

***CHERCHEZ LA FEMME:***  
**FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS THROUGH POPULAR MAGAZINES'**  
**REPRESENTATIONS OF FRENCH AND AMERICAN WOMEN, 1945-1965**

by

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For Jon and my parents

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
ABSTRACT	xiv

### INTRODUCTION

<b>Looking at Me by Looking at You: Postwar French and American Magazines’ Comparisons of Each Other’s Women</b>	1
Franco-American Relations, 1945-1965	10
Importance of Postwar Popular Magazines	15
Women as National Symbols	26
National, Social Comparison	29
Methodology and Approach	31
Overview of Dissertation and Scope	35
Dissertation’s Significance	40

### CHAPTER

<b>1. Apprehensive Admiration, 1945-1952</b>	42
Immediate Postwar Context	46
America’s Resilient French Woman	52
Ambivalence Over the Frenchwoman and the American GI	77
France’s Apprehension toward the Admirable American Woman	94
Advertising the American Woman in French Magazines	110
Conclusion	122
<b>2. Mutual Fascination and Liberation, 1952-1960</b>	125
The American Woman’s Good Life	133
Iconic Frenchwoman	172

American Women's Liberation in France	192
Conclusion	218
<b>3. Troubles in Adulation, 1960-1965</b>	221
The Start of the Turbulent Decade	224
France's Continued Fascination with the Independent-Dependent American Woman	229
Frenchwoman Knows Best	246
Advertising the Essence of the French Woman in America	255
Conclusion	273
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	
<b>French and American Women's Mediated History Has Only Just Begun</b>	276
APPENDIX: Magazine Sampling and Methodology	287
BIBLIOGRAPHY	293

## LIST OF FIGURES

### FIGURE

i.	Frenchwoman as American Myth	2
ii.	American Magazines' Average Circulation Figures Over 12 Months, 1940-1968	17
iii.	Advertising Expenditures by Medium (\$ millions), 1940-1968	18
iv.	Percent of Households with Televisions, France and USA, 1954-1968	19
v.	Popular French Magazines' Average Circulation Figures by Month, 1945-1968	21
vi.	Mr. and Mrs. Snapp of the USA	30
vii.	Culturally Equivalent Magazines Sampled	32
viii.	Examples of Postwar Magazines' Legacy Today	34
1.1	<i>La Femme Américaine</i> , According to Uncle Daniel	43
1.2	Punishment of Women Collaborators	49
1.3	<i>Life</i> Calls on a Little French Girl	53
1.4	Little French Girl's Close Ties with Americans	53
1.5	Pretty Women in Liberated Paris	56
1.6	Resilient Madame Schneiter	58
1.7	<i>Ladies' Home Journal</i> Cover, July 1945	59
1.8	Opening to "The French Look"	60
1.9	A Close-Up on "The French Look"	62
1.10	Busy French Girl Barbara Laage	64
1.11	Busy French Girl's Resolution to Stay Clean	65
1.12	Studios Frenchwoman	66
1.13	Busy French Girl as Symbol of France	67
1.14	Resolute Working Parisienne	69
1.15	Paris is Gay Again	70
1.16	Simone, French Jack-of-All-Trades	70
1.17	French Models Embrace American Culture	72
1.18	Paris Walk-Up	73

1.19	Close-Up on Paris Walk-Up	75
1.20	The Controversial Kiss	79
1.21	Iowa Women on the Controversial Kiss	80
1.22	Happy Marriage between Frenchwoman Yvette and American GI Harry	87
1.23	Frenchwoman versus American Woman, Original French Version	91
1.24	Frenchwoman versus American Woman, English Version	92
1.25	The Cost of Becoming a War Bride	93
1.26	Confessions of a Young American Beauty	96
1.27	Phyllis Nelson, <i>Paris Match</i> 's Typical American Woman	99
1.28	Following Phyllis' Everyday Life	100
1.29	Phyllis' Ray of Sunshine	101
1.30	Sexual Education in America, Just Another Commodity	104
1.31	Domineering American Woman	106
1.32	Enslavement of the American Man	106
1.33	Look Up to the American Woman	111
1.34	Like the American Woman	112
1.35	Harriet Hubbard Ayer's Clear American Woman Complexion	113
1.36	Mum, A Frenchwoman's New American Woman Habit	114
1.37	Max Factor is Big News for French Women	116
1.38	Man Embellishing Stars Returns to Embellish Frenchwomen	116
1.39	Max Factor of Hollywood Ads	118
1.40	Reard Hollywood Ads	119
1.41	The Subtly Advertised American Woman	121
2.1	The Woman Who Had Been to Paris	126
2.2	Françoise Giroud's Eight Types of American Women	134
2.3	Opening to Françoise Giroud's <i>Amérique</i> Series	136
2.4	The Little American Woman in the Big City	138
2.5	American Housewife-Mother	141
2.6	American Housewife-Mother's Routine	143
2.7	Aspiring Career Woman's Routine	148
2.8	The Double Life of the American Career Woman	152

2.9	Free-Spirited American Woman	158
2.10	Industrious American Secretary	160
2.11	Aspiring Actress, Dreamer	163
2.12	America's Future in the American Girl	167
2.13	America's Greatest Power Is Its Women	169
2.14	A Real Parisienne	174
2.15	The Real Parisienne's Duty to Husband and Family	176
2.16	The Real Parisienne's Glamorous Everyday Life	178
2.17	The Real Parisienne's Role as House Manager	180
2.18	Lessons of the Frenchwoman's Secret Diet	181
2.19	Close-Up of Frenchwoman's Secret Diet	183
2.20	France's Favorite Blonde	185
2.21	The Seductive, Innocent French Girl	186
2.22	The Poised French Girl	187
2.23	Playful, Flirtatious French Girl	187
2.24	An American Man's Eyes on the Women of Paris	189
2.25	The Strolling Parisian Woman	191
2.26	The Parisian Woman's Charming Smile	191
2.27	French Barmaid	192
2.28	Charming Parisian Mother	192
2.29	Luxury for American Women on the Riviera	197
2.30	Liberation of the American Girl in Paris	198
2.31	American Girl in Paris	202
2.32	"I'm on my own—in Paris!"	205
2.33	American Women in the World	212
2.34	American Women in France	215
2.35	American Newspaper Girl	215
3.1	Winston's Franco-American Love Story	222
3.2	100% Américaine	222
3.3	Arrival of Youthful America in the White House	226
3.4	Jackie's French Connection	226



3.5	French Fascination with Everything Jackie	227
3.6	Jackie Kennedy as Ideal Woman Type for French Women	227
3.7	Frenchwomen's American Sister Martha	231
3.8	A French Magazine's Looks into Martha's Everyday Life	232
3.9	Levi's Cowgirl Look Emerges in France	237
3.10	Cowgirl Haute Couture in France (1963)	237
3.11	Borveau's Women of the Wild West	238
3.12	Women of the Wild West Features	240
3.13	A French Look Into the Lives of the Modern Women of the Wild West	243
3.14	"The Women of America...and France"	247
3.15	The Frenchwoman's "Luxury-Loving and Voluptuous" Hero	251
3.16	Frenchwomen Scare American Women	252
3.17	"Take It from a True Parisian"	260
3.18	"Keep Cool as We French Do..."	260
3.19	"Have a Breath of Paris about you...every day!"	262
3.20	Coty's French Spice	263
3.21	Coty's Instant French Beauty	264
3.22	Coty's French Flair	264
3.23	Max Factor's Primitive Frenchwoman	266
3.24	Lenthéric's Wild Frenchwoman	267
3.25	Tabu and Ambush	268
3.26	Uninhibited Frenchwoman	269
3.27	Unexpected Frenchwoman	270
3.28	Magnetic Frenchwoman	270
3.29	Oh là là	271
3.30	"How to Marry a Millionaire"	271
3.31	Perfume, Diamonds, and Ferraris	272
3.32	The French Everyone Understands	272
C.1	A Frenchman Looks at American Women	277
C.2	The American Woman through a Frenchman's Eyes	278
C.3	The Longstanding Franco-American Mutual Regard through Women	281

C.4	Frenchwoman's On Top	282
C.5	Books about Frenchwomen	284
C.6	The Frenchwoman is Still an American Star	284

## ABSTRACT

This doctoral project examines how French and American magazines' comparisons of American and French women, respectively, worked through U.S.-French relations after World War II. The dissertation argues that magazines' representations of women reasserted more secure French and American identities at a time when the United States' power and influence grew significantly relative to that of France. Drawing from over 2,500 primary source documents collected over two years from company, library, and personal archives in the U.S. and France, this project follows a grounded theory approach where articles, covers, images, advertisements, and letters to the editor were analyzed for emergent themes. The dissertation is organized chronologically according to key time periods of postwar Franco-American relations and their accompanying themes: Apprehensive Admiration (1945-1952); Mutual Fascination and Liberation (1952-1960); and Troubles in Adulation (1960-1965).

The overall analysis reveals national social comparison at work, which, in this case, is the constant comparison between two closely related nations to sort out who is better. On the one hand, French and American magazines use American and French women to show the countries' mutual fascination and desire to be like one other. For Americans, French women were resilient, resourceful, independent, and chic. The Frenchwoman's world, and Paris in particular, represented a dream place for American women to transform into glamorous, worldly, and desirable women. The French admired American women for their independence, sense of equality, technical expertise, and material comfort. The American woman's world was the epitome of modern comfort with timesaving gadgets and freedom from Old World social constraints. On the other hand, magazines critiqued women as a strategy to maintain national superiority. To Americans, French women were dependent, frivolous, and overindulgent in femininity; they did not stand up for themselves, and they were too concerned with pleasing men. Conversely, for the French, American women relied too much on machines, conformed to trends, and sulked in marital boredom. In short, magazines' representations of American and French women were a conduit of Franco-American understanding allowing readers to judge the French and American ways of life: the American way rooted in consumerism and technology; and the French way steeped in tradition and esthetics above materialism and efficiency.

This dissertation makes four contributions to media studies, history, and gender studies. First, it shows how international relations and understanding are managed through popular media. Second, it evidences print magazines' important place after World War II to work within and between imagined national communities. In particular, it moves beyond typical single-nation studies of magazines by comparatively historicizing magazines' international nature and impact. Third, despite having been used in well-written histories of the Franco-American experience, magazines have been understudied and under appreciated. This dissertation adds to the growing, much-needed *mediated* history of Franco-American relations preceding the digital age. Lastly, the project details how representations of women, who come to embody and stand in for the nation, play an important role in mediated, symbolic battles between nations. Namely, one sees how women are used to sort out how nations see themselves, how nations compare themselves to other nations, and how nations envision their place in the larger world.

## Introduction

### Looking at Me By Looking at You: Postwar French and American Magazines' Comparisons of Each Other's Women

American women can be seen all over France, and if one looks closely, one will find French women in many places in the United States, too. American women appear in many advertisements for beauty products plastered on the Paris Métro and on bus stops throughout France, are featured guests on French television news shows, and form the centerpiece of fast food restaurant wall décor. In America, French women subtly appear in televised and print commercials for perfumes and make-ups; as the subject of widely popular self-improvement books on dieting, motherhood, and sexual and romantic relationships; as secondary characters in film and television; and as the longtime Halloween costume staple known as the “French maid.”

One might explain the presence of American and French women as simply having spokeswomen for products for each country's nation. Alternatively, one might attribute Americanization to the large presence of the American woman in France in advertisements and media more generally. However, such explanations are overly simplistic. Woven into these repeated images is the special relationship between the United States and France going back to the times of the Revolutionary War in the late 18th century.<sup>1</sup> The United States and France have

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<sup>1</sup> Notable examples include Georges Duhamel, *America The Menace: Scenes from the Life of the Future*, translated by Charles Miner Thompson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931); Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America: Part the Second, The Social Influence of Democracy*, translated by Henry Reeve, Esq. (New York: J. & H.G. Langley, 1840); and Edith Wharton, *French Ways and their Meaning* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1919).

been mutually fascinated, excited, disturbed, and repelled by each other since the time the United States was founded with French aid, and especially in more recent years with diplomatic and cultural clashes after World War II. French and American close examination of each other's women have taken on a significant place in these mutual regards over time, but little work in the fields of Franco-American relations, international media, and gender studies has historicized and analyzed their trajectory, the purposes and functions of these representations, and what they say about French and American imagined national communities, Franco-American relations, and French and American notions of gender and sexuality.

One immediate and recent example illustrates the urgency of addressing the representations of French and American women in America and France, respectively. On the July-August 2014 cover of *France-Amérique*, a monthly magazine covering current events about Franco-American relations, a sleekly dressed woman with a French tricolor cape stands atop a New York City skyscraper (Figure i). The large cover text “The French woman: an American

**Figure i:  
Frenchwoman as American Myth**



myth” explains that this cover illustration represents the issue’s key feature about how the Frenchwoman holds an exalted, even mythical place in America. Within the special piece, the magazine explains that the Frenchwoman’s idol status, which has become a bestselling topic of a variety of books since 2000, comes largely from the New Wave cinema of the late 1950s and 1960s that prominently featured two actresses who embody simultaneously contradictory American imaginaries of the Frenchwoman: sexy and liberated Brigitte Bardot and demure and proper Catherine Deneuve. Although there is intuitive merit to this short journalistic explanation, a significant

portion of the idealized fantasies and imaginary Americans have of France through French women comes from print magazines that dominated the American mediascape after World War II. Similarly, the article fails to note that in France there was fascination with and admiration for American women after the war, too. Further still, several bodies of literature—from Franco-American studies to gender studies to international media studies—have yet to explore this

important gendered, mediated post-World War II history and the significant role magazines had in the process of working through Franco-American relations and imaginaries.

This dissertation, thus, examines where, how, and why popular French and American magazines regularly represented and compared American and French women, respectively, after World War II through the 1960s (1945-1965). Popular French and American magazines' looks into the lives of everyday women on the other shore opened American and French readers' eyes to new ideas, experiences, technologies, and ways of thinking. The women of the other country represented a glimpse into an exciting and evermore globally connected world that invigorated an increasingly mundane, conformist, automated, and fast-paced life in the years after World War II. The women on the other shore were inspirational in their independence, resourcefulness, sophistication, and beauty. However, unlike the experiences of the more well off in France and America, most women could not afford to journey to the other side of the Atlantic, so the representations many women saw of women from the other country presented how to break out of the confines of everyday life, and, sometimes gendered expectations placed on them, which changed rapidly from World War II through the 1960s. These magazines' representations also provided an intriguing, voyeuristic opportunity to gauge oneself in relation to a desirable female peer and how to proceed in the "modern," globalizing postwar era.

This dissertation turns to popular magazines and women in writing a *mediated* Franco-American history for three important reasons. First, historical scholarship generally analyzes popular American and French magazines within national silos. Many articles and books argue that American and French magazines attempted to forge a sense of national unity in the face of postwar anxiety through various nation-centric images of home, family, and community.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, scholarship also shows how French and American magazines actively worked to propagate conservative gender norms by elevating men's status as breadwinners and encouraging

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<sup>2</sup> Fabrice d'Alemeida and Christian Delporte, *Histoire des Médias en France: De la Grande Guerre à Nos Jours* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003); Norberto Angeletti et al. *Magazines That Make History: Their Origins, Development, and Influence* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Jean-Marie Charon, *La presse magazine* (Paris: Editions de la Découverte, 2008); Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989); Erika L. Doss, ed. *Looking at Life* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001); Carolyn L. Kitch, *Pages from the Past: History and Memory in American Magazines* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); John William Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America, 1741-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

women's domesticity and motherhood.<sup>3</sup> In short, magazine scholarship in France and the United States has generally focused on internal national forces and imaginings of or challenges to a patriarchal nation in the years after World War II through the 1960s. When studies do mention or focus on the international dimensions of these magazines, particularly in how American magazine business practices, styles, and content were imported in France after the war, they do not go into adequate detail on what purposes and impact the American presence had in France and how France played a significant role in visual culture in American magazines.<sup>4</sup> Thus, a more rich, nuanced understanding is needed on how the nation and gender were visually imagined simultaneously and transnationally between *and* within the post-WWII United States and France through their popular, highly visual magazines.

In other words, the literature has shown how French and American magazines helped the French and American nations imagine their national communities from within, but it fails to adequately show how magazines helped the French and American national communities imagine themselves by looking from *without* through their regular, active looks and comparisons of American and French women. Gender is constructed within national boundaries as much as is it without, and the media pull from a national and international context to shape how we define ourselves nationally, in terms of gender, and along other identifications such as sexuality. The shaping "from without," beyond the imagined national community, in many ways can often only be done via the media, so assessing the impact of significant representations from abroad that shape gender constructions is important and necessary to do to challenge inward-centric visions of an imagined community in a hastened period of globalization. Therefore, this dissertation calls for serious treatment of highly visual and popular magazines and how their comparisons between two nation's women were a force of intercultural understanding for everyday readers. Postwar magazines were not just paper rags thrown into the trash. They had a highly important presence in everyday people's lives and hold cultural resonance then and now. As such, this

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<sup>3</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York: Basic Books, 2011); Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1995); Betty Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963); Wendy Kozol, *Life's America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Evelyne Sullerot, *La presse féminine*, Second edition (Paris: Armand Colin, 1966).

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Jean-Pierre Bacot et al., "La naissance du photo-journalisme: Le passage d'un modèle européen de magazine illustré à un modèle américain," *Réseaux*, No. 151 (2008): 9-36.

dissertation historicizes and analyzes magazines as key shapers of Franco-American imaginaries and understanding through their role in sorting out various cultural affinities and clashes around the changing roles for women, the rise of mass consumption, and the rapid modernization of everyday life and work through technology. Unlike other histories of Franco-American histories that treat magazines as accessories or mere contributing sources to larger international forces after World War II, this dissertation puts magazines front and center as key sites of situating and sorting out what France meant to the United States and vice versa.

It should be stressed again at this point that leading into the postwar period, France and the United States had a long history of mutual curiosity, admiration, and criticism since before the Revolutionary War in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. France was supportive of the birth of the American republic against the British, and upon America's establishment as a country, the United States supported the French movement for independence. As the American republic grew, notable French travelers, such as Alexis de Tocqueville in the 1830s, visited the United States to discover American culture and life as well as its expanding, rugged frontier territories. For many wealthy Americans in the late nineteenth century, France was a high-class destination to purchase luxurious products and experience vibrant culture. At the start of the twentieth century, the movement of people between America and France surged, as seen in America's "Lost Generation" of writers and artists flocking to Paris in the 1920s, prominent French intellectuals visiting America to discover the new economic and technological powerhouse, and nascent student exchange programs developing between schools in both countries.<sup>5</sup> Further, and most significantly in the twentieth century, both countries fought on the same side of two world wars, which brought the nations closer together, especially in the United States' signal of its concern over France's longevity. Thus, examining the Franco-American case after World War II, especially when the American government provided significant aid to rebuild after the war,<sup>6</sup> is important given the deep involvement, interest, and concern the United States and France have had for each other's survival over a couple of hundred years.

Within this longstanding mutual regard, French and American fascination with each other's women has played a significant avenue through which the French and Americans have

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<sup>5</sup> Whitney Walton, *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890-1970* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Here, I am referring to the Marshall Plan, which will be described in more detail in the section on Franco-American Relations, 1945-1965.



understood each other. Benjamin Franklin was known for having elaborate, notable escapades with women of the French Royal Court. Alexis de Tocqueville provided extensive descriptions of the American frontier woman in the second volume of *Democracy in America*.<sup>7</sup> Edith Wharton dedicated an entire chapter to the modern French woman in her book *French Ways and Their Meaning*.<sup>8</sup> In the case of postwar French and American magazines, American and French women were commonly found and in greater proportion than women from other nations, which can be explained by the United States' deep involvement in rebuilding France as well as the strong alignment between the United States and France for some time (as compared to French rivalries with Britain, Germany, and Italy; and American intrigue with Paris after World War II as a fashion and cultural capital of the world). This does not mean that French and American magazines did not represent women from other countries, or compare their women to other nations' women, but the intensity through which French and American magazines looked at each other's women was stronger than it was for other countries, even at times when other countries' women emerged strongly on the global scene (e.g., Italian cinema in the 1950s and 1960s and British fashion in the 1960s).<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the intense focus in magazines between the United States and France can be explained by America's and France's mutual admiration, intrigue, and desire to size each other up going back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. As such, this dissertation focuses on French and American magazines' representations of American and French women, but it should be acknowledged that these were not the only women who were represented and compared. Rather, French and American women in American and French magazines were one significant site of representation to express affection and anxiety between national allies who admired each other, but who were also competitive and unsure in their nation's place in the world.

Second, examining the use of French and American women in postwar magazines' mediations of Franco-American relations and imaginings of the American and French nations is significant because it shows how women are often stand-ins and symbols for the nation. Women come to represent a motherly figure who maintains a nation's purity, strength, and future through her implied ability to reproduce, nurture, and guard her child, the nation. Prominent female

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<sup>7</sup> Tocqueville.

<sup>8</sup> Wharton.

<sup>9</sup> I do not have content analysis statistics, but this impression is based on my survey of twenty-five years of magazines. See Appendix for in-depth details on the sampling methods used.

symbols of the nation include the Statue of Liberty, France's Marianne and Joan of Arc, Germany's Germania, Mother Russia, and even the Virgin Mary, but women as symbols of the nation go beyond these large and often mythical women. In many ways, everyday women, who are represented in the media to represent an entire country's women, which was often done in magazines in the postwar period in France and the United States, take on more significance as they come to bear the value of the representative, typical, and average "stock" from which a nation derives its character, strength, and longevity. Additionally, such representations leave their mark on readers on how to imagine who and what a nation's woman is and stands for. Many studies of international conflict reveal that everyday women are often the first target by enemy combatants because they embody and stand in for the nation and its place in the broader world of nations. Such logic argues that by targeting and appropriating a nation's women, an adversary attacks the other nation's source of strength and longevity, which gives the invader power, control, and prestige over the other nation. By extension, in the post-WWII world where French and American magazines competed and collaborated to make sense of the world for their audiences who most likely could not directly encounter the world beyond their immediate reach, popular French and American magazines used everyday American and French women, respectively, to symbolically battle for and sort out various conflicts, real and imagined, within and between the two national cultures. Certainly, as the literature on French and American magazines has tended to do, one can look from within one national perspective to see how a nation's body of magazines imagines itself as a nation, but relations and imaginaries are not unidirectional. Rather, they are, at the very least, bi-directional and mutually constitutive, so comparative, transnational analyses of mediated treatments and battles between two nations through representations and comparisons of their everyday women are needed more generally as well as specifically in protracted, intense relations like Franco-American relations.

Third, layered onto the question of the role of popular French and American postwar magazines' representations of each other's women is international relations history's too heavy of a reliance on political, economic, and military individuals, organizations, and forces. Certainly, these individuals and factors have a great influence in determining Franco-American relations on one, usually official, level, but they ignore how international relations worked out for everyday people at that time. Again, traveling and experiencing the world has often been difficult for the average person to do, so people often to turn to their popular media for

understanding the world around them, which lends credence to one argument for the power of media in shaping how people imagine the large world around them.<sup>10</sup> Another limitation layered on to understanding the post-World War II world is the fact that men have predominantly populated much of international relations history, as the subject and author. Franco-American relations history is no exception, so seeing how women fit into this story is essential. Overall, official and male-centric histories are contextually helpful, but the important place of media more generally, and popular magazines more specifically, as well as the position of French and American women are lost and undervalued in understanding and sorting out postwar Franco-American relations. This dissertation seeks to fill those perspectives in the literature.

As Melani McAlister asserts more generally in her history of America's relations to the Middle East after World War II, to understand how we understand ourselves, our relation with the broader world, and how international relations are managed everyday for average people, we need to look to popular visual culture.<sup>11</sup> A significant body of work speaks to the power of the visuality of postwar popular magazines in shaping readers' understandings of the world, but, as mentioned earlier, many studies are from one national perspective rather than being comparative and transnational in scope.<sup>12</sup> Seen as a sort of diversion or entertainment, magazines' in-depth reporting and light-hearted treatment of what the world was like had a lasting impression on how readers came to frame the world, their nation, and their place in it. Henry Luce, often dubbed the "father" behind modern photojournalistic magazines through his creation of *Life* magazine in the 1930s, intuitively knew this when he created his magazine empire in the 1930s as a way to define who and what was quintessentially American. Other American and French magazines followed *Life's* lead by being highly visual in nature with the ultimate purpose of leaving a strong impact on readers' imagination and treatment of the world. Thus, popular visual culture like magazines are just as strong of a force (if not stronger) of imagining, shaping, and working through

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<sup>10</sup> Shani Orgad makes this argument clearly in *Media Representation and the Global Imagination* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012). Her focus on media representations' powerful impact on how people come to see and act in the world, globally defined, was one inspiration for focusing on representation in this dissertation. Certainly, magazine readers can reject, modify, or accept what they see, but media representations are one root site of analysis of where and how global imaginaries are built.

<sup>11</sup> Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Examples include Jean-Marie Charon, *La presse magazine* (Paris: Editions de la Découverte, 2008); Doss; Stuart Hall, "The social eye of *Picture Post*" (reprint from 1971). *Typography Papers*, Vol. 8 (2009): 69-104; Kitch, *Pages from the Past: History and Memory in American Magazines*; Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media*; Kozol; Catherine Lutz and Jane L. Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Sullerot.

international relations for everyday people, as are higher level political, economic, and military histories. In fact, these histories often converge and are mutually reinforcing. Consequently, in taking McAlister's call to take popular visual culture seriously to understand international relations, the important place of women to symbolically situate two nations, and the need to move beyond nationally focused histories of French and American magazines, this dissertation is pressed to examine how popular postwar French and American magazines regularly used everyday American and French women, respectively, to visually frame US-French relations and work through various internal postwar changes happening in each country, such as the changing place of women, the rise of mass consumerism, and debates on how to develop and live in a "modern" society after the havoc of World War II.

Therefore, in short, based on popular glossy magazines' having been overlooked as agents of French and American relations, my dissertation explores where, how, and why French and American magazines compared everyday American and French women with regularity after World War II into the mid-1960s (roughly 1945-1965).<sup>13</sup> My project describes the cultural work of these magazines' visual and textual discourses about American and French women to imagine and reassert more secure national identities at a time when the United States' power and influence grew significantly relative to that of France. In France, with heavy American investment to help France recover from World War II, the American woman symbolized a modern, comfortable, consumer-driven future for France, but she also presented an opportunity to critique the imposing influence of American culture around the world and fears about mass consumer conformism taking over French culture. In the United States, the French woman represented a resourceful ally with admirable feminine qualities to emulate, which served to sustain conservative, patriarchic gender norms and definitions of femininity. Overall, my dissertation uses the important, understudied visual medium of glossy magazines to tell a transnationally gendered and mediated story of postwar Franco-American relations and the

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<sup>13</sup> What I mean by everyday women are those women who did not necessarily have fame and notoriety prior to the time when they were represented by the magazines. Even if a woman came from an elite job, such as modeling or business, the very fact that she was most likely not recognizable before appearing differentiated in my mind how she would be seen by readers, as compared to famous actresses, models, leaders, and notable women who received a lot of attention in magazines. Moreover, women or girls who were labeled as "representative" or "average" by magazines were considered everyday since they were represented to represent the "average" and "regular" woman or girl of that time. These women could, in fact not be "average" at all for a variety of reasons (they have an elitist job, they come from a privileged background, or they have achieved something extraordinary), but the fact that the magazine chose to describe them as representative, average, or typical marks them as symbolically used to be an everyday representation of what regular American and French women or girls were like.

important place each country's women have had in representing, defining, and battling for France's and America's places in the world.

By the end of the dissertation, one will learn that in French magazines, the everyday American woman was admirable in her independence, efficiency, and material happiness, but she was seen as miserable in her boredom, conformism, and anxiety about being a woman in a man's world. The everyday French woman, for Americans, was highly regarded as a symbol of resilience, ingenuity, beauty, and charm, but she was troubling for her vanity, hypersexuality, and deference to Frenchmen. The positive regards on both sides of the Atlantic spoke to the intensely positive collaboration and excitement the United States and France generally had for one another; the negative views reveal larger, deep-seated cultural differences and tensions between American and French visions of progress after World War II, particularly over the proper place of "modern women" in society, the value and impact of mass consumption, and the role of technology and efficiency at work and in the home. Before discussing the key theoretical frames for the dissertation—women as symbols of the nation and national social comparison—as well as the overall approach and structure of the dissertation, a short historic overview of postwar Franco-American relations and French and American media is needed.

### **Franco-American Relations, 1945-1965**

Intense Franco-American exchange and collaboration marked the postwar period.<sup>14</sup> Anxieties were high, but throughout the 1950s, France recovered slowly as towns and cities rebuilt, nationalized utilities and social support emerged, women's roles beyond domestic duties took root, and new businesses, media, and technology became a part of everyday life. Meanwhile, the United States was anxious about its expanding reach around the globe, shifts in racial and class relations, and protecting against the threat of nuclear weapons and the spread of rival communist ideologies.

After France was liberated in 1944, the pain of reconstruction and reunification after Nazi German occupation and Vichy collaboration saturated French collective memory as many parts

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<sup>14</sup> Peter Hamilton, "Representing the Social: France and Frenchness in Postwar Humanist Photography," in Stuart Hall, Ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997), pp. 76-150; Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1993); Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-1954* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

of France continued to face shortages of food, housing, access to water, and basic amenities of life, even through the early 1950s. Shantytowns emerged around large cities, and with rising inflation, continued confrontations between workers and managers, a tumultuous legal purge of national enemies, and an emerging geo-political arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union, anxieties about France's future direction loomed on the national horizon.<sup>15</sup> There were debates over how to recreate French community and solidarity after experiencing a time of "war, humiliating defeat, occupation, collaboration, resistance, insurrection, and liberation by the invading armies of its erstwhile allies."<sup>16</sup> As a consequence, after World War II, France was coming to terms with the memory of occupation. Anxieties were high, but recovery advanced largely, but not unproblematically, with the help of the United States government.

By the early 1950s, France was on the brink of a vibrant period of economic growth and social change, but it lagged behind the United States' postwar boom.<sup>17</sup> Towns and cities started to rebuild, nationalization of utilities and social support emerged, women started to take on roles beyond domestic duties, and new businesses, media, and technology became a part of everyday life. As Charles Sowerwine aptly summarizes the period, "The key fact for most [French] people was that, during the 1950s, American aid, the national plan and worldwide prosperity brought an economic boom that transformed French life at every level."<sup>18</sup> France was on the rebound, and as Kristin Ross describes, the main "movement" of 1950s France was inward through "the withdrawal of the new middle classes to their newly comfortable domestic interiors, to the electric kitchens, to the enclosure of private automobiles, to the interior of a new vision of conjugality and an ideology of happiness built around the new unit of middle-class consumption,

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<sup>15</sup> Hamilton, pp. 88-91. For details about France's attempt to cleanse itself through its *épuration légale* ("legale purge"), see "Retribution and closure" in Rod Kedward, *La Vie en Bleu: France and the French Since 1900* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), pp. 307-9, 312-13; Henry Rousso, "L'épuration en France: une histoire inachevée," *Vingtième Siècle: Revue d'histoire*, No. 33 (Jan.-Mar., 1992), p. 84; and "The purge" in Charles Sowerwine, *France since 1870: Culture, Politics and Society*, pp. 228-32. There were also specific "purgings" of journalists (see Kedward, pp. 312-13, and "Faire table rase: l'épuration et ses limites," in Fabrice d'Almeida and Christian Delporte *Histoire des Médias en France: De la Grande Guerre à Nos Jours* [Paris: Flammarion, 2003]).

<sup>16</sup> Hamilton, p. 92.

<sup>17</sup> Kedward, "The Chequered Imperative of Change, 1940s-1958," pp. 349-383.

<sup>18</sup> Sowerwine, p. 274. This is not to say that all reaped the benefits of the postwar boom of the 1950s. As Sowerwine notes, "People still lived in crowded and poor conditions. In 1954, only 58.4 per cent of French homes had running water, 26.6 per cent indoor toilets, 10 per cent baths or showers...Consumer goods were also slow to reach the working class. While in 1954 only 7.5 per cent of households had a refrigerator, by 1959 20.5 per cent had one, but in 1959, only 12.1 per cent of agricultural workers and 21.5 per cent of workers had cars, while 74.3 per cent of professionals and 57.8 per cent of middle managers had them. These visible differences perpetuated a sense that only the rich got richer and maintained a strong sense of class conflict" (pp. 276, 279).

the couple.”<sup>19</sup> As France rebuilt, it became an increasingly technologically driven society that moved inward to new lives of middle-class consumption.

Perhaps one of the largest contributors to France’s rapid rebuilding and thirty years of economic growth that came to be called the *Trentes Glorieuses* was the United States government’s approximately \$4.9 billion contribution to French reconstruction between 1948 and 1953 through its European Recovery Program, more popularly known as the Marshall Plan after then Secretary of State George Marshall. The Marshall Plan in France aimed to help the country rebuild through intense cultural, economic, educational, and governmental exchange. As Irwin Wall notes, “Between 1947 and 1954 the United States and France entered into an intimate relationship characterized by unprecedented American involvement in French internal affairs.”<sup>20</sup> Business and governmental leaders, authors and artists, and everyday workers on both sides of the Atlantic crossed paths through government-sponsored tours and visits.<sup>21</sup> Even tourism and study abroad were promoted as ways to inject support into the French economy and national well-being.<sup>22</sup> The outward intention of the Marshall Program and other programs was to bring the countries together and to share the knowledge, skills, and ideas necessary to help France rebuild. And while the French public generally appreciated assistance, the United States’ sharing of knowledge, culture, and notions of American modernity with the French people did not go without criticism or anxiety. Many were ambivalent about American notions of modernity that conflicted with dominant notions of French tradition; others were turned off by explicit political efforts to quell the supposed rise of communism in Western Europe.<sup>23</sup> Irwin Wall sketches, with historical hindsight, the noteworthy tendency for the French to view the United States ambivalently in the late 1940s and early 1950s:

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<sup>19</sup> Kristen Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), p. 11. Also see Kristin Ross, “Starting Afresh: Hygiene and Modernization in Postwar France,” *October* 67, (Winter 1994): 22-57.

<sup>20</sup> Wall, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> The United States organized official tours of the United States for French farmers, factory managers and workers, government employees, teachers, artists, and a variety of other workers and managers from a range of sectors. See Richard F. Kuisel’s chapter “The Missionaries of the Marshall Plan” in *Seducing the French* (pp. 70-102) for a rich description of the exchange programs established as part of the Marshall Plan Program.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of how American tourism to France served economic and political purposes of containing communism in Europe, as propagated by government, industry, and media institutions, see Christopher Endy’s book *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France*. For a well-researched study on the role of study abroad in fostering Franco-American relations, see Whitney Walton’s *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890-1970*.

<sup>23</sup> See McKenzie.

Antinomies in the two cultures became exaggerated through confrontation: French Cartesianism versus American pragmatism, statism versus private initiative, centralization versus decentralization, a revolutionary myth versus a carefully cultivated myth of national consensus. The United States became the standard of modernization for most nations in the postwar era. The French blamed their traditions for their nation's relative backwardness, and were invited to internalize an American image of themselves as feudal, archaic, politically unstable, and economically stagnant, a "stalemate society."<sup>24</sup>

For the French, therefore, America was "excessively mechanized, devoted to efficiency and rationalization to the neglect of humane values, in short, materialist, capitalist, and imperialism."<sup>25</sup> Americans were drab, conventional, and devoid of individualism. The United States was an uncultured society of "overgrown children imbued with naïve optimism."<sup>26</sup> And while pragmatic, Americans were blinded by their superiority and did not have a theoretical understanding coming from the wisdom of experience in the Old World.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, for Americans, "the French were a nation of petit bourgeois, tight fisted and cautious, characterized by cynicism and sarcasm, fickleness and intense nationalism."<sup>28</sup> The postwar period, thus, can be seen as a fruitful Franco-American era that had divisions and anxieties lurking below the surface: "The political battle...intersected with the cultural and in both the United States stood for modernization, both hero and villain at the same time."<sup>29</sup> The Franco-American friendship after the war, thus, was based heavily on ambivalence that mixed appreciation and apprehension, which was worked through greatly in French and American magazines at the time.

It is important to note that postwar Franco-American tensions were embedded within broader, complex geopolitical forces. The United States was propelled to an unprecedented role of international leadership while France continued to see problems in its global reach after the war. Despite the tremendous loss of American life, the United States' territory and its means of production emerged from World War II relatively unscathed, so it was able to flex its political and military muscle through economic prowess and advances in technology and production. Further, due to the United States' ability to accumulate more wealth quickly after the war, it was in a position to help parts of the world rebuild, which, intentionally or otherwise, often came in the image of American economics and culture through the import of American goods and modes of production. The United States in many ways, thus, saw its imperial power flourish globally,

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<sup>24</sup> Wall, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Sowerwine, p. 281.



which helped the world rebuild after World War II. However, it did not come without criticisms of the imposition of American-style capitalism and values through a variety of avenues: contingencies on American government aid, the establishment of American-dominated international organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations (UN), and American companies' aggressive drives to develop and build markets overseas with the help and encouragement of the American government. America became an even stronger "Irresistible Empire" after the war due to its promise of material abundance, choice, convenience, technology and comfort, but America's forward-pushing vision of a modern world collided with other nations, especially communists and traditionalists in France, and certainly the Soviet Union, which saw America taking advantage of the moment to dominate globally.<sup>30</sup>

France, a historically important economic, political, and cultural beacon in the world, saw a diminished status from the ravages of war that left mainland France rebuilding infrastructure and political institutions with tremendous influence coming from American government assistance and a large influx of American businesses and products. More difficult, still, France grappled with its crumbling empire and the colonial independence movements in Indochina and Algeria, which would come to violent, devastating heads in 1954 and the late 1950s, respectively. France, thus, faced a national identity crisis from within and without, and the desire among French leaders to maintain France as a relevant global power only fueled the protracted and violent conflicts in Indochina and Algeria, of which the United States generally disapproved due to strong stances about a nation's right for self-determination.<sup>31</sup>

In the world of magazines, the United States' rising imperial status and France's declining position were a significant topic in general magazines like *Paris Match* and *Jours de France*, but they were mostly avoided in women's magazines. The same was true for the American context where general interest magazines like *Life*, *Look*, and *Saturday Evening Post* concerned themselves with America's place in the world as well as pressing global problems like France's crumbling empire. However, such coverage was often provided through a rosy-tinted

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<sup>30</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> The fear of communism's spread, though, trumped this concern, so the United States' position was ambivalent with regard to its involvement in Indochina. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the United States tried to convince the French to negotiate with the Vietnamese for peaceful independence, but French resolve to hold power led to disastrous results in 1954 and the eventual French withdrawal from the region, which planted the seeds for prolonged American involvement in Vietnam to contain communism and to protect South Vietnam.

lens that worked to not disturb or agitate readers; rather, they forged pride in America's accomplishments at home and abroad as well as the country's superiority and growing importance around the world.

In both cultural contexts, when American and French women were compared in French and American magazines, respectively, representations did not explicitly address issues of an American empire or a crumbling France. Rather, they subtly mentioned key issues at stake in the United States' and France's broader clash of cultural values: the United States' ever-present place around the world and France's uneasy sense of national self in light of many domestic and seemingly American-inspired changes after World War II: a faster-paced life rooted in mass consumerism and technology. Popular French and American magazines' coverage (or lack of coverage in the case of women's magazines) of the broader geopolitical issues within and beyond both countries is not the focus of this dissertation. Rather, this dissertation uses this important context as a backdrop to see how clashes of French and American values—women's proper place in society, consumerism, and technology—were worked through in magazines' comparisons between French and American women. Given that one of this dissertation's key claims is that popular magazines had a significant role in working through cultural divisions and anxieties within and between France and the United States, an overview of popular magazines and their significant place in both countries after World War II into the mid-1960s is now needed.

### **Importance of Postwar Popular Magazines**

After World War II, print magazines, newspapers, and radio were the prime mass media available to broadening audiences in the United States and France. Television was on the rise, film was struggling but strong, and the advent of satellite technologies and the Internet were dreams of science fiction. Magazines, especially a body of highly circulating popular magazines, played a significant role in everyday life as they were a common experience for many, and they served as a window onto the world that could not be provided elsewhere, especially for those who did not have ready access to or the financial means to enjoy television, film, or travel. As Walter Lippmann famously stated in 1921 in his seminal book *Public Opinion*, if people cannot experience distant parts of the world directly, they rely on the information given to them, and

that information often comes to them through the channels of media.<sup>32</sup> Lippmann's observation is important in the context of postwar America and France since high magazine pass-along rates, technological improvements that made color printing more cost effective, and greater efficiencies in transportation and wiring technologies allowed popular magazines in both countries to capture large audiences' attention at rates much faster than before World War II.<sup>33</sup>

In the postwar United States, as film ticket sales fluctuated and radio remained strong but challenged by the blossoming medium of television, print media, especially magazines, were increasing in their importance in the American mediascape.<sup>34</sup> In its 1976 report *Magazine Circulation and Rate Trends, 1940-1974*, the Association of National Advertisers summarized the importance of magazines in the American context in writing, "By 1974 there were 211 million people in the United States, up 60% from 1939. The number of ABC-audited [Audit Bureau of Circulations] magazines had increased to 316 and their combined circulation per average issue had increased 165% to 248.8 million."<sup>35</sup> Because of increasing disposable income, spare time, education levels, and magazine outlets, popular magazines generally saw growth in readership and circulation from the 1940s into the early 1960s (Figure ii).<sup>36</sup> Further, as the

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<sup>32</sup> Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: The Free Press; Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1965/1921).

<sup>33</sup> The pass-along rate refers to the rate at which magazines were shared or "passed along," intentionally or inadvertently, to other readers beyond the original subscriber or purchaser of a magazine.

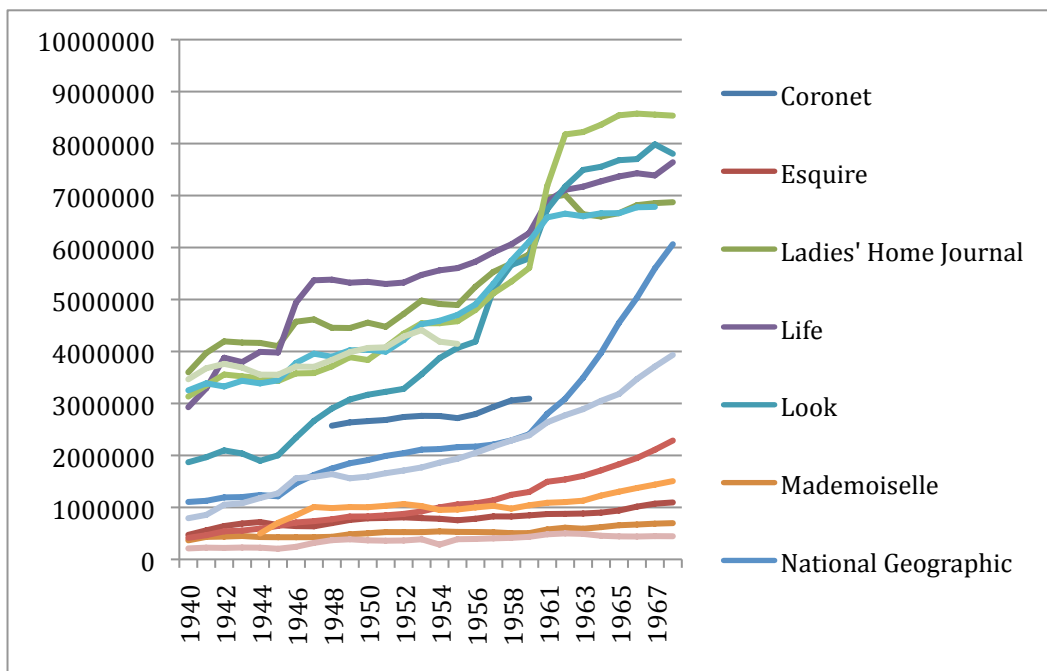
<sup>34</sup> See Thomas Weiss, "Personal consumption expenditures for recreational services: 1909-1963," Table Dh309-318 in Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright, eds., *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Association of National Advertisers (ANA), *Magazine Circulation and Rate Trends, 1940-1974* (New York: Association of National Advertisers, 1976), p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Individual magazine data for 1960 is not available and not included in this graph, as the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) only provided data grouped by magazine type. Circulation figures for 1940-1959 were found in Association of National Advertisers (ANA), *Magazine Circulation and Rate Trends, 1940-1959* (New York: Association of National Advertisers, 1960). Specific pages are the following: *Coronet*, p. 48; *Esquire*, p. 66; *Ladies' Home Journal*, p. 84; *Life*, p. 12; *Look*, p. 12; *Mademoiselle*, p. 103; *McCall's*, p. 85; *National Geographic*, p. 49; *Newsweek*, p. 31; *Reader's Digest*, p. 49; *Saturday Evening Post*, p. 13; *Seventeen*, p. 103; *Time*, p. 31; *Vogue*, p. 103. Circulation figures for 1940-1955 for *Woman's Home Companion* were found in Association of National Advertisers (ANA), *Magazine Circulation and Rate Trends, 1940-1955* (New York: Association of National Advertisers, 1956), p. 85. Circulation figures for 1961-1967 were found in Association of National Advertisers (ANA), *Magazine Circulation and Rate Trends, 1940-1967* (New York: Association of National Advertisers, 1968). Specific pages are the following: *Esquire*, p. 64; *Ladies' Home Journal*, p. 100; *Life*, p. 12; *Look*, p. 12; *Mademoiselle*, p. 120; *McCall's*, p. 101; *National Geographic*, p. 48; *Newsweek*, p. 29; *Reader's Digest*, p. 48; *Saturday Evening Post*, p. 12; *Seventeen*, p. 121; *Time*, p. 29; *Vogue*, p. 121. Circulation figures for 1968 for *Life* and *Look* were found in Association of National Advertisers (ANA), *Magazine Circulation and Rate Trends, 1940-1969* (New York: Association of National Advertisers, 1970), p. 12. Circulation figures for 1968 were found in Association of National Advertisers (ANA), *Magazine Circulation and Rate Trends, 1940-1974* (New York: Association of National Advertisers, 1976). Specific pages are the following: *Esquire*, p. 44; *Ladies' Home Journal*, p. 69; *Mademoiselle*, p. 82; *McCall's*, p. 69; *National Geographic*, p. 37; *Newsweek*, p. 23; *Reader's Digest*, p. 37; *Seventeen*, p. 83; *Time*, p. 23; *Vogue*, p. 83.

economy grew and companies saw the potential for advertising to wider audiences in magazines, magazine advertisement expenditures surpassed that of newspapers and radio (Figure iii).<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that circulation figures do not include the pass-along rates of magazines, which refers to the number of readers who read a magazine beyond the initially recorded newsstand or subscription purchase. This is a significant observation considering that some magazines such as *Life* and *McCall's* had pass-along rates between 4 and 8. These magazines had an average of at least 3 million base readers after World War II, so this means that some issues were read from 12 to 24 million readers, if one includes the pass-along readers. With figures like this, there is no denying popular magazines' important presence in America's postwar mediascape.<sup>38</sup>

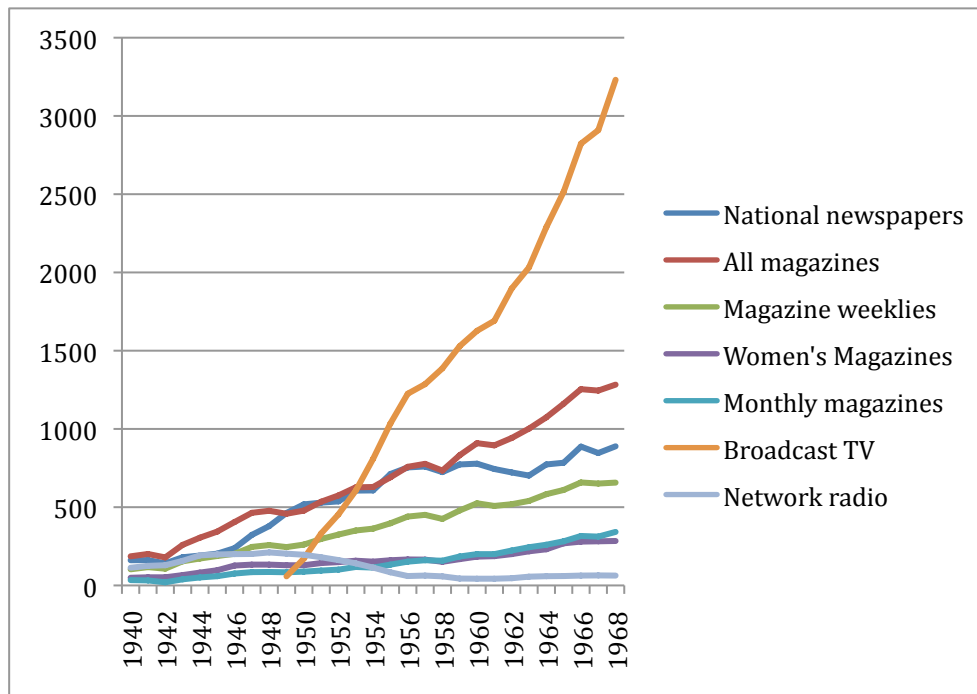
**Figure ii: American Magazines' Average Circulation Figures Over 12 Months, 1940-1968**



<sup>37</sup> Daniel M.G. Raff, "Advertising expenditures, by medium: 1867–1998," Table De482-515 in Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright, eds.

<sup>38</sup> Angeletti et al; Doss; Kitch, *Pages from the Past: History and Memory in American Magazines*; David E. Sumner, *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010); Tebbel and Zuckerman.

**Figure iii:  
Advertising Expenditures by Medium (\$ millions), 1940-1968**

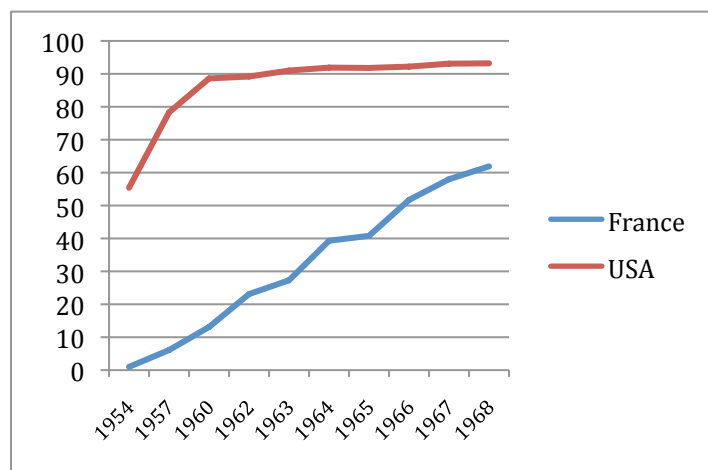


Magazines also had an important presence in France after World War II. To curb any possibility of propaganda by wealthy, powerful elites, the French government implemented very rigid regulations at the end of the war that put most media content under government control or very close government scrutiny. Significant and wealthy pre-war media players, such as Jean Prouvost and his growing prewar magazine and newspaper empire, were not allowed to restart their media work after the war since there was fear that they would use their money and influence to negatively sway the public. Furthermore, some like Prouvost had unclear ties to the wartime French collaborationist government, so any large, deeply pocketed media interests were not allowed to work in the French media industry until the late 1940s and early 1950s if they passed the legal purges facing many wartime journalists and media operators.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> “Legal purges” refer to the various trials, official and unofficial, carried out in France after the war for accused collaborators in Vichy France and Nazi Germany.

To understand the state of French radio and television after the war, it is helpful to compare its postwar figures with the United States. French radio was state-run and rather drab in comparison to its highly commercialized American counterpart, and television was growing at a snail's pace in France compared to the United States. In 1954, only 1% of French households had a television compared to 55.4% in the United States. The numbers for television increased ever so slowly in France, whereas the United States saw a precipitous rise in households with television from the late 1940s onward. In fact, France's state-run television really did not take off until the mid-1960s. Figure iv graphically reveals the stark contrast between television household saturation in the United States and France, with France only narrowing the penetration rate difference from the United States to about 30% by the late 1960s.<sup>40</sup>

**Figure iv:  
Percent of Households with Televisions,  
France and USA, 1954-1968**



French media audiences, therefore, relied heavily on print media, including newspapers and magazines, when they were not tuning into radio. Immediately after the war, newspapers, especially regional newspapers, were popular and a significant source of news, mainly due to popular localized information and persistent regional fears that Paris would control information.<sup>41</sup> However, the postwar newspaper boom was short-lived.<sup>42</sup> Unlike newspapers, magazines were more enticing and interesting to readers since they blended images and text and

<sup>40</sup> Data for France was found in Raymond Kuhn, *The Media in France* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 111. Comparable data for the United States was estimated by dividing the number of American households with televisions found in Alexander J. Field, "Radio and television - stations, sets produced, and households with sets: 1921-2000," Table Dg117-130 in Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright, eds., by the number of American households found in United States Census Bureau, "Table HH-1. Households, by Type: 1940 to Present," <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/files/hh1.xls>. The broadest definition of household was used when consulting the United States Census Bureau.

<sup>41</sup> Kuhn, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

were increasingly printed in color and on interesting papers. Furthermore, magazines wove entertainment and news in a more in-depth style than was done in newspapers. Additionally, as magazines were a relatively inexpensive treat that were highly portable and shareable, they were found and increasingly sought out. The creation and launch of colorful glossy magazines such as *Marie France*, *Elle*, *Paris Match*, and others, were especially enticing given the often-plain newspapers, radio, and burgeoning television, which were highly regulated and controlled by the state. Popular French magazines, thus, saw a steady increase in circulation from immediately after the war into the early 1960s (see Figure v), which is one supporting reason for why this dissertation focuses on magazines during the time period from 1945 to 1965 when magazines were the key visual medium for news and entertainment before television became saturated in everyday French life in the late 1960s.<sup>43</sup>

The popular French and American magazines studied in this dissertation were chosen due to their significance in being the most highly circulating, popular, and long-lasting magazines of the postwar period. Additionally, in both cultural contexts, the magazines importantly attempted to serve their national audiences in a variety of ways depending on their purpose and format. In the United States, for example, *Life* magazine was bought in 1936 by magazine mogul Henry Luce to revive the magazine by using a creative combination of images and texts to provide a positive, forward-looking image of America and its important place in the world. Similarly, the general interest magazine *Look* emerged in 1937 as a direct rival to *Life* to provide entertaining photographs with minimal text. The concept of *Look* was to reach a broader American readership than *Life* by providing news and feature articles that emphasized photography and images. In many ways, magazine's title revealed its purpose and intent—by purchasing and reading the magazine, readers could “look” at the broader world around them without the encumbrances of overwhelming text.

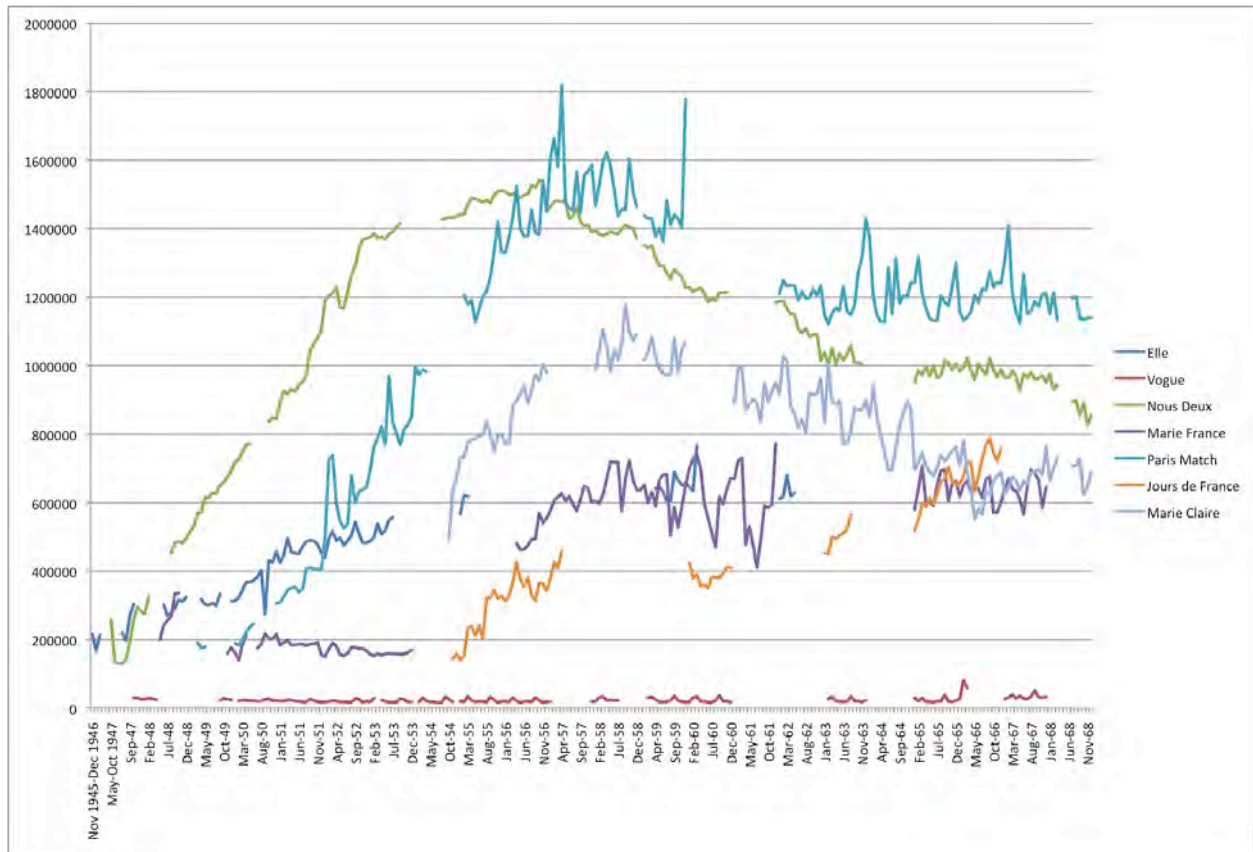
Another significant postwar general magazine, *Saturday Evening Post*, was created long before *Life* and *Look* (in 1821) and gained significant status among American magazine readers through the efforts of editor George Horace Latimer in the 1930s to create a magazine that wove rather text-heavy features: current events and news, installment stories, editorial pieces, special

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<sup>43</sup> All data come from consultations and photocopies of circulation reports prepared by the Office de justification de la diffusion (OJD) from 1945 to 1968. The OJD is currently called the Association pour le contrôle de la diffusion des médias. It houses its archives in its main office at 19 Rue des Mathurins, 75009, Paris, France. Any missing data is due to OJD's not compiling data on a magazine or reports not archived/available at the time of consultation.

features, humorous essays, and cartoons. The *Post* was noted for its Americana cover art by Norman Rockwell, and the overall tone and slant of the magazine was conservative in nature, with particular interest in propagating American pride and exceptionalism, especially as was seen through the hardworking, nuclear American family.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure v: Popular French Magazines' Average Circulation Figures by Month, 1945-1968**



In the world of American women's magazines, the most prominent magazines of the postwar era were *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Mademoiselle*, *McCall's*, *Vogue*, and *Woman's Home Companion*, which all set out on particular missions in reaching their women readers. *Ladies' Home Journal* was perhaps the longest-standing general women's interest and lifestyle magazines in American history, with its being in publication since 1883. After World War II, the *Journal* mainly targeted American homemakers through its enticing low subscription rates and

<sup>44</sup> For general magazine contextual details, see Cohn; Kitch; Sumner; and Tebbel and Zuckerman.



popular content, which typically included special features, stories, recipes, and other regular columns about the life of the housewife and mother. *Woman's Home Companion* was another women's magazine staple, having started publication in 1873 until its closure in 1957. During the *Companion's* postwar years, it featured regular columns related to women's issues, short stories, opinion pieces, recipes, and sewing ideas. *McCall's*, another late nineteenth century start-up (in 1873), was a monthly magazine that saw peak readership in the early 1960s because of editor Otis Wiese's incorporation of more in-depth articles and photographs—in line with the popularity of *Life* and *Look*—to have broader appeal by creating a sense of family “togetherness.”<sup>45</sup>

*Mademoiselle* and *Vogue* magazines served different purposes than their general women's magazine counterparts. *Mademoiselle* was a fashion magazine first published in 1935, which featured fashion spreads and advice, short stories by notable authors, and a variety of other editorial sections. Of note, *Mademoiselle* had a more youthful woman's slant, which was made more explicit in the sixties when the magazine was geared toward “the smart young woman” after high school. The title of the magazine, the French word for *Miss*, inspired the magazine's regular references to France and French words in covering Paris' semi-annual fashion shows. *Vogue*, which first emerged in 1892 as a magazine for the New York aristocracy, was known for its in-depth coverage and following of fashion.<sup>46</sup> The magazine had its first major expansion in the early 1900s when Condé Nast purchased the magazine and established similar magazines with the same title and purpose in Britain, Spain, Italy, and then France. As the *Vogue* network grew leading up to World War II, the magazine focused evermore on high women's fashions, changing times for women, and the modern world of elites. Furthermore, the magazine continued to experiment with various printing technologies, as evidenced by its being the first magazine to print a cover in color in 1932. After World War II, *Vogue* continued its tradition of high-quality print magazines with a focus on high fashion, which emerged strong in New York and Paris. The tone and fashions featured were still very elite in nature in the 1950s, but as fashions relaxed, especially in the 1960s, *Vogue* started to move away from its highbrow,

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<sup>45</sup> For contextual details about American women's magazines see Nancy Walker, ed. *Women's Magazines, 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998); Cynthia White, *Women's Magazines, 1693-1968* (London: Michael Joseph, 1970); Ellen Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women's Magazines in the United States* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998).

<sup>46</sup> Norberto Angeletti and Alberto Oliva, *In Vogue: The Illustrated History of the World's Most Famous Fashion Magazine* (New York: Rizzoli, 2012).

aristocratic style, but it always centered on the high fashion worlds in and between Paris and New York.<sup>47</sup>

In France, postwar popular magazines catered to specific audiences and purposes, too. *Paris Match* was a general news magazine developed by French media magnate Jean Prouvost in 1949 to serve as the French equivalent of *Life* magazine. Drawing from *Life*-inspired photo essays and layouts, Prouvost and his handpicked team of journalists, photographers, and editors sought to establish a prominent picture magazine that showcased France's important place in the world through in-depth news coverage and entertaining features. *Jours de France*, created in 1958 by industrialist Marcel Dassault, followed *Paris Match*'s lead by providing in-depth news and entertainment through provocative images and captivating text. While *Paris Match* took a more conservative and often businessman focus, *Jours de France* aimed to reach broader audiences, including women and children.<sup>48</sup>

In French women's magazines, *Marie France* was born in 1944 and initially took on a moral and educational mission in covering prominent issues surrounding the condition and place of women at the end of the war, but at the start of the 1950s, the magazine gradually took on more traditional women's magazine content, such as fashion and beauty, special reports, short stories, household advice. *Marie Claire* was a new addition to French women's magazines in 1937 under the tutelage of Prouvost's growing media empire. The start of the war shut down operations, but it reemerged after the war in 1954 as a monthly with Prouvost's desire to tap into the women's magazine market. *Marie Claire* set itself apart by focusing on women's fashion, beauty, and general news features, often of a light-hearted and comical nature. Most importantly, as Evelyn Sullerot asserts, *Marie Claire* came to be one of the magazines most influenced by America in its content and form like its sister magazine *Paris Match*.<sup>49</sup>

In direct competition with *Marie Claire* was *Elle* magazine, which had the advantage of starting immediately after the war in 1945 under the direction of Hélène Gordon-Lazareff. *Elle* purported itself to be the "fullest of possible femininity" through its look at fashion, in-depth articles, celebrity news, short stories, cooking, decorating, and cooking.<sup>50</sup> Like *Marie Claire*, *Elle* was noted for being heavily influenced by American magazine styles and content, which is

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Marcel Dassault, *Le Talisman* (Paris: Editions J'ai Lu, 1970). For context on French general magazines, see Charon, *La presse en France de 1945 à nos jours*; and Charon, *La presse magazine*.

<sup>49</sup> Sullerot.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

explained partly by Gordon-Lazareff having worked for *Harper's Bazaar* and the *New York Times* during her wartime exile in New York. Like its American counterpart, postwar French *Vogue* focused on women's high fashion and news from the world of the elite, which gradually eased in the late 1950s and early 1960s with the rise of youth culture and changing, experimental fashions.<sup>51</sup>

In the history of French magazines, the emergence of large format magazines in France, particularly that of *Paris Match*, in the postwar period is significant to stress, as many magazines launched during the Marshall Plan's most intense moment; it was also a point in the early postwar years where France was beginning to expand and see growth. As Rod Kedward notes about the importance of *Paris Match* appearing at a time when better days appeared ahead for France, "*Paris Match*, the illustrated magazine which came to symbolize modernity in post-war France, was launched in March 1949. Rationing was ended in the same year."<sup>52</sup> Other journals heavy in photographs (*Regards*, *Photomonde*, *Noir et Blanc*) also ran at this moment, but *Paris Match* was unique in its symbolic and literal weight, having nearly three times more pages than its predecessors and competitors. *Paris Match*, revealing the transnational nature of the postwar magazine business, was also modeled explicitly after *Life* magazine's use of intimate photographs accompanied by text in an informing, entertaining way. For *Paris Match*'s owner Jean Prouvost and his select group of journalists, *Life* was the exemplar of the new style of successful press. Its regular use of color photography and monochromatic text was attractive and new for readers who had become accustomed to photography by the late 1940s and wanted to see something new. As Angeletti notes, "One of the great merits of this revolutionary figure in French journalism [Prouvost] was to understand that color photography, which was in its infancy, had a great future and had to be exploited."<sup>53</sup> And the way to do this was to follow in the successful footsteps of its older American cousin *Life*.

Other French magazines, especially women's magazines, followed American magazines' footsteps, too. Kristen Ross observes that *Elle* and *Marie Claire* relied on American models, in their literal selection of those photographed and in terms of the structure, layout, and style of

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<sup>51</sup> In many ways, French *Vogue* was really only within reach of the elite after the war due to its high price. For contextual details about French women's magazines see Sullerot; Charon, *La presse en France de 1945 à nos jours*; Charon, *La presse magazine*; and Susan Weiner, *Enfants Terribles: Youth and Femininity in the Mass Media in France, 1945-1968* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

<sup>52</sup> Kedward, p. 372.

<sup>53</sup> Angeletti et al., p. 190.

magazine issues. The use of American fashion models and styles of publishing is significant since it inspired French magazine readers in postwar France to imagine a France that mirrored postwar American-style consumerism. As Ross describes succinctly, "...the new [middle class French] couple finds itself in a situation in which the appropriate new habits have been unable to form and must be borrowed, for the most part, from American-style magazines and films. The covers of the first issues of *Elle* used American models whose bodies bore no traces of the hardships of war; early French television advertisements for home appliances were filmed in American suburban kitchens."<sup>54</sup> French magazines' appropriation of American content and styles, therefore, was significant for it shaped what was to see, know, buy, and become in France, and much of that inspiration and desire was from and for the American.

Jean-Pierre Bacot and colleagues provide a helpful explanation of the mutual borrowing of approaches to magazines between the United States and France before and after World War II. They describe the proliferation of large print magazines in the United States, France, and elsewhere in Western Europe after WWII being the completion of a mediated loop between the United States and Europe.<sup>55</sup> A nebular form of photojournalism was born in Europe, first in United Kingdom in 1842 through *The Illustrated News* and then largely in France in the 1920s and 1930s through the proliferation of photo-rich publications such as *Vu*, *Voilà*, *Regards*, *Photomonde*, and *Match*, which were forced to close shop during World War II. While the styles of each magazine differed slightly, what underlay these early photojournalistic magazines was their tradition of using photos as complements to text and focusing on "useful knowledge."<sup>56</sup> Henry Luce's *Life* modified this model by blending entertainment with useful knowledge through a dominating collage of photographic representations.<sup>57</sup> Above all, what made *Life* so heavily influenced by Europeans was the talent that fled Europe to the United States as WWII broke out in the late 1930s.<sup>58</sup> Other American magazines and print media benefited from the flight of talent from Europe before and during the war, too. Most notably, *Harper's Bazaar*

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<sup>54</sup> Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, p. 148.

<sup>55</sup> Bacot et al., "La naissance du photo-journalisme: Le passage d'un modèle européen de magazine illustré à un modèle américain."

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>57</sup> I do not mean to insinuate that there were no forms of photojournalism in the United States prior to *Life* influencing its emergence (nor do I think Bacot et al. would insinuate this). As Bacot et al. note, there were many pictorially-focused publications serving as *Life*'s American heritage: *The Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* (later *Ballou's Pictorial*), *Harper's Weekly*, and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated News* (*Ibid.*, p. 25).

<sup>58</sup> Bacot et al., p. 25.

magazine and the *New York Times* gained the talent of H el ene Gordon-Lazareff who came to found *Elle* magazine upon her return to liberated Paris in 1944.

In short, postwar popular magazines became an important and entertaining window onto the world for many Americans and French people after World War II. Popular magazines were widely circulating and they served the important function of imagining *and* creating a visually and consumer-driven postwar society and culture. As Ross observes about the nation formation function of magazines, “Magazine reading ... serves to unite the various characters into a coherent group ... despite their different levels of education and their varying access to credit, the rhythm of the daily—or rather weekly—lives ... is constituted by the repetitive, secular ceremony of magazine reading.”<sup>59</sup> Unfortunately, as noted earlier, popular magazines have been neglected or underused in understanding how the United States and France imagined and understood one another after World War II. The French and American literature on postwar magazines examines magazines within national silos or from single magazine/genre case studies, which ignores the highly transnational nature of magazine production, inspiration, and content after World War II between the United States and France. Therefore, this project keeps the transnational nature of form and content in mind in unraveling where, how, and why French and American women appeared in American and French magazines with regularity after World War II. How and why women are used symbolically for and between the nations needs further theoretical clarification, too, which is turned to next.

### **Women as National Symbols**

Marwan Kraidy makes an important statement about how women’s bodies in media come to represent a contested terrain of national and international politics: “Women are reproducers of the nation and at the same time markers of boundaries between the nation and its others.”<sup>60</sup> Mrinalini Sinha similarly notes that women cannot be ignored in analyzing how the nation is imagined: “Because women are often constructed as symbolic ‘bodyguards’ of a culture, those who carry the group’s ‘honor’ and are responsible for the intergenerational reproduction of its

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<sup>59</sup> Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, p. 140.

<sup>60</sup> Marwan M. Kraidy, *Reality Television and Arab Politics: Contention in Public Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 162.

culture, they cannot be marginalized easily from cultural analyses of the nation.”<sup>61</sup> Kraidy’s and Sinha’s statements are a useful starting point to establish a theoretical frame through which one can analyze how American and French popular magazines represented everyday French and American women in the postwar era. As noted earlier, after World War II and into the 1950s, the United States played an important role in French reconstruction, but there were divisions and anxieties in France over expanding consumerism and an increased presence of new technology through an American-influenced model, and many Americans saw France being unappreciative of Americans’ efforts to help the country rebuild.<sup>62</sup> This dissertation argues that one way in which American and French popular magazines dealt with these tensions was the representations and critiques of each other’s women, which would serve as a symbolic marker separating and distinguishing the United States and France. Hence, the place of women as symbols for and between the nation in popular magazines needs close examination.

Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis identify several categories of how “women have tended to participate in ethnic and national processes.”<sup>63</sup> For the purposes of this dissertation’s interest on popular magazines’ practices of representation, two of Anthias and Yuval-Davis’ categories are most relevant: “[Women are used] as signifiers of ethnic/national differences—as a focus and symbol of ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories...[and] as participants in national, economic, and political struggles.”<sup>64</sup> Although Anthias and Yuval-Davis define women as signifiers of national difference and participants of struggle in the context of physical battle or national liberation, the case of popular French and American magazines involves a symbolic “battle” between France and the United States through the representations and critiques of each other’s women.

Agnieszka Graff’s paper on the place of gender talk in constructing the Polish nation amid debates over Poland’s accession to the European Union (EU) is an apt illustration of how magazines use the category of gender and its associated symbols to grapple with rapid societal

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<sup>61</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, *Gender and Nation* (Washington, DC: American Historical Association), p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> For an interesting French critique of technological innovations taking over parts of everyday postwar French life and the difficulty for some French people to move into a hyper-clean “modern” state, see Jacques Tati’s film *Mon Oncle* (1958).

<sup>63</sup> Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, “Woman—Nation—State,” in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 1480.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1480-1.

changes.<sup>65</sup> In her analysis of popular Polish magazines from 2002 to 2005, Graff reveals that these media tended to project societal anxieties about accession onto their observations of gender and sexual relations. The EU question ultimately threatened the Polish nation's sovereignty at a time when sexual minorities and women's contributions outside of traditional spheres of domesticity were becoming more prominent and naturalized. To rationalize the seemingly emasculating loss of sovereignty, magazines used sexual minorities and the "new Polish woman" as displaced release valves. Instead of dealing with the anxieties of European integration head-on, the magazines, especially conservative ones, called for a return to traditional values where sexual minorities and women knew "their place" within the confines of traditional (male-dominated) Polish society. As Graff summarizes, magazines had an "obsessive concern with gender and the process of Poland's EU accession...anxieties evoked by Poland's EU accession have been projected onto, and resolved within, the realm of gender."<sup>66</sup> Although Graff's paper discusses a situation that is 40 to 50 years after the focus of this dissertation, her argument about popular magazines' use of gender as an avenue to resolve and work through rapid internal and international changes is useful in the case of postwar French and American magazines.

In returning to the case of postwar America and France, and as will be made clearer shortly in discussing the concept of national, social comparison, in American popular magazines, the everyday French woman was compared directly or implicitly to the white, middle-class, upwardly mobile American woman in order to admire France yet place it in a position of inferiority; the same holds true in the reverse for French magazines. The ways in which popular French and American magazines represented each other's women ultimately made comparisons with and reflections on their own women, which served as a way for American and French readers to grapple with postwar anxiety over rapid change in a world where American ideas and goods seemed to dominate French society.<sup>67</sup> In other words, magazines' representations of French and American women were not mere imaginings of the French and American nation. Rather, they were purposeful representations that used nationalized gender identities and symbolism to work through Franco-American relations and the relative positions of the French

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<sup>65</sup> Agnieszka Graff, "The Land of Real Men and Women: Gender" *The Journal of the International Institute* (Fall 2007): 10-11.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>67</sup> I do not intend to insinuate that all American and French readers read and interpreted its popular magazines in the same manner. However, as some scholars argue, media can limit what audiences see, which can alter the terms of the debate over certain issues.

and American nations. Although the women represented in postwar magazines were not used in physical ways as women are often exploited in situations of direct international conflict, they were still used in magazines for strategic ideological ends to manage the tensions and anxieties of Franco-American relations after World War II.<sup>68</sup> More particularly, everyday French and American women were compared in magazines to define what was and was not American and French, and thus inside and outside of the American and French nation, respectively.<sup>69</sup> As such, the concept of national social comparison in the media needs further elaboration, as it explains how and why such comparisons were made.

### **National, Social Comparison**

The concept of social comparison from social psychology helps explain why popular magazines compared French and American women to assert French and American imagined national communities and a particular sense of Franco-American relations. Social comparison theory's premise is that people compare themselves in order to make sense of where they rank on certain criteria with others. Or, in the case of nations, as René Descartes wrote in 1637 in his *Discourse on the Method*, "It is useful to something of the manners of different nations, that we may be enabled to form a more correct judgment regarding our own..."<sup>70</sup> In the case of French and American popular magazines, American and French women, respectively, were used as an analytic category—explicitly through articles and images making direct comparative judgments and implicitly through the desires and longings manufactured through advertising—to mark the superiority of Frenchness or Americanness while acknowledging and admiring the unique attributes of the other culture. Therefore, by looking at French women and comparing them to American women, popular American magazines looked at the French to understand, better, or prop up particular aspects of the American way of life. The same is the case for French popular

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<sup>68</sup> It is important to note that media representations are not mirrors or reflections of reality. They do ideological work toward a certain end for what Umberto Eco calls "model readers," or those readers that a producer anticipates is receiving and responding to a particular text. The gendered in a variety of popular magazines in France and the United States after World War II propped up French and American nationalism and the image of each respective nation in a variety of ways. Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

<sup>69</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).

<sup>70</sup> René Descartes and John Veitch, *A Discourse On Method* (London: Dent, 1912), p. 6.



magazines in using American women. In other words, by looking at each other's women in magazines, Americans and the French were able to better understand and look back at themselves to situate where they sat in the larger order of the world, which was rapidly changing after World War II.

To illustrate this concept, *The Saturday Evening Post's* July 11, 1959 cover is helpful (see Figure vi). Before readers are two American tourists, Mr. and Mrs. Snapp, visiting a busy Parisian street. The Eiffel Tower anchors the background, and in the foreground we find Mrs. Snapp interrupting the work of a bemused French artist. American readers of the magazine might nod their head in agreement in what appears to be a commonly imagined scene of France: the Eiffel Tower, a busy flock of tourists, a gaggle of pigeons, some colorful art posters glued to a kiosk, and a man sporting a beret and long handlebar mustache. But what is most important in this image is Mrs. Snapp aiming the camera toward the readers. Although the magazine's cover

**Figure vi:**  
**Mr. and Mrs. Snapp of the USA**



explanation described Mrs. Snapp as a stubborn older woman stepping in to more quickly capture the essence of the scene being painted by the artist, what is important and fascinating is that readers may feel as though their photograph is being taken. On one level, by looking upon a stereotyped representation of France, readers are ultimately looking back at themselves as Americans. Maybe American readers wish to join the tourist mass to enjoy the sites of Paris. Perhaps some might be put off or amused by the artist's standoffish glance at the determined woman. Others may be annoyed by what could be a troop of "ugly Americans" trampling through another European capital or the presumptuous, entitled mature American woman who thought she could capture an image better and faster than the French artist with her camera. In any case, the magazine cover's representation of Paris is not a mere informative glance into the world of France and French culture. Rather, it is also an introspective surface through which readers look back to ponder on the scene before them in relation to that scene. This dissertation aims to similarly show how magazines provided a way for the French and American magazine reading publics to better understand themselves by looking closely, intently, and with a critical

eye at each other's women. In other words, just as Mr. Snapp looks toward his wife in eyebrow-raising surprise, one, too, may find some surprising insights into American and French life and Franco-American relations that came through popular magazines' peering eyes onto the world of French and American women after World War II.

## **Methodology and Approach**

This dissertation draws from more than 2,500 representations of American and French women in popular postwar French and American magazines found in library and corporate archives in the United States and France.<sup>71</sup> My grounded theory-driven methodology consisted of identifying themes that emerged from an analysis of the visual and textual elements found in culturally equivalent French and American magazines.<sup>72</sup> I looked to the discourses and rhetorical strategies that emerged through the metaphors and comparisons made visually and textually in magazines' representations of French and American women in articles, covers, and images in addition to advertisements and letters to the editor.

Based on my knowledge of the magazines' content as well as the contextual secondary literature on French and American magazines, I drew from the most popular, culturally equivalent postwar magazines in France and the United States. Figure vii presents the sampled magazines, which are organized nationally and according to their corresponding genre.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> American library archives include the University of Michigan, University of Iowa, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), University of Oregon, Ohio State University, and various American university libraries through Interlibrary Loan. Virtual American archives include Google Books' *Life* magazine archive and ProQuest's *Vogue* Collection. French library archives include the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris), Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme de Lille (Lille), and Inathèque de France (Paris). Corporate archives include *Paris Match* and *Elle* magazines (Paris, France) and the Office de la justification de la diffusion (Paris, France).

<sup>72</sup> See Appendix for more details on how I sampled French and American magazines.

<sup>73</sup> The magazines in the violet boxes—*Life*, *Look*, *The Saturday Evening Post* (for the United States) and *Paris Match* and *Jours de France* (for France)—represent those magazines intended for a general reading audience. Magazines in light blue boxes—*Vogue*, *McCall's*, *Mademoiselle*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and *Ladies' Home Journal* (for the United States), and *Vogue*, *Marie Claire*, *Marie France*, and *Elle* (for France)—represent women's magazines largely defined.

The magazines studied in this dissertation were selected, also, due to their historical and cultural significance.<sup>74</sup> All of the French magazines examined (with the exception of *Jours de France*) are still in print today, and even then, *Jours de France* only ceased publication in January 1989. Although many of the American magazines studied in this dissertation are no longer published, they hold an important place in Americans' cultural memories of the postwar period. To illustrate the prominence of these magazines today, one can easily go to a specialized website like eBay for used and rare booksellers in both countries, which

sell nearly all of the magazines' issues to collectors hoping to build their collections or track down a special issue of interest (see Figure vi). Further still, postwar magazines appear in popular culture today in French and American films of the postwar period through the 1960s to show their authenticity in representing a given time period as well as showing viewers a flavor of the time period, particularly the media that was popular at the moment.

For example, magazines show up as a central "character" in *Populaire*, a 2012 French film set in the late 1950s about a woman from a small Normandy town who comes to win the

**Figure vii:  
Culturally Equivalent Magazines Sampled**



<sup>74</sup> Among the magazines studied in this dissertation, *Nous Deux* was unique in that it contained predominantly serial stories with small space for discussion of entertainment news, cooking, and beauty. Launched in 1957 by Italian publishing czar Cino Del Duca, *Nous Deux* sought to be a magazine of the masses that shared clear, interesting, and easy to follow stories, which would inspire everyone from the factory worker to the elite housewife. Christian and moral bourgeois values were respected, and the magazine often drew from stories written by Americans. Although the content of *Nous Deux* did not reveal much in the way of comparisons between French and American women (although American women did appear in American stories), it included many American advertisements, which were closely analyzed and studied, especially since *Nous Deux* was one of the highest circulating French magazines in the 1950s. I sampled it heavily due to its ease in review, and its significant advertising content.

French national title for fastest typist.<sup>75</sup> In a sequence showing her rise to fame, the film displays the main character on covers of the key popular magazines studied in this dissertation: *Nous Deux*, *Jours de France*, *Elle*, and *Paris Match* (Figure viii).<sup>76</sup> The magazine covers, thus, showed film viewers that the character had “made it” big at the time period, which involved being showcased on the most popular magazines at that time. The widely circulating postwar magazines studied in this dissertation, therefore, because of their immense popularity when they were published as well as their important place in representing the postwar period today make them an important site to understand and study where and how the United States and France imagined themselves and the world more generally as well as how Americans and the French imagined one another after World War II through the 1960s.

Using grounded theory as my approach to sampling and collecting data, my textual and visual analysis is informed by media scholar Julie D’Acci’s formalization of the “circuit of media” model, which builds on key communications and cultural history scholarship and asserts that to understand particular cultural artifacts, such as postwar popular French and American magazines’ representations of American and French women, one needs to see how the cultural artifacts were received and produced within their specific socio-historical contexts.<sup>77</sup> Thus, to analytically complete the American and French woman’s circuit through postwar French and American popular magazines, respectively, I use thick description and connections across multiple magazines to show how the women were represented for consumption and identity (re)creation in a pivotal moment of social and cultural change in French and American history.

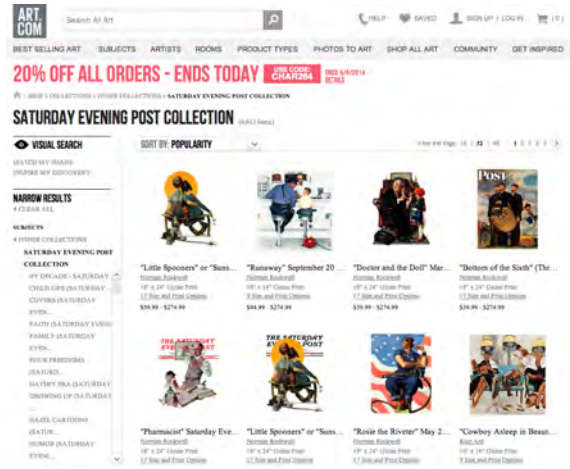
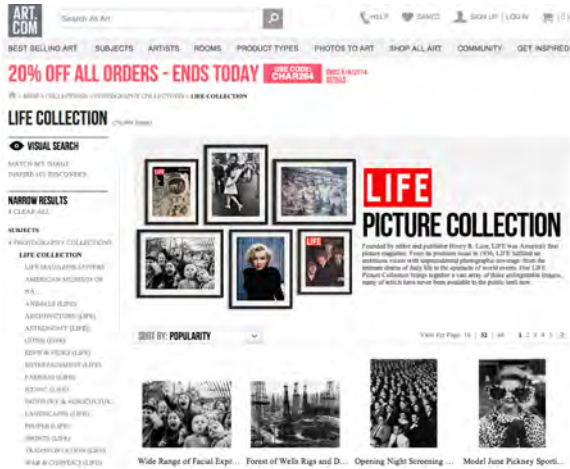
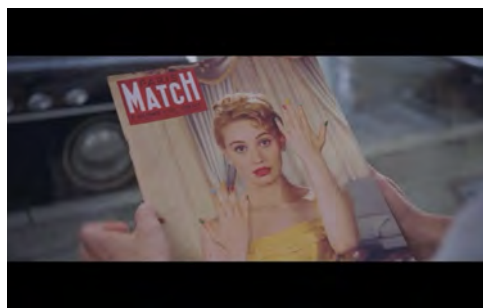
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<sup>75</sup> *Populaire*, directed by Régis Roinsard, (Paris, France: The Weinstein Company, 2012), Film.

<sup>76</sup> The first three images showing fictionalized covers of French magazines from the late 1950s come from the French film *Populaire*. An example of the historic and cultural legacy of two American magazines, *Life* and *Saturday Evening Post*, comes from Art.com, a popular online retailer of posters, prints, and wall art.

<sup>77</sup> Julie D’Acci, “Cultural Studies, Television Studies, and the Crisis in the Humanities,” in Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson, eds. *Television after TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 418-445; Roger Chartier and Lydia G. Cochrane, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988); Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections on Cultural History* (New York: Norton, 1991); Paul Du Gay, *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman* (London: Sage, 1997); Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997); Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” in Paul Morris and Sue Thornton, eds., *Media Studies: A Reader*. 2nd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 51-61.

Figure viii:  
Examples of Postwar Magazines' Legacy Today



Some may wonder why the dissertation focuses mainly on representations. I considered incorporating an analysis of the production and reception of these representations, but because of the severe limited availability of company materials and media practitioners during this time period, I was unable to do this with great depth. Most magazine companies' archives consist only of final magazine issues. Production notes, letters, and internal correspondence have been lost or destroyed in the various sales or changes in magazine structures. In a few cases,

fortunately, I have been able to uncover how and why certain important articles were produced through interviews and consultations of personal archives, but in most cases, I have had to rely on secondary materials surrounding the production of magazines and the work of their editors, owners, journalists, and creative professionals. Despite this limitation, I paid careful attention to letters to the editor for those magazines that allowed readers to write in, but even those letters are subject to selective representation by magazine editors. However, they were still important artifacts to consider in uncovering popular magazines' treatment of French and American women, as they provide a glimpse into what readers thought about the representations found in the magazines.

In the end, concerning the style and approach to the presentation of materials, readers of this dissertation should note that detailed, thick description is used to show the intricate, often-implicit nature of the representational comparisons between French and American women. The nature of national social comparison is often subtle, so showing how magazine text and images worked together to explain the French and American worlds through French and American women to American and French readers, respectively, is needed. Such thick description also brings readers of this dissertation into the colorful, detailed world of postwar magazines and how the seeds of our incredibly visually saturated, mediated world today.

### **Overview of Dissertation and Scope**

The title of this dissertation includes the phrase “*Cherchez la femme*,” which, in French, translates literally as “look for the woman.”<sup>78</sup> Therefore, on the one hand, this dissertation looks for the woman in negotiating French and American postwar relations in popular magazines. Further, this project looks for and uncovers how French and American women were used as symbolic representations for and between the French and American nations, respectively, which has been left out in Franco-American relations and media history. On another level, though, “*cherchez la femme*” in popular culture “embodies a cliché of detective

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<sup>78</sup> I owe the idea of using *cherchez la femme* in my title to Aimée Brown Price who reminded me of the term during several conversations at the Annenberg-Oxford Media Policy Summer Institute in Oxford, England, in July 2014.

pulp fiction: no matter what the problem, a woman is often the root cause.”<sup>79</sup> As French and American women were often used in American and French magazines to sort through how the French and American nations stacked up with one another, magazines in both nations represented women from the other nation to look at and discuss them with a prying microscope, which often critiqued the other nation’s faults and undesirable qualities. French and American magazines, then, represented each other’s women in a way that often put blame on women for all that their nation stood for. Magazines’ comparisons of French and American women was, thus, an avenue through which the French and American nations were propped up at a time of insecurity and rapid change, so looking for women’s important place in managing Franco-American relations is a necessity.

The dissertation is structured chronologically into three main chapters, mainly according to key, definable time periods of postwar Franco-American relations, which allows for a better discussion of the historic context and a comparative analysis of materials from the same relative time period. Chapter 1, the period of “Apprehensive Admiration” covers the immediate postwar years (roughly 1945-1952).<sup>80</sup> Chapter 2, “Mutual Fascination and Liberation,” explores the 1950s (roughly 1952-1960) when mass consumerism entrenched itself significantly in the United States and France. Lastly, Chapter 3, “Troubles in Adulation,” explores the changing early 1960s (1960-1965), particularly how French and American women were used to sort out what it meant to be modern, feminine, and independent at a rapidly changing time in both countries.

Throughout all of the chapters, one will see that French and American women were represented as inspirational in American and French cultural contexts, respectively, over time. In American magazines, French women were represented to be resilient, resourceful, independent, and chic. The world in which Frenchwomen lived, and Paris in particular, represented a dream for American women to transform themselves into women like the Frenchwoman who were glamorous, worldly, and desirable. In French magazines, American women were notable for their independence, quest for equality, technical expertise, and material comfort. The American woman’s world was one of wonderful gadgets, time-saving machines, innovative approaches,

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<sup>79</sup> “*Cherchez la femme*,” Wikipedia, last modified January 9, 2015, accessed December 18, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cherchez\\_la\\_femme](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cherchez_la_femme).

<sup>80</sup> It should be noted that I used 1952 as a cut-off between Chapters 1 and 2 since that was when the Marshall Plan was coming to a close. Although French life started to improve significantly before 1952, the year is significant in Franco-American relations and France’s sense of “independence” in its economic growth.



and wide, open spaces to explore and be free from the social constraints of the Old World. For those American and French women who could afford the experience of living or studying in France and the United States, respectively, or those taking the chance to marry across cultures, particularly French “G.I. Brides” after World War II, the possibilities to grow and benefit from the best of both worlds could be exciting. Yet the average woman in both countries most likely could not travel directly to the other country, so living vicariously through vividly rich representations like magazines was one possible way to travel, experience, and judge the wonders of the other nation and imagine ways of being like (and not like) the other nation’s women.

Still, despite the intense mutual admiration, American and French magazines critiqued French and American women, respectively, which could reassure or convince readers how their respective nation was superior to the other nation. In American magazines, French women showed signs of dependency, frivolity, and overindulgence in femininity; French women did not stand up for themselves, and they were too concerned with pleasing their men. Conversely, in French magazines, American women relied too much on their machines, conformed to the latest consumer trends, and sulked in marital boredom and unhappiness. On the surface, these represent national and cultural superiority. However, more significantly, given the underlying dynamic of social comparison explained earlier, these critiques signal larger intercultural debates about the best way to go about everyday life after World War II. At the time, the American way dominated with its presentation of a comfortable, consumerist, technologically driven society. Yet, for many of the French, tradition, esthetics, and quality were above market and material efficiency, which created immense conflict between the French and American ways of life. In France, many politicians and everyday people felt pressure to go the American way at the cost of the French way, so anxiety about France’s perceived and actual place in the world was considered at stake. For many Americans, a newfound imperial status on the world stage made for a conflicted milieu of fear and overconfidence in the heating Cold War.

As mentioned earlier, this dissertation relies on detailed, in-depth textual and visual analyses of prominent American and French magazine articles, features, and images of everyday French and American women to elaborate how the French and Americans imagined each other and change in a postwar world. Focusing on the details of key articles reveals the complex nature in which national, social comparison was executed in magazines. Many articles had



direct, explicit comparisons between French and American women with the goal of determining which nation's women were better off, which stood in for determining which country and way of life was better. Other articles were not as forward. Such articles used intricate details of the lives of women of the other country, which was done often in a documentary, voyeuristic, and eroticizing style, to make comparisons implicitly between French and American women. On the surface, these implicit representations worked to inform readers, but when digging into the value-laden observations and questions asked, one sees ambivalent admiration in favor of one nation's women over the other. Other representations were not disparaging, as they showed readers what they could learn about themselves and their own country through the experiences and perceptions from women of the other country. In such articles, readers were encouraged to learn about their own nation through the eyes of another nation's women, which allowed them to expand their sense of individual and national self, a necessary virtue in the expanding age of globalization after the war. Other articles featured French and American women who traveled and lived in the United States and France, respectively, and what they learned about their women and nation through study and work abroad, which provided readers with vicarious experiences of the other culture. However, more importantly, these articles empowered and inspired women to go beyond the relegated space of the home or secretarial pool to take on and live in the world independently.

At a time of the explosion of mass consumerism and mass media, advertisements were vital to the survival of magazines' business operations. As a consequence, it is not surprising that another area where everyday French and American women appeared with regularity was advertisements. From the end of World War II into the late 1960s, but especially in the late 1940s and 1950s, American and French women were deployed in the name of gaining market share in bustling and growing consumer industries, including make-ups, perfumes, bras, kitchen appliances, and cars. On the surface, these advertisements functioned to sell products, but they did much more than simply entice French and American readers to shell out money for particular merchandise. As Jackson Lears notes, advertisements serve the purpose of massaging one's purchasing restraint to feed into the dreams and desires that advertised products can bring in a world of mass-produced abundance.<sup>81</sup> These dreams and desires can be anything that will

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<sup>81</sup> Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

magically transform lives and perceived selves into something that is found admirable or desirable, such as being more efficient, beautiful, healthy, or modern. Advertisements, therefore, cultivate desires and are based upon the wishes of what people want to see, do, and become. In this dissertation's look to how postwar magazines' advertisements used American and French women, one sees how gender and the nation were built into how Americans and the French saw, imagined, and possibly wanted to become like the French and American women through the act of exercising consumer choice. Further, one sees such advertisements actively worked to sell and manufacture certain desires and perceptions of national self and community.

Keeping in line with the circuit of culture model's concern with the reception of media representations, another important, but less frequent area where American and French women appeared was in readers' reactions to many of the representations previously summarized. Unfortunately, corporate magazine archives no longer have copies of the letters that were submitted and/or printed, so one must to rely on the letters the editors published as "representative" and interesting for readers to read and think about. When available, responses to media representations are included in the dissertation by looking to the ways in which popular magazines served as a place for readers, especially women readers, to voice their concerns about the cultural and social changes taking place in France and the United States as well as shifting Franco-American relations. These letters also provide an opportunity to see where and how popular magazines' incorporation of letters to the editor allow women to voice their concerns from what Lauren Berlant calls "intimate publics."<sup>82</sup> Rather than extolling the virtues of the normative public sphere where critical, rational, and political debate is idealized, letters reveal the importance of popular magazines as a site of resistance and public discussion, especially women readers, about important issues of everyday life and international relations that does not appear on the radars of many international relations scholars and histories of Franco-American relations. Moreover, looking at letters presents the opportunity to take letters to the editor more seriously. While it is true that letters to the editor are subject to editorial discretion and selection, the very act of presenting this information is important to understanding magazines' constructions and presentations of their readership to other readers, especially a readership that cannot be reached today due to a lack of archives and living readers.

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<sup>82</sup> Lauren G. Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

## Dissertation's Significance

In the end, this dissertation's attention to magazine representations of women within and between the United States and France helps address a long-standing question in international relations: how do we come to understand others from other nations and how do they come to understand us? Certainly, as Benedict Anderson importantly highlights, mass media facilitate an imagining of the nation, but how do media shape how we come to imagine our international relations?<sup>83</sup> Walter Lippmann, mentioned earlier, provided an early answer to this question in *Public Opinion* when he wrote that most people, who cannot directly encounter the world around them, come to understand the larger world by relying on the "pictures in their head" that come from their media.<sup>84</sup> There are many ways in which our understanding of the world outside our national borders is "mediated"—through people we know who have traveled or learned a lot about a particular culture and its people, by meeting and interacting directly with people from another culture, through education, and through our mass media. However, the last factor—our mass media—is particularly important, if not the most important, since it is the source where we can most easily and readily come in "contact" with the world.

As Shani Orgad notes, media and their representations determine how we come to imagine ourselves individually and as a nation as well as how we come to treat and relate to others distant from us.<sup>85</sup> Although her framework is global in nature, her attention to the power of media representations in shaping our imaginations of self, the nation, and the world are essential to this dissertation's specific focus on how popular magazines' representations of French and American women managed Franco-American relations and internal national debates after World War II. Additionally, Orgad, like Melani McAlister, eschews the notion that popular media do not matter in shaping international relations as some policy researchers and political scientists may make it appear. In reality, for the average person, more people follow and engage in popular media than they do higher stakes communications coming from diplomatic corps and official governmental channels. Thus, most people come to imagine and understand the world through popular media's cultivation of an imaginary of what the world is like and how they find

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<sup>83</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).

<sup>84</sup> Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: The Free Press; Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1965/1921).

<sup>85</sup> Orgad, *Media Representation and the Global Imagination*.

themselves in that larger world. This dissertation does not intend to argue that people are duped by the media they engage—in fact, many letters to the editor in the magazines found in this project counter such an argument of ideological interpellation—rather, the focus is on the important work done through popular American and French magazine’s representations of each other through each other’s women. In other words, this dissertation shows where and how popular magazines, often not considered key actors (if an actor at all) of shaping international relations, are actually important in shaping how we imagine ourselves as a nation and our relationship with other nations and their peoples.

This dissertation, as a result, makes four important contributions to media studies, communications history, Franco-American history, and gender studies. First, it shows how international relations are managed through popular media more generally, and particularly through print magazines. Like McAlister, it makes a call for serious attention to popular culture and its service as a conduit of international understanding and imaginaries. Further, it grounds a specific, long-term case of what Orgad calls “global imagination”—how we come to understand and relate to others distant from us through the media. Second, and related to the first point, it evidences how magazines should be analyzed not just for their ability to forge an imagined national community, but they should be seen also for how they situate and work between imagined national communities. In other words, magazines need to be analyzed outside of national silos, and their international nature and impact needs to be historicized more than it has within the scholarship. Third, this dissertation specifically adds a much-needed mediated history of Franco-American relations and understanding. Despite their having been used in well-written histories of the Franco-American experience,<sup>86</sup> magazines have been understudied and underappreciated, especially in the fruitful collaborative period after World War II. Fourth, it explores how representations of everyday women, who come to embody and stand in for the nation, play an important role in the symbolic battles between nations to sort out how each nation sees itself compared to another and how it sits in the larger global order. In the case of this dissertation, it is a battle between America and France where each nation’s most popular magazines used each other’s women as their representational weapons of choice.

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<sup>86</sup> For example, see Brian A. McKenzie, *Remaking France: Americanization, Public Diplomacy, and the Marshall Plan* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005); Kristen Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*; and Weiner.

## Chapter 1

### Apprehensive Admiration, 1945-1952

In early 1946, young Frenchwoman Dominique Veri recounted in the French magazine *Marie France* what happened when she asked her Uncle Daniel to tell her about American women. Dominique approached Daniel because he purported to “know everyone, know everything, and has visited all countries.”<sup>1</sup> After an uncomfortable silence, he put down his newspaper, raised a “terrible eyebrow,” and begrudgingly detailed the American woman for Dominique and French women reading the magazine:

There are three types of women in America. The first category includes women-full-of-science, blue stocking women who make unbearable poems or social theories, and the conversation is done in a continual, glued succession. The second is the ladies-who-attend-beauty-parlors. Their conversation is more dangerous because they seek to seduce everyone equally well to prove that the fortune they spend on creams and massages is worth something. And finally, there is the category of the busy housewife. They are experts in the art of cuisine and delicious cakes... but they do not talk at all.<sup>2</sup>

After hearing her uncle’s cranky diatribe, Dominique told him that he must have been exaggerating due to his sour mood. To respond, Daniel snorted, “And in France, there exists an additional, fourth category: those little insolent and curious girls who come to always ask impertinent questions at the wrong moments.” Hearing this, Dominique ran for the door terrified, but just as she was about to shut the latch, she heard her Uncle Daniel bullying his “old lady”: “And listen to me, Ernestine, get me a sandwich now! And with meat! Heck, I am not a rabbit or goat eating lettuce and radishes!” The niece left “relieved” and concluded with a

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<sup>1</sup> Dominique Veri, “La femme américaine, vue par l’oncle Daniel,” *Marie France*, January 9, 1946, p. 6. All translations from French into English are mine, unless noted otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

sarcastic thought addressing her American sisters: “Oh, women of America, my sisters, what holds our reputation: a little too many herbs without enough butter!”

This short, tongue-in-cheek story from the January 9, 1946 issue of *Marie France* introduces three important French impressions of American women, which set up this chapter’s focus on French and American magazines’ immediate postwar representations of American and French women. First, Dominique’s story shows a conservative postwar French perspective on stereotypical American women. The first American woman type is overly independent, unfeminine, chatty, and opinionated, making herself an annoying imposition. The second American woman type’s penchant for beauty parlors makes her vain, superficial, and materialistic, which renders her worthless and an intellectual dud. The last type, like the story’s background image showing a blond woman pulling a tray from her refrigerator (Figure 1.1), remains a dutiful housewife admirable for her cooking and use of new domestic technology, but she had no significant presence for herself or interesting engagement for her husband. In short, the American woman, and America by extension, was highly imperfect despite outward attractive appearances. Second, Dominique’s story attempts to critique the French woman’s condition. In this case, the niece sees irony in her uncle’s thinking. Uncle Daniel chastises an overly talkative and non-talkative American woman and yet he begrudges a Frenchwoman who is too inquisitive. The Frenchwoman, to Dominique’s uncle, needs to serve her husband and be engaging, but she should not impose her questions or her choice of “feminine” food on her man’s comfort. Rather, she should dutifully attend to her husband’s “masculine” interests, such as eating hearty food and knowing when (and especially when *not*) to break the silence. Uncle Daniel’s critique of loud, outspoken American and French women shows his preference for a woman who serves her man’s wishes, but Dominique finds such treatment boorish, myopic, and

**Figure 1.1:**  
*La Femme Américaine, According to Uncle Daniel*



a little frightening. Third, this short vignette encapsulates an ambivalent period of gender relations within and between France and the United States in the years immediately after World War II where women initially found themselves independent but gradually pressed back into “traditional” women’s roles. In both countries, French and American magazines used every day American and French women, respectively, to work through gender and other postwar changes happening before readers’ eyes, which will be evidenced more clearly in the pages that follow.

This chapter focuses on significant popular American and French magazines’ representations of the lives of everyday French and American women during the immediate postwar period (roughly 1945 to 1952). Overall, French magazines often wrote admiringly of the American woman because of her independence and material comforts, but her life of materialism, reliance on machines, and ever-rising conformism was seen as troubling. As French intellectual Georges Duhamel wrote at the end of the 1920s, America was the direction the future was going, and the United States’ involvement in French reconstruction concerned the French in terms of what the future guided by America would mean for the French way of life.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the positive and negative aspects of the everyday American woman’s life featured in French magazines allowed French readers to deliberate and think about the tensions coming from changing aspects of everyday French life that might come to mirror similar changes in postwar America. America represented the onset of consumer culture and automated mass-produced goods. It also was a harbinger for a faster pace of life that afforded material comfort and new technologies. French magazines after the war used everyday American women, an important symbol and stand-in for American culture and life, to inspect and reflect on the changes that were happening and the possibilities that were to come for French women, and by extension, France more generally.

In America, magazines tended to look at French women with admiration due to her resilience in hard times, her hard work to improve herself and her country, and general appreciation and excitement for American help. However, the Frenchwoman’s sexuality was a threat to American women, especially among those American women who had men stationed overseas, but the Frenchwoman was also a way to prop up American masculinity, which was threatened by changing gender roles during the war. Still, the French woman was ultimately a

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<sup>3</sup> The most notable example is Georges Duhamel, *America The Menace: Scenes from the Life of the Future*, translated by Charles Miner Thompson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931).

point of reference for American women on how to be beautiful and alluring, as seen in magazines' focus on the minute details of what French women were wearing and how they managed to maintain svelte, attractive bodies, even in times of war and reconstruction.

In the immediate postwar period, thus, one sees a “mutual fascination, apprehension, and appreciation” in popular French and American magazines' representations of American and French women, respectively.<sup>4</sup> American magazines followed the admirably resilient Frenchwoman who helped her family and others survive and have the most comfortable lives possible during and after the war, which complimented France and her efforts to defend herself. Conversely, French magazines used the intimate details of the modern, independent American woman and all that she represented (independent, hardworking, and materially well off) to navigate and feel more comfortable with an ever more consumerist world after World War II that was being instilled in France and elsewhere through the ascendance of the United States on the global stage. However, there were tensions and apprehensions that French and American women served to work through in American and French magazines. Frenchwomen's relationships and supposed sexual availability threatened American women as American GIs' faithfulness to their wives and girlfriends was put into question. In France, the independent and prosperous American women presented an alluring life, but the French were worried about the costs of such a commercially and technologically driven American-style life where there could be a lack of genuine happiness that did not depend on consuming and machines. Even worse, the American woman's life of consumerism presented a situation where she was not able to afford quality food due to her quest for material possessions and products that embellished her outward appearances, which shocked the French who prided themselves on good food and balanced eating, even in times of impoverishment and war. And in France, as mass consumerism was on the rise into the booming 1950s, popular magazines heavily featured American women in advertisements to inspire new cleaning habits, consumer spending, and a widespread mass consumer society.

This chapter reveals four major themes of how American and French magazines represented French and American women, respectively, in the immediate postwar period. First,

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<sup>4</sup> The phrase comes from the book jacket previewing Whitney Walton, *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890-1970* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009). This phrase is useful because it does not treat Franco-American relations in binary terms, such as a “love-hate” relationship, which popular literature and articles often do in writing about Franco-American relations. Here I think specifically of Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).



in “America’s Resilient Frenchwoman,” one sees how American magazines homed in on the resilience and strong characters of French women, especially in how they could make do with what little they had. Second, in “Ambivalence over the Frenchwoman and the American GI,” American and French magazines were intensely interested in the relationships that formed between Americans and French people through the war, particularly American GIs and Frenchwomen, which set off conversations comparing the lives of French and American women and the state of gender relations in America. Third, in “France’s Apprehension toward the Admirable American Woman,” French magazines provided in-depth features on the technically savvy American woman who was admired for her independence. Yet the American woman was troubling to French readers due to her materialism and conformism. Lastly, the American woman had a significant presence in French magazines through her being a tool of advertising products in France. The American woman was used to appeal to French consumers to buy new products or products returning to French markets after the war. Although French products, particularly beauty products, were advertised well in American magazines, too, attention is needed on the significant flood of American products where the image of the American woman was used as point of reference for French women to emulate. More specifically, these advertisements of the American woman in France shows one prominent way for American life and ways of living to take hold on postwar French women and society. Before presenting significant cases for each of these four themes, a discussion of the immediate postwar situation is needed to put the textual and visual analyses in proper context.

### **Immediate Postwar Context**

The immediate postwar period was an important turning point for the United States and France. The United States had emerged from World War II as the wealthiest nation in the world and one of the strongest military and cultural powers. The American economy was bustling at full capacity, and despite the tremendous loss of life during the war, America prospered and the quality of life rose rapidly as American service people returned to the States. However, there was a rising tide of conservatism due to growing concerns over the Soviet communist threat at home and abroad.

In France, the country found itself defeated and battered after nearly five years of

German occupation. The symbolic and real clout France had on the global stage was diminished. Internal struggles and debates waged about how to rebuild the French government, to handle the question of what to do with Germany, to engage in new international agreements such as the North Atlantic Treat Agreement (NATO) and budding European governance, to fix the country's damaged infrastructure, to find ways to battle food and housing shortages, and to resolve how to fairly and justly handle wartime collaborators with Germany. To add to its troubles, France's colonies overseas in Southeast Asia and North Africa clamored for independence, resulting in the deployment of French troops immediately after the war into the early 1950s. Nonetheless, America's taking on the role as a world economic and military superpower as well as France's loss of prestige and influence presented a tumultuous postwar rebuilding within and between the United States and France. Although peace was found with the end of fighting in the European theater in late April and early May 1945, how to rebuild and forge ahead into the future was a struggle in both countries, especially for France.

Out of the latter half of the 1940s and early 1950s, the United States took on an important role in rebuilding France and much of Western Europe through the Marshall Plan. Guised in the name of helping Europe rebuild, the recovery program served as a way to eliminate and contain the communist threat in Western Europe by garnering the support and admiration of politicians and citizens in participating countries. Although Europeans were not "duped" by the American government's attempt to instill American values and ideals over competing communist and socialist ideas from the East, the support the American government and people gave Europe after the war helped establish closer ties between the United States and France, especially through the regular movement of politicians, business people, artists, intellectuals, farmers, and everyday citizens, including students. Some French people, particularly those on the left, did question the United States' motives to help France, as they saw the American government's programs as efforts to dominate and recreate France in the image of its commercialist, Fordist society, which was a commonly held fear among vocal French intellectuals and politicians in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, with French resistance to American policies after the war, many Americans questioned the appreciation and loyalty of the French after American military support and intervention in and after two world wars. On both sides, there was admiration mixed with

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<sup>5</sup> The most prominent French thinkers include Georges Duhamel, who published *America The Menace: Scenes from the Life of the Future* in 1930, and André Siefried who was elected to the Académie française, France's official governing body for French language and literature, immediately after the war.

distrust and ambivalence.

Beyond the broader international tensions and collaboration between the United States and France, the place of women in the United States and France after the war deserves special attention, as both countries saw a conservative tide toward women. The situation of women in both countries could be described as advancing slowly toward equality yet ambivalent at best. As the war was ending in April 1944, French women were granted full citizenship through the right to vote. Further, in June 1949, the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* rattled the cage of male privilege by arguing that women's true liberation comes from her taking on her own independence.<sup>6</sup> Despite these advances as well as the experience of French women in taking leadership roles and participating in resistance or war efforts, once the war was over, many middle class French women saw their place being forced back into the home or taking on "traditional" female work, such as assistants and providing domestic services. Moreover, with the massive loss of life during the war, the French government put policies into place that encouraged women to focus on having children, so, as was seen in the United States, the responsibilities that came from the postwar baby boom also limited women's abilities to advance their power in the public sphere outside of the home.<sup>7</sup>

Sharon Cline asserts that postwar French society worked to recalibrate gender relations in line with traditional "Frenchness" after four years of German occupation.<sup>8</sup> During the war, the French collaborationist government based out of Vichy emphasized a conservative gender ideology of homemaking and child rearing for women, but because of severe shortages of food and materials, women took on "men's roles" by doing whatever they could to provide for their families. At the same time, many Frenchmen's statuses as "breadwinners" were undermined as many lost work or were highly underpaid; moreover, their symbolic status of protecting the family and nation was tarnished because of Germany's swift occupation of the country in 1940. As a result, immediately after the war, returning France to gendered "normalcy" was one area of national recovery, and Frenchwomen became a key target of purifying the nation from German domination. In particular, Frenchwomen who collaborated or had sexual or friendly relations

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<sup>6</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963). Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).

<sup>7</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families In the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Sharon Elise Cline, *Féminité à la Française: Femininity, Social Change, and French National Identity, 1945-1970*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, PhD Dissertation, December 2008.

with Germans had to parade in towns and cities with their heads shaved; some, such as prostitutes, were forced to parade naked, even with their children, possibly part-German children, in hand (Figure 1.2).<sup>9</sup> As Cline writes, “Female collaboration and prostitution . . . bespoke the inability of some French men to protect and/or provide for their families and highlighted the willingness of some women to betray the national community . . . Coming to terms with this legacy set the stage for the re-establishment of femininity by beginning a restoration of masculinity.”<sup>10</sup> Although collaborating Frenchmen were also sought out for public scolding and punishment, Frenchwomen, the symbol of the French nation’s purity, were primary targets for cleansing France in ways far crueler and demeaning than what Frenchmen faced. As such, how French women were perceived and represented at home and abroad in magazines took on particular significance in helping France recover.

**Figure 1.2:  
Punishment of Women Collaborators**



Mary Louise Roberts’ recent book *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* makes observations in line with Cline’s work, but from a more transnational perspective.<sup>11</sup> Although she focuses on the war and its immediate aftermath, Roberts, in looking to the American Army’s photojournalistic press, found that the French woman was highly sexualized and considered an available resource to American GIs stationed in France. Ultimately, Frenchwomen’s accessibility threatened Frenchmen’s masculinity, which represented a broader worry about France’s diminished place on the world stage: “Through contacts with the GIs, French men began to realize that their nation was no longer held in the

<sup>9</sup> “The French Get Back Their Freedom,” *Life*, September 4, 1944, pp. 21-22. The top photo comes from page 21; the bottom from page 22. Both images depict “women collaborators.”

<sup>10</sup> Cline, pp. 16-17.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

same esteem. In this sense, the French ‘crisis of masculinity’ was much more than a domestic matter, as historians have assumed. To be properly understood, male gender damage must be placed in an international context, namely the war’s impact on French global status and the heavy presence of American soldiers on French soil.” In other words, with Frenchmen’s defeat of masculinity, a general feeling of gendered national defeat emerged with American men’s physical and symbolic appropriation of Frenchwomen, and Frenchmen did everything in their power to return to normalcy by rebalancing gender roles through encouraging the return of a “traditional” Frenchwoman.<sup>12</sup>

In the United States, painful gendered realignment occurred after the war, too. Messages about the place of American woman took a wild “ideological roller-coaster ride” in the immediate postwar period prior to the solidification in 1952 or 1953 of what Betty Friedan would eventually call the feminine mystique.<sup>13</sup> As Susan Douglas notes, in the 1930s, women were told or explicitly forbidden to take “men’s work,” but immediately following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the American government and industry leaders encouraged women to fill the places of men conscripted for war. Six million women joined the workforce, making up a third of the total American jobs. Additionally, many women joined the war efforts directly by serving overseas as WACs and WAVES, members of the Women’s Army Corps and the Navy’s Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service, respectively.<sup>14</sup> Despite American women’s hopes to continue with work outside the home because of their liking of “the money, the sense of purpose, the autonomy” it provided, as more GIs returned from battle, a war was waged against “Rosie the Riveter.”<sup>15</sup> Four million women lost their jobs, and these mass firings of women were based in the fear that Depression era conditions would resurface if soldiers returned to limited job prospects where women continued to “flood” the labor market.<sup>16</sup>

One significant influence in drumming up this fear was the 1947 bestseller *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* by Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg, which used psychoanalytic theory to explain that independent women who rejected their “fundamental role as wife and

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<sup>12</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, p. 90.

<sup>13</sup> Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are* (New York: Times Books, 1995), p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

mother” were unhappy and confused because they took on masculine pursuits.<sup>17</sup> With this logic in mind, Farnham and Lundberg called for society to encourage the domestic role for women to make women happy in their “natural” place in the home or in proscribed women’s roles and to avoid leaving men with “feelings of insufficiency and weakness.” As Mildred Burgum noted at the time in her review of *Modern Woman*, the book signified rising conservatism in America and prominent Americans’ continuing assaults on women:

The conservatism that has swept the country since the end of the war has brought concerted attempts to check women’s advances. Clare Booth Luce and Dorothy Thompson have been crying for women’s return to the kitchen. Philip Wylie castigates the American mother. Dr. Edward Strecker, who served as consultant to the armed forces during the war, asserts that “mom” was responsible for the psychological ineligibility of two million men for military service. To this mounting criticism *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* makes the most virulent contribution.<sup>18</sup>

Adding on to this rising tide of social conservatism against women was the emerging ideological battle with the Soviet Union where many leaders did not want the United States to be like the communists who made their women work and have the state raise children in Soviet ideology.<sup>19</sup> By the late 1940s, then, Cold War “anxiety and affluence contributed to a popular conception of the family as a source of social stability and prosperity and reinforced traditional notions of women’s place in the home.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, after the war, and building into the early 1950s, conservative gender norms favoring feminine domesticity established itself in America just as they were in France, which had important influences on popular magazines’ representations of French and American women.

Given this dynamic context where the balance of global influence favored the United States over France, grave economic and social problems pressed down on a war-torn France, and a tide of conservatism worked against women’s advances toward equality with men in both countries, it is important to see how popular magazines worked through what was happening in the immediate postwar period. As noted in the Introduction, in both countries, postwar

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<sup>17</sup> Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947).

<sup>18</sup> Mildred Burgum, Review of *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* by Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham, *Science & Society*, Vol. 11, no. 4 (Fall 1947), p. 383. Clare Booth Luce was the wife of Henry Luce, owner of Time-Life, Inc. Dorothy Thompson was a journalist and radio broadcaster that was named by *Time* magazine in 1939 to be the second most influential woman after Eleanor Roosevelt. Philip Wylie was a popular writer. Dr. Edward Strecker was a psychologist famous for popularizing the argument that boys became weak, feminine, and possibly gay if they were too smothered by their mothers.

<sup>19</sup> Douglas, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> Ellen Dubois and Lynn Dumenil, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: Women’s Lives, 1945-1960,” in *Through Women’s Eyes, Volume 2: An American History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin’s: New York, 2012), p. 595.

magazines were a significant source of mass media and visual culture after the war. In America, magazines were especially popular because of their portability and new, innovative use of color printing techniques. Television was popular, but it was not yet as saturated in postwar American households as magazines, newspapers, and radio.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, due to more income, education, and leisure time as well as the fact that 80% of country was within reach of regular magazine outlets, magazines came to take a significant place in Americans' leisurely reading time.

Similarly, in France, from the mid-1940s through the mid-1950s, magazines boomed as a result of rising disposable incomes, increased ad revenue, and innovative start-ups such as *Elle* and *Marie France* in 1945 and *Paris Match* in 1949.<sup>22</sup> Print media and radio were the main media in the late 1940s through early 1960s, as television was still expensive for consumers, and television broadcast infrastructure was not as advanced and developed as in the United States. In general, French postwar mass media were highly regulated and controlled by the state due to fears of propaganda and the use of media as tools of the wealthy. As such, radio and television that emerged were drab in comparison to the print magazines that started to experiment with color printing and include more lighthearted, interesting topics. French magazines, too, often created themselves in the image of American magazines either explicitly, as in the case of *Paris Match* whose owner and editors wanted to make the magazine the French equivalent of *Life*, or implicitly, as in *Elle* magazine's adoption of American styles through the editor in chief's having experience in editing and running magazines in the United States before and during the war. With the political, cultural, social, and media context established, one can now turn to the first theme emerging from American magazines' representations of the French woman in the immediate postwar period: America's admiration for the resilient French woman.

### **America's Resilient French Woman**

In the aftermath of World War II, American magazines presented the resilience of French women to make do with whatever means they had to survive and maintain their well-known feminine grace, which helped showcase the benefits and positive impact of American

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<sup>21</sup> John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 244-245.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Marie Charon, *La presse magazine* (Paris: Editions de la Découverte, 2008). Raymond Kuhn, *The Media in France* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

involvement in France. This focus on the resourceful French woman worked to make Americans admire France, its people's trials of Occupation and rebuilding, and its welcome embrace of American assistance and support at a time when the situation in France was complex and ambivalent, especially with regard to relationships between American GIs and French women, which will be detailed more in the next theme on "Ambivalence Over the Frenchwoman and the American GI."

In one of the earliest American magazine features celebrating French women's strength during and after the war, *Life* presented the everyday, newly liberated life of Cherbourg's Mademoiselle Paule Marie Truffert on August 21, 1944 (Figure 1.3).<sup>23</sup> As was typical of *Life's* photo essay style, this "Call on a Little French girl" used a large opening shot to bring readers directly into Paule's life. Readers are immediately made to admire this French girl, shown carrying fresh milk in old wine bottles while she holds a "friendly smile." Further, the caption's description of her "pretty good English," makes readers like

**Figure 1.3:**  
*Life Calls on a Little French Girl*



**Figure 1.4:**  
*Little French Girl's Close Ties with Americans*



<sup>23</sup> "Life Calls on a Little French Girl," *Life*, August 21, 1944, pp. 98-100, 102.



her since these “attributes endeared her to GIs since the Allies freed Cherbourg.”<sup>24</sup> Additionally, American readers are urged to look favorably upon this “little French girl” precisely because she is described as being “fond of enlisted Yanks” and happy to finally be able to buy “butter, cheese and fresh cream without coupons,” because of American help. Even more impressive for readers, *Life* makes her out to be an everyday hero by following her newly found free life thanks to the Americans and their allies. Paule was notable and likely chosen for the *Life* feature because “She is a serious and intensely patriotic young Frenchwoman with a full sense of responsibility” that would align well with the American work ethic. Moreover, the magazine’s short article text underscores her hero status by explaining her bravery of sneaking back to her parents during the war after she had to flee when her father’s gasworks factory was blown up. Showing even more of her gutsiness and dedication to home, family, and country, the article notes that after only a week of the Allies’ having liberated Cherbourg, Paule hitched a ride on an American Jeep to return home and help rebuild.

All of Paule’s admirable attributes as a small-town hero pale in comparison to Paule’s showing American readers the benefits of positive, close relations between America and France. To illustrate her appreciation of freedom brought by America, under a photo showing Paule leaving a shop, the caption explains that she had to face shortages of food, but she found that “Liberty is better than bread.”<sup>25</sup> The photo essay’s middle photographs depicting her daily activities showed other benefits that she enjoyed, such as her trading language lessons with GIs on the beach, fervently reading the new free press or used copies of *Stars & Stripes*, and chatting with American soldiers outside her home or along one of her walks. Paule’s welcoming smile and positive interactions with American GIs on the ground represented and symbolized Franco-American relations at its best as well as “perhaps the most clear-cut personality that has yet emerged from among the thousands of liberated French” (Figure 1.4).<sup>26</sup> In other words, Paule was notable and likeable in the eyes of *Life*, and presumably its American readers, because she appreciated American generosity, which was especially seen in *Life*’s “clincher shot” of the photo essay where Paule smiles toward the camera with American soap suds on her face.<sup>27</sup> The caption explains that the American soap, given to her by an American soldier friend, “is a great

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that the “clincher shot” was the typical shot *Life* editors used to summarize what readers should take away from an article.

joy after four years of poor substitutes.”<sup>28</sup> At a time when “other rare items in Norman households are coffee, sugar and flour” and when she had to live a life in a “room...bare of feminine frills” with a “scant” wardrobe, including what looks like uncomfortable wooden-soled sandals and no hat, Paule’s smiling face display French appreciation for Americans’ gift of small cleanly luxury, which ultimately works to warm American readers’ impressions of this typical young French woman. Further, still, Paule is used to paint a very flattering picture of American GIs and America’s heroism and generosity during and after the war.

The photo essay’s final focus on Paule’s appreciation and enjoyment of American soap also touches readers’ national American pride in helping France clean up from a brutal occupation and return to a life of material abundance and plenty. Without the enjoyable conversations with American GIs, small gifts from Americans, and a return to normalcy and material comforts thanks to American forces, Paule would not be smiling as she does. This short photo-essay, thus, serves to prop up Americans’ positive impressions of the efforts in France and to put a rosy filter on the immediate postwar period through a young girl who symbolizes France and her appreciation for American aid. Ultimately, Paule’s close ties with American soldiers and her work hard to help return her family, town, and country, to normalcy while maintaining a sweet girlish charm for American GIs and the readers of *Life* magazine, make looking at postwar French reconstruction enjoyable when the actual situation in France was quite dire.

Two months after Paule’s appearance, and nearly two weeks after American forces had helped liberate Paris in late August 1944, *Life* continued its examination of France through its women at the end of its in-depth feature “Paris is Free Again!”<sup>29</sup> After discussing and visually displaying the jubilation and chaos that marked Paris upon American GIs’ liberation of the city, the thirteen-page spread concludes with short articles on French women and their fashions. *Life* writer Charles Wertenbaker noted in “The Streets and People” that despite “Paris still look[ing] like Paris—a little dirty and scarred but with no irreparable damage...The latest crop of young girls, those between 18 and 21, are more beautiful than French girls were before. They walked and bicycled as they grew up and did not eat too much.”<sup>30</sup> Here, the actual cost of war (the shortage of food) is described to American readers as an advantage for French women to maintain their beauty and slim figures, even surpassing what had been observed before the war.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>29</sup> “Paris is Free Again!” *Life*, September 11, 1944, pp. 25-38.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

This minimizes French women's actual struggles by reinforcing an American trope of the beautiful, thin French woman.

**Figure 1.5:**  
**Pretty Women in Liberated Paris**



Two photographs accompanying Wertenbaker's article reaffirm the presence of beautiful, thin French women: "The most noticeable things about Paris today are pretty girls (left), bicycles which have replaced automobiles (center) and strange big hats (right)" (Figure 1.5). Rather than explaining that the large hat fashion was actually used as a way to make Frenchwomen taller and intimidating to German occupiers, the caption treats the fashion as a quirky oddity for the independent Frenchwoman. Columnist Mary Welsh follows Wertenbaker's article by focusing on "The Fashions" that still epitomized the French woman's ability to persevere and maintain their status as fashionable and well put together, even when bullets were spraying at crowds of celebrating people. Welsh remarks that French women presented themselves in their best attire to American soldiers to show their and France's endearing gratitude for the United States' help in the war as well as the sign of better things to come for the French economy.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, even in the moments when Paris was battered and newly liberated, France's metropolitan women were used as a symbol in American magazines for France's appreciation for American support, perseverance, and hopes for better things to come. Further, they provided a light-hearted glimpse onto a difficult situation facing liberated France as well as how America positively helped France, and particularly its women, regain a sense of normalcy.

Lighthearted depictions of postwar French life through its women appeared in even the most serious attempts to highlight the difficulties facing the country after the war. Nearly a year after the liberation of Paris, *Ladies' Home Journal's* Sonia Tomara published one such article

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

that strongly showcased the theme of Frenchwoman's resilience in the face of adversity by describing "How France Lives" (Figure 1.6).<sup>32</sup> As a strategy to legitimate her objectivity as a journalist, Tomara writes that she chose the experiences of the Schneiters, a French family from Reims, a mid-sized city northeast of Paris, because of their being representative of thousands of other French families. Indicating that the life of Pierre, his wife Marguerite, and their five children is representative of experiences of all other French families is significant because such language works to convince readers that the representation is objective, which produces a blanket impression of French life through the particular experiences of one family, and most importantly, that family's wife and mother.

Overall, the article shows the life of the Schneiters as brutal. Even after the end of the war, they struggled to find food, heating fuel, and clothing. However, what made the family's life bearable during and after the war was Marguerite's ability to make do with what she had, even maintaining her sense of fashion, on which Tomara focuses in her initial description of Marguerite:

She is slender, well-built, and fair-haired like all the children. Behind her black horn-rimmed glasses, her eyes are very direct and gray. *Like all Frenchwomen*, she can run a house, market, cook, and sew supremely well. *Like them*, she can make something out of little. Her good-looking black winter coat is trimmed with the last remains of a caracul coat her husband gave her before the war. With five young children and no household help, she has no time to follow fashions, however. Her hat is not the monumental turbanlike affair many Parisian women wear, but a brown brimmed felt, and her black platform shoes have wooden soles.<sup>33</sup>

Here, in her extended introduction, it becomes clear to readers that Marguerite represents all French women ("like all Frenchwomen"), who are, like her, jacks-of-all-trades who "can make something out of little." To be sure, Tomara describes how Marguerite knows how to use available resources to raise a handful of children and meet her duties as the leader of the household when her husband secretly attended resistance activities. And while Marguerite did not meet Paris' expectations of fashion, Tomara describes her admiringly due to her ability to maintain the dignity American readers associated with French women in keeping their appearance in order, even in the family's impoverished state where the children were always distressingly hungry.

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<sup>32</sup> Sonia Tomara, "How France Lives," *Ladies' Home Journal* (July 1945), pp. 95-99.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96. Emphasis added.

**Figure 1.6:  
Resilient Madame Schneider**



The various photographs accompanying *Ladies' Home Journal's* in-depth look at the Schneider's lives draws further attention to Marguerite's ability to make do and stay beautiful with little means. In one photograph illustrating France's dire food shortage and Marguerite's determination to provide for her family, Marguerite is shown anxiously awaiting to buy supplies with other women to purchase part of the minimal available food supplies (see middle of Figure 1.6). Further, the caption for a small, square photograph of tiny feet in felt material underscores Marguerite's ingenuity and resourcefulness in all aspects of her life: "Shoes cost up to \$60 a pair in France, when you can find them. Mme. Schneider made these from an old rug and a brown felt hat"<sup>34</sup> As Tomara informs American readers, the issue of clothing was very distressing for Marguerite during the war and after liberation due to massive shortages in materials and supplies, so to show the ingenuity of the average French woman, the article's text emphasized how Marguerite was not wasteful and used her creativity, as all Frenchwomen do, to make clothing possible:

Another great problem in Marguerite Schneider's life is clothes for her children. Points [for rationing] are not issued in France as regularly or as strictly as they are in England. She must stand in line at the city hall to prove that she needs clothes, and she may or may not be given some points. Average number issued a year is about forty a person. A pair of pajamas take thirty points. So with great ingenuity Mme. Schneider has cut down and made over old clothes. Luckily, nothing is ever thrown away in a French household. She solved the shoe problem by making sneakers for the children out of an old rug, an automobile-engine cover and a brown felt hat.<sup>35</sup>

Here, Marguerite's making felt shoes from scraps was not described in as heroic terms as the article's retelling of Pierre's brother's capture and execution by Nazis a few days before Reims'

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

liberation. However, Marguerite is implied to be a hero in her own way, just like the article's description of neighboring French women who contributed to the resistance by harboring and helping Allied fliers who clandestinely parachuted into the region; some even risked their lives to make Allied fliers feel at home by bringing them to church and the movies right under the noses of German occupiers.<sup>36</sup> Marguerite did not board any Allied fliers, but the article treats her as a hero for keeping up her house as best she could for the safety and well-being of her children. Marguerite's profile and story of struggle, survival,

and perseverance was used to project to American readers images of all Frenchwomen, and the article's images and texts of Marguerite's small victories worked to make the responsible French housewife-mother admirable, endearing, and inspiring to garner continued support for America's efforts and sacrifices abroad, which was clearly on readers' minds, as seen in that month's cover featuring an American soldier being embraced by the soldier's relieved wife and daughter (Figure 1.7).

American magazines often framed French women for American audiences as everyday heroes who did not flinch at having to help their common man during the war, and they readily shared such endearing, heartwarming stories because they made American audiences appreciate France's mutual sacrifice and its women's abilities to represent and uphold its country in face of adversity. In one such article, a couple of years after its feature on the Schneiter family, *Ladies' Home Journal* told a short, somber, and moving story about an American military awards ceremony that recognized the French who offered space in their home to the Allies during the war, particularly many French women seen in the crowd. Most notable for the magazine's journalist were "a young woman, capable and kind-looking, with the typical expression of a French working girl"<sup>37</sup> and a small, gray-haired woman "dressed in one of those typically French

**Figure 1.7:**  
*Ladies' Home Journal* Cover, July 1945



<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>37</sup> Ruth L. Yorck, "Heroes are Small People," *Ladies' Home Journal*, July 1947, p. 113.



wartime, ladies'-wear coats which won't keep the intended creases, but wrinkle tiredly all over."<sup>38</sup> These women were seated with "other heroes of the resistance, the special kind, the ones who helped Allied parachutists during the occupation of France."<sup>39</sup> Their reward during this ceremony (and many others like it in France) was a special medal, the Medal of Freedom, along with a small income for boarding soldiers during the war. However, to move American readers to the significance of these women's sacrifices, the author describes "a young girl wearing bobby socks" who runs up to get a medal, but instead of receiving one, she ends up being awarded three—one for herself and two for her parents who had died in the war. As the article's author notes, the medals and the money were no consolation for their losses and sacrifices, but they were an important symbol of American appreciation for the great things these women did "in their small way."<sup>40</sup>

**Figure 1.8:**  
**Opening to "The French Look"**



<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Beyond the heroics of the Frenchwoman's contributions to her family, community, and resistance war efforts, American magazines also dedicated articles specifically to share the Frenchwoman's skill in maintaining her assumed beauty and charm with little to no resources. Several articles took this fascination further by comparing Frenchwomen and American women on their ability to maintain their attractiveness and femininity. In one notable article, *Life's* "French Look" from September 10, 1945, four pages of analysis were dedicated to studying the French woman's dress and anatomy, which was summarized in its provocative subtitle: "Sexier and Less Natural than the American Look, It is the Result of Effort and Ingenuity" (Figure 1.8).<sup>41</sup> Here, reinforcing the resilient Frenchwoman theme, American readers also learn that the Frenchwoman is resourceful to make herself beautiful through her "effort and ingenuity." Uncovering how the magazine shows what the Frenchwoman was like and what she did is important to directly address, as one can see how it affirms the long-held American image of the alluring Frenchwoman: "By long-standing consensus of males, the young women of France are the most alluring of Europe. In the past year, to the not inconsiderable worry of wives and sweethearts at home, many Americans have had a chance to check this ancient truth at first hand."<sup>42</sup> The use of the words *ancient truth* implicates that the Frenchwoman has an enduring innate character and appearance of beauty that transcends time that may be explained through genetics, culture and otherwise. The magazine, thus, serves implicitly to verify this American knee-jerk understanding of France. As the photo essay progresses, the images of sensual eyes, expressive eyebrows, inviting and smiling lips, "beautifully molded" legs, petite feet, braless busts, and small, flat stomachs aim to fetishize the Frenchwoman by breaking her body into its various parts. In so doing, American readers could analyze and dissect the Frenchwoman with precision to see how she held up in comparison to American women (Figure 1.9).

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<sup>41</sup> "The French Look," *Life*, September 10, 1945, pp. 91-94.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.





through an American magazine's close look at French women, the threatened American woman is described as more natural. In its opening explanation, what differentiates the French woman from the American woman is her being "more openly sexy, more consciously stylish, less 'natural.'" <sup>44</sup> Although the article assuages any fears by noting that GIs prefer the "Great American Girl, they give high marks to the gay but artful beauties of France who make it their prime purpose in life to please men."<sup>45</sup> The American woman ultimately is superior in that she is beautiful naturally; the French woman's regular use of artificial aids, including "make-up, false or dyed hair, figure-shaping brassieres, carefully plucked eyebrows, thick-soled and high-heeled shoes," only makes her out to be an imposter because of her over-reliance on a masquerade.<sup>46</sup> Despite this, compared to the American woman, the French woman is still advantaged naturally in her deep sensuality, shorter and slimmer legs, smaller and thinner figures, and small feet. Moreover, the French woman was most admired for her resilience in the face of adversity. Like Marguerite Schneiter mentioned earlier, "The French Look" article implied that all Frenchwomen made themselves beautiful with their skill and creativity. Despite all of these advantages, though, *Life* made it clear that the French woman could never quite stack up to the American women, which, by extension shows how France, despite her intentions, could never quite stack up to America's place as a natural leader.

Further still, Kaplan describes *Life*'s focus on Frenchwomen's "girl-parts" as a way to "strip the French woman down" to reveal what occupant GIs experienced and saw. Furthermore, the close-ups on the Frenchwoman's look also sent messages to American women about their men abroad and what they should do to keep their men's interest when genders would realign after the war:

...it [the article] is also addressed to the American woman, waiting, and reading, back home. She is shocked, perhaps, by the photos' resemblance to what may look to her very much like a GI pinup poster. And at the same time she is reassured by the legends and the layout, neatly categorizing all that she does, in the manner of the all-familiar Sears mail-order catalog. Perhaps, the article implies—without ever stating so directly—the American woman should come home from her war effort job at the factory and start to work on her beauty instead. She needn't go as far as the French girl, but she ought to do *something*: wartime French brides, after all, were arriving in America in some quantity in the late 1940s.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> "The French Look," p. 91.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Alice Kaplan, "Taste Wars," p. 162.

The “French Look” article, thus, gazed intently on French women and her “parts” as a way to sort out the larger places of America and France after the war and to guide American women into what to become and not become in terms of beauty, sexual availability, and their place in society. The “French Look” propped up American women’s place in the world of beauty, but it also gave her anxiety and tools on how to move forward with the changes to come after the war.

Continuing with its intrigue over a beautiful Frenchwoman’s ability to persevere in a new postwar world, *Life* magazine’s June 3, 1946 issue followed “Busy French Girl” Barbara Laage, one of Paris’ up and coming theater actresses at the time (Figure 1.10).<sup>48</sup>

Like the other *Life* magazine articles about the lives of Frenchwomen immediately after the war, the magazine uses this representation as a broader indicator of life for all motivated Frenchwomen of the time. Relying on a common stereotype of a Frenchwoman’s career being that of a beauty model or actress, this article served to reinforce the beauty credentials and priorities of Frenchwomen in the minds of American readers. To be

sure, the introductory description of *Life*’s photo essay on Barbara makes sure readers know that what they are reading should be regarded as a truthful documentary representative of the modern French career girl: “Basically, the story of Barbara Laage, which is told in LIFE Photographer Nina Leen’s pictures on the following six pages, is the universal story of an ambitious, young career girl. But in this particular case, however, it takes on the complexion of a social document, showing how part of postwar Paris is living by its wits and keeping up its spirits.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, according to *Life*, the unknown Parisian actress and singer took on a significant place to gauge how Paris, which stood for France more generally in Americans’ minds (or, at the very least, is the main identifiable French place in Americans’ minds), recovered and coped with postwar reconstruction and rebuilding in a determined way.

**Figure 1.10:**  
**Busy French Girl Barbara Laage**



<sup>48</sup> “Busy French Girl: Paris Actress Works Hard for a Career,” *Life*, June 3, 1946, pp. 105-111. Barbara Laage would come to have who would eventually come to have a short film career in America in the early 1950s, but a very prominent acting career in 1950s France.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

As was typical of *Life's* postwar photo essay formula, after introducing the context and important purpose of the piece, the essay immediately dove into the intimate, key moments of Laage's everyday life using captivating snapshots and intriguing captions. Implicitly presenting her as a national symbol of France, Barbara is first featured wearing a skirt suit bending her body on her bicycle toward the Joan of Arc statue behind her on the busy commercial street Rue de Rivoli (see upper left image in Figure 1.11).

Next, a series of three photos showcase Barbara's resolution to maintain her beauty despite her limited salary and amenities. In one photograph, Barbara sits beneath her paltry wardrobe cleaning her shoes herself. Propping up American abundance, the caption emphasizes how she did not have much and that she had to occupy herself with mundane everyday tasks like shoe cleaning, which, by the magazine's implication, American readers did not need to bother with themselves: "Her entire wardrobe except for dress and cape at cleaners, consists of wool dress, striped rayon suit, old gray suit, dressy blue suit, four jackets, two sweaters and slacks, five pairs of shoes. Only one pair has leather soles. She cleans her shoes herself."<sup>50</sup>

In another photograph, readers' eyes are guided from her pointed, exposed leg to Barbara's hands as she prepares for a bath at a friend's house. As the text explains, Barbara comes to use her friend's bathroom, which she must reserve well in advance because "there is no hot water in her little studio." Knowing that her home amenities were limited, she spent much time in the bathroom to do her laundry, wash her hair, and have a nice soak.<sup>51</sup>

**Figure 1.11:**  
**Busy French Girl's Resolution to Stay Clean**



<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Further showing American readers Barbara's ingenuity and tact, and implicitly displaying France's lack of material luxury compared to the United States, the photo next to her bath preparations follows Barbara's quest for soap. In the image, Barbara evaluates soaps that her former concierge offers her. As the caption explains, Barbara needs to find this extra soap, which was highly rationed, due to her work as an actress where she "needs ten times [the] normal ration to remove stage make-up."<sup>52</sup> As in all of the other images, Barbara's face is serious, revealing her resolve to maintain her beauty and cleaning regimen at all costs, even when it was inconvenient and taxing. In the photo where she cleans her shoes, her eyes are focused on the arduous task at hand. In the bathroom, Barbara almost stares off in a daze, highlighting the hard life she must endure to make her acting career possible. In the final image with her old concierge, Barbara is deep in reflection as she rifles through the extra soaps she desperately needs. American readers learn through these photographs that the life of the busy French career girl is not an easy one in comparison to the American girl, but with her ingenuity and her community and friends around her, she is able to make it happen. Laage's ability to face her struggles with beauty and enthusiasm, too, made her admirable to American readers, and Barbara's tenacity, thus, ultimately bodes well for Paris' recovery.

**Figure 1.12:**  
**Studious Frenchwoman**



Beyond resourcefulness, *Life's* feature on Barbara showed France's hard work and admiration for America, which would please American readers of the magazine. When Barbara was not running around, readers learn that Barbara often holes herself up in her small studio apartment to read books and plays to practice her speaking. Her studious nature is most evident in a full-page photograph where she reads intently and with purpose (Figure 1.12). As with her quest for soap, the photo reveals how her eyes are fixated on the book's page as she draws her hand to her mouth, depicting a studious nature in order to succeed as an actress. But in describing her attire, the caption pleases American readers by explaining that Barbara's style consisting of a pair of slacks and a button down shirt borrowed from her boyfriend is because of

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



the American influence she liked: “Barbara could easily be mistaken for an American teen-ager. In this she exemplifies the tremendous new influence exerted by U.S. styles and customs on French girls.”<sup>53</sup> Here, Barbara, while a symbol of Frenchwomen’s hard work, comes to reveal French admiration of American influence and style. In fact, Barbara is equated with the American woman through her dress, and by implication, she is like the American woman through her hard work and desire to make it big in life. To American readers, the American woman, thus, is implicitly part of the reason for why Barbara works so hard, and Barbara’s emulating her style serves only to encourage *Life* readers to nod their heads in approval of this industrious Frenchwoman who propped up the American woman and culture and provided an entertaining look into a French beauty’s hard work.

Ultimately, the six-page photo essay serves to show *Life* readers of the hard working, beautiful Frenchwoman through Barbara’s “universal story of an ambitious, young career girl” that came to represent how Paris and France were doing more generally to get by.<sup>54</sup> Although it is questionable whether or not Barbara’s status as a budding actress was actually representative of all French women at the time, she was used by *Life* to portray an image of Frenchwomen, and by extension France, who was getting by through whatever means she had. The American influence, was important, too, as seen in her dress, and even her appreciation of the sweeter things in life were because of America, such as the happiness she notes about the arrival of ice cream, which reminded her of the chocolates

**Figure 1.13:**  
**Busy French Girl as Symbol of France**



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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

she received from GIs at the end of the war.<sup>55</sup> Here, the American readers' national egos are massaged through the recall of how American GIs saved the day and made French life sweeter by helping oust the Germans from France. To further *Life's* readers approval of the "Busy French Girl" in its conclusion—and thereby propping up American national pride even more—the magazine editors say that Barbara hopes that all of her hard work will pay off by achieving the ultimate dream: success in the United States. The article ends by noting that Barbara consulted a psychic about her future, who envisioned that many transatlantic voyages were in her future, which "Barbara's admirers think...is a safe prophecy."<sup>56</sup> *Life* ultimately presents Barbara as quintessentially French as the Eiffel Tower in front of which she works out to maintain her figure (Figure 1.13), but most importantly, she was a tool of an American magazine to shore up American pride through a Frenchwoman's wanting to make it big in the United States. Barbara Laage showed *Life's* American readers that better things would come for France through the Frenchwoman's hard work, determination, and embrace of a slice of the American Dream from afar. In other words, and most importantly, this article legitimates U.S. cultural imperialism because Barbara, a representative stand-in for the French woman, welcomes and happily emulates American cultural influence in France.

Other American magazines also examined how life in France was improving over time, as seen through the everyday lives of French women. In his lengthy 1946 *National Geographic* article on how "Paris Lives Again," M.O. Williams describes Paris' postwar rebirth. After detailing the international hubbub around the Paris Peace Conference where Allied power leaders negotiated treaties with several Axis power nations to reestablish national borders and reparations in Europe, Williams explains that the city is vibrant again despite its challenges to overcome the marks of "malnutrition, tuberculosis, and the deprivations of war."<sup>57</sup> The Parisian woman, in particular, played a significant role in Williams' indication to Americans that Paris was doing well again after the war:

Indeed, Paris is Paris again and the Parisiennes seem on the surface as gay as ever.

On their thick-soled sandals of wood, cork or raffia, the girls stand on tiptoe and pile their hair high in an effort to look like queens. In long gowns they would, for they carry themselves well. But in their short skirts, bare legs, and simple blouses they look like vacationing schoolgirls, too unsophisticated to model fashion's robes or use perfume with scandalous names.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>57</sup> Maynard Owen Williams, "Paris Lives Again," *The National Geographic Magazine*, July-December 1946, pp. 767-790.

Perfumes, indeed! Like motorcars, perfumes are for export and most of the display bottles are full of make believe.

Fabric and line still respond to the magic French touch. Slick fashion magazines are alluringly illustrated with such sketches as make feminine hearts jump for joy. But I saw few such evening gowns as carry the fame of France to the four corners of the world.<sup>58</sup>

Here, for Williams, the Parisienne carries on an air of gayness because of her newfound freedom, and from time to time meets the queen-like expectation of what an American would expect to find in a Frenchwoman. However, for Williams, the ravages of war deprived Parisian women of their stereotyped penchant to wear *haute couture* dresses and expensive perfumes, but signs of better things to come were seen through the magazines Frenchwomen saw. Also, like Paule, *Life's* “Little French Girl” from Normandy, and Barbara Laage, *Life's* “Busy French Girl,” Frenchwomen made the best of what they had to stay fashionable, even if it involved wearing clunky shoes. At the time of Williams’ writing, France still faced shortages and rations, but the Frenchwomen that were described and photographed indicated that, like the other women mentioned previously, they were doing the best they could, which boded well for France.

In an image of the resolute “Parisienne who hustles to the small café where she works” with bottles of wine and a giant yard-long loaf of bread in hand, American readers resonate with her hardworking and determined gait (Figure 1.14).<sup>59</sup> Williams observed other Frenchwomen like her who were resuming Parisian traditions, such as the famous cancan dancers in Montmartre, which, to him, looked like good, “old times” revealing how “Paris again is gay” (Figure 1.15). In his conclusion, Williams writes that although “misery hides in the courtyards, away from the smiling face of Paris, and only the future plays bogeyman...With courage and a Gallic sense of humor, the Old Dovecote of Paris faces the dark-veiled shape of things to come.”<sup>60</sup> The description and inclusion of images of Frenchwomen, from the industrious restaurateur to the erotic Moulin Rouge dancers, aimed to assure Americans

**Figure 1.14:**  
**Resolute Working Parisienne**



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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 781.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 783.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 790.



that their contributions to France's and Europe's peace were working well, as seen in the positive attitude with which French women were picking up the pieces into the country's unknown, yet optimistic future after the war.

In another *National Geographic* feature updating readers on life in France, Deena Clark was sent to Paris in 1950 to cover a story on "Home Life in Paris Today."<sup>61</sup> With her husband and four-year old daughter, Deena set out to establish her family's home life in Paris and to inform readers what life was like there, especially everyday French women's experiences with struggle. After scrambling to find a reasonably priced apartment amid the city's housing scarcity crisis, the family found a heftily priced place that was "one of the two percent in Paris equipped with a Frigidaire."<sup>62</sup> Here, by referring to the rarity of the Frigidaire, Deena makes sure that American readers know France is behind in modern amenities common in the States, previewing for readers the common difficulties of being a Frenchwoman at the time. Revealing American elitism about what constituted modern amenities, Deena described with amusement the frustrations of everyday French life for women, such as antiquated plumbing and amenities and the need to run to numerous specialty stores rather than going to a one-stop supermarket.

However, what is most significant about her article is her description of her live-in French nanny Simone. Simone came to be the family "jewel" who stepped right out of a *New York Herald Tribune's* "Situations Wanted"

**Figure 1.15:**  
**Paris is Gay Again**



**Figure 1.16:**  
**Simone, French Jack-of-all-Trades**



<sup>61</sup> Deena Clark, "Home Life in Paris Today," *The National Geographic Magazine*, July 1950, pp. 43-72. It should be noted that Deena Clark eventually became a Washington, DC, television personality in the 1950s through the early 1980s.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

advertisement and “straight into [their] hearts.”<sup>63</sup> For Deena, and presumably her American readers, Simone was most admirable not just for her impeccable command of English and patience in explaining what a lettuce washer was (Figure 1.16), but also because of her resourcefulness and versatility in making do with the mysteriously connected plumbing and limited lighting. Most important of all was Simone’s ability to help Deena and her family thrive in postwar France.

Simone was noted for her kind, welcoming nature, which won the heart of Deena’s fickle American daughter. She also prepared delicious meals that delighted the family and their guests, which fit the common American impression that all Frenchwomen knew how to cook well. In many cases, Simone frantically saved Deena from wasting some of the biggest “secrets of French cooking”: “skimming the ‘scum’ from the top of boiled milk...to enrich a stew” and saving dried plant leaves and twigs to spice up sauces.<sup>64</sup> Overall, through Simone, and especially her picture draining lettuce with resolution, *National Geographic* depicted everyday Frenchwomen as jacks-of-all-trades who were cultured, pleasant to be around, and knew how to run a home. In many ways, the Frenchwoman Deena Clark presented was the ideal woman in general, from which American women could learn, because she knew how to balance femininity, domesticity, independence, and hard work.

In addition to presenting the ideal woman through her close relations with one Frenchwoman, like other magazine writers at the time, Deena Clark made important observations about the French woman’s determination to stay fashionable even in the most bare of situations. Similar to *Woman’s Home Companion’s* description of the industrious Madame Schneiter in making clothes for her family, Deena observed that despite the stereotyped image of a Frenchwoman dressed in the *haute couture* fashions, most Frenchwomen made their own clothes since they could not afford the fashion house’s styles. As such, as Deena explained, “a demonstration of pattern cutting or hat making always drew an enormous crowd,” showing the Frenchwoman’s tenacity in maintaining her fashionable image economically:

One morning a department-store demonstrator held at least 200 women, including me, spellbound with an animated show illustrating how a variety package of collars and cuffs could change the personality, utility, and even the season of the same dress. That appealed to the thrifty Parisienne, who, wielding her needle as a sword for economic independence, will make exquisite blouses out of her grandmother’s eyelet-embroidered petticoats, and dress her little boys beautifully in hand-sewn trousers made of her husband’s wedding suit!

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

The thing that most surprised me was the juxtaposition of the dowdy and the chic in what has long been the style center of the world. I think that with most Frenchwomen, especially since the war, their interest in investments outweighs that in vestments.<sup>65</sup>

Clark, thus, reveals Frenchwomen as clever and thrifty in their ability to independently furnish themselves and their families with quality clothing in the name of getting ahead in other areas of life. However, unlike what most American readers might expect, Clark observes that Frenchwomen's priorities are different than expected: fashion was important, but the ability to save money responsibly at an uncertain time of economic change took more precedence, revealing the noteworthy resourceful side to Frenchwomen.

Although Frenchwomen were admired for their resourcefulness in other magazines, they were praised by American magazines when they embraced the benefits of the comforts of American life, including economical, readily available clothing. In one such article, published at roughly the same time of Deena Clark's article, and showing the increasing movement of people between the United States and France after the war, *Life's* readers were introduced to the story of how "Two French Models Thrive in U.S."<sup>66</sup> Paris models Sophie Malgat and Bettina Graziani initially came to New York for a vacation and the possible chance to model, but they knew they had "no assurance that they would make good in the bitterly competitive American modeling field."<sup>67</sup> However, this would not stop them, as they were described admirably as "deadly serious about their careers."<sup>68</sup> Aligning with the American affinity for people determined to climb up the social ladder through hard work, the article stressed that after a few persistent weeks, Sophie's "sophisticated look" and Bettina's "sly, elfin quality" allowed them to be seen and hired as two of the top models in New York. As the three-page photo feature followed parts of their trip, including a visit to Coney Island, modeling for American *Vogue* in an alleyway near Hunter College, chatting with their French compatriots at a French party, and buying blue jeans, frontier pants, and cowboy boots (Figure 1.17), readers

**Figure 1.17:  
French Models Embrace  
American Culture**



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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 70-71.

<sup>66</sup> "Two French Models Thrive in U.S.," *Life*, July 24, 1950, pp. 53-54, 56.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

learn that these French women have fallen in love with all that is American. Beyond the “30 pairs of sandals, full set of plaid-covered luggage, and every make of ice crusher and orange squeezer” that Sophie could find, both she and Bettina wanted to come back to get something much more precious—American citizenship.<sup>69</sup> Here, the hardworking, industrious Frenchwoman, just like “Busy French Girl” Barbara Laage featured four years earlier, saw going to America and enjoying the American way of life as a major accomplishment. Mass consumer goods and the quick rise to fame and fortune appealed to even the most beautiful of French women, and given the French culture’s perceived elevated status among many American readers, this would appeal to American pride by being admired by even the French. The Frenchwoman was, thus, commendable in American readers’ eyes for her ability to pull herself by her bootstraps and make do with what she had—even in America following the American Dream of making it big for oneself through hard work—but she was most attractive to American magazines in her happy and enthusiastic embrace of the American way of life, which was spreading rapidly around the world with the United States’ ascendance after World War II. In other words, American representations of Frenchwomen like Sophie and Bettina flattered American ethnocentrism while flattening any problems that came with U.S. imperialism around the world.

Ultimately, like its features on the successful French models in America, the “Little French Girl,” the “Busy French Girl,” *Life* magazine significantly looked favorably upon the creativity of typical Parisian women. This was especially the case in its photo feature “Paris Walk-Up,” which encapsulates all of the articles comprising the theme of the resilient French woman.<sup>70</sup> Featured are Mouny, Mickey, Geneviève, Marcelle, and Jacqueline, “Five

**Figure 1.18:**  
**Paris Walk-Up**



<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>70</sup> “Paris Walk-Up,” *Life*, February 2, 1948, pp. 86, 89, 90.

French girls [who] beat inflation by sharing three beds, one tub.”<sup>71</sup> To make the story believable, inviting, and enjoyable to read, the large opening photograph welcomes American readers into these five women’s personal lives, as seen through the women’s playful group pose and smiles toward the camera (Figure 1.18). The fact that these women are smiling might seem remarkable to some American readers given their everyday challenges and the disadvantages in their home. In particular, in their small studio in Montmartre, which is “sparsely furnished, equipped with ancient plumbing, [and] heated only by a surly iron stove,” the five women have to “share three beds, one bathtub and the housework to get by” in a city with scarce shelter and “ruinously expensive” food.<sup>72</sup> The apartment “is no great shakes,” but, as described in a rather sexist tone, “it is an attractive address in anyone’s book...because it is the home of five pretty girls, three of whom are fashion models.”<sup>73</sup> Overall, perhaps to the surprise and awe of some of *Life*’s American readers, even in “days of scarcity and inflation they find it [the apartment] comfortable,” these Parisian women did not see “their Montmartre home the slightest bit decrepit.”<sup>74</sup> Rather, they were optimistic and happy in life, which would resonate with the American preference for avoiding uncomfortable news. *Life* magazine’s representation, thus, created a sense of humility, respect, and admiration for the Frenchwoman despite the setbacks American readers may have observed in the lack of modern amenities and comforts in the home.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



Following *Life's* photo essay formula, through a series of close-up photographs after the introductory opening shot, American readers dive deeper into how and why these “typical” French girls’ lives are happy and comfortable despite the challenges around them (Figure 1.19). Contrary to American readers’ presumed life of interior comfort, the first photograph visualizes the problems of French infrastructure by focusing on the “ancient,” outmoded cast-iron stove that provides the only source of heat for the apartment. Fortunately, and admirably so, the life of the Frenchwoman was not dismal because she did not have the latest amenities. Rather, the women made each other’s lives better together, as seen in a neighboring photos where they enjoy an early and sparse breakfast in the “French workingman’s habit” of having a “hastily drunk” glass of white wine before they “dash off to their respective jobs.”<sup>75</sup> As the photo essay continues on another page, the girls’ came together to make “skillfully prepared,” but “plain food” for their male guests. This reinforces Frenchwomen’s camaraderie as well as her penchant to please her men.<sup>76</sup> As a way to shock American readers, the caption notes that “High prices (beefsteak is about \$1.70 a pound) keep [the] girls’ menu from ever being fancy,” but that does not keep them from having a good time together, as four of the girls have enjoyable conversation with their guests while model Mouny grins toward the photographer’s camera.<sup>77</sup>

**Figure 1.19:**  
**Close-Up on Paris Walk-Up**



<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 89. What is interesting about the “white wine” image is the posed nature of the shot. One woman visibly looks at the camera out of the corner of her right eye while passersby on the street look into the bar toward the camera, questioning *Life's* purported unfiltered look into these French women’s everyday lives.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. \$1.70 in 1948 is roughly equivalent to \$16.67 in 2014 (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, “What is a dollar worth? Calculator,” accessed February 28, 2014, <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/>).

The last two images of the photo essay, the so-called “clincher shots,” are the most provocative of all of the images and deserve especial attention since they were seen by *Life* editors to be the most important images to impress upon American readers’ thoughts once they turn the page. In the second to last photo, Jacqueline and Mouny double up in a bathtub “to save the precious hot water.”<sup>78</sup> Sharing hot water was a common occurrence in France and even much of the United States since it was expensive or difficult to come by without an automated heater, but the piece, like its judgment of the antiquated stove, works to put down Frenchwomen, and France by extension, for a lack of water heating technology. However, this critique may pass over some readers’ heads as the image eroticizes these French women like a pin-up poster. Jacqueline is shown extending her leg to clean with a washcloth while Mouny attends to her own washing up amid the bath’s bubbles. Although the sharing of hot water is, in reality, not sexual in any way, a Frenchwoman’s pointed leg in the air says otherwise by insinuating her availability and her potential lesbian tendencies, which might have fed into common American stereotypes at the time of the “easy Frenchwoman.”

The exoticization of the French girls’ living situation is reinforced further in the final image where Jacqueline and Mouny are shown sleeping together in their double bed in what appears to be no clothing.<sup>79</sup> Again, such images, especially highly editorially posed images, reinforce the French woman’s extroverted sensuality and hints at her comfort, and perhaps overindulgence, in her sexuality. Across all of *Life*’s intimate details on the girls of the “Paris Walk-Up”—everything from eating to bathing to dressing to sleeping—the notion of the resilient, alluring, and attractive French woman is maintained, and Americans’ superiority in having access to more modern appliances is implied through the captions’ shock of a lack of more modern amenities. This lack of modern equipment in the home may not matter, though, to some readers, as the Frenchwomen featured were visual sources of pleasure and sexual innuendo, which could cause some American readers anxiety, especially American women. The issue of the troubling Frenchwoman is discussed in the next emergent theme from the immediate postwar period: American magazines’ worry about the Frenchwoman’s hypersexuality and the general ambivalence in both countries over relations between Frenchwomen and American GIs.

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<sup>78</sup> “Paris Walk-Up,” p. 90. For a discussion of *Life*’s photo essay formula and how editors used it strategically, see Norberto Angeletti et al., *Magazines That Make History: Their Origins, Development, and Influence* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

## Ambivalence Over the Frenchwoman and the American GI

American magazines in the immediate postwar often admired the French women for their ability to make do with what they had as well as their courageous effort to protect their families and homeland during the war. However, there was ambivalence and distrust in America over the meeting of French women and American GIs, especially among the girlfriends and wives back in the States. Likewise, the experience for the roughly 6,000 Frenchwomen who married American GIs after the war was mixed.<sup>80</sup> As Hilary Kaiser writes on French war brides' experiences in the States, "their welcome could be warm or cold, depending on how their in-laws and the local community accepted them. Many of the women had to contend with the reputation of French women as being 'ohh, la, la girls.'" <sup>81</sup> Often, Frenchwomen missed their families and homeland, and returning home was difficult without the financial means to do so. Coupled with feelings of distance and loss, French war brides had to learn a new language and adapt to American culture. Kaiser asserts that many Frenchwomen did not regret their decisions to marry Americans, as the insights that came from living in a new culture made the experience challenging and exciting.

In the immediate postwar period, American magazines took up American women's concerns over French women's relationships with American GIs to work through gender disparities between American men and women; such representations also served to prop up American men's masculinity and power over American women. In France, magazines were also concerned about the intercultural journeys of Frenchwomen who came to live in the United States after the war, particularly what could be learned in comparing the life between French and American women and what costs came with the Frenchwomen going *Américaine*. This body of articles, thus, presents the second emergent theme coming from the immediate postwar period: ambivalence over the French woman and the American GI.

In American magazines, the Frenchwoman came to be a threat to the American woman through her overt sexuality, particularly through her readiness to kiss American soldiers to thank them for their service. GI William Walters' September 11, 1944 *Life* article on the "Liberation of Montmartre" describes the flurry of kissing from French women that would set off alarm bells among American women:

On Aug. 25 our jeep, amid an American armored column, passed through Porte d'Orléans and

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<sup>80</sup> Hilary Kaiser, *WWII Voices: American GI's and the French Women Who Married Them* (Scottsdale, AZ: Summertime Publications, 2011), Kindle Electronic Edition: Paragraph 1, Location 1881-87.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, Paragraph 2, Location 1898-1913.



then “Boul Mich” toward the Seine. Parisians pelted gladioli, asters, carnations and dahlias into every passing vehicle. Every few yards the crowd surged in. Conservatively I estimate I kissed a thousand females from 2 to 90 that afternoon, and that means two thousand kisses, for no one ever kisses less than once on each cheek in Paris. One woman plopped a huge parcel of jelly into my lap. Others pelted us with ripe peaches and tomatoes. Though their intentions may have been honorable, the result was deplorable.<sup>82</sup>

Yet, in further his building of the image of an overzealous Frenchwoman, Walters notes that GIs were not available enough to Frenchwomen, as enthusiastic French women who did not have the chance to thank and kiss the passing American column wanted to show their gratitude in any way they could, even though the form of impromptu risqué dancing:

The girls were apparently feeling slighted that so far the parade had passed them by, ignoring shuttered Moulin Rouge and all other cafes and music halls. As our jeep slowed down a massive brunette let out a hoarse bellow: “Girls, the Americans are back.” From every doorway people streamed, flags fluttered from windows, wooden-soled shoes came clattering down cobblestones. From wall to wall the entire street seethed with cheering, laughing humanity. What the girls lacked in virtue they made up in enthusiasm. Masses of arms like writhing serpents wound and wound about us. Three girls from a café came galloping up, wearing fantastic headdresses of red, white and blue ostrich feathers three feet high. A hennaed number mounted the jeep engine, shrieking: “I am Madam Lulu. Ah, Paris, Paris, ooh la la” and, lifting up her skirt waist-high, did a cancan while the crowd roared.<sup>83</sup>

In this passage, in addition to Walters’ presentation of Frenchwomen as possibly overreaching in showing their appreciation because of their “lack of virtue” when using kisses and glimpses of their legs, the Frenchwomen’s gratitude propped up GIs’ masculinity and status as heroes, as Williams implies in his final line where he equates the GIs feelings upon Liberation to the first man to fly solo nonstop across the Atlantic: “For one night every American was a Lindbergh.”<sup>84</sup> Thus, French women were a threat through their overt sexuality, especially to American women, but they were also a source of masculine pride to elevate the American man’s virility and strength at home and abroad.

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<sup>82</sup> William Walton, “The Liberation of Montmartre,” *Life*, September 11, 1944, p. 38.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

Walton's detailed scenes reveal a larger controversy surrounding the interaction of American GIs and Frenchwomen after the war. The most famous representation setting off concern was *Life's* famous "Soldier and Girl" photo in its September 4, 1944 issue (Figure 1.20). As Mary Louise Roberts notes, the photograph made its way into mainstream American mass culture and came to be a "symbol not of French gratitude but of male sexual infidelity abroad."<sup>85</sup> This was evident in *Life's* September 25, 1944 article about a group of Iowan women who "didn't like that kissing in Paris" (Figure 1.21).<sup>86</sup> The Iowan women feature, from its outset, presented an international catfight between guarded American women and promiscuous Frenchwomen: "The girls back home in Iowa are almost as happy as the French girls are to hear that Paris is free again. But at precisely that point the parallel stops. The girls in Iowa have heard that the girls in Paris were so happy to be free that they kissed every American soldier they could reach, and that an unusually large number of American soldiers found themselves within reach."<sup>87</sup> The article sets up a competition between American women and French women, but a few of the Des Moines women who did not have boyfriends or husbands (or had their loved ones stationed elsewhere) found the kissing to be innocent and perhaps needed at the end of a gruesome war. The debates surrounding the swirling of kisses from French women reveals the contested nature of French women and the American GI in American culture as well as how the American man related to the American woman after World War II.<sup>88</sup> Further, this debate uncovers American anxiety

**Figure 1.20:**  
**The Controversial Kiss**



<sup>85</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 68.

<sup>86</sup> "Speaking of Pictures...Some Iowa Girls Didn't Like that Kissing in Paris," *Life*, September 25, 1944, pp. 16-18.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>88</sup> As one such woman, Arlene O'Connor, said, "The French girls deserve a few kisses from American soldiers after seeing nothing but Nazis for four years" (*Ibid.*, p. 16). Mrs. Jack Bennett dismissed any worries, too, as she saw French women not having anything she did not have. A handful of other women did not blame people for taking celebratory kisses, as the same thing might happen in Iowa if the situation were reversed. One unidentified quote from a woman even went so far as indicating that GI relationships with French women leading to marriage could be a good thing for solving problems after the war: "It could be that if two out of the three fellows



sensuality are something ingrained in the Frenchwoman's being: "Those French girls are supposed to be that way."<sup>90</sup> In the case of the Iowan women, then, the French woman was characterized as inappropriate and immoral in her appreciation for American support through her overtly physical and sexual nature, and she presented a threat that put American women on guard as GIs became the prey to the alluring Sirens known as Frenchwomen.

As noted earlier, the image of the American GI kissing the Frenchwoman on a Jeep became one of the most widely and popularly distributed war photos, and, as such, it was important culturally in how Americans at the time visualized the end of the war, their place in the world, and gender relations at home and abroad. The use of the Iowan women's reactions, too, is notable since the Midwest is often a symbolic stand-in for the "heart of America" and what the average American thinks and values. The controversy and debate over the Frenchwoman's physical overreach, thus, was a strategy to represent broader American views and debates about Franco-American relations on the surface, but more specifically about the place of the American man at home and abroad. For Roberts, *Life's* publishing of the Iowan women's reactions displayed the strength of independent, working American women in the 1940s, but it also showed an important "contrast between how these women look (savvy, cool, and professional) and what they have to say—old-fashioned jealous grousing."<sup>91</sup> In other words, the debate over American GI and Frenchwomen's interactions revealed and attempted to work through broader fissures in American attitudes about the role of the American man abroad, the hypocritical gender norms surrounding American sexuality more broadly at that time, and what would happen to the "balance" between American men and women after the war. As Roberts writes, the explicit target of controversy was French women's strong advances, but below the surface, the debate around the kissing image worked through gender changes after the war:

The kisses captured by *Stars and Stripes* were expressions of joy and gratitude on the part of civilians who had waited four years for freedom. The military paper not only eroticized these kisses, but also remade them into symbols of Franco-American unity. In *Life* magazine, American sexual codes of conduct transformed these same gestures of intimacy again. Here the falsely eroticized kiss reinforced American stereotypes concerning French sexual decadence. The kiss also offended strict American moral codes concerning extramarital sex. As it was repackaged by *Life* magazine, the photo inverted GI fears concerning sexual faithfulness: now it was sweethearts and wives who had to be anxious. At the root of that inversion, of course, was the sexual double standard: male, not female, sexual infidelity was encouraged. Nevertheless, the mainstream American version of the photo allayed GI fears about sexual infidelity and reinforced manly

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>91</sup> Roberts, *What Soldiers Do*, p. 69.

confidence.<sup>92</sup>

The image of the Frenchwoman, therefore, was a symbol in American magazines over how to define American sexuality and faithfulness after the war, and the Frenchwoman, although seen earlier in this chapter as admirable for her resilience, was troubling because of her physical display of appreciation toward American soldiers. Either way, the Frenchwoman was caught in the middle of an intense American debate after the war, and it would only add a highly sexualized impression of the Frenchwoman in American readers' imaginations.

In September 1945, a year after the appearance of the strong Iowan reaction to the "Soldier and Girl" photo, the larger debate surrounding the role of the Frenchwoman in "stealing American GIs' hearts" was still not settled, as Infantry Major Merrill Panitt writes in his *Ladies' Home Journal* article "Those English Girls (No, It's not the French who Stole Their Hearts)."<sup>93</sup> As a way to claim objectivity and gain his readers' trust, the editors initially note that Panitt's views do not reflect the *Journal* staff's opinion or the other returning soldiers, but they found it a compelling piece to include since it "touched off some lively controversy" among the magazine's editors, and presumably the wider reading public.<sup>94</sup> As he opens his article, Panitt explains how in his recent return to the States he was able to gauge American women's sentiments about GI relations with European women through "ten long-distance phone calls to tell the girls that their men still loved them."<sup>95</sup> In so doing, he encountered repeated worries about French women at the start of conversations, which often went as follows:

ME: Yes, he feels well and he looks fine and he's enjoying his work.

WIFE OR SWEETHEART (*attempted laugh*): What about those French girls?

ME: Oh, you don't have to worry about *them*!

I spoke the truth. They hadn't a bit of cause to fret over French girls. But why they think of the French ladies as competition and disregard the English, is beyond me.<sup>96</sup>

To explain and support his assertion that the Frenchwoman was not someone to fear or worry about, Panitt dedicates the first half of his article to writing about why the Frenchwoman was not American GIs' preferred woman. First, the language barrier between American GIs and Frenchwomen was too much to bear given the constant need to gesticulate in "sign language." Second, many GIs came into contact with "the average, everyday, garden-variety Frenchwoman

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>93</sup> Merrill Panitt, "Those English Girls (No, It's Not the French Who Stole their Hearts)," *Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1945, pp. 4-5, 156-157.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

of the provinces” compared to “the chic, money-conscious Parisiennes.” The latter are the “good-looking girls” Americans imagine who have svelte figures, fine features, and the “clothes you [American women] will be wearing next year and the year after,” which make them “easy to look at.”<sup>97</sup> However, French farm girls are drab and old, and, thus, not in contention with American women: “Unlike American farm and village women, they pay little attention to their appearance. They would no more think of wearing an attractive coiffure than they would of churning butter by machine. Their charm is in the fact that they probably look, act, dress and think just as their great-great grandmothers did.”<sup>98</sup> Therefore, the American woman comes out on top compared to the average French woman. The American woman is hard working, modern, forward-thinking, and concerned with pleasing men visually. The average stock of French women, by contrast, is dowdy, backward, and peasant-like, which, if such women come to represent the nation itself, place France in an inferior position to that of the United States.

Despite the lack of competition for American women from dreary French farm girls, what is most striking to Panitt, which makes her unattractive to American men, is the Frenchwoman’s being boring due to her unwavering interest in love. Panitt writes in an affected French accent to mock the Frenchwomen’s disdain for the American woman’s lack of romance, which also reinforces the American stereotype of Frenchwomen being obsessed with love:

“Zees Americain womain,” one rather pretty and overly painted lass pointed out to me, “zay like zee politique and zee beezness and zee jeetairbugge. Zay are not what you call *romantique*.”<sup>99</sup>

For Panitt, although love is certainly a concern for Americans, the Frenchwoman’s prioritization of love above all else makes conversation dull: “A Frenchman can devote two or three hours to telling his beloved . . . how much he loves her. An American says, ‘I love you,’ and lets it go at that. If she’s not smart enough to realize that he means her eyes are like twin azure pools and her lips are like velvet and her ears stick out pretty, then it’s her tough luck.”<sup>100</sup> Here, American readers are cued to the seemingly superfluous nature of highly contextual French culture and customs, which pale in comparison to the direct, efficient exchange of information among Americans. Americans, thus, are superior in their machine-like ability to communicate and get things done, even in the quest for love.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

On the topic of love and romance, unlike the characterizations that Mary Louise Roberts found seeing Frenchwomen as women with loose morals, Panitt warns that even though the Frenchwoman is obsessed with love, the stereotype of the promiscuous French girl is not necessarily true since all the talk of love is just that—*talk*. In fact, there was a logical explanation for why Frenchwomen come off so forwardly. To Panitt, the Frenchwoman’s forward nature was due to the fact that Frenchwomen outnumbered Frenchman, forcing Frenchwomen to use whatever feminine tools they have to gain the “attentions of men”:

Frenchmen like pretty faces, striking clothes. Their women live *pour l’amour des hommes*. They devote their lives to making themselves attractive to men—*pour l’amour*. Is it any wonder that women’s perfumes, clothes, cosmetics—all man bait—are French products?<sup>101</sup>

Panitt makes an important observation here in describing Frenchwomen’s concern for attracting men by noting some of the common images associated with France and Frenchwomen—good clothing, cosmetics, and perfumes—and explains an economic specialty through a factual imbalance of the sexes that makes Frenchwomen claw for an available man. Although Panitt characterizes French women as fiercely competitive in their constant use of her feminine “man bait” tools to capture men, he also notes that French women are not as promiscuous as many Americans believe since they must follow the customary formalities of traditional French etiquette. Ultimately, Panitt tells readers that he admired the Frenchwoman’s “chief trait of attraction”—“lightheartedness, the ability to revert to youth.” In fact, he found Frenchwomen to not take pride in maturing quickly as the American woman did, but the Frenchwoman, and French culture by extension, is backward compared to the American woman (and American culture) because she is constricted by old traditions, customs, and worldviews.

Showing the prevalence of national social comparison as well as the sexist objectification of foreign women among many American soldiers during and after the war, Panitt explained in his article that he and other American soldiers regularly took part in “the popular overseas pastime of ‘rating’ the women in countries Americans have invaded—by invitation or otherwise—during this war.”<sup>102</sup> Overall, Frenchwomen came in third after their American and English counterparts who typically tied for first, with the English often getting the “edge.” Panitt ultimately declared English women most attractive to American men not necessarily due to what they wear compared to American and French women—they often wore “the same dresses for ten

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

years.”<sup>103</sup> Rather, they were most attractive because of their common native language, interest in hearing American men speak with interesting idioms about America, and “the English girl’s lack of independence.”<sup>104</sup> In other words, just as Mary Louise Roberts noted about the use of the image of the Frenchwoman kissing the American GI, English women were desirable to American men because they propped up American masculinity through their looking for “a big, strong, protecting male to care for them,” which Englishmen did not do or “took for granted.” Put more explicitly, Panitt writes that English women “are successful in making men feel they are the strong rock foundation of the house of matrimony, rather than a spare bedroom added as an afterthought.”<sup>105</sup> Further, despite the Frenchwomen’s linguistic complexities for American soldiers and her overzealous concern for love, what united French women and British women, unlike their American counterparts, were how they made American men feel masculine and needed:

The men are returning with clear memories of how English and French girls look up to them and respected them. Nothing is more satisfying to a man than to be considered—within reason—the lord and master. In England and France, especially in England because there he could understand what was happening, the American soldier found women competing for his attention, and having attracted him, depending upon him for support and guidance. This has given the Americans a new idea of the relationship between men and women. It is a relationship men like.

Panitt’s article, thus, reveals that Frenchwomen (and British women in the case of this article) were key tools for returning GIs to feel empowered and secure. The Frenchwoman was a tool in American magazines to fight against an independent American woman who emerged during World War II. The published discussion in the highly read *Ladies’ Home Journal* attempted to draw ire from American women readers and possibly remind them of their important place in making their men feel wanted and needed.<sup>106</sup> It was one nail in the coffin for Rosie the Riveter, as the tide of conservatism rose in American culture to accelerate the feminine mystique for a large swathe of American women picking up popular magazines like *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

In France, popular magazines were interested in the relations between Frenchwomen and American men, too, especially French women’s experiences of being married to an American man and moving to another country and culture. Most French readers were ambivalent about the

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>106</sup> Reactions to Panitt’s piece, which were published in the *Journal*’s December 1945 “Our Readers Write Us” feature were mainly negative. Although Frenchwomen were not brought up in these letters, Panitt’s characterization of men’s preference for dependent women drew ire from American women readers who saw such subordination of women appalling.



merits of an intercultural relationship between American men and French women and what it would mean for a Frenchwoman to give up her French cultural roots by going American. For example, on November 8, 1945, *Marie France* published an article with numerous representative letters the magazine received in response to reader Yvette B. who anxiously asked, “Can I marry a foreigner?”<sup>107</sup> The foreigner in question was an American GI.

Overall, many magazine readers said such marriages were possible, but it came with advantages and disadvantages that needed to be clearly considered. Mlle G.N., 22, from Paris, writes that an intercultural marriage is possible, but only with some work. Noting that an intercultural marriage goes beyond immediate attraction, *Marie France* uses G.N. to remind readers that one could marry a foreigner after knowing him for certain amount of time and by developing a common language given their presumed linguistic differences. Moreover, for G.N., and interestingly in line with the comments made by Panitt in his discussion of American soldiers’ comparisons among French, American, and British women, intercultural marriages could actually be a solution for the gender imbalance in France: because there are five to six women who are single for every man, a Frenchwoman’s marrying a foreigner could help the single woman situation in France. For other letter writers, intercultural marriages could make beautiful children, too, and thinking of the broader international implications, Mlle G.N. asserts that a French woman could bring a little bit of the charm of France to her new country and take on the noble task of becoming an ambassador for her country. Thus, by going with an intercultural marriage, a Frenchwoman could selflessly serve as a symbol for her nation and culture, and carry on its legacy around the world.

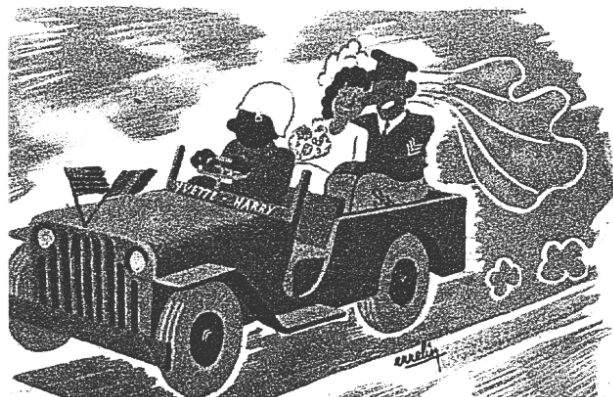
Other women who wrote into *Marie France* discussed specific types of intercultural marriages that were ideal, particularly Franco-American relationships. Madame Jany, a Frenchwoman who had been married to an American man for five years, writes that her marriage had been good and that she was perfectly happy. She had not been able to learn as much about America as she would have liked since they lived in France, but an advantage of their relationship was that their child learned two languages from a very young age. Mlle Marcelle B., a reader from Tunisia, advised Yvette B. to only listen to her heart. Similarly, from a very globalized mindset, H el ene writes that borders should not impede on love.

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<sup>107</sup> “Puis-je  pouser un  tranger?” *Marie France*, November 8, 1945, p. 4.

Not all women agreed, though, with G.N., Jany, Marcelle, and H el ene. Showing their French national pride, but not providing any explicit reasons, many readers disagreed reactively by insisting that French men were the best to marry. Further, marrying a foreigner was problematic since exotic attraction clouded one’s judgment and there were too many emotional nuances and barriers between foreign partners that needed to be overcome. Moreover, children would be torn between two countries, creating rifts in the family. Despite these objections, *Marie France*’s editors refuted these claims based on the overwhelming response that French women could marry foreigners. As such, in their final presentation of letters, and to answer Yvette’s original question explicitly about marrying an American man, the editors left readers thinking about a “curious declaration” from Mlle F.T. from N ehou, a town in Normandy: “Marry a foreigner? No. But a citizen of the U.S.A., Yes. An American man is not a foreigner. I could never become an English, Belgian, German or Italian woman, but an American woman, right away!”<sup>108</sup> This letter, perhaps being analogous to other letters received, revealed at the very least, a desire on the part of the editors to show a positive light on French women having relationships with American men. However, it also shows a possible broader desire among some French women to marry American men, and if they were open to the possibility, the desirability of becoming an American citizen and all that comes with being an American woman. To visualize the positive relations between Frenchwomen and American GIs, and to answer Yvette’s question subtly in image form, a small drawing accompanying the article features a Frenchwoman named Yvette newly married to American GI Henry sitting in the back of a Jeep (Figure 1.22). Here, one sees a happy marriage of the two cultures and countries, as shown in the pairing of the French and American flags and the close, smiling couple. Further, finishing with Mlle F.T.’s ecstatic call for Frenchwomen to marry American men

**Figure 1.22:**  
**Happy Marriage between Frenchwoman Yvette and American GI Harry**



<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

leaves an optimistic view among French readers of the meeting of French women and American men.

Marrying an American and moving to America afforded a French war bride the advantage of making observations of America for French women. In one such article in *Elle*'s February 1946 issue, war bride Mrs. John Briggs (née Jacqueline Le Blanc) used her experiences to make explicit and detailed comparisons between French and American women.<sup>109</sup> To present her observations after living for two months in her husband's hometown of Bridgeport, Connecticut, Jacqueline developed a checklist comparing the qualities of French and American women (Figures 1.23 and 1.24).<sup>110</sup> Because of her recent, fresh experiences, the magazine found her to be an expert in Franco-American marital relations, and subsequently the relative characteristics and ranking of American and French women. In granting Jacqueline such frank observations and possibly fearing a backlash against stereotyping, *Elle*'s editorial team noted that no checklist could give a full representation of all the women of one country, but it still felt that Jacqueline was an appropriate commentator with observations of a "certain value" given that she grew up in a town in France similar to Bridgeport with parents who had occupations similar to her in-laws. In all cases, the magazine's use of such cautious language worked to gain readers' trust and confidence in the "expert" French woman's observations that, in reality, worked to make sweeping generalizations about American and French women that worked to polarize the United States and France and the American and French ways of life.

To generalize the differences between American and French women, Jacqueline's feature comprised a full-page of observations where the French woman's qualities ("La Française") are listed in a column opposite from the comparable details for the American woman ("L'Américaine"). What emerges from Jacqueline's list is a division of polar opposites, which serves to pit France against America through consolidated notions of national identity. Jacqueline observes that American women are materialistic, wasteful, conformist, and too attentive to what other people think of her. The French woman, by contrast, is not rooted in

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<sup>109</sup> Jacqueline Le Blanc, "J'ai épousé un Américain il y a huit mois," *Elle*, September 3, 1946, p. 20.

<sup>110</sup> The original publication (Figure 1.23) did not list the items as number bullets. However, I use numbers in the chart to make it easier to refer to and cross-reference the items for the French and American woman. Also, in the original language, the editors assumed that the readers would start with the Frenchwoman's list before reading the corresponding bullet for the American woman, as noted by pronouns, such as "it" and "she," which refer back to the items explicitly mentioned under the Frenchwoman. This is important to point out given that the American woman is compared with the French woman as the common reference point for readers.

materialism nor does she wish to be loved by all. Rather, she is economically minded in her dress and relations with men and children. Further, French women have a fuller life by enjoying sentimentality, caring for her handwriting, and spending time only with the most cherished people in her life. Opposite this confident French woman is the American woman who is afraid of being alone (and thus trying everything to be admired by everyone), are vain in their love for their amenities, wasteful by throwing away barely worn items, do not care for economizing food or gasoline, want to dress like the richest neighbor's wife to stay up with the crowd, and have a false sense of what life is like (American women did, after all, believe in Hollywood film fantasies). In addition, American women do not understand the nuances of fine speech and writing, and they go after gaudy, unpractical fashions, even if they cannot afford it. In short, Jacqueline presents the American woman as a crass, gin and whisky-drinking lady who is deeply insecure despite her material and technological advantages. The French woman, despite her lack of material and monetary wealth compared to the American woman, implicitly knew how to make do with what she had, and she knew how to make a marriage work with a partner who was an equal.

Jacqueline's comparative list presents a highly bifurcated world between France and the United States. American and French women are opposites, and, therefore, given that women often symbolically stand in place for the nation, the United States and France are diametrically opposed with the French woman and nation coming out on top. Ultimately, the French woman is treated positively while the American woman is disparaged for her emotional insecurities despite the actual material securities in the United States compared to France. Jacqueline's short and rather tongue-in-cheek comparative checklist, thus, serves a vital function of national social comparison in *Elle* magazine. By looking intently at a close comparative other, a French woman reader could take stock in and prop up herself and her nation. How the French national self and community are propped up in this case focuses on the treatment of material goods, perception of self among others, and everyday social and cultural practices. Such an entertaining feature in a woman's magazine might seem trivial on the surface, but underneath Jacqueline's comparative checklist is a cutting edge that pits the French and American nations against the other in a way that serves to elevate France above the United States and cast aside the actual problems and disadvantages in France immediately after World War II. The war was traumatic for both countries in that it interrupted "normal" life and created an unknown world that needed

rebuilding. Thus, in the war's wake, major anxieties about what should happen next were on the minds of everyone touched by the war, especially war-torn France and a thriving United States. Therefore, in a difficult moment when France sorted out its national identity crisis as well as its severe problems of reconstruction, Jacqueline's comparison of American and French women was an entertaining, and thus, palatable means to shore up French national pride in light of the real, difficult clash of values between America and France over materialism, efficiency, and what constituted a modern, safe, and comfortable postwar world. Although Jacqueline chose to marry an American man, she ultimately found the French woman and nation better due to its more appealing values and approach to life, which worked to appeal to French readers' sense of national pride at a time when the United States came to expand its influence in France and around the world.

Figure 1.23:  
Frenchwoman versus American Woman,  
Original French Version

## J'AI ÉPOUSÉ UN AMÉRICAIN IL Y A HUIT MOIS...

Quelle différence y a-t-il entre une Française et une Américaine ?  
Mrs John Briggs, née Jacqueline Le Blanc, femme de G.I., vous l'apprend.

Mme John Briggs s'appelait Joséphine Le Blanc et habitait Laon, il y a huit mois, avant d'épouser un G. I. Elle a rejoint son mari en Amérique et elle a vécu deux mois à Bridgeport, dans le Connecticut. Elle s'est amusée à établir un parallèle entre les Françaises et les Américaines. Aucune femme ne peut prétendre représenter toutes les femmes de

son pays. Mais Laon et Bridgeport sont deux villes industrielles de même importance. Mme Briggs s'est mariée dans un milieu semblable à celui dont elle est issue : son père était commerçant et son mari vend des chaussures. Ses observations ont donc une certaine valeur. Elles nous ont paru justes et amusantes. Les voici telles que nous les avons reçues.

### LA FRANÇAISE



- Sait toujours comment occuper et distraire son temps.
- Désire plaire profondément à un homme en « particulier ».
- Est souvent méfiante envers les autres femmes.
- Fait admirer son salon.
- Traite ses enfants comme des enfants.
- Ne reçoit que ses bons amis.
- Pense au prix de l'essence et fait le moins de kilomètres possible pour l'économiser.
- Est rétive aux conseils.
- N'aime pas se déplacer.
- Est plutôt respectueuse des opinions de son mari. Les adopte volontiers.
- Oublie de voter.
- Est plus sentimentale, se laisse plus facilement influencer par les jolies phrases, séduire par l'habileté de l'homme qui lui fait la cour, même s'il n'est pas beau.
- Soigne son écriture.
- Aime que son mari l'aide à choisir ses robes.
- Vertueuse, elle est facilement indulgente aux fautes des autres.
- Boit volontiers du vin mais peu d'alcool.
- Sait faire la cuisine économiquement.
- Approuve le grand lit conjugal.
- Est plus élégante en robe de ville.
- Aime que son mari rentre déjeuner.
- Aime à ajouter à ses robes une note personnelle, élégante et peu voyante.
- Trouve normal pour une jeune fille d'apporter une dot à son mari.
- Réfléchit à deux fois avant de briser son foyer.
- Espère que son fils sera chef de cabinet d'un ministre.
- Tire fierté de ses tartes, de ses ragoûts, de ses sauces, de ses plats mijotés, de son poulet à la crème.
- Considère la soupe en conserve comme un sacrilège.
- Pense que tous les Américains sont des « Don Juan » dangereux.
- Pense que les films américains ne sont pas toujours le reflet bien authentique de la vie.
- Fait ses dons et ses aumônes comme il lui plaît.
- Ne s'intéresse pas ou peu à la « chose » publique, sauf de rares exceptions.



- Fait des économies, même lorsqu'elle est pauvre.
- A envie d'un manteau noir vraiment bien coupé. Et l'obtient.
- Racommode soigneusement son linge.
- Écrit une longue lettre affectueuse à sa meilleure amie pour sa fête.
- Frémit à l'idée de mettre sa fille dans un collège mixte.
- Met des pantalons longs à son fils à quinze ans.

### L'AMÉRICAINNE



- A horreur d'être seule. Aime à faire partie d'une « bande ».
- Aime à être admirée par les hommes « en général ».
- Noue facilement des amitiés féminines.
- Fait admirer sa salle de bains.
- Traite ses enfants comme ses égaux.
- Reçoit n'importe qui.
- N'y songe jamais et n'hésite pas à faire vingt kilomètres pour aller au cinéma.
- Les accueille avec avidité.
- A toujours des projets de voyage.
- Le contredit facilement et en public. Vote souvent dans un sens opposé.
- Adore voter.
- N'est pas sensible à la « technique » des beaux parleurs. Les compliments la gênent plutôt. Elle préfère l'adoration silencieuse d'un homme rude et inhabile à s'exprimer.
- Écrit souvent ses lettres d'amour à la machine.
- N'a aucune confiance dans le goût de son mari.
- Vertueuse, elle est absolument intolérante pour les erreurs des autres.
- Boit gin et whisky comme son mari. Boit aussi des quarts de lait.
- Fait facilement du gâchis pour préparer un simple repas.
- Préfère les lits jumeaux.
- Porte mieux la tenue de sport.
- N'attend jamais son mari à midi.
- Aime à s'habiller comme toutes les autres et, en particulier, comme la femme de son plus riche voisin.
- Trouve cette coutume barbare et humiliante pour la jeune femme.
- Demande le divorce au premier malentendu.
- Espère que son fils sera président des États-Unis.
- Tire sa fierté de son jus de tomate, de sa confiture à la menthe, de sa purée de pommes, de son maïs.
- Pense que les conserves sauvent bien des situations.
- Pense que tous les Français sont des « Don Juan » dangereux.
- Pense que la vie est comme dans les films américains.
- Organise, avec ses amies, la charité sur une vaste échelle.
- Appartient au moins à trois clubs féminins et à plusieurs comités.
- Ne songe pas à économiser, mais à gagner de l'argent.
- A envie d'un vison. Et l'obtient rarement.
- Le jette dès qu'il est usé pour acheter du neuf.
- Envoie ses souhaits de fête ou ses vœux de Noël et de Nouvel An par télégramme.
- Préfère les écoles où garçons et filles sont élevés ensemble.
- Met des pantalons longs à son fils à neuf ans.



**Figure 1.24:  
Frenchwoman versus American Woman, English Version**

The Frenchwoman	The American Woman
1. Knows always how to occupy and fill her time.	1. Horrified of being alone. Likes to take part in a "group."
2. Wishes to please deeply one man in "particular."	2. Likes to be admired by all men "in general."
3. Is often suspicious of other women.	3. Drowns easily in feminine friendships.
4. Shows off her living room.	4. Shows off her bathroom.
5. Treats children like children.	5. Treats children like equals.
6. Only receives her best friends.	6. Receives anybody.
7. Thinks about price of gasoline and drives the least possible kilometers to save it.	7. Never thinks about it and goes twenty kilometers to go to the cinema.
8. Is reluctant to advice.	8. Accepts it with greed.
9. Doesn't like to move around.	9. Always has travel plans.
10. Is rather respectful of her husband's opinions. Adopts them voluntarily.	10. Contradicts him easily and in public. Often votes in the opposite way.
11. Forgets to vote.	11. Loves voting.
12. Is more sentimental, more easily taken in by pretty phrases, seduced by the skill of the man who woos her, even if he's not handsome.	12. Is not sensitive to the "technique" of sweet talkers. Compliments rather bother her. She prefers silent adoration of a rough, not well-spoken man.
13. Cares for her handwriting.	13. Often writes loves letters by machine.
14. Likes her husband to help choose her dresses.	14. Has no confidence in her husband's taste.
15. Virtuous, she is easily forgiving of others' faults.	15. Virtuous, she is absolutely intolerant of others' faults.
16. Voluntarily drinks wine but little alcohol.	16. Drinks gin and whisky like her husband. Also drinks quarts of milk.
17. Knows how to cook economically.	17. Easily makes a mess to prepare a simple meal.
18. Approves a large bed in marriage.	18. Prefers twin beds.
19. Is more elegant in a city dress.	19. Wears sporty clothes better.
20. Likes her husband to come home to eat lunch.	20. Never waits for her husband at noon.
21. Likes to put a personal note on her dress, elegant or not noteworthy.	21. Likes to dress like everyone else and, in particular, like the wife of the richest neighbor.
22. Finds it normal for a young girl to bring a dowry to her husband.	22. Finds this custom barbarous and humiliating for a young woman.
23. Thinks twice before breaking up her home.	23. Asks for a divorce at the first disagreement.
24. Wishes her son to be the head of a ministry office.	24. Wishes her son to be the President of the United States.
25. Takes pride in her tortes, ragouts, sauces, mixed dishes, and creamy chicken.	25. Takes pride in her tomato juice, mint jelly, applesauce, and corn.
26. Considers canned soup sacrilegious.	26. Thinks that canned goods save many situations.
27. Thinks that all American men are dangerous "Don Juans."	27. Thinks that all Frenchmen are dangerous "Don Juans."
28. Thinks that American films aren't always the best reflection of real life.	28. Thinks that life is like American films.
29. Gives donations and alms as she pleases.	29. Organizes, with friends, charity on a large scale.
30. Isn't interested, even a little, in the public "think," except rare exceptions.	30. Joins at least three women's clubs and many committees.
31. Saves money, even when she is poor.	31. Doesn't think about saving, only about making money.
32. Wants a black, well-cut coat. And gets it.	32. Wants a fur. And rarely gets it.
33. Mends her laundry carefully.	33. Throws it out as soon as it's worn to buy new.
34. Writes long, affectionate letters to her best friend for her party.	34. Sends party and holiday wishes by telegram.
35. Shivers at the thought of putting her daughter in a mixed middle school.	35. Prefers schools where boys and girls are raised together.
36. Puts long pants on her son until he's 15.	36. Puts long pants on her son until he's 9.

The question of French women marrying a foreigner, particularly an American man, had greater implications than the opportunity to make fun, humorous comparisons between French and American women as Jacqueline did. A French woman's choosing the "American way" by marrying an American GI and moving to the United States could have grave consequences, as it signalled leaving beloved France behind in favor for the young American country on the other side of the Atlantic. In a two-page article on July 1, 1950, *Paris Match* reveals what could happen when a French woman becomes *Américaine* (Figure 1.25).<sup>111</sup> On the opening page of the photo essay, readers see family eagerly awaiting the arrival of French war brides along with shots of tear-filled reunions and smiling and bewildered children, one of whom sports a cowboy hat to show his French grandmother. Like a majority of other war brides, the twenty-three war brides shown returning to France had adopted American citizenship, and all of them had become Americanized. The happiness about which these women wrote in letters from America even seemed to be truthful, but in fully deliberating on whether French "war brides" were truly happy, the magazine details the rather tragic story of Madeleine Lavery.

**Figure 1.25:**  
**The Cost of Becoming a War Bride**



Upon leaving Paris to move to her husband's family farm in the Sierra Nevada in California, Madeleine was welcomed by her in-laws and found her American Dream by

<sup>111</sup> "Elles sont parties Françaises, elles reviennent Américaines," *Paris Match*, July 1, 1950, pp. 8-9.



becoming a “cover girl.” She earned a good income, which when added to her husband’s modest salary, made it possible to buy the symbolic amenities of a comfortable American life: a Frigidaire, a Ford, and a television. Madeleine’s newfound American life and material riches did not provide complete happiness, though. Her parents disapproved of her marriage and her move to the United States. She decided to return to France to visit family, but when she arrived at Paris’s Orly Airport with the other war brides, her parents did not come to pick her up. She was rejected by her immediate family, and at the time the article was published, she did not know if her parents would visit her. “Perfect happiness!” was the ironic phrase used to conclude the melancholic article about the transformation of a beautiful French woman into a successful *Américaine*.

The danger of incomplete happiness and rejection from her immediate French family matches the lost expression captured in the large photograph of her as Madeleine awaits her family to arrive with her sleeping son in her arms (see left image in Figure 1.25). Fortunately, her cousin arrived to take her to stay with Madeleine’s uncle, but this Frenchwoman’s choice of the American way had sad consequences. Madeleine was left to wonder if she would ever repair her relationship with her parents who saw her marriage to an American as a rejection of her family. Even worse, when a French woman met and chose an American man, she implicitly took on American life and culture and, for some French people, this was a defiant rejection of her nation. Going *Américaine* had inherent risks for Frenchwomen like Madeleine, but it also had tremendous payoffs, such as a materially comfortable, independent life and the possibility for success in a career like the American woman. Therefore, to better understand the allure of a Frenchwoman becoming *Américaine*, it is necessary to look to how French magazines represented the American woman as an admirable point of reference as well as a source of fear of the impending consumer-driven American lifestyle in France, which is the topic of the next emergent theme from the immediate postwar period.

### **France’s Apprehension toward the Admirable American Woman**

Like American magazines’ treatment of Frenchwomen, French magazines represented and looked at American women with admiration, too. In the heart of the Marshall Plan years in the late 1940s through the early 1950s, French magazines provided positive glimpses into the life

of the everyday American woman, which highlighted her independence and materially comfortable life; however, apprehensions lurked below the surface. As was seen in broader French cultural debates around corporate minded culture in America spreading throughout Europe before and after World War II, French magazines were certain that there surely could be a cost with having such a materially comfortable, modern life, especially when it was based on a culture of mass consumer goods and efficiency above all else. As the processes of national social comparison and the use of women as symbols for the nation remind, in French magazines' admiration and critique of the American woman, they ultimately make broader commentary about French perceptions of the American nation and all that it stood for after World War II, which ultimately guided French readers' understanding of the French place in the world.

One significant area where French women's magazines admired everyday American women was in her technical prowess and expertise, particularly in the area of make-up and beauty tools. In one such article by *Elle* in January 1948, readers learn the secrets of the young American beauty Janet Stevenson (Figure 1.26).<sup>112</sup> The article first attempts to approximate all women around the world together by writing that "American women are like other women" in that "They worry about money, pimples on their face, breaking nails, and sick children."<sup>113</sup> Further, and specifically for French readers, the magazine reminded that like the French woman, the American woman dreamed to be "pretty, elegant, and liked." However, the methods the American woman employed were different, unique, and worth noting due to their intensity and modernity, so the article aimed particularly to show Frenchwomen how American women could achieve "exactly the ideal of beauty that all American women try to have" through "the result of rigorous discipline," as seen in women like Janet Stevenson.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Mary Parker, "Confidences d'une jeune beauté américaine," *Elle*, January 27, 1948, pp. 8-9.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

**Figure 1.26:**  
**Confessions of a Young American Beauty**



Similar to American magazines’ in-depth look at specific aspects of the French woman’s life, *Elle* put Stevenson under a microscope. To emphasize her beauty training and disciplined regimen, the magazine first notes that Janet, a model with the famous Ford Agency in New York, was able to keep her beauty because she “learned how to take care of herself, like a boxer taking care of his muscles.”<sup>115</sup> As a way to stare at the American woman in order for French readers to look back at themselves and their beauty practices, the article painstakingly describes Janet’s beauty, dressing, and eating routine as well as her work schedule down to the last detail, including what water temperature, soaps, beauty supplies, undergarments, and carrying cases she used. In fact, the article advised readers to be like Stevenson to stay on top of the latest fashions and to be entirely dedicated to putting oneself together, even if it meant standing in your closet for an hour a day trying to pick the right outfit.

However, a significant portion of the article analyzes the success American women seek to achieve through these efforts. In addition to earning a solid income, Stevenson is able to take part in the social institution all American girls experienced at the time—going out alone with her boyfriends on dates, receiving a corsage, having a nice meal, seeing the latest picture, and receiving a goodnight kiss. But the most important reward of all was being able to tell her girlfriends all of the juicy details about her “beau” the day afterward. In the end, by detailing

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

and admiring Janet's intensive beauty routine and the positive results that come with it, *Elle* implies that the French woman was not good enough. Janet was a fashion model, which among *Elle's* readership is supposed to hold a certain elevated status because of her beauty and femininity. Through its in-depth description, the article implicitly informs French women what they could and should be doing better in order to be like the successful American woman. Janet, thus, served as a reference point for how to achieve success in beauty and in reaching for modern American-like dreams of landing a feminine job, being doted upon by a man, and receiving admiration from her friends.

However, the magazine notes that there is a troubling side in following the American beauty's recipe for "success." In Janet's case, despite her good earnings, she squanders most of it on make-up, with the cost being not able to buy enough food: "Janet earns a lot in her life, but all young American girls dedicate most of their budget to their toiletries and their beauty, while reducing their food to a minimum. Orange juice and three or four café au laits by day are de rigueur."<sup>116</sup> This, to the French who pride themselves on quality, balanced food, would be shocking and nearly blasphemous. To prioritize the tools of beauty above all else, even the subsistence of life, clued French women to a problem American women's priorities and way of life. In particular, putting external beauty above health was materialistic, vain, and superficial. The French woman's life, by prioritizing food over cosmetics was implicitly a better quality life for women. The American woman might still be admired for her beauty and the independence it could bring French women, but the French way was better since it did not discard one of the most important, sacred aspects of life, such as balanced eating. Further, and most importantly, the French way of life presumably did not pressure women to fall into the trap of unsatisfying materialistic narcissism that seemed to be so prevalent in the United States.

To conclude the article, *Elle* hints at another critique of American culture seen through the typical American beauty: conformity. As the magazine notes, even though modeling is seen attractively among American women, Janet's friends are not jealous of her lucrative work since they know models' careers end by the time they are thirty. However, as the article concludes, "[T]hey all try to resemble Janet Stevenson, ideal prototype of the American beauty," which revealed to French women the American woman's proclivity for following the crowd.<sup>117</sup> Thus,

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

the *Elle* feature on Janet Stevenson, touts the benefits and joys that come through being a hardworking American beauty, as featured in the large full-page photograph featuring Janet's perfectly plucked eyebrows, full white smile, twinkling eyes, and shiny lipstick (Figure 1.26). However, behind the smile of the typical young American beauty is a life with skewed priorities rooted in vain materialism that questioned the seemingly perfect life in prosperous postwar America.

In an even more significant look into the admirable and troubling life of the everyday American woman, *Paris Match* offered its first take on American women in September 1949 through an in-depth, five-page feature on Phyllis Nelson, a twenty-five-year-old Minnesotan transplant in New York (Figure 1.27).<sup>118</sup> According to the magazine's New York-based team, which had searched far and wide for a typical young American woman who fit "official statistics" of size, origin, education, salary, tastes, and morals, Nelson was deemed perfect because she exemplified all of the American women whom they had encountered: "In her habits and mentality, Phyllis Nelson is identical to millions of young people who fill offices and shops not only in New York City, but throughout the United States. This is not the Miss America of beauty pageants, it's Miss America in real life."<sup>119</sup> Above these opening lines, the title, "Phyllis Nelson: An American Woman Like Others," immediately invokes what early-twentieth-century Walter Lippmann called the reductionist filter of the media that creates a certain value in constructing social reality for its audiences.<sup>120</sup> By emphasizing in large, bold type that almost all American women had the same experience as this one aspiring-to-be-middle-class white woman, *Paris Match* immediately insinuates a very powerful message regarding women in the United States: the typical American woman was white, most likely from a rural town, and moved to the big city (with her father's permission, of course) to work as a secretary and find a husband.

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<sup>118</sup> It is worth noting that the feature appeared within the first six months of *Paris Match*'s launch in March 1949. Not only was *Paris Match* inspired by the American magazine *Life*, but it drew much of its early content from *Life* or other American-related topics.

<sup>119</sup> "Phyllis Nelson: Une Américaine comme les autres," *Paris Match*, September 10, 1949, p. 25.

<sup>120</sup> Lippmann's seminal work *Public Opinion* stresses this important filtering role of the media quite clearly: "For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. . . . To traverse the world men must have maps of the world . . . [and] what each man does is based not on direct and certain knowledge, but on pictures made by himself or given to him" (Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* [New York: The Free Press, 1965], pp. 11, 16).

In addition to the story's reductionist nature, the article fits the period's preoccupation with the everyday. The article briefly summarizes Nelson's upbringing in Minnesota and then focuses on what French readers might have seen as exotic features of her daily life (Figure 1.28): ironing her clothes and dressing in the morning, eating a sandwich and drinking a glass of milk for lunch, working with her supervisor, putting on nail polish, living with female roommates, and going out on a date with a man in an open convertible (Figure 1.29). Everything about Phyllis points to the dazzling, adulated woman in the French imaginary of the United States. Phyllis pulled herself up by her Midwestern bootstraps and paid an exorbitant monthly rent of \$17.25.<sup>121</sup> However, this did not stop her from regularly (and “vainly”) spending nearly triple that amount on going-out dresses priced at nearly \$50.<sup>122</sup> Thus, a perfected outward appearance was an important aspect of Phyllis's everyday life, as it was for all Americans: “Phyllis Nelson wears tailored clothing, like everyone in America, which doesn't keep her from buying relatively expensive dresses.”<sup>123</sup> Moreover, books on good manners (as dictated by a fashion magazine such as *Vogue*) appeared to be on a par with the great works of literature: “Her library ranges from mystery novels to history books, from *The Key to Dreams*, a book on manners published by *Vogue*, to the works of Shakespeare and some classics.”<sup>124</sup>

**Figure 1.27:**  
Phyllis Nelson, *Paris Match*'s Typical American Woman



<sup>121</sup> “Phyllis Nelson: Une Américaine comme les autres,” p. 26. In 2014 dollars, this is equivalent to about \$170 (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, What is a dollar worth? Calculator, retrieved February 26, 2014).

<sup>122</sup> In 2014 dollars, this is equivalent to about \$495 (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis).

<sup>123</sup> “Phyllis Nelson,” p. 27.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 1.29:  
Phyllis' Ray of Sunshine



Beyond the attempt to have Phyllis Nelson represent (and reify) the typical American woman, the article makes implied comparisons with France, which served to situate, define, and elevate French readers' sense of national self; they also brought readers closer to the American woman while distancing them from disturbing or disapproved-of aspects of American life. This is evident in the article's focus on Nelson's salary and spending habits, practically down to the penny, for items such as her daily breakfast of fruit juice and coffee. By shockingly spending over half of her salary on rent, Nelson faces a living situation contrary to what was found in France: "And the rent! As in all countries of the world, *except France today*, rent in the United States, and particularly in New York, is the main component of individuals' budgets."<sup>126</sup> Thus, the United States was different from France, but the difference is much more troubling than the high cost of rent. Phyllis's materialism and conformity were disconcerting because they left her broke monetarily and emotionally in her enticement and subjugation to the greedy claw of American capitalism. Even though, "like the majority of American men and women, her body and clothing are perfectly clean," Nelson was a slave to the *Key to Dreams* of material goods,

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 26. Emphasis added.



technology, and her quest for marriage, which, from the French perspective, was exotic yet incredibly disquieting.

The life of American women like Phyllis Nelson and Janet Stevenson was troubling in other ways beyond their obsession with becoming married and being materially comfortable at all costs, particularly the broader culture in which they lived and its commercialization of and paradoxical stance on sex. In a report opening an investigative series on love in 1949, *Elle* focuses on Americans' obsession with sex amid a general culture of Puritanism.<sup>127</sup> Michel Gordey, *Elle's* special envoy, describes the barrage of questions he received about the difference between French and American women from American students in a bar near a prominent North Carolina university. Michel and the students had been talking all night, and regardless of what arguments he tried to use to enlighten them, the Americans would not shake their stereotyped impressions of French women:

I tried vainly to explain to my young interlocutors that the reputation of the easy Frenchwoman by American tourists and GIs, rested uniquely on fortuitous meetings that these people had around the Place Pigalle and the Boulevard de la Madeleine. I told the important role that French women play in the home. Waste of time. They smiled skeptically and the youngest among them continued to tell me, "Yes, but your women in France are flighty and obsessed with love."<sup>128</sup>

As they left the tavern and walked past a newspaper stand, scantily clad women and racy book titles popped out at him. Pointing at what he saw, Michel pressed one of the American students with him to defend his point about the French over-obsession with sex and love. As a way to reveal their essentialist thinking and stereotyped impressions of the French, Michel notes how American students responded that Americans were not born with the innate knowledge of love as the French were, so, they argued Americans needed to use science to figure it out. Michel had other explanations for why Americans relied on "expert" knowledge to sort through common issues normally dealt with on one's own in France. For Michel, there was an all-too-common and frustrating experience he saw throughout the United States. "Puritanical" Americans were on the "desperate (but too organized) search for happiness, for a love as perfect as the last Frigidaire model."<sup>129</sup> In other words, like Nelson and Stevenson, Americans in general think their problems can be solved by a transaction—either through the purchase of an item or the pay that came from sheer will and hard work.

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<sup>127</sup> Michel Gordey, "L'éducation sexuelle est aussi répandue en Amérique que la television, le chewing-gum, et le frigidaire," *Elle*, May 30, 1949, pp. 14-15, 30.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Michel was shocked by publications being bought, left and right, on the most “natural” and “obvious” topics of human nature. After Professor Kinsey’s *Sexual Conduct of the American Male* was published in 1947, Michel notes that sexology became the rage in America where university professors and research teams posed such “scientific” questions as “Do men prefer blonds?,” “What are the personality differences between blonds and brunettes?,” and “How to choose a husband?”<sup>130</sup> He was most taken aback by the American obsession to quantify and study the most intimate things that they would not usually talk about. In the end, he insinuates that such publications on sex in America were rather trivial. In fact, he jokes that Americans should instead rely on the advice of their friends who learned all there is to know about love from their times in France. Such a joke sought to undermine American stereotypes of the French at the same time as winking at his French women readers that it might be true and to acknowledge their national pride in being known for such perceived seduction and romance.<sup>131</sup>

On the surface, Michel’s report discusses sexual education in general in the United States, but its title and images actually work to depict American women with a critical edge by showing how they treat the topic of sexual education as another commodity that feeds off Americans’ desires to keep up with the latest fad like everyone around them. In particular, the subtitle of the article reads, “American women like flats [shoes], television, giant wedding cakes, girls in pants, and sexual education,” matches all of the images shown across the top of the page (Figure 1.30).<sup>132</sup> The article does not discuss American women’s shoes, televisions, wedding cakes, or dresses, but it uses them as associative metaphors for how sexual education became an obsession among puritanical Americans that was rooted in a broad cultural desire to keep up with others. It also revealed companies and researchers’ implicit motivations to profit from and follow the latest consumer trend. Through Michel’s article, he critiques American women—and the American nation—for commercializing an area of life that is best left to everyday knowledge and people. Most importantly, through this critique, Michel presents to French readers a cultural and spiritual bankruptcy in America that was supplanted by consumerist conformity.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 14-15.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-15.

Figure 1.30:  
Sexual Education in America, Just Another Commodity



In addition to critiquing American commercialism and conformism, French magazines' looks at the everyday American woman provided explicit opportunities to better understand who was better off between French and American women. This came through most notably in the spring and summer of 1950 when *Paris Match* magazine's premier New York-based journalist, Raymond Cartier, started a heated debate about who was better off—American or French women—in his feature “The American Woman – Is She the Unhappiest in the World?”<sup>133</sup> Cartier cites the increase in the ratio of American women to men after the two world wars as one major cause of their misery. American women were in constant competition for the perfect man who was a “good provider” of materialistic wealth. Yet, in Cartier’s view, the American woman was the most privileged in the world because of her material comforts: “There certainly is no more privileged creature in the world than the American woman . . . [she] is certainly the best

<sup>133</sup> Raymond Cartier, “La femme américaine—est-elle la plus malheureuse du monde?” *Paris Match*, May 6, 1950, pp. 18-19.

nourished, best dressed, best housed, best cared for, best protected, the richest, the most respected, and the most coddled in the world.”<sup>134</sup>

Cartier seems to be most troubled by American women’s holding the upper hand in gender relations, particularly because divorce held out the prospect of alimony, and husbands were required to do all of the chores around the house while their wives performed symbolic *petits services* and pampered themselves with beauty products. But what Cartier constructs as American women’s unhappiness was the lovelessness of their marriages and the corset-like restriction of relying on their husbands. Many American women felt that they were treated like sex objects or a member of their husband’s personal “harem” because husbands wanted sex more than romance. Even more disappointing for women was the docile nature of American men, who offered their wives everything they wanted (except romance), when what women really wanted was independence. Cartier concludes, “The American woman is the most miserable creature in the world . . . the excesses of her well-being, privileges, and domination have not given her the freedoms about which feminists of the last century dreamed.”<sup>135</sup> Thus, being dependent on their men who did more complex tasks around the house while they contented themselves with doing everyday household chores and using their new electric appliances left American women bored and desiring romance from a strong manly figure.<sup>136</sup>

Similar to Jacqueline Boggs’ comparative checklist between French and American women in *Elle* mentioned earlier (see Figures 1.23 and 1.24), Cartier’s piece makes an implicit comparison between American women, who were miserable despite their material luxuries, and French women, who were, thus, implicitly less miserable. By focusing in absolute terms on the frenetic competition among American women, Cartier implicitly exalts a large body of his readership, French women, who did not fit this bossy, materialistic extreme. In the end, American women were miserable because they were the victims of their own modern freedoms.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Earlier that year, in a profile of Washington, D.C., Bess Truman, former President Harry Truman’s wife and right-hand “man,” is classified as the prototypical bossy American woman, presumably by Cartier: “[Bess] is exactly the prototype of the hundreds of thousands of women who govern America, much more than the Capitol and the White House combined, in terms of regulating morality and dictating education by imposing their notions of good, bad, decency, inappropriateness, virtue, and sin” (“Washington: capital du monde et sous-préfecture,” *Paris Match*, March 31, 1950, pp. 23, 25).

**Figure 1.31:**  
**Domineering American Woman**



**Figure 1.32:**  
**Enslavement of the American Man**



More problematic for Cartier is the fear that the American woman provoked in French men. In an image adjoining Cartier's article, an American cartoon shows a wife pointing a gun at her husband to remind him that he needs to take their son to school (Figure 1.31). This image is reminiscent of a *Paris Match* issue of October 8, 1949, in which French actress Michèle Morgan shockingly points a double-barrel shotgun at readers on the front cover. Perhaps coincidentally, several pages into the Morgan issue, an article discusses the rise of feminism and women's bold, direct, demanding "revenge" on men. According to the article's authors, the worst aspect was the enslavement of French men by women, similar to the enslavement of American men, which was featured in an image of a man being pulled by a leash (Figure 1.32) and detailed at length in the article's text:

The fate that awaits the French man is already decided. There is an example before our very eyes: the American male. . . . When an American man speaks to an American woman, he always speaks like a slave to his master (hence his incredibly rude reactions to non-American women when [he's] abroad). Most often, the husband cares for children in the evening, while the woman reads a scholarly work or goes to her club.

The writer Henri Troyat, who recently toured America, states that he was deeply struck by the happy, calm expression of American women. Compared to American women, he found French women to be worried, or even in anguish. . . . The American writer Gore Vidal summed up the situation succinctly: "In America, we are led by women. Most men are emasculated and no more dangerous than pet dogs."<sup>137</sup>

French men, therefore, continued to be fearful of postwar shifts in gender roles. One view might be that American women were happy with her independence and material luxuries, whereas French women were miserable, worried, and wanting "revenge." Cartier's view, in contrast, is that American women were miserable due to their domination and boredom. In declaring

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<sup>137</sup> "L'heure des femmes a sonné," *Paris Match*, October 8, 1949, pp. 34-35.

American women miserable, he implicitly argues that American gender relations were problematic. He, too, fears the fateful shackles to come for French men, so he declares American women miserable in order to make the “traditional” positions of French men and women admirable and desirable, which came precisely at the moment when French masculinity needed reinforcement after the emasculating loss of German Occupation and American GIs stealing away French women at the end of the war.<sup>138</sup>

Cartier’s sketch of the miserable American woman did not go unchallenged in the magazine. On June 24, 1950, Margaret Gardner, an American living in Paris, was given the opportunity to respond; in her article, she claimed that French women were miserable, too.<sup>139</sup> She notes that Cartier’s caricature of the overburdened American man, who wakes up first to fetch his wife a grapefruit and then take the children to school, only reveals Cartier’s anxieties as a Frenchman. In Gardner’s view, Cartier is worried about troubling gender role reversals that could come to France: “Because, as you yourself, a Frenchman, said, in housework, it’s [the American woman] who wears the pants . . . or, rather, it’s [the American man] who wears the apron.”<sup>140</sup>

Gardner attributes Cartier’s calling the American woman “exceptional” to his belief in “her rarity” and the docility of the American man: “The American man, if he is fortunate enough to find a woman, places her in a shrine, free of dust from the cellar and the insults of laundry.” Gardner, rather, finds this a grave misunderstanding of American gender relations: “And you owe this opinion [of American men’s docility] to Western films that you saw in your childhood. In the saloon where gold rushers and cowboys went to drink there was always a blond girl, who had just gotten off the paddleboat, for whom men would kill each other.”<sup>141</sup>

Continuing with imagery of fighting men, Gardner states that Frenchmen, who proudly claimed to have invented chivalry, were not chivalrous at all. French women were dependent upon their husbands to determine their identities and approve of everyday business such as banking and applying for a passport. In France, women were still considered inferior to men: “There remain in Latin countries [such as France] some vestiges of the ancient Roman

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<sup>138</sup> See earlier “Immediate Postwar Context” section for more details on French masculinity and the problem of the American GI for Frenchmen.

<sup>139</sup> Margaret Gardner, “Vous vous trompez, monsieur Cartier! Ce sont les Françaises qui sont malheureuses,” *Paris Match*, June 24, 1950, pp. 22-23.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

conception of the inferiority of women. In the United States, these have been forgotten.”<sup>142</sup> For Gardner, Cartier’s insistence that American women were unhappy because their husbands and modern appliances freed up time to make themselves pretty was nonsense. French women were miserable because they were left in silence, and while Gardner admits sarcastically that American women can be bossy, why was that so bad when even the Duke of Windsor had renounced the throne for a “*femme* made in the U.S.A.”?<sup>143</sup> To sarcastically argue with Cartier, she presents the solution of creating the perfect misery-loves-company couple: Cartier’s dominated American man and what Gardner sees as the suppressed French woman.

It is important to note here that *Paris Match* created a space for Margaret Gardner, an American woman, to counter directly Cartier’s view of the “miserable American woman.” By having an American woman engage candidly in a debate about gender relations in the United States compared to those in France, *Paris Match* enabled its readers to face the larger tension built into Franco-American relations about America’s omnipresence and control in the world, especially France. Gardner contradicts Cartier by showing the ways in which French women were enslaved to their men and to lives of technological and consumer self-deprivation. Because the magazine included Gardner in this debate, readers could engage in the magazine’s regular comparison between the United States and France and see the bias of the other side openly. This was tactically smart, as injecting an American voice critical of French women’s lives might inspire strong reactions among French readers to assert their notion of Frenchness, countering the view of an opinionated *Américaine*.

Such reactions were revealed on July 22, 1950, when *Paris Match* concluded the “woman debate of 1950” through a one-page summary of the “abundance” of letters to the editor sent by “deeply moved” French women.<sup>144</sup> The article’s page-centered headline proclaims, “The French Woman is Happier.”<sup>145</sup> The reasons are featured in bold type: French women knew how to cook without the constraints of machines (“She knows how to flip pancakes”), they did not hide behind make-up and false happiness (“Her make-up doesn’t lie about her physical being”), and they shared their freedom with their husbands rather than making their husbands do everything

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> In this instance, Gardner is referring to King Edward VIII who abdicated his throne in 1936 to marry wealthy and twice divorced American Wallis Simpson.

<sup>144</sup> “La Française est la plus heureuse: les lecteurs de ‘Paris-Match’ donnent leur avis sur le bonheur conjugal,” *Paris Match*, July 22, 1950, p. 24.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

(“No husband happy to do everything”).<sup>146</sup> One letter provides an apt summary of what the magazine views as the dominant French woman’s sentiments regarding American women’s dependence on technology and their husbands:

Mrs. Isabelle Blanchard, of Grenoble, hopes that American women will never know years such as those that French women experienced during the Occupation. “Because if, in America, it’s the husbands who do everything, with the help of their electric appliances,” she said, “I wonder what American women would do with a half-hour of electricity each day (in good times) and their husband absent. They probably would blow their brains out.”<sup>147</sup>

Blanchard’s and *Paris Match*’s representation of the technologically oppressed and emotionally depressed American woman was very revealing at this moment in French history. As Blanchard’s letter shows, the memory of German occupation was still fresh in the French mind, especially amid the flurry of new household products, many of them American, that not only flooded France’s storefronts and shelves, but were advertised in *Paris Match*. As *Paris Match* gained its footing within France’s print culture, products such as Hoover vacuum cleaners, compact clothes washers, Hollywood’s Max Factor Pan-Cake Make-Up, American-style Spray-Net, the Pennsylvania oils in Dr. Roja Shampoo, and Kelvinator refrigerators from Detroit filled an ever-growing number of pages. Certainly, France was on its way to becoming consumer-based society, but, as *Paris Match* revealed through the “woman debate of 1950,” ambivalence remained toward new timesaving and beautifying products given the cultural memory of the recent past. For French women, new products could save time and make one beautiful, but it would pull them away from the realities of everyday life and provide a new kind of enslavement to their machines and their men.

To explore how magazines worked to entice French women to follow the American woman and her admirable products, a close look is needed at the advertisements flooding and financially supporting the pages of French magazines, many of which were new after World War II and dependent on any advertising they could get, and the source with the most funds to advertise were American companies establishing markets and operations in France. As one flips through the pages of popular French magazines after the war, American products were everywhere, but the American woman was just as prominent. The advertising of American women in French magazines will be taken up next, revealing how despite the ambivalence

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> “La Française est la plus heureuse,” p. 24.



French culture had over the American woman's materialism, conformity, and skewed priorities, she was still greatly admired and considered a source of modern emulation.

### **Advertising the American Woman in French Magazines**

The image of the advertised American woman in French magazines should not be given short shrift, especially given the flood of American products in France after World War II. Examining a few prominent advertisement campaigns shows how many advertisements in immediate postwar French magazines tried to infuse *and* play upon the desire, real or imagined, among Frenchwomen to be like the American woman. The ubiquity of American women in immediate postwar magazine advertisements, thus, shows very much how attributes of the American woman were desirable to French women, or, at the very least, was used as a ploy to get French women to buy something that was associated with or used by the American women they admired.

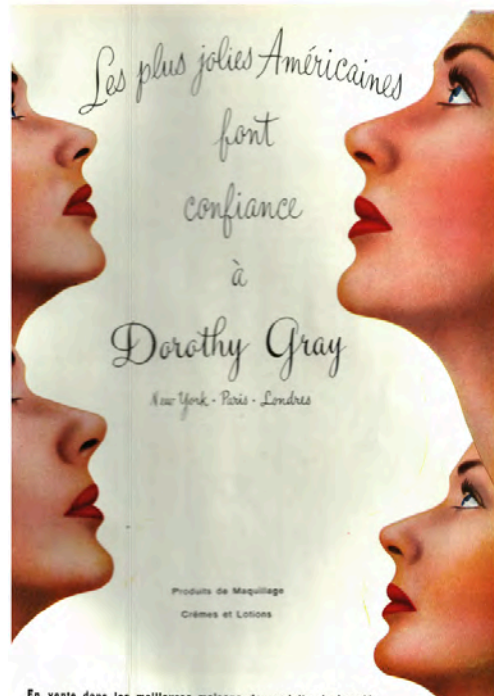
Prominent American products playing on the desirable qualities of the American woman included Helena Rubinstein, Harriet Hubbard Ayer, Elizabeth Arden, Dorothy Gray, Cutex, Max Factor Hollywood, and Johnson Floor Wax. Across many of these advertisements, American women helped declare the exciting return of favored products in France seen before the war, or they indicated the introduction of new products that French women "had to" have or use to become modern, forward-thinking, and well-off women. Most of the advertisements made the American origins of products very explicit, but they took their appeals a step further by reiterating the fact that American women used them, which could lead to desirable results or a heightened sense of status. Some advertisements even insinuated that the French women who used these products would become like the American woman who exhibited confidence, technical skill, and, above all, cleanliness. As Kristin Ross notes similarly on the American woman's place for French women, the advertised American woman was the ultimate point of reference for French women on what to consume; she was also a source of competition and inspiration on how to make French life more modern.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, p. 90.

Dorothy Gray's advertisement campaign in French *Vogue* immediately after the war played significantly on how American women were French women's point of reference. Dorothy Gray had already seen success in France before the war. It was originally a line of make-ups, creams, and lotions that first appeared widely in the United States in the early 1920s and then elsewhere in the late 1920s through the marketing and advertising efforts of the Lehn & Fink make-up company, which bought the rights to the Dorothy Gray name in 1926.<sup>149</sup> After the war, the strategy was to use the American origins of the product to entice French readers to purchase the product again. In the most notable ad of the *Vogue* campaign (Figure 1.33), the

**Figure 1.33:**  
**Look Up to the American Woman**



centered message makes it clear that the product is to be trusted because American women rely on it: “The prettiest American women [*Américaines*] trust Dorothy Gray.”<sup>150</sup> To emphasize the inspiring position of the American woman visually, the advertisement is lined by two women on each side of the page looking up toward the advertisement's tagline. Here, the copy's focus on “the most pretty American women” and the use of the upward look of the women lining the page insinuate the American woman's use of this specific beauty product is something for French women to look up to. Put differently, the American woman was the example for French women of whom and what to follow, and the advertisement's copy and text reinforce the desirable status of the American woman for French women, or, at the very least, the work of an American make-up to get French women to look up to American women.

<sup>149</sup> James Bennett, “Cosmetics and Skin: Dorothy Gray,” accessed February 25, 2014, <http://www.cosmeticsandskin.com/companies/dorothy-gray.php>. Also see Richard Corson, *Fashions in Make-Up from Ancient to Modern Times* (London: Owen, 1972).

<sup>150</sup> “Les plus jolies Américaines font confiance à Dorothy Gray” (“The prettiest American women trust Dorothy Gray”), Dorothy Gray, *Vogue*, January-February 1947, p. 17.

Another prominent Dorothy Gray advertisement takes a less direct approach visually, but emphasizes the American woman's use of the product textually (Figure 1.34).<sup>151</sup> In the dominant background image, a woman lay back on her hair and engages French women readers by directly looking into their eyes with an inviting smile. The woman's smile guides the readers' eyes downward to the largest text that explains who the woman is and why she is smiling: "Like the American woman." When reading the copy in full, one better understands how this advertisement aims to convince the growing number of French readers to follow the American woman: "Like the American woman [*l'Américaine*], the French woman [*la femme Française*] adopted the famous 'Three Step Toward Beauty' treatment." In this and the earlier "prettiest American women" Dorothy Gray ad, the American woman is the sole evidence of why French women should trust and use this beauty product. The implied happiness and cleanliness of the American woman, as seen through the satisfaction of her smile and ease of her comfortable head position, is achieved through using Dorothy Gray. The possibility to become attractive and modern like the American woman could be achieved for French women if they acted "like the American woman" by purchasing and using the cosmetic. For French women, the American woman and her modern beauty was something that could be purchased and achieved through the act of buying and transforming oneself with an American beauty product. And the very essence of becoming "like the American woman" was thus something that French women wanted to be, or the advertisers and magazine editors played on a broader cultural desire for French women to be like American women.

**Figure 1.34:**  
**Like the American Woman**



<sup>151</sup> "Comme la femme Américaine" ("Like the American woman"), Dorothy Gray, *Vogue*, March-April 1947, p. 27.

**Figure 1.35:**  
**Harriet Hubbard Ayer's Clear  
 American Woman Complexion**



In a fashion similar to Dorothy Gray’s “like the American woman” run of advertisements, Harriet Hubbard Ayer, a popular American cosmetic before and after World War II, played off of French women’s desires to be like the American woman by running a series of advertisements in French *Vogue* in 1951 for its Luxuria cleansing cream and beauty water (Figure 1.35).<sup>152</sup> The American woman was explicitly used to evidence the positive results that could come to readers if they used the Luxuria product. In one ad with minimal copy, readers learn that the product could be used for “For a clear complexion of an American woman” (see left image of Figure 1.35). Here, the large cursive text works in tandem with the dominating image of a luxurious, presumably wealthy woman in an evening dress who points with brightly manicured nails

<sup>152</sup> “Luxuria, pour un teint clair d’Américaine” (“Luxuria, for a clear American woman complexion”), Harriet Hubbard Ayer, *Vogue*, November 1951, p. 3. “Un teint clair d’Américaine, pour vous!” (“A clear American woman complexion for you!”). Harriet Hubbard Ayer, *Vogue*, July-August 1951, p. 4. For details on the Harriet Hubbard Ayer legacy, see Annette Blaugrund, *Dispensing Beauty in New York and Beyond: The Triumphs and Tragedies of Harriet Hubbard Ayer* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011).

directly at the “For a clear complexion of an American woman.”<sup>153</sup> The product name embeds the word *luxury* within it to insinuate a high class life, and the explicit mention of becoming “like an American woman” through the product underscores French women readers’ desire to become more like the materially well off and comfortable American woman featured in an expensive gown.

In another Harriet Hubbard Ayer ad for *Vogue*, but for a jar of face cream (see right image of Figure 1.35), most of the copy-heavy text focuses on how the specialized embroygen cream from Hubbard’s American-based laboratory can “rejuvenate your face as soon as tonight.” However, what is notable, as seen in the Luxuria ad, is how the product guarantees that it would give readers a more than just natural beauty through a “healthy and firm face”—it could give readers “a clear American woman’s complexion, for you!” In this instance, the magazine copy works to directly engage the readers by referring to *you* and trying to convince them to purchase the product due to its appealing results and expertly crafted formulas in America. The American woman’s complexion, again, was something appealing to have, and the advertisement played on this desire to convince French women to purchase a new, technical, and modern product.

One of the most direct series of advertisements working to get French women to buy an American product *and* to introduce a new way of staying clean like the American woman was Mum deodorant’s deodorizing cream ad. In one such prominent ad featuring a sketch of a topless woman with her back to readers, the woman with expertly finished nails (a sign for American women at the time) applies Mum under her armpit (Figure 1.36).<sup>154</sup> Near the woman is the advertisement’s key slogan: “A novelty for French women. A habit for American women.” This large tagline communicates two things that work to engage French women to consider purchasing

**Figure 1.36:**  
**Mum, A Frenchwoman’s New American Woman Habit**



<sup>153</sup> It should be noted that after the war, one of the most notable features of the American woman among the French were her well-manicured, polished nails, especially since most French women could not find polish during the war.

<sup>154</sup> “Mum, une nouveauté pour les Françaises, une habitude pour les Américaines” (“A novelty for Frenchwomen, a habit for American women”), Mum, *Elle*, August 13, 1951, p. 3.

Mum. First, this is a new product, “a novelty,” in France to try. Secondly, and more importantly, there is juxtaposition between the French and American woman. The French woman lags behind the American woman because she does not yet engage in the practice of an easy “30 second” application where American women, knowledgeable of all things cleanly, have already made this seemingly simple practice a part of their everyday lives. Further, the ad’s copy explains how it, a hygiene product that “neutralizes sweat’s odor,” should be used by French women, as if they do not understand the concept or process of staying clean or using deodorant: “*Each day* American women, after their shower, apply under their arms, MUM deodorizing cream. This act has become for them as much as a habit as using beauty creams.”<sup>155</sup> Like the Dorothy Gray and Harriet Hubbard Ayer ads, to directly inspire action, the copy tells French women readers to use the product just like American women do: “*Each day*, like American women, use MUM perfumed cream.”<sup>156</sup> Ultimately, by using the product and engaging in what the ad explains for readers as a new beauty practice, French women readers could be pulled from their implied dirty backwardness toward the more agreeable, clean, and modern world of the American woman.

Perhaps the most frequent ads in French magazines that featured American women and their appealing qualities to French readers were Max Factor of Hollywood’s lines of make-ups. Like in American magazines, Max Factor of Hollywood heavily promoted its Pan-Stik and Pan-Cake make-up lines in the more broadly read magazines *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, *Marie France*, and *Nous Deux*.<sup>157</sup> To attract French readers to purchase these products, which had their origins in Hollywood make-up work from the 1900s through mid-1940s, American women movie stars were used to associate the make-up with Hollywood glamour, which by the late 1940s and early 1950s was well established around the world.<sup>158</sup> Beyond using the appealing qualities of American women, by using famous American actresses in particular, Max Factor advertisements in French magazines were an important site of promotion for Hollywood films and stars as well as the image of the everyday American woman who made it in life. Although magazines were a

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<sup>155</sup> Emphasis original.

<sup>156</sup> Emphasis original.

<sup>157</sup> Pan-Cake make-up first emerged commercially in the United States in 1938 after its initial use in early Technicolor films. Pan-Stick make-up, a non-greasy product that could be used to conceal skin imperfections like Pan-Cake make-up but with more ease, was released commercially in 1948 after being used by the film industry for a year.

<sup>158</sup> See Fred E. Besten, *Max Factor: The Man Who Changed the Faces of the World* (New York: Arcade Publishers, 2008); Corson; and Geoffrey Jones, *Beauty Imagined: A History of the Global Beauty Industry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

significantly read medium in the immediate postwar period, classic Hollywood film also played a key role in the broader visual culture, and the use of celebrity endorsements helped prop up a struggling film industry along with the make-up that actresses used in their production.<sup>159</sup>

**Figure 1.37:**  
**Max Factor is Big News**  
**for French Women**



**Figure 1.38:**  
**Man Embellishing Stars**  
**Returns to Embellish Frenchwomen**



Within the moment of classic Hollywood cinema after the war, Max Factor ads tried to convince French women readers that they would come to take on the air and beauty of Hollywood stars, a quintessential symbol of American and global success, by using the products. As one ad using Rita Hayworth's endorsement proclaimed, Max Factor was "Big News for French women!" since French women could now make their lips, eyes, and face as beautiful as Hollywood's beauties, using the advances in make-up technology made by Max Factor and his

<sup>159</sup> It is important to note that visual Hollywood culture was highly Franco-American in nature after the war. As Vanessa Schwartz reveals, intense, productive partnerships between Hollywood and Paris existed after the war, which established a "cosmopolitan film culture" (Vanessa Schwartz, *It's So French: Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of Cosmopolitan Film Culture* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007]). In fact, many popular films during the postwar period were Franco-American co-productions or had Franco-American casts. Two of the most famous of these films include MGM's 1951 *An American in Paris*, featuring American actor Gene Kelly and French actress Leslie Caron, and United's 1952 release of *Moulin Rouge*, featuring José Ferrer, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Suzanne Flon, and Colette Marchand. Schwartz argues that such films helped build a certain image of Frenchness among American and other film audiences around the world, and the visual culture that emerged between both countries was very much a symbiosis between Hollywood and Paris filmmakers. In other words, Hollywood did not dominate completely in the French context.

son for the film industry (Figure 1.37).<sup>160</sup> As one ad for Pan-Cake make-up declares using the face of Irish-born-turned-Hollywood star Maureen O’Hara, Max Factor is the “Man who embellishes the stars...returns to embellish French women” through his line of make-up that make women attractive like the three women mentioned on the advertisement: O’Hara, Ginger Rogers, and Disney’s cartoon version of Cinderella (Figure 1.38).<sup>161</sup> Like other ads, by directly engaging French women readers to transform themselves through buying and applying the make-ups that made famous American women beautiful—such as Dorothy Lamour, Judy Garland, Lana Turner, Esther Williams, Ava Gardner, and Joan Caulfield, among many others (Figure 1.39)<sup>162</sup>—French women could transform similarly into exquisite, bewitching, and “prettier than ever” women. Moreover, in purchasing and using make-ups that made Hollywood and its women so glamorous, French women would, too, transform their beauty into something glamorous like the privileged, elite group of Hollywood women stars, who, as Esther Williams’ endorsement states, “Beauty is truth, truth beauty” (Figure 1.39). On the one hand, the allure of Hollywood could be captured and had through a make-up, but the star world of Hollywood represented more than fame and beauty. It represented the American way of life and symbols of status that came with and through it—success and admiration—and it appealed to French women’s desires to improve themselves, which ultimately would convince them to purchase an American product.

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<sup>160</sup> “Grande nouvelle pour les Françaises” (“Big news for Frenchwomen”), Max Factor-Hollywood, *Marie France*, October 26, 1948, p. 32 (backcover).

<sup>161</sup> “L’homme qui embellit les stars...revient embellir les Françaises, Maureen O’Hara” (“The man that embellishes the stars...returns to embellish Frenchwomen”), Max Factor-Hollywood, *Marie France*, September 25, 1946, p. 2.

<sup>162</sup> Top row: “Jour de joie pour les Françaises, Dorothy Lamour,” (“Day of joy for Frenchwomen”), Max Factor Hollywood, *Elle*, July 2, 1946, p. 24. Bottom row: “Hollywood va transformer votre beauté, Lana Turner” (“Hollywood will transform your beauty”), Max Factor of Hollywood, *Elle*, July 23, 1946, p. 2. “Beauty is truth, truth beauty, Esther Williams,” Max Factor of Hollywood, *Elle*, November 12, 1946, p. 21. “Plus jolie que jamais, Ava Gardner,” (“Prettier than ever”), Max Factor of Hollywood, *Elle*, September 27, 1954, p. 81. “Votre beauté exige cette flatteuse touche finale, Joan Caulfield” (“Your beauty demands this flattering final touch”), Max Factor of Hollywood, *Elle*, January 14, 1952, p. 40.



Figure 1.39:  
Max Factor of Hollywood Ads



Another set of ads, but from Reard of California, uses Hollywood, too, to entice French women magazine readers to buy and possibly imagine themselves as the admired American woman. In one of its repeated ads, Reard presents Hollywood-inspired bras that could transform

French women readers into various qualities presumably associated with Hollywood that would come if one wore specific models of bras: glittering dream, invitation to romance, divine love, enchanter, magical charm, ardent desire, little sorcerer, and flying saucers. To convince French women readers of the quality of Reard, its bras were described as “the first bra in the world” as well as a new product in France after having “considerable success in America” (Figure 1.40).<sup>163</sup> The fact that bras were popular and successful in the United States was a way to appeal to readers’ actual or perceived sense that American products were desirable and better than the French equivalents. Further, by buying Hollywood-inspired bras, French women could transform themselves into the desirable qualities associated with Hollywood depending on the cut bust they chose.

Figure 1.40:  
Reard Hollywood Bras



More enticing, still, as seen in Reard’s Pin-Up ad, French women could become American Pin Ups with the most attractiveness they have ever had before, as the opening copy reads: “Be a Pin-Up Madame! ... by wearing all the intoxication of Hollywood on your legs, you

<sup>163</sup> “Reard, le premier soutien-gorge du monde, un succès considérable en Amérique” (“Reard, the best bra in the world, a considerable American success”), Reard, *Marie France*, December 18, 1950, p. 39. “Soyez Pin-Up, Madame!” (“Be a Pin-Up, Madame!”), Reard, *Marie France*, April 7, 1952, p. 55.

will be stunningly beautiful and have more sex appeal than ever.” As with other ads for American products, French women readers are engaged directly in this Reard ad, and the engagement associates American women’s desired qualities that would be achieved through the purchase and use of the said product. The fashion women took up in California and Hollywood had significant appeal to French women readers, so by buying something as seemingly mundane as a bra could bring more than support to its purchasers. Buying a Reard bra could bring the dream of Hollywood and the allure that was associated with American women’s stardom, which would be a significant selling point that resonated among French women readers who saw a limit in consumer goods during and immediately after the war. Further, and the advertisement’s appeal to purchase the Reard Hollywood bra fed into how some Frenchwomen saw and imagined the ideal and desirable American woman: modern with sex appeal through technologically advanced beauty products and undergarments.

Not all advertisements in French magazines were explicit in their use of the appealing American women. Some advertisements were subtle in their inclusion of the American woman by emphasizing that an American product returned to France from before the war, was being introduced in France for the first time, or had major success among American women (Figure 1.41). For example, the Peggy Sage line of nail polishes emphasized its American roots by using words in English amid French text that it was “Back from America...” Other beauty products implied the American woman by referring to the product being a part of the American fashion, as Lipnet announced its new long lipstick line; as Carroll stressed with its “American nail polishes”; as Johnson wax emphasized in being the “first American brand!” used by American women; as Rita pointed out its being a “new American product,” “like in America,” and “Straight from America”; as My Curling’s proclaimed Frenchwomen could have hair “Like in America!”; and as Dixor indicated through the nod of approval by “the most beautiful woman of New York.” Other specialty products emphasized what American women were doing like Helena Rubinstein, which came to establish a beauty shop in the fashionable Place Vendôme area after the war: “11 million American women have, in year, adopted Helena Rubinstein’s Stay Long, the new *inerasable* lipstick.”<sup>164</sup> Similarly, John Dardley, “the famous American arbiter of beauty” declared that “American women abandon cream and powder” in preference for a more natural make-up. All of these advertisements, like the others mentioned earlier, worked on an implied

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<sup>164</sup> Emphasis original.

and assumed desire among Frenchwomen to become like American women or to be modern or beautiful like American women. Ads in French magazines featuring American women and their products played on or manufactured desires of what French women admired and wanted to be like and become, which was something that approximated the life or material comforts of the American woman that the French woman presumably did not have and wanted to have after a period of scarcity and deprivation.

Figure 1.41:  
The Subtly Advertised American Woman



## Conclusion

The immediate postwar period saw an intense time of Franco-American collaboration where both countries were highly concerned and focused on what each other were doing. At the same time, the United States and France saw dramatic changes before their eyes that needed sorting through. In the United States and France, women were put back in “their place” after having made important contributions to the war; they were told to rebuild their nations through their roles as child bearers, mothers, wives, and purchasers for the family. In France, women also were targets to cleanse the French nation of its wrongdoings during the war through public punishments of female wartime collaborators who were seen to represent the country’s downfall and diminished reputation in the world. The French national image in the immediate postwar period, thus, was battered, and general French sentiment was one of being on the defensive. America had a heavy hand in rebuilding France, and often on American terms, and it was only becoming a stronger actor on the world stage with its economic and military might, which spread American values of free market capitalism, efficiency through technology, and materialism. Layered onto the American influence was France’s crumbling overseas empire, and a heating Cold War. As such, in the world of magazines, American women became an effective target for the French to criticize aspects of American life that would problematically change France after the war. In American magazines, French women were a useful tool for justifying and reinforcing America’s strong influence and place in France and the world more generally. Many Americans were ambivalent about taking on a role as a global hegemon given the tremendous loss of life incurred in two world wars as well as the imminent danger of Soviet communism and nuclear weapons. The immediate postwar period was a relief in that war was over, but for the United States, only more anxieties came with the responsibilities that came with becoming an empire. Showing how American assistance and influence abroad were positive through American magazines’ representations of French woman’s appreciation for America and her triumphant return after the war worked to make the spread of the American empire more palatable for everyday Americans.

French and American magazines’ intense looks at American and French women, respectively, were also one way through which internal gender and societal changes were rebalanced after the war, and admirable and not so admirable qualities of each country were

debated. Overall, American magazines presented a resilient and strong France like its young women heroes who helped foreign soldiers, kept their families clothed, and came together with friends and family to make their dreams come alive. At the same time, the Frenchwoman represented a sophisticated, chic, and fashionable woman that could be emulated, especially since she made it happen with limited resources. Although American women could purchase or make dresses more easily due to the material abundance around them, what the Frenchwoman wore was desirable nonetheless, and American women looked to the Frenchwoman to know where and how to put herself together. The American woman might have been better off in Americans' eyes because she was more independent and able to make purchases compared to her French sister, but the Frenchwoman would be an American woman's guide in pulling it off fashionably and with ease. However, as was seen with anxiety among American women about Frenchwomen stealing American men, the Frenchwoman signaled gender and sexual troubles to come and to work through in the United States, such as intimate relations outside of marriage, infidelity, and the right for women to express themselves sexually and physically. American women may have been pushed inward toward the home and more "traditional" women's work, but the Frenchwoman's strong advances toward American men kept American women's voices vocal about what was acceptable sexual behavior among American men. But even when the Frenchwoman inspired American women's voices, she could be used to put down the American woman's supposed lack of feminine weakness, which served to reinforce conservative gender norms that dictated a woman's proper place as housewife and mother.

In France, the American woman was one of French magazines' representational strategies to gauge and debate where France would go in a new postwar world where France had to literally rebuild infrastructure, businesses, and public institutions. As Richard Kuisel notes through the Marshall Plan and the rise of consumerism in France, it was inevitable that France would be Americanized, but to what degree was a hotly debated question immediately after the war.<sup>165</sup> By looking to the American woman with close attention and detail, French magazines in the immediate postwar period debated the opportunities and costs of this new, modern, technologically-driven consumer life. This was most evident with the representations of typical American women such as Phyllis Nelson and Janet Stevenson where their lives of independence

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<sup>165</sup> Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1993).

and material comfort were admired, but the forgoing of square meals in the name of material and relationship success was blasphemous to French editors and readers who prided themselves on quality food. On one level, a critique of Americans' food habits seems banal, but it signaled greater French critiques about the narcissism and skewed priorities that came from extreme individual consumerism that was espoused and spread through Americans' focus on free market capitalism, assembly line manufacturing, and extreme efficiency at all costs. The forces of Americanization as well as France's gradual incorporation of American-style mass consumerism, automation, and individual choice threatened the tradition and stability that many desired to return after the war. Therefore, when French magazine features focused on the shocking opportunity costs of American-style capitalism, such as an American woman's lack of square meals, they anticipated and lamented feelings of loss that came from Americanization's uprooting of the mostly non-commercialized life upon which the French prided themselves.

Even more significantly, the French and American woman debate in the summer of 1950 showed a questioning of American women's happiness and anxiety about the American woman's purported place of superiority in her technical prowess and material abundance. Debating who is happier—the American or French woman—goes beyond mere comparison between the nations. That is, such a debate struck at larger questions about which way of life was better and what pitfalls could be avoided by the French to avoid creating a society based on unhappy consumerism that puts consumption and materialism above a more humane and spiritually fulfilling life. The French women who married American men showed the exciting benefits that could come through close relationships, but such relationships were also rife with cultural misunderstandings, looks of bemusement, and at its extreme (like that for the returning war bride Madeleine), rejection and loss of close ties to France. Going American, although enticing, as many advertisements made it seem, could make the French into something they might not like, and it could change the French way of life to the scary Fordist visions of the future its cultural critics forewarned. As the Marshall Plan's funding and programs came to a close in the early 1950s, a consumerist France was well in the making. And like in the United States, the bulk of the 1950s was a time of tremendous growth in consumerism and a time of rather intense conservatism, presenting a new, idealized dynamic in French and American magazines' representations and comparisons of each other's women, to which the next chapter will turn.

## Chapter 2

### Mutual Fascination and Liberation, 1952-1960

Eileen Davis' fictional piece "The Woman Who Had Been to Paris," which appeared in *Woman's Home Companion's* February 1946 issue, is an apt anecdote for how American magazines represented France and French women in the 1950s (Figure 2.1).<sup>1</sup> Although this piece appeared before the 1950s, it was before its time in the sense that it previewed what would come in how some American women saw France and what it meant for them in the 1950s. In the story, Nora, a teenage girl from Conorra, a small town on the empty prairie somewhere in Middle America, was fascinated by Mrs. Orlecky, the new woman from the East who moved in the house up the street. Everyone except Nora thought Mrs. Orlecky was odd. She did not wear perfectly matched and placed clothing. She let her children explore wildly around the house. She played unknown music on a piano in a dark house. And she did not put up any window dressings to conceal her house from the outside world. Nora's mother described Orlecky as an "artist type" who did not quite fit in with the "brushed, starched, expectant, sure" small town where everyone had the same routine of going to the predictable music show downtown, coiffing their perfect green lawns, buying similar fashions from the hometown department store, and flocking to buy the same painting of a wolf. In short, Mrs. Orlecky was an eccentric in a small conformist town entrenched in conservative Cold War ideology and mass consumerism.

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<sup>1</sup> Eileen Davis, "The Woman Who Had Been to Paris," *Woman's Home Companion*, February 1946, pp. 32-33, 56, 58-59.



The average woman of Conorra, like Nora's mother, was happy to attend to her duties as housewife-mother in a house filled with well-placed furnishings and machines, and she enjoyed her social obligations down at the department and drug stores, but Nora found all of this boring. After a short, welcome visit to Orlecky's house with her mother, Nora became fascinated by Orlecky and her stacks of books that were actually read

(and not mere ornaments behind a glass case), her vibrant Matisse print, and her stories of traveling in France. Nora came to regularly visit with Orlecky and started to join her daily trips down to the rails to watch the train fade off into the horizon as a way to imagine what lay beyond the prairie's horizon. As time passed, Nora realized that she wanted a life different from the mold cast by her mother and impressed upon her by broader American culture. One day, when Nora was asked to use a significant sum of money her mother saved up to buy the wolf painting that every other house in the town had, she decided instead to stop at Mrs. Orlecky's to try to rent her Matisse print. For Nora, the painting was exciting and different; it would inspire new ideas and perspectives for her and her mother. Nora's attempt failed, though, and her mother demanded that she retrieve the painting everyone else had. Nora knew deep down inside that the seed was planted for her to go off and explore the world beyond Conorra. The stories of Paris and the ideas inspired by Matisse's print brought a new world to the curious girl in small town America. Paris was Nora's dream world to be explored in person and through books and images. Paris stood for where she could better understand herself and become an independent, free thinker away from the confining conformism of postwar America.

France and the life of the French women, thus, represented in American magazines in the 1950s a source of liberation for American women. The same could be said, too, for French women looking in French magazines at American women and their lives of independence and material luxury. The theme of mutual admiration and sometimes apprehension that was seen in

**Figure 2.1:**  
**The Woman Who Had Been to Paris**



the immediate postwar period continued in the 1950s, but representations in magazines in France and America tended to show how American and French women could have it all, or at least an imagination of a better life, by looking at or taking on the experiences and life of the women on the other shore. There were critiques embedded in some magazines' representations, to be sure, but the rosy tinted images that magazines presented in a moment of intense geopolitical anxiety worked to create a sense of stability and comfort for magazine readers in France and the United States.

In the United States, young, single women, especially from middle class backgrounds, often worked outside the home, and many were encouraged to attend universities and colleges, but popular culture, especially magazines, glorified the role of the housewife-mother, and common practice for working women was to stop working upon marriage, and often at the first signs of pregnancy. This conservative environment for women did not mean that there were no calls for women's independence and participation in American civic and economic life, but there was general discomfort over feminism as a vocal movement, as was much of any dissent throughout the 1950s.

In France, there was a similar move to put women back in the home, especially to have more children to make up for the losses of the war. Further, there were societal pressures placed on French women to be elegant and defer to masculine authority central to a successful marriage, which was thought to recalibrate and reassert patriarchal gender norms that went askew during the war and the country's rocky start to reconstruction. As Sharon Cline explains, France's honor in a new world order was dependent upon the French women's honor, which could be illustrated through Frenchwomen's building of strong families.<sup>2</sup> Further, her elegant dignity, as seen through a demure fashionability that was encouraged in the worlds of haute couture and popular culture more generally, would serve to convince the French and the world of the end of France's hardships, a reestablished social order, and restoration of tradition.

America saw unease in its position on the world stage, especially in light of the rise of the Soviet Union and efforts to contain the communist threat around the world in Indochina and Eastern Europe. Even after the witch-hunt for communists on American soil had officially ended, a fear about an unstable world subsisted, so there was a generational shift to social

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<sup>2</sup> Sharon Elise Cline, *Feminité à la Française: Femininity, Social Change, and French National Identity, 1945-1970*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, PhD Dissertation, December 2008.

conformity, enjoyment of mass consumption, and centering life around work and home in newly established suburban and urban areas. In some ways, America in the 1950s was a rosy period of ignorant innocence for many Americans, particularly middle class white Americans, whose inward lives would help weather fears of a broader unstable world. Still, around the world, American goods and money abounded, and America's belief in scientific futurism fueled optimism moving into a modern age. The success of the United States' efforts and influence around the world in the 1950s was, as *Life* magazine publisher Henry Luce presaged in 1941, significant evidence in support of "the American century."<sup>3</sup>

Like in the United States in the 1950s, increased disposable incomes, new technologies and products, and a return of plenty pressed French attention inward to lives of consumption and family life.<sup>4</sup> Domestically, France saw a return to a new normalcy where mass consumption and availability of new goods and services reemerged. It was also a moment when everyday life changed drastically with an increase in the number of cars on the streets, an explosion of new buildings in a modernist style, rock n roll and pop music, post-modernist fashions and home décor, and the gradual introduction of television.<sup>5</sup> Many French people saw the 1950s as a refreshing time after the ravages and shortages of war. The quality of life in France improved, which seemed to come significantly from America, as seen through the bombardment of American products and concepts in France at the time. However, there were attempts to take up American products and ideas and make them into a French mold.<sup>6</sup> Further, there was still anxiety within broader society and French popular culture about the rapid changes that appeared to be American in nature, such as the prevalence of automobiles, the creation of manicured communities, and the automation of work and life.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Henry Luce coined the phrase "the American century" in a *Life* magazine editorial on February 17, 1941, as a way to describe how and why America should play an active role around the world in spreading democracy, capitalism, and freedom.

<sup>4</sup> Kristen Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Jouin, *Une liberté toute neuve: Culture de masse et esthétique nouvelle dans la France des années 50* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1995); Rod Kedward, *La Vie en Bleu: France and the French Since 1900* (London: Allen Lane, 2005). Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1993); Rebecca Pulju, "Consumers for the Nation: Women, Politics, and Consumer Organization in France, 1944-1965," *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2006): 68-90; and Rebecca Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Kuisel, *Seducing the French*.

<sup>7</sup> Film director Jacques Tati was one prominent critic of rapid French modernization that mirrored life in America. In his 1958 film *Mon Oncle*, Tati provides a contrasting view of the warm, comforting, personal

As France retreated to domestic comforts, there were important efforts abroad to shore up French national pride in light of France's diminished place on the world stage. In general, the French government and people looked positively on the United States, but America's lack of support in Indochina and Algeria proved to be problematic.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, on top of being caught in the middle of the ideological battle between America and the Soviet Union, France's global position was weakened by several international failures: a devastating defeat in Indochina in 1954, an attempted war (alongside Israel and Britain) in 1958 to regain control of the Suez Canal from Egypt,<sup>9</sup> and an escalating crisis in Algeria. In May 1958, the situation in Algeria was so dire that many in the French government were willing to give up the fight, but French colonists in Algeria helped overthrow the French government to put Charles de Gaulle back in charge of the country. De Gaulle's forcible reentry into French politics in 1958 ushered in a new era of a strong French executive who was fixated on never abandoning Algeria and restoring French honor in the world at all costs, even if it meant continuing a war that could never be won in Algeria. Politically, then, France was on uneasy footing with its former elevated status having been diminished, but French leadership toward the end of the 1950s and in the early 1960s, fought tooth and nail to make the French presence in the world known.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, external forces in France and the United States—France's crumbling empire, and America's anxious postwar rise in power and prestige on the world stage *vis-à-vis* France, and America's worry over the communist threat and anxiety over a nuclear war with the Soviet Union—contributed to a wide-reaching interior-focused conservatism that emphasized a strong family unit comprised of a strong, masculine working husband and a caring, submissive wife-mother-housekeeper. In both countries, effectively burying many of the advances and contributions women made during and immediately after the war, mass media purported women's primary role as attending to family and home while consuming on behalf of the family, which, by extension, helped build and maintain the modernity and prosperity of the nation.

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traditional life of old world France with the cold, detached, and impersonal life of the modern France being built in the 1950s that valued automation and technology.

<sup>8</sup> The United States criticized France for not recognizing the independence movements, but there was still concern about the rise of communism in Indochina, so the United States provided some assistance, but not enough to maintain France's colonial power.

<sup>9</sup> The United States, Soviet Union, and United Nations forced them to withdraw.

<sup>10</sup> Pierre Jouin, *Une liberté toute neuve: Culture de masse et esthétique nouvelle dans la France des années 50* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1995), p. 18.

Within this general context at the time of the wide-reaching popularity of glossy magazines in both countries, this chapter takes up three important themes that work through many of the cultural and societal issues within and between France and the United States.

In the first theme, “The American Woman’s Good Life,” as also seen in the immediate postwar period, French magazines in the 1950s admired the independent American woman. However, unlike the use of representations of the American woman after World War II to sort through which path to take to rebuild France (the American way rooted in consumerism or the traditional French way of life), the American woman that was represented in this period served to more explicitly align the French woman’s life with that of the American woman. Of course, these representations came with significant criticism of the American woman and her way of life along the way, such as the American women’s unhappy life based on narcissistic consumerism and alienating independence, which propped up the French woman’s good life. Nevertheless, as Susan Weiner writes on *Elle* magazine in the 1950s, the American woman was a symbol of a better life for French women in politics and at home. The American woman, and by extension, American society, was “a model society where the housewife was respected and as a result content with her lot.”<sup>12</sup> One important person in exalting the American woman for French audiences was Françoise Giroud, a journalist and interim editor for *Elle* magazine until 1953 when she formed the news magazine *L’Express* with Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber. In November and December 1952, before her departure from her full-time position at *Elle*, Giroud traveled to New York to follow the everyday life of American women from various walks of life, which was presented in a well-photographed and detailed 10-part article series. Weiner and other scholars such as Kristin Ross, Victoria de Grazia, and Rebecca Pulju who assess French magazine interest in the American woman in the 1950s do not analyze this series of articles.<sup>13</sup> As such, this chapter’s first theme examines Giroud’s series carefully, which helps show how a French magazine worked to inspire French admiration for the American woman’s condition and how looking at her could implicitly help the French contend with their continuing gender troubles. Despite the American woman’s actual unequal status at the time, Giroud builds an

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<sup>12</sup> Susan Weiner, *Enfants Terribles: Youth and Femininity in the Mass Media in France, 1945-1968* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance Through Twentieth-century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Kristen Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization And the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); and Rebecca Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France*.

idolized independent American woman who was a tool to keep Frenchwomen's hope for a more equal footing alive.

The second theme, "America's Iconic Frenchwoman," involves American magazines' admiration for the Frenchwoman's femininity, which propped up a conservative notion of American womanhood focused on family and home in the service of men. Drawing from the appeal of an upper crust, fashionable Parisian woman, American magazines' images and text crafted an iconic Frenchwoman who served as an example of how to be a proper, beautiful, well-to-do woman who knew her place within the home and providing for her family. Yet at the same time of being an ideal for beauty and domesticity, the Frenchwoman gave lessons opposing conservative gender norms. That is, within broader American culture at the time, Frenchwomen like the bombshell film star Brigitte Bardot were admired and popular because they were sexy, provocative, playful, and seemingly always available to men. Just as Susan Douglas writes of the contradictory messages to and about women in the American media in the 1950s (and since that time), American women could use the Frenchwoman to learn how to have it all, even if those messages were in conflict with one another.<sup>14</sup> The iconic Frenchwoman could teach American women how to be proper housewives, beautiful, excellent cooks, and sexy; they also served as pleasurable eye candy in magazines for heterosexual American men and a standard of comparison for these men to evaluate their girlfriends and wives. The literature tends to focus on the image of American women in American media's providing contradictory messages in 1950s America, but the Frenchwoman, too, played her part in this process, which shows how the American imagined national community was partially defined and shaped by looking to women—French women in particular—outside the imagined national community that magazines built.<sup>15</sup>

The third and last theme, "American Women's Liberation in France," reveals how American magazines planted seeds of hope for American women that positive, liberating change would come in having a more equal and fulfilling life as men, as seen through the success of the independent American woman in France.<sup>16</sup> This theme is important to explore, as the 1950s was

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<sup>14</sup> Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are* (New York: Times Books, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> I do not mean to insinuate that Frenchwomen are the *only* external source of imagining a gendered imagined national community in America in the 1950s. Rather, I am drawing attention to the fact that looking to the media's use of women from outside the American national community is underanalyzed and needs more discussion.

<sup>16</sup> American magazines often gave mixed messages to women to be a good housewife-mother and go out to obtain a quality education and job. Therefore, examining how American magazines used American women's

a moment when American travel and study in France rebounded, particularly by university students on their “junior year abroad.” Many American magazines closely looked to the American woman’s experience in France, which showed how American women felt they could break from constraints placed on them at home. Further, these women’s experiences implicitly served to inspire other American women to want to break free from their constraints, either through similar travels or studies abroad or through the act of thinking about (and possibly acting on) the situation they found in the lives around them when they read the various magazine features. As Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique* describes in detail about 1950s magazines, many articles, images, and advertisements worked to lock women within the conservative gender ideal of a housewife-mother.<sup>17</sup> However, articles showing American women’s adventures in their studies and travels in France conflicted with this by trying to inspire independence, personal growth, and academic and professional achievement. Articles and images following American women abroad showed how they were empowered by going to France. In particular, American magazines highlighted various language, confidence, and career benefits bestowed upon American women who made the voyage across the Atlantic. Like American magazines’ use of the Frenchwoman to provide the contradictory message about how to be a respectful and sexy woman, stories of American women’s travels to France worked to nudge American girls and women to be independent and build their careers despite broader messages telling them to follow the wife-mother-housekeeper path. This falls in line with recent scholarship on the importance of France as a destination for American women to flourish and grow, but what is lacking in this scholarship is how magazines played an important part in appealing to American women to take up the challenge to find their independence in and through France; more specifically, how American magazines may have appealed to everyday American women who could not afford to go abroad to France, but had dreams of doing so.<sup>18</sup>

This chapter takes up each of these themes in turn by detailing representative magazine articles and images of American and French women and how they worked through the condition

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experiences in France to encourage women to develop themselves personally and professionally outside the bounds of being a housewife-mother is significant to see how women’s rights and independence were gradually incorporated and accepted more into popular discourse.

<sup>17</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1963).

<sup>18</sup> Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *Dreaming in French: The Paris Years of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Susan Sontag, and Angela Davis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Whitney Walton, *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890-1970* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2010).

of women in France, maintained conservative gender norms in the United States, and inspired American women's independence. Moreover, always keeping the concept of national social comparison in mind, through the key representations discussed at length, one sees the continued important mutual regard France and the United States had for each other—and ultimately themselves—through their popular magazines' comparisons of each other's women.

### **The American Woman's Good Life**

In late 1952, Françoise Giroud, one of the first co-editors of *Elle* magazine and one of France's most prolific writers, politicians, and public intellectuals after World War II through her death in 2003 (especially about women's issues and the place of France in the world), wrote an important ten-part article series on the American woman during a five-week "voyage en Amérique."<sup>19</sup> Her trip brought her mostly to New York City and a few locations along the East Coast, but she used her trip to observe the American woman more generally and to answer several questions that presumably faced many French readers at the time: "Are American women in particular happier than French women? Do we have something to borrow from them in their way of living, thinking, doing dishes, building a career or making believe that they are beautiful? Is it dangerous, desirable, or impossible that American civilization overruns not only our foods and clothes closets, but also our values?"<sup>20</sup>

Giroud's questions are very revealing especially in their display of national social comparison at work. Giroud's query implies French ambivalence about their own position in the world, and to gauge where and how France and the French woman's life ranked, Giroud made it her job as a journalist to carefully compare life for French woman to that of the American woman and life in the United States more generally. Further, within her questions, one sees how Giroud hints at her and readers' sense of anxiety about America's overreach in the world and whether or not the "American way," as seen through the American woman, could actually benefit or improve life in France. To answer her questions and to work through the French woman's anxiety about her and her nation's place in the world, Giroud presents what she

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<sup>19</sup> For details on Giroud's importance for France and French women, see Henri Fabre, *Les Françaises: de la Libération aux libérations* (Toulouse, France: Privat, 2002), p. 129.

<sup>20</sup> Françoise Giroud, "Françoise Giroud en Amérique (2)," *Elle*, November 10, 1952, p. 20. All translations from French into English are mine, unless noted otherwise.



describes as “typical” American women in weekly installments, roughly in the order in which she met the women during her trip. Each of Giroud’s articles focused on a specific American woman type to give readers a broad-spectrum view of American life. Each feature, in addition to describing the intimate details of each type of woman’s everyday life, provides vivid snapshots for French readers to visually emphasize various aspects of the American woman’s life.

Figure 2.2 presents a summary of the eight American women types that Giroud featured and discussed with depth. Closely analyzing Giroud’s eight types of American women not only reveals what Giroud codifies as “typical” American women for French readers’ minds, but it also shows how she used each type of American woman to work through broader questions about France’s place in a new world order and way of life after World War II, which was heavily influenced by the United States.

**Figure 2.2**  
**Françoise Giroud’s Eight Types of American Women**

<b>Issue Date</b>	<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Representative American Woman Type</b>
Nov 10, 1952	Betsy, drugstore waitress Norma, aspiring model	Young, unmarried, rural American women going to the city to make it big
Nov 17, 1952	Dorothy Roberts	Housewife-mother
Nov 24, 1952	Allyson Terry	Young aspiring career woman
Dec 1, 1952	Eleanor Lambert Kay Brown	Successful career women
Dec 8, 1952	Jane Owens	Artist-intellectual
Dec 15, 1952	Dorothy MacDonald	Industrious, hardworking secretary/career woman
Dec 22, 1952	Emily MacLaughlin	Aspiring actress
Jan 5, 1953	Mia	America’s Future: The young American school girl

Giroud’s attempt to answer questions about American women’s happiness is important for close examination since her articles in *Elle* were closely followed by French readers in the early 1950s. Giroud was a popular journalist more generally, but she was especially followed after her controversial and provocative 1951 *Elle* article “Is the Frenchwoman clean?,” which detailed Frenchwomen’s habits of cleaning body and home. According to Kristen Ross, Giroud’s piece on cleanliness showed a broader postwar French desire to achieve symbolic catharsis through physical cleanliness at a time when France was still overcoming German occupation, facing an imploding colonial empire abroad, modernizing itself through new modes of production, and having a more interior-focused and consumer-driven life in the home.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Françoise Giroud, “La Française est-elle propre?” *Elle*, October 22, 1951, pp. 14-16.

Moreover, Giroud, like *Elle* co-founder H el ene Gordon-Lazareff, found America to be a way for France to get out of its “rut.”<sup>22</sup> In her in-depth look at *Elle* magazine, Susan Weiner observes that Giroud believed that “The French should look to the United States...as a model society where the housewife was respected and as a result content with her lot.”<sup>23</sup> Further, Weiner states that for Giroud, “the qualities of the Eternal Feminine and Modern Woman were in perfect equilibrium in America. Women could achieve in the public sphere and still be housewives who cheerfully performed their ‘ancestral tasks.’”<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, Weiner’s and Ross’ assessments of France in the 1950s do not address Giroud’s American woman series in late 1952 as well as how its focus on the minutiae of the everyday American woman’s life helped French readers better understand themselves and their perceived position in the world.

Ultimately, Giroud used her profiles of the American woman as a way to help Frenchwomen break from their “invisibility as a working member of society...and to imagine the possibility of greater respect.”<sup>25</sup> Further, she detailed typical American women’s lives to answer her larger, pressing questions about whether or not American women are happier and better off than French women, which determined if American or French society was better. By examining Giroud’s intense looks at intimate details of each American woman type’s life, one sees how a popular French woman’s magazine like *Elle* served as a sophisticated conduit of international relations and understanding between the United States and France as well as a framing of the imagined French national community in relation to its American counterpart. Each of Giroud’s installments will be discussed in turn, focusing on where and how the article helped French readers better understand themselves through looking at the life of the American woman. The goal of going through these details is not to exhaust the reader of this dissertation; rather, it is to show how the intricate look at American women through carefully selected images and words subtly allowed French readers look back at themselves and their place in the world.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> As her 2003 obituary in *The Economist* quoted her after her first visit to America after World War II, Giroud was impressed by “the degree of optimism, the exhilaration” she discovered and encountered in the United States that was not found in France. “Fran oise Giroud, a French writer and politician, died on January 19<sup>th</sup>, aged 86,” January 23, 2003, accessed August 11, 2014, [www.economist.com/node/1548599](http://www.economist.com/node/1548599).

<sup>23</sup> Weiner, *Enfants Terribles*, p. 52.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> Analysis of Giroud’s rich details also provides American readers of this dissertation a glimpse into the world of the American woman at that time and how today’s image of the 1950s American woman might be similar to or different to what Giroud observed through French eyes.

*Giroud's Arrival: Setting the American Context for Her Readers*

In her first article of the series, Giroud does not profile a specific American woman, but she provides readers a general context of America at the end of 1952 (Figure 2.3). Although she did not explicitly note this in her piece, Giroud's arrival to America came at a significant time politically and culturally. By 1952, the feminine mystique that Betty Friedan identified a decade later had firmly established itself in American culture and society after the war against Rosie the Riveter was effectively won.<sup>27</sup> For most middle class American women, the life of the housewife-mother saturated mass media, especially magazines, and it was encouraged more generally socially and within societal institutions. Further, in November 1952 when Giroud landed in New York, she saw herself in the midst of the presidential election between Dwight D. Eisenhower, the immediate postwar leader of the Army and the newly formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and Adlai Stevenson, the intellectually minded, divorced governor from Illinois. Eisenhower's landslide election signaled a more conservative, laissez-faire leadership, which brought an end to the twenty-year span of Democratic presidents and a move away from New Deal policies. Given his status as leader of the Army at the end of World War II and his strong family image, Eisenhower was viewed as a strong force to build essential American infrastructure, promote economic prosperity and American business, and fight against the communist threat at home and abroad. Eisenhower represented conservative moderation that would represent and stand in for the American value of the nuclear family, which was and is commonly associated with the conservatism of the 1950s.

Amid this shift in political climate, Giroud's opening article describes her amazement in seeing Americans' fervor around the presidential election, particularly over how the candidate's personal relationships are brought into the mix by women voters. When Giroud arrived to New York, she immediately became engrossed

**Figure 2.3:**  
**Opening to Françoise Giroud's**  
*Amérique* Series



<sup>27</sup> See Susan Douglas's chapter "Mama Said" in *Where the Girls Are*, pp. 43-60.

by the movement of American life and the fanaticism she saw built into the Eisenhower-Stevenson election. In particular, Giroud was mesmerized and abhorred the crying of Mamie Eisenhower after each one of her husband's speeches, which she implied was used as a cheap way to gain sympathy for her husband's cause. Yet, in joining the throngs of spectators around election activities, Giroud was most struck by the large number of "little American women" who left their small provinces in Ohio, Texas, and Massachusetts to come to large cities like New York to make it big. Giroud reminded her French women readers that Paris was cruel and unforgiving, but she found New York to be a sort of "large family" where women came together to help each other to establish their lives. In making such a distinction between the United States and France, Giroud tells her readers that France limited women's opportunities and could ultimately learn from America by relaxing itself when it came to class and other social structures. However, as she noted in nearly every article in her series, Giroud was struck by how strangely gender-divided America was compared to France, which she discovered when she arrived to her first lodging place: Barbizon for Women, a women's-only hotel. To conclude her introductory piece for the longer series, Giroud hints in her final line that the Barbizon symbolized many other differences between American and France that would be revealed throughout her series: "For Women...pour femmes seulement. This time, I'm sure of it: Europe is very far."<sup>28</sup> Such a bold statement at the end of her gateway piece served to entice readers to pick up future issues to learn more about the intriguing and odd life of the American woman. It also encouraged French woman readers to follow Giroud's series to see a world that was vastly different from their own, which could help them better understand themselves, their nation, and their place in the larger world.

*Type 1: "Little American Women" Moving to the Big City*

Giroud's first article on American women mainly follows her interactions with two women who lived in the Barbizon with her: Betsy, a drugstore waitress, and Norma, an aspiring model (Figure 2.4). To Giroud, Betsy and Norma were like many other American women in that they were part of a larger movement of "little American women" who relocated on their own to the big city to make a new life of their own. Right off the bat, Giroud sees her job as a reporter to show a "true" side to American life, and that came much in the way of dispelling the

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<sup>28</sup> Françoise Giroud, "Françoise Giroud en Amérique," *Elle*, November 3, 1952, p. 44.

stereotypical French image of the American woman, which she describes as the “blond woman with long legs that one tells us in Paris that fill the American streets.”<sup>29</sup> Giroud emphasized that she never met such a mythical creature in the hotel or on the streets. Instead, she found women who had a sense of equality built into them from birth. Further, she observed that all American women had a sense of duty to the community in which they lived, and all were helpful to others. For Giroud, these were all were lessons from which Frenchwomen could learn.

Despite American women’s seeming community-oriented mentality, though, Giroud was troubled by Americans’ fear of too much communitarianism, which came in the form of communism. In her description of Betsy, the drugstore waitress, Giroud remarked how many young American women described communism akin to a disease that needed to be eradicated. To summarize Betsy’s view of communism, Giroud noted that Betsy believed that “a communist is a man who is discontent with the organization of his country, who wants to upset it by a revolution and prevents” her and others from working hard and getting what they truly want. In Betsy’s case, she wanted a fur coat, a material good that was expensive and all the rage at the moment. However, if there were communism, Betsy felt she would not be able to obtain such a luxury item. In Giroud’s eyes, this average American woman who moved to the big city was hard working and helpful, but she was suspicious of non-market based living, and had a troubling desire to have a materially well off life.

Giroud remarks that Frenchwomen might want similar luxuries as American women, but in America, Frenchwomen would abhor the pressures to conform and follow the life of the herd. Betsy was nonetheless admirable to Giroud because, even with her modest and middle class status, she had a generally happy life and felt a sense of equality ingrained in her from birth. Through Betsy, Giroud saw that American women breathed equality and opportunity, and her

**Figure 2.4:**  
**The Little American Woman in the Big City**



<sup>29</sup> Françoise Giroud, “Françoise Giroud en Amérique (2),” *Elle*, November 10, 1952, p. 21.

life was admirable because she never had to experience misery or humiliation, which explains why Betsy and many other Americans at the time thought communism was stifling to their freedom of choice.

Norma Seway, Giroud's neighbor in the Barbizon Hotel, was similar to Betsy in that she was staunchly anti-communist, conformist, welcoming, and helpful. As soon as she heard that Giroud was a French journalist, Norma told her that she assumed that Giroud was afflicted by communism.<sup>30</sup> What surprised her beyond Norma's ignorant, knee-jerk abhorrence of communism was her dress and cleanliness, which is important to note given Giroud's 1951 article on how Frenchwomen were not clean: "Her skirt and blouse are not of the best taste but, from head to toe, she is clean like almost all of the young women I came across. Rarely pretty, rarely elegant, very rarely seductive, but 'polished.' Not a hair, not an eyelash, not a blackhead. She made me irresistibly think of a completely new, small refrigerator, nicely white, very clean, and very cold." Here, for French readers, American women are portrayed as perfectionists who are unwavering in their views and hygiene practices. In fact, they are so precise that they might be cold and callous in their methodical approach to grooming, and possibly their lives. However, even though Norma was initially frigid toward Giroud's assumed communist disease, once she heard Giroud was looking for work, Norma offered to help Giroud find a job. Giroud, though, revealed that she wanted to become a model, and Norma frankly and directly told her that she was too old, which showed the average American woman's likeable bluntness. Giroud wished Frenchwomen could pick up this cue from time to time for efficiency's sake: "She wasn't mean, Norma, she was even very nice. Only she said things as they are. Subtlety, nuance, one doesn't teach them that. On the other hand, one learns to never waste time and if I would present myself to a modeling agency for models and photographers, she honestly considered that a waste for me."<sup>31</sup>

With Norma's frank advice, Giroud then decided to go to *New York Times*' help wanted section. In so doing, Giroud realized a major difference found in America that she wished could be found in France for French women with respect to opportunities and optimism. As Giroud observed, job descriptions were stated in brief terms that were very optimistic, such as one representative ad she quoted for her readers, "If you are ambitious, optimistic, careful, come

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<sup>30</sup> Giroud, although not proclaiming herself a communist in the article, had very left-leaning views, as she was a prominent member of the left-center French Radical Party.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

work with us.” This independence of American women and the environment of social and economic mobility was what Giroud wanted to see in France. For her French readers, Giroud painted America to be the land of dreams for women to remake themselves by moving to the city and working hard like Betsy and Norma. They might not necessarily make it big or be able to be the flashiest women, but they were able to have a comfortable life with the choice to make something of their lives.

Despite the American woman’s freedoms, Giroud showed the troubling constraints in American women’s lives created by the separation of sexes and the over-presence of rules between American men and women in certain spaces, as seen in the Barbizon Hotel for Women. Men had to wait downstairs for women to arrive, and those women who did not date made it abundantly clear that they did not need men in their lives. Giroud explained to her French women readers that the separation of the sexes was demoralizing to American women, as it made some women overly anxious and others staunchly anti-man. As such, Giroud felt out of place with her French view that men and women should mingle and converse more easily and openly. As a result, Giroud found it amazing that in a world where a small-town girl could make friends and find a job in New York City within forty-eight hours, women still faced stifling Victorian social mores, which implicitly would make French readers proud in their more advanced ability to handle relations between men and women.

Overall, in her first American woman profile on the brave American woman from the country who moved to the city, Giroud makes the life of the little American woman out to be great and even better than that of the Frenchwoman. Yet, as Giroud hints toward the end of her piece, the higher a woman goes up the social ladder through her hard work, the greater her relative dissatisfaction: “Betsy the waitress, Norma the model...are more happy, more gay than their French sisters. I discovered that contrary to what one sees in Europe, the more one rises in the social ladder, the less happy women are and the less their way of life seems to me—relatively—enviable.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, the little American woman’s life was happier than the Frenchwoman’s life, but there were more nuanced layers of unhappiness that emerged when success failed to meet American women’s expectations of a better life on the top. This unhappiness is progressively made clear in Giroud’s presentation of the next three women types: the housewife-mother, the aspiring career woman, and the successful career woman.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

### Type 2: Housewife-Mother

In her second profile, Giroud follows Mrs. Dorothy Roberts, a housewife and mother of three, to show *Elle's* readers how 32 million American housewives live (Figure 2.5).<sup>33</sup> By indicating that all American housewives have a life like Dorothy Roberts, Giroud immediately gives a strong statement to readers: regardless of actual socioeconomic and other differences, the life and material well-being of this family comes to represent *the* typical middle class American family. Additionally, the American housewife, as seen through Dorothy Roberts, comes to stand in for all American families due to her supposed archetypal status and experiences. Giroud's making this broad statement is problematic in many obvious ways, but the main and most troublesome issue is that her generalization from a middle-to-upper-class white American woman's experience could stamp a certain perspective for French magazine readers on what life was "really" like for housewives and mothers in America.

**Figure 2.5:**  
**American Housewife-Mother**



To summarize Dorothy's life in the title of her article, Giroud stresses three points about the typical American housewife-mother: she is shameful of being in a bad mood, prepares dinner in 15 minutes, and makes her guests do dishes. Here, the first item in the list alludes to the American woman's desire for conformity by maintaining an outward appearance of happiness at all costs. To be a proper American housewife-mother means keeping any sense of "moodiness"

<sup>33</sup> Françoise Giroud, "Françoise Giroud en Amérique (3)," *Elle*, November 17, 1952, p. 20. The entire article runs pp. 20-21, 51.



buried away from anyone's view. For Giroud, and as Simone de Beauvoir and eventually Betty Friedan would agree, such happiness at all costs, even at the expense of deluding oneself, was harmful to women who would then carry a heavy emotional burden. The second item reveals Giroud's admiration for American efficiency and modern technology; at the same time, though, coming from a French perspective, making dinner in fifteen minutes would be a shock since it would turn one of the sacred moments of the French day into a sprinted, mechanized task that went against French traditions of enjoying and savoring food—even the slow process of cooking. The last item is most likely included for shock purposes. In the French cultural setting, guests are not expected to take care of any of the logistics of a meal. In France, to make a guest clear away and do dishes would be seen as rude; whereas, in America, helping out is often a way to show your appreciation for your host's hard work and to not burden your host too much. Ultimately, Giroud uses these three bullet points as tactics to entice readers to read more about the typical American housewife-mother's life and all of its wonders and shocks that would be elicited among French readers pondering on American life and culture at the time.

To provide her readers context about American housewife-mothers at the start of her article, Giroud notes that a majority of American women work, but of the 35 million married women, only 5 million work. Giroud explains that this is the case because it is very expensive to have live-in maids or domestic workers, so married women and mothers take on caring for the house and children as their career. Further putting Dorothy's economic situation in context for her French readers, she notes that if Dorothy were in France, she would have domestic services every day of the week. However, Dorothy only had a "housekeeper" come once per week due to the expensive cost of living in the States. Based on this, and troublingly so, Giroud calls the Roberts family an average American family; however, the Roberts were in reality, far from average. They owned an apartment in New York and had a house forty-five minutes away in the countryside, between which they went back and forth on weekends. Contradicting herself somewhat later in the article, Giroud refers to Dorothy as bourgeois if she were in France, but Dorothy nonetheless represents the typical American woman to Giroud not because of her economic situation but due to her average appearance: "She is rather representative of the average woman in the sense that she doesn't possess an exceptional beauty, nor a vocation, nor a particular gift, nor a devouring passion."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

The lack of supposed talent, thus, for Giroud is an explanation for why the everyday American mother's unsatisfying life consists of constantly going from one place to another to drop off and pick up children and tend mainly to domestic chores. As Giroud states on the American woman's main preoccupation in life: "Raising young children is the number one problem that faces American women. Factories, big companies, certain public services have organized daycares perfectly kept up. However, Dorothy was, before the birth of her son, a secretary for a newspaper's management. She had to give up working."<sup>35</sup> Therefore, contrary to the American woman fresh to the city, the image of the suburban wife that Giroud paints for French readers is one where the American woman sacrifices everything in her own professional development to take on the responsibility for caring for the family and home. This, to Giroud, is the opposite of independence, even if the American woman is advantaged in her possession of technology. Even if many French women readers were in the same position at the time, Giroud's depiction of the American housewife's misery might serve as a wake-up call because of the critical distance created by the representation of another woman in another cultural context.

Figure 2.6:  
American Housewife-Mother's Routine



<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

Giroud was intrigued by Dorothy's every day and weekly routine, which, to her, revealed the curiously highly budgeted, planned, and efficient American woman's life (Figure 2.6). The detailed images and their accompanying captions break down Dorothy's everyday life in caring for family and home. Like a textbook for French women readers, these minute details of how the American housewife-mother cared for her children and home provided an educative window onto the world of American living and its underlying cultural values of machine-like punctuality and efficiency. Monday and Tuesday were Dorothy's washing days, which, as Giroud explains in her text, was made very easy by using fancy machines and materials made of Nylon to reduce drying and ironing. When she was not washing clothes or linens, Dorothy occupied herself with the youngest children who were at home with her during the day. As a way to train them as young adults, Dorothy, as she is pictured, made her children make up their beds and clean their rooms. To be as efficient as possible while maintaining calm in the house, she let the children play outside while she prepared the house. If not, another machine, the television, was used as the "savior" of the house to lure her children's attention away from making a mess. Lunch, which was never cooked (because there was never enough time), consisted of items like milk, spreads and breads, cold chicken, dates, and fruits, and was served in a rush before heading to school at noon in the car. When school was over, Dorothy ran around again in her car to retrieve the children, prepare their snacks, wash the dishes, bathe the children, and prepare dinner before picking up her husband. Because of this intense schedule, Françoise realized why American women were not the most fashionable and were always tired compared to French women: "I understand now why she doesn't wear nail polish and why she wears her 36 years well. Despite the care that the most indifferent American women take automatically to the subject of their beauty, their skin, their hair, they are generally marked because they have to go everyday above their fatigue."<sup>36</sup> Further, still, having alone time with her husband is a near impossibility because of the high cost of paying student babysitters and the lack of a governmental family subsidy program. Thus, through the minute details in text and print, Giroud makes her French readers vividly imagine Dorothy's fatigue by bringing them right into the American woman's highly scheduled, fatiguing, and busy life. The luxurious, materially happy life of the American woman is in question due to the cracks behind the façade of the supposedly happy, smiling housewife-mother living in the decadent American suburbs.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

To conclude her profile of the typical housewife-mother, Giroud directly poses the broader question spanning her entire article series, which is begged by the tiring details readers come to learn of Dorothy's everyday existence: "Is Dorothy happy?" For Giroud, Dorothy's life, despite having a larger budget than a Frenchwoman of the same social class, is not as good as that for a French woman, as she notes:

Dorothy Roberts lives in rather less agreeable conditions and in a house where the floors, windows, ambient disorder would bring despair to any of our housewives. I only saw "maintained" interiors in very rich environments. It's maybe a little simple ideal...It's maybe a luxury to which future generations will be insensitive...But I admit that I would more voluntarily eat on an American woman's head than on her rug.<sup>37</sup>

Here, Giroud, while continuing to admire the physical cleanliness of the American woman in a humorous manner, states that the American woman's materially comfortable life is not what the advertisements and movies at the time made them out to be. In reality, the average American housewife's life is a mixed bag, and a large part of her problems come from avoiding the problems before her in her everyday life. That is, Giroud notes that despite her appearance of smiles, as seen across all of the images depicting her life, Dorothy lives a "happy" life since she avoids conflict at all costs on the exterior. This, in turn, makes the American housewife-mother's life unbearable: "Painful passivity will not take more than the silk linen. Suffering is suspect. The anguish, anxiety, issues that the less subtle European sometimes arises about the meaning of life, the 'state of mind,' everything could be called, in short, metaphysical anxiety is a state reviled by the average American woman."<sup>38</sup>

Dorothy, thus, unlike her French and European sisters, stamps out any sign of sadness or displeasure in the name of outward happiness to keep stability in the home and within the family. Giroud simplifies American women's aversion to emotional turmoil through by saying that it was similar to the division between European intellectualism and American pragmatics. That is, between the battle of thought and action, American women choose action to swiftly avoid bad humor to avoid languishing in their issues whereas the French woman would face her problems head-on. To make this metaphor concrete for French women readers, Giroud uses an example of Dorothy going to great lengths to buy a new, special cream to get rid of a pimple that just emerged. Giroud observed that American women like Dorothy typically tried to find quick fixes to eschew their malaise, but these quick fixes often were unsatisfactory and unfulfilling. In

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

short, the American housewife-mother kept herself taxingly busy and obsessed with quick fixes to live a myth of American happiness that maintained an outward appearance of radiance and happiness at the prime of their lives when, in fact, they are very much unhappy and feeling entrapped.

### *Type 3: Young Aspiring Career Woman*

The third type in Giroud's America series introduced readers to the life of Alyson Terry, a saleswoman at a New York Lord and Taylor Department store who represented the ideal American woman, at least in age, responsibility, and opportunity (Figure 2.7). Just as she had done for all of the other American women featured earlier in the series, before introducing the details of Alyson's everyday life and work, Giroud makes an overall observation about the American woman's life. In Alyson's case, Giroud's commentary touched upon age and gender in postwar America. In particular, the life of the young, twenty something American woman like Alyson was seen as the ideal since her life seemed to be full of opportunity, material wealth, confidence, and happiness: "If I were 20 years old, I would like to be an American woman. It's the glorious age for women in this country. Little ladies well nourished, adolescents liberated from all awkwardness, shyness, they become all assured young women to act naturally and with simplicity in all occasions."<sup>39</sup> Additionally, American women in their twenties have the entire world tailored for them: "They have a fashion to them, periodicals for them, clubs, distractions, relationships, an entire universe matched to their age."<sup>40</sup> Further, still, the youthful American woman supposed lives a life of ease, free of worry, especially since work is supposedly done for pleasure: "Lastly, they don't wage any struggle against their family for learning a job, for applying it, for leaving the house as soon as they are capable of supporting themselves. Work is never in their country a painful obligation, but a means, sometimes a goal and in all cases a satisfaction."<sup>41</sup> However, the young American woman's life is not ideal forever, as Giroud hints by alluding to a darker time to come for the American woman as she ages: "They [the young American woman] still have light in their eyes. Later on, they will be made of lead. They are wise. Later one day, they will be cold. They are firm in their words, in their behavior, in their

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<sup>39</sup> Françoise Giroud, "Françoise Giroud en Amérique (4)," *Elle*, November 24, 1952, p. 40.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

wishes. Later on they will be hardened.”<sup>42</sup> The next profile of an American woman type, the career woman, reveals the underbelly of the older, successful American woman’s life, but for Giroud’s presentation of Alyson’s life, the youthful American woman’s life is viewed as ideal, even if Giroud focuses only on a specific type of youthful American woman. The issues and struggles of rural, minority, and average-looking American women are avoided in order to gloss a rosy picture of the doted young American woman. It is important, thus, to see how and why Alyson exemplifies the golden age of youth for American women, which gave French readers an overly idealized image of a pampered and spoiled creature.

In following Alyson Terry’s life, French readers learn that a large portion of it surround her work in the petite dress women’s section of Lord and Taylor. Overall, as Giroud directly observes, Terry’s life is much different from a French saleswoman in the same position from the perspective of her budget and what she does. To explain how her life is different, Giroud painstakingly details and follows Alyson’s every move throughout her day, just as she had done in her thick description of the housewife-mother’s life. French women learn that Terry wakes up every morning at 8am and drinks a glass of milk before she jumps up to wash her face with soap and water. She has to be to work by 9:25 a.m., and although she does not have to worry about wearing the same make-up each day, she must pay careful attention to her dresses since she cannot wear the same outfit two days in a row, which is “bad” in America since it is a “sign of negligence, pessimism, and indifference toward your work and colleagues.”<sup>43</sup> Giroud, then, wants her French readers to see that the young American woman is industrious, but she is part of a vain culture that obsesses with material abundance and blending in with the crowd.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 42.



From Giroud's perspective, Alyson's life, and by extension the young American woman's life is easy and taken care of for her. Her work at Lord and Taylor is straightforward, but quite busy. In her job, women who shop already have made their choices based on their reading magazines and advertisements before coming into the store. At work, Alyson seems to have it made, too. Lunch is covered by a small sum in the store café to grab whatever she likes among ham, sausages, steaks, ice creams, coffee, and juices. She has the possibility to stop in the hairdressers on another floor during her lunch hour, and she always can stop in a comfortable sitting room to put on lipstick, wash her hands, and tidy up before returning to work. Further, still, Alyson has a break, for a half hour, around 3 p.m., where she can have a coffee and cigarette before she is released from work at 5:30 p.m. where she promptly returns home to bathe and be ready to have dinner with one of her boyfriends. To make do, similar to French women, Alyson lives with two store colleagues and a fourth woman, a student. Giroud points out that like many American women at the time, if they did not live together, it would not be possible for them to afford their monthly rent. Even though the apartment was "modest," Giroud made special note that there was a private bathroom in the apartment along with a telephone and refrigerator, which, according to French standards, was luxurious and quite high tech.

Despite some of Giroud's accolades for the young American woman's life, Giroud was keen to note for French women that young American women like Alyson were anxious and stressed over their only apparent goal: marriage. No matter the type of woman, "the sentimental, the ambitious, the good girl, the flirt, they have all a dream that they have well decided to actualize: find a husband and have kids."<sup>44</sup> All around her, Giroud saw American women hunting far and wide for a husband during their frequent dates among the boys and men they encountered through work, colleagues, and friends.<sup>45</sup> Ultimately, Giroud saw the power between the sexes in American women's hands since there are "ferocious laws" that protected women against men, which seemed to frustrate men who often had to resort to alcohol to put up with the games American women played with them. As Giroud explains more explicitly, "They [American women] do not throw themselves to the first [man] who comes because they tell

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Giroud noted in particular for her French readers that American women typically go on two or three dates a week, and in the business-minded American way, the women economized by coordinating these efforts by having a communal party from time to time.



themselves that the second might be better.”<sup>46</sup> Despite this constant dating, compared to the experience for French women, Giroud saw a lack of drama in American culture between men and women since many laws were in American women’s favor. For example, Giroud explains that if an American woman claims a man is the father of her child, the burden is placed on the man; the children will take the father’s name and the mother will receive child support (this was not the case in France, apparently). Whether or not Alyson’s drama-less experiences with dating were the reality for all American women is not taken up by Giroud, who ultimately strengthened the French trope of the spoiled young American woman.

In examining Alyson’s quest to find a husband, Giroud shows how the American woman’s quest to find a man might be easier than the French woman’s because the social hierarchy was apparently more relaxed. The two suitors Alyson dated included a cadet at West Point and a physicist. Giroud, anticipating her readers’ intrigue about Alyson’s relationship with physicist, explains this odd pairing in an analogy that her French readers would understand: “I don’t know if you know many young scientists who have simply a 4 cylinder and take out a saleswoman from Printemps to dinner and dancing two or three times a week for the only pleasure of her conversation...” In this case, Giroud observes class and education differences between America and France. In France, a saleswoman from Printemps, a popular department store in Paris, is viewed to have nothing in common with an educated scientist. The life of the shopkeeper is distant from that of a scientist in France, whereas in America, men and women easily marry across social and economic strata, which evidences the continuous mobility of American life, particularly in one’s social station, that Giroud desired and wanted to see in France.

Thus, Giroud builds a positive image of the American twenty something’s good life. Alyson’s life is rooted in the American Dream, a mix of naivety, dreams, and hopes for a better future: “Yes, it’s good to be a young girl of 20 years here, to have this naive faith in the future, this conscience in her work where she is respected.”<sup>47</sup> However, Alyson’s life seems to be missing something, as Giroud implies in describing her empty goals and hobbies outside of her hard work at Lord and Taylor: “Outside of her work and jazz recitals, she only interests herself in marriage. She doesn’t read, she rarely goes to the movies, and never goes to the theater. Her

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

friends don't either." Alyson's life ambitions are chained to the quest for marriage, which Giroud finds troubling, especially since it leaves Alyson deprived of more intellectual endeavors that Giroud's French readers might find shocking as well.

Another problem in Giroud's mind was the limits to Alyson's rise in life and its accompanying happiness. To Giroud, Alyson's eventual climb up the economic and social ladder as well as the inevitable forces of age would only lead to an unhappy life: "In twenty-five years, Terry will be maybe one of the women that holds the gigantic fashion industry in her hands, makes impressive fashion collections, but has a broken stomach because for years she ate too fast, who doesn't know the weight of a man's look, and who, from time to time, remembers that among other well off people, she has a husband. But like her jewels, she is insured against theft."<sup>48</sup> The life of the young American woman, thus, was rooted in the quest for a husband and a successful career if that was possible, which ultimately only led to misery in Giroud's eyes. The American woman does not see it that way, at least on the surface, since she ran after what she wanted all along. However, through Giroud's observations, French readers, despite seeing images of the happy, materially comfortable, and busy life of the young American saleswoman might conclude that such a happy life is only temporary. However, Giroud makes the young American woman's life still seem admirable to French readers because of her opportunities and ambition. But Giroud reminds readers to consider the ultimate purpose and goals that come with the young American woman's freedom. From Giroud's perspective, the American woman had her material and dream-acquiring advantages over the French woman, but her overall mental health was questionable because she took life too fast and did not enjoy the feminine pleasures of life, as is made especially clear in Giroud's next profile on the older successful American career woman whose dedication to her work in her youth brought her to the pinnacle of her professional career, which came with the cost of a cohesive, happy life.

#### *Type 4: Successful American Career Woman and Her Double Life*

Giroud's fifth installment focuses on American women like Alyson who eventually come to succeed in reaching their career dreams. Such "career women," who are distinguished in wealth and determination, carry an air of seriousness in their work and life, but they come to

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

carry on an exhausting “double-life” as an executive during the day and a wife-mother at night.<sup>49</sup> This “army of women” make things happen, but, as Giroud wants her French woman readers to know, it comes at a cost that a large salary and prestige could never pay them. Giroud follows two of these women in particular due to their typical, “total, brilliant” success as career women: Eleanor Lambert and Kay Brown. Both hold important positions in different sectors, but both share pressure to succeed as career women without the encumbrances of femininity and as wives-mothers who can whip up a quaint, enjoyable dinner party like any other typical wife might be expected to do at that time.

Figure 2.8:  
The Double Life of the American Career Woman



Au bureau : femme d'affaires. Miss Lambert, alias Mrs. Berkson, met du temps sans le secouer. Les autres et font toujours son chemin vers à succès, sans être étonnée. Elle a 11 collaborateurs qui l'aident à réaliser un chiffre d'affaires annuel de 100 millions de francs.



Le milieu : femme d'intérieur. Mrs. Berkson, alias Miss Lambert, allume les bougies qui baignent d'une lumière réconfortante le dîner servi par son mari pour leurs deux commensaux. Elle a une femme de chambre, qui représente un spécial luxe à New-York, elle, sans domestique.

“ J'ai vécu la double vie de



Françoise Giroud  
en Amérique (5)

• Depuis son arrivée à New-York, Françoise Giroud nous a entraînés : 1) à l'hôtel pour « dîner sérieux » où elle était descendue pendant quelques jours, au « string-store », où la secrétaire lui a confié sa succession de bouillottes, dans l'intimité des « vingt-cinq heures de la vie d'une famille moyenne américaine » et aussi dans cette de jeunes filles renouées dans le cadre « grand magasin » où elle s'était elle-même engagée pour travailler pendant trois jours. Aujourd'hui, elle nous présente deux types de femmes d'affaires, les « career-women » (2).

(1) Voir ELLE depuis le n° 392.  
(2) Les femmes qui travaillent et qui font une grande carrière.

Quelles que fait comie Eleanor Lambert, Kay Brown et les centaines de « career-women » dans New-York est possible? On voit-elles dès 9 heures du matin, sanglées dans d'irrépressibles tailleurs, chemisettes, vestons, blouses?  
Sans âge, sans pitié, sans migration, elles forment une redoutable armée de femmes sans l'appât de laquelle cela qui veut faire sa place à New-York se brise les reins.  
Chaque d'elles est l'un des millions de la classe d'air avec laquelle elles ont ébranlé leur jeunesse, sur qu'elles gagnent, celui qui elles font gagner.  
C'est vers 13 heures qu'il faut les voir, dans les restaurants élégants de la ville, le Colony, le Pavilion, le Twenty-One. Neuf tables sur dix sont occupées par des femmes qui peuvent sans broncher 2.500 francs au mètre de tissu, deux cravates et un cabot.  
Le plupart ont leur de jeunesse et, en soirée, elles sont pressées.  
Tout le monde est toujours pressé à New-York, et la machine de la ville est constamment malade pour accélérer le rendement, pour épuiser chaque minute. Pourtant les Françaises restent ces occasions de s'implanter parce que dans la machine aveugle on ne peut pas glisser le joint volant. Et parce qu'il est exclu de se faire comprendre à demi-mot, de se faire servir plus vite qu'il n'est permis, de proposer une initiative qui pourrait nuire, pour votre bonheur, le mécanisme qui tourne pour tous.  
A l'heure des Français, les Américaines ont l'argent lent, il ne savent pas compter, mais ils parlent à point. Et vous commencent la fin de l'histoire du livre et de la lecture.

niss Lambert, femme d'affaires

Les « career-women » à l'heure minérale ne s'installent pas, par exemple, quand on leur fait attendre une table pendant 20 minutes. On retient. Et encore cette civilité même, qui sont d'être fait pour le succès dans le meilleur des mondes, cette attitude ne leur serait pas étrangère si elle était évitable.  
Les hommes, ces centaines de femmes tirées à quatre épingles qui se rencontrent chaque jour, de quoi parlent-elles? Elles parlent pour la plupart. Les autres se retrouvent à midi comme on se retrouvait autrefois aux « thé de dames », pour entretenir les relations.  
Elles croquent, s'entendent, des dîners, regardent autour et se retrouvent avec des visages blanchis, des « Quelle joie de vous rencontrer! ». C'est merveilleux de vous voir!... Quel plaisir de vous connaître!...  
Si ce n'est pas sincère, c'est bien limité. Et cette habitude américaine de flâner à tout propos l'atténue satisfaction fait par entre la satisfaction.  
C'est seulement dans les obscures vallées de leur âme que le diable même parvient à passer, dans ces profondeurs rigides du cœur, du corps et de l'esprit où il est impossible de trébucher. Aussi y faites le moins d'impressions possibles et demandez-les à la maison, au travail, voire à l'abord de vous maintenir sur des sommets toujours érodés.  
Toutes ces dames infiniment heureuses de se rencontrer ont quelque chose de précis à se dire et le disent sans préambule, sans détour. Ensuite, s'il leur reste quelques instants, elles s'accordent le droit de pointer. Mais les petites conversations ont un tour précis. Ce sont des

le jour,  
femme du monde  
le soir”

The pressures put on these American career women are seen most clearly in Giroud’s presentation of Miss Lambert (Figure 2.8). Miss Lambert is an ad agent during weekday hours, but evenings and on the weekend, she goes by Mrs. Seymour Berkson, the wife of the General Director of the International News Services. Visually, readers clearly see the taxing nature of the

<sup>49</sup> Françoise Giroud, “Françoise Giroud en Amérique (5),” *Elle*, December 1, 1952, pp. 56-59.

American career woman's maintenance of the separation between her career identity and her wife identity. In the left image of the opening double-page spread, Miss Lambert puts on lipstick at her desk in her military-like dress as she looks rather despondently out the window. On the opposite page, a tired and focused Mrs. Berkson lights a candle at a dinner party. In both cases, empty stares, firm lips, and rooms filled with piles of neatly arranged work or decorations connote a fatigued energy that make French readers question the supposed glamorous life of the American woman at that top. In other words, these images show the serious fatigue that came with being a successful American career woman and her necessity to maintain boundaries between these identities of her life.

In order to give her French readers a sense of Lambert's accomplishments within American culture where men typically held positions of power at that time, Giroud profiles Lambert's history and everyday work. Giroud describes Lambert as carrying "a physique of a grand English woman" with "a purely American soul." Showing her resolve, Giroud notes that Lambert came to New York in 1925 without a penny in her pocket with the goal of becoming an actress. She failed, but she worked her way up the ladder by starting off doing advertisements for art galleries. Through hard work and determination, Lambert built up her career to the point of developing her own agency. At the time of Giroud's writing, Lambert had fourteen collaborators, a "sumptuous office on Fifth Avenue," a car, and a chauffeur.

Because Lambert is an "ideas woman," Giroud explains that she gets paid handsomely. In fact, two of her most famous ideas included the Ten Best Dressed Women List and the Oscars of Couture. She also worked on President Eisenhower's campaign to help make him appealing to American women through the most important qualities Lambert saw in him: "simple, ingenious, and economical."<sup>50</sup> From 8:30am to 7pm each weekday, non-stop meetings with clients take up Lambert's life. As such, Giroud observes that Lambert must work and live like a methodical, efficient machine. Because of this robotic rhythm, Giroud finds American career women like Lambert to be "inhumane" because their lives are strictly programmed and everything is always put together. Further, although Lambert appears to be a fair boss because she pays her staff well, she "doesn't tolerate any faults," just as her clients would not accept anything faulty from her because of the added scrutiny placed on her as a woman in power.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

After her demanding day as “career woman,” Miss Lambert returns home to take on the role of wife, which, as mentioned earlier, requires her to change her name to Mrs. Berkson in deference to her husband. Giroud followed Berkson home for a dinner party where she was able to make observations for her readers about the pressures placed on Giroud. While being impressed that all of the guests ate like kings with luxurious meats, rotisseries, and even oysters, Giroud was keen to see a broader worry in Berkson’s mind about being able to do and have it all in her public and private lives, at least in appearances to her guests. Contrary to what Giroud found in France, American career women like Lambert would torture themselves to play and look the part of the host. As Giroud describes in terms her French women readers would understand,

When she returns tired and a little defeated, at the moment of choosing the dress she would wear, she reacts exactly opposite of a Frenchwoman who, in the same circumstances would tell herself: “Something black, quick my black dress in which I will be relaxed, and that doesn’t oblige me to suck in my stomach. Others can be showy...I will watch.” Rather, Eleanor tells herself: “Quick my red dress, the least comfortable, the boldest, that one that will make me constraint my waist, to overcome my weariness until I forget it. Never become a spectator of life, always an actress.”<sup>51</sup>

In this description, Giroud shows that Lambert/Berkson wears an uncomfortable dress so she can appear successful and “act” the parts she was trying to play in her life—a successful business woman and doting wife who was not going to crack under the weight of balancing these two lives. That is, in Giroud’s eyes, American career women like Lambert/Berkson sacrifice their comfort to maintain their façade of resolution and power and ability to be successful business women: “If Eleanor shows any sign of weakness, she will be swept up and left behind, so she has to make all efforts possible to show her worthiness as a business woman.”<sup>52</sup> Lambert/Berkson’s need to put on a façade at all times when she is on stage before her business colleagues, friends, and family only adds to the impression of a sort of schizophrenic misery that reveals itself in Miss Lambert’s despondent face in the opening photographs of the spread.

The other American career woman, Kay Brown, has a different life than that of Miss Lambert. She is employed and paid richly for her work as an agent for actors and writers. Giroud explains that Miss Brown is the most sought after by starlettes, especially due to her having discovered famous actress Ingrid Bergman. But what makes her well known and popular is her “flair.” Having been invited to one of Kay’s “ultra-elegant” cocktail parties, Giroud

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

entered her Park Avenue apartment in one of New York City's most expensive and famous neighborhoods. To Giroud's surprise, Brown's husband, a renowned lawyer, was the server for the evening, which was a sign of who had the power in this particular relationship. He set the table, made dinner, and served it. After dinner, all of the women retired to the kitchen where they did the dishes to chatter, but throughout the night, no matter what Kay asked for (cigarettes, her bag, the telephone), her husband automatically got up to attend to her needs like a lap dog. Outside of the home, Kay was all business as Mrs. Barrett. But, to Giroud, at home, what might appear to Americans as a "good wife" and a "kind" mother of two who is full of "humanity" and "sensibility," was actually a monster through French eyes: "In Paris, her look, her walk, her tone of speaking to her husband would send shivers down their spine."<sup>53</sup> Thus, from the French perspective, the American career woman's need to be ruthlessly efficient and on her mark to make it in a man's world made her a robot to be feared. Giroud admits that American career women display a remarkable work ethic that is rare among French women. However, Giroud's tone of fear and the selection of images with drained faces insinuate that such success did not mean that French women should become cold, calculating, and unhappy beings like the successful American career woman.

Giroud importantly uses Miss Lambert's and Mrs. Barrett's stories to make broader observations for her readers about the difference between French and American women on the issue of women's power as it related to their happiness. According to Giroud, French women still tried to exercise their power through men, but American women seemed to have an ability to exercise their power on their own. As Giroud explains: "The Frenchwomen have an influence. The American women have power. Those [American women] who hold it [power] have victoriously overcome both dangerous capes: age twenty, or the cape of illusions, the age at which young girls make marriage into a heavenly image of which makes even the most romantic French teenager smile; and age thirty, or the cape of disillusionment, the age when they no longer expect anything from marriage and they despise men not knowing how to dominate."<sup>54</sup> Giroud, thus, explains to French women that the aspiring American career woman's life and quest for power is one of smoke and mirrors that ultimately turns to disillusionment. In fact, the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 58. In French, Giroud refers to *cape*, which can refer to the geographic term in English for a *cape*, a large mass of land that juts into a body of water and indicates a change in the shoreline. An alternative translation could be *point*. In all cases, the word insinuates a remarkable instance that presents a distinctive moment of change.

grandeur of the American career woman's life that brings power, perceived prestige, and money may not be worth it. Like her piece overall, Giroud describes the American career woman's life to be a "tragic spectacle." America did not pardon the female winners of success like Miss Lambert and Miss Brown who were under constant scrutiny and pressure to adhere to elevated standards for women. The American career woman had to always act and adhere to what was expected of her when she is "front stage"—fiercely accurate businesswoman by day, and caring and organized wife by night—which kept her from being who she truly was and wanted to be.<sup>55</sup> In other words, the "double life" of the successful American career woman where one was always driven to appear and be perfect (yet never having the possibility to actually feel adequate and happy) undermined the glamour of the American career woman's life, which elevated the less powerful but more enriching life of the Frenchwoman with a better balance between independence and dependence and masculinity and femininity.

#### *Type 5: The Artist-Intellectual*

Contrary to the constrained double life of the American career woman, for the artist-intellectual like Jane Owens, window display maker for New York's clothing stores, one has the life of one of the "most spoiled children of the American paradise" (Figure 2.9).<sup>56</sup> The artist-intellectual woman is free from many of the constraints of work, marriage, and children that seem to plague other American women types, and although Owens had been married for eight years, she divorced to live a life relatively free of most of American society's conventions. On the outside, Owens' life seems very bohemian and carefree, but from what Giroud observes, she is actually a very serious worker who is exact, precise, efficient, and focused on her creative and intellectual development. As such, for Giroud, Owen takes a stance on money and material possessions that is much different from most American women she met:

Where she differs from the mass [of American women] to approach a relatively restrained group, it's in how she makes use of her money. She drives an old car that she bought, used...; savage or platinized furs leave her cold; she doesn't have a night gown but she pays for a long trip to Europe each year. She knows all of the museums of France, Spain, Italy, and got me stuck when talking about paintings that one sees in the Louvre.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> The term "front stage" comes from Erving Goffman's *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), which refers to the way in which humans actively work to maintain a certain image to others, mainly in public, that coincides with the expectations placed on them in society.

<sup>56</sup> Françoise Giroud, "Françoise Giroud en Amérique (6)," *Elle*, December 8, 1952, pp. 47-49, 53.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

Here, French readers learn that the artist-intellectual woman in America, despite her focus on productive work for material gain, does not let materiality overtake her life. Rather, she economizes so she can experience the world and focus her energies on learning. This life and work of the mind allows Jane to excel, but that means that many Americans distrust her due to her smarts, which Giroud finds troubling. To explain this suspicion, Giroud observes Americans' derision for intellectuals by noting words that are commonly used describe them: *eggheads* and *highbrows*. Because Americans are wary of intellectuals and do not typically follow pursuits of the mind like Jane, including reading, Giroud elevates her French women readers by flattering them due to their more cultured and intellectually minded status:

Culture is not as diffuse as in Europe where it isn't rare to find in a humble home a solid library, where the busiest wife always finds time to read, where there is not a gulf between a degreed person and a simple typist, but a small ditch.

One could even say: when a French woman is bored, she reads. When an American woman reads, she's bored.<sup>58</sup>

In this passage, Giroud's description of the American woman as bored is significant, as it promotes the status of French women, as opposed to the seemingly uncultured mass in America.

Giroud did not want to insinuate that there were not any intellectuals in America. Rather, she remarks that they do exist like Jane Owen, but there is "very little interpenetration between 'intellectuals' and others," which builds a great divide between everyday Americans and America's great thinkers and artists.<sup>59</sup> Some examples are exceptions to the rule, such as old professional baseball player Danny Perlmutter who married a student of the arts. Danny became accustomed to the arts and its importance, and as such, he encouraged his wife to take up her talents, which was in making candles that came to have a commercial success. Giroud questions if the typical American commercialization of art suffocates inspiration, creation, and artist serenity. It might, as Giroud saw in Jane's experience where constant unease, worries, and drama came with the continuous hunt for contract work. Giroud notes that while Europeans use desperation for inspiration, Jane quickly "chases her monsters" by seeing a psychoanalyst, a common critique Giroud had about American women who always seemed to seek out others to solve their problems for them when they could solve them on their own if they merely took the time and mental energy to do so.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 52.



Figure 2.9:  
Free-Spirited American Woman



Giroud’s piece on artist-intellectual Jane Owens, therefore, serves as a way for French women to explore and critique America’s lack of intellectualism and the preponderance of materialism in American life and culture. As seen through Jane’s experience, Giroud observed and described the American tendency to commercialize art and intellectual pursuits in addition to focusing on appearances without Americans’ digging below the surface. Fortunately, though, as Giroud concludes, there are smart people who resist commercial temptations and take up more intellectual and cultural pursuits like Professor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. II at Harvard. Giroud explained that American intellectuals like him sought to “elevate” their fellow Americans, but it was constantly a challenge given the enticements of the commercial boom of the 1950s and the rise of the new medium of television. Giroud, being optimistic, considered the rise of television in America as a force to put action to thought in American culture: “There is an efficient action that drives their country. With this regard, TV is not, as many complain, a collective brutishness. It can become a collective brutishness, but in the battle between mediocrity and quality, it doesn’t seem impossible that quality wins it.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, like Jane Owens who was able to balance her creativity and intellectual pursuits with material happiness, Giroud hoped American television might hold the key to elevating Americans to a

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

more French-like state of mind where they were interested in issues beyond base commercial and material concerns.

*Type 6: The Industrious American Secretary*

Moving into the world of television that Giroud alluded to at the end of her profile of the artist-intellectual, the seventh installment of Giroud's "Amérique" series followed Dorothy MacDonald, the secretary to CBS news journalist Edward R. Murrow (Figure 2.10).<sup>61</sup> Giroud uses Dorothy's work in television as an opportunity to explain to French readers about the rising importance of television in American life, which had yet to fully penetrate France. She cites the statistic of 21.6 million TV sets in the United States in December 1952 and 60 million Americans tuning in each night.<sup>62</sup> Although MacDonald is behind the scenes in the television world, Giroud sees MacDonald holding an important place in this rising television world, partly because of the important person for whom she works. At the time of the article's writing, MacDonald had worked at CBS for 7 years, and she noted she liked working for Murrow since he treated her as a human being rather than "a secretary." Unlike other male bosses, MacDonald explained to Giroud that he always introduced guests (important and otherwise) to her, and he incorporated her in more complex tasks than a typical secretary. Dorothy revealed that her dream was to one day become a news editor or archivist for Murrow. Dorothy, thus, represented an American career secretary who was industrious and balanced in her life and who worked toward the greater good in society through the important work in which she found pride. Not all American secretaries had the opportunity to cultivate a career in a burgeoning field and technology that would change American life, but Giroud's look at this American secretary worked to show French readers stark differences in the quality of life and work between the United States and France.

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<sup>61</sup> Françoise Giroud, "Françoise Giroud en Amérique (7)," *Elle*, December 15, 1952, pp. 30-31, 42-43, 53.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.



admirable in the balanced, industrious American secretary. Further, still, American secretaries are happy and able to maintain this amiable efficiency because they are not overworked. French readers learn that American companies use large secretary pools to spread out their work, which, unlike the assumed to be overstressed French secretary, gives ample time to take a coffee or cigarette break without nerves. Additionally, Giroud argues that American secretaries have the “best material” at their disposal, including “clean, nice, warm, and aerated locations.”<sup>66</sup> Unlike what was seen in France, American secretaries “never have an asthmatic typewriter, a telephone that one needs to scream into, chairs that break kidneys, lamps that ruin their eyes, and cold air on their back.” In short, the material comforts of the modern American office made the American secretary happy and more productive than her French equivalent since she could leisurely do her work and enjoy it, too. The comparison between American and French secretaries, thus, reveals a modern, efficient, and comfortable work environment in the United States that stood in stark contrast to the backward, “asthmatic” one in France that needed changing.

But for Dorothy, success and happiness do not necessarily come from material comfort. For her, and other American women like her, Dorothy’s sense of pride in wanting to be useful impressed her. According to Dorothy, she worked for an important man in American life and was able to stay abreast of current affairs and politics in helping him. She also found Edward R. Murrow encouraging, as he told her to stay informed, which made her feel more worldly and involved in national and global affairs. In seeing this, though, Giroud still found Dorothy like many other Americans in having a rather naïve idealism: “Like most Americans, she is profoundly idealist and a little missionary. She likes good sentiments, she believes in the triumph of Good over Evil and of hygiene over despair.”

Dorothy’s optimism and sense of purpose, though, contrasted sharply to the bulk of American women Giroud saw hoping to become celebrities or models. For example, Giroud notes the experience of Betty Furness who was a model showing Westinghouse appliances during one of CBS’ shows. While trying to demonstrate a vacuum cleaner in one commercial, she was not able to get the machine to work, but instead of panicking, she stayed calm and collected with a smile. This led Furness to be requested for political conventions, which grew

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

into a TV career where she had her own show discussing women's fashion, beauty, and food. Other American women flocked to television opportunities to stake their claim for success, too.

Dorothy was different, though, and Giroud wanted her readers to see that. As Giroud explains, Dorothy wanted to be an assistant to Murrow writing texts and suggesting ideas and debating with him what to do with future episodes. Further, with a tone of admiration in her conclusion, Giroud notes that Dorothy continued to work hard and attentively as a secretary and did not want to succeed on a fluke chance like Furness did. To show Dorothy's "simple" and "dignified" manner, Giroud ends her piece by telling French readers precisely how much Dorothy cares about her work, her contributions to society, and the health of her nation: "Each night she [Dorothy] prays that God protects her bosses, who she respects and who respect her, her big country, that she supports and that supports her."<sup>67</sup> Dorothy, thus, is used to show French women one ideal American woman who works hard for a cause and with conviction. She does not put one aspect of her life before another, and she chooses a career where men and women are seen and treated as equals. Dorothy implicitly represents a sign of a better future for American and French women where a career and family could be achieved on respectful and comfortable terms for the betterment of all, including self, work, family, and nation.

#### *Type 7: Aspiring Actress, Dreamer*

Contrary to the stable life of the American secretary Dorothy, for aspiring actresses and dreamers like Emily MacLaughlin who wanted to become America's next big Broadway star or Hollywood actress, life swung between hope and despair (Figure 2.11).<sup>68</sup> In New York, Giroud met MacLaughlin, a struggling Broadway actress who presented "an attitude that American women hardly have. Her face expressed something discretely pathetic."<sup>69</sup> Giroud learned that this painful suffering came from being an actress at night in any job she could find while being "a nurse, or a typist, or a saleswoman, or a coat check woman during the day."<sup>70</sup> MacLaughlin did anything she could to secure an acting job, even if it meant giving up her day job: "When she hooks an engagement, she abandons her daytime work. When the engagement ends, she takes the first job that is offered to her to earn what to pay her rent—this New York

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

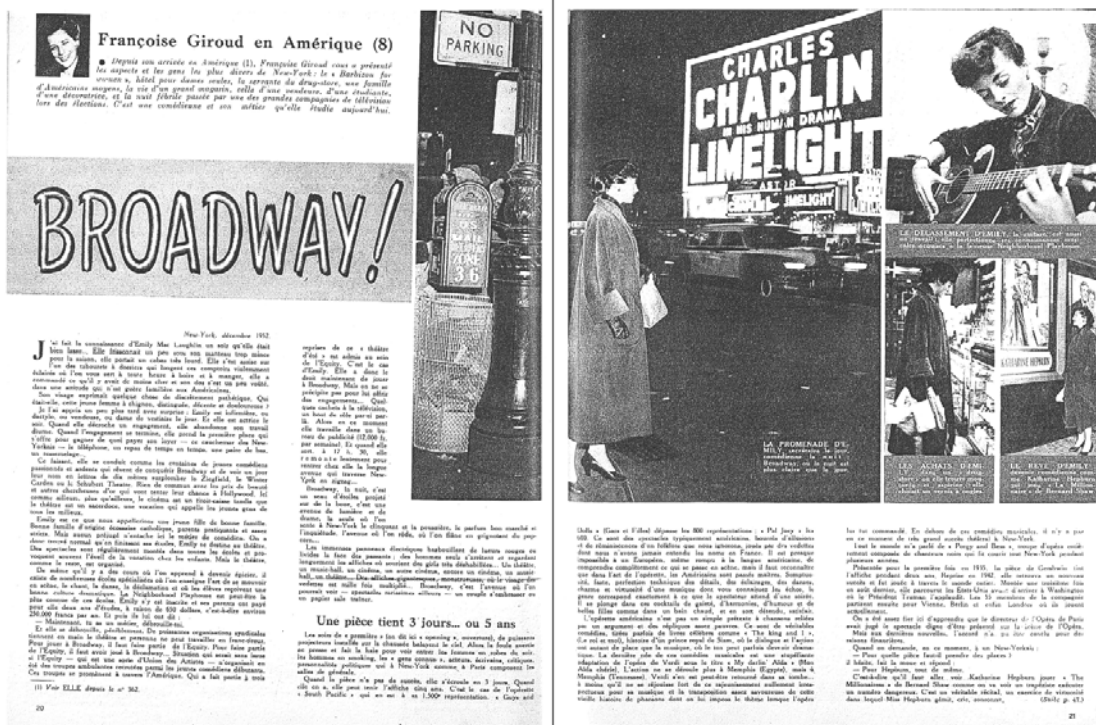
<sup>68</sup> Françoise Giroud, "Françoise Giroud en Amérique (8)," *Elle*, December 22, 1952, pp. 20-21, 47.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

nightmare—the phone, a meal from time to time, a pair of stockings, a shoe repair...<sup>71</sup> MacLaughlin was the sign of a broader American woman type who had the dream, like so many other women, to go to New York or Hollywood to land a career in acting where she could see her name on the billboards, across movie screens, and on television. Such a life was rooted in anxiety and near-poverty that was troubling to Giroud, especially since the chance of success was so limited.

Figure 2.11:  
Aspiring Actress, Dreamer



To explain to French women how and why Emily went after an acting career, Giroud contextualizes her life. Emily came from a “good Scottish Catholic family,” and it did not seem odd for her to go off toward a career in theater when she showed great acting promise in her acting clubs in high school. Although she tried hard to find acting jobs, it was nearly impossible to do since she had to be a member of the Actor’s Guild, but if she was not an actress, she could not be a member of the Guild, so she was left in a conundrum. That obstacle did not stop her, however, from trying. Fortunately, she often was offered small parts, but nothing long term

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

came along, so she strung along from job to job and borrowed money from her parents. From this background detail, Giroud observes that Emily might have a poor room and no steady income stream, but, unlike many French women at the time, especially actresses in a similar situation, she at least had a heated room with a bathroom, refrigerator, and phone.

As with her other installments featuring American women, Giroud took the opportunity to use Emily's profile to observe and critique broader elements of American society for her French readers, particularly in how and why Americans sought out work despite the odds working against them. Through Emily's situation, Giroud learns and describes that Americans believe they have an innate need and desire to fill a function for which they feel they are made based on their individual strengths. To explain this concretely, Giroud uses one of her interactions with an elevator attendant:

When asking an elevator man about his work, he said his country put him in the best place possible. He's not the most intelligent, gifted, or energetic, or courageous to do better—it's not society that's culpable—it's original inequality that makes people pretty and ugly and geniuses and stupid people. The American education system has convinced people of this. It's a system where it's impossible for people to lose their way and to not use the least competencies to the best of their interests.<sup>72</sup>

Returning to Emily's case, then, although there are a limited number of actress slots, Emily exhibited hope and continued to sacrifice things in her life because there was always the chance that her big break would come. Emily's life was exciting and sad for French readers, but her ability to pursue her dreams through a system that cultivated innate talents made America and the American woman's life so appealing for Giroud, which she wanted her French readers to see. America was the land of opportunity and growth, and as Giroud made clear in her next installment on the youngest American girls, anything seemed possible for women. Giroud wanted such energy in France, too, which is why she so painstakingly detailed the American woman's various lives to French women in *Elle* magazine.

#### *Type 8: The Future of America Is Its Girls*

Giroud's second-to-last installment brought French readers into the American education system and what she saw as the base for America's successful future—its girls (Figure 2.12). For three days, Giroud followed Mia, an eleven-year-old girl who Giroud described as “the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

typical American girl raised in school and at home according to modern methods.”<sup>73</sup> Mia attended the Dalton School, a private progressive school in New York City. Although Giroud was suspicious of American private education, where “idiots amass a fortune and then donate their money and put their names on scholarships” so students can afford expensive education, she was amazed by the type of education American girls like Mia received. Most impressive to Giroud was Mia’s preparation for being a productive American worker and citizen. As Giroud describes, contrary to the hierarchical French school system, at the Dalton School, teachers were referred to as “advisors,” and students were left to do a prescribed set of tasks on their own with their teachers’ support. Students have group meetings with teachers where they discussed materials, but their homework was done on their own, and students were usually left alone for most of the day to do as they wished. If they received an assignment that was due at the end of the month and they decided to wait until the last week, Giroud was surprised and intrigued that teachers felt it was the student’s decision that would result in her learning from her poor choice. Through this method, Giroud observed that young American girls like Mia learned responsibility and independence early on in addition to the most important lesson of all in American culture: being on time. Further, young American girls learned their responsibility to seek help when it is needed.

Giroud found this forward-thinking preparation of American girls to be novel, and perhaps something from which the French could learn. As she informs her readers, Giroud explains that the American education system ultimately aimed to teach children how to be productive contributors to democratic society by becoming well-rounded citizens. Mia learned about everything—moral education, physical education, civic education, practical education—and how to be good, adapted citizens for society. Giroud detailed one telling example: each morning, students started off with sociability and democracy classes in large amphitheaters where they needed to raise their hand to speak to the president and other children. In describing this scene, Giroud observed that Mia learned how to express herself and develop her ability to make decisions and have authority, which French girls rarely had the experience of doing. Yet despite this independence training where the young American girl was not forced to “obey” and “be good” like her French counterpart, her “ideal” was to be happy and liked among her

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<sup>73</sup> Françoise Giroud, “Françoise Giroud en Amérique (9),” *Elle*, January 5, 1953, p. 34.



classmates: “To be liked, she must be likeable, cooperative and works well with others.”<sup>74</sup> Her motivation, thus, did not come from fear from an authority figure or the desire to make her father happy, as Giroud reminded French readers was the case in France. Rather, Mia works hard to feel responsible for herself and her community, which, to Giroud, was a worthy way to build a nation of active, productive, and contributing women.

Giroud remarks that there are two important results of Mia’s education, which should be taken seriously by the French. First, Mia was able to adapt to the democratic functions of American society. Second, she could organize her work and leisure according to herself. All of this education allowed young American girls like Mia to explore their strengths and interests. Even if they did not go on to university, at the end of it all, Giroud was impressed that American girls at least learned how to live and work in society. To Giroud, Mia was much more prepared than the average Frenchwoman because she was being trained for life: “At 11.5 years old, Mia is more efficient than Frenchwomen. All that Frenchwomen learned in school, they didn’t learn what American girls learn (even the most mediocre)—practicalities, the technique or work, and discipline—this is only found in the *Grandes Ecoles* and in specialized schools.”<sup>75</sup> Ultimately, the best solution Giroud offers readers is to combine the best qualities of American and French education: the American knack for practical skills and learning how to contribute to one’s society and community, and the French ability to master key theories and facts. In all cases, for Giroud, the future for the young American girl like Mia was bright. Young American girls were brought up to be capable, confident, and independent, which was something that Giroud wanted to see in French schools for the sake of the future of France and the quality of French girls’ lives.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 42. Note that the *Grandes Ecoles* to which Giroud refers are very advanced, elite institutions of higher education in France. Like the Ivy League in the United States, these universities are highly selective and very difficult to enter and succeed.



*Giroud's Conclusion: America's Power Is Its Women*

To conclude her in-depth series on her visit to America, Giroud provides a final overview of her impressions of America and the situation of the American woman compared to the French woman, which is summarized in the large title revealing her admiration for American women: “Number One USA Power: the women.”<sup>76</sup> To begin, Giroud discusses the important role of Mrs. Mamie Eisenhower, featured in the large opening image, in taking over the role of First Lady in the White House. Giroud acknowledged that one of Mamie’s jobs was to update the White House decor, but Mamie made it clear that her ultimate job was to be a doting wife who took care of her husband when he took office in January. According to Giroud, Mamie Eisenhower and Mrs. Truman, the wife of former President Truman, although from opposing political parties, were part of the same “race” of American women. This so-called “pipe and slippers brigade,” or, as Giroud explains, “the category of devoted wives who are essentially preoccupied by the well-being of their husband” at all costs is troubling because it limits what women envision themselves doing and becoming.<sup>77</sup> Giroud saw these all-ready-to-please women all over America, as elsewhere, but, fortunately, she also saw signs in America for the rise of women’s rights:

The big wave, here like elsewhere, is rising women and pushing them toward the commands of the nation, but doesn’t pull them from their ancestral tasks.

As the last president of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs said, “The foyer must be the center of interest for each woman. The center, but not the circumference.”

Get out of the kitchen and look at what’s happening outside and get active in our country’s activities. The veil on politics has been lifted, so women are encouraged to get involved. But if American women are so energetically engaged in this route, where European women loathe to walk—it’s because their leader brought out Politics with a capital P, its mysterious mask.<sup>78</sup>

Women, thus, were being told to not exclusively make their roles as housewife-mothers the central locus of their lives. Instead, they should engage in Politics. To explain what Giroud means by American women’s “Politics,” Giroud observes that American women put all of their weight into politics despite their not being in the elected positions of power. In fact, in the recent election, Giroud noted that President Eisenhower owed much of his victory to women, so, as a result, he appointed women (even those who were married and mothers) to important governmental positions for the first time. However, for many American women, this small

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<sup>76</sup> Françoise Giroud, “Puissance USA No. 1: Les femmes,” *Elle*, January 12, 1953, pp. 14-15, 44-45.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

number of appointments was not enough, so they started to use other avenues for action.<sup>79</sup> One such place was women's magazines. To illustrate the power of these magazines, which revealed American women's gradually growing clout, Giroud cites the American magazine *Woman's Home Companion* and its 4.25 million weekly copies in circulation. At the time, Giroud informed French women that this and other women's magazines had campaigns that worked to combat juvenile delinquency, stop the circulation of obscene literature, and better deteriorating schools.<sup>80</sup> Even more impressive was how information found in the *Companion* was used to convince certain states to require bus drivers to have qualifications for their jobs. Giroud, understanding the power and reach of magazines like *Woman's Home Companion*, importantly impressed upon French readers "that a magazine with over 4 million readers touches such important topics shows the significance of its efforts," and, thus, possibly hints of the empowerment that could come for French women, too, by reading *Elle* magazine.<sup>81</sup> Giroud, thus, paints a picture of women's power being very present in America, especially in magazines, but it had not yet been realized to its greatest potential.

Figure 2.13:  
America's Greatest Power Is Its Women



<sup>79</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>80</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

Despite these indicators of progress for American women, as noted throughout Giroud's series, there were troubling signs in American gender relations. First, Americans still followed the Anglo-Saxon custom of separating women from men, which the French often derided. Giroud described the "model American man" as one who did not interest himself in other women and gave very little to his own woman. As she notes, "He is, in sum, very content to go away after dinner because, if not, he would be obliged to respectfully put up with the women present who do not give up, brutally intervening on any subject."<sup>82</sup> Second, Giroud observed that American couples were very detached and did not show any signs of affection. Giroud equates this, too, with conformism in America: "No one in the US lives outside conventions, and does not do unlike everyone else...The more the collective life is good, the more individual liberty is threatened."<sup>83</sup> Third, American women neglect and lose their tools of femininity once they "capture their husbands." From Giroud's experience, once American women were married, they did not feel the need to please their husbands, as passion became "suspect and useless."<sup>84</sup> More tragically, when American women become widows, they "carefully jump into vigorous puritanism and work in social clubs. America is certainly the country where it's the easiest for women to get old and get old alone."<sup>85</sup>

In the end, in America, Giroud sees women having power not through their men, but next to their men. Many American women understood this power, but Giroud did not see many American women exercising it fully, which led Giroud equate to American women with a third sort of sex: "In truth, I believe American women are in the process of constituting a third sort of sex...asexual."<sup>86</sup> In other words, American women did not imitate their men in presenting power, but they exerted their agency through an aggressive femininity that was not quite feminine and not quite masculine. Giroud writes that American magazines tell American women to "be feminine," and they do not seem to have a problem with collaborating with men in work situations, but men's gestures "of respect" toward women, such as opening doors, pulling chairs, and raising hats, undermine any sense of equality of the sexes in America.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Giroud, "Puissance USA No. 1: Les femmes," p. 44.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid..

<sup>86</sup> Ibid..

<sup>87</sup> Ibid..

Giroud concludes her final essay by taking up the direct question that underlay the purpose of her entire series: Are Americans happier than the French? Further still, and revealing social comparison still at work, Giroud writes that she observed American women for French women readers in order for them to better understand themselves and the French woman's position in the world: "Since I returned, I have asked myself the same question 100 times: To finish, are Americans happier than us?"<sup>88</sup> To directly answer this question, Giroud affirms this with certainty. As seen through the various profiles she wrote, Giroud concludes that American women were more materially wealthy, easier to please and entertain, positive in their outlook, focused on working hard, and rightfully proud of their country:

In certain regards, America is happier because it's rich. The margin is relatively small between the poor and rich, as seen in rich countries.

They're happier because they are less demanding, like children, their aptitude for happiness and sadness is weak, much less pointed than us.

But we cannot borrow their richness or youth.

They're happier than our lives because they are more focused on their work and work for them is more relaxed and more satisfying, never humiliating. There, we can borrow a lot from them.

They are happy because they don't have shame in liking their country.<sup>89</sup>

In answering her questions about French versus American happiness in this passage, Giroud tells herself and her French readers that they could improve themselves by being harder workers, more relaxed, and less fickle in demands. Although Giroud finds American women happier than French women due to their optimism, positivity, hard work, materially comfortable life, Giroud ultimately rides the fence, perhaps to assuage some of her French readers' displeasure in placing America above France. Giroud admits that happiness is ultimately defined differently in both countries, but the comfort of life for the American woman is definitely better: "So it seems fair to conclude by saying that the happiness of an American woman would not be the same as ours. A French woman suddenly transported into this world might be feeling bruised on all sides and terribly lonely. But it is certainly easier today to be an American than to be French."<sup>90</sup> Thus, Giroud's series on the American woman overall finds the American woman's life better and happier because of her material wealth, opportunities, and growing power and rights over time, but it was not perfect. The taxing life of the American career woman, the desperation of the aspiring actress, and the anxiety of many women over finding a husband left an ambivalent

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid..

<sup>90</sup> Ibid..

picture of an American woman who seemingly had it all for the Frenchwoman to admire and possibly emulate through hard work and positivity.

### **Iconic Frenchwoman**

As the American woman's life was often written about admirably in French magazines by journalists like Françoise Giroud, the Frenchwoman appeared regularly in American magazines to bring a recipe to American woman about what it meant to have a good life with status and beauty to admire and possibly attain. As a recent *France-Amérique* article strongly argues, "In America, the myth of the Frenchwoman, her inner chic, perfect figure and model children, causes American housewives who dream of equaling this icon despair."<sup>91</sup> In other words, the Frenchwoman has a mystique and qualities that American women admire and learn from, and as one explores popular American magazines in the 1950s, the Frenchwoman, especially the Parisienne, was featured regularly in this way. In the 1950s, at a time of significant American popularity for French high fashion, such as Chanel, Dior, and Schiaparelli, the urban French woman was glamorized in American magazines for her ability to have it all—being modestly and confidently beautiful, holding an aura of sexual and romantic mystery, and being desirable and irresistible to men and admired by other women. The iconic Frenchwoman featured in American magazines was like the resilient immediate postwar Frenchwoman (see Chapter 1) in that she knew how to work with what she had in order to be an attractive, thin, and ideal housewife, mother, and lover. American magazines helped fuel this image by prominently following and visualizing the glamorous aspects of the everyday lives of Frenchwomen. The iconic Frenchwoman had it all—she was chic, elegant, beautiful, thin, and materially well off, and at the same time, she held a sexual and romantic power that was not masculinized—it was purely feminine, or "in deference" to men's position of superiority. Exploring significant representations of the iconic Frenchwoman shows how the Frenchwoman, and especially the Parisian, was idealized by Americans for the particular purpose of encouraging American women to be perfect as wives, mothers, and lovers, even if some of those roles had conflicting values to the conservatism in the United States at the time.

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<sup>91</sup> Caroline Riva, "Le mythe américain de la femme française," *France-Amérique*, July-August 2014, p. 12.

The notion of an icon is important to examine closely, especially in photojournalistic magazines that work to essentialize what a nation's women are and stand for. As noted by Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, "Photographs function rhetorically as icons in large measure because they eloquently negotiate key cultural tensions by managing multiple transcriptions or patterns of identification."<sup>92</sup> In the case of conservative 1950s America looking at a burgeoning France, the reification of the Frenchwoman as a chic, urban woman was in line with one of the country's most notable exports—expensive fashion that moderated sexuality and emphasized sleek femininity—which ultimately worked to provide American women a shortcut formula on how to be what was deemed and sanctioned to be respectfully beautiful, sexy, and womanly. The Frenchwoman depicted was deemed respectable mainly because she was a Parisian woman, *la Parisienne*, which Agnès Rocamora describes as a "figure of distinction" just because she came from Paris:

...*la Parisienne* reflects the exceptional status of Paris, at once the epitome of France and so French, but also, and in its claimed superiority to *la province*, above France, somehow detached from it. As in discourses where the French nation is associated with, but also, and in the process, reduced to the capital, the shift from *la Française* to *la Parisienne* can be seen as expressive of privileging of the latter over the former, with the most accomplished version of French women Parisian women.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, built into the iconic Frenchwoman was an internally French national distinction, where the Parisian woman held an elevated status that embodied all Frenchwoman due to her coming from the capital city. As explained by Richard Bernstein, coming from Paris "brings an identity that transcends social class, economic distinction; it is to belong to a world apart."<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the iconic Frenchwoman in American magazines, who in essence is often the iconic *Parisienne* in Americans' minds, reveals how Americans, especially American women, wanted a life of material wealth, status, and distinction that brought otherworldly admiration and respect.

The elevation of the *Parisienne* as iconic Frenchwoman is most significantly seen in Patricia Coffin's August 7, 1956 photo essay for *Look* magazine where readers could "Meet a Real Parisienne" by the name of Madame Salomé Chalandon (Figure 2.14).<sup>95</sup> Across the nine-

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<sup>92</sup> Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, "Seeing the Bomb, Imagining the Future: Allegorical Vision in the Post-Cold War Nuclear Optic," *Imaginaires du présent: Photographie, politique et poétique de l'actualité, CahierRemix*, No. 1 (May 2012), accessed September 14, 2014, <http://oic.uqam.ca/en/remix/seeing-the-bomb-imagining-the-future-allegorical-vision-in-the-post-cold-war-nuclear-optic>.

<sup>93</sup> Agnès Rocamora, *Fashioning the City: Paris, Fashion and the Media* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), p. 100.

<sup>94</sup> Richard Bernstein qtd. in Rocamora, p. 100.

<sup>95</sup> Patricia Coffin, "Meet a real Parisienne," *Look*, August 7, 1956, pp. 53-63.



page photo essay, the real *Parisienne* is a wealthy housewife who attends to her family's every need, especially her husband's needs. She has a pampered life of which many readers could only dream, but the notion that Salomé is a representative, *real* Parisienne shows how the magazine worked to propagate a specific image that generalized to all Parisian women, who, by extension, would come to represent and stand in for the French woman more generally.

**Figure 2.14:**  
**A Real Parisienne**



The article's use of words of generalizability work to reinforce and legitimate the image of an upper-class, proper, and elite *Parisienne*. The title's language immediately emphasizes the generalizing nature of the article. The use of the word *real* insinuates that readers will meet an authentic Parisienne. Further, it implies that readers may have only met or seen the opposite of a "real" Parisienne—a fake, imposter Parisienne. The title, thus, works to draw more readers in to see who is deemed the one, true, factual Parisian that they may have never encountered or seen before. Further, still, the subtitle emphasizes that Salomé is not even seen by those Americans who visit Paris: "She lives the kind of life American tourists never see." The tactic of showing

the “real,” true Parisian aims to lure American readers into the feature who come to have the expectation that their misconceptions of the Parisian woman would be corrected, which ultimately legitimates the magazines’ powerful position in representing the realities of the world to its readership.

The language of the opening line further stresses Salomé’s authenticity by emphasizing her “true” chic that is associated with the Parisian woman: “Of the half-million Americans flooding Paris this summer, few will meet the conservative, elegant Frenchwomen who represent its true *chic*.”<sup>96</sup> The caption to the large image showing a smiling profile shot of Salomé wearing a fur and shiny earrings and hair pulled back into a bun takes Salomé’s authenticity a step further by describing her as “a classic French beauty.” Here, the word *classic* underscores how Salomé’s qualities and life are representative of an idealized French way of life that has been around for some time. Salomé, thus, comes to represent all Parisienne women. In fact, all others do not stack up to the classic power and authenticity that she has. The article’s tone, though, is not always serious, as it jokes about generalizing and stereotypes, as seen through one of Salomé’s statements: “I’m sure we have a false picture of each other. You Americans don’t divorce *all* the time.”<sup>97</sup> Further, to add to the magazine’s attempt to stand its ground as an authoritative figure on the subject of “true” French women, the essay’s start explicitly tries to dispel American readers’ stereotypes of what a Frenchwoman is like by defining what Salomé, the real, true, classic Parisienne, is *not*:

Conversely, she doesn’t subsist on snails, brush her teeth with wine or buy all her clothes at Dior. She actually spends four times as many hours housekeeping as does her U.S. counterpart, although she can afford three servants for the price of one here. She has never been to the Folies Bergère, does not smoke, owns no dishwasher or TV set, cooks with no canned or frozen foods. And she dresses, as she does everything, to please her husband.<sup>98</sup>

The last sentence of this introduction to Salomé is the most important for targeting one of *Look*’s main purposes of presenting the real *Parisienne* to American readers: encouraging American women to likewise please their husbands so they could be the best housewives, mothers, and housekeepers possible for their families.

As the photo essay moves from the introductory text to large glossy shots from Salomé’s everyday life, American readers see how the real Parisienne is admirable for serving her husband

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

and family (Figure 2.15). In particular, for the image of Salomé attentively removing a splinter from her husband's hand while he lounges and smokes a cigar (see bottom left image in Figure 2.15), the accompanying caption reinforces her sense of duty to her husband that is implied to be seen among all other French wives: "But *she's like most French wives* in seeing constantly in her husband's comfort. He, in turn, treats her with the utmost courtesy."<sup>99</sup>

**Figure 2.15:**  
**The Real Parisienne's Duty to Husband and Family**



<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 54. Emphasis added.



Fashion is another way Salomé works to please her husband and maintain a status of elegance as a real Parisienne (Figure 2.16). In one spread showing the fashion “credo” of the Parisienne, Salomé inspects a Dior adaptation in a shop window near the Seine, attends a party at her father’s place for fashion designer Maggy Rouff, and chooses fabrics and tries on a dress with her “little family dressmaker” Madame Bouillet.<sup>100</sup> Salomé, here, conforms to a stereotyped image Americans may have had of Parisiennes as being smartly dressed because they lived in the fashion capital: “Like all smart Parisiennes, she is understated—wears tailored suits, small hats by day, ‘a little black dress’ to the theater; pays great attention to details such as the color of her gloves (she doesn’t own a cotton pair), the shade of her stockings. An average pair of good nylons costs \$3 in France.”<sup>101</sup> Again, language such as *like all* generalizes Salomé’s experience onto all other Parisiennes who, similar to Salomé, presumably have the money and time to select the best fashions that build the fashionable *chic* image Americans associated with Parisian women.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 58-59.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

Figure 2.16:  
The Real Parisienne's Glamorous Everyday Life



In the photo-essay's final spread (Figure 2.17), the other most important indicator of Salomé being genuinely Parisian is her adherence to the second most important credo of the Parisienne—the ability to cook well: “In the feminine French *tradition*, Mme. Chalandon is



herself a good cook, has personal recipes for many of the dishes she serves.”<sup>102</sup> Here, Salomé follows the long-standing tradition of cooking that is implied to be ingrained and passed among generations of Frenchwomen. Similarly, the article notes that like other “true Parisiennes,” Salomé never entertains at a restaurant or a popular night club, as was assumed to be done in America. Rather, it is always done at home with wine, which “comes with every meal except breakfast, which is often served in bed.”<sup>103</sup> The comment about her being served breakfast in bed shows the underlying irony in *Look*’s giving readers a “representative” glimpse into the life of the “real” Parisienne. Further, in the images of Salomé in her kitchen, she is not shown proving her ability to cook. Rather, she is pictured going “over the daily menus with Catherine,” her cook, and how to fold a napkin with her maître d’. Salomé, thus, seems to be more of a good manager of the household telling her staff what to cook and how to present it than an actual cook using her talents in the kitchen. Her role as house manager comes through clearly in the photo essay’s conclusion where readers learn that “Her life centers around her home and the details of its management.”<sup>104</sup> In this closing, Salomé is noted for having to go to the market daily and ordering groceries by telephone and spending much time shopping “for delicacies like spices, condiments and special tea.”<sup>105</sup> In all, Salomé’s life is aimed at being the perfect woman—in beauty, as a wife, and in home—as the photo essay’s final line makes clear: “The work goes by slowly, but she hopes the result will be perfection—her goal in all things to do with her home.”<sup>106</sup> This perfection is seen in her well-put together look along with the exquisite house she lives in.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 60. Emphasis added.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 2.17:**  
**The Real Parisienne's Role as House Manager**



The discerning reader would question if Salomé was the typical Parisienne due to her ability to live such a life of luxury and entitlement. In reality, Salomé's representation as a true Parisienne is more like a dream and expectation of the ideal Parisienne held by Americans. American readers might imagine a Parisienne to be wealthy and able to wear a designer Maggy Rouff original while out shopping. Further, they may imagine the Parisienne to be a woman who can have it all by being chic, glamorous, and luxurious while pleasing her husband and family. She could have a life of high status, coming from a place of the wealthy with designer clothing, exotic perfumes, and gourmet food. But Salomé's life of luxury and husband dotting is more of something that American magazines like *Look* tried to have American women aspire to. Or, at the very least, American magazines represented the fantasies of a dream world that American women might have wanted. The images of Salomé's upper class life did not present the life of the "typical" middle class Parisienne of the time period, but they certainly reveal what Americans wanted to see in Frenchwomen as well as what they saw as admirable for American women to aspire to become.

Some American magazines were more explicit in giving American women recipes on how to achieve the glamour and look of the Frenchwoman, such as in *Look's* November 16, 1954

issue where American women were taught how to diet like a Frenchwoman.<sup>107</sup> As Evelyne Sullerot notes in her study of the feminine press, one of the main functions of popular magazines geared toward women is to educate on how to be a “proper woman” through various how-to articles, including how to make clothes, buy and use domestic appliances, and cook. In the case of this piece on “Secret Diet, French Style,” American women learn three things (Figure 2.18). First, they need to stay thin and beautiful. Second, they need to employ strategies to stay thin and beautiful so they do not bother other women and their men about their efforts. Lastly, and most importantly, American women need to pay attention to the Frenchwoman because she knew how to achieve the first two goals through her genetic predisposition to do both, as the opening text reads:

With inborn wisdom about men, a French woman keeps her diet a secret. As reported in the French magazine *Réalités*, “French women have lovely figures because they go on a ‘lumps and bumps’ diet at least one day a week. And they do it without their husbands—who normally lunch and dine at home—ever being the wiser.” French women know nothing bores a man as much as women’s diet talk. They diet silently. American women, who talk about dieting as frankly as they apply lipstick, might do well to follow suit.<sup>108</sup>

In this opening quote, American women readers are instructed that the Frenchwoman intuitively “knows her place” by dieting in silence. While her man gets to enjoy whatever he wants to eat, she secretly makes the diet a secret so as not to “discomfort” him. The pains of staying beautiful should stay masked; all is done to please the man. Similar to the description of Salomé, Frenchwomen here are admired in a magazine because they know how please their men, and this article particularly works to make American women readers want to stay desirably thin for their men in a way that is not bothersome.

The instruction to diet quietly like the Frenchwoman is an important point to stress. By referring to the Frenchwoman as quiet, the article assumes that the American woman verbalizes her dieting efforts too

**Figure 2.18:**  
**Lessons of the Frenchwoman’s Secret Diet**



<sup>107</sup> “Secret Diet, French style...she loses weight on a meal he enjoys,” *Look*, November 16, 1954, pp. 114-115.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.



much, and, as such, should do better to not displease others with such unpleasant detail, especially men. As such, the bulk of the short article gives American women specific strategies on how to succeed in carrying out such a diet by following the French woman. Assuming that her husband is duped while she diets, the American woman could learn from the Frenchwoman's focus on things that he prefers to concern himself with: "the well-set table" and enjoying "a complete dinner."<sup>109</sup> Further, the Frenchwoman should be noted for smartly and stealthily dieting only eating protein foods, high-vitamin fruits and vegetables, and avoiding sauces and dressings at all costs. As such, the Frenchwoman restricts her diet without her husband even noticing and, thus, according to the article, maintains a pleasant air without disappointing her husband. Again, implied in all of these instructions is the American woman is nothing like the French woman. She is too loud and makes the pain of her problems everyone else's, so rather than verbalizing about the expectations placed on American women to conform to ever-more unrealistic beauty standards, the American woman is told to shut her mouth, literally and figuratively.

Admiring the Frenchwoman's use of "the principle of distraction" needs particular attention, too. Whenever guests come to dinner, the article reveals that the French woman avoids eating too much by spending much time preparing her salad while the guests eat the early courses of the meal. By doing so, "guests (and even her husband) never notice how little she eats."<sup>110</sup> The Frenchwoman is admired because she effectively starves herself until the main course is served where she then can relax her restraint by enjoying a hearty portion of meat and vegetables, and possibly a dip of sauce as "a token gesture."<sup>111</sup> The French woman, thus, plays her gender performance of discretion by sacrificing all—including eating what might be in fact a delicious meal—in silence for the comfort of others, particularly the men in the room. The article effectively tells American women readers to glue their lips on their incessant talk about dieting in order to keep their place in pleasing their men. It also sanctions the idea that American women should conform to an idealized beauty pattern seen in the Frenchwoman, which presumably suited American men.

The image that accompanies the spread provides visual instructions that show the pervasiveness of the Frenchwoman's diet advice (Figures 2.18 and 2.19). The end-goal for the

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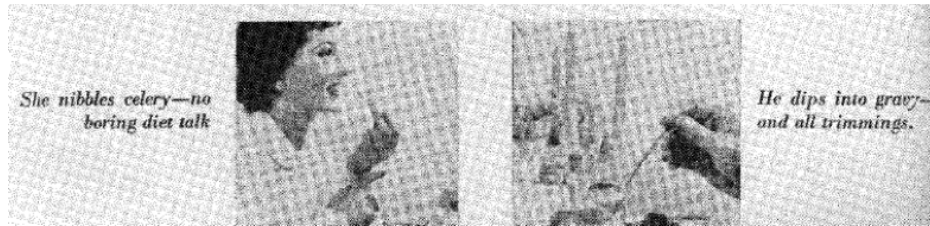
<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

American women readers is presumably to be like the young, thin, attractive French woman who eagerly and smilingly pays attention to the large, overweight, and aging man before her. The message of the image, the accompanying list of recipes differing for men and women, and the notes on where to buy the woman's fashions featured in the image all serve to educate and shape the American woman readers' perceptions of self to adhere to specific beauty standards and gender norms; namely, being young, thin, and deferent to men. The ultimate lesson offered American women is that they should do whatever they could to diet while men did whatever they wanted. Such a lesson is very much in line with the conservative pressures of the 1950s to silence women, make them conform to an idealized and unrealistic beauty standard, and place them under harsher scrutiny than men. American women were encouraged to comfort and please their husbands at all costs, but the article implies that they did not know how to do this well, so the Frenchwoman, who was implicitly born with this skill, was used by *Look* magazine as an instructive tool of patriarchal beautification.

**Figure 2.19:**  
**Close-Up of Frenchwoman's Secret Diet**



In addition to the Frenchwoman's ability to have it all like Salomé or to diet in ways that do not make men uncomfortable, American magazines presented the iconic Frenchwoman to instruct American women how to have a certain sexual allure. One of the most famous French sex symbols emerging from the 1950s was Brigitte Bardot, who was dubbed by *Look* on January 7, 1958 to be "Sex uncorked" and France's "aggressive sex kitten" that turned the French film industry upside down through her "frank personality and primitive physical allure" that "symbolized 'the impossible dream of millions of married men.'"<sup>112</sup> Bardot's success as a film star certainly brought an image of the coquettish, playful, coy, and sexy Frenchwoman, but the stereotype of the flirtatious and sexual Frenchwoman preceded her explosion of popularity in

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<sup>112</sup> "Bardot Conquers America," *Look*, January 7, 1958, p. 62.

America in the late 1950s.

In its short three-page spread “France’s favorite blonde,” *Look* presented Martine Carole, who the magazine asserted was the “perfect symbol of *la Femme*.”<sup>113</sup> In the opening line to the article, readers learn that Martine Carole was not just any woman—she was a French woman, which means she carried a recognizable national cachet and status: “To Frenchman, film star Martine Carole is as much the epitome of femininity as Gina Lollobrigida is to Italians.”<sup>114</sup> Here, the article shows its goal of introducing American audiences to a new French actress who they presumably do not know, so they equate her with an Italian star that most Americans at the time would recognize. On the surface, the article details who Martine is and how she hoped to “conquer the hearts of American movie audiences” through a successful five-year contract with 20th Century-Fox.<sup>115</sup> However, what is more important than who Martine is and where her career was going was what the article tells what Martine Carole can teach American women: “As a woman who has tantalized her countrymen for over a decade, Martine Carole, as a Frenchwoman, can offer some authoritative tips on how to win over a dinner companion.”<sup>116</sup>

This statement about what Martine can teach American women is visualized in the main photograph feature of the spread entitled, “How a *Frenchwoman* charms her dinner date...”<sup>117</sup> In a series of nine photographs taking up three-quarters of two pages, Martine provides examples of various facial expressions of seduction. In these images, though, Martine does not just represent herself. Instead of referring to “How Martine charms her dinner date...” the spread uses “How a Frenchwoman charms her dinner date...” (Figure 2.20). As such, Martine comes to represent all Frenchwomen and what they can teach American women about being alluring, attractive, and pleasant to men. Further, Martine’s lessons are important because they come from a beautiful woman, but also because they come from a French woman who, like Salomé and the dieting Frenchwoman, somehow have qualities built into them that the American woman does not have or does not know how to use.

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<sup>113</sup> “France’s Favorite Blonde,” *Look*, February 21, 1956, pp. 93-95.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>117</sup> Emphasis added.

**Figure 2.20:**  
**France's Favorite Blonde**



The progression of expressions in the nine images provides specific, step-by-step instructions to American women on how to be charming and alluring like a Frenchwoman, which are explained through a very specific order and formula listed in the captions: “Size him up carefully, Try a demure smile on him, Speak with him heartily, Never allow his attention to wander, Offer him choice delicacies, Hang on every word he utters, Don’t skimp with the champagne, Drink to him with your eyes, and Laugh shyly when he finally clasps your hand.”<sup>118</sup> Taken the entertaining, playful, expressive images and given that Martine is described as “the French ideal of what a woman should be,” American readers ultimately learn that a woman should be flirtatious and all-consumed with how to please a man. Like all other Frenchwomen, the spread instructs readers that women’s roles are to allure, seduce, captivate, and please a man until the final victory of affection. Again, the instruction is based on women’s deference and service to men and by using feminine tools in a “sophisticated” manner like the Frenchwoman.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., pp. 94-95.

Other burgeoning French actresses in America were also used by *Look* to instruct American women readers on how to be attractive. In its November 26, 1957 article “Hollywood’s New French Look,” the magazine presents American readers to Christine Carere, “a buxom Frenchwoman with a touch of a child’s innocence, [who] has come to America to ‘show what French girls are really like.’”<sup>119</sup> Immediately, the article equates Christine, an established young French actress, as how all French girls are *really* like. As with the “Meet the Real Parisienne” piece, the article assumes that what readers knew about French girls may not be completely accurate, and what Americans see in the article is therefore the more accurate portrayal of them. On the surface, Christine is featured to provide a plug for *A Certain Smile*, a new film adaptation of French novelist Françoise Sagan’s second book where Christine plays the lead as a “schoolgirl who discards her schoolboy love to have a two-week affair with his 40-year-old uncle.”<sup>120</sup> The rather racy content of the film alludes to Christine, the symbol of what all French girls are *really* like, as a brazen seductress who is uncontrollable in her lust.

**Figure 2.21:**  
**The Seductive, Innocent French Girl**



The images that appear in the photo essay reinforce the idea of French girls being overtly

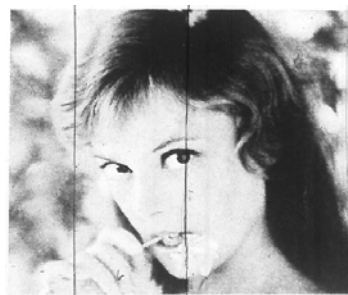
<sup>119</sup> “Hollywood’s New French Look,” *Look*, November 26, 1957, p. 145. The full article runs pp. 145-149.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

sexual and seductive (Figures 2.21, 2.22, and 2.23). From the first page in the large opening shot, Christine sits on a drum with a polka dot dress staring toward the camera with her head tilted up toward the reader. This might suggest playfulness, but looking more closely at her body position shows more than just childish play. Her toes dig into the ground as she places her hand between her thighs to close the dress, which might otherwise expose her undergarments. This is the center of the image, which grounds the readers' attention and line of sight with the middle of her body. Further, the use of the drum between Christine's legs connotes a rhythmic beat that insinuates she is sexually available. If any sexual innuendoes were not picked up with her hands between her legs while sitting on a drum, a smaller close-up of her face "with chestnut hair and clear brown eyes" is unavoidable (Figure 2.22). As she stares at readers with a side-glance, she provocatively holds a lollipop in her open mouth in such a way to indicate her desire for sex. According to the photo-essay's insinuation, then, this French girl, like the character she plays, is a temptress and one of the available "French ingénues who 'know life' " and its charms.<sup>121</sup> American readers may believe from this opening shot that that all French girls are playful, sexually available, and focused on seduction; if not all, at least some of them are expected to fit the Frenchwoman's image as sexually easy.

Other images of Christine reinforce the idea of the French woman as a coquettish sex doll. In two images showing her with director Jean Negalesco, Christine sits on a sofa with one leg crouched to the side as she twists her chest away and looks back at the director sitting at a nearby desk (Figure 2.23). This position makes her appear available to the director and the readers who look on the scene. Further, like Martine

**Figure 2.22:**  
**The Poised French Girl**



**Figure 2.23:**  
**Playful, Flirtatious French Girl**



<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

Carole's gestures, Christine's positioning serves as a way to instruct American women readers on how to flirt in an admirable French womanly way. To be sure, the image shows Jean looking back at Christine in approval, which is explained by Jean's quote in the photograph's caption: "She has the special French charm you can't find any other place in the world."<sup>122</sup> To show his further admiration for Christine, as well as her elevated status as a woman among all of the world's women, a smaller image of the same office scene reveals Jean kissing Christine's foot.<sup>123</sup> Although readers most likely know that the poses Christine and Jean make are for good fun, they still build an image for American readers that young Frenchwomen like Christine are available, overtly flirtatious, and godly creatures of beauty and charm that should be adulated.

Presentations of new French notables in America like Martine Carole and Christine Carere provide excellent examples of how American magazines fashioned the French woman to be the ideal woman for American women readers to emulate. However, the ultimate reinforcement of the American perception of the Frenchwoman as being the standard of femininity came in July 1960 with *Life's* printing of Gordon Tenney's collection of images entitled "An American's Eyes on the Women of Paris."<sup>124</sup> This eight-page spread featured a variety of everyday Parisian women and included Tenney's comments of how and why he selected the Parisian women he photographed. To introduce readers to other women like Françoise Foex, the smiling Parisian woman photographed behind a counter of a *grand magasin*, which opened the photo-essay (see Figure 2.24), the editorial commentary notes how the Frenchwomen is commendably resilient and resourceful among all of the women of the world:

Tenney found Paris women charming in a thousand delightful ways. But rich or poor, *gamine* or *grande dame*, they share an instinctive sensuality that can haunt the mind of a man. "I have come," Tenney reported, "to this simple conclusion: French women are not the best looking in the world; the Americans and Scandinavians are that. But French women know how to do more with what they have than any other nationality."<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., pp. 146-147.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>124</sup> Gordon Tenney, "An American's Eyes on the Women of Paris," *Life*, July 25, 1960, pp. 65A-74.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 65A.





ingrained in her from birth and cultivated over the ages, which should be adulated. In one instance, below images of women walking down a busy shopping street, one of which shows the backside of a smiling saleswoman hunched over in a window looking toward Tenney's camera (Figure 2.25), the Frenchwoman was described as a nationally distinct feminine creature with features of charm and beauty built into her:

There is something indefinite about a Frenchwoman that proclaims her nationality anywhere in the world. She proudly proves Balzac's boast that "the woman of Paris has genius in her bearing"...

Passing a Paris boutique, Tenney noticed it contained more than just dresses—"a girl with the musical name of Laurence de Boonerive was arranging the display and gave me a charming smile. Paris shopgirls have an innate flair, bred in them through 500 years of coquetry."<sup>126</sup>

These captions paired with the photographs' supposedly candid, and therefore natural, representation reinforces the notion of a singular Frenchwoman who was "a natural charmer," no matter if she was "the sober and joyous, the old and young" (Figure 2.26).<sup>127</sup> And according to Tenney, contrary to younger shopgirls, older French women were alluring, too: "Barmaids in France are not sparking beauties. They tend to the robustness of Irene Rodier, whom I met in a Paris bistro. She has the fun loving earthiness most French women have—though many try to hide it" (Figure 2.27).<sup>128</sup> Thus, through Tenney's photos and commentary, American readers learn that French women are an identifiable symbol of French femininity—playful, seductive, earthy, fun-loving, and naturally filled with flair. As a final case in point on the Frenchwoman's desirability, the last photograph of the photo essay, *Life's* "clincher" shot, shows a French mother and her child in a Parisian park. Here, the nameless mother, who represents all other Frenchwomen by remaining nameless and being described in general terms, looks "more like the babysitter than the mother" (Figure 2.28).<sup>129</sup> The general insinuation is that Frenchwomen are eternally youthful, fashionable, and sought-after. While Tenney's initial remarks in the photo-essay do not tell American readers that the French woman is more beautiful than her American counterpart, he ultimately tries to get *Life's* readers to imagine her to be most distinguishable among the crowd of women around the world due to her aura of charm, natural beauty, timeless youth, and sexiness, which are qualities to which American women should look closely.

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., pp. 65B-66.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-71.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

**Figure 2.25:  
The Strolling Parisian Woman**



**Figure 2.26:  
The Parisian Woman's Charming Smile**



**Figure 2.27:  
French Barmaid**



**Figure 2.28:  
Charming Parisian Mother**



### **American Women's Liberation in France**

French women like those featured in Gordon Tenney's photo essay on everyday *Parisiennes* were a source of inspirational beauty for American women, but where French women lived was just as significant for American women. France, and Paris in particular, represented a way for American women to break free from the expectations and constraints placed on them in the 1950s. American magazines made this apparent in their in-depth looks into the learning experiences American women had while they were studying or living abroad. These articles mainly appeared in the mid-1950s (roughly 1954-1957) at a time when Americans studying abroad in France had fully stabilized after the drought of the war and as international exchange programs like the Fulbright program, established in 1948, started to see the fruits of its labor.<sup>130</sup> Across all of the American women featured in American magazines who had lived or

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<sup>130</sup> France as a place of liberation and discovery for American women was not unique to the 1950s in the postwar period, but articles on American women's travels, studies, and work in France was unprecedented in the 1950s, and it was a key way in which France was packaged and presented to American readers. After the war, it seemed that Americans, especially women, re-flooded France. As Robert Barrat, a Frenchman, wrote in a November 17, 1950, article in *Commonweal* on his impressions of the influx Americans in Paris, what struck the French was the American woman and her independence: "Speaking of American women, there is something else which astounds the French: and that is the number of women tourists (48 percent, I believe) who travel alone or in a group. We have often heard of the emancipation of women in the United States, but the presence of so many

studied in Paris, American readers learn that the women grew and matured for the better. Most became more confident and knowledgeable of their world. Others gained skills that might not have been open to them if they had stayed in the United States where they were expected to get married, have kids, and live an isolated life in the suburbs.

As Alisia Chase argues in her dissertation on American women in 1950s films set in Paris, and as Whitney Walton shows through her assessment of study abroad between the United States and France throughout the 20th century, Paris in the 1950s represented a place for American women to break free from the constraints of conservative America.<sup>131</sup> By looking closely to the language and images used in the articles showing American women's transformations in Paris, one sees how Paris was a way for American women to grow. Popular American magazines, despite what Betty Friedan described as vehicles to entrench and force the feminine mystique on many women, also worked in the 1950s to inspire American women to take advantage of opportunities in the world, or, at the very least, to imagine a possible world where they were not constrained by what they saw around them in postwar America. At the same time, most articles imply or directly state that the United States is a better, more comfortable place for American women to be than France, which feeds into the trope of American technological and modern superiority. This propping up of the American nation paired with focused attention on American women's loneliness and longing for a piece of America while they were in France also served to undermine the empowerment that many magazine representations worked to show when American women were independent and free in France.

Consequently, images of an independent, motivated American woman who succeeded through hard work and ingenuity in France were part of broader conflicting messages to women in the 1950s to reach for the stars and also be the ideal housewife and mother.<sup>132</sup> France, thus, represented an opening to something more liberating and meaningful away from the constraints

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American women, many of them students and white collar workers, is a striking demonstration of that phenomenon." Robert Barrat, "From France: Americans in Paris," *Commonweal*, November 17, 1950, p. 138.

<sup>131</sup> Alisia Chase, "An American Heroine in Paris: Hollywood and Women in the City of Light in the 1950s" (doctoral thesis, University of Minnesota, 2002). Whitney Walton, *Internationalism, National Identities, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890-1970* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>132</sup> For a discussion of various pressures on women to conform to various expectations in the 1950s, see Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are* (New York: Times Books, 1995); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1983/2003); and Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

of conservative American culture in the 1950s, but it was also a closure from the materiality and conveniences of America that were lacking in France. The American woman abroad, thus, presented the opportunities and dangers in becoming an independent woman and pulling free from the claws of the American feminine mystique. Her experiences abroad also worked to prop up American superiority on the global stage. Thus, as with other magazine articles of the time, close attention needs to be made to how images and text fuse to make France a place that could in help American women better understand themselves and their place in the world. In this particular theme's case, it was an image of independence and freedom that came for American women when they bravely went to study, live, and work in France, which, in some instances, may have come at the price of loneliness or sadness of being so far away from the comforts of home in America. However, no American woman featured ever regretted taking up the adventure in France.

In one glimpse into the experience of the American woman in Paris, *Mademoiselle's* July 1953 issue details Irene Orgel's journey to Paris to learn French, which brought incredible growth through the process of learning a new language and culture. From the first few lines, Orgel's essay stresses the transformation American women have in taking up the challenge to go to France: "There comes a time when you are no longer a tourist in Paris. You look back in amazement on those narrow first weeks when your way was bounded by your hotel and American Express. Now you are no longer satisfied with being able to call for 'l'addition!' (check please) in a restaurant or to make out the legends embroidered in tapestries in the museums. No, you want to grasp the living culture as it is created afresh every day. You are going to do the thing thoroughly. You will go to school to learn French."<sup>133</sup> Much of Orgel's text-only essay explains her struggles to reach this determined conclusion. In particular, in her class, she felt inferior to her European classmates who seemed to pick up the language quickly and easily compared to her and her American counterparts. Irene details her frustration in her "uninitiated" friends and family who often insinuated that she should stop being so serious in doing so much homework and "just pick up French" by living there. As she detailed at length, such flippant remarks only made Irene study harder, but no matter how dedicated she was to her studies, her progress was painfully slow:

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<sup>133</sup> Irene Orgel, "French? You Just Pick It Up," *Mademoiselle*, July 1953, p. 14.

You get out in the morning mist through the public gardens and get to your class at nine sharp. You come home to lunch and eat your croissant with a book of verbs open in front of you, while the radio pours torrents of French in your ear until you shut it off and spring for your afternoon course. After this you come home for the evening to do your homework. All this time you are getting letters from home saying, 'I suppose by now you are talking French like a native. What are you doing all day long?' Or, 'Aunt Dora says she is surprised you are going to school to learn French. She is sure you would pick it up faster if you sat in the cafés. When she was in Montevideo...' <sup>134</sup>

In this description, Irene brings her readers into her wonderful experience of passing through the magically misty and lushly green Paris, which conflicted with her struggle to master French and her frustration of her family's not understanding how difficult living abroad could be for her. The journey still would seem exciting, though, to any average American woman reading the magazine who may never have the means to make it to Paris.

Despite her frustrations, Irene inspires American women readers by describing her determination to conquer French through dedication that would make any language teacher proud. She explained how she listened closely to Radiodiffusion Française and avoided English-speaking circles. She even looked for a conversation partner, a Frenchwoman who lived an hour outside of the city. Even though her meetings with her language partner were short, the Frenchwoman's English progressed quickly, while Irene felt her French languished. <sup>135</sup> Getting fed up with her slow progress, and showing her readers just how hard her experience was, Irene explained how she threw in the towel: she went to an English bookstore to indulge in a Penguin mystery, listened to Jack Benny on the American Armed Forces radio program, and became more irritable because of those "damn foreigners" around her. Yet, Irene's letting go actually helped her progress. When she passed on to a new language level, she felt her "solitude starts to thaw." <sup>136</sup> She began to notice smaller details of Parisian life. Chiefly, one day, outside her window, she smelled roasting chestnuts on the street below. She dropped what she was doing to venture out to see the "cornucopia of glowing embers" to buy a cone wrapped in a sheet of old music. This letting go and her noticing the details of Paris led her to the realization that she understood more than she thought in her cocoon of studying.

The next day, when she was shopping for some books, Irene discovered that her hard work paid off, which showed readers the value of her keen persistence. By bringing her readers into her epiphany, Irene allows American women come to experience her breakthrough with her.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

As readers learn through her detailed story, while Irene perused books, she listened in on the banter between the store's old shopkeeper and a stuttering girl working in the shop. On the way out, having seen how the old shopkeeper treated the girl poorly, Irene wanted to be nice to her. The detailed exchange that followed between Irene and the girl brings readers directly into her moment of linguistic victory, which would make her and others proud and more appreciative of the opportunities afforded to an American woman in Paris at that time:

When the old dragon [the old shopkeeper] leaves you venture to say to the girl, inadequately, the easiest phrase from your schoolbook: "Nice day today." And it happens to be true, for the cold snap has broken.

"Oui. Le printemps est, n'est-ce pas, precoce [sic]?"

Spring is precocious! She is a myth-maker, this girl with the stammer. And because she is without the helter-skelter fluency of the rest of the French, she has touched your eardrums with understanding. Spring is precocious. You go out of the store saying the phrase over and over again. Violets are banked up in baskets on the corners, mingling their scent with the chestnuts. Everyone is speaking lyric poetry and your Francophilism knows no bounds.

You have a few phrases now with which to open conversation. It is like knowing how to serve in tennis. You can toss a ball fairly accurately into the right court; the trouble is you can't return it. However, you go on batting phrases all over the place, and once in a while there is a lucky stroke when you understand the reply and can toss it back.<sup>137</sup>

Ultimately, in this passage, American women readers join in Irene's success over the trough of culture shock as well as her linguistic barrier. Like Irene, American women learn how to accept their limitations and acknowledge the growth that could be made with hard work. However, she reminded her readers that the mastery of her French eventually would make one sad since the exciting journey of learning French moved beyond leaps and bounds of epiphany. That is, for Irene, once the mystery of the French language was unlocked, a sort of "glow...faded from the world." As a result, Irene is not discouraged. In fact, she inspires American women to keep on exploring, too. To Irene, the best way to move on was to continue to be reinvigorated through more travel and language learning, as she implies in her final sentences: "What are you to do? Go to another country? Learn another language."<sup>138</sup>

The concluding lines telling readers to go out and learn a new language reveals the ultimate purpose and importance of Irene's essay. By following the details of Irene's frustrations, joys, and excitements of living in Paris, young American women readers of *Mademoiselle* learn how taking a chance and exploring the world allowed another American woman to grow and become something of her own. It is this purpose that makes the Irene's use of the word *you* throughout the entire essay all the more important since this selection of point of

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 112.



view directly engaged American women to follow along with Irene’s challenges and take the chance to go abroad, too. This strategy, intended or not, reveals how many popular magazines in

**Figure 2.29:**  
**Luxury for American Women on the Riviera**



the 1950s provided an inspiring worldly experience for American women readers who might not be able to afford the adventure. *Mademoiselle* magazine in this case worked to inspire young American women to go after their goals, work hard, and dare to go abroad and learn a new language and culture. It also associated Paris and the experience of living there as a place of growth, discovery, and mastery for American women like Irene.

Popular American magazines’ representations of France as a place of growth and discovery for American women also appeared alongside images of France as a place of luxury and wealth for American women to enjoy while studying abroad. Leslie Felker’s April 1954 *Mademoiselle* article on “Riviera

Campus” presents such a vacation-like world for American women studying abroad in Cannes along the coast of France’s Riviera.<sup>139</sup> The article reads mostly as a description of the appealing sunny Mediterranean climate and the studying that may happen for Americans found there, but it shows how France was projected as a fantasy world of play, leisure, and wealth for American women in the 1950s. To reinforce this image, one photograph depicts two women standing on the steps of the main building of the Collège International looking at what appears to be a newspaper while basking in the sun in their beach attire (Figure 2.29).<sup>140</sup> In a neighboring image, two American women sit on a sunny terrace as they enjoy a cool drink at a café. The experience of Cannes, the “warm, happy city on the French Riviera,” offers the “taste of French language and civilization” and the chance to “live in one of the world’s glamour spots, all for a

<sup>139</sup> Leslie Felker, “Riviera campus,” *Mademoiselle*, April 1954, pp. 132-133, 160.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.



comparative pittance—\$85 a session...for room, board and education.”<sup>141</sup> Therefore, going to Cannes to “study” is depicted as luxurious and part of the appealing life of material comfort in a new postwar world. Even if the American women readers could not afford the trip to study in Cannes, they were transported through the magazine to a fantasy-like world where “lucky girls at the college found themselves riding on Sadri Khan’s yacht or cavorting with a young Spanish-English count whose pleasure it was to give daily picnics where people would compete at games for small bottles of champagne.”<sup>142</sup> The university life in Cannes was a scene from a comfortable, wealthy life that many of the American women reading the magazine could only dream about: “There’s a beach for the college between the Carleton (Cannes’ finest hotel) and the popular Martinez. Here students play volleyball to the screech of gulls, the fluent French of children (a constant surprise) and the gentle nibbling of waves on the shore.”<sup>143</sup> Americans would indulge in swimming parties drinking “rosy wine, often chilled in hollowed-out melons.”<sup>144</sup> Or if they don’t want to stay in Cannes to enjoy terrace sunsets or a “philosophical sip” of a drink, they can “squeeze into a friend’s Renault or Fiat (the French and Italian answers to our Ford)” to take a ride down the coast.

Contrary to the hard work that Irene displayed through her study of French in Paris, there was another side of France that *Mademoiselle* highlighted for its readers. France was a place where classes could be taken at one’s leisure and where an exciting, carefree life could be had. Reading this article from *Mademoiselle* from an ever-conforming American suburb or rural area in the mid-1950s would only work to create an image of France as a place of excitement, discovery, and luxury for American women.

France was an enticing place for American women to go, and as Paul E. Deutschman illustrates in a two-part article on the “American Girl

**Figure 2.30:**  
**Liberation of the American Girl in Paris**



The expatriates see the tourists’ Paris too. No one misses the Eiffel Tower from the top of Notre Dame.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

in Paris” in *Holiday* magazine, American women expatriates to France were common and therefore in need of in-depth analysis and understanding.<sup>145</sup> Deutschman sought out many women expatriates to answer the question of why so many American women were going to France, but he found the case of “Nancy Pride” to be the most typical. To establish her generalizability and therefore convince readers of her authenticity, Deutschman declared that she was representative early on: “Nancy’s name had been given me by friends as being fairly typical of the American girls residing here. She had agreed to show me her Paris—the peculiarly American Paris of the girl expatriate—which so far has escaped notice of the guidebook writers and the movie makers and is never written about in letters back home.”<sup>146</sup> It should be noted, too, that Nancy Pride is a cleverly selected pseudonym by Deutschman since he felt that she was very much full of pride—not only of how she had grown through her experiences in Paris, but also in the sense of importance she felt in having a life in Paris.

Like other American magazines describing Paris, from the start of his piece, Deutschman describes Paris to be a dream for most Americans: “Paris is a great, never-fulfilled hunger; a city of romance and of nostalgic aching for nostalgia; a magic place bathed in gay song and the soft, passionate cries of old lovers who never die; a misty, purple-gray sky that exists nowhere else in the world—and all of it encircled by dreams.”<sup>147</sup> Yet among those Americans who eventually come to expatriate to Paris to immerse themselves in this dreamlike place, American women are the most “dedicated”:

The most dedicated of the Paris expatriates (if that is the word for them) are the American girls, a few years past college age, who have flocked here by the hundreds since the War. Most of them, for some reason, seem to come from a rather specialized upper-middle segment of American society. Watching from a convenient café terrace, you can recognize them by their high-head, long-legged walk, by their expensive-looking three- or four-year-old tailored suits from Bergdorf or Best and the long, heavy woolen scarves they wear in wintertime, flapping outside their coats with a truly Parisian dash. And if you study the matter further, you will discover that it is they who carry the most tarnish proof preconceived picture of Paris and who find the finest justification for these preconceptions everywhere they go—in the meanest hotel and the mangiest restaurant and in the most feeble lover’s arms.<sup>148</sup>

In this description, Deutschman informs American readers several things about the average American girl in Paris. First, she most likely is entitled due to being from the upper-middle class to upper class. Second, she carries on a certain fashionable persona that is distinctive on

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<sup>145</sup> Paul E. Deutschman, “American Girl in Paris,” *Holiday*, October 1954, pp. 106-111. Paul E. Deutschman, “American Girl in Paris—Part II,” *Holiday*, November 1954, pp. 56-59.

<sup>146</sup> Deutschman, “American Girl in Paris,” p. 107.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

the Parisian landscape. Third, she carries a particular romantic, perhaps over-romanticized image of Paris through what she dreams and imagines Paris to have been and be. From a close reading of Deutschman's tone, one might assume that he has a bit of disdain for the American girl in Paris, which becomes increasingly clear as he describes the life of Nancy Pride in the rest of his articles.

Deutschman's slight derision for the American girl in Paris comes expressly through his selection of the pseudonym "Nancy Pride." The word *pride* is both positive and negative, where the former meaning of the word connotes a sense of accomplishment and the latter meaning insinuates arrogance or stubbornness. Throughout the piece, though, Deutschman carefully shows how Nancy is full of pride in her growth as an individual, which comes through most clearly in Deutschman's inclusion of Nancy's explanation of her gratification in discovering Paris on her own:

"For the first six weeks I was completely alone. But I didn't mind, honestly. I like being alone—especially in Paris. I just walked around and saw the city and watched the people's faces, but didn't speak to anyone. I rode the Metro and the buses and went into a lot of churches and did all the corny, wonderful Paris things wandering through the art galleries on Rue Jacob and the bookstalls along the Seine, sitting around in cafes drinking red wine and eating almonds. I'd go up to Sacre-Coeur all by myself and look down on the lights of the city and wander around Pigalle and Montmartre late at night and think nothing of it. Oh, I'd even go to Les Halles at six in the morning and eat that awful onion soup—or just walk around, eating *pommes frites* [French fries] out of an old rolled-up newspaper and looking at the flowers and the beautiful vegetables and the wonderfully alive, unbeautiful women and 'men in their leather coats all smelling of onions and blood. Everything seemed very strange and foreign—and yet, somehow, I didn't feel like a foreigner. Because I don't think that anyone can feel that way in Paris, do you?'"<sup>149</sup>

Nancy's feelings of discovery are strengthened in particular by the image that accompanies the first article where Nancy looks out from her rooftop on the Paris skyline with the iconic Eiffel Tower centering the page in the background (Figure 2.31). All of Paris, thus, was Nancy's to discover and explore on her own terms. For American women, then, Nancy would be the epitome of the independent and free American woman in France who was able to let go and grow as a woman.

Nancy's exploration of Paris mainly impacted her ability to mature, see the world, understand another country's perspective, and move beyond what she found to be an insulated American society. Nancy expresses her growth clearly to Deutschman when she details how being abroad only made her interculturally competent and even a better American:

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

“You know...I’ve lived pretty much the way I’ve wanted to live over here and my family just can’t understand why I stay. They’ve been writing me for months, asking ‘When are you coming home?’ For them going to Europe is fine—but it’s something a girl does for maybe a year, as a kind of grand tour. Then, you go back and take up the life you’ve left behind you.

“But—I don’t know—I suppose I’ve changed a lot these past three years. Frankly, I like the European way of life better than the American. That doesn’t make me a worse American—I think it makes me a better one. You get perspective living in Paris. Maybe it sounds strange—but you get to know a great deal more about your own country living away from it.

“Before, I hardly ever met anyone who didn’t speak my language and think the same as I. But now, suddenly, I begin to realize that there are a lot of people in the world who think differently from me—and they’re people too.”<sup>150</sup>

Here, Deutschman learns and conveys to his readers that Paris was where an American girl like Nancy could discover herself by herself and learn how to live, grow, and develop in an ever more globally connected world. Nancy, in her extended quotation, showed her desire to understand and grow from beyond her cultural sphere. For her, Paris was the place where she felt inspired and free to do as she wished, and her proud words could serve as inspiration to American women readers, too. Further still, Nancy’s sense of growth was not something completely intrinsic. When Deutschman visits Nancy’s apartment building to see what living is like in Paris, one of her landlords provided him evidence of how she grew and became more confident because she came to Paris:

“She has changed, that one!” one of the [landlord] sisters observed. “So timid she was, when she first came here, *m’sieur*. You would not believe it!”

“What changed her?” I asked

The woman suddenly became very French. “What changes them all, *m’sieur*?” She rolled her eyes upward, quizzically, “*La vie! L’amour! Paris!*”<sup>151</sup>

In this short following of Deutschman’s tour of Nancy’s life, the words of a Frenchwoman explain to readers that the aura and mystique of Paris liberated and educated Nancy, which boosted her confidence and ability to be outgoing. Nancy felt fully and wholly independent in Paris, as compared to what she saw in America in the 1950s, and Deutschman’s attention to her growth, which was confirmed by others beyond Nancy’s direct experience, only fixed Paris as a site of inspiration to American women readers of the magazine, too.

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<sup>150</sup> Deutschman, “American Girl in Paris—Part II,” p. 59.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

Figure 2.31:  
American Girl in Paris



Although Deutschman depicts Nancy's life to be one of maturity and discovery, like his chosen pseudonym, he uses a slightly condescending tone to describe Nancy, her pampered life in Paris, and her skewed misgivings about postwar American life. For Nancy, life in postwar America was suffocating, which she described at length:

“For me, going home means New York, because I certainly couldn't move back with my family in the Philadelphia suburbs. And New York means getting a job again—a ‘career’ job—and finally marrying one of those bright, agreeable copywriters I used to go around with. That means I'd end up waiting in the Darien station with all of the other blank-faced women—waiting for the six-ten and the seven-ten and then later trains. And I'd become more and more dissatisfied. I'd be forced to do things around the suburbs—the PTA, the Lighthouse or the Hunt Club Ball. Oh, I've seen the continual separations between husbands and wives back there—because of the driving, driving, driving! The husbands get more and more wrapped up in their businesses. And the wives become more isolated in Greenwich or Darien—even though they do get a second station wagon or an MG.”<sup>152</sup>

In his response to Nancy's critique of the constraints of suburban American, Deutschman scoffs at her concerns by insinuating that what she has experienced must be “so horrible.” This belittlement of Nancy's observations of American women's frustrations of postwar life reveals not only Deutschman's misunderstanding of the entrapment many American women like Nancy felt at the time, but it also diluted the import of Nancy's experiences in living and working

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

abroad in Paris. Nancy's description of suburban America presented a reality that Deutschman did not fully appreciate. Rather than empathizing with the urgency Nancy felt in staying in Paris and exploring how and why Paris and France were appealing to American women like her at that time, he brushed her concerns about American society aside, either due to misguided chauvinism or as a unintentional strategy to placate any flak he would receive from editors and readers in uncovering the mundanity of American life; or, even worse, elevating the French way of life above that of the American. Many other American women magazine readers may have also felt that same as Nancy in seeing postwar American life as a world of entrapment, and the possibility of exploring those feelings seriously would have more accurately shown how and why Paris was such a sought after place for American women, either in reality or in their imagination. However, acknowledging in a popular magazine that the American way was not the best way for American women was a danger Deutschman barely avoided, as it still provided a small window for American women readers to know that other American women were not satisfied with their lives, too.

Despite his slight undermining of Nancy's views of the American woman's condition, in his conclusion, Deutschman tried to more adequately and fairly explain why American women like Nancy go to Paris. For him, American girls were not escaping America. Rather, they are going after the American Dream of a career. Deutschman explained that the presence of American women abroad like Nancy was a "postwar transatlantic offshoot of a very prevalent female American phenomenon—the career girl." Therefore, rather than being an escape, the American girl's pursuit of Paris was just an extension of the American spirit. In Deutschman's eyes, in going to Paris, American women needed "some kind of justification for this flight to the city," which, in the American context, "lies in a career" that "is the bridge that makes all this freedom permissible."<sup>153</sup> Thus, rather than explaining how American women probably wanted to go and stay in Paris due to its offering a better life, Deutschman safely shields Americans, particularly men and those who found nothing wrong with postwar American culture, by explaining that it is the American Dream that draws them to France. Further, he undermines all American girls' experiences by equating Nancy's situation with being spoiled. Deutschman observed that the American girls in Paris came from "well-heeled families and they've had their

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

comforts at home.”<sup>154</sup> As such, the benchmark of their success was not achieving monetary success of material comforts as it was at home. Rather, it was their ability to pursue their career of freedom of independence and exploration. Deutschman, in the end, admires and is slightly annoyed by Nancy Pride and the other American girls of Paris. He admires their growth and independence, but as he tries to impress upon his readers, these women are entitled and not completely appreciative of the rare opportunity of going to France that the average American woman could only dream of having.

One average middle-class American woman featured in *Woman's Home Companion* January 1955 issue was very much appreciative of her opportunity to study in Paris. Originally from Tulsa, Oklahoma, Martha Ann Lauderdale wrote about the transformative experience of coming to live in Paris in her article “I’m on my own—in Paris.”<sup>155</sup> The article’s title immediately implies the sense of independence Martha felt that the magazine wanted to promote: she was “on her own.” To stress the importance of where she was on her own, a dash is used before indicating it is *in Paris*, which was presumably a noteworthy place for American women readers, as explained by the title’s explanatory caption: “Here’s what happens to a girl from Tulsa whose *dreams come true* in the most romantic city in the world.”<sup>156</sup> Here, an American woman’s magazine, tells its readers that Paris is a dream place that is rare for everyday American women to see, which makes Martha’s accomplishment all the more significant in readers’ eyes.

To further emphasize the desirability of Martha’s experience for American women readers, several telling opening images present Martha’s notable adventures in Paris (Figure 2.32). In one image, Martha forages through items at one of Paris’ famous flea markets to “buy anything from old jewelry to bizarre modern furniture.”<sup>157</sup> In a neighboring image, which almost seems like a photograph pulled from a scene from the MGM classic film *American In Paris*, Martha is shown “after work” watching a beret-touting artist paint a picture in Montmartre along with other passersby. In another image, Martha stands in a modest kitchen with limited technology, but being in Paris seemed to make up for that, as noted in the caption: “I prepare breakfast on a one-burner gas plate—but outside my windows is a view of Paris.”<sup>158</sup> Playing

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Martha Ann Lauderdale, “I’m on my own-in Paris,” *Woman's Home Companion*, January 1955, pp. 36-37, 79-81.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 37. Emphasis added.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

along with the glamour of having an independent life in France where romance abounds, Martha explained in her photographed dinner with Parisian local Pierre that “French food is luscious but I still need help with the menu.”<sup>159</sup> Immediately from glancing at the article’s opening images, Martha’s life in Paris is one of adventure, fun, and discovery, but there are also slight undertones that her life in Paris is not all that it is cracked up to be, as emphasized in the largest image of the opening spread showing Martha looking off despondently past readers as she longs for home in America.

**Figure 2.32:**  
**“I’m on my own—in Paris!”**



One of the most telling images of the introductory page showing how Paris was an important place of growth for American women appears along the spread’s top. Martha smiles and laughs upward, which shows her happiness and almost uncontrollable excitement of the experience of living abroad, as she explains in the accompanying caption: “When I learned I had won the job in Paris, first I was stunned and then wild with happiness.”<sup>160</sup> From these structuring images and text, American women readers might wonder why Martha was so happy and what they could learn from her time abroad. Martha anticipates these questions and clearly explains why she was so happy with being in Paris in her opening lines: “I’m in Paris and I love

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 37.



it. I'm 25, old enough to sound a little sophisticated but I can't—I'm living in a dream-come-true. I have everything Paris can offer, from the opera ballet to simply strolling along the boulevards, and when I've worked at my job a little longer, I'll be flying to visit other European cities. Who could ask for anything more?"<sup>161</sup> Here, Martha reveals Paris' symbolism as a place of dreams, independence, high class, and culture for American women. The ability for Martha to experience Paris, especially given her coming from a rural middle-class family, only made the opportunity all the better and remarkable for the average American women reading *Woman's Home Companion* at that time.

Martha's emphasis on her middle-class, Midwestern status to appeal to the broad American readership of *Woman's Home Companion* should be addressed at length because this story for the average American woman took on a greater meaning than an exciting story for a woman in Paris. That is, the story insinuated that any average American woman could also be empowered in similar ways as Martha to take up the challenge. As such, and possibly sensing many readers' desires to go abroad, Martha stressed that coming from Oklahoma, she had always "wanted to go to a foreign place and stay long enough to feel [she] were really living there."<sup>162</sup> However, like many American women at the time, she felt that she "didn't have much chance of getting to either one [Rome and Paris]," so she decided to become an airline stewardess in the States after graduating from the University of Oklahoma.<sup>163</sup> Revealing her desire to explore the world as an American career woman, this occupational choice brought her all over the United States, which was significant since she had "never gone very much beyond the state line" before. She found the 3000 flight hours over three years to be exciting, but she did not feel like she connected well with the places she visited since she typically only had 24 hours in each place she went to. On one of her layovers in New York at a friend's apartment where she found a job opening in Paris in the *New York Times* for the Around-the-World Shoppers Club, which needed someone to find presents Americans would like to buy. Despite her friend's pessimistic assessment that it would be impossible to get the job out of a thousand others clamoring for the position, Martha, revealing her American spirit of optimism and hope, felt it did not hurt to try. With her experience in Spanish as well as buying gifts for others in Mexico, the Club readily

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> For an excellent discussion of how being a flight attendant afforded opportunities for American women, see Kathleen M. Barry, *Femininity in Flight: A History of Flight Attendants* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

hired her after a phone interview. Martha had “no doubts about wanting the job” as it “was the chance [she] had been waiting for.”<sup>164</sup> That chance was adventure and possibility that may not come with staying in the States. Martha only had four days’ notice to leave, but she took the opportunity readily, and definitely not before spending every available moment on the telephone with her family back in Tulsa. Martha, thus, represented the typical American woman looking for independence and adventure, but firmly grounded in her connection to family and America. Martha’s journey showed American women readers how an independent American woman could go after her dreams, succeed, and still not err too far away from her duty to family.

Martha, though, was a vehicle for discovery for the many American women readers of *Woman’s Home Companion*. In particular, her description of her arrival of Paris whisked readers away into her dreamlike experience. In detailing her travels by plane, Martha put her readers into her shoes by giving them the sense of excitement that came with one’s first view of the Parisian skyline: “A thin fog was covering the ground. But above the fog rose that famous landmark—the Eiffel Tower. We were circling over Paris.”<sup>165</sup> As she arrived into town and was driven to her new job, the Paris Martha anticipated and imagined, as seen through films and magazines, was there, which would have confirmed many magazine readers’ expectations, too:

When you first see a place you’ve read and heard so much about you react in a strange way. Everything rushes up at you quickly and you don’t know exactly how to feel.

The bus drove us in from Orly Airport, through the Porte d’Italie, down the Boulevard Montparnasse, near the École Militaire and the Hôtel des Invalides to the terminal. I noticed the beautiful fountains, the tiny shaded squares, the broad treelined avenues and the massive monuments. It was like sitting at the movies and seeing scenes shooting past on a screen. Odd as it sounds, the thing that impressed me most was that men were actually wearing berets. I’d always thought that was only an affection of people trying to look French. But here were really Frenchmen casually wearing berets. I was really in Paris.<sup>166</sup>

In this description, Martha reinforces the dreamscape of Paris and the stereotyped image of the bereted Frenchman. More importantly, though, Martha implies a sense of accomplishment in making it to Paris. She “was *really* in Paris.”<sup>167</sup> Paris was no longer something to grasp at a distance like Martha’s readers were doing with her essay. Martha could see, breathe, taste, and become someone in Paris. Again, the article’s beginning further sets up this sense of accomplishment by stressing that Martha thought she would never get beyond the Oklahoma

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<sup>164</sup> Lauderdale, p. 79.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Emphasis added.

state border, which contrasted sharply with the cosmopolitan life she could make in Paris working for an international company. All it took was taking a chance, and her gamble proved to pay off well.

Martha's essay works to paint a more realistic picture of her life in Paris beyond the images of a Parisian fantasyland, though, which worked to prop up America. Life was challenging in Paris, which, in many ways reinforced Martha's accomplishment more. However, Martha had difficulties in finding an apartment because of a severe housing shortage and high rental prices, but after trying every day for weeks, she found an apartment to share with a French student nurse named Marianne. As she notes, and feeding into Americans' expectations of an inferior French household, the apartment "wasn't the place of my dreams but it was something I could call home." Martha enjoyed her job, which presented continuous challenging assignments, but her work and life were constrained since French society was structured differently, making her miss out on American customs, such as shopping at lunch (businesses closed in France for elaborate, multi-course two-hour lunches). Given her modest salary, food cost a fortune, and eating out was a luxury as it was much more expensive than in the States, but she could still indulge in everything from *gratin de cranes* to roast ducks to a variety of specialty cut steaks. Martha was keen to forage the city for cheaper places to eat, but what she could not easily find was inexpensive good-looking clothes like she could in the States.

At the point of describing clothing, Martha corrects American women's impressions of French women and their ability to stay fashionable. Clothing was expensive for French women, but, like Martha thought initially, American women would expect to see French women in high fashion like they saw in the magazines. However, Frenchwoman could not afford luxury fashion. Rather, they improvised. In fact, to the possible surprise of American readers, Martha found Frenchwomen admirable of American women's ability to buy ready-to-wear clothing so easily due to its relative lower cost:

When I think of all the girls in the States just dying to come to Paris to buy clothes, I'm reminded of a visit I made not long ago to the home of a young French couple. There was a pile of American magazines in a rack and I asked Nanette if she enjoyed reading them. 'I just look at the dress advertisements,' she answered. "It must be wonderful to choose any one of these dresses—and be able to buy it."<sup>168</sup>

In describing the Frenchwoman's jealousy over readymade clothing, Martha shows American women readers that French women admire the American woman. Further, the preconceived

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<sup>168</sup> Lauderdale, p. 80.

notion that Parisian *haute couture* is everywhere and worn by all French women was dispelled. The American woman's dream at the time might have been to go to the big fashion houses in Paris, but Martha brought her readers a reality check by describing her experience of visiting a Parisian designer's store:

Back home you imagine yourself in Paris walking into one of the big fashion houses—Dior, Jacques Fath, Balenciaga—and walking out with an original. Of course you never owned an American original in your life but that's the kind of dreaming that thoughts of Paris inspire. Well, one Saturday afternoon I went around like a *grande dame* to one of the big fashion houses. It was very plush and ornate and I sat down to watch the beautiful models glide through in silk evening gowns and taffeta cocktail dresses and lovely wool suits. I knew I'd have to save up for a long time to buy even one original—but little did I know! I saw a gray flannel astrakhan-trimmed suit and I asked one of the salesgirls how much it was. She said a little disdainfully, "Two hundred thousand francs." It took me a minute to figure out that that was more than 500 dollars.<sup>169</sup>

Martha, therefore, corrects the American woman's Parisian dreamland. Further, Martha reveals, like magazines immediately after the war, that American women still have something to learn from the Frenchwoman: to stay fashionable, Frenchwomen are resourceful and make their own clothes or finding a neighborhood dressmaker. The American notion of going to department store in France had not caught on yet in France since, as one of Martha's colleagues explained, "Frenchwomen didn't like standardized, machine-made clothes." To Frenchwomen, machine-made clothes meant a lack of individuality, but this adherence to old ways led Martha to conclude that "the average woman here [in Paris] is not as well-dressed as she is in America but the well-dressed woman in Paris is more elegant than anyone else in the world."<sup>170</sup> Martha, thus, continues to build an elevated image of the fashionably chic Frenchwoman who is resourceful and knows how to "make do" with the little resources she has, as compared to the United States. The American woman has the upper hand comparatively when it comes to being technically well dressed and put together. As a result, the Frenchwoman still holds her mystique, but the American woman is just as strong through her access to material abundance.

Martha's description of her home life also propped up American women's sense of pride in having better modern amenities than the Frenchwoman. Compared to the United States, France was behind in convenient home appliances, as Martha describes:

Back home we have our gleaming white gas ranges, home freezers, central heating, hot water and garbage disposal and we take them for granted. Here in France, not only are these things extraordinary but all the little things we've been used to are real luxuries. I run a bath that takes an eternity to fill. My one-burner stove leaks gas. There's no milk on my doorstep in the morning and

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid. In 1955, \$500 is roughly \$4350 in 2014 (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, "What is a dollar worth? Calculator," accessed February 28, 2014, <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/>).

<sup>170</sup> Lauderdale, p. 80.

no laundryman to come around and pick up my bundle. You can't have fresh orange juice, either, except when oranges are in season. There isn't any frozen orange juice in the refrigerator because I can't buy frozen fruit juice and I don't have a refrigerator.<sup>171</sup>

Through Martha's experience, readers realize that American technology and convenience make life better for the American woman, which was not completely tolerable in Paris, especially once the Parisian honeymoon fog burned off. As Martha describes, she initially saw the inconveniences of French amenities as "glamorous" because "you're busy getting to know the most exciting city in the world."<sup>172</sup> However, "the novelty wears off" as "you realize one thing—you're spending too many evenings alone; you don't know anyone well enough so that you can just call up and talk; you're lonely."<sup>173</sup> As such, Martha said most Americans search for something familiar, such as the Washington Bar, which was an American diner on the Champs-Élysées. At Washington Bar, Martha reveled in an American experience: "I can order a glass of milk and a real hamburger in a loud American voice without fearing everyone is staring at me."<sup>174</sup> Fortunately, on one visit to the diner, Martha met a German student studying at the Sorbonne who spoke English. The German woman, too, was lonely, because of what Martha observed to be the difficulty in meeting French people. Contrary to the extraversion of Americans, to Martha, the French seemed to be very insular: "I came to Paris hoping to get to know some French people really well. Those I have met I like; they're friendly and very polite and extremely kind. But they always seem to be conscious that you're a foreigner living in their country and it's a rare occasion that you're invited to their homes. Even Americans who have lived here for years confess that they have few really close French friends."<sup>175</sup> Martha, thus, shows the downsides of living in Paris away from what she sees as a more open, welcoming American culture. Yet, despite the inconveniences and loneliness she sometimes felt, Martha still saw living in Paris the chance of a lifetime that brought freedom, independence, and a sense of exhilaration that she would never give up:

Despite all the strangeness, the inconveniences and especially the moments of loneliness, I wouldn't leave Paris. I've a feeling that in time I'd come to feel at home here. There is already much that I love—walking along the Champs Élysées and coming into the Place de la Concorde with its spaciousness and buildings in the grand style, as beautiful in rain as in sun; catching a glimpse of the river Seine and the bridges; stopping at me book stalls along the Left Bank.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Lauderdale, p. 81.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

Consequently, Paris is where Martha can explore and be independent. It is also a place where she can be confident and feel a sense of pride. For American women readers, then, they are empowered to seek the same sort of independent experiences. In the final lines of her essay, Martha reveals these feelings of gratification of living in Paris when she described what happened when a French person took her for a native *Parisienne*:

And little things do wanders to build up my confidence, to make me feel that I'm not such a foreigner after all. Just the other day I was walking home and a woman stopped me on the street to ask a direction.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle," she said, "*mais où se trouve la rue Eugène Delacroix?*"

"*Tout de suite à gauche,*" I answered quickly, pointing the way.

It was extraordinary. She had acted as if I had lived in Paris all my life. Lucky for me I knew the street she wanted. It's the one I live on.<sup>177</sup>

In her depiction of her being on her own in Paris, Martha's *Woman's Home Companion* essay balances an everyday American woman's dream image of an independent life in Paris with the hardships that do come from being far away from one's home. The American woman had much to take from her time in Paris, including a sense of accomplishment and adventure. Also, through Martha, American women learn that the French woman may have a mystique that could not be beat, but the American woman's comfortable life put her on top. Martha's story, in the end, did not critique the underlying reasons for why life in France was better because of the independence it afforded American women, but it provided average American women readers a sense of hope in taking a risk to follow her dreams of exploring the world.<sup>178</sup>

To conclude, American magazines' representations of the liberated American woman in Paris, *Life's* December 1957 special double-issue on "America's World Abroad" is especially instructive on popular magazines' and Americans' concern with the place of American women in the world in the 1950s (Figure 2.33). Within a special issue entirely dedicated to looking at America in the world, journalist William Brinkley presents one of the issue's longest pieces focusing on the presence of American women abroad.<sup>179</sup> Referring to what people are saying around the world, the article's title insinuates that the American woman is a sight to behold and something to admire: "They all say: 'Look at the American Signora!'" The subtitle stresses this

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid. Emphasis original. Translations: "Pardon, Miss...but where is Eugène Delacroix Street?" "Immediately to the left."

<sup>178</sup> In fact *Woman's Home Companion* at the time had a very pro-women's rights stance that worked to inspire American women to take an active role in the public sphere.

<sup>179</sup> William Brinkley, "They All Say: 'Look at the American Signora!'" *Life*, December 23, 1957, pp. 66-74.

even further: “Presiding over chateaux, starting new businesses or doctoring the sick, our women overseas amaze, delight and sometimes shock the whole world.”<sup>180</sup> For Brinkley, the American woman abroad, in general, is admired by all due to her special comparative status among the world’s women:

To people of all lands the American woman is the world’s most fascinating creature. They have never seen anything like her, and they look at her with every shade of emotion from love to horror. All over the world, in one language or another, they are saying what the Italian neighbors of an American woman in Rome exclaim when they gaze across their fences and observe her working her farm: “Look at the American *signora!*”<sup>181</sup>

To provide *Life*’s readers with an idea of the entire world’s purported awe before America’s women, and to support his generalized claim, Brinkley stressed early that he could make this argument through his tireless work as a journalist where he “circled the world by ship, plane, train, jeep, air-conditioned Chrysler and horse-drawn *jutka*” over 100 days to talk with hundreds of American woman and “many people of different nationalities about her, on three continents and in a dozen different countries.”<sup>182</sup> In these extensive travels, Brinkley realized that the American woman was “absolutely everywhere—in a miserable room in Paris, in a castle in Denmark, in the equatorial jungles of Sumatra—and doing everything.”<sup>183</sup> Brinkley, thus, inspires *Life*’s readers, especially its American women readers, to be proud of the American woman’s prominent place in the United States’ postwar presence around the world.

**Figure 2.33:**  
**American Women in the World**



<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 66. Emphasis original.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> William Brinkley, “They All Say: ‘Look at the American Signora!’ ” *Life*, December 23, 1957, p. 66.

Before he details the specific experiences of American women abroad, and particularly the stories of American women in France, Brinkley explains to readers why American women—“from Denver, Minneapolis, Portland, Buffalo, Lincoln, Belleville, Brooklyn, Hyattsville and Branson”—were going abroad. Among all of the women he quotes to provide his explanation, the underlying themes were a desire to be more independent and the opportunity to find their own way in the world:

“Belleville, Michigan? Oh, my word. It has one dime store and a couple of drugstores. Salzburg has music festivals in the summer, and in the winter it’s next door to the most wonderful ski resorts. I sail on the Wolfgangsee in the Salzkammergut. Belleville, Michigan? Oh, my word.”

“Independence! I want independence! I knew if I was going to be independent, I would have to get far enough away so I couldn’t just go home anytime. I mean \_emotional\_ independence.”

“Being overseas—it gets in your blood. There’s no other life.”

“In the town I live in it was role-playing. I wanted to find out if I really existed. Right now I’m both scared and glad, but that’s just another indication that I am a human being.”<sup>184</sup>

For these American women that Brinkley quotes at length, readers learn that going abroad was way for women to explore the world, be away from suburban American boredom, find a sense of purpose, and inject a sense of excitement in their lives. For other women, especially those featured doing service work, time abroad was a particularly meaningful way to improve others’ lives. For others, particularly an American woman in Sweden, American women abroad enjoyed a more gender equitable life: “ ‘The American man as I remember him—too willing to do anything I wanted. In a right marriage no one has to dominate. That’s the way it is here.’ ”<sup>185</sup> As Susan Georgiou, an American woman in Athens, explained, having a life outside America could bring an interesting, non-commercially-based life, too:

“The way I’m living many American women wouldn’t like. I don’t have the facilities for homemaking, we don’t have warm water, we don’t have a washing machine. I can’t afford the craze for clothes American women have. Our only difficulty is financial, but we economize. I never wanted to settle down and be a housewife. Marriage meant a home in Connecticut and I certainly didn’t want *that*.”<sup>186</sup>

As a result, Brinkley reveals to readers that American women going abroad found a way to be independent, move away from the constraints of a sexist, mass consumer, suburban culture, and seek opportunities and lifestyles not necessarily possible for them in the United States. Brinkley did not question these women’s motives, but as is made clear shortly, he ultimately undermines

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. Emphasis original.



these women's implicit critiques of America by appealing to the superiority of America felt among many American women abroad.

Of the American women around the world, Brinkley only presents two women in France who come from very opposite stations in life (Figure 2.34). The first, Joan Signorile, was the most outspoken American woman abroad that Brinkley featured. She was a papergirl for the *Herald Tribune* and her territory was the busy and famous Champs-Élysées, starting from the Arch of Triumph. For Brinkley, and to many French people, Joan stood out for more reasons than one. Physically, she wore a bright orange sweater with the name of her newspaper's "emblazoned in bold letters across the chest" to shout "Herald Tribune! Herald Tribune!" at cafés and along street corners. Personality-wise, Joan was not afraid to voice her opinion and to take the most out of life. When Brinkley asked her why she lives in Paris in her "extremely small and shabby" second floor apartment with no room and "shattering" traffic noise below, like many of the other American women in Paris featured in other magazine articles, she responded that it allowed her to open up: "Because an American girl can cut loose in Paris. Like me, selling newspapers. Psychologically, it's helped me a lot. In New York I'm very shy. This job has made me go up to people. I sell papers here and like it. I would die if I did it in the United States."<sup>187</sup> Joan's out-of-the-shell attitude certainly comes through in Brinkley's description of her: "The men at the sidewalk cafés stared with interest at her. Now and then she sold a paper. One man just leered. She stared directly back. '*Herald Tribune?*' she said with icy sweetness. He still said nothing, still just leered. She turned briskly and walked on."<sup>188</sup>

To visualize this bawdy attitude, the "svelte paperseller" is shown "hawking" her offers next to a Frenchman selling French newspaper *Paris-Presse* (Figure 2.35). Joan's independence, however, is undermined by the male gaze used in the photograph, which draws readers' eyes to her "svelte" legs and up toward her turned torso and pouty lips.<sup>189</sup> She is still a force to reckon with, though, as seen by the Frenchman's slight tilt away from her in the shot.

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

**Figure 2.34:**  
American Women in France



**Figure 2.35:**  
American Newspaper Girl



**SWIFTY PAPERSELLER,** Joan Signorile hawks *Herald Tribune* on Champs Elysees in Paris next to a French competitor who sells copies of *Paris-Express*.

Despite Joan’s outspoken love for France and the newfound confidence that came from living and working in Paris, she ultimately wanted to settle down with an American man. When Brinkley asked what she wanted to do with her life, she responded “instantly”: “Get married and have babies.” His follow-up question, “To a Frenchman?”, led to Joan’s strong response: “Heavens, no. I can’t stand Frenchmen. I want to marry an American.”<sup>190</sup> Part of this response could be because she fell in love with a Frenchman three years prior who “dropped out of sight” when she returned a year later to Paris to find him. However, during the conservative 1950s, Joan’s preference was inspirational and debilitating to the average American woman reader. Certainly, she was an outspoken American woman who claimed her independence, worked hard in a typically male-held job in France, and spoke her mind. However, she seemed to want to give all of that freedom up by wanting to be a housewife-mother and attending to her American husband’s needs. For many American readers, too, her choice of the American man would be appropriate, as it signals an American woman’s preference for America despite her having chosen to take up a life in France.

The second American woman in France that Brinkley features is Baroness Philippe de Rothschild, also known as Pauline Potter, who is photographed in the photo-essay during her stay in a Danish castle with her French husband. Unlike the seemingly unrefined Joan, Pauline

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

was born to a father who worked in the American Embassy in Paris, which most likely facilitated the start of her relationship in 1950 with Baron de Rothschild, the owner of the famous Mouton-Rothschild vineyard in Bordeaux. Her marriage to the Baron was “watched closely by France” since the Baron was one of the most sought-after bachelors in all of France, or, as Brinkley notes, “French society was enormously curious and jealous: one of its great names had chosen, over all the numerous qualified women of France, an American.”<sup>191</sup> Thus, Baroness, won out in the battle for American women against French women for France’s most eligible bachelor to claim the prize of a life of wining and dining with the premiers of France and other greats of Europe, which would be the dream of many American women not unlike the story of Grace Kelly’s becoming the Princess of Monaco. The Baroness ultimately became royalty, married into wealth, and was able to enjoy a high European life. However, Pauline importantly massages the American magazine readers’ national ego by telling them that she did not forget her American roots, as she tells Brinkley: “The great danger for an American woman married to a Frenchman is to become too French. To assimilate too much of another nationality weakens you. Though on the surface I might not seem to be 100% American, I have tried to remain as shaggy inside as possible.”<sup>192</sup> Here, even when an American woman climbs to the highest social echelons of Old World nobility, she is still proud of her American roots and makes every effort to maintain her connection to her home. Brinkley, in other words, shows that the American woman in France, despite social status, has an affinity for home and all of its comforts and advantages.

In the end, according to Brinkley’s research, most American women abroad prefer America. This strategy, deliberate or not, was ultimately a way to not disturb American readers’ sense of national pride. American women appreciated the growth they saw when going abroad, but if her experiences abroad were better and made her happier than an existence in America, that would disturb national unity and the exceptional place America was supposed to have in the world at that time. To show how the independent American woman abroad appreciated her time abroad but preferred America, Brinkley was keen to end his piece with a scene where the American woman returned home. On his final journey from Tokyo to San Francisco, Brinkley met an American woman who articulated clearly how the American woman was empowered through what she could learn abroad: “It was my first time over. I learned that people have great

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

similarities all over the world. I developed an understanding of other people's moral codes while not changing my own. And I took mandarin lessons. I'm asking immediately for reassignment overseas."<sup>193</sup> However, another woman mentioned her excitement about going back to American shops for all of the abundance and choice that implied: "First thing, I'm going to a supermarket and look, look, look."<sup>194</sup> Yet, the reaction that drove home the point about how the independent American woman abroad preferred America came with his final image of the piece that describes one woman's reaction to approaching the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. The woman, who "had been away two years," stood on the deck of the boat and remarked, "I never knew how beautiful it could be. It's not such a remarkable bridge, is it? It's just because it is what it is."<sup>195</sup> After quoting her, to close his essay, Brinkley detailed what caught his eye the most: "Suddenly there were tears on her cheeks."<sup>196</sup> Here, while American readers learn to admire the free-spirited American woman found all around the globe, the tears of the woman are a reminder that independent American women around the world most likely still found home the best.

American readers of the "America in the world" issue of *Life* saw that the American woman abroad more generally, and the American woman in France more specifically, could become more independent by going far away from home and leading a new life of adventure and learning. However, the American way ultimately won out.<sup>197</sup> In the end, American women readers were encouraged to be freer and take on opportunities to grow, but they also were reminded in many ways of how great America was and could be. Further, and unfortunately, Brinkley's piece failed to show adequately why American women left in the first place to avoid the constraints placed on them amid the unhappiness that women felt in postwar America. However, the piece shows us how the American women featured in *Life* were used to prop up American pride and the greatness that came from their being American and having American values. The American woman might have left America, but, to Brinkley, no one could ever take the superiority of the American out of the American woman.

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> This was not surprising given *Life's* and its creator Henry Luce's mission to prop up America after World War II.

## Conclusion

In France and the United States, the 1950s presented a reprieve from the atrocities of World War II and the difficulties of reconstruction immediately following it. A comfortable life of plenty emerged in both countries with a growing middle class that enjoyed the fruits of economic and cultural booms that came from new consumer goods, businesses, and technology. However, with general unease on the global stage for both countries—France’s faltering empire and political turmoil; and the United States’ expanded reach around the world and entrenched battle against the Soviet Union—French and American society retreated conservatively inward by trying to create stable lives and families headed by a strong male figure and a demure housewife-mother. French and American magazines’ representations of American and French women, respectively, legitimated and reinforced this inward movement. At the same time, though, French and American magazines provided an avenue through which French and American women readers could taste a bit of female liberation that could come through reading and seeing French and American women’s lives and experiences. Just as the teenage girl mentioned in the opening anecdote of this chapter felt trapped by conservatism and conformity all around her, many French and American women readers most likely shared the same sentiments to a certain degree, so the popular magazines they turned to, which often compared them to American and French women, created an opening onto the attractive world on the other side of the Atlantic that could bring more fulfillment to their lives—even if these possibilities were just a dream.

As seen in Françoise Giroud’s extensive piece on the independent American woman in all of her varieties, French magazines’ intense focus on the American woman’s life and what it meant for French women continued its trajectory from the immediate postwar period. In examining all American women from young country girls who took a chance on the big city to the spoiled twenty-something working in a department store to the young girl who was trained to be an active member of her community, French magazines showed French women better possibilities to come for them. Certainly, the French woman’s life was propped up in representations showing how the American woman’s life was not perfect because of the intense pressures placed on housewives, mothers, and career women to navigate in a man’s world. However, the American woman’s technical advantages, material comforts in work and home, and ability to dream big (and achieve those dreams) worked to inspire French women readers to

envision new freedoms for women in addition to accepting American-style mass consumerism and technological change that continued to take hold in France in the 1950s.

The iconic Frenchwoman featured in American magazines was inspirational to American women, too. American magazines' focus on a Frenchwoman's continued ability to persevere and make do with what little she had at the same time of being fashionable, desirable, and demure worked to show American women a possibility of how to have an even better, more exciting life amid the humdrum life of abundance in the American suburbs. The iconic Frenchwoman undoubtedly also entrapped American women into adhering to unrealistic, standards of beauty and eating practices to the pleasure of men. However, American magazines' representations of the iconic Frenchwoman's glamorous life afforded a glimpse into another world that could take American women readers far away from the constraints they saw and felt around them in their everyday lives, which gave even more significance to American magazines' representations of the liberated American woman in France. Independent American women in France like Irene Orgel, Nancy Pride, and Martha Ann Lauderdale, who all "made it in Paris," offered images of empowerment and the possibility to break free from constraints placed on American women to conform to the unfulfilling role of housewife-mother. These American women in France served as an example of better things to come for American women as well as a reminder for women to never give up on their dreams of achieving their goals in life.

Ultimately, American and French magazines' continued comparison of French and American women in the 1950s served the purpose of not only opening French and American women's windows onto a better life, but they also propped up the pride each country's women felt in their nation by showing how each nation's women were well off and happier in some ways than the other nation's women. In the end, though, the question over whose life was better or happier was commonly a ruse. As Giroud concluded after her weeks of analysis of the American woman for French women readers of *Elle*, there are many ways in which each nation's women were better off than the other, so sizing up who is better really does not help anyone. Rather, by looking at each other, each nation's women reading popular magazines might be able to gain awareness of themselves, their sisters across the Atlantic, and the ever-shrinking world in which they lived. The world of the 1950s might have been pulled women between the interior comforts of home and the exterior harshness of an unstable world, but American and French magazines' representations of French and American women provided one safe and often

entertaining way for them to sort out the complexities of the 1950s. French and American magazines' providing its readers an awareness of the place of women and how to navigate a rapidly changing, "modern" world, as seen in their continued comparisons between American and French women, was a common concern in the 1960s, too, which will be taken up in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3

### Troubles in Adulation, 1960-1965

In the 1963 pages of *Jours de France*, Winston used the allure of Franco-American love to sell its cigarettes to its general French audience. In one Winston ad from June 20, a man in a gray suit and dark tie stands behind a woman balancing a cigarette in her mouth (Figure 3.1). The man smiles as he uses the burning end of his cigarette to light the cigarette that dangles from the woman's lips. Below this sensual scene of cigarette lighting reads the story of how "Quand il y a de l'amour dans l'air, there is a WINSTON somewhere" ("When there is love in the air, there is a WINSTON somewhere"). In this story, written in poetic form, the lines thread French and English to reveal how the man and woman form a Franco-American relationship that is bonded through their choice of the American Winston cigarette:

Il est Français,  
she comes from New-York,  
il aime les WINSTON  
she loves them.  
Tous deux sont d'accord,  
longue et filtrée.  
WINSTON est  
leur cigarette  
préférée.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Quand il y a de l'amour dans l'air, there is a WINSTON somewhere," Winston, *Jours de France*, June 20, 1963, p. 66. French translations are the following: He is French (line 1), he likes WINSTONS (line 3), Both agree, long and filtered (lines 4 and 5), WINSTON is their preferred cigarette (lines 6, 7, and 8).



**Figure 3.1:  
Winston's Franco-American Love  
Story**

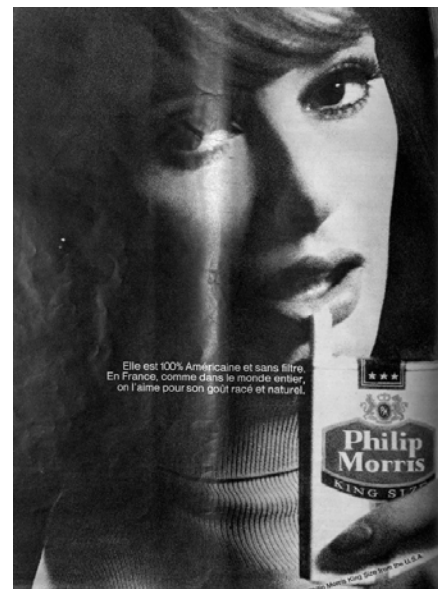


Here, the love that the Frenchman and American woman share is forged through the selection and enjoyment of the same cigarettes. The choice of using French and English words smartly presents the sort of linguistic mixing that could come from a relationship between French and Americans. The advertisement plays on the mutual attraction between the United States and France to appeal to Frenchmen who want to feel attractive and seductive in their choice of cigarette. The Frenchwoman is called, too, by the allure that comes from smoking an American cigarette like her American counterpart. This advertisement, which ran in various forms starting in the late 1950s, reveals how in the early 1960s American

women were still used to represent Franco-American relations or the alluring qualities of an “independent” woman who followed and doted upon her man while depending on him to do the simplest of tasks like lighting her cigarette.

Another cigarette advertisement in *Paris Match*, but for Philip Morris in July 1964, uses a similar play on words associated with cigarettes to implicate and describe the attractive nature of the American woman for the French (Figure 3.2). While the advertisement refers to cigarettes, it appears to be more about the image taking up the entire page of the woman who opens her lips to pull out a cigarette from the Philip Morris pack she holds up: “It [Elle] is 100% American [*Américaine*] and without filter. In France, like throughout the entire world, one likes it for its distinguished, natural flavor.”<sup>2</sup> Here, the capitalized version of the word *Américaine* is used, and there is ambiguity that comes from using the

**Figure 3.2:  
100% Américaine**



<sup>2</sup> “Elle est 100% Américaine,” Philip Morris, *Paris Match*, July 11, 1964, p. 98.

word *elle*, which can refer to *it* or *she*. However, because of the large image of the woman and the capitalization of *Américaine*, one can deduce that they are one and the same, or at least highly associated with one another. Through the ad, the woman has a still pose that reads sexual anticipation through her perched lips and head-tilted stare with eyes set on the reader. This American woman, seemingly “without filter” is “distinguished and natural,” making it ever more enticing for French readers, men and women, to pick up a pack of the desirable Philip Morris cigarettes.

As in earlier time periods covered in this dissertation, the popular magazines in the early 1960s in the United States and France regularly represented French and American women through their images and text. Although their working through Franco-American relations was not always as provocative as these advertisements, many of the implied qualities these advertisements associate with American women and Franco-American relations relate to the various themes drawn out in the previous chapters about the resourceful and chic Frenchwoman and the independent American woman. In early 1960s France, American women continued to represent the highest standard for being modern, clean, and gadget savvy, but, more importantly, at a moment when the women’s rights movement and second wave feminism were emerging strongly in both countries, French magazines were keen to continue to explore the everyday American woman’s life: what made her tick in modern times and how she compared to the French woman and French way of life.

Conversely, in the United States, despite her material advantages, the American woman was not the perfect confection she might have been represented to be. At a time when American magazines decried competition among women for husbands or exacerbated women’s worries about needing to be compatible for a husband, American women searched for solutions on how to be the most alluring possible. Although significant changes were ahead for women in the late 1960s and 1970s, the claws of the feminine mystique and the contradictory expectations of womanhood were still ever-present. One way for American women to navigate this minefield was to look to French women in magazines. In fact, the Frenchwoman and her ways, as described in American magazines, helped teach American women how to stand out from the pack. Additionally, by the early 1960s increasingly sophisticated advertisements for French products in American magazines capitalized on the historically well-known essence of the chic, sexy, seductive, refined, and worldly Frenchwoman to entice American women to buy French-

made or themed products, particularly perfumes and make-ups. In short, the French woman in American magazines continued to educate American women on how to have it all: be sexy, alluring, and yet somehow still demure and in line with proper, even conservative, gender norms.

This chapter focuses on three themes that emerge from French and American popular magazines' representations of everyday American and French women in the first half of the 1960s. First, in the theme of the "France's Continued Fascination with the Independent-Dependent American Women," as with previous years, French magazines focused on the American woman's admirable independence, but there was concern over the American woman's conformity, materialism, dependence on men and limits to her potential in a patriarchal society. The American woman could still offer lessons to French women on how to be independent, modern, and gadget savvy, but American women's conformity was still troubling. Second, in the theme of "Frenchwoman Knows Best," one sees how American women were instructed on how to emulate and look up to the Frenchwoman for her enduring, liberating qualities such as the ability to more openly and freely express her sexual and romantic desires. However, and problematically, layered into these lessons were conservative forces where Frenchwomen were seen to be able to help the modern American woman find ways to improve their intimate relationships, but, in the end, still perpetuate male-dominated society. Third, in the last theme, "Advertising the Scent and Essence of the French Woman in America," by looking to important advertisements for beauty products in the late 1950s and early 1960s featuring French women in American magazines, one sees how Americans imagined France in a gendered way through selling products to and through French women.<sup>3</sup> However, before examining each of these three themes, a look to the general context within and between the United States and France in the early 1960s is needed to better situate the in-depth analyses of various magazine representations that follow.

### **The Start of the Turbulent Decade**

By the 1960s, World War II was fading into the past with the prosperous 1950s having pushed France and the United States ever-forward into the modern, "jet age." Economic growth

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<sup>3</sup> I include the late 1950s in this chapter for several reasons. First, as one will see in the advertising section of this chapter, more semiotically rich advertisements started to emerge in the late 1950s into the early 1960s, so what was evolving in advertisements in the 1960s had roots in the late 1950s. Also, because of extended discussions of the second chapter, advertisements were not included, so by bringing in some of the advertisements from the 1950s, they are covered in part in this dissertation.

in France was at break-neck speed, and it caught up to the United States in many ways, such as the rapid penetration of television in everyday life.<sup>4</sup> With the Cold War still ongoing, the United States saw its prestige on the global stage grow with its gradual success in the space race, and France, evermore feeling trapped between the East and the West, decided to go its own way in defiance of its allegiances with the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The 1960s would come to be a socially and culturally turbulent decade in both France and the United States for a variety of reasons: the explosion of the civil rights, free speech, and women's movements, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and entrenched involvement in Korea and Vietnam in the United States; and the end of the controversial violent war in Algeria and the rise of student and women's movements in 1968 in France. These events dramatically changed both countries with the breakdown of social and cultural barriers and the youthful backlash to the rise of postwar conservatism in the late 1940s and 1950s. The 1960s brought social relaxing, especially in the area of sexual mores and relations, and it was also the decade when more relaxed fashion came to be a stiff competitor for the more conservative haute couture that had dominated New York and Paris in the 1950s. However, although the seeds of change were planted, many of the most significant, dramatic changes did not erupt until later in the decade, with 1964 and 1965 often being considered a turning point and "end of innocence" of 1950s naivety and a decline of conservatism (at least among youth).<sup>5</sup> Therefore, this chapter focuses on the first half of the 1960s, the years 1960 to 1965, when the postwar economic boom became a normalized part of everyday life and the most significant societal and cultural changes had not yet burst on the scene in both countries.

In the early 1960s, French identity was tied to the building of a prosperous, modern France on French terms, as seen in the defiant return of Charles de Gaulle in 1958. By 1962, France's empire finally crumbled with the end of the prolonged, violent conflict in Algeria, which allowed the French to finally move on from its troubled ties to colonialism. Efforts were redoubled to build up French industry and infrastructure, which would allow France to be even more independent. At this time, there was still great interest in American culture and products; however, as France's industries developed strongly, including mass media, more homegrown French products, including popular culture such as television, emerged to rival American

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<sup>4</sup> See Introduction for comparative television statistics between the United States and France.

<sup>5</sup> *American Experience: 1964*, directed by Stephen Ives (2014; Boston: WGBH Educational Foundation, 2014), Television.

products in quality and quantity. Overall, in the early sixties, France saw continuing improvements in the standard of living along with the rise of youth culture in the economic and political sphere, which would eventually prove to create massive political and cultural change with the student protests of 1968.

The year 1960 was especially pivotal in Franco-American relations. It was the year that John F. Kennedy, the young Senator from Massachusetts, and his wife with French connections, Jacqueline, were given the American electorate's nod to enter the White House after that year's election. JFK and Jackie were symbolic of the wave of young people starting to hold increasing power in the United States who pressed for opportunity, dynamism, and service to one's country and world. JFK's call to hire public servants, to send Americans abroad to be ambassadors for the country through the Peace Corps, and to put a man on the moon by 1970 fueled a drive for Americans to seek education and find ways to contribute to society. Along with Kennedy's inspiring youthfulness, there was a general attitude of optimism for the future as well as a desire for change, as seen in the strengthening Civil Rights Movement.

**Figure 3.3:**  
**Arrival of Youthful America  
in the White House**



**Figure 3.4:**  
**Jackie's French  
Connection**



Further, the prominent place Jackie would have as a young, fashionable, and culturally fluent First Lady warmed French hearts to America after French leaders' general cold shoulder to increasing American power on the world stage (see Figures 3.3-3.4). American and especially

French magazines looked to Jackie as a bridge between the countries due to her having family in southern France and extensive experience in France from her junior year abroad (1949-1950). Jackie was even viewed as an ideal woman for French women to emulate (see Figures 3.5 and 3.6). As, Whitney Walton writes, Jackie may not have influenced her husband's or French President Charles de Gaulle's policies, but "she did...contribute positively to each leader's favorable view of the other, and she did change the way Americans and the French regarded one another."<sup>6</sup> For Americans, Jackie represented a hybrid of the modern, independent woman and the conservative, demure American woman. For the French, Jackie was notable for her "youth, elegance, and Frenchness."<sup>7</sup> At a time when Cold War geopolitics was heating up, which fueled anxieties in both countries, Jackie was a bright light for women and positive Franco-American relations.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 3.5:  
French Fascination with  
Everything Jackie**



**Figure 3.6:  
Jackie Kennedy as Ideal Woman Type for  
French Women**



<sup>6</sup> Whitney Walton, "Jacqueline Kennedy, Frenchness, and French-American Relations in the 1950s and early 1960s," *French Politics, Culture, & Society*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer 2013): 52.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> Although Jackie had an immense presence in French magazines in the early 1960s, she is not a focus of this dissertation not because she is not important, but because this dissertation is focused on everyday American and French women. An entire chapter or book could be devoted on Jackie Kennedy's place in French magazines and how it impacted French women's understanding of national self and their position relative to that of American women. Walton does a bit of this in her article, but more extensive and wide-reaching magazine sources are needed.

As Jackie's mixture of independence and reservation shows, the early sixties were a transitional period in both countries for women. In the United States, debates swirled about birth control and whether or not having single, independent working "girls" was good for society. As Susan Douglas notes, the late 1950s and early 1960s was a confusing time for an American woman who was told she was "a member of a new, privileged generation whose destiny was more open and exciting than that of" her parents; however, at the same time, the American woman was told that by becoming a successful, independent career woman, she would be unattractive because she troublingly took on the roles of a man.<sup>10</sup> At the same time in France, there were similar political and cultural debates about women's work outside the home, spousal financial equality, and women's sexual emancipation and use of contraceptives.<sup>11</sup> French women, too, were told to do well in school and find a suitable job, so long as they did not overshadow the men in her life.

Overall, the early sixties presaged change for American and French women with the women's rights movements building, fueled in part by the continued rise in youth culture. In the American context, Helen Gurley Brown's publication of *Sex and the Single Girl* in 1960 and Betty Friedan's release of *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 inspired broader political and cultural debates about women. In France, Friedan's and Gurley Brown's books became quite popular, and encouraged the resurfacing of Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* as well as broader discussions of the place of women in French society. In addition to the explicit discussions over the unhappy and unequal lives of women, gradual relaxing of mores in women's clothing (as inspired by the British "Mod" look) and more mainstream acceptance of risqué representations of women in the media shook conservative notions of the need for a demure woman. By the early 1960s, the provocative images of women in the mass media pressed the limits of what was acceptable for women to wear as well as how they could act physically. Most notable among women in the media were Marilyn Monroe and Brigitte Bardot who became sex symbols in the United States, France, and around the world through their attractive attire and flirtatious characters and personalities. The acceptable roles, rights, and images of women were shifting in

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<sup>10</sup> Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1995), pp. 25-26.

<sup>11</sup> It was not until 1965 that French law officially allowed married women to open their own bank accounts and obtain work without their husband's permission (Larbi Oukada, Didier Bertrand, and Janet L. Solberg, "La parité entre les sexes," *Controverses* [Boston: Heinle, 2012], p. 89). Oral contraceptives became legal in France in 1967.

the early 1960s, and American and French magazines were attuned to these changes as they showcased French and American women's different ways of balancing independence and dependence in a man's world.

At the precipice of this massive social and cultural unrest, the mediascape became evermore visual in both countries. In 1960, France still only saw televisions in about 10% of homes (as compared to about 80% in the United States), but that figure rose above 60% by 1968.<sup>12</sup> Magazines were still an important window onto the world in both countries, as circulation figures and advertising revenue continued to rise. Television came to take over more and more in both countries, but magazines still were a common and regular source of news, entertainment, and advertising within and between the United States and France. As such, it is still important to examine the place of magazines' representations of French and American women in the early 1960s to situate the United States and France as well as the swell of changes that were to come for women. In fact, the question of the independence of and empowerment of women was a common concern, especially among French magazines that closely examined the American woman's life and condition in the early 1960s, which will be turned to next.

### **France's Continued Fascination with the Independent-Dependent American Woman**

As seen in earlier time periods, French magazines in the early 1960s were fascinated by the details of the everyday American woman's life to better understand American culture and life, and compare what was found back to Frenchwomen in order to gauge where and how France stacked up to America. In particular, several articles and magazine series featured and described American women to French women readers as a way to continue to understand the independent American woman, and, by extension, American culture and life, which could help French women readers better understand themselves and what it meant to be liberated women as they propelled faster into modern times.

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<sup>12</sup> Data for France was found in Raymond Kuhn, *The Media in France* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 111. Comparable data for the United States was estimated by dividing the number of American households with televisions found in Alexander J. Field, "Radio and television - stations, sets produced, and households with sets: 1921-2000," Table Dg117-130 in Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright, eds., by the number of American households found in United States Census Bureau, "Table HH-1. Households, by Type: 1940 to Present," <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/files/hh1.xls>. The broadest definition of household was used when consulting the United States Census Bureau. See Introduction for a graphical representation of the rise of television in France and the United States.



One extended piece in *Marie Claire*'s April 1961 issue is a key example of this sustained French interest in the everyday American woman's life (Figure 3.7).<sup>13</sup> Similar to *Paris Match*'s in-depth piece on Phyllis Nelson (see Chapter 1) and Giroud's introduction to eight types of American women (see Chapter 2), *Marie Claire* had Victor Franco follow and present "the total exactitude of everyday life, customs, feelings" of a typical American teenage girl to tell French women readers "All the truth about the ultramodern young woman."<sup>14</sup> However, in opening the piece, the editors stressed to readers that their choice "wasn't chosen by accident." Rather, as a strategy to show their mission of being objective and fair in presenting the representative example of American women, the magazine editors emphasized that Victor "consulted US statistical services and the advice of the heads of different American women's leagues" to determine the qualities of the "typical" American woman. Martha Kostyra, the seventeen year old "tall and skinny" blond with light chestnut eyes, "a straight nose and a little too strong of a nose that gave her a charming, sulky air" who hailed from a New Jersey suburb of New York City, fit the bill for Franco and *Marie Claire*.

For *Marie Claire*, Martha's life had a more important purpose than providing a representative glimpse into the world of modern American women, though. Magazine editors seemed to pull from a textbook definition of national, social comparison without even knowing it by noting that French women could better understand themselves and their place in modern society by following Martha's life and analyzing her every move: "This report has been made in the style of a major investigative report on youth, in the end so the young girls of France, by understanding better those of other countries, they can better understand themselves."<sup>15</sup> Franco's piece on Martha, thus, goes beyond observation for his French women readers. Similar to French magazines' earlier in-depth looks into everyday American women's lives, Franco's piece on Martha describes and photographs every major element of her life from her place in her family to her work and studies in New York City to her hope of having a secure life as a housewife-mother. Thus, Franco observes, describes, and visualizes Martha's life for his French women readers so they can compare themselves for the purpose of better understanding where and how they sit as women in an "ultramodern" world that was rapidly changing in the early

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<sup>13</sup> Victor Franco, "I Saw How Martha Lives, Your Sister from New York," *Marie Claire*, April 1961, pp. 64-73, 75, 114.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

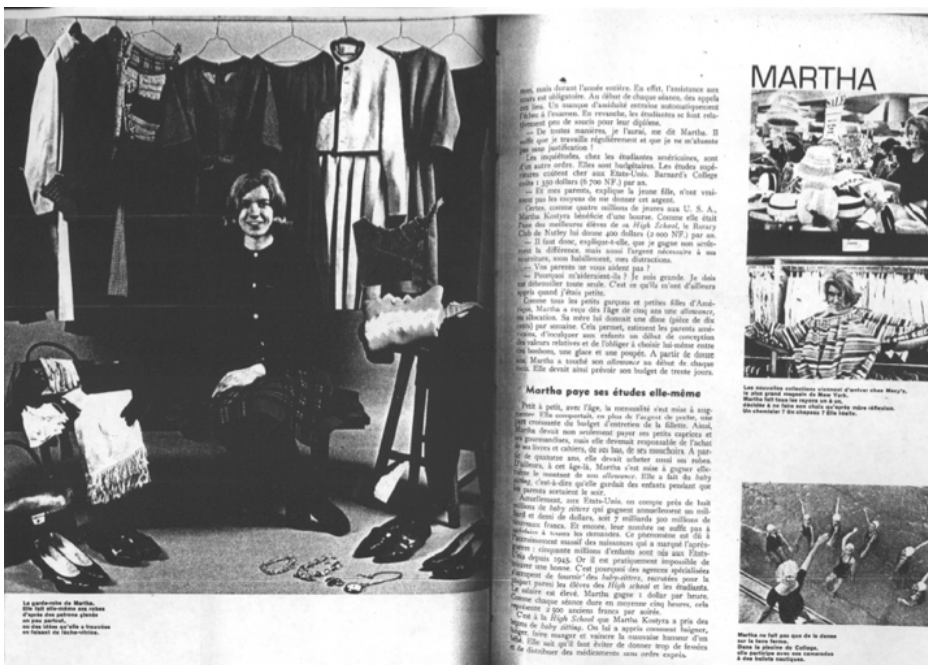
1960s. By closely examining what Franco focused on in his piece, not only does one see how a major French magazine interpreted American culture and society at that time, but one also sees what issues concerned Frenchwomen and how a French magazine's representation of a young American woman could help them move forward into the future.

**Figure 3.7:**  
**Frenchwomen's American Sister Martha**



From the start, Franco describes and pictures Martha to be a responsible young American woman with a sense of purpose and duty. In the opening spread (Figure 3.7), Martha is shown smiling while she sits cross-legged on the floor of the dance studio where she takes classes. The accompanying caption details Martha's determination by noting that Martha said she would do sports her entire life to stay in shape, possibly to maintain her health, and certainly to maintain her physique and figure, which becomes clearer later that she does so in order to secure a steady boyfriend and husband. In addition to being active, French readers learn that Martha is resourceful and helpful in the kitchen, as depicted in the full-page photograph of her cooking in a modern kitchen in her family's home (Figure 3.7). The friendly attitude she exhibits in the images makes this representative "ultramodern" young American woman out to be content and happy with her life through the hard work she does and the busy life she leads.

**Figure 3.8:**  
**A French Magazine's Looks into Martha's Everyday Life**



Much of Martha's sense of duty comes from her being what Franco calls the "cadette" of the family. The second oldest child of six, but the apparent leader among the children due to her active life and determined attitude, Martha reveals the independent and commanding nature of

the American woman. She initially lived at home with her family and commuted into the city to study, but the cost of traveling as well as the time and energy expended led Martha to find an apartment in the city to share with three other girls. Learning this news pressed Franco, who may have anticipated his intended French woman reader's interest, to ask Martha how her parents felt about the move, which would have been rare among French women at the time. Martha indicated that her father approved and found it to be a good learning experiment for her future. However, Martha found that her life in the city was not as completely free as she had thought—she had to return to her apartment by midnight as opposed to an open time at home, and the college she went to was strict in its discipline. Despite these issues, though, Martha found living in the city liberating nonetheless in that she could dress as she wished, spend more time in a bath, and make most of her own daily decisions. For Martha, living on her own provided the possibility to gain a sense of individuality and independent footing going into her future, and the magazine's adulation of this apparent liberation served to inspire French women readers.

For Franco, one of the most notable elements of Martha's life beyond being on her own is her financial freedom. When he asked her how she was able to afford college and an apartment, she explained that she received a scholarship and worked to make up the difference. When asking her if she received support from her parents, Franco seemed surprised to hear that she was a bit shocked by his question, as revealed in her response: "Why would they help me? I am grown up. I must take care of everything myself. That's what they taught me when I was young."<sup>16</sup> In this instance, Franco takes the time to explain to French women readers how all American women seem to be trained to be financially independent from an early age by receiving a small allowance to cover whatever they like. Martha, having these lessons of money from an early age, unlike the French women reading, was able to make do when she was on her own by babysitting. Martha, thus, is admirable in a French context due to her successful ability to pay for her studies through odd jobs as a babysitter, giving babysitting lessons, working admissions for Columbia University, serving as a replacement waitress in a drugstore, or serving ice cream. Further, in the summer, she did not go on vacations. Rather, she worked as much as she could to save up for the upcoming school year. Her ethic of saving, making her money stretch, and only finding the best quality items at good prices allowed her to build a full closet

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

that would be the envy of any French woman (see lower image of Figure 3.8). Similar to what French women would do at that time, Martha's knack of making her own clothes after she looked at the latest fashions in department stores was inspiring since it aligned with Martha's resourcefulness to stay up with the times in way that did not stretch her minimal budget.

Franco was keen to note an important financial freedom in Martha's life that may have come as a shock to many French women readers: "She [Martha] had a personal bank account." At the time of Franco's piece, young French women were not allowed to open or maintain bank accounts in their own names. Martha, however, "like most young American girls" had an account and could control it completely. This freedom, therefore, would have been enviable for French women since it revealed France's lagging Napoleonic laws about women and financial rights. Although the rules in France began to relax with bank accounts being open to French girls and women by the mid-1960s, France was still behind the United States in allowing its women to make their own financial decisions.<sup>17</sup>

Despite her financial and living freedoms, Martha's quality of life was not entirely the best, as compared to French women. When describing Martha's budget to French readers, Franco was keen to notice Martha's frugality in spending money on food, as was seen in the last two chapters with Phyllis Nelson and Janet Stevenson.<sup>18</sup> Martha would only spend a small percentage of her salary on food mainly since she would rely on provisions from her mother, the food she ate while babysitting, or the light meals in the college cafeteria, which often consisted of a salad, glass of milk, tomato juice, and spinach. Franco was shocked by this stinginess in her eating, as was highlighted for magazine readers in a heated conversation between Franco and Martha on the subject of food and vitamin supplements:

[Martha:] I don't want to get fat. It's absolutely necessary that I lose the extra pound I have on my shoulders.

[Franco:] But you risk falling sick.

[Martha:] Absolutely not! Look at this bottle: my father gave it to me. I never leave without it. These are vitamins. Each night, before going to bed, I take one of these pills. That replaces the red meat and vegetables.

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<sup>17</sup> As the World Bank notes, up until 1965, banks were required to notify husbands when their wives opened bank accounts. Yasmin Bin-Humam, "When Business Gets Personal: How Laws Affect Women's Economic Opportunities," World Bank Private Sector Development, last modified January 12, 2012, accessed January 1, 2015, <http://blogs.worldbank.org/psd/when-business-gets-personal-how-laws-affect-womens-economic-opportunities>.

<sup>18</sup> See Chapters 1 and 2, respectively.

[Franco:] Frankly...I have the impression that this diet won't hold you up for a week!

[Martha:] Then try a pill!

[Franco:] And you aren't sick?

[Martha:] No, never. In my family, the doctor never comes!

In this exchange, French women come to see Martha's stubbornness in prioritizing money on other things than food for a balanced diet. Instead, she resorts to vitamin pills to maintain her figure rather than eating a full meal, which would be a shock to an average French reader. Martha seemed to be determined to live a busy, productive life, as all American women did, but food and nourishment are not a top priority, if a priority at all, since Martha had a more important concern on her mind: maintaining her bodily figure, which readers later learn by the end of the article is an obsession due to Martha's perceived need to find and keep an ideal man for a fiancé and husband.

Beyond food, Franco finds American women like Martha admirable, especially in her hard work and determination, but her view of hard work and why her generation worked so hard had hints of trouble that he wanted French women to think about going into the future. As Martha described, "We were born during the war...We all had the time to avoid growing up with television in the home. Our biggest worry is work. I don't know why. Maybe because we are worried we will get behind." Some American youth, as Martha explained further, were worried about being boring or "square," so they ironically followed the same trend, but most young American women wanted to graduate, get married, have children, be a good mother, and work outside the home to help her husband.

However, Franco notes the hard realities of the situation in store for young American women. Based on his observations, American women actually had the goal of marrying before the age of twenty, and they did continue to work to help their husband like Martha claimed, but at the first sign of a child, Franco saw most American women stopping work immediately. Franco implicitly wondered whether or not this would be tenable when he quotes one of Martha's professors trying to show Martha and her classmates the perversity of American women's putting a professional life on hold for marriage and a baby: "Think to the moment when your children will have grown up. You will be between thirty-five and forty then. You

will begin to be bored.”<sup>19</sup> Martha’s hard work, then, seems almost wasteful, in Franco’s view, since it is as if American women gave up on applying their education after they had children.

Franco uses Martha to show French women a shift in American women’s beliefs about dating, too. Martha, who had been dating a young man named Andrew, firmly believed that instead of dating many people at once, as her parents had done (as is seen in other French magazine features on American women in Chapters 1 and 2), she preferred to go steady and stay with one person. Franco questioned her resolution to marry her first steady boyfriend, by telling her that she was too young and that there were certainly others to meet. However, Martha was resolute in her belief that her life would be happy by marrying her steady boyfriend. Franco explains, through the expertise of one of Barnard College’s professors, that young Americans see instability all around them in the world, so they hurry to take responsibilities early in life, including marrying young to their first steady love. This, in the professor’s mind, provided a way for young American women like Martha to create a false stable world in a very instable world. As such, Franco concludes that Martha’s universe might be filled with luxurious gadgets and some freedoms the Frenchwoman did not yet see in their lives, but Martha worked so hard for stability that she lost sight of any dreams beyond the responsibilities she had before her. Overall, Martha’s life was a content one, certainly, but her only following safe options in life begged whether or not Martha’s life was one of holding back due to fear of change in the world. Martha, who, according to *Marie Claire* was the typical young American woman, presented a liberated yet held back woman that might be the envy of French women due to her financial and other freedoms, but she seemed to be settling for a life that was not as exciting or rich so she could avoid any unpleasant and unexpected discomforts in a rapidly changing modern world. Martha’s life might implicitly press French women to take action by questioning the various constraints in their lives and actual take risks beyond the housewife-mother role in an uncertain “ultramodern” world.<sup>20</sup>

In the early 1960s, French magazines presented the quasi-independent life of American women like Martha, but to navigate the modern future, they also looked back in time at the mythical American woman of the Wild West. In the late 1950s and for much of the early 1960s, stories of the American Wild West filled much of the world’s imagination, especially those of

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>20</sup> I use the word *ultramodern* here since Franco uses it to describe the world within which French and American women lived at the time.

the French. Battles between cowboys and Indians or between a righteous sheriff and a band of outlaws were a common trope, but within popular French magazines, understanding the women of the Wild West—real and imagined—and selling the cowgirl style through clothing such as Levi’s jeans, boots, and large cowboy hats was regularly on display for French readers (Figures 3.9 and 3.10). Beyond following a cultural fad and curiosity of the time, the pioneering women of the American Wild West (“Far West” in French) were a way for French women magazine readers to better understand the American woman’s rugged character, which in turn, allowed French women to imagine their relationship with Americans and their place within a world heavily influenced by fast-paced, consumer-driven American culture.

One of the most in-depth looks at the American women of the Wild West came in May through July 1963 when *Elle* magazine ran an eleven issue special series on “The Women of the Far West” (Figures 3.12 and 3.13).<sup>21</sup> A prominent woman from the Far West was featured in each installment, which served to highlight a different mythical American woman and her enduring qualities that made her and all pioneering American women special. As the opening of each article contextualized for readers, the Wild West had conquered the world, especially France, and in order to capture the momentum of this interest, the magazine asked

**Figure 3.9:**  
Levi’s Cowgirl Look Emerges  
in France



**Figure 3.10:**  
Cowgirl Haute Couture in  
France (1963)



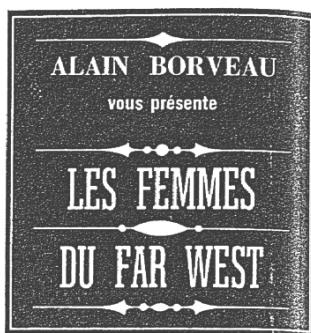
<sup>21</sup> Borveau’s “Women of the Far West” feature fits in well with a certain French way of imagining the American woman that goes back to Alexis de Tocqueville. On his journey through a young United States in the 1820s and 1830s, Tocqueville noted the intense, rugged mentality of the American frontierswoman. Although he was shocked by the separation of the sexes, he recognized and admired the American frontier’s woman’s ability to persevere and thrive in the most extreme and dire circumstances. The American women, as seen through the famous pioneering women of the Far West, exhibited agency and a voice that fascinated French readers, and it fit in with magazines’ concerns in the early 1960s to bring about new ways of thinking of how women could act in a modern world.



Alain Borveau, a French film director of *En Amérique*, an animated history of the American West, to develop the women's profiles to give a "history of the women who participated in the conquest of the West." In all, *Elle* and Borveau had the goal of featuring the women of the Wild West because they "have all proved courage if not always virtue" that was built into the American woman and so admired in France.<sup>22</sup>

Overall, Borveau's series of articles builds an image of an independent, courageous, and industrious American woman, which, like other features appearing in popular women's magazines at the time, pressed French women readers to ignite their consciousness toward achieving equal rights along with the ability to be feminine and beautiful.<sup>23</sup> Further, the series crafted an imaginary of American women that was inspiring and admirable for French women to reach for a more equal footing for themselves at home and the public sphere more generally.

**Figure 3.11:**  
Borveau's Women of the Wild West



Many today would recognize some of the names of the eleven women featured in the "Women of the Far West" series: Calamity Jane, Lily Hitchcock, and Anne Oakley. Others, perhaps not as well known, still had inspiring stories, which *Elle* wanted to emphasize carefully: Tamsy Donna, Narcissa Whitman, Dora Hand, Ann Eliza Young, Rose de Cimarron, and Mattie Silks. In addition to their courage, what was common to all of these women's profiles was their outspoken nature, willingness to take on and fill supposed "men's roles,"

and their ability to persevere no matter what the price was. All of these pioneering women, in their own way, worked to build Frenchwomen's interest about a pop cultural fad, but they also served as an inspiration for Frenchwomen to look at themselves through these American women's experiences to imagine a world that was better than what they faced in their everyday lives in France. Through their force, strong personalities, and will to thrive and go after their passions, the women of the Wild West featured in *Elle* magazine worked, along with the magazine's general politics at the time, to get French women readers to seize the day for themselves in any way that they could. The women of the Wild West featured in Borveau's

<sup>22</sup> Alain Borveau, "Les Femmes du Far-West: Baby Jane Doe," *Elle*, May 31, 1963, p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> Susan Weiner, *Enfants Terribles: Youth and Femininity in the Mass Media in France, 1945-1968* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

series very much counter the trope of the helpless woman needing to be saved by a brave cowboy, which was a common plot line in many Westerns at the time. In effect, the women of the Wild West that Borgeau discussed are robust and able to succeed and overcome tragedy, obstacles, and danger through their own wits, intellect, and courage; often, they did it better than men.

In looking at some of Borgeau's descriptions of the women of the Far West, the American woman's admirable independence is clear. For Julia Bulette, "the lady of the saloon" in Virginia City, a wild place with violent, temperamental men passing through, "she seemed to not fear anything."<sup>24</sup> With her smart understanding of what tired men who were cut off from the world wanted, she established her own saloon that became the social center of the town. Showing her commanding presence, Julia had an "iron fist" in her saloon where she demanded politeness and good manners. To Borgeau, Julia was successful because she was "energetic, hard in 'business' and in her heart."<sup>25</sup> She was courageous and generous during the Civil War when she turned her bar into a hospital. However, after the war, her bar went downhill after more wealthy business people moved in, leaving only outlaws to frequent her establishment. Tragically, she was murdered by a jewel thief, but her legacy as a brave, "true" person of the West lived on among those who remembered her warm welcome and determination to make others' lives more comfortable in a very harsh American world.

According to Borgeau's description, the story of Elisabeth Mac Court, also known as "Baby Doe," is one less of courage and more of a symbol of the dedication of American women to community and family honor. Living in Denver at the height of the gold rush, Baby Doe, newly divorced, married Horace Tabor, the man of Denver who owned the mines that brought immense wealth. Baby Doe wanted an extravagant life, including a palatial home and the fine arts. As such, she convinced her husband to build an opera house and theater for the town, but all of the spending eventually contributed to her and her husband's financial demise when the American government shut down Tabor's mine and the ability to sell gold. After needing to sell off their palace and personal possessions, Baby Doe and Horace moved into the poor section of Denver where they lived a life of poverty. Showing her loyalty, Borgeau notes that Baby Doe

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<sup>24</sup> Alain Borgeau, "Les Femmes du Far-West: Julia Bulette," *Elle*, May 24, 1963, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

“didn’t want to leave her husband; faithful in fortune, and also in adversity.”<sup>26</sup> She was by Tabor’s side until his death when he uttered his last breath—“Hang yourself in the ‘Unrivaled’ ” [a mine]—which she faithfully obliged soon thereafter. Baby Doe’s story, to Borgeau, shows an American woman’s sense of duty to her community and her unfaltering sense of dedication to her husband. Baby Doe’s unwavering commitment to her husband may appear to be weakness and extreme, fatal deference, but Borgeau emphasizes to his French women readers that such acts of selflessness of American women of the Wild West to give up everything for someone they love was actually incredibly courageous.

**Figure 3.12:**  
**Women of the Wild West Features**



Of Borgeau’s installments, Lily Hitchcock is perhaps one of the most famous and most emblematic of the brave and rather brazen American woman. Hitchcock, who lived at the end of the 19th century into the early 20th century, was noted for her unofficial membership in the San Francisco “Knickerbocker” firefighting squad. As Borgeau notes, Hancock never missed a

<sup>26</sup> Alain Borgeau, “Les Femmes du Far-West: Baby Jane Doe,” *Elle*, May 31, 1963, p. 26.

single fire, and she was always ready to help. Her taking up the cause started during the devastating 1906 earthquake. Exhibiting her bravery, she woke up to alarms and “did not resist this call, she went down into the street, caught the valiant rescuers and joined in, panting, excited, in their efforts to control the flames.”<sup>27</sup> Her family and friends thought she was insane, but showing the American woman’s tenacity, Hitchcock continued her work regardless of their disapproval, and the Knickerbockers welcomed her as an honorary member nonetheless.

To evidence her struggle to break down barriers for “respectable ladies,” Borgeau describes how her family tried to lock her up since she seemed to get herself into scandal after scandal: “Once locked her in a convent, she escaped, frequenting assiduously bars and dens of Frisco, getting herself photographed with a bottle of booze in her hand. She even dared to smoke a cigar in public, dressing in masculine clothes, and being recognized outside an opium smoke shop in Chinatown.”<sup>28</sup> Hitchcock, thus, was revolutionary in snubbing supposed women’s roles and going after what she wanted.

Still, even though she grew older, Borgeau stressed that Lily did not calm down one bit in her heroic efforts to show women’s potential. She might have married city bureaucrat Howard Coit to the relief of her family, but immediately upon moving in with Coit, she continued to fight fires. She went on to receive many notable honors—even from Napoleon III—and came to open the annual firefighter’s festival each year. Up until her old age, Lily kept fighting fires in her own way; the last fire was in 1929. Because of her bravery and belief in what she was doing, Borgeau informed French women that Lily’s legend lives on through Coit Memorial Tower, which holds a prominent place on the San Francisco skyline as a testament to all firefighters, including Lily, who risked their lives to keep San Francisco safe before most of the city was built out of bricks and mortar. According to Borgeau’s description, Hancock represented the determination, bravery, and sometimes hardheartedness of the American pioneer woman to do what she thought was right and break down barriers erected between men and women in society.

The last woman featured in Borgeau’s series was one of the most famous of the women of the Far West: Anne Oakley, “the star of Buffalo Bill.” In fact, as Borgeau explains, Anne may have been the most well-known American woman of the Wild West for French readers, as she was known for being a performer imitating the Wild West in the famous circus featuring Buffalo

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<sup>27</sup> Alain Borgeau, “Les femmes du Far-West: Lily Hitchcock,” *Elle*, July 5, 1963, p. 30.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

Bill that traveled throughout Europe. Oakley, who was from Ohio and had a perfect shot, took up the image of the Wild West by wearing a long skirt, a brimmed hat, a vest, and a rifle. As Borveau reveals, Annie never stepped foot in the true American Wild West, but she came to represent “a true girl of the West” for the world over since “she didn’t hesitate before any dare.”<sup>29</sup> Traveling the United States and then on to Europe, Anne came to be the “the pretty Amazon who was then the world’s most expensive attraction, and the living symbol of the West.”<sup>30</sup> To show her bravery and talent as well as put her accomplishments in context, Borveau gives French women readers one notable example of Anne’s unabashed nature: when Anne visited the German Kaiser, she asked him to the challenge of shooting a cigarette in his mouth. Sadly, upon her return to the States after several years, no one remembered her there, and she regretted “maybe to not have known this West that she had personified” for the world.<sup>31</sup> However, Borveau wanted to know that Anne’s legend lived on, particularly in France. Overall, Anne and the other women of the Wild West may not have been “virtuous,” and many had sad final stories, but they remained “very often heroic” and inspirational in their pursuits.<sup>32</sup> Such heroism, to Borveau, was important for French women readers of *Elle* to take with them into their everyday lives, especially as they started to speak for themselves more and more as women in the public sphere.

While Borveau described the women legends of the American Wild West, but *Marie France* magazine was more interested in “what remains of the legend, in the heart of the wild territories of the West.” As such, in 1963, it printed French journalist Suzanne Chantal’s recent experiences with and reflections on the modern woman of the American West when she visited her daughter who was studying in Ellensburg, Washington.<sup>33</sup> Beyond exploring and bringing the rugged, open landscape and rodeo culture to her readers, Chantal presented the life of the typical woman of the “Far West of 1963” and what lessons French women could learn from her about the modern world and life in general. In all, the details Chantal provides about the life of the contemporary woman of the American West were ultimately used to set up a list of recommendations for French women on how to proceed in a fast-paced modern world.

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<sup>29</sup> Alain Borveau, “Les femmes du Far-West: Anne Oakley,” *Elle*, July 12, 1963, p. 9.

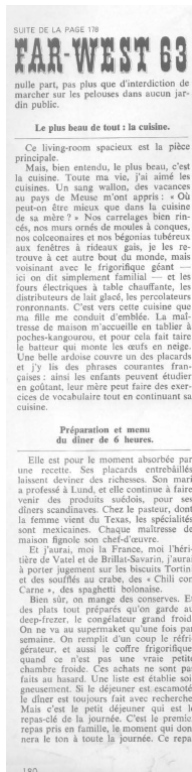
<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Suzanne Chantal, “Une Française chez les pionnières: comment vivent les dames du Far-West 63,” *Marie France*, October 1963, pp. 118-119, 178, 180, 209.

**Figure 3.13:**  
**A French Look Into the**  
**Lives of the Modern Women of the Wild West**



From the start, French women learn that the American frontier woman's existence was comfortably rugged. Because of the long distances between large tracts of farm and cattle land that husbands and sons of the family maintained, Chantal witnessed how these pioneering women kept up their women ancestors' ability to educate and care. Most of the women home taught their children the fundamentals of "reading, counting, and praying" until they reached high school. They even took on the role of nurses since they were far from hospitals and most likely did not have a telephone line installed due to the distance and expense in having one.<sup>34</sup> The women had cars and often went into town to run many errands to maximize the time of their trip. They relied on their canned and frozen goods. And despite their major responsibilities in caring for large families (often six to nine children) and planting trees to protect their homes, Chantal noted, "They are well kept, elegant, and watch[ed] their figures."<sup>35</sup> The women Chantal saw often reminded her of "the shape of Maureen O'Hara," the main character of the book and

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

film *Gone with the Wind*. Their fashions, however, were often distant of those of Paris, as the pioneer woman still mainly wore boots, had clothing made of felt, and had a gun; in winter, from the first cold, sweaters and suede jackets were worn, especially for skiing. Overall, Chantal painted a picture of the modern pioneer woman to have a “healthy, free, and open life,” but Chantal saw a downside to this very rural, isolated life: women quickly got bored and struggled to find work in the cities, and men, presumably staying on farms and ranches, struggled to find wives.<sup>36</sup>

Because of the busy life of farming, ranching, or running errands, Chantal, like other French observers in other magazines, was taken aback by American women’s poor eating habits, especially at lunch, when all one had was “always boiling” coffee with “exquisite tasting pies” or a “comfortable sandwich.”<sup>37</sup> The worst of all, to Chantal, was the dependence on peanut butter and the common non-familial or non-office, twenty-minutes-or-less lunch, which, to her estimation, was still seen by Americans as an impediment to the tasks at hand on a given day. By the end of the day, this led to considerable hunger and fatigue for Chantal, but she discovered early on that this was taken care of through hearty meals prepared in comfortable, tidy homes with open windows and well-manicured lawns.

For Chantal, the best of all in the American woman’s life was her kitchen, which was the “most beautiful of all” in the house. The American living room may have been the largest, but to Chantal, the kitchen was the most exquisite and emblematic of modern American life, which had connections to her experiences back in Northern France. As Chantal describes, the pioneer woman’s kitchen was similar to the French woman’s kitchen, but it was more technologically advanced, and it even served as an ideal place to teach children in the home:

But, of course, the most beautiful is the kitchen. All my life I’ve loved kitchens. With Walloon blood, holidays in the Meuse taught me, “Where can one be better than in the kitchen her mother?” I found our well-rinsed tiles, our walls decorated with mussel shells...our begonias in gaily-curtained windows on this end of the world, but side by side with a refrigerating giant - here one simply calls it family-sized – and electric ovens, ice milk distributors, and purring percolators. It was around this kitchen that my daughter took me immediately. The lady of the house welcomed me in her kangaroo-pocketed apron after silencing the mixer that whipped egg whites. A beautiful chalkboard covered one of the cupboards upon which I read French phrases that the children studied while tasting, their mother giving vocabulary exercises while continuing her cooking.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

From this passage, Frenchwomen come to feel the coziness Chantal felt in the modern American frontier woman's home, and they, too, came to admire the efficiency the frontier woman had in her cooking—relying on preserves and her deep freezer—and her careful planning for the evening meal. In addition, she impressed upon her readers an interesting way to take advantage of the frontier woman's unspoken rule of staying clean, tidy, and efficient as one went about the meal: as plates were whisked away to be quickly cleaned or put away into a washing machine, children seemed to know that if anything spilled, it should be wiped up immediately. Further, the American frontier woman's use of cooking papers and a garbage disposal led to minimal waste and cleaning, while Chantal found it shocking to have guests help with a meal or clean up (like other French observers of American society at the time), she came to understand that it was the American woman's way of minimizing her burden of work while everyone shared in a communal activity.

From her experiences of trailing her daughter in an American university to going into the homes of American families, Chantal believes that French women readers could learn other valuable lessons from the pioneer women of 1963. She jokingly tells French readers that she does not suggest that the refrigerated hamburger is the way to go, nor should they take on all of the modern conveniences of American life, but she found that French women could learn much from American women in the West to make their lives better in a world that was becoming ever more fast paced. First, the American frontier woman taught Chantal that one should not live in haste. By making proper plans, one can always be prepared, even at short notice. Second, one should remove anything that is useless, cumbersome, or difficult to maintain and clean. One should always find ways to use tools or ideas to make life easier. As Chantal stresses, one might want to cling on to tradition, but French women should not fight against the wind of change. Third, one should “not pretend that some tasks do not exist or are done by magic.”<sup>39</sup> Rather, like American women, French women should use more disposable household tools to simplify cleaning and avoid “unpleasant washes,” which, in turn, would make life more comfortable. Fourth, French women should try to make the house come to life. This involved moving furniture around, having family stay with you, getting new curtains, buying new paintings, and having fun while paying attention to your house yourself. Fifth, French women would be happier and do better by having a wide open door to receive their neighbors. The women of the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 209.



American West always seemed to have the coffee maker ready to go for family members, friends, neighbors, and even strangers. To Chantal, French women would be happier and feel more connected to others by being more hospitable like the American pioneer woman, especially at a time when French society seemed to be ever-more isolated and divided.

Chantal took the last lesson about the American pioneer woman's hospitality to heart. As she concludes her article, she wondered where she would take those who welcomed her in Ellensburg if they visited Paris with the mission to get to know France. For her, it would not be "at the Eiffel Tower, in the castles of the Loire, or Maxim's."<sup>40</sup> Rather, it would be "in my house, in yours."<sup>41</sup> Here, we see Chantal being touched by the American pioneer woman's ability to welcome foreigners into her home, and how such a welcome showed guests a more open, authentic side of American life and culture. Chantal advised Frenchwomen to do the same—being as open, resourceful, and kind as the women of the American West who made a quiet life in the woods enjoyable and worth living, even as French society pressed on quickly all around them.

### **Frenchwoman Knows Best**

By the early 1960s, Frenchwomen caught up more with that of American women in terms of material comforts in life, but questions still remained about whose life was better—the Frenchwoman's or the American woman's—especially as talk of women's rights and changes for the "modern" woman became more prevalent in magazines and the public sphere more generally. One of the most prominent features from the early 1960s that attempted to answer this question was Toni Howard's February 18, 1961, *Saturday Evening Post* article "The Women of America . . . and France."<sup>42</sup> Reminiscent of *Paris Match*'s great woman debate of 1950 (see Chapter 1), Howard used her piece to take an American perspective on the question of the comparative well-being of French and American women. The comparison between the French and American woman is visually depicted in the opening spread where a smiling American

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Note that Maxim's was a famous Parisian hotel where many Americans, especially famous Americans, frequented. The Loire is a river valley in France found west of Paris that is known for its castles and white wine vineyards.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Toni Howard, "Women of America...and France," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 18, 1961, pp. 18-19, 60-63.

woman walking toward readers is pictured opposite a French woman who happily buys flowers at a Parisian flower stall (Figure 3.14). Both women appear content, well dressed, and comfortable, but one woman's life is better, as the article's subtitle explains: "In spite of her freedom, the American wife is often much less happy than her unemancipated French counterpart. So who's really better off?"<sup>43</sup> Consequently, on the surface, Howard's piece works to provide readers a comprehensive comparison, but it works more pervasively by pitting the French and American ways of life against one another, especially in the way each culture handles gender and sexual relations. Howard, through her purported expertise in having lived in France for twelve years and traveling between the United States and France on a yearly basis, primes her readers from the outset to find the Frenchwoman's life to be better mainly because Frenchwomen respect and work within patriarchic gender roles, while American women suffer in a state of agitation.

**Figure 3.14:**  
**"The Women of America...and France"**



Before delving into the details of her argument about the Frenchwoman's relatively better life, Howard summarizes the French and American women's impressions of one another as a

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

strategy to show her sensitivity to knee-jerk stereotypes. Such attention to the dangers of generalizing serves as a legitimation tool of her objectivity as a journalist writing on the sensitive topic of sex and gender in one of America's most popular, widespread magazines. Overall, Howard notes that Frenchwomen saw their American counterparts as bored, consumer-driven, efficient beings; and American women saw Frenchwomen as frivolous, overly fashionable creatures who trampled freely through relationships. To summarize American and French women's impressions of each other, Howard writes:

Today the Frenchwoman's image of her American sister is of a cool, efficient creature whose push-button gadgetry allows her to spend her entire time popping in and out of department stores and supermarkets. The American woman's image of her French counterpart is of a frivolous creature whose sexual propensities and Dior clothes allow her to spend her entire time popping in and out of love affairs. Each is convinced the other is unconscionably spoiled, both by her men and by society in general. Each is convinced the other has it made.<sup>44</sup>

Rather than seizing the opportunity to unpack these intercultural misunderstandings between French and American women, Howard instead focuses on answering nationalist questions laced with patriarchic undertones: "Who has it better, the American woman or the French? Who does a better job of being a woman? Who is happier, and whose men are happier? American and French women may pose these questions innocently or with narrowed eyes. Either way, simply by posing them they are measuring themselves against each other."<sup>45</sup> Here, instead of working through the unhappy conditions of women in both countries, Howard opts to appeal to readers' national pride and desire to codify what is and should be an ideal, happy woman at the service of men.

Howard's questions and evidence are also prime examples of national social comparison at work. Through making comparisons of French and American women, Howard implicitly claims to authoritatively determine how the countries measure up to one another through their women, which would ultimately declare which country had the better way of life and "take" on womanhood. As Howard notes, what brings French and American women together is their womanly concerns—their desire to maintain security for their children and their knowledge that they live in man's world—but they differ the most on how "they approach the simple fact of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

being female,” which, as readers come to learn, begs the question of how far women should go to being independent in society.<sup>46</sup>

To settle the debate, Howard initially focuses on how French and American women differ in their perceptions of being a woman. In Howard’s analysis, American women see their sex as handicap or challenge to be faced: “For all her rights and liberties, the American woman tends to regard being a woman as something to be overcome, something to be compensated for. She strives to stand on an equal footing with the men, to discharge her responsibilities in as competent a manner as a man would, and somehow to overcome the disadvantages of being born to housework and home.”<sup>47</sup> Being an American woman was a burden, then, because it comes with expectations placed on women that they ultimately despise; further, they feel the need to prove themselves as capable in a man’s world. For Frenchwomen, Howard explains that they see womanhood as a lifelong career of character acting and being resourceful within the constraints society places on them, which does not lead to anxiety, as seen in the American woman:

Wifehood and motherhood are two normal aspects—but only aspects—of the great, all-embracing starring role of Woman which you have been put on earth to play. ... In this, the Frenchwoman does not have it better; she *makes* is better. She puts foot into it, and a lot of other things, including passion and drama. To do this, she has got to be something of an actress. But she *is* something of an actress, mostly because she is not afraid to be. Being more whole and more wholesome, the average American woman is afraid of making a fool of herself. She is honest and forthright, and would rather ‘just be herself.’ The Frenchwoman wouldn’t think of such a thing.<sup>48</sup>

Here, Howard likens Frenchwomen’s view of womanhood as a sort of act on a man’s stage. The Frenchwoman realizes that the cards are stacked against her, so rather than working to change the system head-on through upfront honesty, Howard notes and implicitly admires the Frenchwoman for her tact in getting what she wants as she navigates a man’s world. Rather than interrogating how American women might be working to combat patriarchic society, Howard finds the French woman admirable in her ability to deal with the cards she was dealt as the weaker sex in a man’s world.<sup>49</sup> In other words, Howard’s piece serves to uphold patriarchic society in America through a glorification of the Frenchwoman’s ability to make her position in life tolerable while doing nothing to change the male-dominated nature of society around her.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 61. Emphasis added.

<sup>49</sup> This resilience is a common description of French women across American magazines, as detailed in-depth in the first chapter on the immediate postwar period.

On the whole, though, Howard goes to great lengths to show how American women are “infinitely better off” than French women because of the legal and financial freedoms for women in the United States. In fact, Howard cites several areas where French women had no control over their lives at that time, as compared to American women. American women were individuals before the law. They could apply for passports and bank accounts on their own and have a voice in neighborhood and school organizations. Further, they had greater chances of successfully requesting a divorce from their husbands.<sup>50</sup> Above all, though, Howard deemed American women superior to French women in their ability to achieve material and intellectual wealth and be the most informed about their health and hygiene.<sup>51</sup>

Unfortunately, for Howard, what made the American woman miserable were the very liberties that American women have. The American woman was “confident of her power and independence, [and] can walk up to life squarely and insist on what she considers her due, [but] the Frenchwoman must be as devious as a crab” and has fun doing so.<sup>52</sup> Howard complains that the American woman has everything set up explicitly for her, and, in the end, is unhappy with her predicament since she is powerless to change the fact that she lives in a man’s world. French women, on the contrary, live half their lives in “make-believe” and enjoy it. Here, again, rather than extolling the benefits of trying to emancipate French women from the clutches of patriarchy, Howard asserts that the French woman’s predicament is happy and admirable since French women accept male privilege and work within it to get what they want. Howard believes that the unhappy American woman, thus, should take advice from the Frenchwoman by making it her “lifelong career” to please men and indulge in the pleasures of femininity.<sup>53</sup> American women, accordingly, are unhappy because they prefer to go the route of insecurity, where the French woman accepts her gendered station in life, which provides a sense of security that brings happiness.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 61-62. Although Howard’s claims of women’s equal access to rights across the United States in 1961 is questionable, the veracity of her statement is less important than the generalized differences she pits between French and American women and how that would impact readers’ impressions of the state of life for American and French women.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

Consequently, the French woman has the ultimate advantage compared to the American woman because she can play the role of actress before a male-dominated audience. As Howard writes, “To my mind, this is where the Frenchwoman has a distinct advantage over the American woman, who lacks an audience. To the Frenchwoman, wherever there are men around, she can still go on rehearsing her part for the time when an attentive audience finally materialize.”<sup>54</sup>

The American woman is too caught up in material competition and homemaking and too sure of herself in “having won her battle for legal and social equality.”<sup>55</sup> She is bored since “she is so used to getting her way without coquetry or play-acting or sex that she has let her weapons as a female rust with disuse and now doesn’t know how to use them.”<sup>56</sup> And to drive home the innate nature of how and why French and American women are in their present condition, Howard argues that French and American women’s takes on life in a man’s world is primordially rooted in society’s female heroes. Howard explains that American women look up to the “tame and colorless” Betsy Ross, Carry Nation, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, who call for stoicism, hard work, and piping up about their displeasure with problems of their place in a man’s world. French women, though, look up to more exciting heroines: the pious and courageous Joan of Arc and the “luxury-loving and voluptuous little royal mistress” Agnès Sorel who was famously painted by French artist Jean Fouquet exposing a breast while comforting the baby Jesus (Figure 3.17). The difference in qualities of each country’s national heroines, then, leads to American women going after a boring, stoic life while French women seem to make a miserable situation at least interesting and fun.

Toni Howard’s article concludes by finding the French woman’s situation happier and better off despite her disadvantages in economic, civic, marital, and material opportunities. The French woman will “throw away” a more independent life in order to be able to have a playful one within the framework of pleasing men, who, according to her, know too well that they

**Figure 3.15:**  
**The Frenchwoman’s “Luxury-Loving and Voluptuous” Hero**



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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

should spoil her back. Howard does not take the patriarchic injustices of French gender relations seriously, and instead, attempts to convince American readers with a position that props up a male-privileging society that admires an old-fashioned sense of femininity. Such a position at the precipice of the women’s rights movement in America is important to note, as it shows the entrenchment of older values about gender roles in society as they came to be more widely challenged and threatened in the American public sphere. As Howard’s piece illustrates, the debate over women’s rights and gender equality in America was not limited within an American cultural context; the Frenchwomen, as a symbol of another nation, was used to help prop up conservative gender norms in American culture, too.

At the same time of the Frenchwoman’s use as tool to maintain conservative gender norms in America, the Frenchwoman represented a challenge to tamer American values around sex and love. In one such article highlighting the place of Frenchwomen to challenge American women’s relative conservativeness, Suzanne Dadolle, a Parisian woman living and working in the United States as a popular weekly columnist for Hearst Publishers, explained to French readers in *Marie Claire* in October 1962 why French women scare American women as much as hydrogen bombs (Figure 3.16).<sup>57</sup> Among all of her experience she had in the United States, Dadolle summarized how and why Frenchwomen were seen as more daring, exciting, and attractive than American women: “We know how to fight for our love.” And to make things even clearer, she tells French women readers to look into the mirror to tell themselves: “I am a fearful seductress.”<sup>58</sup> One sees how the trope of the troubling, seductive Frenchwoman lingers on in magazines, and in the case of this

**Figure 3.16:**  
**Frenchwomen Scare American Women**



<sup>57</sup> Suzanne Dadolle, “Vous-oui, vous (et moi) la Française vous faites peur aux autres femmes,” *Marie Claire*, October 1962, pp. 63-64.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

magazine piece, a Frenchwoman informed her fellow national sisters that such an image is something to be proud of.

To begin her explanation of why American women fear French women, Dadolle notes that most American women look unconfidently at themselves and wonder how the French woman does it: “They ask, ‘But in the end, what are the French women that we’re not? Why do they bewitch men, our men?’”<sup>59</sup> Dadolle eschews the common French thought that American women might find French women to be easy, light, and frivolous. Rather, Dadolle observes that American women find Frenchwomen to be mysterious because they are unpredictable and always doing the unexpected. This is precisely the point where Dadolle makes direct comparisons between French and American women in line with some of Toni Howard’s observations in the *Saturday Evening Post*. For Dadolle, the American woman is too rationalized and practical thinking in America, so French women find American women too predictable and “thought out” from the moment they wake up to the time they go to bed. This, in turn, makes the American woman boring from French eyes. Conversely, Dadolle observes that American women feel like French women know how to enchant and love, but they are disappointed in their own love lives as they do not treat love, relationships, and life as a mystery as Frenchwomen do. American women’s following rigid “courses” and lessons in life shock Dadolle and other French women because American women are not left to explore love and beauty into their adult age where “they have love, a magical thing for them to explore and discover, little by little and with passion.”<sup>60</sup> As Dadolle summarizes succinctly, “When they get to the age of womanhood, what is left for them to dream about? They just continue to calculate mathematically what should work best.”<sup>61</sup> The image of the mechanistic American women continued, as seen in other popular French magazines (especially see Giroud’s profile of the American Career Woman in Chapter 2), which served as a way to elevate the status of the French women magazine readers above that of the American woman represented.

By looking at the minute details of the American woman’s life, training, and views of the Frenchwoman’s life, Dadolle’s piece ultimately serves to uphold a conservative view of gender

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Dadolle lists several lessons in the American woman’s life: “in middle school, they start to flirt with boys; when they’re a little older, they have official boyfriends and dates until they are engaged; they then take courses that are on sexual initiation and couple’s harmony; at age 11 they start to put on make-up (there are even magazines in America that teach girls how to use makeup!); at age 13, they start to wear heels; at age 14, they go to dances...”

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.



in France. In other words, the American woman's life and experience works to reinforce and support the status quo of gendered life in France where women catered to their men, which comes through most significantly in Dadolle's conclusion where she discusses the biggest difference between French and American women: how they view and treat relationships and love. Dadolle sees American women mixing love with their pride, and treating love as a material object to obtain rather than an experience to cultivate. As soon as a relationship falters, particularly if there is an infidelity, Dadolle observed that American women immediately picked up the phone to discuss divorce proceedings with their lawyers. In her experience, Dadolle sees a more tolerable approach among a French woman who will be "sad but she will fight—she'll do whatever she needs to do to fight...to recapture her man; she fights with weapons, but women's weapons."<sup>62</sup> To recapture men, like Howard, Dadolle extols the virtues of French women's embrace and calculating use of their femininity. Rather than advising women to stand up against a man's infidelity, as an American woman might do, Dadolle advises women to stand by and fight for the men who betrayed them. To Dadolle, thus, American women have too thin of skins and treat their husbands like "flattering machines" to open doors, send flowers, offer presents, and maybe even give personal pleasures, but they do not treat their men fairly as fallible beings.<sup>63</sup> As Toni Mitchell observed similarly, Dadolle argues that American women want so badly to feel like women that they feel like they need to become super-women or maybe not women at all. However, American women fail in the end because they do not see love as a sort of risk worth taking by becoming and embracing their status as feminine creatures; rather, they see love as another material good to obtain that may or may not live up to standards established in their training as independent women.

To conclude, Suzanne Dadolle proclaims that she equates her job as a journalist in America with being teacher to American women on how to act and be better women by being French. Through a list of specific lessons of how to act more like a French woman, Dadolle thinks American women would become more confident, feminine, and loving: "don't put make-up on your girls; take chances; be jealous; present yourself in pants without lipstick and make-up; laugh when he is sad, cry when he's happy."<sup>64</sup> Dadolle's last piece of advice is especially

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. List of items and adjectives comes directly from the text, but I transformed the forms for the purpose of my narrative.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

telling: “once per week, serve dinner a half hour late and forget to salt the food tell him, ‘I am ready to leave everything for you, I really love you. Cancel your life insurance.’ ”<sup>65</sup> Telling American women to “leave everything for” her man implicitly sends the message to American women to give up their dreams of independence and embrace their femininity by accepting deference to men. In the end, to Dadolle, American women treat everything too coldly and calculatingly, in accordance with an assembly line-like sense of feminine development, so to make life better, they needed to give up the fight. For Dadolle and her fellow observers of the differences between French and American women like Toni Howard, American women in the early 1960s may have had the material means and conscious motivation to prepare themselves for a successful, happy life on par with men, but they were ultimately lost and unhappy because they lost their art of femininity. Dadolle and Howard, thus, use comparisons of French and American women to tell American and French women to indulge in their femininity and avoid a life of unease and unhappiness that came with questioning patriarchic authority in society.

### **Advertising the Essence of the French Woman in America**

French women, real and imagined, have been often used in advertisements for products in American magazines. The late 1950s and early 1960s were no exception in how they played on certain alluring features of French women to sell products in a well-developed, competitive mass consumer market like the United States where women, especially young women, had more disposable income than ever before to purchase non-essential items like perfumes and make-ups. As beauty products’ presence exploded in booming, consumer-driven postwar America, the French woman—as depicted mainly through French-identified beauty products—served as a regular indicator of ideal beauty for American women in print magazines. Through a close reading of the images and texts of French beauty advertisements from the popular American magazines *Life*, *Mademoiselle*, and *McCall’s* in the late 1950s and 1960s, one sees how beauty advertisements built an American desire of consuming and becoming a certain French woman’s mystique, often in line with the image of the iconic Frenchwoman discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

As with the cigarette advertisements opening this chapter, the advertisements comparing

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

or representing French women in the United States reveal more than what was sold. That is, they reveal how France and America imagined and desired to be like each other in certain ways—or, at the very least, what advertisers thought their readers imagined or wanted their readers to imagine about France, the United States, and Franco-American relations. Histories on postwar advertisements indicate that advertisements served an important place in the postwar boom (America) and in postwar reconstruction (France) *and* directly in relation to their targets on women (in general in the United States and using American products in France); however, how the aesthetics and dreams of transformation and change were made through the alluring qualities of French women in America is not treated. Kristen Ross tells us that American woman was the point of competition for French women (see advertisements from Chapter 1), so this emergent theme shows how the reverse was true for American women in the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, to sell beauty products, American magazine advertisements capitalized on Americans' fascinations with and desire to be like the French woman and her sexy, chic, and worldly image.

More generally, advertising works to sell products, but that selling is based on how viewers come to see themselves through potential purchases. As John Berger notes, "Publicity is always about the future buyer. It offers him an image of himself made glamorous by the product or opportunity it is trying to sell. The image then makes him envious of himself as he might be."<sup>67</sup> Thus, in relying on her desirable qualities for future American buyers, the iconic Frenchwoman that appeared regularly in American magazine advertisements for perfumes and make-ups provided American women with the tools to achieve feminine and sexy ideals that American readers imagined of the Frenchwoman; or, at the very least, what advertisers and editors anticipated American readers imagined of the Frenchwoman. Through buying and consuming a product associated with or sanctioned by Frenchwomen, American women could reap the desirable benefits of becoming, or at least seeming like the Frenchwoman. The advertisements of French women in American magazines, therefore, speak to the desire and pleasure of acquiring the admirable qualities of French women and possibly imagining a way to be that other woman Americans so admire. It further shows how magazine advertisements

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<sup>66</sup> Kristen Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization And the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

<sup>67</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London and New York: BBC and Penguin, 1977), p. 132.

fueling the late 1950s and 1960s consumer boom were highly transnational in nature, content, and inspiration.

As has been noted throughout this dissertation, the place of women in the United States after World War II was ambivalent. Betty Friedan's seminal 1963 publication of the *Feminine Mystique* critiqued the male-dominating nature of American society as seen in Frankenstein-like women's magazines, but despite this advance in feminist critique and American women's experience of taking on full-time work outside of the home or participating in war efforts, once the war ended, many middle class American women saw their place being forced back into the home or taking on "traditional" female work, such as assistants and providing domestic services. As Elaine Tyler May argues, the large responsibilities that came from the baby boom also limited women's abilities to continue with women's advances in the public sphere.<sup>72</sup> Yet despite these changes, American women had significant control over what was purchased for the family since they did most of the shopping. Postwar advertisements, in consequence, were largely geared toward women since they guided family spending in emerging, growing supermarkets and stores. American women were key targets for advertisements, and they came to take on the important role of consumers for the family, and by extension, the nation.

Lizabeth Cohen's work on post-WWII America from a consumer perspective sheds light on the important place of American women consumers in advancing the nation.<sup>73</sup> American women were seen as influential during World War II for their roles as "the consumer" who made diligent efforts to feed, clothe, and maintain the standard of living of their families, especially those women whose husbands or significant others were serving in the military. After World War II, America saw the rise of the "purchaser as citizen" whose "personal material wants actually served the national interest," which combined two competing perspectives on consumption found before and during the war: the "consumer citizen," who was "responsible for safeguarding the general good of the nation" through sacrifice and selective choice (i.e., rationing); and the "purchaser consumer," who helped greater society by using her purchasing, rather than political, power.<sup>74</sup> However, the place of American women as "purchaser as citizen" was complicated by the retrenchment of middle class women into the home and the

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<sup>72</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

<sup>73</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 18.

disadvantaged status of working class and minority women.<sup>75</sup> Yet despite the relative retrenchment of women's rights after World War II, women were still the largest targets for advertisements for domestic appliances, cleaning agents, and soaps since they were the users of these products and most likely the purchasers of these products on behalf of the family unit. Susan Douglas explains the important place of women as targets of postwar American advertising, particularly in maintaining America's growing consumer culture, which increasingly formed the American economy's base:

A burgeoning consumer culture needs one big thing—consumers. Consumers, of course, need money. But America's consumer culture was predicated on the notion that women were the major consumers of most goods—that was their job, after all—and that, to sell them, you had to emphasize with their roles as wives and mothers, because it was in these capacities, no in their capacities as secretaries or nurses, that women bought. So, to buy more things, many of our mothers had to work. To sell them, advertisers erased and diminished this fact, and stressed how many more products they needed, and how many more tasks they had to undertake with those products, to be genuinely good wives and moms. No wonder Mom was often a bit testy. Here she was, part of a system that insisted it needed her to consume inside the home but adamantly refused to admit it also needed her to produce outside the home. She was supposed to deny a central fact of her life, and she was damned for doing the very things that were keeping not just the family but the entire U.S. economy financially healthy.<sup>76</sup>

The American woman, thus, was an important purchaser for maintaining the financial and familial health of the nation, and even if her political and other rights did not reflect her importance, advertisers targeted her since she had the most stakes in maintaining national order and economic progress. Although a consuming American woman helped build an economically viable nation, images and imaginaries from outside the United States, such as the French women, were used to fuel this gendered consumerism, too.

On the surface, advertisements serve the function of selling a product, but they do much more than inform and entice readers into shelling out money for particular merchandise. As Jackson Lears notes, advertisements in the United States have served the purpose of massaging one's purchasing restraint to feed into the dreams and desires that advertised products can bring in a world of mass-produced abundance. These dreams and desires can be anything that will magically transform lives and selves into something that is found admirable or desirable, such as being more efficient, beautiful, healthy, or modern. Advertisements, thus, cultivate desires and

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<sup>75</sup> See Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1994.

<sup>76</sup> Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are* (New York: Times Books, 1995), p. 56.

are based upon the wishes of what people want to see, do, and become.<sup>77</sup> Or, as Raymond Williams argues, advertising is part of a “magical system” that “transforms commodities into glamorous signifiers (turning a car into a sign of masculinity, for instance) and these signifiers present an imaginary, in the sense of unreal, world.”<sup>78</sup> As a result, as Roland Marchand asserts similarly, but in different terms than Lears and Williams, advertisements work as “social tableaux” to reveal more than just the consumer trends of a given moment. That is, advertisements “reflect public aspirations rather than contemporary circumstances,” and they “mirror popular fantasies rather than social realities.”<sup>79</sup> Therefore, looking to how American magazines’ advertisements used French women lends insight into how gender and the nation were built into how Americans saw, imagined, and possibly wanted to become like the French woman. In other words, French women were one important desiring tool used to get American readers to make purchases and accept or learn ways of how to imagine themselves in new, desirable ways, and interestingly, the advertisements where French women appeared the most in American magazines were products aimed to make American women more desirable, such as make-ups and perfumes.

Perfumes and perfume making is one of France’s well-known legacies among Americans. In the October 13, 1956 edition of *Saturday Evening Post*, James P. O’Donnell describes “How the Ladies Get Their Glamour” through French perfumes and “the discerning sniffers of certain Frenchman” who help women “entice the male with perfumes more potent than Cleopatra’s or Madame Pompadour’s.”<sup>85</sup> O’Donnell notes that while perfumes may bear a “fancy Paris, London or New York label...the chances are that the best that is in them was born” by the perfume experts, also known as the “Noses,” in Southern France. These men’s work is “tremendous, because it is based not only on the gift of smell but on one’s supposed knowledge of the working of the feminine psyche. No man, least of all a Frenchman, is eager to deny possession of such a gift.”<sup>86</sup> French perfume and the expertise used to create it are important tools for American women, and O’Donnell works through his extended look at the process of creating and perfecting a perfume to show that French perfume holds an important place for

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<sup>77</sup> On creating desire to consume, and to become accustomed to increased abundance, see Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in the United States*.

<sup>78</sup> Simon During, ed., *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 410.

<sup>79</sup> Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. xvii.

<sup>85</sup> James O’Donnell, “How Ladies Get their Glamour,” *Saturday Evening Post*, October 13, 1956, p. 30.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

American women to express their femininity, attractiveness, and charm. American magazine advertisements for a wide array of French perfumes and make-ups take advantage of this cultural knowledge by drawing on the alluring, transformative qualities of Frenchwomen who use these products.

One of the assumptions behind the alluring qualities of Frenchwomen is that they have intimate knowledge of what it means to be feminine. Bourjois' Evening in Paris line did just this through several advertisements heavily placed in *Life* magazine in 1956, 1957, and later in the sixties. Bourjois was a make-up brand that had originally started in Paris in 1863 and had expanded its market and production to other locations, including the United States, by the 1920s. First launched in the United States in 1928, the Evening in Paris line saw much success, especially since it was seen to bring the luxury of the bourgeoisie to the middle classes.<sup>87</sup> The name of the company itself is a play off this connection, since Bourjois is pronounced phonetically the same as the word *bourgeois*. Popular French women, thus, were employed to legitimate the line's claims to provide a beautifying transformation of its American female readers (or American male readers' significant others) into the seductive, elusive French female.

Bourjois placed one ad repeatedly in 1957 to attest to innate French knowledge of fashion, perfume, and romance (Figure 3.17). The ad's copy reads, "Take it from a true Parisian—Give Evening in Paris, advises Paris born Jean Pierre Aumont. It's the fragrance *more* French women

**Figure 3.17:**  
**"Take It from a True Parisian"**



**Figure 3.18:**  
**"Keep Cool as We French Do..."**



<sup>87</sup> "Histoire d'une marque," Bourjois Paris, accessed September 24, 2013, [http://www.bourjois.fr/home/histoire\\_d\\_une\\_marque/notre\\_histoire](http://www.bourjois.fr/home/histoire_d_une_marque/notre_histoire).

wear than any other . . . and the French *do* know!”<sup>88</sup> The use of the phrase “true Parisian” insinuates authenticity of the product, and by having a French insider recommend the product, it entices American women to purchase a product that could provide what was seen in the advertisement’s image—happiness and an endearing, protective male companion, which “the French *do* know” about. In this instance, just as a Bourjois fragrance speaks through its scent, the advertisement plays on the notion that the French woman comes from a culture of seduction that does not need enunciation. The advertisement assumes that American readers know that the French woman has innate knowledge of all things feminine, and by purchasing Bourjois, the American woman, too, gains access to this knowledge and power in America.

In other ads, Bourjois relied on Zizi Jeanmaire (Figure 3.18), a French actress and ballerina who starred in the 1956 Paramount musical film *Anything Goes*, to advise female readers to “Keep Cool as We French Do...” by buying Evening in Paris’ eau de toilette and dusting powder.<sup>89</sup> Again, using an authentic French insider, but this time a Frenchwoman who might have been familiar to readers following popular musicals, the Bourjois advertisement sought to draw in American women (or those who care about them) to the cool, sophisticated cosmetics that French women use. Jeanmaire even promoted Bourjois’ accessibility among Americans due to the free samples the company distributes: “We French adore Evening in Paris perfume and pay good francs for it. But in America, you give it away.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, built into the ad is an appeal to American readers’ potential pride in the material abundance seen in the United States during the postwar years.

Yet the most significant appeal for American female readers to transform themselves to have an alluring French femininity comes in Bourjois’ prominent tagline appearing throughout 1956, 1957, and 1958 in *Life* (Figure 3.19). By buying and using Bourjois perfume and deodorants, American women would be able to have a “breath of Paris about them,” similar to the women shown in these ads who shout with glee in a Parisian park, wander down a cobblestone street in haute couture fashions with their princely beau next to them, or look out onto the Seine River.<sup>91</sup> The ads work to make the French woman glamorous and something

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<sup>88</sup> “Take it from a true Parisian,” Bourjois, *Life*, December 9, 1957, p. 108.

<sup>89</sup> “Keep Cool as We French Do...,” Bourjois, *Life*, July 16, 1956, p. 96.

<sup>90</sup> “What! Give Away Fine Perfume?” Bourjois, *Life*, April 16, 1956, p. 146.


<sup>91</sup> “Have a breath of Paris about you...everyday!” Bourjois, *Life*, April 23, 1956, p. 185; “Have a breath of Paris about you...everyday!” Bourjois, *Life*, March 10, 1958, p. 17; “A breath of Paris about you everyday!” Bourjois, *Life*, March 10, 1958, p. 17.



American women could and should become due to their sophisticated nature that Americans imagine of and admire in French women. The women's fanciful dresses speak to high society, wealth, and sophistication. In particular, despite America's political and economic dominance at this time, the appeal to "old world" imagery, such as the *fin de siècle* or haute couture clothing and cobblestone streets, established French femininity as a trusted locus of desire since French women know how to be sophisticated through their years of natural training in refined, feminine knowledge.

**Figure 3.19:**  
**"Have a Breath of Paris about you...every day!"**


*have a breath of Paris about you...every day!*



**EVENING IN PARIS  
 DEODORANT STICK**

Here's delightful protection! A deodorant that keeps underarms dry and delicately scented with precious Evening in Paris fragrance. Marvelous instant-dry stick... glides on neatly without drip or mess... stops perspiration odor all day long.

limited time offer!  
**SPECIAL-2 FOR \$1.00**  
 regular \$1.50 value



*have a breath of Paris about you... every day!*



Enjoy Paris glamour in your deodorant! Evening in Paris stick glides on smooth and dry, keeps underarms dry and delicately fragrant. Rely on it for 24-hour protection. New convenient push-up tube.

**EVENING IN PARIS  
 DEODORANT STICK**

EXQUISITE - QUANTITY IN FRANCE - MADE IN U.S.A.



*have a breath of Paris about you...every day!*



Discover the most fabulous deodorant ever... Evening in Paris Deodorant Stick. Amazing how it glides on dry-to-keep underarms dry; to give you dawn-to-dawn protection. Delicious the way it surrounds you with a mystic fragrance; the very breath of Paris that only Evening in Paris Deodorant Stick can give you. Try it tonight!

**EVENING IN PARIS  
 DEODORANT STICK - SPECIAL! 2 FOR \$1**  
 regular \$1.50 value



**Figure 3.20:**  
**Coty's French Spice**



Other French beauty products that were advertised in the late 1950s and early 1960s evidenced increasingly provocative tones and messages in line with the move toward more “cool” advertising that had minimal copy and playful associations through words and images. Coty, a popular brand created in the 1910s by marketing-savvy Frenchman François Coty, couched itself as “the essence of beauty that is France,” which several of its products defined as being appealing, daring, and enticing. In *McCall's* September 1958 issue, one such advertisement for “French Spice” describes a red lipstick to be one that “dance[s] on lips that dare to be delicious” (Figure 3.20).<sup>92</sup> In addition to being “the new spice in fashion’s life,” French Spice was magically transformative—it made those who use it ready to be more adventurous, presumably in physical manners: “And when French Spice glows on your fingertips...goes to your toes...who knows what beautiful things it can lead to!” Here, the copy is meant to reinforce an image that is often associated with French women in an American

<sup>92</sup> “French Spice,” Coty, *McCall's*, September 1958, p. 3.

context. In the background, one sees bright yellow, red, and pink cancan dancers similar to those found in Paris' Montmartre entertainment district. The woman in the foreground wears a fur-topped dress exposing her shoulders signifying elegance and wealth. The woman's expression is one of a no nonsense attitude; it is a woman who is confident in her beauty and seductive charm. For American readers, French Spice pulls from the stereotype of the confident, boisterous, and sexual French woman in order to appeal to the daring transformation that came from using the product.

At roughly the same time of its French Spice campaign, Coty launched its new formula for Instant Beauty (Figure 3.21). Although less provocative than its French Spice sister product, Instant Beauty made important implications about French women and their place as a symbol of direct expertise on how to be beautiful and attractive. A majority of the page consists of a shot from what looks like a street in Paris' old Latin Quarter. In the foreground is a smiling woman who looks at the reader from the side with a firm, closed smile, showing a degree of classy distance. Behind her is an older man carrying a large bundle of French flags. The woman's bright red lips, blue eyes, and white shirt, necklace, and bandana, mark her to symbolize France through her wearing the national tricolor. She presumably has used Coty's Instant Beauty to give her the "Light Look" that lightly smoothens on to blend into skin and banish flaws and vanish shadows and lines.<sup>93</sup>

**Figure 3.21:**  
**Coty's Instant French Beauty**



**Figure 3.22:**  
**Coty's French Flair**



<sup>93</sup> Note that my text builds off of the copy appearing in the ad: "See how lightly it smooths on, how lightly it blends into your skin, how lightly it banishes flaws, vanishes shadows and lines."

Here, the Frenchwoman comes to physically embody France through her tricolor hues and being an exemplar of sophisticated French beauty for American women to be light, carefree, and in line with fashions of the day. The physical transposition of France's national colors onto this light-skinned French woman presents the French woman as a readily-achievable symbol of the French nation and all that she stands for through the make-up she wears: being sexy yet demure, reserved yet available, and proud yet modest.

In the early 1960s, at a moment when more young women were "on the go," Coty's ad for "French Flair" (Figure 3.22) worked to appeal to busy American women by being an efficient means to putting the "best face forward" while staying "lightheartedly lovely...even on busiest days."<sup>94</sup> Here, an advertisement that intends to sell an ingenious make-up that is powder and foundation "Air Spun" into one insinuates that American women would be able to stay on the move while not giving up on their attractiveness like the well-dressed French woman featured in the advertisement who walks out of a luxury make-up shop with a wrapped package in hand. The French Flair image that Coty works to generate is less about the technical innovation in make-up, and more about the French woman's ability to be cool, smart, luxurious, and well put together in no time at all. For American women at this time who lived in a culture of cheap mass consumer gadgetry and conformism, they would find the elegance and sophistication of the French Flair woman to be a way to stand out from the crowd in an American society that valorised material wealth and social mobility.

In line with the general evolution of American advertising, advertisements of French women in American magazines saw increasing minimization of copy in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which forced readers to use their imagination to make cultural associations based on what they might expect of French women. In particular, perfumes were increasingly sold in sexually provocative ways, making insinuations that French femininity was promiscuous and powerful like the call of the Sirens in luring men to danger. One such advertisement from *Mademoiselle's* October 1961 issue for Max Factor's "Primitif" presents a French-sounding and spelled perfume "for the woman who is every inch a female" (Figure 3.23).<sup>95</sup> In this image, a woman in the dark stares down readers as light from openings in window blinds reveals her arched eyebrows and perched lips. The woman appears to be just like the name of the perfume she is wearing—

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<sup>94</sup> "French Flair," Coty, *Mademoiselle*, June 1962, p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> "Primitif," Max Factor, *Mademoiselle*, October 1961, p. 16.

primitive and ready to pounce with a seemingly sex-driven body that is “every inch a female.” Although there are no explicit identifiers indicating Paris or France, the use of the French word *primitif* suggests an exotic quality that comes from being a French woman.<sup>96</sup> As Barthes and Williams would cue, here one should look to the disconnection between reality and image. In this case, the Max Factor ads work to manufacture real desire to purchase a product through fantasy about French women’s innate sexual availability and successful ability to lure men, which could enhance the desirability and success of American women.

**Figure 3.23:**  
**Max Factor’s Primitive Frenchwoman**



Other fragrances connoted wild, seductive, and sexually promiscuous French women. One such ad by Lenthéric in *Mademoiselle*’s March 1961 issue presents women running toward readers through a French field wearing flesh-colored tights (Figure 3.24).<sup>97</sup> On the one hand, one might assume that the women’s growing wild is related more to the spring months the copy is drawing attention to: “This is the one time of year you find it—the fragrance Spring wears to be Spring. Young, lighthearted Red Lilac, only grown by Lenthéric.” However, the use of flesh-colored body suits that were the same color as the product insinuates the fragrance could make women spring-like, young, and lighthearted just as a sexually free, nearly nude, and liberated

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<sup>96</sup> In fact, the product comes from American manufacturer Max Factor, which despite its American origins regularly played on the popular appeal of French products in America to establish its market as a reliable brand.

<sup>97</sup> “Growing Wild,” Lenthéric, *Mademoiselle*, March 1961.





attractive and facilitate a certain ease with taboos—sexual or otherwise—that might not be possible without it. For Ambush (bottom of Figure 3.25), the name of the perfume itself implicates French women to be hunters of men, as the copy explains: “take him completely by surprise.” Just as Tabu lures toward the forbidden, Ambush enables women to ensnare men like the coy woman featured in the accompanying image, who hides behind white plumes and the blue and red stripes of the French tricolor. The French flag signifies France and Frenchness, and the use of women within the flag connotes French women. The name of the products, the copy describing them, and the associated images combine to reveal how French women are charming and agreeable to approaching and possibly breaking certain unspoken taboos. Such advertisements reinforce women’s availability to male suitors and play into heteronormative notions of seduction as well as the American stereotype of French women being able to seduce men easily.

**Figure 3.25:**  
**Tabu and Ambush**



According to some advertisements, French women not only could ensnare men like hunters, but they do so with the guile of cunning cats. Advertisements for Fabergé's Tigress perfume, which first appeared in *Mademoiselle* in October 1964 and as late as April 1967, associate French women with unbridled wildness and uninhibited seduction. In the earlier advertisement (right of Figure 3.26), a woman, who wears a sheer dress with Bengal-print shadows cast over her, crouches like a cat with an open mouth and hair wildly spread about. If readers did not catch the sexual availability of this "woman in heat," the copy makes it even more explicit: "Wild! Is the word for uninhibited jungle heat of Tigress." The French origin of the perfume is implied through the use of French words for "extraordinary perfume" ("parfum extraordinaire"), but the copy explicitly reiterates that the perfume was "made in France by Fabergé." Nothing in this advertisement provides specific details about the utility of the product. Rather, it relies on the association readers should make between the tiny perfume bottle shown in the bottom, right corner of the page and the tiger-like Frenchwoman filling up the majority of the advertisement. The modified version of the October 1964 ad appearing in the April 1967 issue of *Mademoiselle* (left of Figure 3.26) used nearly the same copy, but instead of showing the woman's crouching body, the only image is of the woman's face and open mouth, which lines up perfectly with the large phallic-like bottle to insinuate the oral availability of the "Tigress on the loose!" The mention of France is not explicit as the October 1964 advertisement, but the use of French words *cologne extraordinaire*, *Fabergé*, and *Tigress* connote the Frenchness of this product.

**Figure 3.26:**  
**Uninhibited Frenchwoman**





The unexpected and wild nature of French women is represented in the advertisement for Coty perfume *L'Imprévu*, too (Figure 3.27).<sup>99</sup> The discerning reader who knows French would know that *imprévu* in French means unexpected, but the use of the French word implies it is a French product. In one daring ad from *McCall's* December 1965 issue, an ecstatically laughing nude woman clutching her chest presents that “*Imprévu* is here!” Playing on the American idea of Paris being associated with spring as well as springtime being nature’s moment of reproduction, the ad tells readers that “spring is an all-year thing” with the help of Coty, which can bring the unexpected to wearers of the perfume.

**Figure 3.27:**  
**Unexpected Frenchwoman**



Another Coty ad running regularly in the United States and France in the mid-1960s was for Coty’s *L’Aimant* perfume (Figure 3.28). As with the *L’Imprévu* perfume ad, this perfume plays on the use of the French word *l’aimant*, which means magnet, and just like a magnet’s feature of being attracted to an opposite charge, *L’Aimant* helps pull women to men by working “like a kiss across the room.” In the image that dominates the ad, a shorthaired brunette sits on the floor as she looks at a man sitting in a chair with a drink in hand. The woman is presented as available to the man, who seems to be awaiting the seemingly coy woman before him. The perfume “imported from France” identifies the product and

**Figure 3.28:**  
**Magnetic Frenchwoman**



<sup>99</sup> “*Imprévu*,” Coty, *McCall's*, December 1965, p. 57.

the woman to be French. The ad insinuates that if American women use this product that it will be easier for them to lure a man like the French woman's suggestive glance and wearing an inviting fragrance.

Beyond being a force of attraction, French femininity was advertised to help create a mood to be adventurous and sexy. In *Mademoiselle's* October 1964 issue, Ciro presents its "Oh la la..." perfume as helping "for those black lace moods!" (Figure 3.29). Here, a black garter belt, a symbol of risqué women's undergarments, surrounds a gift set for Oh la la perfume insinuates the product could be used at special, intimate "Oh la la" moments. Although the advertisement does not provide an image of a woman, the use of the common French expression "Oh là là" and a garter belt call forth associations with French lingerie or French "cancan" dancers who are well known among Americans for their flashy leg moves that reveal their garter belts. Like the garter belt that might make American women feel or look sexier in intimate moments, Oh la la perfume promises American women even more comfort and success with a few spritz of its scent.

Appealing to American women's desire for wealth, wearing a French perfume could also make an American woman luxurious and wealthy like a French woman. Possibly playing off of the 1953 hit film *How to Marry a Millionaire* featuring Marilyn Monroe, Lauren Bacall, and Betty Grable, Lanvin's March 1961 ad for Arpège insinuates that American women could marry a millionaire through the use of Arpège: "How to Marry a Millionaire...Arpège!" (Figure 3.30).<sup>100</sup> Lanvin, which described itself as "The best Paris has to offer," displays its bottle of perfume in front of a glowing sun, which beams

**Figure 3.29:**  
Oh là là

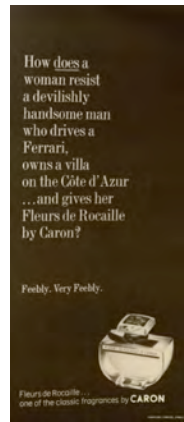


**Figure 3.30:**  
"How to Marry a Millionaire"



<sup>100</sup> "How to Marry a Millionaire...Arpège!" Lanvin, *Mademoiselle*, March 1961.

**Figure 3.31:**  
**Perfume, Diamonds, and Ferraris**



**Figure 3.32:**  
**The French Everyone Understands**



down on what appears to be the Mediterranean coast, a symbol of luxurious relaxation. Similarly, Caron's Fleurs de Rocaille "classic" perfume is presented as a difficult gift for a woman to resist, especially if it comes from "a devilishly handsome man who drives a Ferrari, owns a villa on the Côte d'Azur" (Figure 3.31).<sup>101</sup> According to a later ad for Fleurs de Rocaille in November 1966 (Figure 3.32), such resistance should not be surprising, since the Coty brand is synonymous with innate French knowledge of what women want and should be to be alluring. Or, as the copy of this ad with a nude woman caressing a bottle of Fleurs de Rocaille says, "Caron is the kind of French every woman understands."<sup>102</sup>

French women, thus, were featured regularly in American magazine advertisements for perfumes and make-ups in the late 1950s and

1960s, and by closely examining a sampling of these ads' images and text, the admirable and marketable qualities of French women come into focus. French women, and French perfumes and make-ups by association, could make American women more attractive, luxurious, seductive, and empowered sexually and as feminine beings. On the surface, French women were used as visual markers of the French nation with the regular use of the French tricolor and scenes

<sup>101</sup> "Fleurs de Rocaille," Caron, *Mademoiselle*, June 1964, p. 53.

<sup>102</sup> "Caron is the kind of French every woman understands," Caron, *Mademoiselle*, November 1966.

from the capital city of Paris. However, more pervasively, French words and common American tropes of French women solidified and sold visions of French beauty products' magical abilities to transform its American women wearers into sophisticated, liberated, and available to the men they desire. In general magazine advertisements for products worked to inspire readers to make purchases of those products, which supported the larger establishment of mass consumer society in America. However, items like beauty products, which are not needed as necessities of life, could not sell themselves since they are discretionary and unnecessary to survive. Therefore, targeting purchasers' desires, fantasies, and anxieties were played upon to induce a pressing need to buy an essentially unneeded product. American magazine ads, thus, worked to inspire purchases of French beauty products by relying on fantasies of what it meant to be a French woman, which implicitly worked to help American women maximize their femininity by making up for any supposed deficiencies some readers might have felt came with being an American woman. Although further research is needed into the production and reception of these advertisements, the dominant function of these advertisement's representations of French women offers ways to see how American magazines, even by the mid-1960s, perpetuated the idea that American women could transform themselves into *la Française*, or, at the very least, imagine that such transformation was possible.

## **Conclusion**

By the early 1960s, Americans and the French found themselves on the cusp of significant changes to come for women. With the debilitating effects of World War II having been overcome through collaborative Franco-American exchange and the embedment of fast-paced consumer culture in everyday life in both countries, major seeds were planted in the early sixties for women's rights, which would blow the lid off the feminine mystique and gendered conservatism. The early sixties was a confusing time for women where they were told to reach for the stars through education and employment at the same time of being told to not achieve so much as to be like a man. In this context where birth control, working women, and women's financial freedoms were also debated in the public sphere, French and American magazines' representations of American and French women navigated the opportunities and limits of independence for women. In other words, French and American magazines' comparisons of

American and French women tested the boundaries of the terms of the Women's Rights Movements in both countries through their critiques of how American and French women situated themselves in a predominantly man's world.

In the case of the American women found in French magazines like "ultramodern" Martha and the persevering pioneers of the West, French women continued to see the material advantages and opportunities they did not have open to them that were available to American women, such as the ability to open a bank account or work and start a business on one's own. However, French women also saw the struggles American women had to navigate an uncertain world that was dominated by men, even in the most minute areas of life such as eating. American women who were too independent were troubling because they seemed to shake off their femininity or they ended up leading tragic, disappointing lives. Nonetheless, the admirable qualities of the American woman—being hard working, determined, and welcoming—allowed French women to see a world where opportunity and independence for women was possible. As Suzanne Chantal's piece on the American women of the Wild West explicitly argued, the French woman had a lot to learn from the American woman on how to carry on in the modern world. The representations of American women in French magazines in the early 1960s may not have intended for French women to toss aside their traditions, but it encouraged them to be courageous and daring by looking beyond the kitchen and secretarial pool's desk.

The Frenchwoman in American magazines in the early 1960s played a more pervasive role when it came to working through the place of women in America. On the one hand, compared to the Frenchwoman's life, American women continued to be advantaged in their independence and material wealth, but, as was even observed by French magazines immediately after World War II, the American woman was agitated and not completely happy in continued quest for complete independence and distinction from men. As Toni Howard's provocative piece comparing French and American women argued, French women offered a view of womanhood and femininity that allowed the American woman to at least bear the fact that she lived in a man's world. According to Howard, the French woman, through her artifice and tactful power over her men, unconsciously knew that women's place in society was next to men. However, because French women play the gender game in order obtain what they want, they ultimately can be free by not letting men know how women manipulate them. In this way, Howard uses the Frenchwoman as a legitimating prop for patriarchal society that was vocally

challenged by the emergence of outspoken feminists like Betty Friedan as well as the single, working American woman who did not want to necessarily conform to the housewife-mother role after she finished her education. Although there were broader discussions in magazines about feminism and the place of the woman in the early 1960s, American magazines' use of the idealized iconic Frenchwoman softened the blow of the argument made by some American woman to keep women in the kitchen and to continue to balance independence and dependence.

The alluring advertisements of French women in American magazines are more complex. On the one hand, advertisements took advantage of the iconic status of the Frenchwoman in American culture to gain market share and sell unnecessary beauty products. However, on the other hand, and most importantly, the French woman in American advertisements presaged a more pervasive shift to come for American women. American women were told in sleek, sophisticatedly visual advertisements that they could achieve happiness by buying a product associated with the attractive qualities of the French woman, which reveals that American women were pulled even more into multiple directions on the cusp of the women's rights movement that would only make the expectations for them "to have it all" even more frustrating. Through the advertised French woman, American women were told to continue to adhere to an unrealistic beauty standard. Further, American women had to be alluring and sexy in order to please their men. At the same time, they were told not to be too risqué, so as to cross the line in being too seductive. The Frenchwoman of the ads, in some ways, only pushed American women further into the clutches of patriarchy by reinforcing her need to stay beautiful, be an object of desire, and find her success in life through attracting a man. Feminists and the women's rights movement later in the decade would certainly challenge these extreme pressures built into advertisements. However, by uncovering these magazine advertisements' continued message that the Frenchwoman knows best on how to allure men through the purchase of a product reveal how the seeds of today's pervasive visual messages to American women to seek false happiness and power through their purchase of material goods imbued with mystical qualities of the Frenchwoman were planted long ago in the early 1960s.

## Conclusion

### French and American Women's Mediated History Has Only Just Begun

To conclude this dissertation's twenty-five year journey across popular French and American magazines, it is fitting to turn to one of the most significant magazine representations that inspired this project in the first place, as it serves as a fitting transition to a discussion of what this dissertation accomplished and where this project can go in the future. The piece in question is French photojournalist Pierre Boulat's *Life* photo-essay "A Frenchman Looks at American Women" (Figures C.1 and C.2). Beyond Boulat's in-depth look at the everyday American woman in the 1950s, what is most notable about Boulat's photo-essay in relation to this dissertation's driving questions is that *Life* magazine used a Frenchman's representation of the American woman to show American readers who the American woman was and how the world saw her. As will be explained in more detail shortly, Boulat's essay was a way for American readers to look at how France looked at America through American women, and ultimately it told Americans how America stacked up to the esteem of France. In other words, from the American perspective, by looking at a Frenchman looking at American women, American readers could gauge and take pride in the prominent, admirable place American women had in the minds of others around the world, which in the end propped up Americans' pride over their strong presence in the world.

The plan for Boulat to snap images of everyday American women for *Life* magazine in 1957 was not an accident. Boulat's selection to cover the American woman was plotted over dry



martinis at a Rockefeller Center bar frequented by America's photojournalism elite.<sup>1</sup> Sitting with him was fashion editor Sally Strickland who insisted that Pierre go forward with a test piece capturing American women from a Frenchman's eyes, especially because American women supposedly cared deeply for a Frenchman's opinion. Further, beyond his talent for shooting impromptu moments with his camera, Sally had full confidence in Boulat to do the feature due to his charm as a Frenchman, which, in her opinion would also make American women more agreeable to having their candid photographs taken for the major national magazine at the time.<sup>2</sup>

What resulted from Boulat's collaboration with Kirkland was a nine-page spread featuring what Pierre saw (and *Life* finally selected) as typical, everyday American women going about their day.<sup>3</sup> From the "sensuous strength" of the average woman crossing a Chicago street to two of Coney Island's funnily dressed "Heckuva-Good-Time-Club" members, the American woman's wide smile transcended regional differences as she proudly went about her emancipated life with dreams of making it big, and maybe striking it rich in Hollywood

**Figure C.1:**  
**A Frenchman Looks at American Women**



<sup>1</sup> Boulat, whose photographic skill was discovered by *Life* when he captured an image of a tornado over Paris in 1953, became a regular in the magazine's contract photographer pool, focusing mainly on French fashion throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Ever since he discovered *Life* magazine during his work as a photographer in Vichy during World War II, Boulat knew he wanted to photograph for *Life* magazine. The story Pierre gives of his recruitment to photograph American women is telling: "*Life* invited us to spend some times getting acquainted with Rockefeller Center. The big chief, Ed K. Thomson, maintained *Life* circulation at the time at around 12 million issues a week. In the evening, I had to undergo the screwdriver test, the facsimile of a saloon at the time of the conquest of the West. He had proposed a photo trial on American women seen through the eyes of a French man with a reputation of a lady killer [sic]. Sally Kirkland, the fashion editor, insisted on completing the working out of the project in front of dry martinis—very dry ones" (Pierre Boulat, *Mes Années Life* [Paris: Martial Productions, 1992]).

<sup>2</sup> Much of this back story comes through my personal interviews in January, March, and April 2012 with Annie Boulat, Pierre's surviving wife, who currently runs Cosmos, the photo agency she and Pierre founded together.

<sup>3</sup> "A Frenchman's Eyes on American Women," *Life*, September 16, 1957, 121-129.



(Figure C.2).<sup>4</sup> For any American reading the magazine, one would be proud in the confidence and determination the American woman showed while walking, working hard, and even trying on clothes in a department store. Yet, what would have impressed American readers more was Pierre's observation that American women had qualities not seen in the sophisticated everyday Frenchwoman. As *Life* notes, all eyes are typically on the Frenchwoman, but when the camera was turned onto the American woman, the American woman was *the* sight to behold between the two: "But he also saw unconcerned good looks he never knew in Paris, a determination to be a mistress of career and outgoing friendliness that appreciative Pierre Boulat summed up as an expression of 'dreams, purpose and casual beauty.'"<sup>5</sup> Thus, of all of the beauties of the world, the American woman was unique and special in her optimistic essence, even in the eyes of a Frenchman who came from a land of ultimate beauties.

**Figure C.2:**  
**The American Woman through a Frenchman's Eyes**



<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 123-124, 127.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

*Life* magazine's choice of a French photographer to present typical American women is significant, too, which can be more adequately explained by closely looking at the nuances of the opening shot of the photo-essay (Figure C.1). Readers may notice several layers before them: the American woman in the foreground and Pierre capturing his photograph snapping in the mirror next to the American shopkeeper. On the most basic level, the American woman is put before *Life* magazine readers for inspection. However, more interestingly, and most likely unbeknownst to the American reader, there is a reflective inspection for readers themselves, which comes through Pierre Boulat's use of the mirror. That is, by looking at Pierre looking at the American woman, the American readers of the magazine also looked back at themselves. The readers may not be visible in the camera or mirror, but they are implicated in the shot when they sit in the very place where Boulat was taking the photograph. Thus, the opening spread of Boulat's photo-essay shows how the camera captures the American woman, Pierre looking at the American woman, and the American reader who is looking at a Frenchman who looks at the American woman. Through this process, *Life* magazine readers come to learn more about American women through a Frenchman's representation, which, in the end, allowed them to understand America's admirable place in the world. *Life* could have easily selected among its troops of American photographers, but having a Frenchman look at American women for American readers signaled the important place of a French view on the modern American woman (and life in America more generally) after World War II.

Similarly, as has been detailed at length in this dissertation across the immediate postwar period into the early 1960s, French and American magazines regularly represented and compared American and French women for the purpose of understanding one another and gauging where they stood in an ever-shrinking global world. In both countries, anxieties lurched below the surface of economic growth and prosperity after the ravages of World War II were over. American and French women saw their position in society diminished after their taking on new roles during wartime, but they did not initially go away without a fight. However, as conservatism and the realignment of pre-war gender norms took hold, pressures mounted for American and French women to conform, stay silent, and show unity (rather than vocal dissent) in light of the far graver and more frightening dangers of a divided Cold War world where the vestiges of some empires were crumbling (the French and British), while new empires (the Soviet and American) were erected with the help of technology and geopolitical muscle.

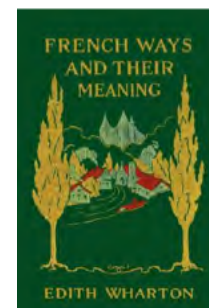
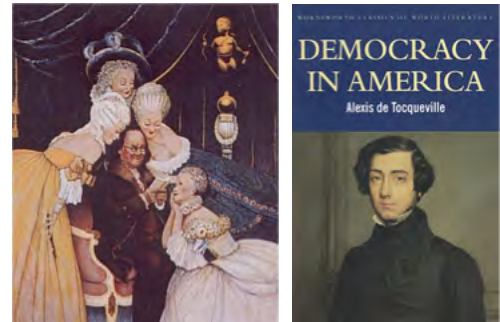
Certainly sites of entertainment and pleasure in both countries, popular magazines had a significant place in managing and working through the various difficult cultural, economic, and societal changes after the war within and between both countries. And as this dissertation has shown through detailed, in-depth textual and visual analyses, magazines' representations of French and American women in a variety of ways played a substantial role in grappling with those changes.

French and American women were used not just because they were intriguing subjects that could garner attention, discussion, and the purchase of magazines. Rather, they were also used because of their embodiment as symbols of honor and status for and between the French and American nations. As such, in representing and comparing everyday French and women, more heated topics like materialism, consumerism, conformity, sex, gender relations, and the place of women in society could be handled in gingerly, often fun, and sometimes serious ways. As this dissertation stated at its outset, popular magazines as well as the place and image of women have been mostly ignored in the telling of the Franco-American story and international relations more generally; and the use of another nation's women to help the imagined French and American national communities grapple with internal changes and debates has not had adequate attention, too. French and American constructions and understandings of each other and national self were very much a product of popular magazines' ruminations on the comparative place of each other's women beyond maneuvers of men and high-level diplomacy.

This dissertation only looks to magazines, but other popular media such as film, television, and radio, could and should be addressed and included in future research, too. Furthermore, it would be helpful and interesting to go beyond this dissertation's focus on everyday women to bring in the prominent French and American women who were often kept in the background. These notable women, due to their notoriety within and between both countries' popular media definitely were used as symbols of the nation and yardsticks for the Franco-American friendship, but due to limitations of the scope of this project, this story could not be told. Such a study, paired with this dissertation's focus on the everyday woman, would provide a wide-reaching and very revealing look to how representations of women, broadly defined, in popular magazines played a very significant role in sorting out relations between the United States and France as well as national conversations about pressing issues of the day.

To further show the importance of this dissertation’s close look at popular French and American magazines’ representations of American and French women to work through Franco-American understanding and questions of internal national significance, it is helpful as well to realize that this dissertation covers just one period in a long-standing arc of French and American looks at each other’s women through various popular media. Going back to the days of Benjamin Franklin’s exploits in Paris among women of the French Royal Court to Alexis de Tocqueville’s encounters with the rugged pioneer woman to American writer Edith Wharton’s treatise on “French Women and Her Ways” (Figure C.3),<sup>6</sup> the French and Americans historically have continuously sorted each other out (as well as themselves) by looking attentively to each other’s women. Therefore, this gendered and mediated Franco-American story still needs further historicizing and uncovering, which requires expanding this project well before the post-World War II period. Building and filling out the long-term history of gendered, mediated Franco-American relations will only help other historians understand the significant place that popular media representations, women as national symbols, and the process of national social comparison have in shaping international relations and understanding.

**Figure C.3:  
The Longstanding Franco-American  
Mutual Regard through Women**



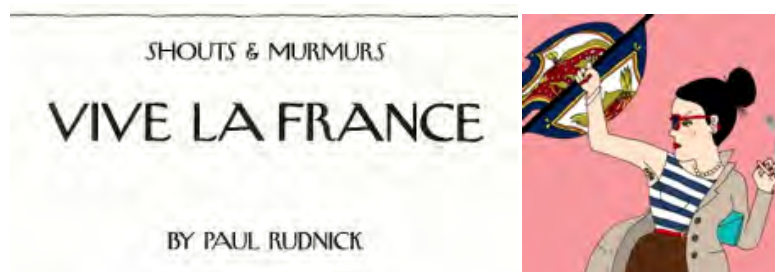
Additionally, to show the potential of this dissertation to move forward and better understand ourselves today, it is also useful to take a peek at the present to see if popular

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<sup>6</sup> These are just some notable examples, but there are others. From top to bottom, left to right in Figure C.3: Benjamin Franklin with women in Paris (1776-1785), image taken from Ionelia Engel, “Benjamin Franklin and the French Women,” University of Pennsylvania English 129-601, accessed October 1, 2013, [http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~engelis/bf\\_and\\_women.html](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~engelis/bf_and_women.html); Alexis de Tocqueville’s writings on the education of American women in *Democracy in America: Part the Second, The Social Influence of Democracy*, translated by Henry Reeve, Esq. (New York: J. & H.G. Langley, 1840); and Edith Wharton’s chapter dedicated to understanding France through “The New Frenchwoman” in her book *French Ways and Their Meaning* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1919).

magazines' representations of French and American women and their use of national social comparison are at work presently to sort out what America, France, and Franco-American relations are. Put differently, looking a bit at today's situation gives us an anecdotal impression of the lingering power of French and American magazines' representations of American and French women in the postwar period. It also presses for further research beyond this dissertation timeline by looking to 1965 to present.<sup>7</sup> To illustrate the potential of looking after 1965, two recent magazine features underscore how national social comparison between French and American women is still very much at work in popular magazine representations, which presses for careful examination of how and why French and American women still are used to sort through Franco-American relations and senses of American and French national self.<sup>8</sup> Further, the presence today of images of French and American women from postwar period demands a deeper inspection of the larger, long-term impact of popular magazines after World War II into the 1960s.

**Figure C.4:  
Frenchwoman's On Top**



The first recent example comes from a piece by Paul Rudnick in *The New Yorker's* Shouts & Murmurs section on March 26, 2012 (Figure C.4). In his parody, Rudnick takes on the persona of a fake Frenchwoman, Marie-Céline Dundelle. The article was written in light of the

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<sup>7</sup> I do not intend to say that there is a direct casual link between what was seen in the postwar period and today. However, I think it is useful to see how historic patterns may still exist today, which demands further research from the end of this project's time period to present. Beyond this dissertation's main focus on representations of French and American women, looking at more recent times could add new insights into the processes (i.e., national social comparison) at work, too. Namely, audience and industrial research could provide a fuller picture of where, how, and why French and American women appear frequently in American and French media to shape Franco-American relations and understanding as well as controversial debates around issues of great national and societal concern (i.e., the place of women in society, sex, motherhood, etc.).

<sup>8</sup> Another piece that is important, but not discussed here, is the *France-Amérique* article described at the start of the Introduction on the mythical place of the Frenchwoman in American culture today.

abundance of books aimed toward American women that tout the advantages and lessons that come from French women (Figure C.5). Also, the piece emerged during the ongoing debates in America about the French woman's supposed indifference to infidelities, which obfuscated the more significant, pressing case of World Bank President Dominique Strauss-Kahn who was accused of sexually assaulting a hotel maid in May 2011.

Rudnick uses Dundelle to poke fun at American and French views of the Frenchwoman's supposed position of superiority over the American woman. It also seeks to mock American women's sheepish following of the Frenchwoman's ways in self-help books. As Rudnick starts his piece: "I do not need a book contract to reveal that French women are superior in all matters."<sup>9</sup> Playing on the stereotype of an angry and dryly sarcastic Frenchwoman, Dundelle, in various ways, shows how the Frenchwoman thinks she is better in a variety of ways. The Frenchwoman is skinnier (she does not even have a word for fat), svelte (she only eats food in the shape of a semicolon), active (her daily exercise is slapping an unknown tourist), and a stern mother (she completely ignores her children unlike the obsessive American woman). Fashion was perhaps the largest difference between American and French women, as seen in the failed lessons Rudnick's fake Frenchwoman gave her American friends: "I have...offered tutorials on elegance to American women. I will hand an American a Hermès scarf and ask her to tie it somewhere on her body, anywhere but around her neck. A French woman might use the scarf to secure a ponytail...my American pupils either use the scarf as a makeshift sling or eat it." In the end, Dundelle concludes, "The French woman has given so much to the world," the most significant contribution being Joan of Arc, "the most glorious and eternal symbol of French womanhood...because she was a cigarette."

Although it is highly satirical and humorous in tone, Rudnick's piece on the elitist view of the Frenchwoman over the American woman strikes seriously at how many Americans view French women as better and how many French women also feel their superiority over American women. Contrary to the immediate postwar period where French women were anxious and looking to the American woman for guidance, the tables seemed to have turned today. The Frenchwoman is seemingly on top, and the American woman is concerned how she stacks up to the Frenchwoman on nearly every part of daily life, presumably because the Frenchwoman somehow has a better way of life. Further, it goes without saying that the legacy of the iconic

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Rudnick, "Vive la France," *The New Yorker*, March 26, 2012, p. 65.



Frenchwoman lives on in the American imagination. Future research into what happened between the mid-1960s in the American and French imaginations of each other through their women as well as how these representations worked through debates over gender and beauty would be helpful. Based on this dissertation’s finding, popular media like magazines would definitely be one important place to see where and how these posturings were sorted out. Adding in other media that grew in prominence after the mid-1960s, such as television, would only nuance our understanding even more.

The second recent example exhibiting the importance of this dissertation as a growing, evolving project for us today came on January 17, 2014 when major French newspaper *Le Monde* published a short article in *M*, its online magazine supplement, entitled “‘The Frenchwoman,’ star in America.”<sup>10</sup> On the surface, the article details a short sampling of a long list of recently published and best-selling books in America about the everyday Frenchwoman (see Figure C.5), including Pamela Druckerman’s comparison of French and American parenting, mothering, and education in *Bringing Up Bébé*, and Mireille

**Figure C.5:**  
**Books about Frenchwomen**



**Figure C.6:**  
**The Frenchwoman is Still an American Star**



<sup>10</sup> Louise Couvelaire, “ ‘La Française,’ star en Amérique,” *M, le magazine du Monde*, January 17, 2014, [http://www.lemonde.fr/mode/article/2014/01/17/la-francaise-star-en-amerique\\_4349003\\_1383317.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/mode/article/2014/01/17/la-francaise-star-en-amerique_4349003_1383317.html).

Guiliano's series of books on Frenchwomen, particularly, her most popular books *French Women Don't Get Fat* and *French Women Don't Get Facelifts*. However, and more importantly, the article stresses the long-standing American fascination over Frenchwomen in the media and what Frenchwomen can teach Americans about themselves and their place in the world. To illustrate the enduring status of the iconic Frenchwoman in America, the article uses a *Life*-like postwar photograph to reveal Americans' imagined French female archetype: a chic, well-dressed *Parisienne* walking a poodle along the sidewalk of the fashionable, expensive Place Vendôme (Figure C.6). While summarizing the key arguments of the books, the article implies, as the title explicitly states, that the imagined, ideal Frenchwoman is rooted in the postwar image of the Frenchwoman, which has become a star among Americans. As the article's author explains, "American women swoon before her [the Frenchwoman's] 'so chic' bob cut, inquire on how to tie her scarf in the 'so French' fashion, marvel in front of her 'so Parisian' elegance, and are jealous of her 100% made in France BMI (body mass index)." In other words, the Frenchwoman for Americans is still the epitome of chic, beauty, flirtation, and feminine grace that was crafted in postwar American magazines. As Géraldine Lepère, the author of the blog *Comme une Française destiné aux Américaines et aux Anglaises (Like a Frenchwoman, for American and British Women)*, helpfully elaborates further, "France remains a fantasized country...And the Frenchwoman conveys an image of perfection that greatly impresses." Or, according to Giuliano, herself a Frenchwoman married to an American man, "Anglo-Saxon women are intimidated by our way of joking, flirting, and being flirtatious...They envy us." On the one hand, this article serves as a current point of pride among the French for its women being highly esteemed among Americans. More significantly, though, in relation to this dissertation's focus on postwar French and American magazines, this article points to the longstanding, important historic trajectory of American and French fascination with each other's women and their relation to one another and how this is a continuously evolving story. Further still, the use of a photojournalistic magazine's image from the postwar period shows the lasting impact of popular magazines in American and French culture.

Popular media in their various forms, particularly print magazines with significant visual elements, have been a key avenue through which imagining and comparing has taken place between France and America. Further, everyday French and American women have had and should have a significant place in telling that story in the future. Although this dissertation tells



one slice of the story from the perspective of the immediate postwar period into the early 1960s, it can be extended to the past before 1945 as well as the present in popular media within and beyond magazines; other historians may apply this framework to other binational and multinational cases, too.

In the end, by seeing how American magazines represented Frenchwomen as admirable, liberating, and sometimes troubling creatures—from the resilient postwar Frenchwoman to the iconic Frenchwoman in the 1950s to the knowledgeable Frenchwoman of the early 1960s—one comes to understand how American women came to truly understand themselves and their nation's place in the world through Frenchwomen. The same can be said for the French context where French magazines liked and feared the American woman's life of independence and comfort rooted in mass consumerism and conformity, which allowed French women to ponder what kind of modern women they wanted and did not want to become in a new France that was rebuilt after World War II. The gendered, mediated history of Franco-American relations has only just begun. Even more exciting comparisons and looks into each other's lives are yet to be seen between French and American women in American and French magazines and other media.

## Appendix

### Magazine Sampling and Methodology

As I first approached the question of how France and the United States came to understand one another through media, I first came to magazines due to their extreme popularity and important visual presence in the mediascape in both countries after World War II. Further, the magazine world was highly transnational after World War II, especially between the United States and France. In some ways, the synergistic connections were a product of larger diplomatic forces, which trickled into the images and texts that came through in the popular sphere through magazines. Lastly, from a more practical standpoint, the archives and data are more manageable and searchable, especially for American magazines.

To consult and retrieve items, for American magazines, I relied upon the “retrospective” version of *Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature*, which contains an index of major American periodical articles between 1890 and 1982. The *Reader’s Guide* interface allows for targeted date range and keyword searches in article titles and subject listings. To sample American magazines, I started with the largest category possible, all articles between 1945 and 1968 dealing with “France” or “French.” From there, I sorted through search results to tag and retrieve magazine features directly through the University of Michigan’s periodical collection or through interlibrary loan requests. To make sure nothing fell through the cracks, I performed advanced searches, too, for articles that were tagged “France,” “French,” “Paris,” or “Parisian” and *women, woman, girl, girls, wife, wives*, etc. Also, I conducted targeted searches for key French personalities, including Brigitte Bardot, Zizi Jeanmaire, Leslie Caron, Sylvie Vartan,

Simone Signoret, Nicole Alphanand, Coco Chanel, Simone de Beauvoir, and Edith Piaf.<sup>1</sup>

For *Life* and American *Vogue*, I used digital archives to conduct my searches. *Life* magazine is completely digitized through Google Books. For *Vogue*, I could consult The Vogue Archive, through ProQuest, which has search capabilities in all *Vogue* issues going back to 1892. Since *Reader's Guide* and *Life's* Google Books collection do not allow for advertisement searches like The Vogue Archive, to collect advertisements from American magazines, I consulted physical issues of the magazines at the University of Oregon's periodical collection.<sup>2</sup> I randomly selected ranges of issues and paged through magazines to identify and collect advertisements of interest. For interlibrary loan requests, I always requested the table of contents and cover to help gauge the relative importance of an item, and to see if there were other items of interest that could be requested and consulted. At the University of Oregon's collection, I also consulted important articles' specific issues' original copies to see the larger context of articles.

Major French magazines are not indexed by subject like American magazines are in *Reader's Guide*. Moreover, historical French magazines are not yet available in digital form. As such, I had to consult the original magazines at complete, or nearly complete, collections, mainly in France. I consulted the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the French equivalent of the Library of Congress (where all French periodicals need to be legally deposited), to consult original French magazines. Many magazines did not have table of contents until the mid-1950s, so much of my work was paging through issues and developing an index of citations relevant to my research questions. In that index, I included initial notes and impressions about the items as well as the general evolution of magazines consulted, which helped me later in my analysis of emergent themes across items found in magazines. I was fortunate to have access to *Paris Match's* archive at the Lagardère publishing group's headquarters in Paris. They gave me access to *Paris Match's* internal database of all articles and items going back to its start in 1949. They allowed me to scan and take photographs of items, too. For *Jours de France*, I mainly relied on the École Supérieure de Journalisme de Lille's collection. The librarian there informed me of this magazine, which is the only magazine of all of the French magazines I have sampled that does not exist today. In all of my sampling, my goal was not to quantitatively map or content

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<sup>1</sup> Although my dissertation ultimately focuses on everyday women, I still retrieved materials about famous and notable women for contextual information and the possibility of expanding this project to include both everyday and notable women.

<sup>2</sup> I consulted the University of Oregon since it was the library closest to my permanent residence in Portland, Oregon, with the most complete American magazine archive.

analyze articles for statistical purposes. Rather, I worked to identify key articles, images, and advertisements in order to study the dominant discourses emerging from across all of these representations.

The chart and accompanying key that follow summarize the French magazines sampled for this dissertation. Unlike major American magazines, which are indexed by subject and general bibliographic information and electronically searchable in *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature Retrospective, 1890-1982*, French magazines are not indexed by subject in any publicly available database. Therefore, manual sampling of French magazines was required. Further, many French magazines, especially in the 1940s and early 1950s did not have table of contents pages, so sampling from cover-to-cover was often required. When table of contents pages were available, they were consulted along with a cursory review of a magazine. Some magazines were randomly reviewed in full even if they did not contain any apparent relevant items in the table of contents. The only French magazine that was sampled using a searchable database was *Paris Match*, which was housed in its private corporate archive in Paris. *Elle* magazine, owned by Lagardère Active, the same media conglomerate as *Paris Match*, was not indexed during the time period of this study; the state of their archive was also poor, so I was not given access. The other French magazines studied did not respond or declined access to their archives. Therefore, issues of *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, *Nous Deux*, and French *Vogue* were consulted at the Bibliothèque nationale de France—Site François Mitterrand (Paris, France). Most of *Jours de France* was consulted at the École Supérieure de Journalisme de Lille's library (Lille, France). Most of *Paris Match* was consulted at the *Paris Match* company archives just outside Paris (Levallois-Peret, France) along with requests for physical or scanned copies through the University of Michigan's Interlibrary Loan Service. For items found at the Bibliothèque nationale, copies had to be ordered directly from the library's reproduction office. Items found elsewhere were photographed or scanned.



■ Sampled all issues in time period.  
 ▨ Sampled 3/4 issues in time period.  
 ▩ Sampled 1/2 issues in time period.  
 ▪ Sampled 1/4 issues in time period.  
 □ Did not sample.

\* Did not sample because not available at archive where consulted this magazine over this time period (e.g., did not own, missing, or restricted).  
 n Did not sample because not in print.  
 NOTE: Paris Match was sampled using Paris Match's internal article and item database. Other issues were pulled based on purposive sampling/people/issues. All magazines but Jours de France circulate today (2014).

w = weekly NOTE: Marie France published as weekly 1948-March 1956; monthly thereafter.  
 s = semi-monthly NOTE: Marie Claire published semi-monthly Sept 1964-Dec 1966; monthly thereafter.  
 m = monthly

Concerning my data analysis, as I compiled materials, I analyzed them through grounded theory's inductive method of coding and searching for emergent themes. Laura Ellingson summarizes my grounded approach to data analysis aptly:

The steps of grounded theory research outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (2000) include coding data, developing inductive categories, revising the categories, writing memos to explore preliminary ideas, continually comparing parts of the data to other parts and to literature, collecting more data, fitting it into categories, noting where new data does not fit and revising the categories (theoretical sampling), and continually refining the typology using constant comparative analysis.<sup>3</sup>

My data analysis, thus, involved entering units of data into various spreadsheets and establishing the dimensions (i.e., tacit feel, properties, context) and a category for each unit as I went along.<sup>4</sup> Each new unit of data entered into the chart was regularly compared to previous entries and assigned into an existing or a new category. The entire data set was then reviewed several times until all relevant units of data were assigned a category. All data was then sorted by category; items were compared to each other again to maintain an existing category or assign or refine a new category. Once all data was reviewed again, I turned to my notes and secondary literature to reflect on categories' greater meanings and connections. Through this process, I established the emergent themes that appear throughout the chapters of the dissertation.

Also, in order to situate my primary source documents within the larger socio-cultural and historic context in which they were produced, I iteratively turned to the secondary literature on the time period, the productions of specific magazines, and any biographical accounts related to those working in the magazines. I also dedicated some of my “downtime” to explore other important media at that time period—including listening to popular songs, watching major film productions, perusing newspaper headlines, and reading major novels or books—in order to immerse myself in what the French and American mediascape and culture were like at that time and put my analysis in conversation with those media trends. Also, in my archival work in France, I often went to places mentioned in magazine features, so I could connect with the detailed descriptions magazines provided. Ultimately, I believe these rigorous steps helped me better critically analyze my primary source materials from the perspective of the time period

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<sup>3</sup> Laura Ellingson, *Engaging Crystallization in Qualitative Research: An Introduction* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009), p. 56.

<sup>4</sup> For details about grounded coding strategies see Anselm L. Strauss and Juliet Corbin, “Coding Procedures,” in *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990), pp. 57-115. For references on coding strategies using matrices and charts, see Matthew B. Miles and A.M. Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994).

rather than my stance as a historian in the present moment, although my personal experiences in having studied and lived in France certainly informed my understanding of the broader context within which Franco-American relations were described and discussed.

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Bibliothèque Nationale de France – Site François Mitterrand  
Bibliothèque Nationale de France – Arsenal  
École Supérieure de Journalisme de Lille  
OJD (Office de Justification de la Diffusion/Diffusion Contrôle)  
*Paris Match* Magazine (Lagardère Active)  
University of Michigan Library  
University of Oregon Library  
Various periodical collections through the University of Michigan's Interlibrary Loan Office, especially the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), University of Iowa, and Ohio State University.

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<u>American</u>		<u>French</u>
<i>Coronet</i>	<i>Reader's Digest</i>	<i>Elle</i>
<i>Ladies' Home Journal</i>	<i>Saturday Evening Post</i>	<i>Jours de France</i>
<i>Life</i>	<i>Seventeen</i>	<i>Marie Claire</i>
<i>Look</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Nous Deux</i>
<i>Mademoiselle</i>	<i>Vogue</i>	<i>Paris Match</i>
<i>McCall's</i>	<i>Woman's Home Companion</i>	<i>Vogue</i>
<i>National Geographic</i>		
<i>Newsweek</i>		

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\* Although many issues were leafed through from cover to cover, American magazines that were sampled were identified by using repeated searches in the Retrospective Database of Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature. There is no French index equivalent of Reader's Guide Retrospective, so sampling was done by mainly by leafing through magazines from cover to cover (see Appendix for details on how French magazines were sampled).



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