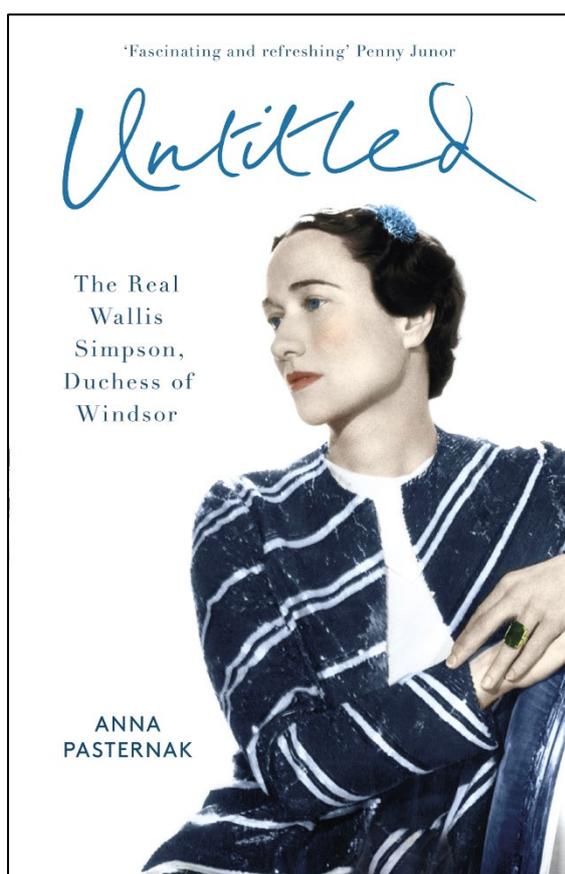


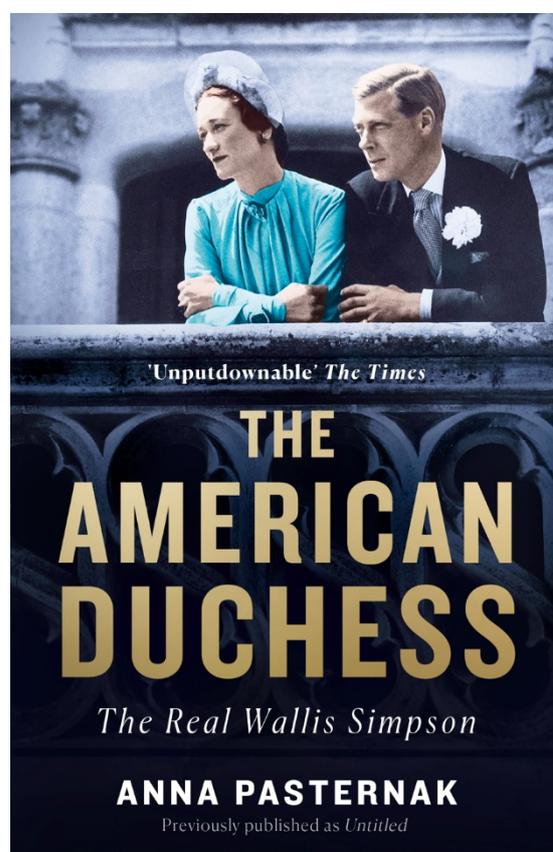


ANNA PASTERNAK



UNTITLED

7TH MARCH 2019



THE AMERICAN DUCHESS

6TH FEBRUARY 2020

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WILLIAM COLLINS

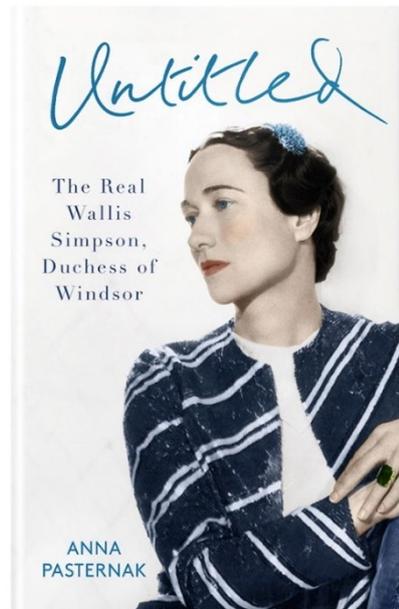
'Fascinating and refreshing' Penny Junor, Royal Biographer

Untitled

The Real Wallis Simpson,
Duchess of Windsor

Anna Pasternak

Thursday 7th March 2019
£20



Who was the real Wallis Simpson?

On the 11th December 1936 Edward VIII's abdication plunged the British monarchy and its government into crisis. Determined to marry Wallis Simpson – the American divorcee who had become his obsession – the King didn't pause to consider for a moment that she, not him, would be blamed for his history altering decision.

Hated by the male-run establishment and the royal family for disgracing the throne, Wallis has been cemented in history and in the public's consciousness as the destroyer of the British Monarchy: a conniving and heartless social climber, intent on obtaining a title. But in truth she was a warm, witty, engaging woman, adored by her friends, as real, self-conscious and insecure as any of us, and painfully aware of her fateful role in history.

In this startling and intimate book – **the first positive biography of Wallis** – Anna Pasternak looks deep into the life and legacy of one of the most misjudged women in British royal history, seeking to understand an unusual and complex woman, and the untenable situation she became embroiled in.

From Edward and Wallis's first meeting, through their whirlwind courtship to the drama of the abdication and their final listless years in exile, Pasternak - who has had privileged access to Wallis's inner circle as well as Edward's home Fort Belvedere, Royal Lodge and the couple's burial place at Frogmore - has finally given Wallis her authentic voice in this gripping and moving account.



Anna Pasternak is a writer and member of the Pasternak family: her great-grandfather was Leonid, the impressionist painter and her great-uncle was Boris, the Nobel prize winning novelist. She was educated at Christ Church, Oxford and is the author of a number of books, including the best-selling *Princess in Love* and most recently *Lara*, the critically acclaimed biography of Boris Pasternak's lover and muse, Olga Ivinskaya.

Anna is available for interview and to write features.
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FAT TALK

March 2019
£4.90

Is Meghan Markle the next Wallis Simpson?

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Kateřina Herzegová is

THE DUCHESS





BYSTANDER

EVERYTHING ABOUT EVERYBODY EVERYWHERE



Let's go
duchess
*What can
Meghan learn
from Wallis?*

PAGE 45

Bling's
the thing
*Time for a
new watch*

PAGE 67

Bold in
Belgravia
*At home with
Bea Vincenzini*

PAGE 59

The Duchess of Windsor
wears silk-chiffon, feather
and crystal dress,
£13,370, by **GUCCI**

Illustration by Nour Flayhan

TATLER CONTRIBUTORS

NOUR FLAYHAN

Lebanese illustrator and ingénue Nour Flayhan has created this month's *Bystander* cover, an illustration of the Duchess of Windsor. Her bright, bold work featuring beautiful, empowered women can be seen in campaigns for Gucci, Levi's and Apple.



SOPHIE PERA

Tatler's Fashion Director, Sophie Pera, started her career under Anna Wintour at American *Vogue* and has since worked with everyone from Annie Leibovitz to Tim Walker. She says that shooting the Dior archive for this month's issue – as a major exhibition on the house opens at the V&A – was 'the highlight of my career. I nearly burst into tears when Anna Cleveland walked in wearing the first look.' She adds, 'I died and went to heaven to be near these pieces.'



GEORDIE GREIG

Editor of the *Daily Mail*, Geordie Greig once headed up *Tatler* (and the *Mail on Sunday*, and the *Evening Standard*). He returned to his alma mater for this issue, venturing to the furthest reaches of Zimbabwe on a *père-et-fils* safari with his son, Jasper, whom he describes as an owl to his lark. Amid charging elephants and a precarious canoe trip in croc-infested waters, they discovered that the wilds of Africa are the 'perfect place for filial bonding'.

JAMES BROWN

When he was only 22, James Brown styled Kate Moss' hair for her debut *Vogue* cover, becoming the youngest hairdresser to do so and supercharging his career. Over the years, he has worked with everyone from Gwyneth Paltrow to Richard Avedon via Calvin Klein. On shoots, he used

to do 'undercover styling', too, turning his talents from tresses to clothes. Now he has officially stepped into the light, styling the likes of Kate Moss (again) and, in this month's *Tatler*, rock'n'roll royalty Ella Richards, working with photographer Perry Ogden. 'I literally used to bottle-feed Ella as a baby,' he says. 'I knew instantly it had to be her. And it was magical.'



ANNA PASTERNAK

In *Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor*, out next month, Anna Pasternak, the bestselling author of *Princess in Love* about Princess Diana, turns her attentions to the Duchess of Windsor. 'Surely no woman has been more unfairly maligned,' says Anna, who writes about the affinities between Wallis and the Duchess of Sussex. 'I feel a kick of injustice on Wallis' behalf every time I see Meghan's HRH. I wish she had been given the opportunities that Meghan enjoys.'

a lesson from history

Continuity, conformity and the cult of the court: Anna Pasternak asks what truths Meghan must learn from Wallis Simpson, the original divorcée duchess?

Whenever there is a Royal Wedding, we buy into the archetypal fairy tale. We want to believe in happily-ever-after, but the reality is rarely halcyon. A royal match promises palaces, but delivers gilded cages and gruelling public scrutiny. The couple may marry for love, but history and tradition regularly conspire against them. Monarchy depends on continuity, conformity and the cult of the court. Too much character or colourful behaviour is frowned upon – the spotlight must be trained on the monarch or heir apparent. As Diana, Princess of Wales and Sarah, Duchess of York, found to their cost, individuality is a liability. Popularity is a mixed blessing, unless you consistently play it safe and keep schtum, à la Kate and Camilla. Which makes me anxious for Meghan.

When Meghan Markle married Harry, the peoples' prince, last May, two billion people tuned in to witness the modern monarchy in action. This biracial beauty, an American divorcée, was a Hollywood star turned HRH. It was inevitable that similarities would be drawn to her predecessor Wallis Simpson, another American divorcée who became a royal duchess. ▷

A WIFE LESS
ORDINARY
*The Duchess of Windsor,
from the Coronation
Souvenir Book of 1937,
the year she married
Edward VIII*

◁ Eighty-one years earlier, Wallis married into the firm to no fervour or fanfare – only public fury. While the entire royal clan gathered for Meghan's wedding, Wallis' marriage to the former King Edward VIII was a tight, tense affair in a French château, with only seven British guests present. The event wasn't even recorded in the Court Circular; a deliberate snub to the new Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

For the last two years, I have been researching a book about Wallis Simpson; sitting in elegant drawing rooms in Chelsea, Gstaad and Paris, listening to her friends reminisce. We have been overfed a diet of such fantastical slander about Mrs Simpson that it has become impossible to discern the real Wallis. The common perception is that she was a ruthless, cold, ambitious bitch who schemed from the outset in the hopes of becoming the Queen of England. And yet, again and again,

penchant for couture. Whip-smart, they were similarly well-educated.

Wallis came from a prominent Baltimore family. She received a strict, traditional education at Oldfields, an all-girls' boarding school. Posted on the dormitory doors was the inscription: 'Gentleness and courtesy are expected of the girls at all times.' Wallis, possessed of perfect manners, took this credo to heart, behaving with laudable inner strength and dignity, despite the decades of insults hurled at her later in life.

As the Duchess of Windsor, she created an eternal signature look which became her personal armour. She learned to distil every outfit to its essence, later asking Parisian couturiers, including Hubert de Givenchy and Christian Dior's Marc Bohan, to dispense with pockets. She never wore a watch (Fulco Verdura told her they were common). Instead, hers was attached to her handbag by a delicate chain. Like Meghan, Wallis had an innate sense



Princess Diana learned that to thwart or underestimate the courtiers was catastrophic

her friends reiterated to me that, far from the Machiavellian villain she's been painted as, she was a victim of history. They spoke of her kindness, sense of fun and depth of friendship. When, in 1936, Edward VIII abdicated what Churchill called 'the greatest throne in history', renouncing an empire of more than 500 million people, to marry Mrs Simpson, she was blamed as the wicked witch who almost derailed the monarchy. As the Duchess of Windsor, she was denied use of HRH and the couple were banished into permanent exile.

So far, so different from Meghan and Harry's modern fairy tale. Apart from the two women being 34 when they met their princes and sharing an exceptional closeness to their mothers, what else could unite these American divorcées turned royal brides? Both reed-thin, they have a distinctive, pared-down style and

of style and significant sartorial pep. 'I can't say that she was sexy, but she was sassy,' says Nicky Haslam, who knew the Duchess of Windsor. 'She walked into a room and it took off. The only other person I knew who had that quality was Frank Sinatra.' Given the popularity of Meghan's official tours, the Duchess of Sussex clearly has a similar electric presence.

At first, that was where the comparisons between the two American duchesses ended. But ever since the news broke that Meghan and Harry were leaving Kensington Palace for Frogmore Cottage, Windsor (where, coincidentally, Wallis is buried), the rumour mill has been churning out less favourable reviews. Apparently, a rift between Meghan and Kate is driving William and Harry apart. The dark echo of history threatens. Edward VIII and his brother, Bertie, once close, fell out due to the enmi-

The Duke and Duchess of Windsor in their Paris apartment, 1964. Opposite, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex attend 2018's Royal Variety Performance





CROWN CONTROL
The Queen with Prince Charles and the Duchess of Windsor in Paris, 1972



ty between their wives. The young Queen Mother was so outraged at the abdication forcing her nervous, stuttering husband on to the throne that she blamed the whole affair on Wallis, dehumanising her as ‘that woman’ and ‘the lowest of the low.’ She even convinced herself that Wallis was responsible for her husband’s early death at 57 of lung cancer.

The Queen Mother, then Elizabeth Bowes-Lyons, once had dreams of marrying Edward herself, before she accepted his brother Bertie’s hand, on the third proposal. Jealous of Wallis, she saw Edward as a weak pawn in his wife’s palm. Interestingly, the blame for the current schism between the merry wives of Windsor is being laid at ‘pushy’ Meghan’s door. Harry, as beloved as his great-great uncle, is regarded without recrimination – or even agency – despite reports that he behaved with regal hauteur prior to the Royal Wedding, telling courtiers: ‘What Meghan wants, Meghan gets.’ And yet the popular narrative remains that Harry, like Edward, is helplessly besotted with his feisty, demanding wife.

What Meghan needs to wise up to fast – and what Wallis realised too late – is that with the monarchy, it is, in fact, the courtiers who hold the real power. As Queen Mary’s biographer James Pope Hennessy warned: ‘It is courtiers who make royalty frightened and frightening,’ Princess Diana, who called them the Men In Grey, learned that to thwart or underestimate them would be catastrophic. They will always win, whether you are the Princess of Wales or not. They maintain control by undermining with snide gossip and setting up rivalry between courts. Clarence House took on Kensington Palace in the war of the Wales’ during Charles and Diana’s acrimonious divorce in 1996. In 1932, Edward’s equerry, John Aird, railed against the courtiers at York House who were briefing King George V against his son, lamenting ‘all the nasty gossip, which is very wrong of them and does no good.’ *Plus ça change.*

Meghan, who has already suffered the indignity of two aides leaving her court and rumours of her imperiousness to Kate’s staff, needs to understand what a constitutional monarchy is. The sovereign reigns but does not rule. The Royal Family do not wield ultimate power. Wallis realised it: ‘I became obsessed with the notion that... a calculated and organised effort to discredit and destroy me had been set afoot.’ She was right. The unholy trinity of the government, church and palace did not want Edward, whom they considered weak and ill-disciplined, on the throne and they used Wallis to rid Britain of him. Wallis, wise to this, wrote to Edward post-abdication: ‘It is the politicians whose game it is... to build up the puppet they have placed on the throne. I was the convenient tool in their hands to use to get rid of you and how they used it!’

Her detractors consistently fail to acknowledge that Wallis did not want to divorce her second husband or marry the Prince of Wales. At the time of the abdication, Edward slept with a loaded gun under his pillow and threatened to kill himself if she forsook him. Aides described him as ‘*exalté* to the point of madness.’

What the treatment of these royal women has revealed is that no member of the royalty can ever be bigger than the Crown. The Duchesses of Cornwall and Cambridge, who have never sought the spotlight, understand this. Diana’s star was too bright in the firmament. Tragically, it was extinguished too soon. Wallis never got a chance to shine for the exceptional woman she was nor the dutiful wife she became. Meghan needs to take note. If she tries too hard to take centre stage, her royal fairy tale may well become another cautionary tale, just like that of her late mother-in-law and the Duchess of Windsor. She should heed Wallis’ fateful words: ‘I who sought no place in history would now be assured of one – an appalling one, carved out by blind prejudice.’ □ *Untitled: The Real Wallis, Duchess of Windsor by Anna Pasternak (£20, William Collins) is out on 7 March.*

The real Wallis, first duchess of Frogmore

Before Meghan, Windsor was home to another American – one history has treated unfairly, writes biographer *Anna Pasternak*

On a sweltering June day last summer, I put on my best silk cocktail dress and my mother's pearls. I wasn't preparing to go to a party but to make a pilgrimage that was profoundly meaningful for me.

I was going to Frogmore to place a bouquet of flowers on Wallis Simpson's grave. I dressed up purely to honour the Duchess of Windsor, rigidly impeccable in her own style. I carried a special bouquet, the flowers chosen with care. It contained Wallis's wedding blooms; white peonies, delphiniums the colour of her Mainbocher blue wedding dress, larkspur and sprigs of wild grasses.

A month before, when Meghan Markle married Prince Harry, they had chosen the grounds of Frogmore House to hold their wedding reception. Now, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex are going to live in Frogmore Cottage, nestled in Home Park, the most private and idyllic sanctuary in the heart of Windsor Great Park. The grounds feel windswept and free. Paths mown through wild-flower meadows lead to the central lake.

There is a poignancy that Meghan's predecessor, Wallis Simpson, lies in the historic royal burial ground facing the lake. As soon as Harry and Meghan's

engagement was announced, endless comparisons between the two women were made. Apart from both being American and divorced, they were both 34 when they met their princes. Both have a distinctive style, share

a penchant for Givenchy and an exceptional closeness to their mothers.

Initially, that is where the comparisons ended. Unlike Wallis, who was derided by the Royal family, denied royal status and exiled when Edward VIII abdicated in order to marry her, Meghan has been welcomed into the royal fold, granted the coveted HRH title and now has a royal property to live in.

But while the new duchess was deemed a breath of modernising fresh air around the time of the wedding, the Frogmore move has seen a more negative narrative emerge. History, it has been suggested, is repeating itself. Edward VIII and his brother, Bertie, once close, were driven apart due to the enmity between their wives, Wallis, and Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. The distance between William and Harry is similarly being blamed on Kate and Meghan – as different in character and approach as their predecessors, and said not to get along.

Yet for Wallis to still be seen as the wicked witch who nearly derailed the monarchy, seems monstrously unfair. I've long held a fascination with her: when I was at Oxford, my mother gave me the published letters between Wallis and Edward. I devoured them, haunted by their tragic love affair. Thirty years later, while watching *The*

Crown, I realised that some scenes depicting her role in the abdication were factually incorrect. I decided that the time was ripe to rehabilitate Wallis and for the past two years, I have been researching a book about her.



I was extremely privileged to be given permission to enter the Royal Burial Ground, where the duke and duchess lie at rest together, but set apart from the other royal graves, separated by the protecting boughs of a giant plane tree. When the Duchess of Windsor was finally allowed back into the royal fold for Edward VIII's funeral on June 5 1972, she was asked by the Queen, which side of

her husband's plot did she wish to be placed? Wallis chose the left. She liked the idea, she said, of the leaves of the plane tree falling on her grave in the autumn. Acutely aware of her unpopularity and lack of any children, she commented that no one was ever likely to place flowers on her grave. The leaves would adorn her instead. She used to collect similar leaves from the park of their Parisian mansion and place them on her dressing table, along with her collection of billet-doux from the besotted duke.

As I knelt before her grave, I

expected to feel incurably sad. Instead, I felt relieved. Edward and Wallis have been accepted into this unique realm when they were driven from it in life. The duke's stone grave is adorned with his heraldic roll call of names and his regal title. The duchess's, of rougher-hewn stone, simply says: "Wallis, Duchess of Windsor, 19 June 1896, 29 April 1986".

So much innuendo has been levelled at the Duchess of Windsor, that it has become impossible to hear her authentic voice amid the cacophony of condemnation. We have experienced her so fully as Machiavellian, through others' projections and prejudice, that she has become a caricature of villainous womanhood. History is mostly perceived from the perspective of history. But what about her story?

The more embroiled I became in Wallis's world, the greater my mounting fury that she has been judged so unfairly. Nicky Haslam, the interior designer, who knew Wallis, opened his address book for me and as I sat in elegant drawing rooms listening to Wallis's old friends, the same sentiments were echoed. That Wallis was kind, witty and diverting company, while the duke was self-absorbed and

less engaging. Hugo Vickers, the royal historian, says: "The world adored him, yet the people who knew him and worked for him, had reservations about him. The world hated her, but the people who knew her and worked for her, absolutely adored her."

I spent a memorable afternoon in Marbella with Count Rudolf Graf

Von Schonburg, whose wife, Princess Louise of Prussia, was related to Edward VIII via Queen Victoria. "I have always considered that the Duchess of Windsor's position in history is factually incorrect and very unfair," he told me.

Wallis was, in fact, warm, well-bred and well-read. She was also irresistibly charming, loyal and dignified to the end. Cherished by her friends, here was a woman written off by a cunning, powerful British establishment who sought to destroy and diminish her. Palace courtiers like Tommy Lascelles, who famously dismissed her as "shop-soiled" with "a voice like a rusty

saw" (watch out for the courtiers, Meghan!). Stanley Baldwin, the Prime Minister, and Cosmo Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury, both had vested interests in dehumanising Wallis.

None of these men wanted Edward, whom they considered weak and ill-disciplined, on the throne and they used Wallis as the excuse to rid England of a man they deemed unfit to rule.

What most of her detractors fail to acknowledge is that she never wanted to marry Edward. Initially she was flattered by his attention. What woman would not have been beguiled by the prince's "unmistakable aura of power and authority?" Yet she never expected the infatuation to last. In 1935, she wrote to her beloved aunt, Bessie Merryman, "what a bump I'll get when a young beauty appears and plucks the Prince from me. Anyway, I'm prepared."

The real tragedy for Wallis is that she could never have prepared for what was to come. She never intended to divorce her second husband, Ernest, with whom she had a contented marriage. It was Edward, then king, who forced her

into an untenable position, refusing to ever give her up. In the name of his needy love, Wallis paid the ultimate price: entrapment by a childish narcissist who threw the biggest tantrum in history when he could not have the two things he wanted most in the world – her and the throne.

Forced to choose Wallis, Edward was devastated when his family closed ranks against him.

Fortunately, Prince Harry did not suffer the same fate on his marriage to his American divorcee. I'm sure, that as Meghan walks around the grounds of Frogmore, pushing a pram next spring, she will pay homage to the Duchess of Windsor. I came to adore Wallis as I wrote my book, and wished that she had been a close girlfriend. I hope Meghan comes to champion her, and places flowers on Wallis's grave. Nothing would have surprised or delighted the Duchess of Windsor more.

Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor by Anna Pasternak will be published by [William Collins](#) on March 7 2019

'The people who knew her and worked for her absolutely adored her'



Wallis Simpson with Lord Mountbatten and Duke of Kent at her husband's grave

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**Capturing a prince:
divorcees Wallis
Simpson and
Meghan Markle
were both 34 when
they met the men
they were to marry.
Now the Duke and
Duchess of Sussex
are to move to
Frogmore Cottage
in Home Park, left,
where the Duke
and Duchess of
Windsor are buried**

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Finding MRS SIMPSON

History has long maligned WALLIS SIMPSON as the manipulative American divorcée who sabotaged the monarchy and lived her life in disgrace. In reality, she was the opposite of a cold-hearted schemer, says her biographer *Anna Pasternak* ►

Ever since Meghan Markle came into the royal spotlight, comparisons have been made with her notorious predecessor, Wallis Simpson – the first American divorcée to captivate a handsome British prince. Mrs Simpson caused international scandal in 1936 when King Edward VIII abdicated in order to marry her.

From her portrayal in countless books and films, everyone assumes they know the Duchess of Windsor – there has only ever been



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The Duke and Duchess of Windsor in Miami, 1941, five years after the abdication; Edward was made governor of the Bahamas during the Second World War. Opposite: Wallis photographed for *Vogue* in 1944

one narrative about this enigmatic character. Wallis is an icon of fashion yet, in spite of her undeniable chic – the Cartier and couture – her image remains hard and unyielding: a ruthless, cold schemer who nearly derailed the monarchy. Devoid of warmth, she remains the victim of brutal character assassination decades after her pitiful death in 1986, alone and exiled in Paris.

So how could a man who had everything give it all up for a woman who had nothing? Having spent two years writing a book about the Duchess of Windsor, I have reached a simple conclusion: Edward loved Wallis because she was lovable. Far from being a frigid, cold dominatrix, she was a loyal, deeply feminine, vulnerable woman who remained charming and dignified to the end.

During my research, in which I gained entrée into Wallis's coterie of living friends, I listened with mounting incredulity and fury as they told me repeatedly of her kindness, sense of fun and depth of friendship which contradicted the public image of a hard-nosed, shallow woman. She was no saint – but she was far from a sinister manipulator. Her detractors continue to screech that she was a Nazi sympathiser and traitor; yet her friends and eminent historians such as Hugo Vickers and Philip Ziegler are adamant that there is no evidence of Nazi conspiracy. She did go with Edward to Germany to meet Hitler; but in 1937 – before the atrocities of the Second World War – and this was only because Edward wanted his wife to experience the pomp and ceremony of a royal tour; denied to Wallis in England.

It was a revelation to discover the real Wallis Simpson. I was taken aback by the force with which her friends adored her: 'She was so affectionate, a loving sort of friend,' wrote fashion editor Diana Vreeland. 'Women are rarely that sort of friend to each other.' Wallis was similarly loyal to male friends. The Conservative MP Sir Henry 'Chips' Channon said, 'She has always shown me friendship, understanding and even affection. I have known her to do a hundred kindnesses and never a mean act.'

Why has the real Wallis never been seen

before? Because history perpetuates convenient myths and Wallis has long been the victim of misogynistic portrayals and female jealousy.

Lady Monckton, a close friend of the Windsors, said after Wallis died, 'People were always being nasty about Wallis. You must remember how jealous people felt when the Prince of Wales fell in love with her.' No woman was more furious with Wallis than Queen Elizabeth the late Queen Mother. She laid the blame for the abdication at Wallis's door; incandescent that her nervous husband Bertie was forced on to the throne. She dehumanised Wallis as 'that woman' and 'the lowest of the low'. Royal toadies and most of the establishment duly followed suit.

Wallis was a woman written off by a cunning, powerful British establishment who sought to destroy and diminish her. Palace courtiers such as Tommy Lascelles – who famously dismissed her as 'shop-soiled' and 'with a voice like a rusty saw' – the prime minister Stanley Baldwin and the Archbishop of Canterbury Cosmo Lang all had vested interests in annihilating Wallis's character. None of these men wanted Edward, whom they considered weak and ill-disciplined, on the throne and they used Wallis as the excuse to rid England of a man they deemed unfit to rule. Wallis, who was better bred than Grace Kelly and better educated than the Duke, realised that duplicitous forces were against her. She wrote to Edward post the abdication, 'It is the politicians whose game it is to have you forgotten and to build up the puppet they have placed on the

throne. I was the convenient tool in their hands to use to get rid of you and how they used it!

What Wallis's critics fail to acknowledge is that she never wanted to divorce her second husband,

Ernest Simpson, or to marry Edward. She tried on many occasions to break off her relationship with him, yet he blackmailed her, threatening to kill himself if she forsook him. Lord Perry Brownlow, who accompanied Wallis to the South of France when news of the abdication broke, wrote a moving account of her terror and despair: 'We found rooms in a hotel,' Perry recalled. "Perry," Wallis said to me through the door after we'd been in our separate rooms for what seemed an eternity, "will you please leave the door open between your room and mine? I'm so frightened. I'm so nervous." Soon after, Wallis called out to Perry again, asking if he could sleep in the bed next to her as she felt too afraid to be alone.

Wallis started to cry - 'Sounds came out of her that were absolutely without top, bottom...they were primeval. There was nothing I could do but lie down beside her, hold her hand, and make her feel that she was not alone.'

What I had not expected during my research was how much I came to love, admire and relate to Wallis. An only child, she adored her mother and was bereft when she died in 1929, soon after

Wallis moved to England to marry Ernest Simpson. She grieved bitterly, for she felt her mother was 'the only person who truly understood her.' I warmed to Wallis as I have struggled with my grief since my own mother died. I respected her inner discipline. When the world learned of the abdication, Wallis received vicious hate mail - the equivalent of the trolls slaying Meghan online today. 'It's no exaggeration to say that my world went to pieces every morning on my breakfast tray,' she later wrote. Admirably, she schooled herself to survive what would have felled the hardiest of souls, 'To be accused of things that one has never done; to be judged and condemned on many sides by people ignorant of the controlling circumstances; to have one's supposed character day after day laid bare, dissected and flayed.' She triumphed with 'a kind

of private arrangement with oneself'. She knew who she was and her friends knew too. She learned to uphold what matters in life and to endure being a woman misunderstood. Whom among us hasn't felt lonely and fragile when other people have written us off as hard or robust? ►

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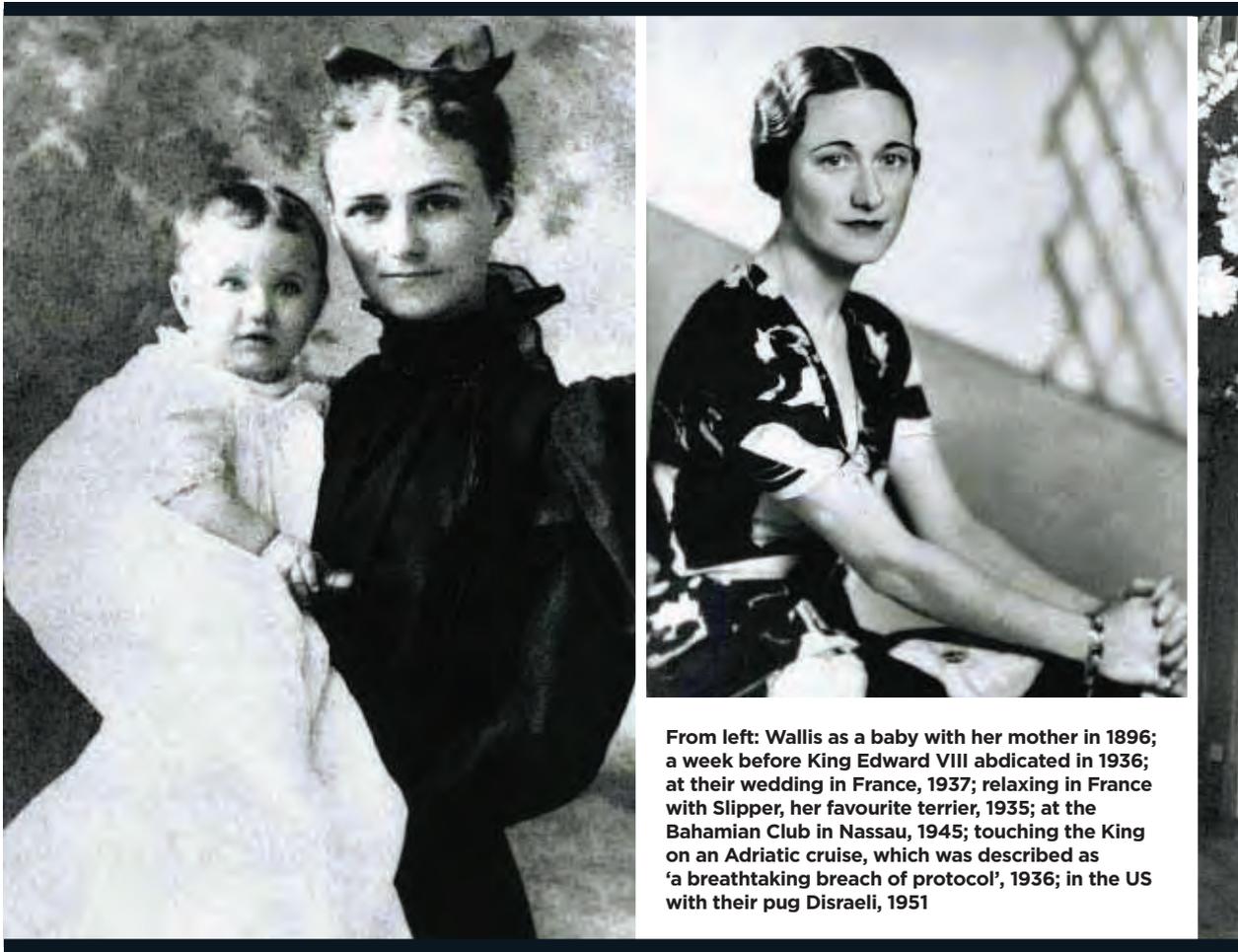


‘SHE NEVER
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From left: Wallis as a baby with her mother in 1896; a week before King Edward VIII abdicated in 1936; at their wedding in France, 1937; relaxing in France with Slipper, her favourite terrier, 1935; at the Bahamian Club in Nassau, 1945; touching the King on an Adriatic cruise, which was described as 'a breathtaking breach of protocol', 1936; in the US with their pug Disraeli, 1951

◀ I came to understand why Wallis cultivated such a severe appearance. Her rigid sartorial perfectionism became her psychological armour. An inscrutable dignity gave her strength. Always immaculately groomed, there was a delicacy about her appearance from her dresses cinched with tiny belts to neat pairs of heels.

What struck at the heart of her womanhood was that she would have loved children but was infertile due to gynaecological problems (she had a hysterectomy later in life). The secret inner pain of childlessness must have made the slurs against her bitterly hard to bear.

Wallis compensated by developing other graceful traits. She was the most accomplished hostess who loved interior decoration. According to interior decorator Nicky Haslam, who knew her in New York in the 60s, Wallis 'was a much more artistic creature than people thought. She liked beautiful things and had a keen eye.' Edward said of his first visit to her flat in Bryanston Court, Marylebone, 'Everything was in exquisite taste and the food, in my judgment, unrivalled in London.' According to Lady Pamela Hicks, 'She was the most marvellous hostess. Her houses

were perfection. At giving parties and serving food, she was the best.' When she was the Duchess of Windsor and could afford it, Wallis would spray floral centrepieces with Diorissimo perfume. It is a mark of how fond the society florist Constance Spry was of Wallis that she offered her wedding flowers as a gift, in the process ruling herself out of the lucrative commission for the flowers for George VI's coronation. Spry spent two days filling the French venue with lilies, white peonies, delphiniums and wild roses. She told the

photographer Cecil Beaton, 'I'm going to make the flowers as beautiful as I can. I'd do anything for her. I adore her. So did all my girls when they arranged flowers for her in her Regent's Park House and didn't know who she was.'

Part of the fascination with the Duchess of Windsor is because we want to know if the fairytale was real. Did she and the former king have a happy ending? For Edward, it was a *coup de foudre*; his love for her never wavered. His inscription inside her 20-carat emerald engagement ring read, 'We are ours now'. Wallis, on their wedding day, was more in shock than in love. As they were leaving for their honeymoon in

Austria, Edward's aide Sir Walter Monckton took Wallis aside. He later admitted that he told her that most people in England disliked her very much because the Duke had married her and given up his throne, but that, 'if she kept him happy all his days, that would change; if he were unhappy, nothing would be too bad for her.' Once Wallis was entrapped in marriage, she determined to do her best by Edward, whom she grew to truly love. In this endeavour, against the backdrop of psychological assassination from the entire world, she triumphed.

Count Rudi von Schönburg, who ran the Marbella Club – a society hotspot in Spain frequented by the Windsors in the 60s – became a devoted friend. 'In 50 years of running a hotel, I have seen thousands of couples together,' he told me. 'I have seldom seen a couple as integrated as they were. They had a deep confidence in each other and mutual respect. It was an extraordinary love.'

Sadly, the world still has not altered its trenchant, biased view of Wallis Simpson. It is my intention to bring her back favourably in the eyes of the world, which she deserves, and where she belongs. ❏

■ **Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor by Anna Pasternak will be published by William Collins on 7 March, priced £20***

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'IT WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL LOVE. I HAVE SELDOM SEEN A COUPLE AS INTEGRATED'

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Clockwise from left: the Duke and Duchess pose in their Paris home with their pugs for *Vogue*, 1964; Prince Philip, the Queen and Prince Charles visiting the couple in May 1972, shortly before the Duke's death; and on their wedding day, 3 June 1952, at Château de Candé in the Loire valley

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HEPHZIBAH ANDERSON

BIOGRAPHY

Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess Of Windsor

Anna Pasternak
[William Collins](#) £20



The Royal Family's embrace of Meghan Markle left biographer Anna Pasternak fuming on behalf of another American divorcee who captured a prince's heart but found herself trapped in a very different kind of story.

More than 80 years since Edward VIII's abdication, the name Mrs Simpson still evokes scandal. Bessie Wallis Warfield, as she was born, has been accused of spying for Nazi Germany, rapaciously plotting to make herself queen and domineering entrapment with geisha-like wiles.

To Pasternak, all of this seems bitterly unjust, and she sets about rehabilitating her in a diverting if unpersuasive book dedicated to 'HRH The Duchess of Windsor', a title she never received in full.

It's a curious kind of rescue, reliant upon casting Wallis as passive and powerless, and the Duke of Windsor as a maniac, unhinged by his obsession with her. Far from scheming to become queen, Pasternak insists that Wallis never intended to divorce her second husband. Indeed, Mr Simpson's chief concern when His Royal Highness spent today's equivalent of £7million on jewels for his wife was their mounting insurance bill.

As events spiral out of control following the death of King George V, Wallis is shown to be vulnerable and afraid. Her health falters. Deep-seated childhood anxieties about poverty flare up. From their five-star exile, she pens

self-pitying notes to her now ex-husband.

Even as Pasternak defends her heroine, the facts undermine her case. There goes Wally, borrowing the yacht of a suspected Nazi collaborator, accepting a jero-boam of perfume from a playboy in a Paris nightclub, getting yet another facelift.

Early on, Pasternak urges us to cease 'belittling' Wallis and see her as a 'modern, intelligent, remarkable woman'. Remarkable? There's little here to suggest it, though her intelligence comes across through a succession of tart ripostes. Her modernity, on the other hand, is striking: rattling around in chateaux and penthouses, trapped by her own Faustian pact and oppressed by media scorn, she resembles nobody so much as one of TV's *Real Housewives*.

IT'S A FACT

A slice of Wallis and Edward's wedding cake from 1937 was sold at Sotheby's in 1997 for £22,000 - a scene later recreated in TV's *Seinfeld*.



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The Duke and Duchess of Windsor
on their wedding day in 1937

Learning to love Wallis Simpson

Book of the week

A new biography paints Edward VIII's wife as a tragic figure unfairly vilified by history, says **Ysenda Maxtone Graham**



Untitled
The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor
by Anna Pasternak

William Collins,
342pp, £20

Even if the EU has 40 words for “no”, the British royal family surely put Michel Barnier in the shade. When it comes to flinty-hearted negotiators refusing to soften their stance towards someone they consider to be beyond the pale, you can’t beat the royals in the mid-20th century. For 35 years they responded in the negative to the Duke of Windsor’s repeated requests that his wife should be granted the title “Her Royal Highness”.

So the apposite title of this biography of Wallis Simpson is *Untitled*. It’s a rehabilitation job on the woman for whom Edward VIII abdicated the throne in 1936; he would rather marry a divorcée and cause a constitutional crisis than be king. Anna Pasternak tells us in the acknowledgments that she asked Simpson’s previous biographer, Anne Sebba (*That Woman*, 2011), to sum up her views on Simpson. Sebba’s response was: “What’s to like?” To which Pasternak replied that her view was exactly the opposite: “What’s not to like?”

How Simpson’s enemies — her mother-in-law, Queen Mary, and her sister-in-law Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother — would have shuddered, not only at this

opinion, but also at the modern jargon. Pasternak’s mission is to make us love Simpson, to see her as a tragic heroine, unfairly vilified, who did all she could to make the man who loved her desist from giving up the crown to marry her.

The book does have the *Desert Island Discs* effect of making you take notice of and see the compassionate, vulnerable sides of someone you have subconsciously compartmentalised all your life as too rich, too thin and, let’s be frank, too American. (During her one stay there, in 1936, Simpson introduced the triple-decker sandwich to Balmoral.)

As with most royal biographies, there’s little here that hasn’t been written somewhere before. Pasternak quotes extensively from Edward’s memoir *A King’s Story* and Simpson’s Mills & Boony autobiography *The Heart Has Its Reasons* (“I was prepared to go through rivers of woe, seas of despair, and oceans of agony for him”), as well as from Sebba, and from James Pope-Hennessy’s biography of Queen Mary and Philip Ziegler’s *Edward VIII*. Pasternak whizzes us through Simpson’s 1890s Baltimore childhood in three pages,

her disastrous eight-year first marriage to an alcoholic in a page and a half, and her final widowed, miserable, lonely, gaga 14 years (from Edward’s death in 1972 to her death at the age of 89 in 1986) in another three pages.

So why read it? Well, Pasternak did interview a few fresh people: John Julius Norwich, whose parents, Duff and Diana Cooper, knew the Windsors well in Paris; Count Rudi von Schönburg, who ran the Marbella Club in the 1960s; Anne Pleydell-

Bouverie, whose parents knew them in the Bahamas; and a duke called David Maude-Roxby-Montalto di Fragnito, who met Simpson a few times on Palm Beach.

These people bring fresh observations to bear, such as (from Norwich): “Papa could see that this thing had got far too big for Wallis and she was longing to get the hell out... but the King was determined to marry her.” Or (from Von Schönburg): “The Duke harboured this terrible fear that ‘they didn’t treat Wallis well when I was alive, how will they treat her when I am dead?’”

What makes the book unputdownable is Pasternak’s lively and detailed (and thankfully not Mills & Boony) retelling of this ever-fascinating, ridiculously poignant love story. The happily married Simpsons met Edward in 1932 through their friend Thelma Furness, and they invited him to dinner at their mansion flat in Bryanston Court in London. Edward invited them back for a weekend at his house, Fort Belvedere, in Surrey.

“She is a nice, quiet, well-bred mouse of a woman, with large startled eyes and a huge mole,” the MP Chips Channon wrote of Simpson in his diary. However, there was something about her forthrightness that enchanted the prince. There is no factual back-up for the rumour that she hooked him with “sophisticated sexual practices” she had picked up in “singing houses” in China, where she spent a year in the 1920s after escaping from her first marriage. That was just prurient tittle-tattle that spread when the scandal broke. “Everything was a bid to discredit her,” said Norwich, “but she was the furthest



thing from kinky.”

Although Simpson is the central character, this is as much a biography of Edward; just as nothing could separate them in life, no biographer can separate them in death. On every page you wince as they once more step towards a life of exiled futility.

Norwich said that his father was the only person who dared to warn Edward of the inevitable outcome, “that the whole blame for the catastrophe [of the Abdication] would be placed on Wallis, now and in history”. Edward did not heed this warning. There is no doubt that the tragic flaw that drives the story was his obsessive determination to have his own way, at all costs, in matters of love. This trait was revealed last year in Rachel Trethewey’s *Before Wallis*, which portrayed him as obsessive in his pursuit of his girlfriend of the moment. With Simpson, this obsessiveness reached

the level of total dependency and blindness to all reason.

“Yes, but...” I kept wanting to say to Pasternak, who impresses on us that Simpson implored the prince to let her go, so she could return to her sweet, gracious, noble husband, Ernest. “I feel I am better with him than with you,” she wrote to Edward from the dismal rented house in Felixstowe in Suffolk where she was staying just before her divorce trial in Ipswich, “and so you must understand.”

She offered to return the gifts Edward had given her, as well as the “life-changing sum of money” he had bestowed on her — although she was enchanted by the royal lifestyle, she was emphatically not (Pasternak claims) a gold-digger. On crackly telephone lines, as she went into hiding in France in December 1936 when the news of the affair broke in the British press, she was overheard shouting at him: “Never leave your country. You *cannot* give in. You were *born* to this. It is your *heritage*.”

Edward took no notice, but she could just have not married him, couldn’t she? Perhaps not. You try having Edward VIII in love with you and see if you can escape. He simply went ahead and abdicated.

The story is made odder and sadder when you consider that Simpson never menstruated, so could never have children (a source of infinite sadness to her), and that (as Lady Cynthia Gladwyn explained to Hugo Vickers, who told it to Pasternak), “the prince had sexual problems. He was

unable to perform.”

Here are some of Simpson’s traits that Pasternak mentions to build up a positive image. She was a wonderfully attentive hostess; if there was a legendary bore at the dinner table, she was the one who took the trouble to talk to them. She was a calming influence on the impossibly demanding Edward, whose bitterness towards his family (who persistently refused to meet his wife) increasingly infected his life. Each morning of their married life she wrote a “programme” for him and put it on the hall table, to help him to get through the long, pointless day ahead.

She loved her dear American aunt Bessie. She wrote affectionate letters to friends. She loved Ernest (but she did divorce him). It’s not true that she flew from the Bahamas to Miami every week during the war to have her hair done, but she and Edward did like shopping in Washington DC occasionally, taking 73 pieces of luggage.

Wise Ernest, who understood and cherished her, gently told her the truth about how inextricably bound up she was with Edward. “Would your life ever have been the same if you had broken it off? I mean, could you have settled down in the old life and forgotten the fairyland through which you had passed? My child, I do not think so.”

Among the book’s excellent photographs, some published for the first time, there’s a hauntingly sad one of Simpson looking out of a window of Buckingham Palace watching the Trooping the Colour, utterly desolate, before Edward’s funeral in 1972. On that day, at last, she was invited to ride along The Mall with the Queen Mother in an open-topped carriage, but she declined. That gesture of friendship and reconciliation, one that would have brought so much happiness to Edward, had come too late.



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

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LOST WORLD Wallis Simpson and the Duke of Windsor in the Bahamas c 1942. Below: at Buckingham Palace in 1972 before her husband's funeral

Cracking the royals' code

Since 1803, the Court Circular has revealed juicy gossip on everyone from Wallis Simpson to Sarah Ferguson, says *Anna Pasternak*

Hello, my name's Anna and I have a weird confession. I'm addicted to the Court Circular. This daily diary of events carried out by the senior working royals, issued by Buckingham Palace and printed in the *Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Scotsman*, soothes and tickles me.

Quintessentially British, it is unintentionally hilarious. Compiled in the Private Secretary's office in Buckingham Palace, it is formal and exacting in style; yet it reveals gems. The copy, to this day, is approved by the Queen before it is published.

While Princess Anne was the busiest royal in 2018, who knew that the Duke of Gloucester was so industrious? He's always working, with his 150 patronages, including the British Homeopathic Association and the Japan Society. Princess Alexandra, aged 82 – a total trouser – remains the patron for Safe Haven for Donkeys in the Holy Land. And who can resist the indispensable nugget that, when the Duke of Cambridge travelled to Israel last June, he 'visited a coffee kiosk on Rothschild Boulevard, Tel Aviv-Jaffa'.

The practice of the Royal Household or 'Court' circulating a report on the sovereign's official daily engagements to the newspapers began in 1803 due to George III's frustrations with inaccurate reporting by the national press.

In 1827, it became a daily listing, while in 2015 it joined Facebook. From Queen Victoria's reign – when every time she drove out in her carriage, it was recorded – to today, the column has included subtleties that make it a precursor to the gossip column. It's like a code that if you are in the know, you understand.

So devotees would have deduced that Sarah, Duchess of York officially thawed her royal freeze-out long before Princess Eugenie's wedding. After her 1996 divorce, Sarah made the Court Circular until 1997, when she attended Princess Diana's funeral. Then, after a 20-year exclusion, in June 2017 she was officially



Circular sore: Wallis Simpson and Edward VIII at Balmoral in 1936

recorded standing in for the Duke of York at Westminster Abbey at the memorial service for comedian Ronnie Corbett.

I became preoccupied with the Court Circular researching my forthcoming book on Wallis Simpson. Opinion on the Duchess of Windsor is hugely divisive but, talking with still living members of her inner circle, I came to like and admire her. Contrary to myth, she did not want to marry the King and far less wanted him to abdicate. She was the victim of the unholy trinity of the Church, Parliament and the Palace, which used her existence as an excuse to get rid of a king they considered unfit to rule.

And you can chart poor Wallis's horrendous fall from royal grace by her inclusions, then glaring omissions, in the Court Circular. Apart from those in the Prince of Wales's social orbit, the country knew nothing of his infatuation with Mrs Simpson until his decision to abdicate. He chose the Court Circular to announce his friendship with the Simpsons and make clear, to those who could decode it, his intentions. So Mr and Mrs Ernest Simpson were listed in the Court Circular at a dinner held at St James's Palace on 27th May 1936, in which Edward planned to introduce Stanley Baldwin to Wallis.

'Sooner or later my Prime Minister must meet my wife,' he told an appalled Wallis. The dinner was the last time that Ernest Simpson would ever be the King's guest, a fact noted by avid followers of the Court Circular. Once considered dull and dreary, the listing became, according to Diana Mosley, 'a source of endless gossip and conjecture in London society'.

Edward further horrified courtiers, already questioning his sanity, by announcing Wallis's arrival in Balmoral for his house party that September, her name taking precedence over the Duke and Duchess of York (the future George VI and Queen Mother). After he abdicated and the couple ricocheted into exile, the Duke of Windsor's obsession with his Duchess receiving the critical HRH and her presence being recorded in the Court Circular tormented him. It seems staggeringly petty that the wedding of the former King on 3rd June 1937 was not recorded in the Court Circular.

Chips Channon railed, 'The treatment of the Duke of Windsor by the present government has hurt the institution of royalty far more than ever the Duke of Windsor did by his abdication.'

Thirty years later, when the Duke and Duchess came to Britain for the unveiling of a plaque in memory of his mother, Queen Mary, they were not mentioned in the Court Circular either.

On the only occasion that the Duchess merited an inclusion in this snobbish bastion, it was too late to delight her Duke. She was recorded arriving in Britain on 2nd June 1972 at Heathrow to be met by Lord Mountbatten on behalf of the Queen, for her husband's funeral.

But, as royal historian Hugoickers pointed out to me, even then her listing concealed a diminishment. The 't' of 'the Duchess of Windsor' was lower case. Only royal duchesses, with an HRH, merit an upper-case T. 

Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor by Anna Pasternak is published on 7th March (William Collins)

Top fives



Fiction

- 1. Still Me**
by Jojo Moyes
(Penguin, £8.99)
- 2. The Tattooist Of Auschwitz**
by Heather Morris
(Zaffre, £8.99)
- 3. Wild Fire**
by Ann Cleeves
(Pan, £7.99)
- 4. Broken Ground**
by Val McDermid
(Little, Brown, £7.99)
- 5. A Country Escape**
by Katie Forde
(Arrow, £7.99)

Non-fiction

- 1. This Is Going To Hurt**
by Adam Kay
(Picador, £8.99)
- 2. The Fast 800**
by Michael Mosley
(Short, £8.99)
- 3. The Salt Path**
by Raynor Winn
(Penguin, £9.99)
- 4. Everything I Know About Love**
by Dolly Alderton
(Penguin, £8.99)
- 5. Mary Berry's Quick Cooking**
by Mary Berry
(BBC, £22)

Children's

- 1. Fing**
by David Walliams
(HarperCollins, £12.99)
- 2. Bad Dad**
by David Walliams
(HarperCollins, £6.99)
- 3. Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone**
by JK Rowling
(Bloomsbury, £7.99)
- 4. Diary Of A Wimpy Kid**
by Jeff Kinney
(Puffin, £6.99)
- 5. Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets**
by JK Rowling
(Bloomsbury, £7.99)



Charlotte Heathcote

Making history

Dazzling stories steeped in the past

Spies And Stars: MI5, Showbusiness And Me ****
by Charlotte Bingham
(Bloomsbury, £14.99)

In this dazzling sequel to *MI5 And Me*, her hilarious memoir of derring-do and unsuitable romance in the British Secret Service, Charlotte Bingham is now a typist in MI5 where her father is a star agent. Lottie embarks on her first grown-up romance with hapless actor Harry, recruited into the service to winkle out communists in the British theatre.

As theatrical agents rub shoulders with secret agents, the author details the chicanery of left-leaning actors desperate to impress directors by displaying *The Daily Telegraph* in rehearsals and voting Tory to win roles as officers and gentlemen. Together, Lottie and Harry try to write a comic script, *The Happy Communist* – a title later changed to *Sexy Aliens* – while negotiating the rarefied world of missing top-secret files and political blackmail.

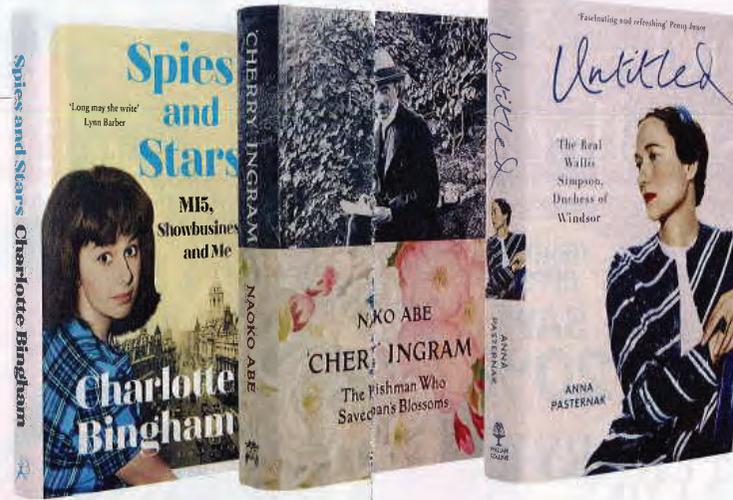
The writer's remarkable eye for detail conjures up a 1950s world of Kensington privilege – a world of Lyons Corner Houses, Sketchleys and Underwood typewriters. Her prose is like an old car driven at breakneck speed and her friends have names like Rollo, Arabella and Zuzu. This accelerated writing, combined with cavalier humour, comes across like a cocktail of Jilly Cooper and Angela Brazil, elevating this memoir out of the nostalgia rut and giving it an irresistible immediacy.

The world she inhabits may be gone but she makes it easy for us to engage and identify with her mad, louche and ever-so-slightly-bonkers characters. It's enormous fun.

Neil Norman

"Cherry" Ingram: The Englishman Who Saved Japan's Blossoms ****
by Naoko Abe
(Chatto & Windus, £18.99)

Set against the narrative arc of Japanese



history, journalist Naoko Abe's account of the man behind the preservation of her country's national symbol is both sympathetic and compelling.

In April 1926, Collingwood Ingram addressed the Japanese Cherry Association, warning his audience of royalty, business leaders and bureaucrats that the diversity of their cherry trees, that centuries-old symbol of Japanese nationhood, was under threat.

By 1880, the grandson of the founder of *The Illustrated London News*, he had never needed to earn his living and was dedicated to the preservation of cherry species worldwide. He had an abiding interest in the natural world and a passion for cherry blossoms inspired by two visits to Japan in the early 1900s and a pair of magnificent cherry trees in his Kent garden. But during a return visit in 1926, he saw the diversity of Japanese cherries was at risk from industrialisation, neglect and deadening uniformity.

Over the next few years, he sent cherry scions by sea to Japanese enthusiasts, but extreme temperatures on the voyage meant these shoots were dead on arrival. So in 1932 they were inserted into potatoes, for moisture retention, and sent overland by the Trans-Siberian Railway to avoid dramatic fluctuations in temperature. They survived the journey and took root in Japan. "Cherry" Ingram also introduced 50 new cherries into Britain and many more across the globe.

On reading this book, beautifully illustrated with atmospheric period shots and colour plates, you may well determine, as I have, to visit Japan at cherry blossom time.

Vanessa Berridge

Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess Of Windsor ****
by Anna Pasternak
(William Collins, £20)

Prince Harry's engagement to American divorcée Meghan Markle was the inspiration for *Untitled*. Although the Royal Family granted Harry's bride the title of Her Royal Highness, Anna Pasternak felt a sense of injustice at the treatment of another American divorcée who was denied that title.

In the early 1930s, Wallis Simpson caught the eye of the heir to the British throne, Edward, Prince of Wales. And the idea persists that twice-married Wallis was a calculating monster, intent on becoming queen.

Not so, argues the author. After an unsettled childhood and an unhappy first marriage, she wed the divorced Ernest Simpson, whose connections introduced her to court circles.

Her wit, irreverence and deep charm quickly attracted the prince and Wallis was flattered. But before long she was oscillating "between a state of heady delight at her exalted court position and a burgeoning sense of isolation".

Anna Pasternak paints a compelling portrait of a warm, rather reserved woman, beloved by her staff and tender towards her childlike husband. She is less kind to Edward, who on his abdication became the Duke of Windsor. She calls him "an insufferable egotist".

Their story is, in essence, a tragedy, with Wallis spending a purposeless lifetime trying to make up to her husband for all he had relinquished. At the duke's funeral in 1972, Prince Charles overheard her repeatedly muttering, "He gave up so much for so little."

Vanessa Berridge

Partners in crime

From 40s New York to turn of the century Poland, try Jake Kerridge's pick of offbeat new thrillers

Freefall
by Jessica Barry
(Harvill Secker, £12.99)

This is a perfect gift for Mother's Day, showing that when you're up against it nobody has your back like mum. It begins when Allison Carpenter survives a plane crash in Colorado's Rocky Mountains but she soon realises that's just the start of her troubles as a dangerous man is pursuing her. Meanwhile, her estranged but tenacious mother refuses to believe her daughter is dead and sets out in search of her. The characterisations may be less striking than the book's premise, but Jessica Barry deploys her story and its twists with infectious brio.

The Mobster's Lament
by Ray Celestin
(Mantle, £16.99)

This is the third volume in Ray Celestin's *City Blues Quartet*, which has already established itself as one of the most ambitious and riveting works of crime fiction in years. The books follow the career of Louis Armstrong and his (fictional) friend, detective Ida Davis, across many decades and American cities. This one is set in New York in 1947 as Armstrong struggles to kickstart his floundering career, while Ida investigates a horrific mass murder in Harlem. The story of how the Mob became one of the most powerful forces in American politics is another strand in a compendious, gripping book that captures the fizzing energy of New York at one of the most exciting points in its history.

Mrs Mohr Goes Missing
by Maryla Szymczkova
(Point Blank, £12.99)

Unconventional sleuth Zofia Turbotynska is the social-climbing wife of a medical professor in 1890s Poland who finds herself mixed up in a series of mysterious deaths at a retirement home run by nuns. While there is a strong whiff of Agatha Christie in this book, it is much more than a pastiche. At the expense of Zofia's perceived self-importance, the story fuses high comedy with an evocative portrayal of the period. And the author's pseudonym conceals the identities of two well-known Polish writers who have collaborated on this amusing curio, ably translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones.

After The Eclipse
by Fran Dorricott
(Titan, £7.99)

Journalist Cassie Warren has given up her flagging career in London to care for her ailing grandmother in the tiny town of Bishop's Green. Returning to her hometown has its problems, though. Not only must she cope with memories of her sister's disappearance during the 1999 solar eclipse, but there's the possibility she'll bump into her childhood friend and first love, Marion. Then there is another eclipse, a second girl goes missing and Cassie decides to track her down. Small town crimes repeating themselves over the years is a familiar trope, but Fran Dorricott's characters are refreshingly three-dimensional and her writing is full of zest.



To buy these books, see Bookshop on page 77

STEPHEN BATES

The Woman Who Wouldn't be Queen

Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor

By Anna Pasternak

(William Collins 342pp £20)

Suppose there are still two opinions of Wallis Simpson, the woman whose relationship with Edward VIII precipitated the king's abdication in December 1936. Was she the woman who 'pinched our king', as a popular parody of 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' had it? Or was she merely an unfortunate femme fatale who unwittingly launched the greatest British royal crisis (or greatest royal love story) of the 20th century?

Anna Pasternak is definitely in the second camp. Her publisher's blurb goes so far as to claim that this book is the first positive biography of Wallis, and it certainly reads a bit hearts and flowers in places. There's an occasional touch of *Private Eye's* Dame Sylvie Krin too, such as in the description of Wallis's return from her divorce hearing in Ipswich: 'On the long journey back to London ... Wallis sank back, exhausted. She was thankful the ordeal was over, but as always, anxious. Few around her realised, let alone were sensitive to, her fragility.' This is certainly the first book I have ever read where the author thanks a florist (Bluebells of Henley) for ensuring a regular supply of her subject's favourite flowers to inspire her writing.

Pasternak overstates the degree of public sympathy there was for Wallis and Edward when the news of their relationship – and of the king's determination to marry her – broke in the British press eighty-two years ago. We may be a little sceptical when she approvingly quotes Diana Mosley, a friend of the couple, babbling about the love that ordinary people bore the king. The Mosleys were not necessarily the best judges of public opinion in the 1930s. Nor can we really take at face value Mosley's suggestion that the crisis was the biggest news story of the decade.

The king was indeed very popular until the news that he wanted to marry a twice-divorced American broke in the press. It's hard to know which part of that caused greater outrage: divorce was still a serious

matter in 1936, and as for Americans, well, prejudice towards them remained strong.

When the official files relating to the Abdication Crisis were opened at the National Archives a few years ago, out tumbled a huge sheaf of angry letters written by the public to the government at the time, virtually all of which condemned the king's disgraceful desire to marry an American divorcee. Modern social media trolls have nothing on the correspondents of 1936, who at least had to take the trouble to affix a postage stamp to their expressions of outrage: Wallis was an octopus, a fake, a legalised prostitute and 'a woman climber from a boarding house in Baltimore', they scribbled.

Pasternak does not mention these, only the hostile press, which notoriously remained silent thanks to an undertaking of Lord Beaverbrook and other newspaper proprietors to keep the story out of the papers. The vow of silence was broken only when the appropriately named Bishop Blunt of Bradford made a mildly censorious comment about Edward not going to church enough to his diocesan synod. The remarks were not as inflammatory as Pasternak seems to think (Blunt didn't know anything about the king's affair) but their effect was to open the floodgates. The press haven't made the mistake of discretion again, as the modern royals can attest.

Pasternak makes a fair case in arguing how hard Wallis tried to give up Edward as his determination to marry her, even if it meant abdicating the throne, became apparent. As the crisis broke, she wrote him repeated letters suggesting she should bow out. It must be remembered, however, that she had allowed herself to be sucked into the king's coterie over the course of several years and was prepared to ditch her loyal and devoted Anglo-American husband, Ernest Simpson, in order to pursue a relationship with Edward. It was poor Ernest who gallantly volunteered to be found sharing a bed with a woman who was not his



Wallis and Edward: special relationship

wife – the standard proof in divorce proceedings for adultery – at the Hotel de Paris on the banks of the Thames at Bray.

Perhaps it was the £50,000 worth of jewellery the infatuated Edward showered on her at Christmas in 1934, or the further £60,000 worth he gave her at New Year, that first helped her to see the merits of hanging around. Or did she have an inkling, while writing those letters, of the long decades of vacuousness and boredom that would await her once she had married the dull, peevish royal with a strong sense of entitlement and self-righteousness?

However much Pasternak describes the couple's devotion to one another (apart from Wallis's fling with the ghastly American heir Jimmy Donahue in the 1950s), it is generally impossible to raise a bat squeak of sympathy for their plight when one reads of the 186 trunks and 80 further items of luggage they took on honeymoon with them. Or the unpaid £800 telephone bill that Edward ran up by calling Wallis every day for three months from a friend's *Schloss* in Austria while waiting for her divorce to be finalised. Or the peppercorn rent the French government charged the couple after the Second World War for a chateau in the Bois de Boulogne, or indeed the tax exemption that it also granted them.

Thank goodness life has moved on. Wallis and Edward must have susurrated gently in their neighbouring graves at Frogmore as an American divorcee married a British prince last year with scarcely a murmur of protest.

To order this book from the *Literary Review* Bookshop, see page 34.



One essay outlines the gruelling challenges faced by some Muslim women

Muslim women in west London, January 2016. Guy Curbishley/Alamy

It's burqas as usual

Burhan Wazir is impressed by a wide-ranging collection of essays on Muslim women's lives in modern Britain

It's Not About the Burqa: Muslim Women on Faith, Feminism, Sexuality and Race
Edited by Mariam Khan
Picador, £14.99, pp272

No other item of religious clothing has ignited passions and prejudice among politicians and media commentators as much as the burqa, worn by a minority of Muslim women. In 2006, then leader of the Commons Jack Straw wrote of his "concerns" after a meeting with a veiled Muslim woman in his Blackburn constituency – he later apologised. Tony Blair, who was then prime minister, said the wearing of veils was a "mark of separation". More than a decade later, Boris

Johnson wrote that women who wear veils "look like letterboxes".

The paranoia over Islamic clothing has become a political opportunity to codify laws against European Muslims. Legislation prohibiting or limiting face veiling now exists in Belgium, Bulgaria, Austria, France and Germany. Last year, politicians in Denmark cited local values when they passed a law banning the wearing of face veils in public. The law, punishable by a fine, affects only an estimated 200 Muslim women.

In this engrossing collection of essays by mostly young British Muslim women, contributors come from all areas of life – law, journalism, human rights, academia, fashion, gay rights and activism. Writers include the public speaker and author Mona Eltahawy, *Guardian* journalist Coco Khan, the beauty and wellness social media influencer Amena Khan and Malia Bouattia, a former president of the National Union of Students.

The writers cover a panoply of subjects, including immigration, mental health, terrorism, divorce and feminism, as well as veils. In one

fascinating essay, Sufiya Ahmed, whose mother divorced shortly after she was born, finds insight in the sixth-century life of Khadija bint Khuwaylid, a successful 40-year-old merchant who married the 25-year-old prophet Muhammad: "It was the disparity between the life of Khadija and the lives of some modern British Muslim women, still repressed under cultural rules in the 21st century, that inspired me to become a women's rights activist."

Her example resonates with young Muslims around the world. From 2008 to 2016, I worked and travelled widely in the Middle East; my doctor, HR liaison and line manager all wore veils. For a short period, I sat opposite a veiled Qatari who spoke about her independence after divorce. None of the women was burdened, subjugated or reacting against progress.

One issue often overlooked is that religious clothing can excite provocation even within the ranks of minority groups themselves – examples include the radio talk show presenter Maajid Nawaz and the author Ayaan Hirsi Ali – who

find currency as self-appointed reformers. Elsewhere, clothing manufacturers such as Nike or Jo LaMode take an apparently atheistic view of religious apparel, while women who are veiled or cover their hair with mitpachats have been accused of monetising their faith or aiding radicalism.

One of the most persuasive essays is by the Scottish-Pakistani writer Anna Saleem, who writes about her father's depression and the toxic masculinity that informed the way some men reacted to it. The same narrow outlook, she argues, shapes the attitudes of a small group of Muslims today. "For instance, the radical Islamists and the wannabe YouTube scholars who serve as pick-up artists for young Muslim men..."

Another striking piece of writing comes from the journalist Saima Mir in a bracing essay on marriage and independence. At 25, Mir had been married and divorced twice. Her first husband, a Muslim doctor in Mississippi, was 11 years her senior; the couple had met only once before their wedding. Mir was 23 when she married her second husband, also a Muslim. The relationship took the form of a bond of servitude. "A few months in and I was cooking all the meals and cleaning the house, waiting on everyone hand and foot."

Mir's essay outlines some of the gruelling challenges faced by a minority of Muslim women who are expected to conduct themselves as both trophy wives and domestic slaves. "Honour is the strongest currency in South Asian families," she writes. "It is the bedrock on which friendships are built and marriages are arranged." Later, she adds: "There is a difference between guilt and shame. Guilt comes from recognising one's own mistake. Shame is heaped upon us by others." After her second divorce, Mir retrained as a journalist and joined the BBC; she has since remarried.

While these essays take a courageous and panoramic view of Muslims and Islamic attire, most of the writers agree that acceptance is best achieved by promoting diversity. This may provide a lesson to politicians and opinion writers, who should acknowledge that integration requires both host and immigrant to understand each other.

If Theresa May is serious about "global Britain", a post-Brexit political and social climate should moderate its obsession with how a minority of Muslim women dress and instead embrace the ethical and economic opportunities presented by the global sharia culture.

To order *It's Not About the Burqa* for £10.99 go to guardianbookshop.com or call 0330 333 6846

In brief by Alexander Larman

Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor

Anna Pasternak
William Collins, £20, pp368

Most biographical accounts of Wallis Simpson have painted her as "the American harlot", as she was known by the British public during her relationship with Edward VIII. Anna Pasternak's study of Wallis attempts to redress the balance and emphasises her intelligence, independence and unwillingness to ruin the life of the man she loved. This book does not replace Anne Sebba's *That Woman* as the definitive contemporary work about Wallis, but with such aggressive press coverage of Meghan Markle, it is useful to be reminded that perceived royal interlopers have always been treated harshly.

The King's Evil
Andrew Taylor

HarperCollins, £14.99, pp464

The third in the series of Andrew Taylor's crime novels set in the Restoration era could be the best yet. Taylor's main characters Cat Lovett and James Marwood find themselves caught up in a conspiracy that spans London's high and low life alike, as Cat is framed for a murder at Clarendon House and Marwood must prove her innocence. Taylor's description of a teeming, uncertain London is vivid and compelling.

Circe
Madeline Miller

Bloomsbury, £8.99, pp352

Madeline Miller's excellent *Circe* ties in with the current vogue for classical revisionism in that it looks at a famous incident from literature from the female perspective. In this novel, the episode from *The Odyssey* where Odysseus is stranded on Circe's island becomes a stirring account of feminine empowerment and hard-won agency. Yet she never forgets the reason these books have endured is because of the strength of the storytelling.

To order *Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson* for £17.60, *The King's Evil* for £13.99, or *Circe* for £7.91, go to guardianbookshop.com or call 0330 333 6846

Magic and sadness haunt Edward and Wallis's French party house

The mill owned by the exiled Duke and his wife is being sold for £5.6m, writes *Anna Pasternak*

News that the French country house of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Le Moulin de la Tuilerie – which Wallis Simpson called “our only real home” – is for sale for £5.6 million, fuels nostalgia.

The Windsors were exiled to France when Edward VIII abdicated, but longed to return to Britain to create their marital home. In contrast, the Duchess of Sussex, our more recent American divorcee turned royal wife, is happily nesting in Frogmore Cottage, near where Wallis lies in the historic royal burial ground, facing the lake.

How Wallis, who was infertile, would have adored to be awaiting the birth of her child – and for Frogmore to echo with the patter of tiny feet. She admitted that her “one continuing regret” was never knowing “the joy of having children of my own”. Instead, it was a succession of pugs that became the couple’s child substitutes.

Today the pugs’ headstones lie smashed up in the courtyard of The Mill (as it was known). This once glittering party house, where the Windsors played Canasta into the early hours with Maria Callas, Marlene Dietrich, Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton and Cecil Beaton, is a haunting reminder of their love and tragic fate. Its latest incarnation as a B&B – it has 26 acres and sleeps 36 guests – is now being sold by The Landmark Trust.

Tellingly, it was a lengthy 16 years after the abdication before the Duke finally bought a property in France, in 1952. Although Edward pined to return to his adored home, Fort Belvedere in Windsor Park, Tommy Lascelles, King George VI’s private secretary, said that his presence would be “a constant agony (I use the word advisedly) to the present King, which might have really serious consequences”.

When the Duke managed to persuade Rab Butler, the chancellor, to release £30,000 from his capital in England, which was blocked by currency control, to purchase an 18th-century mill outside Paris, it was a grudging acceptance of defeat. England would be his home no more.



Home from home: the Duke and Duchess of Windsor in the grounds of Le Moulin de la Tuilerie

THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

A gifted interior designer, Wallis was influenced by two design legends, Syrie Maugham, wife of novelist Somerset Maugham, and her good friend, Elsie de Wolfe. The purchase of The Mill gave Wallis a substantial project; a courtyard, outhouses and large barn were transformed into entertaining areas and guest cottages. One wall of the barn was covered



The Duke made an exact replica of the rock garden at Fort Belvedere

with a map of the Duke’s world travels when he was Prince of Wales, while Wallis’s decorator, Stéphane Boudin, created her *jeu d’esprit* in imposing letters on the wall of the sitting room: “I’m not the miller’s daughter, but I have been through the mill.”

This frescoed *trompe-l’œil* depicting a ribbon running through a mill wheel remains today. The Duke made an exact replica of the rock garden at Fort Belvedere, with alpine blooms

and water splashing from a small hill. I have stood in the rock garden at Belvedere, made from the stone that Edward had delivered from Yorkshire, staring wistfully at its uncompleted state. He was forced to abandon it when he abdicated.

In France he commissioned designer Russell Page to recreate a traditional English country garden. The head gardener, Edouard Kruch, was Alsatian, to whom the duke spoke in German. (Unlike Wallis, Edward never learnt nor spoke French).

The biographer James Pope-Hennessy spent a weekend at The Mill in 1957. “The Queen Mother at Clarence House is leading a lodging house existence compared to this,” he wrote.

A friend, Ruthie Burgess, who went to stay at The Mill last year, found it a poignant experience. “A sadness lingers in the air,” she told me. “You have such a sense of a couple who were trying to create a piece of England, and a home fit for a monarch in what is fundamentally quite a shabby house.”

“Wallis made it delightful and everywhere you see their initials, WE, entwined in the ironwork. You sense their love and the love that went into it and while you know that it was an amazing party house, you can’t help but feel sad about what it was and what it represented.”

Untitled; The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor by Anna Pasternak is published by William Collins, £20

3 March 2019

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Above, from left: Wallis at her Paris home in 1950; with the former King Edward VIII on their wedding day in 1937

The outsiders

Vilified as the woman who “stole” our king, a new book puts Wallis Simpson in a new light and draws startling parallels with Meghan Words by Rachel Carlyle

When Prince Harry announced he was to marry a divorced American, Anna Pasternak felt an overwhelming sense of injustice on behalf of another divorcée who captured a prince's heart – Wallis Simpson.

While 80 years and a tidal wave of social change separate the weddings of the two American women, there are some surprising similarities. Both were 34 when they met their princes, both are adored children of strong, single mothers, both have a pared-down style and an electric presence and

both are evidently worshipped by their Royal partners.

But while Meghan Markle has been welcomed into the Royal fold, Wallis Simpson was cast as a wicked witch whose scheming brought about Edward VIII's abdication – a narrative many of us still believe today, says Anna.

The author has spent two years talking to Wallis's friends and Royal insiders for her new book, *Untitled*, which aims to reverse public opinion of the duchess.

She says, “I'm thrilled times have moved on and Harry could marry the woman he loved but I felt a burning sense of injustice



Above: The Queen and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, watch an RAF flypast from the balcony of Buckingham Palace. Below: The Queen with Wallis Simpson after the funeral of the Duke of Windsor in 1972



Prince Harry and Meghan attend a state dinner in Tonga



PHOTO: PRESS / BARON / RBO / GETTY IMAGES

that Meghan was going to get the HRH title and the trappings Edward so desperately wanted for Wallis."

And there are big lessons to be learned from Wallis's treatment at the hands of the Royal Family, claims Anna. They effectively sent Wallis and Edward into exile for life following the abdication in 1936 because their high public profiles were seen as a threat to the new king, Edward's younger brother, George.

"Like Wallis, Meghan is a whip-smart, savvy woman but she needs to look out," warns Anna. "If she becomes the star of the show she will be slapped down, no question, and that's happening already. The backlash against her has already started."

Anna believes palace courtiers are undermining Meghan because she and Harry are in danger of eclipsing William and Kate.

"To the palace, the whole goal is survival of the monarchy, so no individual can be bigger than the Crown unless they're the king or the heir. The whole MO of everyone in the Royal Family is to support the monarch and heir.

"That's why I genuinely worry for Meghan and Harry," she adds. "I think he's quite like his great-great-uncle Edward in that he's very popular and people warm to him. He's the people's prince, as Edward was the people's king. I fear that if Meghan and Harry's star rises too high that will be perceived by the courtiers - who



The Duke and Duchess of Windsor with their dog Trooper aboard the passenger liner United States in 1953



The couple pictured in the 1960s



Edward and Wallis in 1940 with friend Charles Bethell

Princess Diana called the men in grey – as a threat to the heir.”

Her advice to Meghan would be to stay quiet and remain under the radar. “I’d say to her recognise that you cannot behave like a Hollywood celebrity as a member of the Royal Family. She cannot set the agenda, she has to toe the line and support the monarch and heir. I don’t think she realises that yet. Meghan is like a grenade that’s been thrown into this very archaic system and there are explosions already going on, which I think will continue.

“You think that marrying into the Royal Family is a fairy tale, but it’s actually a gilded cage and you are subject to some pretty devastating scrutiny,” she adds. “Wallis had exactly the same. She had hate mail from all over the world. It was going on in 1936, too.”

Anna has been fascinated by Wallis’s story from the age of 11 when she saw the TV series *Edward & Mrs Simpson*.

Born Bessie Wallis Warfield in 1896 to a Southern family, her father died when Wallis was a baby and she and her mother became “more like sisters”. From an early age she realised she was too angular and severe looking to be considered beautiful by the standards of the time and she funnelled her energies into being quick-witted, funny and astute – qualities that later so annoyed the British establishment.

After a disastrous first marriage to a violent drunk, she wed shipping executive Ernest Simpson and moved to London where she met Edward, Prince of Wales, through his married mistress Thelma Furness. She and Ernest became regular visitors to Fort Belvedere, the prince’s house in Windsor Great Park.

Edward, to the despair of courtiers and his parents, didn’t seem to be king material. He preferred “vulgar” American café society to staid aristocratic company, he loved drinking, partying and daring outfits and was seen as childish, petulant and self-obsessed (he once dismissed designs for a new stamp that showed him from his right side,

rather than the more flattering left). He didn’t seem in a hurry to find a bride, either. Instead, he had a habit of taking mistresses who were married, then dropping them.

Which is what Wallis assumed would eventually happen to her, says Anna. Instead, Edward became obsessed with her. He loved her forthrightness and sharp tongue and said she was “witty and crackling with new ideas.” He sent her endless gifts, including jewellery, photographs of himself and a cairn terrier called Slipper. Wallis enjoyed the attention and lifestyle and grew to love him, but she also thought him childish and selfish. She and Ernest privately called him Peter Pan.

It is perhaps the biggest myth of all that Wallis was scheming to marry Edward and become queen, claims Anna. In fact, he trapped her into marriage through his suffocating neediness. “She realised it was too late to leave because he was so needy and demanding. She tried desperately to leave more than once and wrote to him saying, *please release me and let me go back to Ernest. It will be painful but ‘I am better with him than with you’*. But he refused. He was determined to have her by his side and that’s where he was selfish to his core.”

When his father, George V, died in January 1936 and Edward took the throne, he absolutely refused to let Wallis go and she wrote that she felt like an animal in a trap.

Although the affair was well known about within the couple’s social circle, British newspapers had remained silent about it. “The trouble is, when the news finally broke that their beloved new king was thinking of abdicating for this strange-looking American divorcée, of course everyone was shocked,” says Anna. “The narrative never really changed that this woman took away our king. But she never wanted to marry him or be queen.”

Anna says another myth about Wallis is that of a cold, hard and ruthless woman. While carrying out her research, she spoke to many friends of the Duchess who painted a very different picture. “Because of her very angular,



Clockwise, from above left: Wallis Simpson pictured in Berlin in the late 1930s; Meghan attends last year's Royal Variety Performance at the London Palladium; Wallis and Edward seen in the Bahamas about 1942; Meghan and Prince Harry at a youth centre in Peacehaven, Sussex

brittle appearance, people thought she was cold, but the greatest revelation for me was how soft and vulnerable she was," says Anna. "Her girlfriends all adored her and were horrified by what she went through."

"Yes, she was flawed. But aren't we all? People assumed she was an arch manipulator who schemed to get her man, whereas it was the other way round. Edward was obsessed with her and did everything to get her."

After the abdication on December 11, 1936, and the couple's quiet wedding a few months later in a borrowed castle in France, they lived as exiles and Wallis devoted the rest of her life to making Edward happy. Now known as the Duke of Windsor,

Edward always assumed he would eventually return to Britain with his wife, but courtiers and Queen Elizabeth, later the Queen Mother, were against it in case the couple eclipsed King George VI.

"Edward always assumed he would get Wallis the HRH title she had been denied and they would return to his beloved Fort Belvedere. The most piercing illustration of that is when Slipper died he had the dog's body sent back to be buried in the garden," says Anna.

"I believe if they'd said to him if you abdicate you will be exiled and never allowed back into Britain he wouldn't have done it. But I don't think he ever regretted marrying Wallis because he genuinely loved her to his dying breath. At the end

of his life, his first question on waking was always, 'Is the Duchess awake?' If she'd gone out to the hairdressers he'd wander around, agitated, until she got back."

Edward died in 1972, but Wallis lived on, near Paris and increasingly frail, until 1986. She is interred alongside Edward in the burial ground at Frogmore in Windsor, albeit apart from the other Royal graves and not far from Meghan and Harry's new house, Frogmore Cottage.

Anna says, "Wallis commented that no one was ever likely to place flowers on her grave, which I found tremendously sad, although I've since discovered from talking to Sarah [Ferguson] that she does sometimes go there and sit at the grave and

pay her respects. She feels a real understanding of what it's like to be exiled from the Royal Family."

Anna took her own flowers to the Duchess's grave after finishing her book, "When I knelt before her I made a vow that I was going to do everything in my power to reverse the narrative about her."

"In a sense, Meghan has rejuvenated the spirit of Wallis and I just hope people will be open to the view of her as a kind, witty, loyal and dignified person who unfairly became the most vilified woman in the world." ❧

Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess Of Windsor (£20, Harper Collins) by Anna Pasternak is out on Thursday. See Express Bookshop on page 77.

THIS PICTURE & BELOW: The Marbella Club played host to the Duke and Duchess of Windsor
INSET: The Duke and Duchess with Charles Beatty, of the Bahamian Club, who introduced them to Nassau society, 1940



WALLIS REVISITED

A chance trip to The Marbella Club in Spain unveiled a whole new side to **Anna Pasternak's** subject for her next book, the Duchess of Windsor



It was the most wonderful synchronicity. I was in the middle of researching a book about Wallis Simpson and desperately needed a restorative break. A friend suggested that I visit the Marbella Club, which I had assumed was a dated outpost of gin-soaked roués and WAGs tottering around the pool in bikinis and wedges. I couldn't have been more wrong. The current incarnation of this property, bought in 1946 by Bavarian aristocrat Prince Alfonso Hohenlohe-Langenburg, is a restorative Mediterranean

hangout with a stylish spa. An Andalusian Bamford. I was walking to dinner one evening, through a candlelit courtyard overhung with bougainvillea and scented jasmine, when I saw an exhibition of photographs of guests through the decades. To my surprise there was a photograph of the Duchess of Windsor, dining in 1964 alongside glamorous

Spanish society figures the Marquesa de Toreno and the Duke of Arion. Count Rudolph Von Schönburg, who ran the club with his cousin, Prince Alfonso, is standing behind them in the photograph. Imagine my delight when two days later, this charming octogenarian invited me to lunch and talked exclusively about the Windsors, with whom he and his wife, Princess Maria Luisa of Prussia, became great friends.

Count Rudi, as he is affectionately known, and I sat at the legendary beach club restaurant eating freshly grilled gambas, just as the Windsors had done 60 years earlier. In 1954, Prince Alfonso, converted his farmhouse into a 20-room guest house, then turned this former olive grove into an exclusive playground for the crowned heads of Europe, Middle Eastern potentates, tycoons like Aristotle Onassis and Hollywood stars such as Grace Kelly, Audrey Hepburn and Cary Grant. The Windsors came three times in the early sixties. With no entourage, they brought a valet and maid and booked a bungalow as paying guests.

Through my research into Wallis Simpson, I discovered that she was greatly misunderstood. The common perception is that she was a cold, sinister schemer desperate to be Queen of England who almost derailed the monarchy when Edward VIII abdicated in 1936 to marry her. Talking to her friends, I discovered that the opposite was true. Wallis was a warm, loyal, intelligent woman written off by cunning, influential establishment men seeking to diminish her and to destroy her reputation. They wanted Edward off the throne, and Wallis became the ideal scapegoat.

Count Rudi unequivocally confirmed this: 'I have always considered her position in history factually incorrect and very unfair,' he said of Wallis. 'I was flabbergasted when I first met her. She was so much nicer than we had been led to believe. The story of their marriage was so shocking and we were told that she was this loud, twice-divorced American, yet she was very polite, well-educated, dignified and charming. She always looked amazing with incredible jewellery but never overdid it. I liked her very much.'

One of the reasons that the Duke of Windsor loved the Marbella Club – his daily ritual was to pick a fresh lime to squeeze into his dry martini at exactly seven o'clock – was because here they honoured Wallis. Denied the coveted HRH in England, at the Marbella Club they referred to her as Your Royal Highness or 'Señora Duquesa' because 'it



Wallis dines at the Marbella Club in 1964 with Count Rudolph Graf von Schönburg (standing), the Marquesa de Toreno and the Duke of Arion



made the Duke so happy'. I found it incredibly touching that the Windsors always had the same discreet corner table in the restaurant for dinner. When they got up to leave, every single Englishman in the restaurant stood up and bowed to the Duke, then to the Duchess. This was 30 years after the abdication. 'There was still a huge respect for him,' explained Count Rudi. 'And those who respected his decision to marry Wallis were deferential to her. The Duchess was immediately accepted here, whereas in other places, because of her husband's relations, this was not the case.'

Edward, who was related to Princess Maria Luisa through Queen Victoria, loved to sit and speak German with her for hours. Count Rudi and Princess Maria Luisa were frequently invited to stay with the Windsors in Paris in the seventies. 'It was elegant and formal but not stiff,' Count Rudi recalled. 'Wallis was a wonderful hostess and the table was beautiful. She was good conversationally but

we never discussed politics. Yet the reason that the couple were in exile was all political. The government had such influence over the royal family, which people forget.' I asked Count Rudi if the Windsors were truly in love. 'In over 50 years of running a hotel, I have seen thousands of couples together,' he said, 'I have seldom seen a couple as integrated as they were. They had a deep confidence in each other and mutual respect. It was an extraordinary love.' ■

Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor by Anna Pasternak is published by William Collins, £20



WALLIS SIMPSON

The DUCHESS of DERISION

The author of books about maligned famous women risks another backlash with her latest on – as the Queen Mother put it – “the lowest of the low”. by DIANA WICHTEL

What price love? Anna Pasternak, journalist and author, was possibly born to the task of counting the cost. She's a great-niece of Boris Pasternak,

says of Hewitt. “Then he approached me and said that Andrew Morton was doing a second book on Diana. She knew that their affair was coming out and she wanted it sympathetically told as a love story.”

The price of a sympathetically told love story: “Everyone denounced it as Mills & Boon because that was the easiest way to diminish me and the story. People thought I'd made it up.” Well, you couldn't, really, could you?

The book sold like the scandalous royal bodice-ripper it was, and Pasternak got the last laugh. “Eighteen months later, when Diana admitted in her *Panorama* interview that the affair was true, suddenly I went from being the villain to being celebrated. At the 20th anniversary of her death, even her sons were saying exactly what I had said 20 years earlier. I could have carved out a career being on the breakfast sofas every morning talking about royal things.”

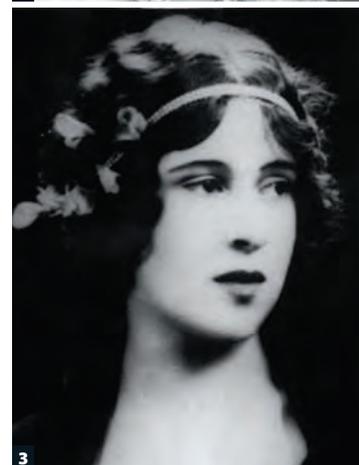
writer of that three-hanky Russian classic of doomed love, *Doctor Zhivago*.

Pasternak was 26 when she tackled a less-heroic love saga, Princess Diana's affair with James Hewitt, in her 1994 book, *Princess in Love*. “Her need was too much, she was starting to flail. So, with the ease of a dancer performing a well-worn routine, she stood up, walked across to him and slipped sideways on to his lap,” Pasternak wrote, in a story that slid into lurid territory as effortlessly as a princess dropping into the lap of an unsuitable commoner. “I know my own father considered it was rather tabloid and beneath me,” she says, sighing, from her home in the UK.

It was certainly a scoop. “I met him socially,” she



“Because of Me Too and the current political climate in not silencing women's voices, I hope that we will be more open to hearing the truth about Wallis.”



GETTY IMAGES



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1. Wallis Simpson, c1920. 2. A young Edward, Prince of Wales. 3. The prince's lover, Thelma Furness, who introduced him to Simpson, c1920. 4. King Edward VIII in 1936. 5. Edward and Wallis, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, on their wedding day in 1937. 6. The duchess in 1937. 7. The duke and duchess on a visit to Nazi Germany in 1937. 8. Author Anna Pasternak, the great-niece of Boris Pasternak, who wrote the Russian classic *Doctor Zhivago*.



WALLIS SIMPSON

Pasternak talks a mile a minute in beautifully modulated vowels, with an admirably unapologetic attitude. But her first book was clearly a punishing experience. The next, *Lara: The Untold Love Story and the Inspiration for Doctor Zhivago*, about Olga Ivinskaya, lover of her great-uncle Boris, was a long time in the making. "It took me 20 years to write *Lara* because I was so terrified of the backlash. I thought, 'If your name's Pasternak and you're writing about Boris Pasternak, god, it better be good.'" Luckily it was. "I was absolutely steeled to be kind of flayed alive and quite the reverse happened. I got this critical acclaim."

For Ivinskaya, the price of love was heavy. *Doctor Zhivago*, set against the backdrop of the Russian Revolution, was considered anti-Soviet. Pasternak's muse was imprisoned, miscarried her lover's child and spent years in the Gulag. "She was subjected to interrogation about the book that Boris was writing and not once does she betray him," Pasternak says.

Her loyalty was not repaid. "My family denounced her as this traitor." Pasternak's grandmother never sullied her lips with Olga's name. "She was so contemptuous of this temptress who she felt had dragged Boris off the moral path."

A TEMPTRESS AND WORSE

Pasternak's new book takes on another woman derided as a temptress and worse, but who is a less immediately sympathetic proposition: Wallis Simpson. We know the story. Glamorous, popular King Edward VIII abdicates the throne in 1936 to run off with a twice-married American. The rest is history, books, movies and *The Crown*. "The common perception is that she was a ruthless, cold, ambitious bitch," observed Pasternak in *Tatler*. The couple



The Duke and Duchess of York and their daughters Margaret and Elizabeth, bending, attending celebrations at St Paul's Cathedral in 1935 marking the silver jubilee of King George V.

go on to live a hollow hedonistic life in exile. And as viewers of *The Crown* were reminded, there was that bit of bother with the Nazis.

Why Wallis, why now? "I decided I wanted to spend the rest of my career rehabilitating women whom history has

"The conspiracy of silence was even assisted by newsagents who literally cut out revelations from foreign journals. Wasn't that incredible?"

treated badly, and obviously there was no woman in the royal family who I think has been treated more appallingly than Wallis."

That's saying something when you consider the slings and arrows suffered by Sarah Ferguson, Diana Spencer, Camilla Parker Bowles, Kate Middleton – and now Meghan Markle. "There was that line

Wallis says, 'Every day, my life goes to pieces when my breakfast tray arrives', because of the amount of hate mail that was sent to her. The means of the delivery of the message has changed, but as with Meghan Markle, once you become a member of the royal family, you don't have a voice to speak back."

The gossips have been claiming that Prince William and Prince Harry have been driven apart, casting Markle in the Yoko Ono role. As Pasternak notes in *Tatler*, "Edward VIII and his brother, Bertie, once close, fell out due to the enmity between their wives."

Thus history, in this case fairly farcical to begin with, repeats. The Queen Mother

became Queen through the abdication, but "that woman" and "the lowest of the low" were how she referred to Wallis. "She was seen as the nation's favourite granny in her later years, a pudgy woman in her chiffon dresses, soft and marshmallow, and she was utterly ruthless," muses Pasternak. "This culture of immense judgment from women to other women is part of what I'm trying to debunk."

These days, a divorced, retired American actress can be styled Her Royal Highness. Wallis never got her HRH and claimed not to care, but Pasternak is almost as aggrieved about that as the Duke of Windsor was. Her book is titled, pointedly, *Untitled*. It's defiantly dedicated to "Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Windsor".

Pasternak's publishers weren't impressed. "In the first draft, it wasn't in. I had to say if there was any flak, I took full responsibility. And then they put the HRH in quotation marks, I just noticed, in the American edition. It's utterly incensing."

THE NAZI CONNECTION

She puts one of the Duke of Windsor's



more deplorable episodes down to this slighting of Wallis. In 1937, Edward took Wallis to Germany, where they hung out with Hitler. By some accounts, Edward gave the Führer full Nazi salutes. As an episode of the BBC series *The Crown* showed, papers were uncovered outlining a plan by Nazi officials to kidnap the Duke and reinstall him as a puppet king after an invasion of Britain.

Was he a Nazi sympathiser? "I watched the Pathé newsreels. He's waving to the crowd, but you can take one frame and it looks like a Nazi salute." She consulted historians of the period. "There's no evidence that they were Nazi sympathisers and certainly there is no complete evidence for this rubbish that Wallis had this affair

Pasternak's story slid into lurid territory as effortlessly as a princess dropping into the lap of an unsuitable commoner.

with [high-ranking Nazi Joachim] von Ribbentrop."

Oh dear. On that 1937 trip, Wallis was treated like, well, an HRH. "When you see Edward's woundedness from his family and how desperate he was to show Wallis that this was the life she was entitled to as his wife, it was like he came to it from this bizarre place of hurt and made a very foolish decision."

And yet the couple were close friends of Diana Mosley, one of the Mitford sisters, wife of British fascist leader Oswald Mosley and a lifelong remorseless Hitler fan. And there's evidence that even after World War II, Edward blamed Churchill and the Jews for it.

"Yes, I think he did say some ill-advised things, but I think they were probably taken out of context. In his autobiography, he admits that Hitler wasn't a good man and that it was ill-advised to go on that trip," Pasternak says. "And remember, Edward was not academically bright or astute. In one sense, he was modern in some ways, but he was incredibly stupid in others. I'm sure after a few drinks he could have said some very stupid and offensive things."

They were so privileged, so epically useless. If they had some tough times, it's



1. Diana, Princess of Wales, with Prince Harry in 1986. 2. Her former lover, James Hewitt. 3. The Prince and Princess of Wales in Canada in 1991. 4. Meghan Markle.

hard not to think, well, boo-hoo. "Yeah, exactly," says Pasternak. "They did lead this profligate, rather – in the end – soulless, empty existence. But I firmly believe that if – when he said he was going to abdicate – he had been sat down and told, 'Right, you will never be allowed to live in England again. You will never have royal status in England. Neither will your wife. And you will never be allowed to go back to the home you loved so much, Fort Belvedere,' he would have made a different decision."

A "GENTLEMAN'S AGREEMENT"

Untitled is a reminder of just how scandalous the King's abdication for "the woman I love" was. A "gentleman's agreement" meant the press wouldn't cover Mrs Simpson's "friendship" with the King. "The conspiracy of silence was even assisted by newsgagents who literally cut out revelations from foreign journals," Pasternak writes. "Wasn't that incredible?" she says.

"When Princess Margaret was going out with Captain Peter Townsend, exactly the same thing happened. There was a media

blackout which came from the palace until they couldn't contain it any longer."

The blackout only served to make news of the abdication more shocking. "The people adored him and then suddenly it was, 'I'm leaving for this strange-looking divorced woman'."

The strange-looking divorced woman hasn't hitherto elicited a lot of support. As Pasternak records, when Wallis biographer Anne Sebba was asked about her view of her subject, she replied, "What's to like?"

Even the sympathetic *Untitled* reads like a sort of horror story. Wallis is first flattered, then plagued with doubt as Edward's "narcissistic neediness" nudges her towards divorce and a marriage.

"She never wanted to be queen," Pasternak says. "She didn't actually even want to marry Edward and she certainly didn't want him to abdicate. She was perceptive enough to realise that she would be blamed in perpetuity."

As Yuri Zhivago says to Lara in *Doctor Zhivago*, "I don't think I could love you so much if you had nothing to complain of and nothing to regret." For Edward,



■ WALLIS SIMPSON

the forces ranked against them fuelled his obsession. "A boy is holding a girl very tight in his arms tonight ..." he wrote to Wallis. "A girl knows that not anybody or anything can separate WE ..."

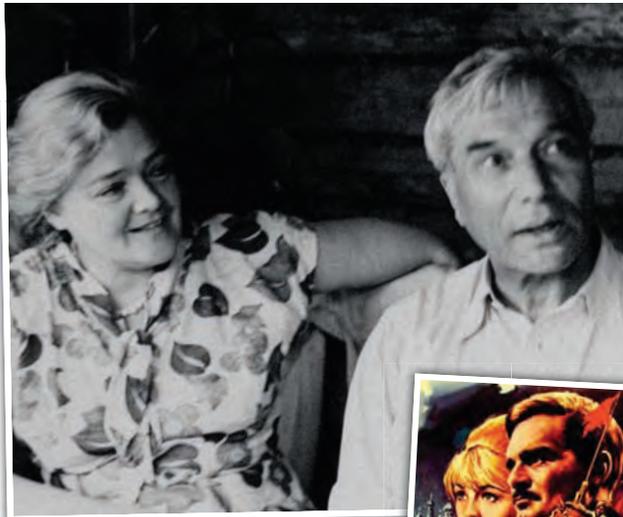
The book paints a vivid portrait of a woman rendered powerless. "... due to the letters [the hate mail] I shan't live very long," she wrote to her ex-husband, Ernest Simpson, "and in fact am a prisoner. Four detectives."

You can see why Pasternak, who endured flak after *Princess in Love*, might empathise. "When the hate mail started coming and she realised what her fate was going to be, she developed this inner strength – that had to be enough against the backdrop of universal vilification. That takes real emotional intelligence and real dignity and tremendous courage."

Wallis is hardly a feminist icon, but the story has relevance in a time when women still struggle to be heard and remain more harshly judged for breaking ranks. "There is still a very entrenched view in this country, especially among the Establishment, that Wallis was this dreadful woman who denied the country their popular King," Pasternak says. "Because of Me Too and the current political climate in not silencing women's voices, I hope that we will be more open to hearing the truth about Wallis and the old prejudice, which is so almost Dickensian and out of date, will be allowed to fall away."

REALITY BITES

Pasternak projects a certain steely resolve but has also worn her heart on her romantic sleeve. She has documented her own quest for love. "I have," she says brightly. Sample 2010 *Daily Mail* column: "Can therapy find me love? Divorced, single mother Anna Pasternak tries one last throw of the dice." In this she describes a "particularly gruelling decade": "I got married, got divorced, met a divorced American, got into a relationship with him, got pregnant, had an abortion as he was so vehemently against me having the child, later met a younger man, had



Olga Ivinskaya and her lover, Boris Pasternak, c1957; the poster for the 1965 film of his book.

embattled dignity in her subject. Too bad Wallis can't know how fiercely she's been championed after all these years.

Pasternak, a woman unafraid to admit to having smudged herself with sage to enhance her relationship aura, is not having that. "I like to think that she *does* know in some sort of karmic or spiritual way," she says. Indeed, *Untitled* ends with the author visiting the



a planned baby with him and was left a single mother when my daughter was two and I was 38."

Goodness. Unlike Diana and Wallis, things worked out for Pasternak. See a story in the *Telegraph* titled, wonderfully, "I met my Wizard in a yurt ... sobbing my heart out." She has described her meeting with yurt-bound therapist

Boris Pasternak's muse was imprisoned, miscarried her lover's child and spent years in the Gulag.

Andrew Wallis. "You are a shallow, neurotic, materialistic, posh Russian bitch," he reportedly told her. It was all on. He answered the phone when I called Pasternak, so a happy ending.

EMBATTLED DIGNITY

In her mission to redeem other unhappy women, Pasternak can claim some success. Her father had shared his family's poor opinion of Olga Ivinskaya. He was reading *Lara* when he and his daughter were flying to Milan together to see the original manuscript of *Doctor Zhivago*. "He finished the book," recalls Pasternak, "and he said, 'Boris would be very proud.'"

Nice. Wallis Simpson may prove a harder ask. Pasternak's fascinatingly detailed, always entertaining, sometimes moving book does reveal a certain

Duchess' grave on the Frogmore Estate at Windsor, now home, spookily, to that other American divorcée, Meghan Markle, and Prince Harry.

Pasternak took flowers, knelt at the grave. "I expected to feel this tremendous sadness," she says. "As I placed the bouquet on her grave, I felt this rush of happiness mixed with relief come up my body. It was quite extraordinary."

That other-worldly experience didn't make the final cut in *Untitled*. "My editor said, 'You cannot say that. Your book is so factually correct and then you go into this esoteric New-Age vibe that you felt Wallis' pleasure.' I'm sorry, but that is the truth of what I felt." Wallis, Duchess of Windsor, honorary HRH, grateful from beyond the grave for some good PR at last – fair enough.

And the case of Camilla, another reviled Duchess, gives Pasternak hope. "Yes, there are the Diana fans who are still very against Camilla, but on the whole [the palace has] absolutely reversed her public image with a very strategic and careful campaign. I want the same to be true for Wallis."

You can only wish her good luck with that. ■

UNTITLED: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor, by Anna Pasternak, (HarperCollins, \$35)

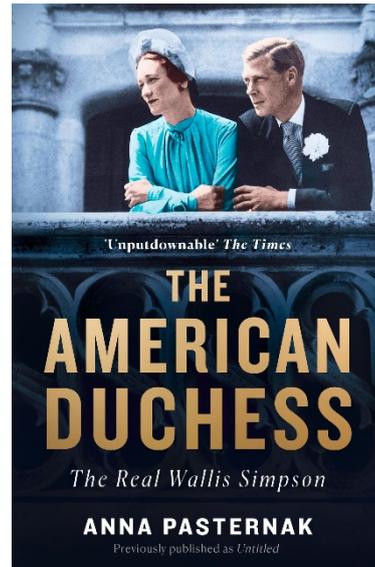
**UPDATED WITH STARTLING NEW TESTIMONY FROM THE
WINDSORS PRIVATE SECRETARY, JOHANNA SCHUTZ**

THE AMERICAN DUCHESS

The Real Wallis Simpson

ANNA PASTERNAK

Thursday 6th February
£9.99



Life has always been difficult for women marrying into England's royal family.

With the Duke and Duchess of Sussex stepping down from royal life, never has the abdication saga of the Windsors been a more poignant echo of history repeating itself.

A divorced American woman, Wallis Simpson was not welcomed by 1930s Britain when she entered a relationship with King Edward VIII. Rather, she became one of the most vilified women of the twentieth century – the opposition against her so fierce that in order to marry the woman he loved, Edward was forced to surrender his throne. He didn't pause to consider for a moment that she, not him, would be blamed for his history altering decision.

Hated by the male-run establishment and the royal family for disgracing the throne, Wallis has been cemented in history as one of the most destructive forces against the British Monarchy. But was she really a conniving social climber? Or simply the love of Edward's life?

In this intimate retelling of their love story, Anna Pasternak looks at how twisted gossip and public distrust has always haunted women who dare to fall for an English Royal. From Edward and Wallis's first meeting, through their whirlwind courtship to the drama of the abdication and their final listless years in exile, Pasternak - using fresh insider accounts - looks deep into the life and legacy of one of the most misjudged characters in British royal history.

Finally, Wallis has been given her authentic voice.



Anna Pasternak is a writer and member of the Pasternak family: her great-grandfather was Leonid, the impressionist painter and her great-uncle was Boris, the Nobel prize winning novelist. She was educated at Christ Church, Oxford and is the author of a number of books, including the best-selling *Princess in Love* and most recently *Lara*, the critically acclaimed biography of Boris Pasternak's lover and muse, Olga Ivinskaya.

PRAISE FOR THE HARDBACK

'Unputdownable' *The Times*

'A sympathetic biography' *Observer*

'Fascinating and refreshing' Penny Junor, Royal Biographer

'The best book about the Windsors for decades' Petronella Wyatt

**Anna is available for interview and to write features.
For media enquiries and further information please contact
Katherine Patrick, Publicity Director, William Collins
katherine.patrick@harpercollins.co.uk / 0208 307 4802**

Fit for a KING?

Anna Pasternak tells Alice Cairns why Wallis Simpson deserves a second look



In 1936, Edward VIII renounced the crown for the woman he loved – in so doing, changing the course of British history. 83 years later, Wallis Simpson is still viewed by some as a calculating social climber, a sophisticated temptress and a Nazi sympathiser – even as a hermaphrodite. But has history treated her unfairly? Ahead of her appearance at Henley Literary Festival, Anna Pasternak tells Alice Cairns about her new, sympathetic biography - *Untitled: The Real Wallis Simpson, Duchess of Windsor*.

Why Wallis Simpson?

I've decided that I want to spend my career rehabilitating the women that history has treated badly. One of the many myths about Wallis Simpson is that she pushed for the abdication. Nothing could be further from the truth. She is historically written off as the villain of the piece when she is clearly the victim.

When I started to approach people who knew Wallis, I expected doors to slam in my face. In fact, what I heard again and again was "I am only going to speak to you if you're going to be positive." I was shocked!

Why are women so often misremembered and maligned by history?

The simple answer is that most of the history books have been written by men. Academics on the whole are only interested in facts: the cold, raw details. I'm not an academic, and I don't like being described as a historian. What I'm interested in is emotion, colour and detail, because that's what brings the past alive. It's so easy to write off female figures in history without taking the time to unpick their psychological armour and discover their vulnerabilities.

When you think of Wallis Simpson, you think of the severe hair and the immaculate dress sense. But when you look at photos of her before she

met Edward, she has a softer, more traditionally feminine style. As her relationship with Edward became more complicated, she developed this severe way of dressing, and had her hair knitted in that strange hairstyle, almost as a defence mechanism, because she felt so mutilated by a world that reviled her.

What drew Edward to Wallis?

She was incredibly honest with him, witty, sharp and funny – a breath of fresh air when compared to fawning British beauties. Nowadays, we tend to think of her as austere, cold, and rather masculine. In fact, she was a nurturing friend, a wonderful hostess and a whizz at interior design. She desperately wanted to be a mother, but she and Edward were both infertile; that shared sadness drew them together. Then after the abdication it was very much them against the rest of the world.

Did your opinion of Edward change?

My view of him became more complicated. I found him weak and needy, but in other ways I also found him passionate and courageous for sticking to the woman he loved. He's a complex character.

Do you think comparisons between the Duchess of Sussex and Wallis Simpson are fair?

They are both modern, well-educated American women who've entered an ancient British institution. But I think Wallis was a lot more dignified than

Meghan is proving to be at the moment. Wallis contained her agonies with laudable strength, whereas Meghan lets her displeasure be known. You don't last the course in the royal family by doing that.

Has the book proved controversial?

There has been backlash, of course. I have been astonished by the way that a certain generation of people – lets say, people in their 70s and 80s – are totally unwilling to accept another view. They're dogged in their insistence that this woman must be the wicked witch of the piece.

I always rather naively thought that history was objective, but it's not! My research shows that earlier historians wanted certain things – for example, more

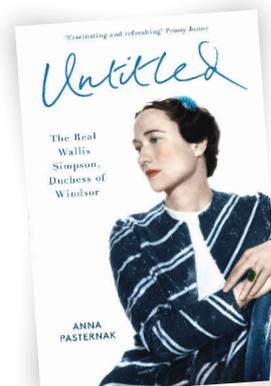
access to the royal family - so they toed the line set by the Queen Mother, who hated Wallis. It takes a bit of courage to say "no, you've all been following this path because it suits you, but it isn't the truth."

Did the book have a personal meaning for you?

When I finished the book, I went to Frogmore House and put flowers on Wallis's grave. When she was alive, she doubted that anyone would leave flowers for her, because she had no relatives, and she knew that none of her friends would have access to Frogmore. So it was a real pilgrimage for me, and as I knelt before her grave I made her the pledge that I was going to do everything in my power to reverse and transform the narrative around her.

When I finished the book I experienced a kind of postnatal depression. I missed Wallis! I would have loved to have been a friend of hers; I think she'd have made a super girlfriend. It makes me happy to think that with every book I sell, another person can look at Wallis differently. I feel delighted about that.

“Most of the history books have been written by men”



■ Anna Pasternak is the New York Times bestselling author of *Princess in Love* and *Lara*. She's also the great niece of Boris Pasternak, author of *Doctor Zhivago*. She'll be discussing *Untitled* at Henley Literary Festival on 28 September. Henleyliteraryfestival.co.uk

The Windsors' fate is a cautionary tale of lives unfulfilled

Commentary



By Anna Pasternak

Harry's hot-headed display of petulance seems familiar – he should learn from a bygone royal crisis

Prince Harry may not be king, but the news that he and the Duchess of Sussex want to step down as senior royals has created a bitter echo of Edward VIII's abdication in 1936 to marry American divorcee, Wallis Simpson – a seismic blow that left the House of Windsor open-mouthed and reeling.

That the Sussexes want to leave the monarchical strictures of the Firm to create a life in semi-exile – living between the UK and North America – bears many of the hallmarks of that saga more than 80 years ago.

A prince rejects his family for the love of his American wife and leaves the country with her. Two brothers, once united, are torn apart due to their conflicting spousal loyalties. Just as Edward and his brother Bertie – failsafe brothers-in-arms growing up – fell out over the former's decision to put his wife before his country, there is now a rift of enmity between William and Harry, highlighting their different family loyalties.

Like Harry, an adored young prince whom we all took to our hearts, the dashing Prince of Wales had the status of a movie star in the 1920s. If Diana, Princess of Wales, was the People's Princess, worshipped by the masses, Edward was the People's Prince.

“He was a golden-haired, blue-eyed, debonair Prince Charming, the most famous celebrity in the world, who seemed a Raphael angel grown up,” said society hostess Elsa Maxwell in 1920. Fashion editor Diana Vreeland agreed: “He was the Golden Prince.” Men were equally beguiled. Senior Palace courtier Alan Lascelles, later a fierce critic of the former king, gushed in 1921 that the heir to the throne was “the most attractive man I ever met”.

When news of Edward's affair with Mrs Simpson – two years his junior, with two living husbands – broke from under a media blackout in 1936, the country felt betrayed and abandoned. It seemed unfathomable, when the Prince of Wales could have had any beauty he desired, that he was smitten with Wallis, an unconventional looking American. When he gave up “the greatest throne in history”, as Churchill called it, she immediately became the scapegoat.

The well-worn view is that Wallis alone was responsible for triggering the constitutional crisis that almost brought down the British monarchy. Probably the biggest lie in the fable of the abdication is that she lured Edward from his destiny: her detractors claim that if she had never divorced her husband, Ernest Simpson, the abdication would not have occurred.

Yet the truth is she had no intention of divorcing Ernest. It was Edward, then king, who forced her into this untenable position. In the name of his needy love, Wallis paid the ultimate price – entrapment by a childish narcissist who threw the largest tantrum in history when he could not have the two things he wanted most in the world; her and the Crown.

Although Harry was never likely to ascend to the throne, this hot-headed stamp of petulance feels familiar. Apparently aggrieved by the recent photograph of the Queen, with her



heirs – Princes Charles, William and George – he felt sidelined. His rift with William is due to the fact that Harry does not feel that Meghan was sufficiently celebrated and welcomed into the royal fold. Yet who could blame William for his concerns, gently urging his brother to exercise caution? After all, look where we are now.

Decades earlier, Edward was aghast and hurt that his family would not even receive his adored Wallis. The late Queen Mother, then Elizabeth, Duchess of York, was furious that Edward's abdication might force her highly strung and physically weak husband, Bertie, on to the throne, and referred to Wallis as "that woman" and "the lowest of the low", ever after.

On Dec 11, after Edward dined with his family at Royal Lodge, he drove to his old rooms in Windsor Castle, where his unforgettable abdication speech was broadcast to the nation at 10pm. In his inimitable voice, he said calmly and movingly: "You must believe me when I tell you that I have found it impossible to carry the heavy burden of responsibility and to discharge my duties as king, as I wish to do, without the help and support of the woman I love."

Unlike Meghan and Harry's wedding, which the entire Royal family attended at Windsor Castle, he and Wallis married to no fanfare, only public fury. A tight, tense affair in a French chateau, only seven British guests were present at the wedding. The event wasn't even recorded in the Court Circular; a deliberate snub to the new Duke and Duchess of Windsor. The first American Duchess was denied use of HRH and the couple were banished into exile.

The problem for the Windsors was that they had little to give weight to their lives. Post-abdication, they lived with a laminated form of grief as it became clear that their previous existence was unrecoverable to them. Edward had misguidedly assumed that after a cooling-off period, he would be allowed back to the UK. It never occurred to him that abdication meant permanent exile, as there "wasn't room for two kings in one country".

During the Second World War, he was allowed to be the governor of the Bahamas, then he settled, disgruntled, in France where he lived exempt from taxes. The Duchess decided the best revenge against her in-laws was a life lived well, and the couple became major players amid a dazzling, but ultimately unfulfilling, café society.

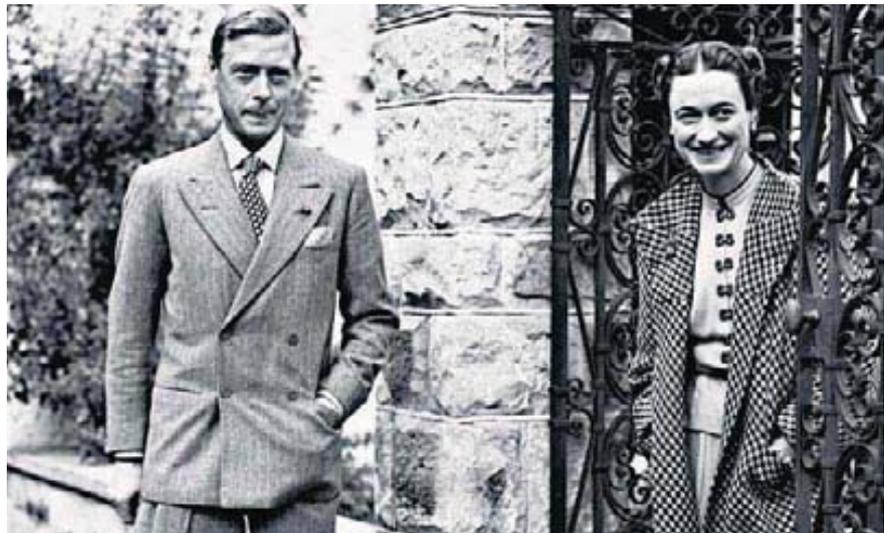
Meghan and Harry will, no doubt, initially relish their new status as international celebrities, surrounded by fawning acolytes in North America. But they should see the Windsors' fate as a cautionary tale. The glittering hue

of semi-royal celebrity has a tawdry underbelly; the unsophisticated hangers on. Prince Charles once described the Windsors' circle as "the most dreadful American guests I have ever seen".

I fear that both Meghan and, particularly, Harry will come to regret this ill-conceived decision. No doubt, courtiers will come down hard upon them. You can't have one foot inside the Firm and the other outside. It simply doesn't work. As we've seen with Prince Andrew, it's disastrous to try and commercialise royal connections. If Harry is to follow in the footsteps of his great-great uncle, he should recall the lesson he learnt too late: when it comes to the Royal family, you are either all in, or all out.

'The American Duchess' by Anna Pasternak is published by William Collins on Feb 6

'They lived with a laminated form of grief as it became clear that they could not recover their previous existence'



The Duke and Duchess of Windsor became major players in a dazzling café society, but had little to give weight to their lives

As Wallis found, Meghan's real work begins now

Once the Duke of Sussex's royal support network falls away, the Duchess will find she has a new role to play, says *Anna Pasternak*

When the Sussexes married in May 2018, we wanted to believe in happily ever after. Prince Harry finding true love was cause for celebration and, as a nation, we were rooting for the young couple.

Less than two years later, we are faced with the seismic news that Harry and Meghan are to be semi-detached royals, living largely in Canada. This week, the Duke performed what may be his last official duty as a senior royal, laughing with something approaching relief as he launched the Rugby League World Cup at Buckingham Palace. It has also been reported that staff at the couple's Windsor home, Frogmore Cottage, have been "redeployed".

The consensus seems to be that this partial abdication proves the immortal phrase reported at the time of their nuptials: "What Meghan wants, Meghan gets." Reluctant to be a silent ribbon-cutter, "progressive" Meghan appears determined to have it all. She wants her modern marriage and her royal husband on her terms – and her terrain, having previously lived in Toronto while filming *Suits*.

But if history has taught us anything, it's that the real work will now begin for Meghan. When Edward VIII abdicated to marry Wallis Simpson in 1936, he never paused to consider the complex emotional implications the decision would have for his wife. More prescient than him, Wallis – who burst into tears at the first mention of abdication – could see that she would be blamed in perpetuity for stealing a popular king from his throne and almost destroying the monarchy. The relationship that began as a thrilling *coup de foudre* for the former ruler became a Faustian pact for his wife.

Meghan should look to her predecessor – the first American Duchess – to see that, once Harry's royal support network falls away, she will have a new role to play.

Suddenly, without his family and roster of royal duties – everything that has given structure and meaning to his life – Harry's sense of purpose will demand detailed attention from his wife. While Meghan will be inundated with exciting opportunities, his future is far less certain. He appears to have admirably put Meghan's



happiness first while she settled into his world; now, it will have to be the other way around.

The onus will be on her to ensure that this monumental sacrifice has been worth it. She may well find, as Wallis did, that this becomes onerous. The “us against the world” mantra fast exposes any relationship flaws and requires a backbone of committed steel not to buckle.

For Wallis and Edward, there remained a seam of guilt that underlay their marriage. He had turned her into the most hated woman in the world, while she felt responsible for taking him away from his country. Their marriage became an overcompensation for this. It had to work; they couldn't let a sacrifice of such monumental proportions be in vain.

Once the banished couple settled in Paris, it began to sink in that the Duke - then not much older than 35-year-old Harry - had nothing to do. Idle restlessness gave him time to nurse his grievances against his family and dwell on injustices.

While Wallis filled his life as much as she could, neither had anticipated a life of obscurity. She told the writer Gore Vidal: “I remember like yesterday the morning after we married and I woke up and there was David standing beside my bed with this innocent smile, saying: ‘And now what do we do?’ My heart sank. Here was someone whose every day had been arranged for him all his life and now I was the one who was going to take the place of the entire British government, trying to think up things to do.”

Harry may not be a king renouncing the throne, but Meghan will have to be similarly diligent towards a man who, rather like his great-great-uncle, does not seem to be as emotionally resourceful as his wife. In France, Wallis immediately created a life for herself. The Duke's empty existence consisted of trawling after her.

Each evening, she would have French lessons. In the course of researching my book, I met the daughter of Wallis's French teacher, who said how bright and lively she had been. How keen to learn French, unlike the Duke, who never spoke a word of the language. Instead, he would whine that, during her lessons, “he had no one

to talk to”.

Every day, a programme for the Duke was put on the table in the hall. Pitifully, it detailed which guests were coming for lunch and what time his golf lesson would be. “None of it was important,” said Diana Mosley, the couple's friend, “but all his life he had been accustomed to a programme, and the Duchess wisely saw to it that he should have one.”

While it is unlikely that Harry will trail around after Meghan in such a needy, claustrophobic manner - fortunately, they have baby Archie to further occupy them - he will rely on her more heavily than before. She will be responsible for his social circle, as it will be her friends that they mix with. Already, it has been reported that the couple spent Christmas with the Duchess's best friend, Jessica Mulroney, and her family.

Let's hope that Meghan has the patience and fortitude of Wallis. The Duchess of Windsor had to cocoon the Duke from the mundane aspects of non-regal life. Like all royals, he had never carried cash, so she took care of all payments to tradesmen and oversaw the domestic side. She reined in his overzealous purchases of everything from Thermos bottles to boxes of thermometers, the former king still in the mindset of buying bulk for his many palaces.

Where Meghan is blessed - but does not seem to fully appreciate it - is that the Royal family has tried to accommodate her. Poor Wallis had to endure not only exclusion by her in-laws, but from the world at large.

Yet unlike Meghan - whose own father may testify against her in court, over a claim that a tabloid newspaper unlawfully published one of her private letters to him - Wallis knew the importance of family. It caused her unbearable pain that their exile separated Edward from his mother, Queen Mary. In 1942, when Edward was governor of the Bahamas, his brother, the Duke of Kent, was killed in a plane crash in Scotland. Edward was consumed with grief. Wallis watched his agonies helplessly.

It was poignant that, earlier that year, she had attempted to make “one last try to reach his mother and heal

the breach between them”. She wrote a generous-spirited letter to Queen Mary, explaining: “It has always been a source of sorrow and regret to me that I have been the cause of any separation between mother and son and I can't help feeling that there must be moments, perhaps, however fleeting they may be, when you wonder how David is.” The sweet missive received no reply.

The love affair between Edward and Wallis was a story of devotion and a heart-rending chronicle of the consequences of sacrifice - his in giving up the throne for the woman he adored, but also hers in having to put her husband's needs first for the duration of their 35-year marriage.

It remains to be seen if Meghan has the selflessness to place Harry's happiness ahead of her own. Family may be fraught, but exile illustrates that no man - and no marriage - is an island.

The American Duchess by Anna Pasternak is published by [William Collins](#) on Feb 6. Order now for £9.99 at [books.telegraph.co.uk](#) or call 0844 871 1514

The love affair began as a thrilling coup de foudre for the former ruler, but became a Faustian pact for his wife

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Harry appears to have put Meghan's happiness first; now it will be her turn

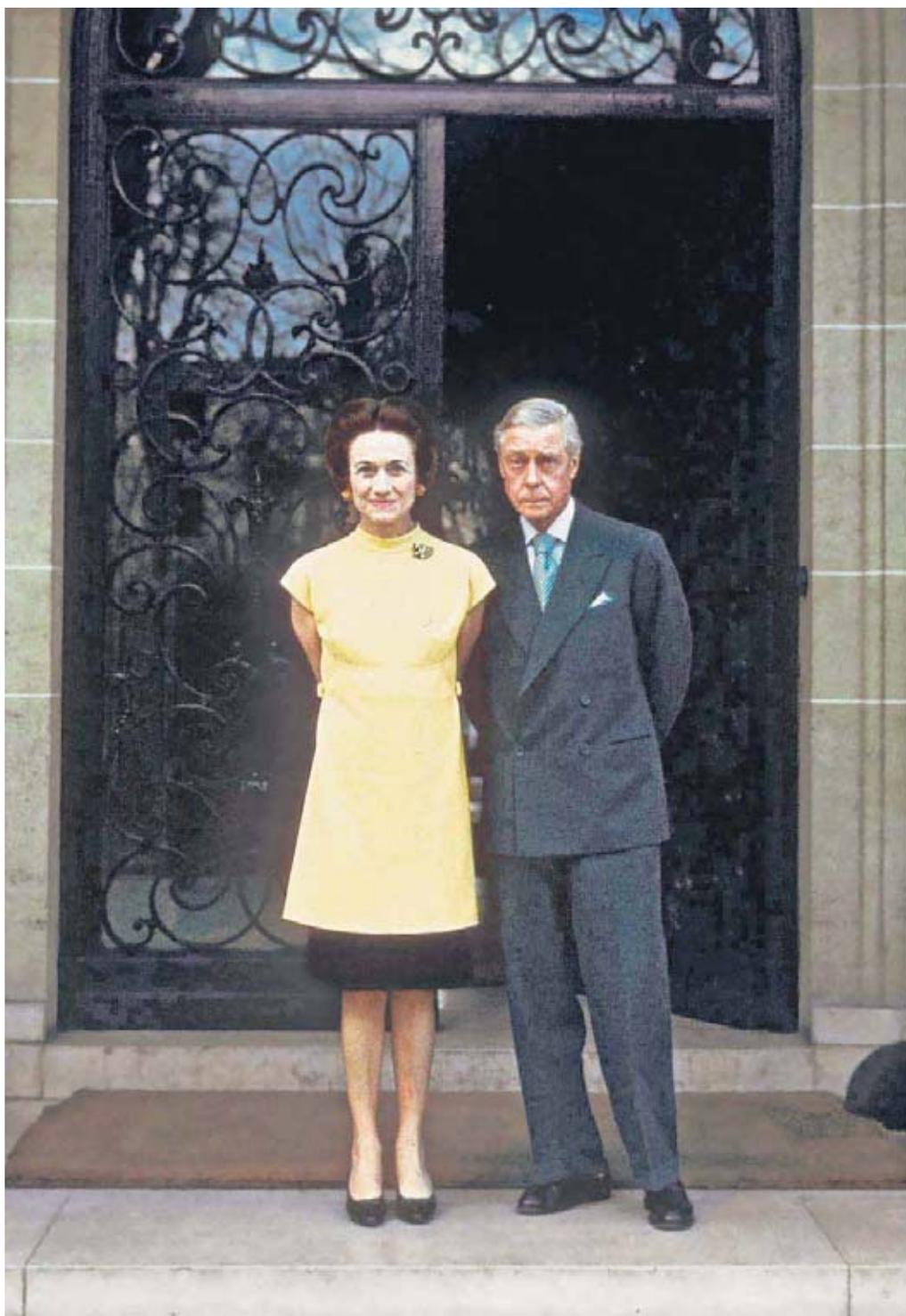


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History repeating:
the Duke and
Duchess of
Sussex, left,
could learn from
the experience
of the Duke
and Duchess of
Windsor, pictured
in 1966, far
left. The Duke
of Sussex at
possibly his last
engagement as a
senior royal,
below left

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ROLLALANZA/REX; PA; AP; ALAMY; EMPICS ENTERTAINMENT

Life with Wallis: 'I saw her pain and sacrifice every day'

For years, Johanna Schütz was the Windsors' private secretary. Here, she tells *Anna Pasternak* how the Duchess dealt with the 'dark forces' that haunted the royal couple

As the Duke and Duchess of Sussex settle into their new life in Canada, comparisons with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, exiled in France after the 1936 abdication, are inevitable. The difference is that while Wallis Simpson was roundly reviled for her part in the crisis, she never wanted Edward VIII to renounce the throne – and desperately wanted him to stay in the Royal family – while Meghan appears to want Prince Harry out.

Probably the last person alive who knew the Windsors intimately was their private secretary for eight years, Johanna Schütz. When researching my biography of Wallis Simpson, I tried to contact Swiss Ms Schütz, to no avail. Deeply private, she has never given a

press interview, keeping this iconic couple's secrets close. You can imagine my delight, when, after reading my book, she contacted me because I had "captured the Duchess perfectly". She wanted to give me some exclusive historical facts for my paperback.

Now in her late seventies, Schütz has the zeal of a woman decades younger. The minute I met her at Gibraltar Airport – she has a holiday home in southern Spain – I liked her. Bright, kind and gloriously eccentric, she told me that the first time she met the Windsors, as a 26-year-old in 1969, she went to Galeries Lafayette in Paris and bought a "black wig" to hide her mane of brown hair. Why? "Because I knew that they were so stylish and thought

that if I looked awful, they would not want to employ me."

The couple had met Schütz's sister, secretary to Bolivian tin king, Antenor Patino, who suggested Johanna as the Windsors' secretary. Multilingual, well-bred and fun, the Schütz sisters bought pastel-coloured Courrèges mini dresses and turned up to the Windsors' Parisian mansion for tea. "Look, darling," Wallis called out to Edward, "spring has come."

It was Wallis who won a sceptical Schütz over. "She had this hypnotic charm. She wasn't beautiful, but she had the most mesmerising blue eyes. The Duke was polite and gracious, but it was the Duchess who was brilliant. Everyone always said that the Duchess



infatuated the Duke, but why would he have stayed with her if she wasn't exceptional?"

Schütz became the daughter the Windsors never had. After the Duke died in 1972, Johanna ate every meal with Wallis, regularly accompanying her by boat to America. "I couldn't replace the Duke, but I could support the Duchess, which was a pleasure," she recalls. "The Duchess had the best chef in Paris, the best food and wine. She was the most perfect and interesting hostess. I had a wonderful time."

Schütz saw them as a couple steadfastly united. "When I arrived, the Duke was 76. His hip was bad, so he always took the elevator downstairs. Every time the Duchess went out, I had to call his valet, Sydney, beforehand. The Duke was always waiting for her when she descended the stairs. He walked her to the front door, to tell her how much he would miss her. When she returned, he would be waiting to say: 'Darling, I'm so happy to have you back.' His love for her really impressed me until his last breath."

But wasn't this choking adoration too much? "She never humiliated him in public or put him down at home, as people said. But sometimes she pushed him away, as she was suffocated by him. I could understand why she had not wanted to marry him. He trapped her, no question."

Schütz witnessed Wallis's sacrifice: "She kept her pain inside. She tried every day to appease the Duke, who was always negative about the Royal family. Until the Queen came."

The visit she describes to the Windsors' Bois de Boulogne home, 10 days before the Duke died on May 28 1972, was fictionally portrayed in *The Crown*, with the Duke seen showing

Continued on page 26

'I could understand why she had not wanted to marry him. He trapped her'



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THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES

Exile: the Windsors at their home near Paris in 1955, above. Johanna Schütz with the Duchess and the Duke's private secretary, John Utter, in 1974, left

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

the Queen letters from Prince Charles about Camilla. She says the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Charles came together, after a day racing at Longchamps, because they knew the Duke was dying, and to thank him for recently establishing a Prince of Wales Foundation. (No official records are believed to exist of a Prince of Wales Foundation that has any link to the Duke of Windsor, nor of the Queen's meeting with her uncle in Paris shortly before his death.) "That visit was historic and healing," she tells me. "It was very important because the Duke always said that he loved the Queen."

Indeed, Schütz says the Duke had bequeathed everything, once the Duchess died, back to the Royal family. "I had a copy of the will. The Windsors wanted all their money, jewellery, paintings, artefacts to be returned to Britain."

Had this loyal gesture taken place, might it have helped turn the negative press that the Windsors have endured for the past 40 years? It would certainly have been immensely restorative to the royals' frosty relations with Wallis, once she was widowed. Tragically, however, the Duke's wishes were obliterated by the darkest force to enter the Duchess's life. A year after he died, the Windsors' Parisian lawyer, Maître Suzanne Blum, whose husband had been their French lawyer since 1946 until his death in 1965, persuaded Wallis to let her take over their affairs.

This Machiavellian woman fuelled Wallis's worst fears of penury and had a despotic hold over the Duchess, who was "utterly grief-stricken" after the Duke's death. According to Schütz, Blum loathed the British and wanted everything in Wallis's will to go to the French. "Blum really threatened the Duchess," she recalls. "She told her that the French government would make her leave the house [where the Windsors lived rent- and tax-free] unless she bequeathed everything to the Louis Pasteur Institute. She was totally

menacing." Schütz did her best to fulfil the Duke's desires – "I had a huge box of diamond insignias from the Emperor of India, which we gave back to the royal household" – and it was thanks to her that the entire correspondence between Edward and Wallis was saved. This haunting collection of love letters that documented the turbulent times they endured was presented to Schütz by the Windsors' butler, George.

"He came to me in 1976 with this large box filled with all their letters. He said that the Duchess wanted me to burn them. I said: 'We can't burn this. This is history.' [But] Blum got hold of the letters and as soon as the Duchess was dead, had them published. The Duchess never wanted that."

Despite her ostracism, Wallis still "wanted all her jewellery to go back to Britain", insists Schütz. Poignantly, Edward stated in his will that he never wanted any piece of jewellery that he had had made for the Duchess to be sold or worn by another woman.

"They were for her and her alone," said Schütz. Many pieces had personal inscriptions such as "Hold tight" or "We are ours now", as with her engagement ring. Yet Blum defied the Duke's wishes. A year after Wallis died in 1986, the entire collection was sold at Sotheby's for £31 million; the proceeds going to the Pasteur Institute.

If the Duchess's precious jewels had returned to the royal fold, again, British antipathy might have softened.

Schütz did try to intervene. In 1975, she had planned to take Wallis to live in New York, in the Waldorf Towers. "We were all set to go, then the Duchess suffered a perforated ulcer because Blum had worried her so much. After that, she was too ill to travel or impose her wishes."

Blum imprisoned Wallis; her friends were banned from seeing her and her health swiftly deteriorated under her lawyer's perverse control. "I informed Sir Martin Charteris and asked him to send a doctor and a lawyer to do a new will," says Schütz. "The Queen's lawyer came to Paris with a doctor and Blum wouldn't let them through the door." According to Schütz, the nurses hired by Blum started "drugging the Duchess". Meanwhile, Blum stripped the

Parisian mansion, selling off its beautiful treasures. “The Duchess would say, ‘Why don’t we go down and have dinner in the library?’ I had to say, ‘You are too frail. It’s not heated.’ Any excuse so she didn’t see the truth.”

It was reported that Schütz was dismissed by Blum in 1978 on the grounds that she was “unstable”; in fact, she says, she was offered a new contract, which she refused to sign, as she would only work for the Duchess, not Blum. She finally left when Wallis, senile and emaciated, no longer recognised her. The Duchess died, pitiful and alone, eight years later. “She suffered so much. It was heartbreaking for me,” says Schutz. “The only way I coped was to close that part of my life down.”

She dismisses current comparisons between Meghan and Wallis. “Meghan doesn’t come close to the Duchess in terms of style or sophistication,” she sniffs.

Schütz, who, like Wallis, has no children, but an adoring lifelong French partner called Jean, concludes: “It’s all a pity. If only the Royal family had known her. The Duchess was a wonderful woman.”

The American Duchess by Anna Pasternak is published by William Collins on Thursday. Buy now for £9.99 at books.telegraph.co.uk or call 0844 871 1514

‘Meghan doesn’t come close to the Duchess in terms of style or sophistication’

‘She was told that the French would make her leave the house unless she left it all to France’



Haunted: it was thanks to Johanna Schütz, main, that letters between Edward and Wallis, above, and his diamond insignias were saved

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HEATHCLIFF O'VALLEY FOR THE TELEGRAPH, EYEVINE

Top chefs: Schütz with the Duchess, above. After the Duke died in 1972, Johanna ate every meal with Wallis and describes the best food and wine



Lucy and her children enjoying the wilds of Wales in January



74



EDITOR'S PICKS

WEAR

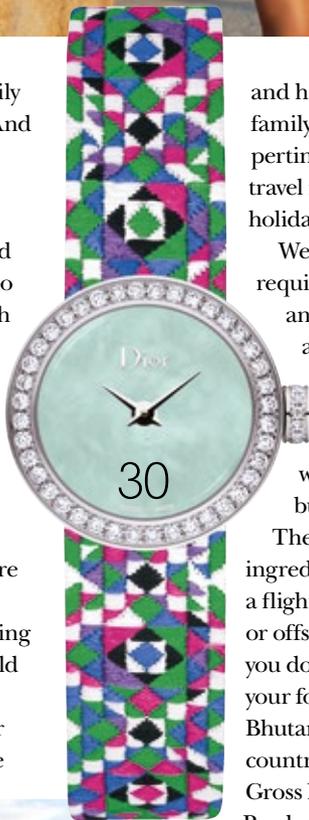
The ideal travel dress made with upcycled silk and local materials from My Perfect Gypsy

EDITOR'S LETTER



I had one of my best family holidays ever recently. And it didn't involve getting on a plane. It did involve a tiny two-up, two-down, 16th-century cottage carved into a Welsh hillside with no central heating and enough hot water to run one bath

(daily). Each morning, we would plan a peak to summit (Pen y Fan being the highest) or a trail to follow. We'd return – husband, dog and two children (six and nine), happily tired and suitably muddy – to our cottage before it got too dark to find (we had to park our car 500m up a hillside to avoid it being stuck) to share the bath, toast Welsh cakes and sip tea, before playing games in front of the fire and rediscovering a love of *Fawlty Towers* (Manuel had my six year old in stitches). I felt most decidedly happy and I put this down to being outside in nature, walking for hours in some of the most wondrous countryside

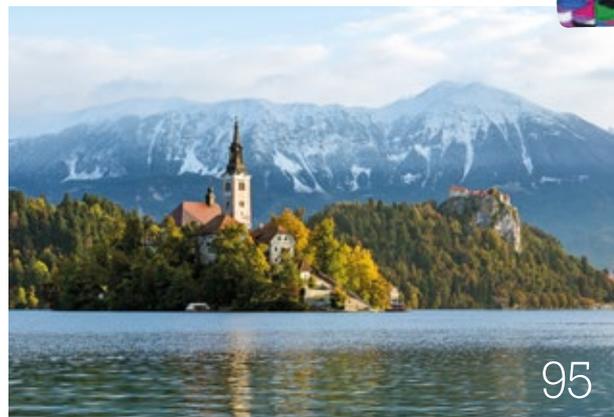


and having uninterrupted time with my family. This anecdote is a rather circuitous, but pertinent, route to introducing you to this year's travel issue, whose lead feature is *Peter Hughes'* holidaying without getting on a plane (p95).

We don't need to mention the obvious requirement to re-evaluate the way we travel and spend our leisure time – it's buzzing all around us, or raging in the case of Australia. Nor are we here to preach – after all, travel, discovery and adventure are intrinsic to us and it would stunt us should it ever be denied, but change needs to be happen and fast.

The joy of my Welsh break proves that the ingredients of a holiday don't always necessitate a flight. The rise in UK staycations, train travel or offsetting schemes are proof enough, but if you do want to get away, there are places where your footprint can make less of an impact: take Bhutan, it's the world's only carbon-negative country. How? By policy making based on Gross National Happiness not Gross Domestic Product, with environmental protection at its core. Oh, what a lot we could learn (p111).

US hotel designer and 'starchitect', Bill Bensley, also puts environmentalism and low carbon impact at the heart of each and every one of his projects, without sacrificing the comfort and experience of the best hospitality in the world. Whether it's zip-lining into Shinta Mani Wild, deep in the Cambodian rainforest, or cosying up in a treehouse at the Rosewood in Luang Prabang, Laos, Bensley's hotels stand out for their commitment to sustainability, no green-washing guaranteed (p90).



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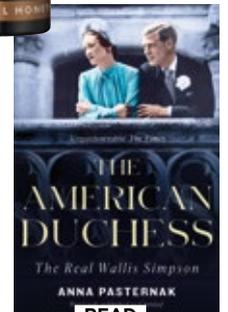
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David Attenborough's *A Life on Our Planet* premieres on Netflix on 16 April



SPRITZ

A healthy glow without the sun with Amanda Harrington's amazing bronzing face mist



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As history repeats itself, Anna Pasternak's book has never been more pertinent

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Lucy

THE AMERICAN DUCHESS

Anna Pasternak

BROADCAST COVERAGE

On the news that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex were stepping down from royal duties, Anna was interviewed widely across national broadcast media discussing the extraordinary parallels with the abdication and the fact that history is repeating itself.

TELEVISION



