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JUNE/JULY 2015

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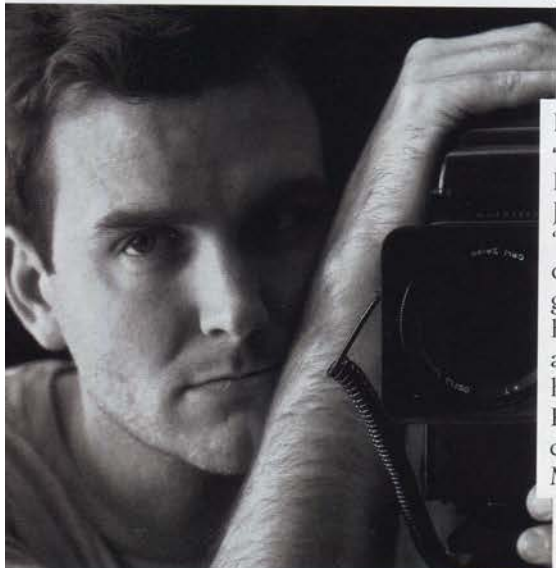
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T&C CONTRIBUTORS



VICTOR DEMARCHELIER

For this month's cover story, "A BEAUTIFUL MIND" (page 122), Demarchelier photographed Jennifer Connelly, whom he calls "a real beauty" with "a strong opinion and point of view." After graduating from Vassar, where he studied economics and studio art, Demarchelier worked for his fashion photographer father, Patrick. He has shot several covers for *T&C*, including Gugu Mbatha-Raw in March.



MARCIA DESANCTIS

While living in Paris for four years, DeSanctis found that Americans' very relaxed idea of comfort required some explaining. "I have a French friend who was fascinated by the La-Z-Boy," says the author of the *New York Times* best-seller *100 Places in France Every Woman Should Go*. In "FEMME FATIGUE" (page 102) she argues for the many things French women could learn from their Yankee sisters.

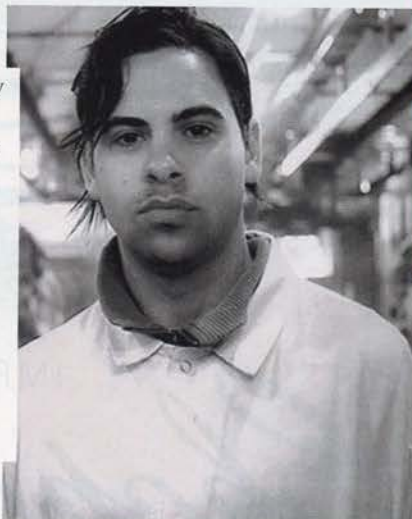
TOM SHONE

Shone, pictured with daughter Juliet, profiled Jennifer Connelly for "A BEAUTIFUL MIND" (page 122). "She has a rep as a tough interviewee who doesn't suffer fools, but we got on terrifically," says Shone, who describes her emotional intelligence as "like rock salt. I love the way she drills down into characters." Shone, the movie critic for the *Economist's Intelligent Life* magazine, teaches film history at NYU.



CHRISTIAN FERRETTI

While shooting the jewelry in "THE GRIP OF PASSION" (page 152), Ferretti "immediately connected to this woman, drenched in over-the-top gems in an Upper East Side apartment." The native Californian started out working for David LaChapelle and Annie Leibovitz; he now shoots for *Interview* and *W*, among other publications.



HOLLY PETERSON

Peterson defines grilling—her subject in "HEATED COMPETITION" (page 158)—as "the perfect storm of obsession for one-percenters who seek to fulfill their gregarious, hedonistic, and somewhat self-aggrandizing desire to serve the most perfectly massaged Kobe beef on the largest grill on the most expansive patio behind the most luxurious home." She is the author of *The Manny* and *The Idea of Him*.

MANNERS & MISDEMEANORS

By Marcia DeSanctis

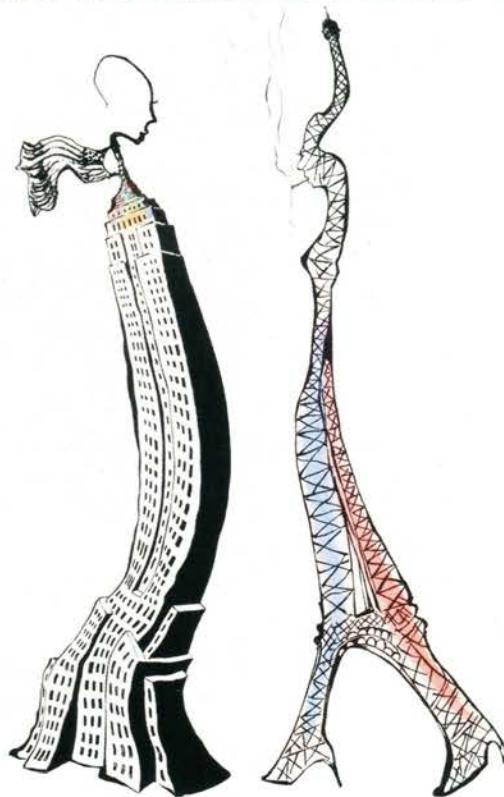
Illustration by
Horacio Salinas

Of all the harsh words written by expatriate Americans about their motherland, Edith Wharton's inflict the sharpest sting: "What a horror it is for a whole nation to be developing without the sense of beauty and eating bananas for breakfast," she wrote to her friend Sara Norton in 1904. Two years later Wharton had abandoned her disappointing country for the classier shores of France. Thirteen years after that, from the bombed-out ruins of World War I, Wharton went public with *French Ways and Their Meaning*, one chapter of which laid the blueprint for the now accepted theory that the American woman is, in every way, inferior to her Gallic counterpart. In other words, she threw her compatriots under the bus. "The Frenchwoman is grown up," Wharton wrote. "Compared with the women of France, the average American woman is still in kindergarten." Ouch.

I love France. In fact, I just wrote a book—really, a 420-page love letter—to it. I strongly believe that for women the country can have transformative, even mystical powers. I lived, worked, and married there and made lots of friends from whom I absorbed critical life lessons as thirstily as cherries soak up brandy, including how to whip up *pâte à choux*, pour wine with lunch, and expertly shop for leeks and chanterelles. Nevermore will my (expensive) bra not match my (equally expensive) underpants. I always wear heels and just enough perfume; unless I'm actually exercising I wouldn't be caught dead in sweatpants. And my kids eat like adults; no Happy Meals at my dinner table. In many ways both quantifiable and ethereal, the years I spent in France changed me for the infinitely better and wiser.

And yet...

Through it all I remained resolutely American, a Boston-bred Yankee loyal to my roots to the bone. So when I read time and again of the superiority of the French



CULTURE CLASH

FEMME FATIGUE

JE SUIS OVER THE
ENDURING AMERICAN
OBSESSION WITH
THE FRENCH WOMAN.

female, it fans a spark of defensiveness on behalf of my countrywomen. Putting aside the occasional hankering for a deep-fried Twinkie, I submit that, in terms of relative merits, there is a parity of graces between French and American women. Furthermore, there is much they could learn from us—even according to some Parisians.

"I am so impressed by the drive of American women. You are fearless, very positive, and seem to be so wonderfully in control of your lives," says Mathilde Thomas, co-founder of the French beauty company

Caudalie and five-year resident of New York City. Her upcoming book, *The French Beauty Solution: Time-Tested Secrets to Look and Feel Beautiful Inside and Out*, touts the French emphasis on pleasure in a skincare routine, yet even she allows that in some areas—like grooming—American women win, hands down. "New Yorkers especially are impeccable. Never a bad hair day. Always a perfect manicure," she says. "And I don't know if it's the fluoride, but American women have incredibly beautiful smiles." (Certainly fluoride has something to do with it, but so does our aversion to nicotine. A French woman may hold her Gauloise with worldly languor, but it is *still* a cigarette.)

I don't buy the trope that "American" and "sophisticated" are mutually exclusive, and history bears me out. Consider the many American women who have influenced French culture and history: Julia Child, Josephine Baker, M.F.K. Fisher, Janet Flanner, Mary Cassatt, Gertrude Stein, and the chiseled Lee Miller of Poughkeepsie. Paris swooned over Louisiana-born Amélie Gautreau's lavender powder and gasped at her creamy shoulders as painted by John Singer Sargent. The Gilded Age trendsetter Sara Murphy was beloved for her easy bonhomie. "She was direct and frank, and that was very refreshing to the French people who knew her, and what Picasso loved about her," says Amanda Vaill, author of the Murphy biography *Everybody Was So Young*. In true American style, Murphy enjoyed many male friendships, without any gamesmanship. "She had a complete lack of flirtatiousness," Vaill says. "French men were fascinated with her, and French women were relieved that she was not trying to seduce their husbands." A generation later, Iowa-born Jean Seberg's gamine chic—showcased in the films *Breathless* and *Bonjour Tristesse*—helped her beat out 18,000 actresses for the part of France's patron saint, Joan of Arc.

All of these women brought a quintessential Yankee spirit to France—a big, welcoming vitality that is distinctly un-French—and the country was the richer for it. Not to say →

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MANNERS & MISDEMEANORS

→ that the candor and familiarity we prize don't sometimes fly in the face of the more discreet locals. "French women do not tell you anything—not the address of their facialist, not that they're battling breast cancer, nada," says American writer Dana Thomas, a 25-year resident of Paris and author of *Gods and Kings: The Rise and Fall of Alexander McQueen and John Galliano*. "And they don't have their clan of girlfriends who they go shopping or to the spa with." For Thomas, being an American in Paris is about balance: her native straightforwardness combined with a soupçon of reserve and a dash of discretion. "I'll give you my facialist's name, even if that means next time you get the appointment instead of me," she says, "but I also won't whine about menopause symptoms over lunch."

French women do not make a habit of complaining to each other about cramps or hot flashes; on the other hand (and this does not pertain to all French women, of course), a certain dourness can be de rigueur. To be overly enthusiastic or outgoing can be considered gauche. And yet my Parisian friends, males included, often described the positivity and friendliness they saw in me as infectious. "French men adore the forthrightness of American women and let you know it. That's nice," Thomas says.

Wharton certainly benefited from forthrightness. Even as she repudiated her roots, she embodied the spirit of her birthplace in her adventurousness and unstoppable ambition, and most meaningfully through her activism on behalf of refugees during World War I. And where did she raise the money for her wartime

efforts? America. This tradition of charity work is as endemic now as it was in Wharton's time. "When I came to America I was stunned," Mathilde Thomas says. "Everyone seemed to be involved in community service, helping out, planting trees, volunteering. Much more so than in France."

I've heard Americans referred to as innocent, as if this quality were a bad thing. What is implied is that we are somehow clueless and callow, when in fact it simply means we are refreshingly open and okay with relaxing the rules. This can be uncomfortable for the French, who tend toward a rigid formality, particularly in relation to power. But that may be changing, thanks to women like Michelle Obama, whose accessible elegance (courtesy of designers like Michael Kors and Tracy Feith)—in addition to her degrees from Princeton and Harvard—is adored in Paris. The same goes for the breezily refined, impeccably credentialed Jane Hartley, the first American-born woman to serve as U.S. ambassador to France. (Pamela Harriman, who had the job in the 1990s, was born in England.)

Perhaps they took their cues from another of America's greatest exports, Jackie Kennedy, who visited a besotted Paris in 1961. Her combination of American openness and French reserve was an astute embrace of the middle ground, of give and take. It seemed to say, "I'm approachable—but know when to keep your distance."

She understood, as I do, that French women are awesome, but so are we.

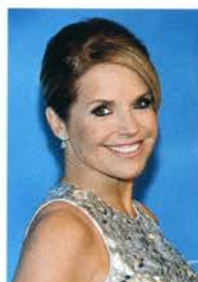
In sum, bananas for breakfast? Yes, every day. With café crème. «

American IDOLS

Women who are globally admired for substance, style, and a serious social media following.



MARISSA MAYER
@marissamayer



KATIE COURIC
@katiecouric



LENA DUNHAM
@lenadunham



TORY BURCH
@toryburch