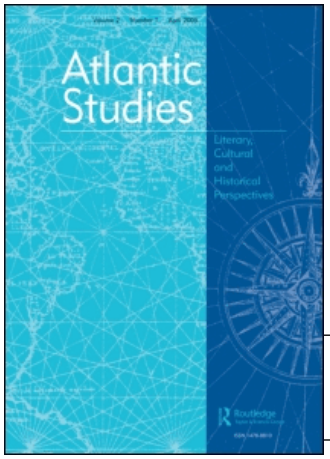

Atlantic Studies
Literary, Cultural and Historical Perspectives
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713703567

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Online Publication Date: 01 April 2008

To cite this Article: Letzter, Jacqueline (2008) 'The political exile of the Stiers: A Belgian family weighs the cost of American democracy (1794-1803)', Atlantic Studies, 5:1, 51 — 73

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/14788810801976136
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14788810801976136

Atlantic Studies
Vol. 5, No. 1, April 2008, 51–73

The political exile of the Stiers: A Belgian family weighs the cost of American democracy (1794–1803)

Jacqueline Letzter*

In 1794, the Stiers, a wealthy Belgian family, fled Antwerp to escape the invasion of their hometown by the French revolutionary army. Attracted by America's political principles and economic climate, they emigrated to the United States. Although they had considered settling there permanently, all but one were persuaded to return to Antwerp in 1803. Their story is told in extensive family correspondence that covers their years in the United States (1794–1803). This correspondence illuminates how the Stiers came to terms, each in his or her own way, with this new and completely different social, cultural, and political landscape; and why, despite the obvious attraction of democracy, all the members of the family, except the youngest daughter, chose to return to their native Antwerp.

Keywords: Belgium; Henri Joseph Stier (1743–1821); Rosalie Stier Calvert (1778–1821); transatlantic correspondence; US social conditions

In the spring of 1794, French Revolutionary armies were overrunning the Belgian provinces, wreaking havoc in the cities and Catholic countryside, and looting churches, convents, and aristocratic residences. In Antwerp, the wealthy commercial port and artistic metropolis of Brabant, patrician families had reason to fear, not only for their properties, but also for their lives. Therefore, in June 1794, just ahead of the second invasion of Antwerp by the French, many Belgian aristocrats fled to German principalities or parts of the Habsburg Empire that were still resisting the French Revolution, and where they had family or relations. The family of Henri Joseph Stier (1743–1821), however, chose to go in the opposite direction—to America.

The story of this family is unique for two reasons. First, they emigrated from a region that had little or no previous connection to America. Unlike French émigrés, Belgians had no colonial, political, or commercial ties to the United States. Second, they left behind an extensive family correspondence during their years in the United States (1794–1803), the only correspondence in the history of Belgian emigration to the United States that has survived to relate in detail a family's experience as immigrants.[1] This correspondence illuminates the contradictions this family perceived between their aristocratic way of life and a democratic society. It shows how they came to terms, each in his or her way, with this new and completely different social, cultural, and political landscape, and why, despite the obvious attraction of democracy, all the members of the family, except the youngest daughter, chose to return to their native Antwerp.

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ISSN 1478-8810 print/ISSN 1470-4649 online

DOI: 10.1080/14788810801976136
http://www.informaworld.com

The Stiers emigrate to America

Henri Joseph Stier and his wife Marie Louise (*née* Peeters, 1748–1804) belonged to two of the most distinguished families in Antwerp. Their ancestors had been wealthy merchants, bankers, and large estate owners.[2] Henri Stier had recently acquired a title of nobility; he signed his official letters as "Baron Stier d'Aertselaer" (after the property the family had acquired through his wife).[3] He had no need to practice a profession, but fulfilled the prestigious public function of *Grand Aumônier*, the head of the main charitable organization in Antwerp, and lived from the income from his real estate and investments. Like the other members of their circle, the Stiers displayed their wealth through imposing houses, both in the city and the country.[4] They owned horses and carriages, collected artwork, and prided themselves on the excellent education they were able to provide for their children, girls, as well as boys.[5] Most significantly, they distinguished themselves as descendants of the painter Rubens, and they were known throughout Europe for their outstanding collection of Flemish masters.[6] It was in large part to preserve the collection that they decided to leave Antwerp, taking the crates of paintings with them on their journey to America.

In October 1794, the Stiers arrived in Philadelphia, where they had an existent contact, the baron Beelen Bertholff (1729–1805), consular agent for the Austrian Netherlands in the United States.[7] Appreciated for their cultural sophistication, wealth, and social standing, the family was welcomed by the city's social and business leaders—the Penns, the Binghams, the Peters, and the Morrises. [8] While Charles Jean Stier (1770–1848) and his brother-in-law Jean Michel van Havre (1764–1844) set out to explore possible business ventures in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, the elder Stiers stayed in Philadelphia with their daughters Rosalie Eugénie (1778–1821), Isabelle Marie (1768–1822) and three-year-old granddaughter Louise.[9] However, concern for their health convinced the elder Stiers that they should not remain in Philadelphia, and in the summer of 1795 they moved with daughter Rosalie to a rented house in the countryside near Annapolis, Maryland. Charles Stier and Jean Michel van Havre installed their young families in Alexandria, Virginia, which they deemed a more favorable location for their business.

Whereas life in the Maryland countryside had proved difficult for the Stiers, their second move, to a house in the center of Annapolis in the summer of 1797, was a success. In town, they found better servants and were no longer as chained to the household chores as they had been on the farm. It was also much easier to enjoy the pleasures of society; by this time, they knew many of the town's prominent citizens—the Carrolls, Ogles, Lloyds, Scotts, Murrays, and Keys.[10] To keep up with their social circle as much as to make themselves as comfortable as possible, the Stiers furnished their house in style. Henri Stier planted a much admired bulb garden, and he had his portrait painted by the portraitist Rembrandt Peale (1778–1860).[11] The family from Alexandria visited regularly, Mimi van Havre being the most frequent visitor because her husband, Charles Stier, was often traveling for business. She proved to be good company for Rosalie: they helped Marie-Louise Peeters with the running of the household, but mostly enjoyed going horseback riding and dancing.

During their stay in Annapolis, Rosalie was courted by George Calvert (1768–1838), a wealthy plantation owner and descendant of the prominent lords Baltimore who had founded the colony of Maryland. Despite Calvert's excellent pedigree and character, the Stiers were not keen on this relationship. Still hoping to return to

Antwerp once peace and stability had returned in Europe, they dreaded the thought of a family separation caused by Rosalie remaining in America. Nevertheless, as the news from Antwerp continued to be worrisome and their return, therefore unlikely, the Stiers no longer refused Calvert's attentions to Rosalie, and the couple were married in the summer of 1799. Their union consolidated the Stiers' social position among America's highest circles: through George Calvert, they were now related to Martha Custis Washington. George Washington himself organized a large dinner for the newlyweds, to which all the members of the Stier family were invited.[12] It could be expected that the Stiers would now find a place in American society comparable to that which they had left behind in Antwerp.

In the summer of 1798, Charles Stier and Jean Michel van Havre had become American citizens, in part because Henri Stier believed that this would make it easier to acquire American real estate.[13] Jean Michel van Havre bought a house in Alexandria and Charles Stier would have followed suit, but was instead enlisted by his father to assist him in his ambitious plans to build his own mansion in Maryland. Henri Stier had been looking for land on which he could build a mansion since 1798, but it was only in 1800 that, on a tip from George Calvert, he found and purchased what he considered a perfect tract of 729 acres of land in Bladensburg, Maryland—situated on the road between the Federal City and Baltimore. He wanted land closer to the Federal City because he sensed that Annapolis was declining in importance. With firm priorities in mind—building a beautiful home for his family, creating an art gallery for his large painting collection, and running a model farm—he immediately started with construction, partly according to plans drawn up by himself and Charles, and partly by relying on the services of the Federal City's most eminent architects and builders, Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764–1820), William Lovering (British, worked in and around Washington, 1796–1802), and Robert G. Lanphier (1765–1856). Henri Stier and his wife named the mansion "Riversdale," a reminder of their fourteenth-century castle, Cleydael, near Antwerp.[14] At the end of 1800, he became a naturalized American, which allowed him to transfer the land to his own name.

For this close-knit émigré family, Riversdale was to become both their American château and the emotional center of their lives. In December 1800, the family spent a memorable Christmas together at a house in Bladensburg that the elder Stiers had rented in order to be as close as possible to the construction site. Together the family envisioned the future of what would be a model family farm. Henri Stier purchased cattle and sheep, as well as 15 slaves, for whom Marie Louise Stier and Mimi Van Havre immediately started sewing winter clothes. Rosalie and Henri Stier, who shared a passion for gardening, began designing the gardens. Henri Stier and his wife decided which furniture and art should be sent from their Antwerp houses to furnish Riversdale. Henri Stier even bought new paintings to add to his collection and in January 1801, he and his wife had their miniature portraits painted by the English artist Robert Field (ca. 1769–1819), presumably to send to their relatives back in Antwerp.[15]

In the meantime, the situation in Europe had changed again, affecting the fate of the Stier family. The rise of Napoleon and the hopes he raised for renewed stability in Europe, coupled with his lifting of sanctions against aristocratic émigrés, made Charles Stier consider a return to Antwerp in the spring of 1801 to recover his

family's substantial properties. When word came that Mimi's mother was very ill, the couple decided not to delay their return any longer and sailed off in September 1801.

In early November 1801, word came that Mrs van Havre had died, and Jean Michel van Havre immediately left for Europe to be with his family. Isabelle could not go with him because she was pregnant with her fourth child and it was too risky for her to make the ocean crossing during the winter. Therefore, she moved to Bladensburg to be with her parents, who were still supervising the building of Riversdale.

The next 18 months were to be a time of painful decisions for a family now situated on both sides of the ocean. Charles Stier, increasingly enthusiastic about Napoleon, urged his parents to return to Antwerp. Jean Michel van Havre was divided about the choice, even as Isabelle pleaded with him to come and fetch them. Henri Stier and his wife were the most torn: they could not envision leaving behind their daughter Rosalie, her growing family, and the near-finished mansion Riversdale. Nevertheless, they did, and in June 1803, they sailed off to Belgium with Isabelle and her family.

The correspondence (1794–1803)

For the period 1795–1803, the time of the Stiers' political exile, the principal repository of letters is the Baron Henry de Witte Archives in Antwerp. Over 600 pages of family correspondence are preserved in this archive, consisting mostly of letters received by Charles Stier along with some additional correspondence with American merchants. Several other archives also contain letters from this period, but their holdings are small compared to those of the Baron de Witte Archives.

The van Havre Papers at the archives of the Château du List (Schoten, Belgium) contain approximately 100 letters from Rosalie to her father, but these are dated after June 1803, as are the few remaining letters Rosalie wrote to her mother. These archives also contain letters from Charles Stier to Isabelle van Havre—especially relevant to the period that interests us are the letters he wrote to his sister between September 1801 (when he returned to Antwerp) and June 1803.

The Calvert-Stier Papers in the van de Werve Archives (Viersel, Belgium) contain some of the correspondence between Rosalie and Charles Stier (after 1803). Finally, the Henri J. Stier Papers held at the Maryland Historical Society (Baltimore) contain a typescript English translation made for John Ridgely Carter, a Calvert descendant, from originals in his possession and now lost. This translation is of letters addressed to Charles J. Stier from 1797 to 1828, including approximately 35 letters from Rosalie (covering the period 1797–1819).

The extant Stier family correspondence for 1795–1803 allows us to make several observations concerning the family's epistolary practices. First, it is clear that the most intense correspondence was between Henri Stier and his son Charles. During the time of their political exile, Charles Stier and his wife, Mimi lived in Alexandria, whereas Henri Stier, Marie Louise Stier, and Rosalie (the latter only until 1799) lived successively in Philadelphia, Annapolis, and Bladensburg. This geographical separation explains the letters between them.

In some years there are more than 35 letters (out of a total of about 50) from Henri to Charles Stier, and although we do not have Charles's answers to these letters, we can surmise that he wrote a great many letters back to his parents.

Charles's letters that have survived (for example, those written once he was back in Antwerp and his parents were still in the US, between autumn 1801 and summer 1803) show that he wrote to his family regularly. He even kept a daily journal on the boat as well as in Antwerp, so that he could give his parents and Isabelle a minute and accurate report of all the news from friends and relatives, and his impressions of their hometown. Although about a third of Henri Stier's letters give business advice to his son and deal with practical financial matters, the rest focus on his experience of day-to-day life in America, his reflections on the situation back in Europe, and on whether they should return to Antwerp or start a new life in America.

Marie Louise Stier also wrote regularly to her son, often sharing a letter with her husband (and occasionally with Rosalie). Mrs Stier's letters are witty, revealing a close relationship with her son, although it is clear that she has strong ideas of her own about politics—ideas that sometimes contradicted those of Charles. After Charles and Mimi's departure for Antwerp in the fall of 1801, Marie Louise Stier takes over the correspondence with Charles from her husband, because the latter is too busy with the building of Riversdale to continue writing to Charles regularly. Until the moment of their own departure, she seems set on staying in America, arranging for Charles to send items from Antwerp to Riversdale. It may be that her reluctance to make the trip back to Antwerp was due to the fact that she did not feel physically strong enough to withstand another uprooting; she died in 1804, relatively soon after their return to Antwerp.

Correspondence between the Stier siblings is relatively scarce during the period when they were all in America. As an unmarried girl, Rosalie mostly added only an occasional line to her parents' letters to Charles, Mimi, and Isabelle. When she does write, it is mainly to relate her excitement (or boredom) about her social life. Even after her marriage, when she lived apart from them all on a plantation in rural Maryland, she does not seem to have written much to her parents or siblings—perhaps because she still saw them regularly.

This all changed, of course, in June 1803, when her family returned to Belgium. The dearth of correspondence between Charles and Isabelle van Havre while in America can be explained by their geographical proximity to each other; Charles only wrote to Isabelle when he was on business trips or when she was staying with their parents in Annapolis. It is clear from their letters, however, that they were close. Indeed, after 1801, when Charles returned to Antwerp, he wrote frequently to her and she to him—much more often, in fact, than to her own husband, who had joined Charles in Antwerp in November 1801. Isabelle sometimes requested that her brother burn her letters because she considered them very private and she would not like them to fall into the hands of anyone. Charles and Rosalie, although they would write to each other a bit more regularly after 1803, never achieved the same complicity as Charles and Isabelle. The intimacy between Charles and Isabelle derived in part from their closeness in age, but also because they were the two family members who agreed about the need for the entire family to return to Antwerp. Neither Henri Stier nor his wife, nor even Jean Michel van Havre, was convinced that this was the best option for them, and Rosalie, of course, was heartbroken to see her family depart.

The Stier family correspondence also includes a few letters that Charles received from friends in Antwerp, inquiring about life in America and informing him about the situation back home. Surprisingly, because so few letters by Charles are extant

for this period, we also have Charles's responses to these letters, in the form of either drafts or copies of letters he actually sent. Henri Stier and his wife received similar letters from their business agent, Henri Lambert Louvrex in Amsterdam, and from other family members in Antwerp. Together with the newspapers from Europe and the occasional reports in the American press, these letters provided them with the information they needed to follow closely the rapidly changing political developments across the Atlantic.

Geographical separation alone does not account for the intensity of the correspondence between family members. Although both Isabelle and Jean Michel van Havre lived in Alexandria close to Charles and Mimi Stier, and therefore, were separated from Rosalie and her parents, there are surprisingly few remaining letters between the van Havres and the elder Stiers. It is, of course, possible that most of these letters were lost, or that the letters written by Henri and Marie Louise Stier to Charles Stier and Mimi were meant to be shared between the two Alexandria households. However, the paucity of extant letters between Henri Stier and Isabelle and Jean Michel Van Havre suggests a relationship that might not have been as intimate, or at least one not based on the same kind of intellectual and emotional exchange, as that of the Stier parents with their son Charles (and his wife Mimi, who spent a lot of time in Annapolis with the Stier parents, especially when her husband was on business trips with Jean Michel van Havre). Of course, Isabelle was not as available to her parents as Mimi was, since she had children while Mimi did not.

After 1803, the family correspondence becomes transatlantic. The most regular correspondence is between Henri Stier and his daughter Rosalie. Besides nurturing their close family ties, their correspondence also fulfills several practical functions. Rosalie needed her father's advice in order to finish the mansion, Riversdale, and the gardens he had begun. She also required items from Antwerp to furnish and decorate the house, as well as bulbs and seeds to plant in the gardens. Moreover, she sought his council on how best to take care of the valuable painting collection that remained in her custody. Finally, she had to report to her father about how she managed his financial assets in America. For a time, there were also letters discussing a plan (that would never materialize) for Rosalie, her husband, and their children to come for an extended visit in Antwerp. Largely, father and daughter agreed that she did the right thing by settling in America. He only regretted he could not be there with her.

After 1803, and especially after the death of her mother in 1804, Rosalie started corresponding more regularly with Isabelle. They compared each other's situations with respect to housekeeping, servants, fashions, and marrying off their eldest daughters, but they also discussed politics, in particular, how it affected their private lives. Frustrated by the many social and financial obligations imposed on them by Napoleon (billeting of soldiers at their house, taxes, military draft of her sons), Isabelle sometimes expressed the wish to return to the United States.

Rosalie's correspondence with Charles is less intimate, but more intellectual than that with Isabelle. Rosalie did not share her brother's enthusiasm for Napoleon or French culture, and he did not understand her fascination with material wealth. Even though they corresponded infrequently, Charles, who was to remain childless, felt a strong attachment to his younger sister, and remained in touch with Rosalie's husband and their children after Rosalie's death.

Belgian aristocrats confronted with American democracy

Given their aristocratic proclivities and their entrenchment in Antwerp's patrician social milieu, the Stiers' choice to emigrate to America may seem surprising from a political point of view. They were the only Belgians to settle in the Washington area at that time, and all of their friends and relatives either had remained in Antwerp or were waiting out the situation in the Netherlands, Austria, or one of the German principalities. However, Henri Stier's political choices during the decade preceding his emigration explain his decision. Like many other enlightened Europeans, he espoused ideals of liberty and a secular and democratic government. In Antwerp, which was then part of the Austrian Netherlands, this would have put him in the position to support the Habsburg monarch Joseph II, who attempted to modernize and secularize his empire. However, because Joseph II was imposing his reforms unilaterally, he encountered diffidence even among those of his subjects (members of the liberal professions and the cosmopolitan aristocracy) who might have shared his philosophy and who were ardently opposed by the Catholic clergy and the ultra-conservative aristocracy, who wanted to safeguard their age-old local constitutions and privileges. The latter factions were the motor of the Brabant Revolution (1787–1790), which succeeded in removing Joseph II as ruler of the region, creating an independent—albeit short lived—Etats-Unis Belgiques.[16]

Although in favor of self-government and liberty for his country, Henri Stier opposed the Brabant Revolution, which in his eyes was reactionary and gave too much power to the clergy. His political opinions set him apart from his largely conservative social circle in Antwerp and might even have earned him imprisonment.[17] It is not surprising, therefore, that in 1794 he did not follow his relatives and friends to conservative principalities that still resisted the French Revolution, but instead opted for the new American Republic, which represented the ideals of liberty, individual rights, and self-government he embraced. A note, allegedly written in his hand and left for the French authorities at his home in Antwerp on the eve of his departure in 1794, expressed his loyalty to the United States, republican France's great ally:

> Je ne quitte point ce pays pour fuir les Français. Je les aime en ami. Mon but en m'expatriant est de fuir le pillage et les désordres que commettent ordinairement des hommes sans loi, mais je vais habiter en attendant un pays libre comme la France, je me retire chez le peuple américain votre allié et ami … la loyauté française et les principes de la liberté que professe cette nation généreuse envers les peuples d'une nation quelconque me font espérer que la république française voudra bien respecter les propriétés d'un ami de la liberté, et avoir égard pour de si justes raisons: elle trouvera toujours dans ma personne un défenseur zélé pour tout ce qui peut contribuer à la conservation de cette précieuse liberté. Le baron J. de Stier, Citoyen Américain.
>
> I do not leave this country to flee the French. I love them as a friend. My purpose in expatriating myself is to flee the pillage and disorders of lawless men, but I am going to live in a country free like France. I withdraw to the land of the American people, your allies and friends; I firmly hope that French loyalty and the principles of liberty professed by that generous nation toward the people of any nation will make you respect the properties of a friend of liberty and consider such just reasons; the French republic will always find in my person a zealous defender of all that can contribute to the preservation of that precious liberty. Baron J. de Stier, American citizen.[18]

It is difficult to know whether this note was sincere or simply expedient—he may have emphasized his status as a political exile rather than émigré in order to avoid being placed on the list of émigrés and having his properties sequestered—but it is revealing that he signed it "American citizen," even before setting foot in America.[19]

Having come to the United States to escape political and economic persecution and embracing American political ideals even before he arrived, Henri Stier continued to profess his admiration for the United States and its republican government once he was settled there. In 1798, he drafted a lengthy essay to guide his children in their decision about whether to stay in the United States or return to Europe. Although France and the United States had both opted for governments of popular sovereignty, France was still in a state of constant revolution, he fretted, undermining the stability of all of Europe. Sometimes the changes were promising, but often they were not. The United States, he deemed, had a much better chance to remain peaceful and stable, because:

> Les mêmes retournements qui me conduisent à prévoir toute la désorganisation de l'Europe me confirment dans la persuasion que ce pays-ci n'est [susceptible] à aucune convulsion. En effet que peut-il arriver et quel changement ou révolution peut avoir le gouvernement? Il est électif dans toute l'extension du terme. Tout gouvernement doit avoir deux parties essentielles: le législatif et l'exécutif. Quel changement peut-on apporter dans le mode qui existe ici? Le législatif consiste dans un Congrès dont le pouvoir est balancé par le Sénat; appeler ces deux branches Congrès et Sénat ou Conseil des Anciens et Conseil des 500 le nom et le nombre ne fait rien à la chose Il n'y a que l'élection qui est susceptible à différents modes or celui [en vigueur ici] ne peut être plus étendu. Quant au pouvoir exécutif un président ou 3 ou 5 directeurs du Directoire, c'est [entre] bonnets blancs ou blancs bonnets. Ce qui existe est mieux que ce qu'on pourrait introduire.
>
> The same events that make me predict all kinds of disorganization in Europe confirm my belief that this country is unlikely to undergo any of these convulsions. Indeed, what could possibly happen here and what changes or revolutions could the government undergo? The system is truly electoral. All governments should consist of two branches: the legislative and the executive. How could this be changed here? The legislative branch is made up of a Congress, whose powers are checked by the Senate; whether we call them Congress and Senate or Council of Elders and Council of 500, the name and number make no difference. Only the way in which representatives are elected could be changed, but here quite a few people have the right to vote already. As for the executive branch, there is no difference between a President or 3 or 5 Directors in the Directory. What exists now is more solid than whatever could be introduced.[20]

Since Henri Stier wanted to ensure for his children a more secure future than what he foresaw for Europe, the probable stability of the United States government, guaranteed by its systems of checks and balances, was for him its utmost recommendation.

Charles was even more enthusiastic than his father was about the United States, which he saw as democratic in the noblest sense of the word. Not only does the state offer security and stability to its citizens, he wrote to a friend in Antwerp, but also its citizens in turn feel a sense of duty toward the state. American civic virtue is not just a matter of empty words it really works:

> Ses constitutions sont vraiment l'expression de la volonté nationale . . . Les souscriptions pour la formation d'une marine, la dette publique et les taxes ne sont rien en comparaison de l'Europe. La différence entre l'état et la fortune des divers citoyens [est] si petite qu'ils peuvent se regarder encore comme une seule famille—en un mot, l'Union leur présente un intérêt supérieur à tout autre. Telle est la situation de ce pays qui lui assure la tranquillité intérieure tandis que son éloignement de l'Europe le garantit des invasions.
>
> [Its constitutions are truly the expression of the will of the nation . . . .] The taxes it imposes to create a navy or pay the public debt are nothing compared to what we have to pay in Europe. The difference between the fortunes of the State and that of the citizens is so small that they all see each other as one family—in one word, they see the interest of their Union as superior to all others. Such is the situation of this country, which guarantees tranquility within its borders, while its distance from Europe protects it against foreign invasions.[21]

To compare the state to a chosen family was the highest possible praise coming from this young man who, during years of turmoil and revolution in his native Antwerp, had only his own close-knit family to provide for stability and security.

Despite Charles's espousal of American republican values, many aspects of everyday life proved difficult for him, and this gradually eroded his confidence that he would find happiness in America. He learned that in America material wealth did not buy independence and leisure. America lacks the most basic comforts, he wrote to the same Belgian friend:

> Un étranger y trouve sous l'extérieur du luxe un dénuement complet de toute aisance domestique. Il n'y faut pas venir pour vivre agréablement, mais tranquillement, c'est-à-dire sans crainte de perdre sa liberté, sa vie, sa propriété.
>
> A foreigner finds only a veneer of luxury with no domestic comfort at all. One cannot count on living comfortably here, only without fear for one's liberty, life, and property.[22]

More disturbing than the lack of domestic comforts was the incessant activity necessary to acquire them. Charles Stier found that Americans valued only work and the acquisition of wealth. They were practical, hurried, and materialistic, and they attached little importance to the intellectual and artistic pursuits to which Charles was dedicated:

> Être oisif n'est pas possible en Amérique. Pour s'occuper des arts et des sciences, le pays est trop jeune, trop peu exalté encore.... On doit se fermer les avenues du cœur et de l'esprit au point de ne plus sentir qu'on ne sent rien.
>
> To be idle is not possible in America. The country is still too young and dynamic to involve itself in the arts and sciences . . . in America one must close off one's heart and mind so that one does not feel that one feels nothing.[23]

Young Rosalie Stier also felt this keenly. She had excelled in writing but did not continue to nurture this skill in America.[24] She had loved reading, music, and the theater, but rarely indulged in these pleasures anymore.[25] Henri Stier, who had been one of the foremost art connoisseurs and collectors in Europe, had to halt this activity almost entirely because there was little interest in European art and almost no art market yet in the young American Republic.

The difficulty of finding reliable domestic help left the Stiers little time for their avocations, even if they had wanted to pursue these privately. In America, men as well as women, each in their separate spheres, were expected to take care of the necessities of life themselves. In the countryside, where there were neither urban services nor stores (including bakers, butchers, creamers, laundresses, tailors, shoemakers, seamstresses, and hairdressers), Rosalie, Isabelle, and their mother discovered that all of these specialized tasks had to be performed on the plantation under their sole direction.[26] Even the design and building of the mansion Riversdale fell entirely on the shoulders of Henri Stier himself. Although he had hired architects and workers, he had to supervise everything, to the smallest detail, since his hired help could not be counted on.[27] In Antwerp, the Stiers had depended on highly skilled servants who remained with the family for life and sometimes from one generation to the next.[28] During the Stiers' almost ten-year sojourn in America, a core of servants remained in their service to take care of their properties in Belgium.[29] The Stiers complained that there were no such servants in America. When by luck they found a capable cook or gardener, such help never stayed long. As Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out, servants in aristocratic societies were seen as unemancipated family members, whereas in democratic America they considered themselves equal to their masters. Domestic service was a lucrative occupation like any other; it was entered into freely, but was left just as freely.[30]

In the absence of servants, wealthy Maryland families depended on slaves. Slaves, however, could not provide the Stiers with the same standard of living they had enjoyed in Belgium. Indeed, the slaves seemed more a liability because the Stiers held no sway over them. Isabelle thought this was due to their unfamiliarity with the system of slavery:

> Peut–être qu'il faut être élevé [ici] et savoir faire aller ces machines noires ce que personne de nous ne saura jamais faire.
>
> Maybe one needs to be brought up here to know how to make these black machines work, which none of us [in the family] could ever do.[31]

Moreover, owning slaves came at a cost unknown in Europe, because they instilled fear in their owners. Isabelle, in particular, developed a real phobia of the slaves. Feeling isolated in the countryside (after she had moved to Bladensburg in 1802 to be with her parents), she confided to her brother, who was already back in Europe:

> Quand on se porte bien et pour un homme je conçois qu'on puisse aimer ce pays-ci, mais c'est un enfer pour une femme surtout quand on a des enfants. C'est comme s'ils étaient toujours au milieu des loups.
>
> I can understand that one can like this country when one feels strong and healthy and when one is a man; but it is hell for a woman, especially if she has children. It is as if we were always surrounded by wolves.[32]

She was afraid that the slaves would harm her children physically and morally:

> Les enfants me donnent encore plus de soucis ici qu'en ville. Je ne peux les laisser sortir plus loin que je ne puisse les voir sans qu'il y ait des conséquences [pour leur] caractère moral. Il faut que je les surveille nuit et jour. Il n'y a pas moyen de les fier un instant aux noirs, surtout de l'espèce que nous avons ici.
>
> I worry even more about the children here than in the city; if I let them go outside without supervising them myself, there is always some consequence for their moral character; I have to keep an eye on them day and night. I cannot leave them one instant with the blacks, especially the kind we have here.[33]

Rosalie had the most frequent and intimate contact with slaves because she was responsible for the work and well-being of a great number of them, both in her house and on the plantation. In addition, like many plantation mistresses, she contended with the distressing knowledge that her husband had a slave mistress and he had fathered several children by her. Although from all accounts Rosalie's marriage was harmonious, her husband continued the liaison he had begun before his marriage until after Rosalie's death. That Rosalie knew about this liaison seems inevitable because she and Calvert's slave mistress lived together at Calvert's first plantation during the early years of their marriage.[34] Despite Rosalie's openness to her sister about personal happiness, marital fidelity, birth control, and pregnancy, she never mentioned in her letters her husband's liaison with the slave and the humiliation it must have caused her. Rosalie and Isabelle thus felt weighed down not only by their unending domestic tasks in America, but also by the fear and shame connected with slavery, grim by-products of American capitalism.

Their feeling of unease was made worse because gender expectations were different in America than in Antwerp. Isabelle, who was often alone in Alexandria during the first years of their emigration because her husband and brother traveled for business, complained that she did not know how to fill her days meaningfully. Imbued with ideals derived from Rousseau, her brother advised her to read *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, where she would find the example of Julie to be a salutary one. Julie was a wonderful mother and educator—comparable to Isabelle, who should make the education of her little Louise her highest aspiration. Indeed, Charles and Isabelle's husband were then looking for a place to settle that would be suitable for the couple to raise children, ideally somewhere in the countryside.[35] It is doubtful that Charles's letter did much to alleviate his sister's *mal de vivre,* for she preferred the city to the country and found American women's preoccupation with children and home difficult to bear. Rosalie agreed with her sister, complaining that a woman's sphere in America was too restrictive and made women petty and uninteresting:

> Les femmes, je trouve, sont en général fausses, peu spirituelles, sans talent et sans instruction; cela est tout naturel car elles sont toujours entre elles sans hommes et alors leur seule conversation ne roule que sur leur ménage, leurs enfants et toilette.
>
> The women, I find, are generally conceited, and have neither wit, talent nor instruction: this is only natural since they are always among themselves without men and thus they only talk about their household, children, and clothes.[36]

Isabelle and Rosalie were urban women of means, education, and ambition. Like their brother, they were accustomed to a lively social life and a sophisticated intellectual and cultural environment. Besides, like other Belgian women of the

upper-middle class, they were expected to be active in society at large, at a minimum to manage family affairs and assets. In order to make this possible their parents gave them an education comparable to their brothers' and equal rights to family assets and inheritance; in return they expected their daughters not only to be able to run their households capably, but also to be informed about the arts and hold their own intellectually in sophisticated cosmopolitan milieus.[37]

Even though Isabelle and Rosalie took their roles as educators of their children and moral compass of their families seriously, they were frustrated when these tasks got in the way of their other aspirations.[38] Like Charles, they expected that their wealth and social status would afford them some leisure to pursue interests of their own, preferably in society at large. However, in their American, circles they found that this was not acceptable for women.[39] Exacerbating Isabelle and Rosalie's feelings of being chained to the home was the burden of childcare, which was heavier for them in America than it had been for their mother in Antwerp. Whereas Mrs Stier had given birth to four children (one of them dying aged eight), Rosalie and Isabelle each had much larger families (nine and seven children respectively). Both women complained about their too frequent pregnancies, and would have wanted to bear fewer children, but were unsuccessful in resisting their husbands' authority on the matter.[40] At one point, their father wrote to Rosalie's husband to plead with him to spare Rosalie further pregnancies.[41]

Problems of self-definition also plagued Charles Stier and Jean Michel van Havre, who found it difficult to affirm themselves in America's business world. In Antwerp these young men could have lived comfortably from the income from proprietary wealth—rents from tenants, returns on bonds, interest from money out on loan—but this kind of income was hard to come by in America, where there were few rent-paying tenants, and money lent was vulnerable to inflation and market fluctuation.[42] Moreover, they now had a greater need for money than in Antwerp, since in addition to their living expenses, they were responsible for large taxes the French levied on their properties in Antwerp. It was necessary, therefore, for them to engage in business, and to this end, they decided to import luxury goods from Belgium, in particular lace. However, despite their hard work and continued efforts to adapt their imports to the American market, they did not succeed.

Their failure underlines important differences in the values and expectations of Americans and Europeans. In America, all kinds of people, rich and poor, engaged in commercial activities. If they did not have capital of their own, they borrowed money to invest in goods, services, and businesses they thought the growing country needed or desired. If they were unsuccessful in one area, they tried another, and were not afraid to take substantial risks on even the chanciest real estate speculations or the volatile slave trade, even if that meant that from one day to the next they could lose most of their investment.

When Charles confided his business difficulties to his father, the latter, who had been an astute investor in Antwerp, revealed his visceral resistance to the American entrepreneurial system. He understood the sociological and psychological factors that blocked his son and son-in-law's paths to commercial success in America: "Vos habitudes sont trop enracinées et trop contraires pour en attendre quelque chose." "Your [European] habits are too ingrained and they are just the opposite of what you would need to succeed here."[43] However, he held fast to his conviction that they should continue to invest conservatively. They should remember that they were

fundamentally different from Americans, most of whom were self-made men. For them, business losses did not mean much because they would only result in a return to their original state, where they had nothing. However, Charles and Jean Michel van Havre were different: they possessed a family fortune, which it was their responsibility to preserve. Failing in business was too risky for them, for it would harm not only themselves, but also their future generations, for whom they were ultimately responsible. They were "trop lourds pour courir et franchir des fossés" "too heavy to leap [as agilely as the American businessmen]" and it was therefore right that they invest more cautiously. [44] Henri Stier's conception of business was aristocratic, which means it was static, discouraging upward mobility and an independent, active, and creative temperament, indispensable factors for commercial success in America.

Moreover, the Stiers considered that working solely for money was dishonorable and base. They valued leisure and freedom from financial need as necessary conditions to do honor to their family's name by distinguishing themselves in the pursuit of a specialized interest or by assuming the burdens of public office. The American Revolution, however, had promoted labor from necessity to honorable pursuit for people from all walks of life.[45] Indeed, their American friends, even those belonging to the most prominent circles of society, such as George Washington or William Bingham, the founder of the Bank of America, led busy professional lives in banking, commerce, or agriculture. Shocked by this clash of values, Charles Stier wrote to a friend in Antwerp, whom he had initially encouraged to join him in emigration that he might find it hard to adapt to life in the United States:

> L'étranger surtout s'il n'est pas Anglais y rencontre de grandes difficultés que la résolution la plus persistante seule peut surmonter. Imaginez-vous [...] que la manière de vivre y est si différente en tout de celle d'un Français qu'il faut pour ainsi dire refondre toutes ses habitudes et devenir un autre homme.
>
> The foreigner, especially if he is not an Englishman, encounters many difficulties, which he can surmount only thanks to the greatest determination. Imagine that the lifestyle here is so different from that of a Frenchman that one must change all of one's habits and become a different man.[46]

To change all of his habits and give up his values proved impossible for Charles, who remained the quintessential European aristocrat, albeit with republican values. He found solace from his business worries by distinguishing himself through service to his community. In Alexandria, he was one of the founding members of the Alexandria Library Company and had the ambition to found an art school.[47] As soon as he returned to Antwerp in 1801, he accepted the important office of *Administrateur des Hospices Civils* (formerly the office of *Grand Aumônier*), even though his parents urged him to decline that post and concentrate on the management of his own family's affairs.[48] Nevertheless, he stuck to his decision; not only was *Administrateur des Hospices Civils* the most prestigious public position in Antwerp, but it was one that members of his family had served in for generations. Perhaps most importantly, he felt that he fulfilled a debt of honor to the departmental prefect, Charles Fortuné, Marquis d'Herbouville (1758–1829), who was helping to remove the Stiers from the list of émigrés. The job proved to be time consuming and lasted a full two years, after which Charles rewarded himself with a

ten-month-long Parisian honeymoon with his new bride.[49] In Europe, he seamlessly resumed living a life in which he felt whole.

Charles was also averse to what he saw as Americans' rampant materialism and admonished his sister Rosalie when he thought that she too was becoming obsessed with her material well-being. He wrote to her that she would do better to read more and cultivate her mind—even to spend time entertaining pleasantly—than to fill her days improving her new home, garden, and furnishings. Rosalie brushed off his remonstrations by explaining that in America material possessions made a big difference among individuals. She wrote,

> I see my brother is still the philosopher…. You say one is less merry in luxurious apartments, but I think just the contrary. A beautifully decorated salon, filled with well-dressed people and musicians performing, enlivens me and makes me happier. But it is not the same here as it is at home—here one must differentiate oneself a little from the mob in order to be respected by them.[50]

Moved by his commitment to aristocratic values, Charles was not convinced, and repeatedly admonished his sister not to become indifferent to intellectual, artistic, and spiritual pursuits.

Whereas Charles clung to an idealized America which asked of its citizens selflessness in the name of public good and in return promised them a new moral and social order, Rosalie and her parents accepted the more realistic America of the early nineteenth century, an America that, in the words of historian Gordon Wood, had undergone a radical transformation into a democracy characterized by "people's absorption in their private lives and interests," where no one paid much attention anymore to selflessness or public duty.[51] We might expect that the elder Stiers would have found it even harder than their children to adjust to their new environment would, but it was just the opposite. Their attachment to the United States hinged on the fact that they could have some peace there and would not be disturbed by revolutions like the ones they had known in Europe. They were delighted finally to be masters of their own destiny, without having to concern themselves with the rest of society. They had put their active life behind them and looked forward to enjoying their favorite pastimes—gardening, art collecting, and reading. Their individualism was a natural reaction to the political turmoil they had experienced and from which they wanted to distance themselves as much as possible.

Charles might not have shared his parents' and Rosalie's individualism, but he was too close to them to notice it and make objections. Some 30 years after him, however, Tocqueville, a more detached observer of the American nation, voiced the concerns Charles might have had, commenting that individualism was one of the unfortunate consequences of American democracy since it turned citizens inward, rather than having them participate in the life of the Republic as had been the intention of the Founding Fathers:

> L'individualisme est un sentiment réfléchi et paisible qui dispose chaque citoyen à s'isoler de la masse de ses semblables et à se retirer à l'écart avec sa famille et ses amis: de telle sorte que, après s'être ainsi créé une petite société à son usage, il abandonne volontiers la grande société à elle-même.
>
> Individualism is a thoughtful and quiet feeling which disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart with his

> family and his friends, so that after he has thus formed a little circle of his own, he willingly leaves society at large to itself.[52]

Unlike their children, the elder Stiers had no pressing desire to become assimilated to America or to play a significant part in building its future. Indeed, neither of them really tried to improve their imperfect knowledge of English. Instead, they were content to retire to the little enclave they created, surrounded by their extended family and depending as little as possible on anyone else. In Belgium, they had enjoyed living in the countryside for part of the year, and they looked for a similar arrangement in America. When Charles signed the last papers for the purchase of land in Bladensburg for his father, he predicted, "Tout ira mieux lorsque papa, étant planteur auprès de nous, viendra nous vendre des poulets et pot au lait Alors il aura un objet réel pour l'occuper." [Everything will be fine when Papa, being our farmer, will come to sell the chickens and milk.... Then he'll have something to keep him busy.][53] Marie Louise Stier, who had assumed the role of full-fledged partner to her husband in the planning and building of Riversdale, was the main voice for extolling the virtues of their little "colony":

> J'ai encore fait des plans pour notre colonie. Comme il est dit dans l'Évangile, il nous faut avant tout chercher le royaume des Cieux; je commencerai par faire une Chapelle; Varent viendra y faire la messe tous les dimanches et vous y viendrez tous, M. van Havre et tous les enfants, et passerez la journée avec nous... Papa vous fournira les premières graines pour vos jardins. Quand on tuera un veau ou un mouton, il en enverra un quart aux autres qui à leur tour lui en enverront de même, ainsi nous aurons souvent du frais; avec la volaille nous ferons des échanges, selon qu'on en aura besoin; quand il fait clair de lune nous irons manger des veaux rôtis chez l'un et l'autre; des fromages, des crèmes et des glaces car nous serons de bonnes laitières, nous aurons les meilleurs fruits du canton, du bon cidre, de la bonne bière que nous brasserons en commun, nous planterons du *tobacco* pour avoir du vin, thé, sucre et café. Nous aurons toujours un cheval prêt à monter, et une bonne voiture ou *cauch* [sic] pour aller nous promener dans la ville et y faire nos commissions.
>
> I have once again made plans for our colony. Since Holy Writ commands us to seek the Kingdom of Heaven first of all, I shall begin by building the chapel. Varens will come to celebrate mass every Sunday, and you will come, too, and the van Havres, and all of the children. You will all spend the whole day with us, unless you have other things planned. Papa will provide the first seeds for your garden. When a sheep or a calf is butchered, he will send the quarters to the others, and they in turn will send the same to him. So we'll have fresh meat often. We'll trade poultry as we need to; dine on roast veal at each other's homes on moonlit nights. There will be the best cheeses, cream, and ice cream, because we shall all have fine dairies, and we shall have the best fruits of the area, make wonderful cider and beer which we'll brew together. We'll plant tobacco in order to trade it for wine, tea, sugar, and coffee. We'll always have a horse ready to mount, and a fine coach to take us to the city and to do our errands.[54]

However, they were not to enjoy their American idyll. By the time they moved into Riversdale, in August 1802, the family was already dislocated. Mimi had died in Antwerp, and Charles Stier and Jean Michel van Havre were in Antwerp hard at work trying to arrange for their parents' smooth return to the homeland. Charles had gone to Paris and had met Napoleon; he could not be more enthusiastic about the First Consul and his beneficial influence on the former Belgian provinces to

whom, Charles was convinced, Napoleon had brought lasting peace. Unswayed by Charles's persistent arguments, but realizing that there was no hope for the family to remain together, Henri Stier and his wife agreed in autumn of 1802 to "join the greater number" and return to Antwerp.[55] In the meantime, Jean Michel van Havre had already made the ocean crossing back to the United States to help them pack, and the whole family, except Rosalie, Calvert, and their two children, sailed back to Europe in June 1803. None of them would ever come back to the United States.

Epilogue

As she had feared, Marie Louise Stier died soon after their return to Antwerp; it had been too much for her to be uprooted once again and to abandon the dream of peace and independence she had enjoyed at Riversdale. Henri Stier survived the voyage, the sorrow over his wife's death, and his separation from Rosalie and her family, but he was not immediately ready to resume an active life. For a time after his return, his heart remained in America. Suspicious of Napoleon's political power and influence over Belgian culture and society, he did not want to be part of the new aristocracy created by Napoleon. He retired to his country estate of the Mick in the countryside near Antwerp. There he could dream about Riversdale, send Rosalie seeds and bulbs from his most successful plants, introduced American plants and trees in his Belgian park, and encourage his son-in-law to use new European agricultural techniques to improve yields on the plantation.[56] Now vicariously living his American dream via his daughter, he asked her to continue to invest for him substantial capital in America and coached her on how to become a *de facto* ambassador for Belgian style and culture in Washington.

Indeed, when Rosalie was separated from her Belgian family, she felt more urgently than before the need to affirm her Belgian identity in Washington. She completed the mansion Riversdale and its gardens in the Belgian style her father had desired and took advantage of the world-famous collection of Flemish masters still in her possession and of her family's relation to the great Rubens himself.[57] In turn, her father, sister, and brother, conscious of the impression Rosalie made on her American friends, kept her informed about the newest literature, fashions, and trends in Antwerp. They sent her art, furniture, and textiles that were hard to find in America to furnish the mansion, and shipped foods, wine, porcelain, and glassware so that she could entertain in style. When her eldest daughter Caroline made her debut in Washington society in 1817, she and Caroline were dressed in the finest dresses Antwerp's fashions offered, carefully chosen, and sent by Isabelle. Thus, Rosalie fashioned a distinctly Belgian self-image, taking it upon herself to educate her children, friends, and the members of the Washington diplomatic circles about her Belgian heritage.

Appreciating his national and familial cultural heritage had become an important consideration for Charles Stier, as well. He remarried, but to his great disappointment did not have any children. He poured all of his energy into art connoisseurship and collecting. Together with his father, he devoted himself to augmenting the family's collection, eventually hoping to make it available to the larger public. In 1815, he served with his father on a prestigious commission for the restitution of Flemish art treasures looted by the French during the Revolutionary wars and displayed at the Louvre during Napoleon's reign. The restitution of these treasures helped restore Belgian pride in their national culture and rekindle the Stiers' enthusiasm for art

collecting, especially since it coincided with the return of the family's collection from America. From 1816 to Henri Stier's death in 1821, father and son worked tirelessly on the family's collection, intending that it would become accessible to the public after Henri's death. The enlarged collection soon attained international stature, as is attested by a letter from Isabelle to Rosalie that no foreigner of note passed through Antwerp without asking to see it.[58] Upon Henri Stier's death in 1821, Charles attempted to interest the United States in the acquisition of the family's collection, so that it could become the core of a national museum of the United States.[59] This plan failed because, unlike European nations, the United States did not yet have an interest in the creation of a national art collection.[60]

As for Isabelle's family, despite her husband's recognition by Napoleon and the prestige ensuing from this favor, the family remained wistful about their years in the United States.

Not only did their elder sons always consider themselves Americans (they were indeed born in the United States), but they retained close links with Rosalie's children and their descendants in America. In the 1860s, one of the van Havre grandsons, Henri Jean Joseph Adrien van Havre (1835–1901), became secretary of the Belgian Embassy in Washington, thereby formalizing a role his great-aunt Rosalie had held.[61]

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Charles Butterwo (University of Maryland, College Park) and René Paddags (PhD Candidate), University of Maryland, for their helpful comments on the first drafts of the article and archivist Erik Houtman (Algemeen Rijksarchief, Antwepen) for sharing his unpublished paper on the ran Havre estate.

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Abbreviations of manuscript sources

Cal S-V	Calvert-Stier Papers, van de Werve Family Archives, Viersel,Belgium.
Carter Trans-MHS	Typescript, in English, in the Henri J. Stier Papers, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore. (Most of the letters in this collection are from Rosalie to her brother Charles. This typescript is a translation made in 1905 for John Ridgely Carter, one of Rosalie's descendants. The original letters, written in French, have been lost.)
CJS-A	Charles J. Stier Papers, Henry de Witte Archives, Antwerp.
Van Havre-S	Van Havre Papers, Château du List Archives, Schoten, Belgium.

Notes

1. Their correspondence is in French with occasional Flemish and English words and expressions. The English translations of the correspondence in this paper are mine unless otherwise indicated. A selection of letters from Rosalie Stier Calvert from the period 1803–1821 has been published in English translation as Callcott, *Mistress of Riversdale*.
2. Genealogist Jean Raymond de Terwangne identifies Henri Stier and his father, Albert Jan Stier (1701–1759), together with the Cogels family, as the foremost bankers in Antwerp during the eighteenth century. Henri Stier's father was born in Amsterdam to a rich merchant family but had moved to Antwerp by the time of his marriage in 1736. Terwangne, "Notice biographique," 28. The Peeters family had lived in Antwerp since the latter half of the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century, the family acceded to the wealthy bourgeoisie and Edouard Peeters (1612–1672) started an art collection that would eventually come into the hands of the Stier family. A daughter of Edouard Peeters married Constant de Weerdt, a grandson of Peter Paul Rubens, and it is likely through him that several paintings by Rubens arrived in the Peeters collection. Although the family continued to acquire art objects and paintings, it was Jean Égide Peeters (1725–1786), the father-in-law of Henri Stier, who was responsible for creating the world-famous Peeters collection, which Joshua Reynolds and other painters and connoisseurs came to see in Antwerp in the 1780s. See Terwangne, "Notice biographique," 4, 127–8.
3. The title of nobility was acquired in 1778 by Henri Stier's mother, Isabelle de Labistrate (1717–1787) for her son, Jean-François Xavier Stier (1739–1792). Through him it passed to Jean Stier (1739–1792) but when is not clear. See Guyot, "Un milieu Rubenien à Anvers," 19.
4. The Stiers owned three homes in Belgium: a townhouse in the Venusstraat in a fashionable neighborhood of Antwerp; a recently built country home named the "Mick" in Brasschaat; and a castle, "Cleydael," in Aartselaar.
5. Henri Stier (along with his two brothers) had attended the University of Louvain, and so did his son Charles Jean Stier (1770–1848). Guyot, "Un milieu Rubénien," 19. The Stier girls, Isabelle Marie (1768–1822) and Rosalie Eugénie (1778–1821), both went to a prestigious English boarding school in Liège, the English Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre. This school attracted an international clientele, with students coming from England, Spain, Scotland, Germany, and even America. Bousse, "The European Education of Rosalie Stier."
6. For further information on the fate of this collection in America, see Letzter, "Rubens in America."
7. Guyot, "Un milieu Rubenien," 34. Aside from being consul, Beelen Bertholff imported lace from Belgium, which may have inspired Henri Stier to recommend the same business to his son and son-in-law.
8. Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale*, 3.
9. Upon their arrival in America, the family consisted of: Henri Joseph Stier (61), his wife, Marie Louise (56), and their three children, Isabelle Marie (26), Charles Jean (24), and Rosalie Eugénie (16); Isabelle's husband, Jean Michel Antoine Louis van Havre (30), and their daughter Louise (3); Charles's new bride, Marie Joséphine A. van Havre (known as Mimi) (24), who was Jean Michel's younger sister, and two unidentified servants. The most complete information about the Stier family, in particular their genealogy and dates, can be found in an article by the Antwerp archivist Alfons Bousse, "Nazaten van Rubens in Amerika."
10. See Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale*, 15.
11. Rembrandt Peale recounted this experience at the end of his career in "Reminiscences," *The Crayon*, II (19 September, 1855), 175.
12. George Washington recorded this dinner of 20 June 1799 in his diary. Washington, *The Diaries*, 352–53.

13. Henri Stier would himself become naturalized at the end of 1800. His naturalization was in conflict with the Federal Naturalization Act of 1798, which required 14 years of residency before admission to full citizenship, but in 1802 Congress repealed the act and reinstated the five-year residency requirement. See Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale*, 43, n 97.
14. Riversdale mansion still stands, in present-day Riverdale Park, Maryland.
15. Journal of Charles Jean Stier 8, 9, and 22 January 1801. CJS-A. According to Calcott, the Field miniatures are in a private collection in Belgium. Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale*, 44 (note 109). For a reference to one of the new art acquisitions Henri Stier made around this time see the letter from Marie Louise Stier to Charles Jean Stier, Riversdale, 17 April 1802, CJS-A: "Papa a acheté un petit tableau de Breughel représentant un canal hollandais avec la fin d'un village et tout plein de peuple à pied, à cheval, en chariot et charrette, qui va et vient du marché. Il en a donné 29 dollars."
16. The Brabant Revolution was centered in Brabant and had widespread support from the clergy, Catholic nobility, guilds, and wealthy commercial towns like Antwerp. Members of the liberal professions and the cosmopolitan aristocracy initially supported the reforms planned by Joseph II (especially the laicization of the state and the centralization of the government in Brussels) but withdrew their support for them because of the manner in which the reforms were imposed. Wils, *Van Clovis tot Happart,* 106–12, esp. 109. According to linguist Guido Geerts, the use of language (French or Flemish) during the Austrian period often determined political orientations. French gradually spread among the nobility and the high bourgeoisie as the language of civilization, public life, and social relations. The "Frenchification" of the Flemish elite greatly increased their exposure to the revolutionary ideas of the Enlightenment, and in the 1780s to the objectives of the French Revolution. On the other hand, the great majority of dialect-speaking Flemish had no contact with these ideas and remained under the sway of the Church. Geerts, "Language Legislation in Belgium."
17. According to historian Gladys Guyot, Henri Stier was arrested in October 1789 because of his opposition to the Brabant Revolution. See Guyot, "Un milieu rubénien," 32. Although I have found no direct evidence of his arrest, nor of his political position in the Brabant Revolution, a letter from his wife attests to her exasperation with the politics of the clergy, which had made the Belgian provinces more vulnerable to the French invasions of 1794, "Nos orgueilleux moines qui ont cru réussir mieux et nous ont laissé tomber dans le bourbier." See letter from Marie Louise Stier to Charles Stier, Annapolis, 12 February 1796, CJS-A.
18. Cited in Guyot, "Une famille anversoise," 28–9; and Donnet, "Un vol de tableaux de Rubens," 37. The source of Stier's note is a manuscript chronicle of the first years of the French occupation of Antwerp by Pierre-Antoine-Joseph Goetsbloets (1793–1797). See D'Hainaut-Zveny, "Tijdsgebeurtenissen."
19. Allan Potofsky clarifies the distinction between political exile and *émigré* stating that the former meant that the individual left France temporarily during a period of political opposition but remained loyal to the Nation, whereas the *émigré* was a "traitor to the Nation" according to the terms of the law of 23 March 1793, which classified *émigrés* in seven categories, each punishable by more severe sanctions. Potofsky, "La Révolution transatlantique des émigrés," 248.
20. Letter from Henri Joseph Stier to Charles Jean Stier, Annapolis, 12 December 1798, CJS-A.
21. Draft of a letter from Charles Jean Stier to an unidentified friend in Antwerp (probably Joseph Charles H.J.N. della Faille de Leverghem, 1754–1822, the husband of Jean Michel van Havre's half-sister, Catherine), Alexandria, 1 October 1798, CJS-A.
22. Letter from Charles Jean Stier to an unidentified friend Alexandria, 1 October 1798, CJS-A.

23. Letter from Charles Jean Stier to Henri Joseph Stier, Antwerp, [Journal de Charles Jean Stier, n.d. end of 1802, beginning 1803], CJS-A. Charles Stier's observation that leisure was perceived as wasteful idleness anticipates Alexis de Tocqueville's analysis by some 30 years. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2, 293–5.
24. See letter from Charles Jean Stier to Isabelle van Havre, Norfolk, 9 June 1795, CJS-A. Charles refers affectionately to their sister as the "second Sappho," and wishes she had had the chance to perfect her skills in America. He hopes that Isabelle's daughter Louise, who showed a talent for music, would not meet with the same fate as Rosalie.
25. Letter from Rosalie Stier Calvert to Charles Jean Stier, 5 May 1808, Cal S-V; transcribed in Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale,* 185–7.
26. See Rosalie's complaints about this situation to Marie Louise Stier, Riversdale, 12 May 1803. Van Havre-S. For a translation of part of this letter, see Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale,* 83.
27. See, for example, the letter from Marie Louise Stier to Charles Jean Stier, Bladensburg, 23 March 1802, CJS-A, in which she worries that her husband exhausts himself at this task.
28. Tocqueville observed that hereditary servants were a characteristic of aristocratic societies. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2, 223.
29. For a comparable situation, see the correspondence of the Duke of Arenberg, a contemporary of the Stiers, who in his letters expressed his gratitude to his servants for remaining loyal to him and taking care of his properties during his emigration to Vienna. Derez, et al., *De Blinde hertog*, 127.
30. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2, 192, 221–30.
31. Letter from Isabelle van Havre to Charles Jean Stier, Bladensburg, 1 and 5 July 1802, CJS-A. In light of Isabelle's numerous complaints about slaves, it seems strange that in summer 1804, when discussing Rosalie's possible return to Antwerp, she suggested to her sister that she bring with her some of her slaves, "since it had become customary in Antwerp to have black slaves." She also wrote wistfully that she wished she had a female slave to help nurse her new baby. Letter from Isabelle van Havre to Rosalie Stier Calvert, Antwerp, [n.d. but probably summer 1804], Cal S-V. Nevertheless, Isabelle never owned any slaves in Antwerp, even though in 1803 she could have kept with her Lucie, a young slave, who had just crossed the ocean with the family. Instead, she sent Lucie back to America, where Rosalie sold her a few months later. For more on Lucie's fate, see Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale,* 59, 61n, 64, 65, and 85.
32. Letter from Isabelle van Havre to Jean Marie van Havre, Bladensburg, 5 April (to 26 May) 1802, CJS-A.
33. Letter from Isabelle van Havre to Charles Jean Stier, Bladensburg, late February-early March 1802, CJS-A.
34. Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale,* 378–84. Calcott surmises that Rosalie knew about this liaison.
35. Letter from Charles Jean Stier to Isabelle van Havre, Norfolk, 9 June 1795, CJS-A.
36. Letter from Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, Annapolis, 28 January 1796, Cal S-V. Tocqueville observed (and was shocked by) the same confinement to the domestic sphere imposed on American married women. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2, 251, 259, 263–6.
37. For details on the Stier girls' education, see note 6. For more information on Henri Stier's policy of treating his children equally in matters of property division, see Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale,* 372.
38. See, for example, the letter from Rosalie Stier Calvert to Henri Joseph Stier, Riversdale, 19 January 1807, Van Havre-S; or the letter from Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, Riversdale, 20 July 1806, Van Havre-S.
39. For more on the concept of "republican motherhood" that gave American women of that period a political role by restricting them to the domestic sphere, see Kerber, "The

Republican Mother," 203–5; for an analysis of the political and social restrictions placed on women in the early American Republic, see Smith, "The Adequate Revolution," 691. Recently, some scholars have nuanced this view of the restrictive role imposed on women during this period by showing that there were possible areas for their political activism (albeit via informal networks and through influencing their spouses), see for example, Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames*; and Allgor, *Parlor Politics.*

40. Historian Mary Beth Norton sees evidence that by the 1780s there was a trend among American couples toward more equality in marriage, which manifested itself in, among other things, their cooperation to prevent pregnancies. Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 232. However, this trend is not evident in either Isabelle's or Rosalie's marriage.
41. Letter from Henri Joseph Stier to George Calvert, Antwerp 15 August 1816, Cal S-V.
42. The term "proprietary wealth" comes from historian George V. Taylor, who explains that land-owning gentry earned income from proprietary wealth sufficient to allow them not to have to work for a living and to take on public office without expecting high salaries. Taylor, "Non-Capitalist Wealth."
43. Letter from Henri Joseph Stier to Isabelle and Jean Michel van Havre, Annapolis, 30 November 1796, CJS-A.
44. Letter from Henri Joseph Stier to Charles Jean Stier, Annapolis, 7 August 1797, CJS-A.
45. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 284f.
46. Letter from Charles Jean Stier to an unidentified friend in Antwerp, Alexandria, 16 December 1798, CJS-A.
47. See letter from Henri Joseph Stier to Charles Jean Stier, Annapolis, February 1799, CJS-A.
48. The position of *Administrateur des Hospices Civils,* the head of Antwerp's charitable organizations, was one of the most prestigious public functions in the city. Well-to-do noblemen accepted it not because they needed the extra income provided by it, but rather because of the honor and prestige associated with it. However, this position carried with it substantial financial risk because if city revenues failed to materialize or there was more need than revenue among the poor, the *grand aumônier* was supposed to provide for the difference with his own funds. See Degryse, "Stadsadel en stadsbestuur te Antwerpen in de 18de eeuw," esp. 476, note 53. It should also be noted that there was an important cultural component to this position, for the *grand aumônier* was a crucial member of the direction of the city's theaters. Conversely, revenues from ticket sales (for theater, opera, and balls) made up the bulk of the incoming funds for his charitable foundation. De Clerck and Van Deyck, "Letterkundigen en schrijvers," 281.
49. Letter from Charles Jean Stier to Henri Joseph Stier, Paris, October 1804, CJS-A.
50. Charles's letter is lost but Rosalie's response remains. Letter from Rosalie Stier Calvert to Charles Jean Stier, Riversdale, [n. d.] January 1807. Carter Trans-MHS. This letter is transcribed in Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale,* 159. See also a later letter from Rosalie in which she responds once more to Charles's admonitions that she is becoming too materialistic. Letter from Rosalie Stier Calvert to Charles Jean Stier, Riversdale, 10 December 1808, Carter Trans-MHS. See Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale,* 196. Rosalie understood that in America's egalitarian society where all privileges and distinctions were abolished, the only way to differentiate oneself was the acquisition of material affluence. See also Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, "Du goût du bien-être matériel en Amérique," and "Des effets particuliers que produit l'amour des jouissances matérielles dans les siècles démocratiques," vol. 2, 161–7.
51. For a statement of the argument about the transformation of the United States from enlightened republicanism to individualistic democracy, see Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 210.
52. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2, 125. Tocqueville saw the reason for this perversion in the unrealistic demands a democracy made on its citizens. A democracy asked of each of its citizens to serve the whole of mankind (rather than one specific

aristocratic patron or sovereign, as in an aristocracy), but this expectation was so grand and unspecific that it could easily be ignored and inevitably disappeared. Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, vol. 2, 126–7, 129–30.

53. Letter from Charles Stier to Isabelle van Havre, Alexandria, 11 August 1800, Van Havre-S.
54. Letter from Marie Louise Stier to Charles Jean Stier, Bladensburg, [n. d.] but after November 1800, CJS-A.
55. Letter from Henri Joseph Stier to Charles Jean Stier, Riversdale, [November 1802], CJS-A.
56. Henri Stier's interest in horticulture and agriculture shows not only a long-standing personal passion, but also his adherence to physiocratic ideals of agrarian reform. Another disciple of the physiocrats who spent time in America in the 1790s was François-Alexandre-Frédéric, duc de La Rochefoucault-Liancourt (1747–1827), who published in 1798 an 8-volume *Voyages dans les Etats-Unis d'Amérique*, covering the years 1794–1797.
57. For more on Rosalie's use of the art collection as a means to inform the American public about Belgian culture, see Letzter, "Rubens in America."
58. Letter from Isabelle van Havre to Rosalie Stier Calvert, draft [n.d.], Cal S-V. For a translation of part of this letter, see Calcott, *Mistress of Riversdale,* 333, n5.
59. For more on the reasons why he chose America rather than Belgium as a destination for his collection, see Letzter, "Rubens in America."
60. Indeed, it would take more than another century before the National Gallery of Art was created.
61. Isabelle and Jean Michel van Havre's sons did not return to the United States, but one of their grandsons did in the 1860s. In 1867, this Henri van Havre married Camilla Hurlbut Webb, the daughter of the famous American officer Joseph Warren Webb (1812–1865), who fought on the side of the South in the Civil War. Henri van Havre and his bride returned to Belgium in 1868. See Houtman, "Het Kasteeldomein De List in Schoten."

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