Straight Record and The Paper Trail: From Depression Reporters to Foreign Correspondents

Magdalena Bogacka-Rode

Graduate Center, City University of New York

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STRAIGHT RECORD AND THE PAPER TRAIL: FROM DEPRESSION REPORTERS TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

BY

MAGDALENA BOGACKA-RODE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Center Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2014
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
STRAIGHT RECORD AND THE PAPER TRAIL: FROM DEPRESSION REPORTERS TO FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

Abstract

By

Magdalena Bogacka-Rode

Adviser: Professor Jane C. Marcus

Straight Record and the Paper Trail: From Depression Reporters to Foreign Correspondents engages with Martha Gellhorn’s The Face of War (1959), Virginia Cowles’ Looking for Trouble (1941) and Josephine Herbst’s The Starched Blue Sky of Spain and Other Memoirs (1991) as documentaries of struggle. Documentary as a mode of writing and image making reveals dissonance, contradictions and varied perspectives which undermine the official historical record. The three writers, I argue, by republishing their Spanish Civil War (SCW) journalism in book form intended to set their record straight. This was motivated by their commitment to the 1930s struggle and the need to recover much that had been relegated to the margins as human interest stories (HIS), or woman’s angle. This patronizing and denigrating label which was applied to their SCW articles dismissed the documentary value of, what I call, their human experience record (HER), as an affectation of uninformed and class biased women writers. Their documentary texts, much like those of Nancy Cunard, Muriel Rukeyser, Gerda Taro, Gamel Woolsey and Virginia Woolf, were not composed under auspices of the dominant party lines as they eschewed formal membership in political as well as international organizations. In these, they recognized the very same patriarchal constraints and limitations
which they sought to expose using the ‘masters’ tools’ they acquired by belonging, or at least being able to pass for “daughters of educated men” yet remained fully aware that being citizens with passports they were in position to help, but by no means to become the face of the cause (Woolf). The main criticism of The Face of War, Looking for Trouble and The Starched Blue Sky of Spain and Other Memoirs has been that Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst did not tell the whole truth, that dates and names of key players are missing, and that they had no definite answers about the politics and propaganda in Spain. But these were not the objectives these women set for themselves when they went to Spain and later when they decided to republish their SCW journalism. What Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst omitted from journalism and their subsequent accounts in book form -- moments of doubt, consternation, idleness -- remains in their archival repositories, the recovery project of which this dissertation aims to initiate.
Acknowledgements

To Jane C. Marcus, my dissertation adviser, I remain in debt and awe for her support, encouragement, generosity and mentorship. It is she who inspired me to put away Hemingway, and turn to writers who have fallen between the cracks of the modernist canon. She gave me a copy of Woolf’s *Three Guineas* and told me go to the archive and be relentless with their gate keepers and find my material. Without her who is a scholar, feminist, writer, mother, mentor and fighter, this project would have never come to be.

Also I would like to express my thanks to the two other members of my Dissertation Committee. To Mario DiGangi, whose feedback on my writing helped me find the path amidst the forest of research, I remain grateful. To Michele Wallace, I am thankful for her insights and for opening her library to me.

As most of the research for this project was conducted in various archives, I would like to express my appreciation to all the librarians and staff without whose help I could not have completed my research. To everyone at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Center at Boston University, the JFK Library in Boston, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, and the Imperial War Museum in London, I am very grateful. Here I must also thank Alexander Matthews, the executor of Martha Gellhorn’s estate, and Harriet Crawley, Virginia Cowles’ daughter, for their generosity and positive response to my project.

To my Graduate Center fellow colleagues and scholars working on incredible women writers, activists, artists and archivists who deserve to be in vogue, I am grateful for their support.

Most importantly to my parents, Danuta and Szczepan Bogaccy, for their encouragement, hard work and sacrifices, I am deeply thankful. To my loving husband, Kurt Rode, I am grateful for always being supportive and willing to hear about my research.

I dedicate this project to my family.
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Introduction

Ruminating on the omnipresence of war in 1943, Gertrude Stein writes in *Wars I Have Seen*:

Of course there are a good many times when there is no war just as there are a good many times when there is a war. To be sure when there is a war the years are longer that is to say the days are longer the months are longer the years are much longer but the weeks are shorter that is what makes a war. And when there is no war, well just now I cannot remember just how it is when there is no war. (5)

With this observation in mind, which Stein made during WWII, the inaccuracy of the phrase interwar period, the time between WWI and WWII, becomes quite vivid as that moment in history between 1914 and 1941 can hardly be described as free of war. Like war, mobilization prior to, as well as disarmament after the war, have no clear or finite end. What’s more the aftermath of rebuilding, reestablishing of boundaries, reprimanding the aggressor and returning home are fraught with conflict, new and old. Also, as Stein notes, even if war seems distant and unrelated to one’s life, “there [is] history, and there [are] novels historical novels” and “modern wars all wars are like that, they go places, where they never heard of in many cases” (7, 15). War on poverty, class wars and sex wars are just few additional instances of struggle which dominated the interwar period. What is particularly telling about Stein’s observation is the mention that “modern wars…go places” which brings to mind war photographs, foreign correspondents’ dispatches from war, eye-witness accounts, and refugees and exiles.

Two major events of the 1930s, the Spanish Civil War and the Great Depression which occurred during the interwar period, inform both my focus and choice of materials in this
dissertation. The political and activist response to both events has been portrayed and narrated, in both historical and popular discourse, in terms of dichotomies of freedom and oppression, democracy and fascism, and right and wrong. The veracity of this dominant narrative has been, and remains, dependent on documentary as well as visually enhanced texts, which are seen as proof of witness. As bearing witness requires proximity to the subject, that position, contingent on seeing and being seen, is both conducive and detrimental to the witness’ perspective. The obvious question, the answer to which is equally evident, is from whose perspective do we look back on that decade? This in turn lends itself to questions with which I engage in this dissertation: how did the experienced of witnessing the unemployment and poverty in U.S. translate to reporting on the war in Spain where the poor and unemployed were bombed by the fascists and their Germans and Italians supporters, and prevented from farming as the land hoarded by wealthy Spaniards? Since with time news stories are relegated to further pages and eventually become stories, is documentary the genre of choice for preventing historical amnesia and repetition of the past? How was the construct of the ‘other’ deployed and reimagined in the narrative of the struggle in 1930s, and the Spanish Civil War? What place, if any, do documentarians have in their documentaries of struggle and how productive is such revision of the genre in instances where the women are the ones seeing? Do women’s ways of seeing forged through both privilege and access to education, as well as autodidactic practice of observing social struggles accurately capture the complexities of the Spanish Civil War? Or does their way of seeing reiterate the very dominant historical narrative via which they themselves are rendered visible?

Martha Gellhorn’s *The Face of War* (1959), Virginia Cowles’ *Looking for Trouble* (1941) and Josephine Herbst’s *The Starched Blue Sky of Spain and Other Memoirs* (1991) are
the three key texts which are examined in this dissertation in light of these questions. As these texts are all republications of the writers’ Spanish Civil War (SCW) journalism, I argue, that Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst intended to set their record straight and produced documentaries of struggle. Documentary as a mode of writing and image making reveals dissonance, contradictions and varied perspectives which undermine the official historical record. This was motivated by their commitment to the 1930s struggle and the need to recover much that had been relegated to the margins as human interest stories (HIS), or woman’s angle. This patronizing and denigrating label which was applied to their SCW articles dismissed the documentary value of, what I call, their human experience record (HER), as an affectation of uninformed and class biased women writers. Their documentary texts, much like those of Nancy Cunard, Muriel Rukeyser, Gerda Taro, Gamel Woolsey and Virginia Woolf, were not composed under auspices of the dominant party lines as they eschewed formal membership in political as well as international organizations. In these, they recognized the very same patriarchal constraints and limitations which they sought to expose using the ‘masters’ tools’ they acquired by belonging, or at least being able to pass for ‘daughters of educated men’ yet remained fully aware that being citizens with passports they were in position to help, but by no means to become the face of the cause. The main criticism of The Face of War (TFOW), Looking for Trouble (LFT) and The Starched Blue Sky of Spain and Other Memoirs (TSBSOSAOM) had been that Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst did not tell the whole truth, that dates and names of key players are missing, and that they had no definite answers about the politics and propaganda in Spain. But these lofty demands were not the objectives these women set for themselves when they went to Spain and later when they decided to republish their SCW journalism. What Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst omitted from journalism and their subsequent accounts in TFOV, LFT and TSBSOSAOM -- moments

1 See Jordana Mendelson’s Documenting Spain: artists, exhibition culture, and the modern nation, 1929-1939
of doubt, consternation, idleness -- remains in their archival repositories and the recovery project of these materials is long overdue.

**From Reporter to Foreign Correspondent**

While a reporter, literally speaking, gathers news and information to then report to a newspaper or other media outlet, a foreign correspondent files dispatches or longer pieces on breaking stories from abroad. And as long as the stories from abroad have no direct impact on situation at home, a foreign correspondent has more freedom. Also, such post was more glamorous to women who had cut their teeth reporting on the Great Depression in U.S., poverty, violent strikes, and the Scottsboro trial, the case involving nine African-American boys illegally charged with rape of two white young women simply because they were on the same train cart traveling in search of work in the South. This reporting was far more interesting than the society columns these educated yet unemployed women, often from so called prominent or middle-class families, were allowed to do. In pursuing stories on the social conditions in which poor Americans lived, young women reporters joined the discourse of thirties Depression: social observation of class, gender and race. This was also the discourse engaged in by government organizations like Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), Resettlement Administration/Farm Security Administration (RA/FSA) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) which sent unemployed men and women, writers and photographers to record the lives of people in the areas hardest hit by the Depression. Through their participation, women reporters became part of the larger discourse for social change, as they developed a way of seeing reality and style for recording their observations. This experience was yet another iteration of their

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autodidactic practice as they learnt and covered similar causes in Europe, which in 1937 led them to the Spanish Civil War.

They came on the heels of reporters like Nancy Cunard and Muriel Rukeyser for whom the Scottsboro case set the tone for the decade. Cunard and Rukeyser travelled to Alabama and reported how the racial injustice against nine innocent boys was exacerbated by poverty and unemployment. Josephine Hersbt saw it too and wrote “Lynching in the Quite Manner” for *New Masses*, which was later reprinted in Cunard’s *Negro Anthology* (1934). Herbst recognized in the Scottsboro case the injustice that led to execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927. Reading, analyzing and drawing conclusions from newspapers and literature written about the Scottsboro Case, Herbst formed her own opinions. To her what this case attested to was that the “whole race problem in the South is first of all economic. It is [African-American’s] position as a laborer that forces him back into the legal status of a slave…because it has seemed to be an economic advantage to keep him that way” (qtd. in Cunard 270). Herbst’s decision not to witness the trial was motivated by her staunch skepticism of organized groups, like the Communist party, and their proclivity to hijack individual causes for their own ends. She saw it happen with the farmers’ movement in the Midwest and she would see it again in Spain. The importance of commitment to struggle together against economic exploitation and access to basic resources, Herbst would return to again and again in her journalism on struggling farmers in Midwest and Cuba, Germans living under censorship imposed by the Nazis, and the cause of Republican Spain fought for by people from around the world.

For Martha Gellhorn inefficiency of government programs created to address social ills which she saw firsthand as a FERA field researcher in 1934 was the first cause. Her reports on poverty, disease and malnutrition in the Carolinas, New Jersey and Massachusetts, include
descriptions of people’s resilience in the face of Great Depression, which she had previously seen at the beginning of the decade among factory strikers in Albany, New York. She was indignant to see the American labor force ill, idle, and cheated along with their families due to mismanagement of resources by uninformed and prejudiced relief workers. In a November 1934 report to Harry Hopkins, the director of FERA, she criticized the “administration, which is so definitely and blatantly bad that it has become an object of disapproval (if not disgust)…In the often repeated words of the unemployed, “They’re all in this together—the politicians and the relief people” (TVFTG 18). Nepotism and “criminal incompetency” of the administration and relief workers, Gellhorn concludes, contribute to the unemployed being made to feel as if they were a drain on the economy yet there was no work for them. The economic situation in Europe was no better, and the Nazi youth movement in Germany, where Gellhorn travelled with a group of French pacifists in 1933 prompted her to adopt an anti-fascist stance on Spain.

Virginia Cowles’ early foray into newspaper reporting focused on how the society half, rather than the other half, live. Her accounts of debutante balls, husband hunts and divorces offer a startling contrast to the daily struggle of the majority of U.S. and European population in 1930s. The wealthy enjoyed profits from their international investments from China, Burma and Philippines as Cowles’ observed and commented on in articles from a world tour. In cases like Italy, as Cowles reported in 1935, invasion of Abyssinia went beyond jump starting the ravaged economy, and was a harbinger of fascism. After a grand tour of Libya with Italo Balbo, the Air Marshal and governor, which revealed that besides agricultural projects-growing of fruit and olives- the Italian military was training there , Cowles had no doubt Italy was planning further expansion.

**Spanish Civil War**
Though it erupted following an unlawful overthrow by traditional Nationalists of an elected Republican government in July of 1936, there was nothing civil about the SCW. The disparity between the have and have nots, in terms of access to economic and social resources, land ownership and suffrage split Spain into various factions. While both sides of the SCW attracted direct support of men and women from around the world, the fascist governments of Germany and Italy saw the war in Spain as an opportunity to grow their totalitarian presence in Europe by testing out a new approach to waging war: aerial bombardment of civilians and civilian occupied areas. Because the objective of this novel warfare strategy was destruction of non-military targets and inflicting heavy casualties, and these were rehearsed in Spain for the first time, the SCW has come to be commonly referred to as a modern total war.

In March of 1937, Spain was a destination for many reporters, writers and volunteers. As Herbert Matthews put it “Madrid was the place to be-the one place above all others where a man who cared what happened in this world would want to be. It had become the hub of the universe” (184). Since the July 1936 coup which marked the beginning of the civil war, Madrid had been the Holy Grail for the Nationalists who launched repeated assaults on the seat of Republican government, which by November 1936 relocated to Valencia. The Non-Intervention Pact signed in August by European powers, left Republican Spain with no outside support, as France and Britain remained neutral. Germany and Italy belligerently violated the pact by sending weapons, tanks and planes, as well as soldiers to the Nationalists. The main source of support for the Republican side came from the Soviet Union and its continued call for volunteers who began to arrive in Spain as of October 1936, and were organized into International Brigades. Large scale massacres by Franco’s forces in Merida and Badajoz, as well as bombing of Malaga by Italian planes sent civilians fleeing for safety to Valencia and Madrid. Food was scarce as were secure
buildings in cities subjected to bombardments and constant influx of refugees. The battle of Gudalajara in early March of 1937 where Italians attempted to seize the Madrid-Valencia road ended with victory for Republicans, and while it was a minor territorial gain, it gave the Republican Spain a much needed morale boost.

Martha Gellhorn, Virginia Cowles and Josephine Herbst arrived in Spain in the spring of 1937 in the capacity of, for a lack of a better phrase, press tourists. Each had in her possession either a letter of introduction or one expressing interest in articles from a news media outlet or a weekly publication but none was an accredited war correspondent. Though this would not be the first struggle they would report on as all three women spent the first half of the 1930s decade travelling in U.S. and abroad, and writing about social and political unrest, this was their first war. Because Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst covered both the home front and war front of the Spanish Civil War -- civilians and refugees living under constant threat of bombardment in overcrowded cities, the injured in hospitals, the dead in morgues, and soldiers in trenches -- their articles were categorized as human interest stories (HIS). Although both men and women contributed HIS to newspapers and magazines, when penned by women, HIS were referred to as a “woman’s angle” reporting. Yet in the context of total modern war that was the Spanish Civil War, where the line between the home and war front was of as little consequence to Franco’s fascist bomber planes as the gender and nationality of their human targets, Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst’s articles reflect a new war narrative, one which Virginia Woolf’s TG phrase most aptly describes: “ruined houses and dead bodies” (26). Their commitment to documenting people’s struggle during the Spanish Civil War is reflected in their decision to republish their articles annotated with their own observations and experiences of war drawn from memory and journals/notes they kept while in Spain, in book form.
Gellhorn and Cowles would go on to cover other military conflicts after the Spanish Civil War, yet their journalistic careers, as those of many other women reporters, are either omitted or heavily abridged in histories and scholarship on women reporters. Aside from Anne Sebba’s *Battling For News: Rise of Female War Reporter*, which contains a chapter on Spanish Civil War and mentions all three women reporters, other studies which, present a general overview rather than a sustained, critical consideration of women’s war writing, only include Martha Gellhorn. Paul Preston, one of the foremost historians of twentieth-century Spain, in *We Saw Spain Die: Foreign Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War* (2009) (WSSD), included two quotes from Martha Gellhorn’s TFW and a lengthy passage from Josephine Herbst’s letter, but does not discuss their SCW articles. While all three women make an appearance in Preston’s book, their presence is rendered superficial and sensational. Preston refers to Martha Gellhorn as the “beautiful American correspondent” and recounts the well-known story of her affair with Ernest Hemingway (50). Virginia Cowles is cast in the role of a “wealthy American” who looks like Lauren Bacall (168). As for Josephine Herbst, while Preston refers to her diary entry which describes the falling out between Hemingway and Dos Passos, he also quotes the critical comments she made about Gellhorn and Cowles which he explains as an indication of Herbst’s “nasty side” which she aimed at “women prettier than herself who got more attention than she did” (81). It seems that Preston’s definition of a foreign correspondent is inclusive only of those reporters who were male and came to Spain to cover the war on assignment. This automatically excludes all three women on the grounds of gender, which combined with their lack of war

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experience and no assignment, left them exposed to sexist derision under the guise of paternalistic condescension. Consequently, Preston’s WSSD, where “we” only refers to men who filed daily dispatches, reflects a vision of war incommensurate with the extent and scope of the SCW. As the first total modern war, where the two sides engaged not only in combat on land but also in air, and the war front extended well into the villages and cities, the SCW blurred the boundaries between soldiers and civilians. This meant that the everyday patterns and routines became monumental feats, as women, children and elderly risked their lives by going to work or school, standing in line for food and returning home. Because Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst observed and wrote about the everydayness of the war as well as home front, their reporting has been categorized as HIS, synonymous with women’s angle, that is considered to be less dangerous and not front page news.

HIS made its appearance in American newspapers after the Civil War, when The Sun began publishing pieces written for emotional impact about events of little to no significance. Yet incorporating quotes and interviews into HIS bestowed a sense of importance and authority to words and ideas of the average man, and created a sense of a dialogue between the stories and the audience. In essence, HIS was “not news,” as Helen MacGill Hughes explains in News and the Human Interest Story,

[s]ince, in contradistinction to news, it has no urgency and no practical consequences, the human interest story may be prepared early in the week for the Sunday edition, but the editor who delays the printing of news imperils his paper’s reputation and its circulation, and, finally, his own job. ..Big news is dead in a day. But the little news which the front page puts into circulation travels and lives on, making the one live item in old newspaper files.(67)
According to Hughes, HIS is not one with finite spatial or temporal boundaries, but a common occurrence which is observed and then rendered into words by the writer. Emphasizing the expiration of news and transcendence of HIS, Hughes seems to suggest that the latter is in fact the base sustenance of the print media. News editors, aware of the role HIS played in the success of sensational journalism, also recognized the need to distinguishing between HIS and a HIS from a woman’s angle so as to retain the gendered hierarchy in the newsroom and at the same time increase circulation and attract a wider reading audience. In the case of women reporters, gendered biases informed what the editors expected from their articles. And women reporters were expected to capture feminine sensibilities through perspective, voice and images in their articles.

But writing on freelance basis for weekly publications, weekly columns or illustrated magazines, as Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst did in Spain, also had its advantages as they could pursue leads and send their articles to numerous publications. Correspondents who were expected to file daily dispatches often had their work heavily censored in Spain, and whatever reached the papers in Europe and U.S. was suspected as propaganda. Arturo Barea and Constancia de la Mora who worked as censors in Madrid and Valencia respectively, and whose job it was to ensure that reporters did not reveal too much in terms of military information, recount in their biographies that reporters often used code or slang. If caught, reporters could lose their safe conduct passes, be expelled from Spain or suffer graver consequences. In spring of 1937, as Cowles recounts in LFT, “International Brigades were not allowed to be publicized; no reference could be made to Russian armaments, and buildings and streets which suffered bombardments could not be identified” (24). Combination of these prohibitive factors made the HIS genre a safe bet for reporters, but because of its gendered connotation, not one most women
correspondents agreed with. When one of the dispatchers at the Telefonica Building in Madrid communicated to Martha Gellhorn, “laughing brightly the while” that she was asked to do a radio broadcast that was a “human interest not war story,” she refused and walked out⁴. But as Cowles describes, “only in the realm of the human interest story” did the journalists in Spain have “a free hand” since “[t]hey could describe bombardments to their hearts’ content”(LFT 24).

As Kate McLoughlin and Anne Sebba point out because of their gender and because they wrote for weekly or monthly publications, Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst’s articles from Spain are distinguished from the hard hitting daily news dispatches filed by male reporters. For one, since women correspondents were not writing on a deadline, they were able to pursue leads and speak with soldiers as well as civilians to compose objective articles which did not blatantly parrot the military personnel briefs or purport unsubstantiated claims. In an October 30, 1938 The Sunday Times article “Getting the News in Foreign Crises,” Virginia Cowles emphasized that while “agency men,” who cover the news for numerous newspapers, would often sacrifice accuracy in order to be first to transmit a big story, “specials” who work for just one publication “have even greater responsibility in as much as they must sum up the day’s news and interpret the meaning of it. They write what is known in American slang as “think pieces”, and the deductions they draw are often the result of hours of sleuthing and ingenious piecing together of information” and their “efficiency depends largely on their contacts”(2). The investigative work that a special correspondent undertook while circumventing formalities of accreditation and gender bias attests to the commitment and cost to personal safety these women invested into reporting, which publications would sell as women’s angle on war, or HIS.

While their gender and accreditation, or lack thereof, were often detrimental to their obtaining passes to the front via official route, these were helpful in securing access to the trenches through contacts made in the Hotel Florida, the home to most correspondents in Madrid, and establishing relationships by speaking with everyone and doing the leg work. Their experience based education and knowledge of international situation and policies toward SCW as well as their middle-class background trumped their lack of war experience, helped them to gain the trust of soldiers and civilians, as well as secure an audience. This came at a price of criticism from other correspondents, women as well as soldiers, of which Gellhorn and Cowles were targets when they succeeded in securing invitations from high ranking military personnel to the trenches which remained a male only space. Women’s infiltrating the ranks of the male war journalists was not too different from them joining their male colleagues in covering courtroom trials at the turn of the twentieth century. As Alice Fahs observes women journalists came under attack because of the “spectacle of their accrued power, made visible by their sitting in the public space of a courtroom together – a space which only few years before had been off limits to them. It was their perceived invasion of the public space that invited scrutiny and triggered attacks meant to diminish their power”(12).

While HIS category when applied to the SCW writing was by no means confined to women’s pages or off limits for male correspondents. In fact majority of the most celebrated and successful dispatches from Spain written by men were HIS. The dispatches about bombardments of civilians in Guernica by German planes and mass executions of republican supporters by Franco’s soldiers in Badajoz which earned George Steer and Jay Allen each a chapter in Prestons’ book were HIS. These were not accounts of battles or planned offensives but examples of fascist brutality witnessed by the reporters, confirmed only by rare survivor and described
with outrage and emotion in lengthy articles written few days after the event took place. Jay Allen wrote his dispatch of August 25, 1936 about “four thousand men and women [who] have died at Badajoz since General Francisco Franco’s Rebel Foreign Legionnaries and Moors climbed over the bodies of their own dead through its many times blood-drenched walls” in Portugal, after “spending a couple of days on the town before [he] got up the courage to sit…down and write it” (Preston 300). Similarly, Preston praises George Steer’s dispatch “The Tragedy of Guernica: Town Destroyed in Air Attack”, which appeared two days later, on April 28, 1937 in The Times and New York Times for its “vivid sense…of the scale of the atrocity”(276). After Steer interviewed survivors on the night of the bombing, he went back the next day to Guernica to see what remained of it after German bomber planes dropped bombs and machine gunned fleeing civilians before setting the town on fire by dropping incendiary bombs.

Hemingway’s dispatches from Spain are short and written from the perspective of a detached observer, who dodges bombs and bullets and speaks the war strategy lingo. Carl Rollyson argues that while Hemingway was a more “graphic” and “more comprehensive reporter” than Gellhorn, “he [was] too confident” often adapting the “correspondent/warrior” style he felt was necessary for recounting military and other important events (76-77). Describing the front near the Ebro river in “Tortosa Calmly Awaits Assault” in April 18, 1938 NANA dispatch, Hemingway slips into his war veteran point of view as he distinguishes between instances when “walking upright within certain range [is] either foolishness or bravado”, and “when it’s like the old days when you walked around the bull ring just before the fight” (White 287). This not only emphasizes his willingness to take risks, much like a soldier, but also his staking a claim to familiarity, insider status as one who knows Spain.
The brevity and lack of engagement with the people he sees and passes by daily in cities of Madrid and Barcelona, as well as towns and villages on the way to the front, reflect Hemingway’s inability to see beyond/behind the front, as he remains focused on trench warfare. When he encounters hordes of civilians on the road from Falset, he simply catalogues what he sees: an old woman crying, eight children following a cart, which much like all carts he had seen, is filled with household objects which survived the bombing, and a woman with a newborn child riding on a mule led by a man. The only question he asks is of that man leading a mule upon which rides a woman with an infant, “When was the baby born?”, and in response is told “Yesterday” (White 282). Where are they going? How will they live and feed the child? Hemingway asks no such questions. Instead, he directs his attention to the soldiers and officers who follow the refugees and whom he knows, and it is with them he speaks of the news from the front.

Women Correspondents, Whores de Combat and Milicianas

The gender distinction within HIS is similar to what historians have observed about attitudes towards gender in war. Revolutions and wars challenge and at the same time reiterate the public and private divide on the basis of gender, and the narratives produced by women at such moments, according to Tabea Alexa Linhard, “oscillate between resistance and accommodation”(5). While for the first three months of the Spanish Civil war women were permitted to fight alongside men on the Republican side, most women assumed roles of breadwinners as all able bodied men were fighting, and the elderly men and women as well as children needed looking after. If they were not working in factories, women turned to
prostitution to earn a living and many prostitutes became nurses, a profession which before the war was performed by nuns.

The war did not provide a habeas corpus on gender and sexual mores for women, and women correspondents, because they were foreign and constantly on the move, were viewed with suspicion. While during initial months, general mobilization was set in motion and the people’s army ranks were gender integrated, six months into the war women were order off the front and behind fighting lines. Thus for women, joining men in struggle against fascism in Spain, ironically entailed retaining and adhering to the very same gendered standards which regulated their work and daily life before the war. Volunteers were assigned to nursing and fundraising duties and women correspondents were asked to write HIS or “woman’s angle” about war. This is not to say that there were no women fighting in the trenches, driving ambulances, and agitating for women’s rights, or that the contributions of the former were any less life-threatening than those of the latter. Yet as the experiences of Martha Gellhorn, Virginia Cowles and Josephine Herbst illustrate, contribution to war effort, clothing and behavior were subject to gender policing, and had to be carefully constructed by women not only to legitimate their presence in war but as a safe-conduct pass necessary for traversing between the home and war front. Here it must be noted that these women war correspondents did not engage in the practice “downward pass,” also referred to in current discourse as immersion or stunt journalism, to experience life as ‘the other’ and report it, which verges dangerously close to exploitation, as it involves deception of a community or a group.

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5 See Shirely Mangini’s *Memories of Resistance: Women’s voices from the Spanish Civil War*, and Mary Nash’s *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War*

6 Elliot A. Ratzman, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Religion/Jewish Studies at Temple University; NeMLA 2014 Conference Presentation Passing Downward: Undercover Journalism by Women Writers from Bly to Ehrenreich”ers from Bly to Ehrenreich” on panel 8.08 Friday April 4, 2014

Pen and Press: Civic Literacy and Social Action in American Women Journalism
The nuances of visibility informed by the competing and contradictory images of femininity did not elude the women war reporters. Visual images created by writers, photographers, and magazine editors from 1870 through 1960s emphasized the presence and predominance of the New Woman, but as Elizabeth Otto and Vanessa Rocco observe “translat[ion] into numerous visual languages” of the New Woman’s image has not yet been undertaken (2-3). In other words, whether a “suffragette, flapper, athlete” or, I would add, war correspondent, the New Woman was not a mere object for visual consumption but an informed consumer, actively engaged in presenting herself in a “strategic and even political” manner so as to gain “[access] to new experiences in the public sphere” (8). This is particularly important in the context of the Spanish Civil War, the first total war and first actively photographed war. For one, the advent of bombing by fascists of highly populated areas like cities and towns in Spain, exposed women war reporters to the very danger threatening Spain’s civilian population.

Secondly, there are the photographs of women war reporters present both on bomb torn streets of Madrid, on the front and in villages of Spain, as well as the photographs which appeared in magazines and newspapers that published their articles. Lastly, there are photographs from SCW which the women kept and which remain in their private papers. These are three very different sets of photographs which capture women correspondents as targets/civilians, as reporters-working or socializing- or face of women’s angle on war, and documentarians.

By the Spring of 1937, the face of war in Republican Spain was no longer that of the miliciana of the early general mobilization and war posters. Kathleen M. Vernon points out that the miliciana

[d]enounced and demonized by the Right, … never ceased to provoke strong reactions on both sides of the war. Nevertheless, the image ultimately bore little relation to the reality
of women’s roles. Just three months into the war, the Republican prime minister was calling for the removal of women soldiers from the front. According to Helen Graham, the “real face of the ‘new woman’ in Spain” was the female factory or farm worker in the rearguard.(286)

Within Republican Spain the mass mobilization efforts included a call to able-bodied men from rural regions and women. To popularize and build its military corps, posters featuring the figure of the miliciana were a common and featured pretty, young women wearing monos, blue overalls which were a symbol of the working-class, depicted in combat ready pose or heading to the front with a gun hung over her shoulder. Photographs by Gerda Taro, a young photojournalist for Ce Soir and Regards, taken in Barcelona in the late summer of 1936, capture the striking figures of young women standing in equal ranks with men as well as practicing shooting on a beach, most with short hair and high heeled shoes. Mary Nash argues that the persona of militant femininity was created as a promotional ploy to further support for the cause rather than an accurate reflection of women’s position society in Spain at the time and the extent to which women participated in the war effort.

This can be gleaned, as Shirley points out, from the accounts written by women about their contribution to the war effort on the home front-combination of domestic duties and filling in for the men who went off to fight, all done under daily threat of bombardments. Their experience was one of crossing boundaries daily, not merely filling in the gaps left by men in the public sector, but being exposed to danger. The daily experience of living in war is what Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst recognized as characteristic of total modern war which they realized was a dress rehearsal for future wars, more specifically WW II. Modernist texts, as Liesl Olson observes engage with ordinariness as they include what we often fail to consider
because it is ever present and as such does not merit contemplation, and because it is subsumed into recurring routines (5-7). Because the articles written by women correspondents in Spain take as their subject the quotidian tasks of soldiers and civilians (as well as those of the reporters themselves) which do not follow the pattern of masculine war narrative, they do not focus on news from the war.

This dissertation, like the women and their documentary texts it considers, too crosses borders, and in so doing, it is a work of women’s studies, visual culture, cultural studies and modernism, with much archival research. By turning to works by women who may have been, to borrow Woolf’s phrase, ‘daughters of educated men,’ which provided them access to certain degree of privilege and education, yet who were committed to social causes of 1930s, this project considers how women through writing about struggle sought to challenge the notion that the resolution to the crisis of the time was return to normalcy and prosperity of the previous decade. To a degree, this project is a symptom of ‘archive fever’, which I caught five years ago in a Women’s Modernist Documentary course taught by Professor Jane C. Marcus. It was she who introduced me to Virginia Woolf, writer, autodidact, literary critic, scrapbooker, and her 1930s documentary project that today we know as *Three Guineas*. By using the term “archive fever”, I am only partially borrowing from Derrida’s 1995 lecture by that title, just one symptom really. Derrida’s point that “There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside,” is pertinent to the documentary writing by Gellhorn, Cowles and Herbst as I engage with it in this project (14). By writing within the HIS genre, these women wrote against the archive of the 1930s to which they returned again and again by republishing their journalism as documentary texts and at times recast it as fiction. At the same time, they committed much material to archives of their own
because much of what they “brought back was too appallingly diffuse” (Hersbt TSBSOS 130). This dissertation aims to establish a new, more prominent “place of consignation” for their archive. But this too raises numerous questions such as what should be included in the archive created by these women? How is it a departure from what Derrida considers an archive and how archives are policed? And as Carolyn Steadman queries can turning to an archives redress silence or exacerbate silence as the records of unrepresented and unaccounted are just that-silences?

The modernist cultural studies approach I employ is influenced by Catherine Driscoll and her bringing together modernism, the “attitude towards modernity that comprises both revolution and progress” and Cultural Studies, the practice of “evaluat[ing] culture and…exhaustively document[ing] it” (8,235). Definition of documentary, as I employ the phrase in this dissertation, draws on principles of documentary film-maker, John Grierson, Susan Sontag’s work on photographing atrocity and W.J.T Mitchell’s writing on image-text, or image/text. Grierson’s documentary principles- naturalness, relationship between the documentarian and subject, as well as social responsibility- are presented by Sontag, in her writing on photographing atrocity, as quiet distinct from humanitarian: the photographer is not an angel of mercy but an angel of death. The photographer may be the producer of the image, but the reading of that image as a text is a subjective experience of the viewer. Though the two seem to be at odds, Mitchell proposes that we not discard either, but utilize both, connections and conflicts between image and text, which he designates as image/text.

In the first chapter, “A single plot in war” : Martha Gellhorn and Gerda Taro’s Spanish Civil War Documentaries” I argue that both Gellhorn and Taro were committed witnesses in Spain and their journalism and photojournalism are examples of documentaries which engage with the complexities of citizen/exile experience. By closely reading the section on Spanish Civil
War in Gellhorn’s *The Face of War* (1959) and her fiction influenced by experiences in Spain, I demonstrate that Gellhorn sought to capture the lostness in war experienced by those who possess documents and can leave yet are committed to witness and remember for those who cannot. The trope of exile is also a dominant one in Gellhorn’s fiction. Gerda Taro’s photographs capture the experience of citizen/exiles in Spain, with particular poignancy as Taro had been living in exile in Paris since 1933. Both women’s documentaries of the Spanish Civil War today remain ‘lost’, overshadowed not only by the larger works of their famous partners, Hemingway and Capa, but the glamorous image of the two women created at the time.

To a bigger degree than Martha Gellhorn, Virginia Cowles is remembered as the attractive American reporter who traveled to the SCW. The fact that Cowles started her journalistic career writing society pieces and was very well connected, her SCW journalism has been dismissed as another instance of “globe-trotting”. The second chapter, “The Class Informant: Virginia Cowles’ *Looking for Trouble* and Gamel Woolsey’s *Malaga Burning: An American Woman’s Eyewitness Account of the Spanish Civil War*”, offers a reading of Cowles’ republished SCW reporting alongside an account of the war by Gamel Woolsey. Because both Cowles and Woolsey came from a wealthy background, they were assumed to be sympathetic to Franco. Instead, Cowles and Woolsey’s class informant documentary texts which are composed from position of proximity to the upper class, offer a critique of both the Nationalist and Republican Spain, and their supporters.

The last chapter, “Fighting for Some Beyond”: Josephine Herbst’s *The Starched Blue Sky of Spain* and Muriel Rukeyser’s *Savage Coast* considers the experience of Spanish civilians with International Brigades. Herbst’s *The Starched Blue Sky of Spain* is an example of a documentary of struggle within the struggle which she witnessed in small towns and villages as
well as within the International Brigades where foreigners and Spaniards built coalitions across boundaries of language and culture. Rukeyser’s *Savage Coast* is also included in this chapter, as it offers an account to the very first encounter between Spaniards and internationals at the outbreak of the war.
Chapter 1

“A single plot in war” : Martha Gellhorn and Gerda Taro’s Spanish Civil War Documentaries

Mary Douglas, the American reporter in Martha Gellhorn’s *A Stricken Field* (1941), is greeted with compliments by a cadre of foreign correspondents at a hotel in Prague, where she arrives from Spain, and is told that Czechoslovakia “story’s already dead”(9). Since she is the last one to arrive, Mary tries to learn as much as she can from the correspondents who had seen concentration camps and evidence of torture, but cannot file their stories without censor’s approval. After the arrest of their Czechoslovakian chauffer and a warning from German guards that their passports and press passes will not protect them next time, the correspondents have retreated into the safety of the hotel, where they spend their time eating and drinking. Though her male colleagues consider Mary’s late arrival in Prague an indication of her inability to abandon lost causes like Spain, they also see this as an opportunity to get a story. They invite her to tag along for a drive to Cesimova Usti and help them get an interview with President Benes, by “vamp[ing] the gatekeeper”(Ibid., 30). Much like the Prague correspondents, those safe in Paris and London, give Mary’s name as a contact to the Czecho exiles. A woman, who asks Mary to smuggle two folders of written testimonies from “Sudeten German Jews, from Liberals, from Social Democrats, from all types of people” about the Nazi invasion, is unable to decide whether the “brainless American” is just a cover or does this “tall and thin and elegant[woman], with expensive clothes, and the handsome, self-confident face, and the voice like somebody who has never even heard of the police….take anything seriously”(Ibid., 282). But Mary Douglas, like Martha Gellhorn, who had been in Spain, recognizes that the very act of keeping record, “proof that everyone is not beaten yet,” shows that the story is not dead (Ibid., 285).
While Spain marked the beginning of Martha Gellhorn’s career as a war journalist and third Mrs. Hemingway, her commitment to documenting people’s struggle began at the start of the decade. Similarly, for Gerda Taro, Spain was the place where she transcended the CAPA & TARO credit line and emerged as a photojournalist in her own right. But her untimely death in July 1937 resulted in her work disappearing into the CAPA file and her name being appropriated for political ends. The most enduring images of Martha Gellhorn and Gerda Taro from the 1930s are the sensational ones created by the media and reductive ones created by scholars of their famed partners: war veteran and famous writer, Ernest Hemingway, and Robert Capa, whose ‘Falling Soldier’ photograph taken in Spain during the early fall of 1936 earned him the title of the best war photographer. And of course the images of Gellhorn and Taro conjured up by Hemingway and Capa themselves. It would be erroneous to contend that Gellhorn and Taro did not contribute to and benefit from those images of them as glamourous women who went to see the war. But being attractive and attached to famous men has also detracted from Gellhorn and Taro’s work being seen as distinctly their own in its focus on the citizen/exile experience.

While the self-imposed exile of Gellhorn on the one hand, and forced exile of Taro on the other, are a markedly modernist condition, their decision to take their exile into war torn Spain challenges the prevailing notion of gender and class in relation to struggle and war. Lack of or short-lived assignments and short-term visas required Gellhorn and Taro to make frequent trips, rather than remain in Spain, and while there, they were constantly on the move. But what they experienced and witnessed went beyond that of “passive spectators” as in passing they observed how citizens became exiles on the fronts of total modern war (Gallagher 3). Their

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7 Recent HBO movie Hemingway and Gellhorn, depicts neither Gellhorn nor Hemingway accurately. This is probably why a similar project about the relationship of photographers Robert Capa and Gerda Taro during the Spanish Civil War, announced to be in the works in 2009 and to star Adrien Brody and Natalie Portman, still has not materialized.
ability to traverse barriers of culture, gender and class, was due to their good looks, confidence and directness that came from their upper-middle class education and upbringing. Gellhorn’s American passport and education were advantages, as was the fact that her German-Jewish parents were committed to social reform and women’s suffrage which exposed Gellhorn to gender, class and race disparities early on in her life. In the spring of 1930, Gellhorn left the safety of college life, and began to travel and write about the Great Depression in U.S. and rise of fascism in Europe. While Taro’s wealthy aunt sought to shield her from persecution faced by her small-business owning Jewish parents in Germany, she rejected class privilege as the anti-Semitic campaign escalated from economic hindrances to violence. After spending several months in prison for allegedly distributing anti-Nazi leaflets, in 1933 Taro went into exile to Paris where the following year she met Capa and committed herself to documenting fascist terror with a camera.

In this chapter I argue that both Martha Gellhorn and Gerda Taro were committed witnesses in Spain, self-educated about social and political issues, and their journalism and fiction, and photography, respectively, are examples of documentaries of struggle which engage with the complexities of the citizen/exile experience. As attractive, foreign women, and non-party members, Gellhorn’s relationship with Hemingway and Taro’s with Capa, offered a degree of security as well as access to basic as well as professional resources. At the same time, these advantages heightened their visibility exposing them to criticism and danger. Remembered in memoirs and mentioned in scholarly texts on the Spanish Civil War, the two women are treated like celebrities, unattainable sex objects. Well aware of the precarious position they occupied in media and war, as female objects of the male gaze and committed witnesses, Gellhorn and Taro turned it into advantage whenever possible. Familiar with images of fascism, class conflict and
poverty, which they had already seen in Europe and U.S., Gellhorn and Taro education in exile informed their narrative of Spain. This was a new narrative about civilians in total modern war, which documented citizens at home in war exposed to violence and sentenced to exile. To understand the subject position of the citizen/exile Gellhorn and Taro drew on their own experiences as part of their struggle documentaries. This tests documentary parameters, which writers and photographers were encouraged to cross in order to learn about the daily reality of their subjects. In order to get a worker to talk about condition at the place of his employment or a housewife to share her take on availability of affordable groceries, Storm Jameson challenged the middle-class writer who hoped to present a realistic record of the changing social situation “to go and live for a long enough time at one of the points of departure of the new society. To go, if you like, into exile. Without feeling heroic, or even adventurous”(13). But when the time came, Jameson warned, to select or create a form for presenting the document-based information, “as the photographer, so must the writer keep himself out of the picture while working ceaselessly to present the fact from a striking (poignant, ironic, penetrating, significant) angle”(15). In light of this, Gellhorn and Taro’s work on the subject of the Spanish Civil War are examples of what I consider to be modernist renegade narratives within the documentary of struggle category, which explore the necessity of perpetual and destabilizing movement of citizen/exile in order to retain visibility and encourage resistance. The designation of renegade narrative borrows from “out-law genre”, which Caren Kaplan defines as a narrative form that “renegotiates the relationship between personal identity and the world, between personal and social history” and through which writers “challenge the hierarchical structures of patriarchy, capitalism and colonial discourse”(qtd. Mangini 56).
In order to show how Martha Gellhorn’s documentary of struggle is an instance of a renegade narrative, I first consider the image of Gellhorn in Spain, which lent itself to opening doors for her but also opened up her and her work to criticism. Next I consider Gellhorn’s early on the job education as a reporter and Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) field investigator, from which she borrowed for her fiction, and helped her to reconcile her gender and middle-class privilege with the challenge of developing the eye of a committed witness. Then by close reading the section on Spanish Civil War in her collection of war journalism The Face of War (1959), against scenes from fiction influenced by her experiences in Spain, I identify the citizen/exiles who are seen and rendered as such in relation to Gellhorn and Gellhorn-like characters: attractive women journalists. While Martha Gellhorn’s Collection at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Center at Boston University is closed until 2023 with restricted access to researchers, having succeeded in obtaining permission from her estate to review her papers, I draw on her notes from Spain during the war, a 1937 manuscript of an unpublished novel, Peace on Earth, and a short story, “A Love Story with Ramifications”, as further evidence that there is much more than meets the eye in Gellhorn’s work on poverty, war, and struggle. Sadly, unlike Gellhorn, Taro never got the chance to complete and present her photographic record as her own as she died tragically in Spain while photographing the Battle of Brunete in July of 1937. Moreover, the joint by-line of CAPA ET TARO and Capa claiming Taro as his wife after her death, retain a hold on Taro and her work within the Capa file. Because work of recovery and identification of Taro’s photographs among those of Robert Capa continues, I will only include a couple of photographs attributed solely to her as well as offer a brief reading of Death in The Making (1938) which Robert Capa compiled with the help of Jay Allen, journalist who covered the war for Chicago Tribune and met both photographers in Spain, using his and Taro’s Spanish
Civil War photographs. But first, it is important to consider Gellhorn and Taro’s reception in Spain in regards to their relationships with Hemingway and Capa as well as the prevailing images of women.

**Images of Martha Gellhorn in Spain**

Just as the narrator in *A Stricken Field* observes that “Americans travel all the time, blindly and cheerfully,” Martha Gellhorn in the preface to the first 1959 edition of *The Face of War* (TFOW) refers to herself as “an unscathed tourist of wars” ((295; 12)\(^8\). When she arrived in Madrid on March 27, 1937, Gellhorn was well aware of her position as a foreigner, a female and a spectator since she was neither an accredited journalist nor an expert on war. Though she had a letter from *Colliers*’ which identified her as a “special correspondent”, she was not in fact on the magazine’s staff. The letter was a courtesy extended to her by a friend, Kyle Crichton, the magazine’s editor, whom she asked for help. The phrase “an unscathed tourist of wars” is applicable in the sense that tourists go places to see, to take in sights, to meet people and learn about other cultures. But someone who chooses wars as tourist destinations sounds like morbid spectator or a perpetual rubbernecker. While reporting on WWII, in a letter to Hemingway, Gellhorn wrote “I think it is not disgusting to look at the world and at war; because someone must see, and after all we have trained ourselves to see”(Moorehead 159)\(^9\).

The account of Gellhorn’s first entry into Spain on March 23, 1937 has grown to mythical proportions as a result of her biographers attempting to debunk the narrative purported

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\(^8\) All TFOW citations come from the first, 1959 Simon and Schuster edition, unless otherwise noted. There have been four reprints of TFOW to date: 1959 Rupert Hart-Davis (England); 1986 Sphere; 1988 Atlantic Monthly and 1993 Granta.

\(^9\) Letter to Ernest Hemingway, dated December 13, 1943. Reproduced in Caroline Moorehead’s *Selected Letters of Martha Gellhorn*. 
by Hemingway’s scholars starring him as the benevolent sponsor who arranged for her to get into Spain. Among Gellhorn’s papers, in her notes on Spain dated 1937-1938, Gellhorn describes taking a train from Paris to Puigcerda, the last stop near the Spanish border\textsuperscript{10}. There, even though she did not understand what a young Spaniard who approached her said when he picked up her bag of canned goods, she followed him with her backpack. He led her to the border patrol, who after some confusion regarding her being an American woman and the non-intervention policy of both U.S. and France, as well as her strange luggage, collected fifteen cents from her for the bag of non-perishables and allowed her to board the train to Barcelona. Her two days in Barcelona were spent visiting schools, refugee children and the Women’s Union, and then she drove with a journalist and a Polish woman to Valencia on March 25. There she spent the next day visiting schools and captured Italian fascist soldiers in prison, and in the evening attended a party for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Alvarez del Vayo. The following day, March 27, she received three press passes from Ted, (most likely Ted Allan) and drove with Sidney Franklin to Madrid. Yet when she arrived in the restaurant Gran Via in Madrid later that day, Hemingway, who was surrounded by reporters and prostitutes, welcomed her by saying “I knew you’d get here, daughter, because I fixed it so you could\textsuperscript{11}”. Hemingway’s paternalistic reception of Gellhorn in Madrid fits with his then image as Papa, as well as the fact that he reigned over Hotel Florida and was feted for his donation of ambulances and courted for invitations to partake of food and drink he had always on hand.

\textsuperscript{10} Entry made in Spain in her notes. Martha Gellhorn Collection. Howard Gotlieb Archival and Research Center, Boston University, Boston.

\textsuperscript{11} This account is not present in Gellhorn’s notes from Spain. It has been repeated in her biographies by Caroline Moorhead and Carl Rollyson, as well as Peter Wyden’s \textit{Passionate War} but in none of these texts is the source of this account identified.
The first impression of Gellhorn when she arrived in Madrid has been recorded by Ted Allan, a twenty-year-old Canadian who wrote for Federated Press and worked with Dr. Norman Bethune’s mobile blood transfusion unit, in his unpublished autobiography, and Arturo Barea, the censor who reviewed dispatches filed by correspondents in Madrid, in *The Forging of a Rebel* (1946). As Gellhorn’s journal from Spain confirms, she met Allan in Valencia where he presented her with press passes. But according to Allan, he also rode with Gellhorn to Madrid that day in order to update her on the war situation as requested by Constancia De la Mora, the censor in Valencia. Allan goes on to recall “kissing and necking” with Gellhorn in the backseat of the car all the way to Madrid, where he was invited to her hotel room but when Hemingway walked in on them, was asked to leave. Barea recalls Hemingway bringing Gellhorn to the Telefonica Building and introducing her as “Marty” and telling him to “be nice to her-she writes for Collier’s-you know, a million circulation” (643). What Barea remembers most vividly is “staring at the sleek woman with the halo of fair hair, who walked through the dark dusty office with a swinging movement we knew from the films” (643). To Josephine Herbst, who arrived in Spain in early April, Gellhorn appeared very much like a celebrity, as she “sailed in and out in beautiful Saks Fifth Avenue pants, with a green chiffon scarf wound around her head” (138). The press at the time used Gellhorn’s publicity shots taken for her 1936 short story collection about the Great Depression, *The Trouble I’ve Seen*, when running announcements about her trips to and from Spain. There are only a handful of photographs of Gellhorn in Spain during the war.

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Gerda Taro, whom Ted Allan also met in Spain in 1937, figures more prominently in his account. Even though Capa was his friend, Allan admits he was in love with Taro and she quite possibly felt the same way. Because Allan went with Taro to the front of the Battle of Brunete in July 1937 where she was gravely injured and was the last one to see her before her death, he has been called upon to retell the story of her last battle. Since he was in love with Taro and his version of her death has changed over time, it is not certain how much of it is true and how much Allan added to convince himself and others that Taro was in love with him, too.
and in none of these does she appear in the manner described by either Barea or Josephine Herbst.

The fact that Gellhorn made four trips to Spain during the war confirms not only her commitment to the Republican Cause but is also an indication that her not having an assignment made it both financially and ethically difficult for her to remain there. Gellhorn’s first stay in Spain lasted from March 27 until May of 1937. In September, she returned for a second visit which lasted until December. Her departure was prompted by an opportunity to do a lecture tour about the situation in Spain and raise money for the war. In March of 1938, Gellhorn came back for the third time to Spain but left in May as Collier’s asked her to do a series of articles on Europe, beginning with Czechoslovakia as Hitler began agitating for return of Sudetenland under German control. In his letter, the Collier’s editor, Davenport wrote “Not interested in Barcelona story stop stale by the time we publish stop please keep to schedule stop Czechoslovakia France England”. At this juncture of war, Barcelona was beleaguered by refugees and also a target of Nationalist air assault, and Gellhorn wanted to report on it. But, as Caroline Moorehead, author of biography Martha Gellhorn: A Twentieth Century Life points out, Gellhorn “could not turn the assignment down even though she wanted to remain in Spain as Collier’s paid well, about $1000 per article, and she needed the money” (145). According to Moorehead as well as two other Gellhorn biographers, Jacqueline Elizabeth Orsagh and Carl Rollyson, Gellhorn made a fourth trip to Spain in fall of 1938, but each provides a different date. What confirms that

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13 Gellhorn cancelled the lecture tour in February 1938 after delivering twenty-two lectures in under a month (Orsagh 91, Moorehead 141).
15 Caroline Moorehead in Martha Gellhorn: A 20th Century Life, claims that Gellhorn returned to Paris from Czechoslovakia on October 22, 1938 and “for the remaining months of 1938 was on the move and writing follow-up pieces on France and England”(151). Few pages later, Moorehead states “In autumn of 1937 Martha and Hemingway paid one more visit to Spain, …Negrin sent away International Brigades, hoping Franco would do the same with German and Italian troops”(153). This must be a typo as the International Brigades were disbanded in fall.
Gellhorn returned to Spain in November 1938 is a letter she wrote at that time from Paris about leaving for Barcelona, and that fact that she met Robert Capa there, who had returned to Spain few weeks prior from his trip to China (Whelan 148).

In the two photographs of Martha Gellhorn in Spain during the war, which have been reproduced by Carl Rollyson, her biographer, and by Peter Wyden, a Spanish Civil War scholar, the “green chiffon scarf and Saks Fifth Avenue pants” are conspicuously absent. The photographs themselves are missing from the Martha Gellhorn Collection, but can be found with eight others in the Ernest Hemingway Photograph Collection at the J.F.K. Library in Boston. It is probable that the reason they remained in Hemingway’s possession is that at the time of the Spanish Civil War he was still married to his second wife, Pauline, and he did not want these photographs to become evidence of his affair with Gellhorn. In two of these photographs, which are snapshots really, Gellhorn stands in front of a barricade constructed from felled tree trunks on the side of which sits Hemingway in a beret with his back to the camera. The captions created by the J.F.K. Library archivists for these photographs, identify the man as Ernest Hemingway “(no face)” and woman as Martha Gellhorn. Aside from identifying the photograph as having been taken in Spain in either 1937 or 1938, no further information is provided. Carl Rollyson used a tightly cropped reprint of this photograph in his biography of Gellhorn, *The Beautiful Exile* (2007), leaving out Hemingway. In the uncropped version of this photograph, Hemingway is poring over something in his hands, most likely food judging by the open bag, piece of paper curled as if it had been wrapped around a piece of sausage, and a flask. In the second snapshot,
Gellhorn too looks down at whatever is in Hemingway’s hands. But in the photograph reproduced here, Gellhorn looks up smiling at the camera and strikes a nonchalant pose, with her hands in the pockets of her pants, which suggests there is no imminent danger nearby and this is a safe zone (see Figure 1).  

Fig. 1. Martha Gellhorn and Ernest Hemingway  
Spanish Civil War, 1937 or 1938.  
Copyright status unknown. From JFK Audiovisual Archives.

Her unbuttoned, dark coat reveals an edge of a vest or blazer, and this layering may be indicative of an unseasonably warm and sunny day in the fall or winter. The last discernable detail of Gellhorn’s attire is a strap of a bag or camera which she wears bandolier-style across her chest.

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Not only does Gellhorn appear much more broad-shouldered and taller than the hunched over Hemingway in this snapshot, they seem to have switched gender appropriate places deeply entrenched in war narratives. Standing with hands in her pockets and looking back at the camera, Gellhorn’s pose is similar to the one assumed not only by Hemingway in other photographs but also by Taro. Hunched over and tending to the food, Hemingway here looks like an elderly civilian bypassed for draft due to his age.

There is a scarf in the second set of two photographs but it is light in color and Gellhorn wears is tied around her neck (see Figure 2)\(^\text{18}\).

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Wearing a tailored coat buttoned up with just the top button open to reveal a scarf, possibly white, tied around her neck like a necktie and holding a dispatch bag under her arm, Gellhorn is clearly on the job. Not only is she looking professional and serious, she is engaged with the people, unlike her uniformed companion, Robert Merriman. The bespectacled American economics professor who served as a General of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Merriman unlike Gellhorn is preoccupied with by something or someone outside the frame of the photograph. His smile and posing for the camera give the photograph a staged quality. One narrative the composition of this photograph suggests is that the children seem to stand in for the exiled, the ‘orphaned’ Spaniards appealing to the journalist, Gellhorn, not the military officer, for help. The second photograph in which Gellhorn faces Merriman, rather than the children, has been reproduced in Peter Wyden’s *The Passionate War: The Narrative History of the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939*.

It is in the third set of four photographs found at the J.F.K. library taken in Spain that Gellhorn appears wearing a scarf on her head, yet the effect of that accessory hardly makes her appear fashionable. The patterned scarf tied under her chin is more like a handkerchief donned by elderly Spanish peasant women, who cover their heads in religious reverence (see Figure 3). The scarf’s light color, her blond hair slightly protruding from underneath it, her white sweater and fair complexion make Gellhorn almost disappear into the background of a white boulder and dry grass. Is she wearing it to protect her hair from debris and dust of an explosion?

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The headscarf makes for convincing disguise as the archival staff at J.F.K Library did not identify Gellhorn by name in the caption for this photograph which reads “Unidentified people watching- Spanish Civil War, 1937 or 1938.” But the man to Gellhorn’s left is Gen. Robert Merriman and the one to her right is the other officer who is also present in the background of photograph in figure 2. Seated between the two military men, Gellhorn is observing a battle and conducting field work for her articles. She is one of the boys.

In another print of this photograph which is more liberally cropped, there are two more men present behind the seated trio. One of them is Hemingway and he stands in much the same fashion as Gellhorn in the snapshots taken by the barricade (figure1). It is unclear who the man squatting next to Hemingway is as his face is obscured by binoculars. The two other photographs
in this set reveal that there is no question that Martha Gellhorn is the woman in the headscarf. One is narrowly cropped to isolate her\(^{20}\). The other one is an odd, close up frontal shot of Hemingway and Gellhorn standing next to each other but a slight distance apart. If one did not know what Gellhorn looked like, she could easily be mistaken for a local woman asked to pose for a photograph with the famous American writer. As the readings of these three photographs show, Gellhorn did not appear out of place in Spain but was a war correspondent engaged in observing and documenting.

**Images of Gerda Taro in Spain**

Although there are no images of Gerda Taro from Spain in anything other than blue overalls and no make-up, some have claimed to have seen her wearing “silk stockings and high-heeled shoes” to the front (Rogoyska 147). Whenever Taro visited Paris between her numerous trips to Spain, she did enjoy dressing up. Like Gellhorn, Taro made several trips to Spain, each visit and its duration dictated by money, availability of press passes and, in the case of the latter ones, securing solo assignments. Her first trip to Spain with Capa in August of 1936 was for an assignment for *Vu* magazine, and lasted until mid-September. In second half of February 1937, they returned to Spain for the second time and employ the joint byline of REPORTAGE CAPA ET TARO for their photographs. In March, Capa is offered a contract by *Ce Soir* while Taro is asked to contribute work on freelance basis. This is the moment when Taro began labeling her photographs PHOTO TARO. Also at this time, Capa went back to Paris to finalize the contract with *Ce Soir* and Taro used this moment to strike out on her own. Her coverage of the Republican victory in Battle of Guadalajara in late March found publication in *Regards* and

\(^{20}\) EH2999P “Unidentified woman (Martha?) sitting outside- Spanish Civil War, 1937 or 1938, (c) unknown” Although there is a penciled note that reads "NYT-Paris" next to this photograph, JFK Library database indicates the photograph is Public Domain. Unfortunately, JFK Library archivists are not sure if that means the photo was taken by the New York Times or whether the paper published it.
became her first solo reportage. Though the magazine credited the photographs to her, her name was misspelled as ‘Waro’ (Rogoyska 129). Because *Ce Soir* asked Taro to return to Paris and cover the funerals of the working-class victims who died as a result of a police raid, she had to leave Spain at the end of the month. On their third visit to Spain in mid-April, Capa and Taro stopped at the Hotel Florida in Madrid, but soon were eager to leave as the city was too crowded with foreign correspondents and visitors, and go north where the next battle was to take place.

Returning to Paris at the end of April, Capa and Taro prepared for their fourth trip to Spain on which they left separately. It was on first of May 1937 that Capa took the photo of Taro buying lilies of the valley from a flower stall (see Figure 4).

![Fig. 4. Gerda Taro in Paris May 1, 1937. Copyright International Center of Photography/Magnum Photos.](image-url)
He reproduced this image on the dedication page of *Death in The Making* (DITM), except that he eliminated the older woman, the owner of the flower stall, who stands in stark contrast to Taro’s youthful and fashionable look. In effect, this alteration divested the photograph of its political significance. The smart little hat which sits atop of Taro’s coiffed head of curls, a scarf around her neck tied in the manner of a necktie, and a bag under her arm, sharply contrast with the vendor woman’s longer hair, which appears greasy and unwashed, and the white shawl that creates a heavy collar around her neck. The clothes and appearance mark their class difference, but the fact that both women are smiling at the lilies of the valley, the symbol of the left movement, demonstrates their cross-class solidarity. Taro’s clothes were remnants of her life in Germany where until she was twenty-two she lived the life of middle-class comfort, as she first attended an all-girls school in Stuttgart, then a finishing school in Switzerland, studied languages and played sports. All of these were sponsored by her wealthy aunt who, as Jane Rogoyska points out, hoped to ensure that Gerda would “become a fully paid-up member of the German bourgeoisie”(20). When she left for Paris in 1933, Taro brought her class distinctive clothes with her as they would most afford her the appearance of being at home. But she sided with the working class and the struggle in Spain.

Eager to photograph the aftermath of the Guernica bombing, Capa obtained papers for travel to nearby town of Bilbao in May 1937. Taro headed to Valencia, which was the time the next target of Nationalist air raids, and took some of the most powerful photographs of victims and refugees of total modern warfare. In June, she rejoined Capa and they travelled north to Cordoba. Alfred Kantorowicz, the political commissar of the Chapaiev Battalion stationed there, initially did not recognize Taro, whom he had previously met in Paris “in hotel lobbies dressed in fashionable clothes”(qtd. Rogoyska 173). In Spain, she looked like a militiawoman, a *miliciana*
come to life “wearing trousers, with a beret placed over her beautiful strawberry blond hair and a
dainty revolver tucked into her belt” (ibid). Looking at Taro’s August 1936 photographs of
militiawomen training in Barcelona, which appeared in special edition of *Vu* (Fig #) it is evident
that she modeled her look on the real women who responded to the initial call for general
mobilization and joined the ranks of fighting men, rather than the sexualized image of the
miliciana depicted in early war posters (Nash 50).

Yet unlike the militiawomen, the only weapon Taro carried was her camera (see Figure 5).

In the far left and partially cut off, Taro stands against a stone wall. It is not she, but a soldier
coming down wooden stairs, which cut through the rock, that is the subject of this photograph.
Her long trench coat over dark clothing, possibly a mono, and a beret on the right side of her
head reflect a professional look. The camera she holds in her hand and the expression on her
face, her gaze focused on something at a distance and tightly closed lips, further add to the image
of a photojournalist. The “dainty revolver” Kantorowicz claims to have seen on Taro’s person, just like the “silk stockings” she allegedly wore to the front, are absent from all photographs of her from Spain.

Because Ce Soir asked Taro to cover the Second International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture in Valencia which began on July 4, she remained in Spain while Capa headed back to Paris in order to arrange an assignment for them to go to China where the next story, Sino-Japanese war, was unfolding. But by July 6 Taro rushed to Madrid to get close to the front and photograph the Battle of Brunete. In mid-July, Taro visited Capa in Paris for few days to enjoy Bastille Day festivities, and there saw not only her photographs from Brunete in both Ce Soir and Regards, but a byline with her name— TARO. Back in Spain for the fifth and final time, while photographing the final stages of Battle of Brunete, Taro was crushed by one of the retreating tanks and died on July 26, 1937 at a hospital in El Escorial.

Dressed for War

The glamorized and politicized images of Gellhorn and Taro constructed from memory and accounts penned by those who had met or seen them in Spain have been judged as a lens through which many approach the two women’s documentary texts. Martha Gellhorn was not the only female correspondent whose presence in Spain had been equated with that of a celebrity and which attracted both admiration at times and severe criticism at others. But she, like Virginia Cowles, the correspondent for Hearts newspapers, had been dressing up for the job from the beginning of her career. To conduct field research for FERA in Depression stricken U.S., Gellhorn wore a “Schiaparelli suit,” with a “brown crochet hat” adorned with colorful “pheasant feathers” and a pair of “elegant Parisian shoes,” or the clothes was given by her previous
employer, *Vogue* (Moorehead MG: ATCL 77). She must have cut a jarring image next to the poor, hungry, people dressed in shabby clothing. Wasn’t she concerned that her look would alienate people and make them reluctant to speak with her? Or did her glamorous clothes make her appear important and influential, which in a way as a FERA field investigator she both was and wasn’t, and prompted people to voice their grievances? Similarly, in Spain Gellhorn’s demeanor, opinions and the manner in which she “sailed in and out in beautiful Saks Fifth Avenue pants, with a green chiffon scarf wound around her head” may have intimidated people as Nancy Cunard did (Herbst 138). The American-English poet, activist and compiler of the extraordinary *Negro Anthology* (1934), Cunard was very much the emancipated woman having renounced her class privilege and denounced her mother as an accomplice to the racist and oppressive patriarchal state. Cunard, who made numerous trips to Spain during the war, reporting for the Associated Negro Press, Sylvia Pankhurst’s *New Times*, and the *Manchester Guardian*, combined the 1920’s androgynous silhouette with the radical look of a turban-like bound head and white face emblematic, as Jane C. Marcus suggests, of “European nations[‘]…identity crisis”(163). Gellhorn’s phantom “green chiffon scarf” and the handkerchief (Fig.3) and Taro’s alleged “silk stockings” and mono can be read as another manifestation of an identity crisis precipitated by international conflicts of 1930s, which prompted free citizens and exiles alike to commit to struggle against fascism, poverty and war.

Because Gellhorn and Taro, just as Nancy Cunard and Virginia Cowles, had class confidence which in concert with their gender they often relied on to negotiate their way to war and at the front, accounts often fixate on their sexual lives rather than their work in Spain. Just as the image of the militiawoman, which was highjacked for propaganda purposes by both the Republicans who used it to drum up military recruitment and by the Nationalists who cited it as
proof of the degeneracy and loose morals of Red republican women, Gellhorn and Taro’s presence in Spain came under scrutiny of the gender policing gazes. When placed alongside the spectrum of feminine types -- the Spanish mother, young Spanish working women, the milicianas, and prostitutes—Gellhorn and Taro came dangerously close to the latter two. Although they visited schools, refugee centers and hospitals, with good intentions, the nurses and others who constantly worked with the wounded and the hungry would at times look unkindly, even contemptuously, at foreign women who were able to just visit and leave at any time (Alexander and Fyrth 27). Gellhorn, too could be critical and made disparaging comments about Spanish women early on, during her first trip to Spain. After meeting the real Lolita, who in The Fifth Column mocks Gellhorn’s character for her journalism, Gellhorn pronounced her a “born whore”. In contrast to Lolita, Gellhorn concluded that “Spanish women…are kind of ignorant infuriating monkeys at the moment, scratching themselves and twittering”. She was shocked to hear from soldiers recuperating at a hospital she visited, that nurses stole food from patients and only attended to those with less severe injuries who were able to take them out to the movies. These observations Gellhorn never shared with her Collier’s readers and later the audience of TFOW. She also didn’t write in her articles about the sexual advances of military personnel during parties hosted at headquarter, which she invited and encouraged, or about the danger of sexual assault which accompanied her solo visits to front on invitation from high ranking officers.

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21 See Kathleen M. Vernon’s Chapter 14 “Women Fashion and the Spanish Civil War: From the Fashion Parade to the Victory Parade” in Otto and Rocco’s The New Woman International.
22 Entry dated April 3, 1937 in Martha Gellhorn notes 1937-38 war in Spain. Martha Gellhorn Collection. Howard Gotlieb Archival and Research Center, Boston University, Boston.
24 Ibid.
It is most likely, that Gellhorn did not write about instances of military staff impropriety towards her because she did not feel it would help, and it would most probably have hurt her contacts in Spain and there was Hemingway too. This is not to say instances of violence against Spanish and foreign women during the Spanish Civil War did not take place, and research on this particular aspect of the experience of volunteer nurses is currently being conducted by Page Delano. Instead Gellhorn recast experiences where her gender became a point of contention at the front as a short story. It was published by Gellhorn after the Spanish Civil War in 1941 in a collection of short stories, *A Heart of Another*. Gellhorn based the character of the Commandant on Rudolph Pacciardi of the Italian Battalion, whom she met at a headquarters party on April 15, 1937, and who was “drunk and eager for a woman and beautiful and the way a soldier ought to be”\(^{25}\). Five days later, Gellhorn recorded that she washed her hair and did her nails, as that day Pacciardi sent over a driver to bring her to the trenches. When she got there, he behaved as if her presence meant she was “risking her life to see him” which she noticed made the soldiers resent her\(^{26}\). The mixed response that the female journalist in “A Sense of Direction” as well as Gellhorn received in Spain was an experience all too familiar to many women journalists, volunteers and soldiers. More often than not women merely speaking about freedom in public were considered to be promiscuous, and those who visited the trenches to bring supplies or, in the initial stages of the war, joined the ranks of soldiers at the front, were perceived by men to be “offer[ing] sex, and when they refused, the men “felt annoyed and cheated”(Lannon 220).

While Gellhorn admits to having had lunch with Paccardi and officers that day during which they “gossiped and flirted (as one must flirt somehow for their sake, because they so need

\(^{25}\) Entry in notes 1937-38 war in Spain. Martha Gellhorn Collection. Howard Gotlieb Archival and Research Center, Boston University, Boston.

\(^{26}\) Ibid
it and want it),” the American female correspondent’s visit to the front in “A Sense of Direction” is marred by threat of capture by enemy and possibly rape. Her host, an Italian Commandant, an “aging man” who is known to always say “successful things to women,” takes her on an evening walk, a decision which one of his subordinates opposes. The soldier recognizes that the woman’s presence at the front has clouded the Commandant’s judgment. As the story’s title reveals, the Commandant does get lost and comes close to leading the female correspondent into enemy territory. By taking this chance just to be alone with her, the Commandant endangers not only his and the correspondent’s life but his men and the Spanish cause. His refusal to answer any of the correspondent’s questions about the war and his attempts at disarming her by calling her “unfriendly” overstate the obvious that she has been invited not because she is a correspondent, but because she is a woman.

The climax of the story plays out like a bad love scene where the Commandant orders the correspondent to move closer to him and be quiet, and the “Next shell was an incomer-unlike two previous ones” (148). The imagery of explosives as well as soldiers smiling at the Commandant when he and the female correspondent join them in the trenches, intimates that the mission was successful. Gellhorn rather than telling about sex, prompts the readers to draw their own conclusions about the Commandant’s character as a leader and a man. Is it possible the entire evening and losing his way has been strategically pre-plotted by the Commandant? Does his willingness to leave his post for a woman indicts him as a callous leader and is it intended by Gellhorn to be a critique of the leadership in Republican Spain, and patriarchal hierarchy in general? The correspondent most likely was aware of the Commandant’s intentions when she accepted the invitation and this might have been Gellhorn’s way of conveying that if she didn’t

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27 Ibid
take such chances she would not have seen war. In the end, the correspondent is allowed to see
the front where the Commandant’s four men lay dead, and with that image she is taken back to
the civilian zone. That image is all the material she has for a story, even though the real story is
that of the precarious position of women in war, the reporter will not write about it and this
omission will make the account more believable as a news story from the front.

Femininity and good looks benefited Gellhorn and Taro with the men outnumbering
women among the ranks of correspondents and at the front. Their visits to the front much like a
female celebrity making an appearance were a welcome boost to the soldiers’ morale. A drawing
“Warning Filming!” made by Hans Quaeck, soldier in the most diverse battalion in Spain, the
Chapaiev, which included twenty-one nationalities among them Germans, Poles and Hungarians,
on the occasion of Taro and Capa’s visit in June 1937 conveys this star-struck atmosphere. Taro,
in a mono with hands in her pockets, stands in the center and a sign under her foot reads “The
Showstopper: The Female Director”(Schaber 27). All around her soldiers hurriedly shave, scrub
their faces clean and primp themselves in a mirror, while others smile for the camera and pose
with their guns. In the bottom right corner of the drawing, a second Taro, here in profile, stands
with her hands in her pockets looking at a camera man, Capa with the Eyemo he was trying out
at the time, as he records the action. Ironically, rendition of Taro in this drawing could be seen as
a reiteration of her status as Capa’s helper and at the same time the “director” with the vision
who made the decision to visit the Chapaiev Battalion on the Cordoba front which was
considered the “forgotten brigade” as the fighting was taking in Barcelona and Valencia
(Schaber 27). But since Taro is depicted with her hands in her pockets rather than with a camera
to her eye, she is object of the male gaze not unlike the poster milicianas.

The Myth of Gellhorn in Spain According to Hemingway
No one has contributed as much to entrenching Gellhorn in the category of the beautiful and not too bright damsel-in-distress as Hemingway. In his 1938 play, *The Fifth Column*, Hemingway depicted Gellhorn as Dorothy Bridges, Vassar educated, lazy *Cosmopolitan* correspondent who if not sleeping, daydreams about a “home-life” with Philip Rawlins, a glorified version of Hemingway, or profits from the war ravaged economy by purchasing a silver fox cape for fraction of the price. In 1940, Hemingway was approached by Benjamin Glazer of the Theater Guild with the proposition to adapt the play for the stage. Glazer, who disliked the character of Dorothy Bridges because to him she seemed to be a nymphomaniac, rewrote the first act to include shell-shocked Rawlins raping her. Though Glazer tried to justify his disturbing creative decision by saying that this would make Dorothy seem more sympathetic, Hemingway in a seven page letter pointed out to him that while bombs are falling, “people don’t rape each other”\(^2\).

But Gellhorn did not fare much better in Hemingway’s non-fiction as his dispatch “Fresh Air on an Inside Story” from Spain illustrates. Here the cast includes Frederick Voigt of *Manchester Guardian*, the “correspondent” and “outsider”, Hemingway in the role of the “hard-working, non-political, straight-shooting correspondents”, and Gellhorn as the “American woman journalist,” and a “girl”(White 296). After Hemingway and his fellow “half dozen …newspaper men who were living and working in Madrid” learn that the “outsider” attempted to get the “girl” to carry an uncensored dispatch which contained fictitious description of Madrid littered with dead bodies, they confront him. “The only ugly thing was,” Hemingway writes “that the girl to whom he had entrusted it, could under the rules of war, have been shot as a spy if it

\(^2\) From NYT February 8, 2008 Charles McGrath’s article “Hemingway’s ‘The Fifth Column’ produced by New York Stage.”
had been found among her papers when she was leaving the country” (White 296). He categorizes Gellhorn as “one of the most popular correspondents [exposed] to an espionage charge for carrying his faked dispatch” (White 296). Popular does not exactly convey professionalism, but rather suggests that Gellhorn, at least according to Hemingway, was more of a celebrity or a media poster girl for the journalists in Spain and with such visibility she ran the risk of being exposed to charges of betrayal to the very cause, that of the Spanish Republic, she supported as she looked attractive and foreign.

While Caroline Moorehead, Gellhorn’s biographer, contends that Gellhorn considered Hemingway’s rendition of her in his play as “nothing more than an affectionate parody,” in ASF she seems to return the favor and uses fiction to set the record straight (MG:ATCL 140). The scene where Mary Douglas arrives at the Metropole Hotel in Prague, corresponds to that of Gellhorn first arriving in Spain at the Gran Via restaurant. Hemingway, who had been drinking and eating with other correspondents, welcomed Gellhorn by calling her “daughter”. In her novel, Gellhorn has Mary respond to Tom Lambert greeting her as “beauty”, by calling him “son” (ASF 9). She has known Tom since he arrived in Paris from America over a decade ago and took to carrying cane, as if in an effort to appear distinguished and possibly a war veteran. Having covered the war in Spain, where she was relegated to writing about “bell alarms and morgues,” Mary is a veteran correspondent who covers “international disasters” (Ibid., 7). She also remained in Spain after it was pronounced a “dead story” while Tom along with the other correspondents left. The term “son” addressed to Tom is meant to communicate that he is too jaded and is more interested in getting the new story rather than seeing the old one to the end. Like Mary Douglas, Gellhorn saw the story of the Spanish Civil War and Czechoslovakia as one
set in the daily struggles of the civilians and exiles for whom neither victory nor defeat were the end.

Making of a Renegade

Despite of what transpired between Gellhorn and Hemingway in the course of their marriage after the Spanish Civil War and their divorce in 1945, she had been one of his staunches defenders as a supporter of the Spanish Republic and was grateful to him for teaching her about war in Spain. In “The War in Spain”, the introduction to her Spanish Civil War articles in TFOW, Gellhorn admits that after several weeks in Madrid, she was still uncertain about whether she could write about the war. And then “a journalist friend observed that [she] ought to write” (12). That “journalist friend” was most likely Ernest Hemingway. Perplexed as to what she could possibly write since she did not know enough about war, Gellhorn describes that conversation in TFOW as follows:

After all, I was a writer, was I not? But how could I write about war, what did I know, and for whom would I write? What made a story, to begin with? Didn’t something gigantic and conclusive have to happen before one could write about Madrid. Why would that interest anyone? I asked. It was daily life. He pointed out that it was not everybody’s daily life.(12)

Gellhorn took the advice and her first article, “Only the Shells Whine,” appeared in Collier’s The National Weekly on July 17, 1937. Her second article, “Men without Medals” which appeared in Collier’s on January 15, 1938, got her name on the masthead. These two were followed by “City at War” which appeared in Collier’s on April 2, 1938. Also, The New Yorker published her piece entitled “Madrid to Morata” on July 24, 1937 and Story Magazine published “Visit to the

30 There is a strong possibility that Hemingway’s suggestion was echoed or even first made by Herbert Matthews, a correspondent for the New York Times. See Dorman 87-88; Carl Rollyson 74; Orsagh 68.
Wounded” in the 1937 October issue. Her account of a visit to the Madrid Zoo with Hemingway appeared as “Zoo in Madrid” in the July 1937 issue of Harper’s Bazaar. As the titles and content of Gellhorn’s articles reveal, what she saw in Spain was determined by where she was able to go. Recalling in TFOW what she did during her time in Spain, Gellhorn writes:

I tagged along behind the war correspondents, experienced men who had serious work to do. Since the authorities gave them transport and military passes (transport was far harder to come by than permission to see everything; it was an open, intimate war) I went with them to the fronts in and around Madrid. Still I did nothing except learn a little Spanish and a little about war, and visit the wounded, trying to amuse or distract them. (TFOW12)

Casting herself as a novice and follower of “war correspondents, experienced men” in this reflection penned twenty years after the end of the Spanish Civil War, is a strategic maneuver on Gellhorn’s part. By admitting her limited knowledge of war as a twenty-eight year old, American woman, as well as lack of access to resources readily available to “war correspondents, experienced men” being an unaccredited journalist, Gellhorn contextualizes for her readers her perspective of on war in Spain, the perspective of citizen exile. Also because a significant amount of time had elapsed since the war in Spain, and the Gellhorn of 1959 was a veteran war correspondent who had witnessed the war in Finland, in China and WWII, it was important that she show who she was before she became an “unscathed tourist of wars.”

31 “Zoo in Madrid” was reprinted in Gellhorn’s 1941 short story collection The Heart of Another. Gellhorn also published ”Exile” in Scribners Magazine in September 1937. The main character of the short story is Heinrich, who leaves Germany because “Nazis were disgusting about Heine” his favorite poet, and who comes to stay with his cousin in America (18).
Aware that her middle-class St. Louis background and college education were valuable resources yet of limited utility in the sphere of journalism where experience was priceless, Gellhorn began her writer’s education by dropping out of Bryn Mawr at the end of her junior year in June 1929. After a brief stint on the New Republic and followed by the Albany Times Union, in spring of 1930 Gellhorn went to Paris, and for the next seven years lived and travelled in Europe - France, Italy, Germany, Spain and England- as well as United States. In The View from the Ground (TVFTG) a collection of her “peace journalism” published by Atlantic Monthly in 1988, Gellhorn states “My life began in February 1930” as “1930 was the real thing” – the year she sailed for Paris “with a suitcase and about $75” with the objective of becoming a “foreign correspondent” (66)32. Gellhorn not only became a “foreign correspondent,” but also, to borrow Carl Rollyson’s title of his Gellhorn biography, a “beautiful exile”. For the rest of her life, Gellhorn would make her home everywhere but U.S., in Cuba, Mexico, England and Africa.

Gellhorn’s first big assignment in Europe was for her home newspaper, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and asked her to write about women delegates attending the Geneva Convention in October of 1930. Grateful for the assignment, Gellhorn was nevertheless indignant about the ‘woman’s angel’ of her assignment, and according to Caroline Moorehead, referred to it as “harmless whoring” (MGATCL 40). By spring of 1931, Gellhorn travelled across U.S. and called on St. Louis Post-Dispatch offering to write articles from the cross country tour she was undertaking. On her trip she interviewed Tom Mooney, an imprisoned union leader; Jack Dempsey, the heavyweight boxer; a poet, Robinson Jeffers; a woman bullfighter, Juanita; and “a pregnant French prostitute” who read “Alexander Dumas and Andre Gide…to her unborn child” (Ibid.,45). The St. Louis Post-Dispatch published two of her articles from this trip: one on Diego

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32 The View From the Ground was published in 1988 as a sort of companion piece to the third edition of The Face of War by Atlantic Monthly that same year.
Rivera, whom she watched painting a mural in Mexico City, and the another on Russian filmmaker, Sergei Eisenstein, whom she tracked down in the Mexican desert (Ibid., 48). What this cast of characters- men and women, American and foreign-had in common was their dual status as heroes and villains, mothers and career women, artists and social commentators. Not surprisingly, the *Louis Post-Dispatch* selected the two pieces on visual artists of international acclaim as both men were regarded as art innovators their leftist politics led to their commissions in U.S. being revoked; this made for sensational news.

In her first novel, *What Mad Pursuit* (1934)(WMP) Gellhorn draws on knowledge and experiences gained as a journalist and a traveler, which is something she would continue throughout her career. The protagonist of WMP, Charis Day, is a young woman with a wealthy aunt, who after reading about a national case reminiscent of the Scottsboro case, like Gellhorn, drops out of college to find a cause she can support. Day tries her hand at working as a cub reporter in Pennsylvania covering stories of suicide and illness, but only succeeds at earning the nickname of “blond peril”. Her support for the strikers which she demonstrates by testifying in court against police brutality she had witnessed, costs her her job with the paper. Next, she travels to California, where she tries to help an imprisoned union organizer, Tim Ronney, who is based on Tom Mooney, but is treated, with suspicion by his supporters who tell her that it would be best if she donated money for his defense. Just like Charis Day, the causes Gellhorn aligned herself with and the victims of injustice she championed were always removed from her due to her educated, middle-class upbringing. When in fact, Gellhorn and other women correspondents crossed class boundaries in their work and politics.

Though the book was poorly received, greatly criticized by her father, and Gellhorn struck it off the list of her published works, it reveals her growing interest in the social and
political climate of the decade. Illustrating Gellhorn’s break with adolescence and the 1920s disillusionment, her disillusionment with disillusionment is what prompted Gellhorn to seek out worthy causes rather than embark on a mad pursuit for the sake of mad pursuit. Like the protagonist of WMP, Gellhorn found her middle-class life a privilege a burden unless she could use it to help others. Yet her early journalist efforts to call attention to injustice and struggle of the working class, fell on obdurate ears of her employers who regarded her as righteousness as a luxury of someone with the safety net of a trust fund. Because Gellhorn came from a middle-class background, her interest and support for causes outside her class were construed as those of an uninformed do-gooder, when in fact taking active interest in people’s struggle was too a part of Gellhorn’s upbringing.

Martha Gellhorn grew up in St. Louis observing her maternal grandmother, Martha Ellis and mother, Edna, working for social reform and women’s suffrage, and her father, George Gellhorn, a respected gynecologist and obstetrician, establish free prenatal clinics. She came to believe that individuals like her, with class privilege and means should work to aid those less fortunate. But much like her socially active mother and grandmother, Gellhorn’s perspective was not free of middle-class bias. Her grandmother’s practice of identifying ‘neglected children’ at school, then visiting them at home to ask their mothers, whom she found often “lying about in a dirty house,” to enroll their children in weekend home-making courses comes too close to generalizations shaped by one’s social and economic background (Rollyson 2). Similarly while Gellhorn’s mother agitated for women’s right to vote, she also maintained that women’s
domestic duties came first. As Carl Rollyson points out, this paradoxical stance was possible for Edna, since the Gellhorns employed a German housekeeper (11)33.

Similarly, Gellhorn’s reports for Harry L. Hopkins of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), an agency for which she began working as a field investigator in fall of 1934, are not free of class based generalizations and prejudices. The reports she wrote for FERA about parts of New Jersey, North and South Carolina hardest hit by the Depression became the basis for her 1936 book *The Trouble I’ve Seen*. This was Gellhorn’s third trip across the U.S., following the second one in fall of 1931 with Bertrand de Jouvenel, her French boyfriend, through the Deep South. As a field investigator, Gellhorn observed and spoke with everyone she could—families, sharecroppers, farmers, factory owners, doctors, and children—and recorded what they told her of their daily lives and struggles. But Angelina Hardy Dorman, author of *Martha Gellhorn: Myth, Motif and Remembrance*, points out that Gellhorn’s “coverage of Depression in America” of her FERA reports, contains a “paternalistic bend, with her ideas bordering on social Darwinism and a call for eugenics”(11). In her reports, Gellhorn is critical of large families which though poor, malnourished, suffering from numerous diseases continue to have children, and angry with a doctor who “refuses to sign sterilization warrants on imbeciles: grounds: ‘It’s a man’s prerogative to have children”(14)34. Also, she falls back on class-based value judgments when comparing the impact of relief on workers of different classes: “Generalizing (probably accurately), the unskilled uneducated laborer is probably getting used to relief. The middle-class

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33 Dorman in *Martha Gellhorn: Myth, Motif and Remembrance* includes the following quote from *Experiencing Women’s History in Missouri: Edna Gellhorn* “Edna[Gellhorn] credited her housekeeping staff for allowing her the freedom to devote herself to various civic endeavors” (23).

34 Gellhorn’s report from Gaston County, North Carolina from November 11, 1934 reproduced in *The View from the Ground* as “My Dear Mr. Hopkins” 10-18.
white collar worker is taking it in the neck, horribly” (30)\textsuperscript{35}. Yet it must be noted that Gellhorn here is participating in the social discourse of the period. At the same time Gellhorn casts her lot with the poor, whom she calls “grand people…[of]… American stock” who “are sound and good humored, kind and loyal. I don’t believe they are lazy; I believe they are mostly ill and ignorant” (18)\textsuperscript{36}. She reserves her harshest criticism for the inefficiency and corruption of the relief administration which is “an object of disapproval (if not disgust) for both the unemployed and controlling masses…often repeated words of unemployed “they’re all in this together –the politicians and relief people” and manipulative and exploitive practices of doctors and employers(19).\textsuperscript{37}

Based on her experience as a field investigator for FERA, *The Trouble I’ve Seen* (TTIS) was very well received both in U.S. and England, and showed Gellhorn’s progression not only as a writer but a keen observer of the relationship between gender, poverty and class. In the four novella-like sections of TTIS, Gellhorn paints particularly striking images of the impact of poverty of men and women of all ages. There is the resourceful Mrs. Madison, whose adult children’s lives are filled with domestic abuse and alcoholism, who puts on a hat for her visits with the relief people. Then there is Merle, a mother with a newborn abandoned by her husband, who rises above her husband’s pride and admits to the relief worker that she needs help. And last but not least, there is the eleven-year-old Ruby who turns to prostitution and contracts syphilis. Their daily struggles penned by Gellhorn are just as heart wrenching as the now iconic Depression photograph of a nameless woman and her children by Dorothea Lange, the Migrant

\textsuperscript{35} Gellhorn’s report from Camden, New Jersey dated April 25, 1935 reproduced in *The View from the Ground* as “My Dear Mr. Hopkins” 24-32.
\textsuperscript{36} Gellhorn’s report from Gaston County, North Carolina from November 11, 1934 reproduced in *The View from the Ground* as “My Dear Mr. Hopkins” 10-18.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid
Mother\textsuperscript{38}, which illustrates the cover of the 2012 Eland edition of TTIS. By emphasizing the difficult choices made by women, Gellhorn documents their strength and refusal to admit defeat, examples of which she had and will encounter again in Europe and in war.

The poverty and class struggle Gellhorn had seen in U.S. during her three trips, was similar to what she had also seen in Europe. In *The View From The Ground* (1988) (TVFTG), Gellhorn described the time she spent in Europe in 1930s as instructive about “what true poverty means, the kind you never chose and cannot escape, the prison of it,” and “the most useful part of my education. It was a very high class education, all in all, standing room at ground level to watch history as it happened”\textsuperscript{(68)}. Feeling she was not knowledgeable enough about European culture and politics, Gellhorn enrolled at Haute Ecole des Sciences Politiques in Paris, but by end of term withdrew deciding to educate herself by going to political meetings (Moorehead MGATCL 42). As Dorman points out “this period served as a journalistic apprenticeship for Gellhorn and Jouvenel was her companion and a critical part of her education on the politics of Europe in early 1930s” (36-7). In early 1934 Gellhorn, de Jouvenel and a group of young French pacifists were invited by the German Youth to visit Berlin. That trip, which she describes in TFOW, made her suspicious as the “German police ….confiscated the newspapers” she and her fellow travelers were reading, and German Youth, who insisted they had no affiliation with Hitler, “in clean blond khaki-clad formation…proved to have one parrot brain among the lot”\textsuperscript{(TFOW 9-10)}\textsuperscript{39}. By late April of 1934 Gellhorn began writing her second novel “set among

\textsuperscript{38} A 1978 *Los Angeles Times* article “Can’t Get a Penny: Famed Photo’s Subject Feels She’s Exploited” identified the woman in the photograph as Florence Thompson. See Hariman and Lucaites’ *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* extensive discussion of the repurposing of the Migrant Mother photograph.

\textsuperscript{39} After that visit to Berlin, Gellhorn tried to remain a pacifist and along with Bertrand de Jouvenel and their fellow journalists, started a magazine *La Lutte des Jeuness* intended to explore economic depression, advocate for scholarships and funds for students, and continue a dialogue with German youth (Moorehead MGATCL 65; Rollyson 46).
the French and German pacifists,” but possibly due to lack of money put the project on hold and in the fall went back to U.S. and began work with FERA (Moorehead MGATCL 69). In her FERA reports, Gellhorn noted the similarities between the poor in America and the “lower class in Europe,” comparing Americans’ veneration for the President Roosevelt to that equal to “Italian peasant’s [for] Madonna” (18,10 TVFTG). She also made analogies the war on poverty and war, noting that relief work is not much different from “getting the wounded from battle field”, while being on relief is as trying as the “third year of war when everything peters into grey resignation”40. The third year of struggle is what Gellhorn would also witness during her last trip to Spain during the war, in November 1938 and described in her article which was unpublished until 1959. “The Third Winter” vividly presents the struggle of a family living in a war torn Barcelona whose entire day is spent waiting for news from their two sons fighting at the front and their daughter returning from work at a munition factory with two bread rolls (TFOW 41).

The Face of War

In Spain, the effects of war on individuals, “intimate destinies of combatants and civilians,” preoccupied Gellhorn who through travel, work, research and journalism had taught herself how to record the everyday (Rollyson 77). The notes Gellhorn kept while in Spain reflect her attention to the daily routines of civilians in war, a category to which she belonged to as equally she did to that of correspondents41. By assuming a routine for herself not too different from one of a visitor or tourist, Gellhorn was able to observe and record the gamut of total war

41 Notes 1937-1938 war in Spain. Martha Gellhorn Collection. Howard Gotlieb Archival and Research Center, Boston University, Boston.
experiences in Spain. Of particular interest are Gellhorn’s notes about her participation in the feminine daily rituals which enable her to traverse the boundaries of the war and home front, gender and class. This is illustrated in Gellhorn’s notes about visiting the wounded in hospitals who dream of becoming artists and musicians; households in which men make double the salary they did before the war yet their wives often return empty handed after standing on food lines for seven hours a day; and hair salons where proprietors complain about lack of quality clientele and a forty percent decrees in what they can charge for perms and manicure. The forty three entries from Gellhorn’s first trip to Spain in March of 1937, contain seventeen instances of bombing, fifteen notes on visiting trenches and hospitals, fourteen mentions of food, ten comments about women’s appearance and their role in war, and nine visits by Gellhorn to shops and hair salon. It is during the visits to the shops and hair salons that Gellhorn in the role of the consumer is able to learn about people’s work, wages and class prejudices. Also, these lists reiterate that much of war is spent waiting and when food and safety are a rare commodity, diversions are all there is left especially for women, who unlike men, are held to gendered standards even in times of war.

TFOW was Gellhorn’s attempt at foregrounding her journalism and rivaling the celebrity image the creation of which was as much the doing of the press and Hemingway, as it was Gellhorn herself. In 1958, Gellhorn negotiated a contract with Simon and Schuster for two books for TFOW. When it was published the following year, the first section, The War in Spain, included only two articles. The first one was “The Besieged City” dated by Gellhorn November 1937, which had appeared in Collier’s on April 2, 1938 under the title “City at War”. The second one, “The Third Winter” which Gellhorn dates November 1938 in TFOW, was never published in Collier’s or any other news media outlet. Correspondence between Martha Gellhorn and

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42 The last entry in her notes from Spain is from May 1938, as she preparing to leave Spain for the third time, this time on assignment for Collier’s.
Charles Colebaugh of Collier’s indicates that while she submitted the article, the magazine decided not to run it. It is important to note that as of May 1938, attention had shifted from Spain toward Czechoslovakia where Hitler was launching his fascist campaign. Collier’s had sent Gellhorn in May to Prague and by October Czechoslovakia replaced Spain, which was pronounced a “dead” story, as the next international news story.

Two recent books of scholarship on Gellhorn by Kate McLoughlin (2007) and Angelia Hardy Dorman(2012) address the issue of the writer’s active role in construction of her image as a journalist. Although Dorman identifies TFOw as a central to Gellhorn’s image she does not elaborate as to why Gellhorn’s choice of war articles that focused on the “mundane is critical” (9). Dorman’s observation is accurate as in the War on Spain section, Gellhorn included only articles which focused on life in war torn Madrid and Barcelona. But unlike in all the subsequent editions of TFOw, in the 1959 edition Gellhorn did not include her first Collier’s article “Only The Shells Whine” from July 17, 1937, which reported on some of the heaviest bombardments on Madrid in the spring of 1937. Because TFOw, as Gellhorn writes in the introduction, is a collection of her war reporting, it is possible that in that first edition she adhered to the technicality and considered only the articles she wrote after she became a war correspondent for Collier’s. Since she was given that title after the publication of her second Collier’s article, “Men without Medals” on January 15, 1938, after her name was placed on the magazine’s masthead,

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43 In Martha Gellhorn: the war writer in the field and the text, Kate McLoughlin traces the letter exchange between Gellhorn and Collier’s editors regarding “The Third Winter”. Gellhorn described an article on Spain in a letter of Dec.6 1938 to Charles Colebaugh(SL 70-71) and mentioned it again in a letter of Feb 31, 1939 to Denver Lindley, saying ‘I hope you can run it’(I.r.). Lindley replied to her on 6 or8 Feb 1939, ‘we’re not using your article. I’m sorry’(f. 1r.) The piece never did appear in Collier’s but it can be found as “Third Winter” in The Face of War, dated Nov. 1938. In a letter of 17 July 1941, Gellhorn told Charles Colebaugh, “I sold you an article once about Barcelona, and events made it outdated before it could be published: it was my responsibility”(f. 3r). The letter appears in Moorehead’s Selected Letters of Martha Gellhorn on pages 112-113, but this remark is omitted.

44 In “Men Without Medals” Gellhorn presents a survey of trenches, where she meets and speaks with many American volunteers, and hospitals during her second trip to Spain (Collier’s pages 9-10, 49).
she chose to omit those articles written beforehand. This line of reasoning would also explain why she omitted the July 24, 1937 *The New Yorker* article “Madrid to Morata” based on her first visit, on March 29, 1937, to trenches outside of Madrid with Dr. Bethune in his blood delivery truck (31,34,37-39), and “Visit to the Wounded,” from the October 1937 issue of *Story Magazine*, based on her April 12, 1937 visit to a hospital in Madrid where she met a self-taught Hungarian who translated French poetry (58-61). But this explanation can only be applied to the first edition of TFOW, as by the second edition Gellhorn included “Only the Shells Whine” which she called “High Explosives for Everyone”. Here Kate McLoughlin’s suggestion that Gellhorn’s war journalism was influenced by the challenge of “conveying the reality of an overseas war to an isolationist country” and her “conspicuous [presence] at the front,” helps account for the changes Gellhorn made to the content and frame of TFOW through its four subsequent editions (1-2).

Fig. 6. The endpapers from Gellhorn’s *The Face of War* (1959).
The 1959 TFOW is the only one of the five editions to date, to include war photographs (see figure 6). Eleven black and white photographs of varying sizes, arranged in three rows of four, four and three, bleed into one another as well as off the edges of TFOW endpapers. Beginning in the top left hand corner, the images depict two parachuting soldiers, British firemen with a hose, two bodies caught in barbed wire, two prostrated skeletal bodies, a line of soldiers picking their way through a bombed city, a thin, an old, starving woman sitting in rubble, another bombed building, men covering their ears with their back to a tank, two rows of bodies, people standing around two tanks in what used to be a city, and last, a young man pushing a wheelbarrow with a large bundle followed by an older woman carrying two bundles, one under each arm, and at the tail end, an older man in a suit. Read in just that sequence, from top left corner and across each subsequent row, the photographic layout of the endpapers in TFOW personifies total modern war. From the international intervention and technology of aerial bombardment, to exposure of open cities and civilians to violence perpetrated despite, or in spite of rules of combat, and culminating in exile, total modern warfare is predicated on expendability of human lives.

As there is an absence of correspondence between Gellhorn and Simon and Schuster regarding the decision to include photographs on the endpapers of TFOW, it is possible that it was the publisher’s idea. The photograph filled endpapers in the first edition of TFOW could be seen as nostalgia for the picture magazines like Collier’s in which Gellhorn’s articles were originally published. While it is unlikely that Gellhorn had any real influence over the layout of her articles, two pieces of correspondence between Collier’s and Gellhorn suggest that the magazine editors wanted to capitalize on Gellhorn’s contacts in Spain-- director of The Spanish Earth, Joris Ivens, and war photographer, Robert Capa -- to procure photographs for the
publication. They provided her with a letter of introduction on March 22, 1938 identifying her as a representative of Collier’s in Europe who is gathering “photographs and other documentary materials as a background for…articles”. She in turn offered her opinion on use of photographs most likely for the layout of her August 1938 article, “Come Ahead, Adolf!,” on Czechoslovakia responding with mobilization, as Republican Spain had two years prior, to fascist bullying. In a June 1, 1938 letter to Denver Lindley of Collier’s Gellhorn wrote:

As for pictures: I think the way to use them is BEFORE and AFTER. You know, the bad Spain pictures, with everything torn up, alongside sweet Marseille picture. Then the cemeteries, and certainly the picture of the quiet and comfortably high Pyrenees frontier. I do think it’s well to show a brand new war, contrasted with peace pictures. (qtd. Moorehead SLOMG 63)

There are also two Collier’s memos showing that Gellhorn asked Robert Capa, whom she met in Barcelona in November 1938, to contribute photographs to Collier’s. One dated December 27, 1938 reads: “Send Pictures Civil Population” and another from January 16, 1939 confirms that Capa’s “photos [are] being sent [on the] next mailer” to Collier’s offices.45

In TFOW the endpapers with war photographs and Gellhorn’s war reporting, do not imitate the layout of a photo essay. Instead they are presented in the manner of what W. J.T. Mitchell refers to as photo/text in an effort to document the never ending tragedy, where those who survive are cast out into exile. A note on the back of the title page informs the reader that these photographs “are reproduced through the courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, Radio Times, Hulton Public Library, and Keystone Press” but no captions, dates, locations or names are

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45 From Crowell-Colliers. Box 316, Folder Martha Gellhorn 1938-1940. NYPL.
provided. And that is essentially the point Gellhorn makes in the introduction to the 1959 edition of TFOW when she refers to her articles as pictures:

The pictures are small but there are many, and it seems to me that they merge into one crowded appalling picture….There is a single plot in war; action is based on hunger, homelessness, fear, pain and death….Refugees, dragging themselves and whatever they could carry away from war to no safety, were one people all over the globe. The shapeless bundle of a dead American soldier in the snow of Luxembourg was like any other soldier’s corpse in any other country. War is a horrible repetition. (7-8)

Even though they are “small” and still images, they convey continuity, what Gellhorn calls the “horrible repetition” of war. The same set of images appear on the front and back endpapers of TFOW which creates the sensation that the beginning could just as easily be the end, and vice versa. The narrative of those displaced by war as well as those who perished on foreign lands is one of being lost in the bombed landscape, and made to wander as the readers’ eyes do over the endpaper war photographs and the images of war in Gellhorn’s articles. To put it another way, the photographs in TFOW are not illustration of the text, but a photo-copy or translation of text into images which conveys the “horrible repetition” of war.

Only the Louisville Courier Journal reprinted one of the photographs from the TFOW’s endpapers, that of the thin, old woman sitting in the rubble in its review of the book.46 And it seems that when Sigmund A. Lavine wrote in the Massachusetts Telegram that each of Gellhorn’s articles is a “tiny picture of the ugly face of war” and the book overall “a close-up that is lined with wrinkles of horror,” he was looking at just that photograph of the old woman.

46 All the reviews of TFOW mentioned here can be found in Martha Gellhorn Collection. Howard Gotlieb Archival and Research Center, Boston University, Boston.
Also numerous reviews compared Gellhorn’s perspective on war and style of writing in TFOW to documentary war photographs. Earl W. Foell called TFOW a collection of “virtually untouched portraits of war” which Gellhorn wrote “as Goya painted it, in sharply etched human images rather than grand battle scenes.” The reviewer for LTS pointed out that “[TFOW’s] pictures of beastliness and tragedy of war are honestly matched with balancing experienced of what soldiers and airmen and red cross workers endured (for [Gellhorn] went into some of their duties with them).” While Peregrine Worsthorne likened the face of war painted by Gellhorn to one that “both repels and fascinates,” Simon Raven admitted the face was “scarred and tearful”, but for him it was “still a great deal too attractive”.

Is Simon Raven objecting to the fact that Gellhorn being a woman could not have seen what the real face of war looks like or that Gellhorn, a woman, in the act of seeing war functions as a seductive advertisement for war? In scholarship on Gellhorn this issue has been revisited. Jacqueline Elizabeth Orsagh has pointed out that the objective of TFOW is somewhat contradictory, because “although [TFOW] intends to present the horror of four wars in order to convince its readers that there must be no more, now that we are in nuclear age” at the same time “TFOW powerfully convinces those readers of the rightness of those wars”(304).

Similarly, Kate McLoughlin has noted that while critical of war, Gellhorn seemed to be keen on running into the thick of things whenever war or conflict erupted. Majority of critics who reviewed Gellhorn’s TFOW in 1959 were equally confounded by her argument, some like Herbert Mitgang called it a “brilliant anti-war book” while Atlantic Monthly hailed it as a “vivid, militant book by an intense and merciful writer”.
The critics and commentators seemed to have overlooked Gellhorn’s admission which she makes openly in the introduction of TFOW “No one need point out my contradictions; I know them and feel them” and on the next page she continues

I do not hope for a world at peace, all of it, all the time. I do not believe in perfectibility of man, which is what would be required for universal peace; I only believe in the human race…Our leaders are not wise enough, nor brave enough, nor noble enough, for their jobs. We, the led, are largely either sheep or tigers; we are all guilty of stupidity, the ruling human sin. This being so, we can expect wars; we have never been free of them. I hate this fact and accept it. (6)

TFOW is therefore neither an “anti-war” nor a “militant” book, but rather a critique of both these positions. Gellhorn is not merely critical of world leaders, but of people who followed them by either by blindly accepting poverty and injustice or do not hesitate to pick up weapons when called upon to do so by their leaders. While initially Gellhorn hoped to find in journalism a means of exposing the cost of war on human life, she learned that people preferred to not know or see. And by ignoring wars, they were just as guilty of condoning violence and destruction as the leaders who send troops in to battles or give orders bombing of civilian populated areas. Citing her journalistic record, Gellhorn declares that after reporting for “nine years” and witnessing “a great depression and two wars ending in defeat, and one surrender without war,” she no longer believes in the power of the press, and concedes that human existence will continue to be marred by war (6).

Gellhorn must have anticipated that republishing her war writing in book format in 1959, fourteen years after her last article included therein was first published, would make some critics
question the truthfulness of her account as well as her motives. Others like Peregrine Worsthorne of the Daily Telegraph London suggested that TFOW “deserves a place on the shelves of literature” rather than “in the library of pacifism”. It seems that Gellhorn by penning not only an introduction and conclusion to TFOW, but also opening remarks to each section, or each war where she describes how she got to the front and what she experienced, transformed at least to the reviewers, herself into the face of war. Most reviewers were skeptical about whether what TFOW revealed about war reporting was accurate, citing specifically Gellhorn’s gender and background as detrimental to her objectivity. The Philadelphia Inquirer, praised Gellhorn for “[managing] to be in places “things happened”. The reviewer for World Press News seemed to be under the impression that Gellhorn was independently wealthy stating: “few journalists can afford the luxury of travelling to war at their own expense before reporting it, but her account of how she became a journalist is nonetheless engaging”. Pat Frank pointed out that because Gellhorn “was not fighting a deadline”, she was able to take the time to gather information and craft her “fine… stories” but “her preface is better”. Simon Raven of The Spectator noted having “unworthy feeling that [Gellhorn] really had a very entertaining time of it all… the way [she] slanted her reports … tempts one to think…that so much excitement and interest cannot have been too dearly bought even at the price of the concomitant horrors”. Kenneth Allsop felt that not only had “reality” in Gellhorn’s war writing “been pushed aside for theatricality” but “lethal boredom” is missing. Peter Duval Smith summed up all these grievances leveled at Gellhorn, and citing a phrase from the introduction to TFOW out of context, called TFOW “a failure” as “a protest” since “one is not greatly affected by [Gellhorn’s] writing” because “as a woman she was not allowed to see much of the actual fighting.” Moreover, Gellhorn did not capitalize on “immense opportunities” she had and instead opted for “false rhetoric of the school of
“Hemingway”, “over simple word[s],” “noble phrases,” and “[f]luffy style[which] speaks for fluffy mind”. Pronouncing her as a “voyeur,” Smith concludes his tirade by stating that Gellhorn’s “account of the Spanish Republic is nothing but a piece of propaganda” which is the result of Gellhorn having “amazingly little idea of politics.”

What all these critiques of Gellhorn reveal is the short sightedness of the reviewers. Being a woman correspondent covering wars, Gellhorn was often excluded and had to make her own way to war. But the narrative of war, or battles fought, lost and won, the reviewers found missing in TFOW, was no longer sufficient. The Spanish Civil War marked the shift to total modern warfare and that required a new narrative which can account for the before, during and after battles fought. That narrative had “a single plot” as Gellhorn pointed out in TFOW, and its “action [was] based on hunger, homelessness, fear, pain and death….Refugees, dragging themselves and whatever they could carry away from war to no safety, were one people all over the globe” (7-8). That is why Gellhorn, much like Virginia Cowles and Josephine Herbst discussed in the subsequent chapters, employed the human interest story to report on the war, and in doing so crossed the boundaries of the traditional war narrative by looking to the daily lives of civilians during the Spanish Civil War.

**Journalist and Private Citizen in The Face of War**

In the opening section of TFOW, War in Spain, the unaccredited war correspondent Gellhorn who takes the reader for triage walks through Madrid and Barcelona stands in stark contrast to the ex-foreign correspondent Gellhorn who in the introduction warns the reader of an even deadlier means to an end than total war, nuclear war. She foregrounds that while at one time she ranked among “the war correspondents, experienced men” stating “I belonged to a
Federation of Cassandras, my colleagues, the foreign correspondents whom I met at every
disaster,” in 1959 she distances herself from them and journalism, declaring: “I am no longer a
journalist; like all other private citizens, the only record I have to keep straight is my own” (2,4).
But in these articles Gellhorn is a journalist and she writes from the perspective of someone who
must work to win over the people of Madrid and Barcelona in order to learn about their lives. To
achieve this she takes to recording the routines of the urban masses who follow the same patterns
as those before the war as a form of active resistance against fascism. The act of repeating the
same quotidian tasks enables the residents of Madrid and Barcelona to retain their status as
citizens.

Unlike the Collier’s title, “The City at War,” Gellhorn’s title “Besieged City” speaks to
the uncanny appeal of Madrid which is inhabited by Spaniards, both residents of the city and
outlying villages, flocked to by foreigners, which include reporters, photographers, writers and
tourists, and targeted by Franco’s forces, from land and air. Yet despite the proximity between
war and civilian fronts, which at times are one and the same, the city remains a home, and “press
tourists”, like Gellhorn, have come to feel at home in Madrid, home at war. Waiting is the city’s
main pastime and has become mundane, which is not dissimilar from lengthy periods of
inactivity experienced by soldiers in the trenches as the offensive is slow to engage. Gellhorn’s
title, “Besieged City,” more aptly reflects this focus of the piece, the liminal state of the city
residents who manage their daily routines around the shelling. Gellhorn begins the article with
fragments of conversations among a group of people about the upcoming offensive:

Someone said he knew that food and munitions were being moved; someone else said
the Campesión’s outfit was in the south or in the north; villages (forty of them, in this
direction, in that direction) had been evacuated; transport unit was ready to go; have you
heard? All front passes have been recalled, leaves are canceled. Who told you, does he
know?...then the rain would start again. And everyone waited. Waiting is a big part of
war and it is hard to do. (14)

The vagueness and contradiction captured by Gellhorn in this excerpt is demonstrates that as a
reporter, she is aware of the importance of objectivity and at the same time recognizes the
gravity of disclosing any information that might endanger the republican military position and
strategy.

The people of Madrid wait out the rain, just as they wait out the nightly shellings: both
have become a natural part of their lives in Madrid. The city is besieged by people and under
threat of a siege by the fascist forces; this image captures the instance of a stalemate as waiting is
a big part of war unacknowledged in most literature. By setting up a parallel between
precipitation and aerial attacks, Gellhorn illustrates the civilians’ patterns and daily routines in
war torn Madrid. Some like Gellhorn and her companions count the number of shells to be six
hundred, as they would lightning during a storm. Like the rain, the shelling causes the people to
stay indoors or seek shelter, and to wait it out.

The triage walk on which Gellhorn takes her readers begins with the damage sustained by
the Hotel Florida, then proceeds to residential homes and ends in the trenches. The maid
summons Gellhorn to “Come and see your old room”, of which “nothing at all remained except
the dressing table, with the mirror uncracked, and…the nosecap of the shell in the broken
remains of the bureau”(16, 19). These interesting details about the objects of vanity remaining
intact while the work space-the bureau- has been destroyed lend themselves to foregrounding the
fact that Gellhorn is a woman and a writer witnessing war. Being fully aware that her looks
simultaneously facilitate and frame what she sees, Gellhorn uses the destruction to her old room in Hotel Florida as a point of departure to explore the fractured association of homes with safety.

While she is given a new room at the hotel following the destruction of the old room during the shelling, the permanent residents of Madrid are not as fortunate. And even if there were some place else for them to go, they would not leave as Gellhorn learns when she accompanies the “first-aid service for wounded houses” (19). She listens to the positive diagnosis the “architects and engineers and bricklayers and electricians, and some workers [who] are employed only to dig bodies from the collapsed houses” give to the residents of homes with missing roofs and walls. But she cannot help but interject and ask “where they would live now”, to which a woman,
whose home was hit by four shells that knocked down one wall, replies “where else shall we go?
This is our home, we have always lived here” (19). In the last place they inspect, reduced to
“collection of old rags and paper, pieces of plaster and broken wood, twisted wires and slivers of
glass,” an old woman approaches Gellhorn, probably because she is a woman. Addressing
Gellhorn as if she were a guest, the old woman says “Look at that, look at that, do you see, that is
my home, that’s where I live, there, what you see there” (19). By holding on to what remains of
their homes, the residents of Madrid also cling onto their identity as Spanish citizens. With no
place else to go, if they were to leave, they would have to accept life of exile in their own
country.

Gellhorn extends her exploration of being home at war, which is equivalent to the
condition of citizen/exile, by visiting the trenches and describing the life of the soldiers there
during the period of lull in fighting. The city itself is not at war, but the trenches are within
walking distance. The guide, “a boy with fantastic eyelashes and an easy laugh” who had
attended just came back from a dance, gives Gellhorn a tour of the trenches “smelling of fresh
wood, and the wood smoke from little stoves, bright blankets over the machine guns, the pictures
of movie stars on the walls” (20). The warmth and small comforts of the trenches are ironically
what is missing from the homes of civilians.

Much like “Besieged City” set in Madrid, in “The Third Winter” written by Gellhorn
during her fourth and final visit to Spain in the fall of 1938, she takes the reader on a triage tour
of Barcelona. Like the Madrid residents waiting out the rain, Barcelonians spend their siesta
which remained observed during the war and was one of the very few considerations shown by
the nationalists, in cafes that have no food to serve, admiring the stalls full of flowers all of
which are reserved for funerals of the victims of an earlier bombing, while remaining alert. The
clear skies lend to unobstructed view of civilian targets exposed to aerial bombardment, thus it is appropriate that Gellhorn overhears a woman say that the “beautiful weather” is a “catastrophe” (26). The few hours pause is finite, as passing as good weather.

Once again just as in Madrid, Gellhorn daily routine in Barcelona involves walking around the city. There is a comfort in constant movement as a moving target is easier to miss. Under the pretense of purchasing a picture frame, Gellhorn pays a visit to the home of a carpenter. As a potential customer and a foreign woman, her interaction with the carpenter and his family is more open than had they been asked to speak with a male correspondent. And none of the male correspondents visited civilians in their bombed out homes. Gellhorn’s decision to do so attests to her interest in civilians’ lives. The carpenter, Old Mr. Hernandez’s household consists of his wife, their daughter, who works in a munition factory, their ten year old grandson, Miguel, daughter-in-law, Lola and her new born child. Their two sons, Tomas and Federico are at the front. Each family member offers an insight into the experience of living in war. Mr. Hernandez, due to lack of material cannot practice his trade as a carpenter, since wood is designated for “dugouts and trenches, bridges, railroad ties, to prop up bombed houses, to make artificial arms and legs, for coffins” and even the smallest fragments are reserved as firewood for hospitals, it is his wife and daughter who provide for their family during the war (27). Old Mrs. Hernandez goes out every day to purchase food often spending most of her days standing in long lines, leaving her place to take cover with other women “professional, like soldiers” only if bombs begin to fall too closely, and if she is lucky returning home with a cigarette packet size sack of rice and two finger width portion of fish (28). The daughter apart from her munition factory salary, which supports the entire family, gets two bread rolls each day that are the mainstay the family’s diet.
The five digressions in Gellhorn’s narrative, which are prompted by what each member of the Hernandez family tells her, illustrate how civilians cope with destructiveness of war by adapting to it as part of their pre-war daily routines. The young grandson, Miguel’s admission that he hides under his bed during bombing and finds it funny to watch women who wait all day in food lines fight when food runs out, prompts Gellhorn to shift to a description of women doing marketing under fire. Old Mr. Hernandez’s contribution to war is reduced to staying at home, as he is not able to practice his craft since wood is needed for construction of trenches, artificial limbs and keeping the hospitals warm. His faith in the Spanish Republic for which his two sons are fighting prompts Gellhorn to reflect on the farewell parade for disbanded International Brigades. The sight of Lola’s corpse-like baby girl causes Gellhorn to recall a visit to a hospital full of injured, shell-shocked and malnourished children. In this most protracted digression, Gellhorn describes how during bombardments the children “remember what happened to them and they go crazy” (34). The only comfort children lucky enough to have survived their home being bombed and not having been orphaned, is their mothers visiting them in the hospital and telling them that they no longer have a home. Attempting to change the subject Gellhorn tries to engage Lola in talk about the movies, one of few commodities available and a popular distraction from hunger. But this fourth digression is interrupted by arrival of Hernandez’s daughter “glowing with rogue and quiet well dressed” from work at the munition factory where she and other women make shells and mortars (38). Most likely because she feels guilty about not having much else to offer them, or because she is preparing to leave Spain for the fourth and final time, before departing Gellhorn attempts to comfort them by saying “third winter is the hardest”(41). It is Mrs. Hernandez the de facto head of the household who reminds Gellhorn “We are Spaniards and we have faith in our Republic” (41).

47 The parade took place on October 29, 1938. Gellhorn was not present in Spain at the time and did not witness it.
The Exile in Gellhorn’s fiction

Unlike Hemingway who wrote *The Fifth Column* (1938) in Spain and then began working on *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) following his last visit to war in 1938, Gellhorn found it hard to write fiction about Spain. As early as May 1937, the *New York World-Telegram* reported that Gellhorn having returned from Spain, this was her first of four trips, would “write a book on Spain in case-history style she used in *The Trouble I’ve Seen*, which was based on her experiences as an investigator for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration” (2)\(^48\). But by July 8, 1937, Gellhorn admitted in a letter to Mrs. Roosevelt that she was unable to write the book as “it is really too close to me and I feel it all too hard…I think that I must wait which distresses me” (SLOMG 56)\(^49\). She then compares her difficulty in rendering the war into fiction by comparing it to working on *The Trouble I’ve Seen*: “I couldn’t have written about the unemployed in a month, after I’d only seen them for six weeks, so I comfort myself saying that later I’ll do the book and not be too ashamed of it” (ibid). It was only after she visited Czechoslovakia in May and October 1938, did Gellhorn feel she “could control and use the emotions of Spain” to tell the story of exiles in a novel set in Prague, ASF (1940)\(^50\).

Some of these “emotions of Spain” had to do with the way Gellhorn had been portrayed by Hemingway and in the press. In ASF upon arriving in Prague, Mary Douglas is received by her fellow male correspondents with compliments and malicious comments about her becoming Spanish tan (19). One of the journalists, Thane, points out that unlike “experienced men” who write hard news, she dabbles in soft news for a weekly publication: “You work for the

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\(^{48}\)“Madrid’s Women Grow Used to Shells, Remain Calm When They Shower on City” *New York World Telegram* May 20, 1937 which reported Gellhorn’s return from her first trip to Spain.


\(^{50}\) See Gellhorn’s afterword to 2011 edition of *A Stricken Field*. 
goddamdest outfit. The story’s already dead” (9). Mary has known these journalists “for years now” and they are “intimate and affectionate with each other, though sometimes pompous too(when you showed off that you knew the language better or were more informed about local politics or had just lunched with a big native statesman), sometimes flirtatious…” (8). So she gives it to them as good as she gets: “I do not write news like you gents. I write history”(9).

Mary debunks Thane’s delusions of grandeur regarding his reporting skills, referring to him and the other male reporters as ‘gents’ who ‘write news’, which suggests that these men do not do the leg work to get the story but simply compose news based on the official statements issued by the press office. She, on the other hand, does not merely repeat the official record but gets the story from the people who see it and live it.

The exile appears in several works of fiction by Gellhorn both published and unpublished. That character is in some instances a man but more often a woman, a German, a French person or a Spaniard. When read chronologically these texts trace the evolution of the citizen in the 1930s into the exile, either one who chooses to become such or is made such by either political crisis or war, and struggles to find a home in an effort to reclaim citizenship. In a short story, “Exile”, which Gellhorn published in *Scribners* in September 1937, an elderly apolitical German, Heinrich, who prefers company of books to people, decides to go into voluntary exile to America. He makes this decision because of the Nazi censorship, brutalities, noise and parades, but what really “disgusts” him is that the “Nazis were messing up truth and history so that one no longer knew what was right and what wasn’t”(18). His Kansas City cousins, who had hear and read about Nazi violence in Germany, are disappointed that his narrative of exile contains no evidence of persecution and torture. When he reveals that the main
reason why he left his home was because his favorite poet, Heine, was denounced as a Jew and therefore not a poet, his relatives feel cheated and encourage Heinrich to move out (21).

While all Heinrich wants to do is write the history of the Post Office, in ASF, the history Mary wants to write and preserve is the stories of exiles like Rita. Being a German communist, Rita had been jailed and tortured by the Gestapo after she had been made to watch her brother beaten to death during an interrogation. When she was released from prison in May, she came to Prague and that is when Mary first met her. On the first occasion of their meeting, when the male correspondents brought Rita to the Metropole, she said little and eyed them with fear and distrust. The two women established a strained rapport and Mary concluded Rita’s behavior was a means of survival “not to be noticed ever again, not to be caught”(17). But when Mary runs into Rita on a street of Prague in October, she barely recognizes her. As Mary navigates the traffic of drab pedestrians with expressionless faces, a woman purchasing German papers at a newsstand catches her eye because of

the inexpensive dark blue tailored coat, the dark blue dress, and the beginning of a round white school-girl’s collar that showed under the coat, the neat childish feet in oxfords, a small flat bag(with nothing in it surely except a handkerchief and a comb and a few coins for carfare), the beret…the well-brushed black hair that was cut straight around below the ears, with a single lock that fell down across her forehead and her right eye. India hair, Mary thought, but how young she looks in her new clothes, and rested of sort of pert. She’s all made over. (14-15)

Rita is pleased that Mary could see her in her new clothes, which she had purchased just two months ago. Though she regrets not having put on the lipstick she has been using very sparingly,

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51 Phyllis Lassner in “Camp Follower of Catastrophe: Martha Gellhorn’s WWII Challenge to the Modernist War” reads the relationship between characters of Mary Douglas and Rita as that of outsider/insider.
she greets Mary with a confident remark “I though you would be here soon”(14). The scrutiny with which Mary takes in Rita’s appearance reveals that she had not expected a woman who is a German communist and an exile, to look so free and girlish. By the same token, Rita’s response to Mary’s questions reveal that she is not interested in being the journalists story “You should see the station: the refugees come in and there they are sent back where they escaped from. You should see it as a writer”(15). Cutting their reunion short, Rita announces she has to go home which surprises Mary. With her American passport and press pass, Mary feels in Prague as if she were in an “odd portable world” but Rita, who has no country, “is not a refugee anymore”(17-18). Rita’s clothes, her work with Solidariat helping new refugees pass for citizens in Prague and her home with Peter, a writer for a Communist paper, give Rita the security of a daily routine which is no different from any lawful resident of Prague. Although Rita knows she can trust Mary she keeps her at a distance. Rita explains the work she and the Solidariat do for the refugees, and takes Mary to several safe houses over crowed with Spanish exiles and recently arrived refugees from Sudetenland.

Rita’s in ASF is becomes Shorty in a 1950 short story, “About Shorty.” Several years after WWII, a nameless female reporter recalls how she met Shorty, a German exile, during the Spanish Civil War. Shorty, whose German-Jewish husband Otto works at one of the field hospitals, is brought to the hotel in Spain by the male correspondents, much like Rita in ASF. The fact that Shorty does not work and is kept by the correspondents in the hotel, incite the jealousy of the nameless narrator. But when Shorty begins having affairs with journalists and soldiers passing through the hotel, she is demoted to a “whore de combat” and the nameless female narrator is reinstated as the favorite (122). The shift is illustrated in Shorty trading in her

52 “About Shorty” was first published in Esquire magazine in 1950. Then it was included in Gellhorn’s 1953 short story collection The Honeyed Peace.
dungarees for a flower pattern dress, suggesting she has become acclimated and intends to make Spain her home. In the eyes of the correspondents, Shorty soon becomes no different than a traitor who is “on Franco’s side,” because she “does no work for the war,” takes up with Juanito, a Spanish Colonel, “distracting [him] from his work and destroying Otto” (125). The narrator becomes “Shorty’s champion and friend,” not because they are both women, but because other reporters forget they have “passports and salaries and were attending this war in the rare modern capacity of press tourists” (120). For Shorty, a German anti-fascist married, who was an exile before she came to Spain, the only safety to be had is attaching herself to men to evade suspicion.

Gellhorn in making Shorty “other” illustrates the precarious position of women in war. Both the reporter and Shorty, the citizen and the exile, occupy unstable positions somewhere on the blurred boundary between inside and outside due to their gender and occupation. Even though the female reporter has a passport, which enables her to come and go, her ability to go places in war is predicated on her contacts with the male correspondents. Her comments, about being prettier than Shorty as well as smarter, should not be dismissed as simply vain. Shorty is competition because she plays to the male reporters’ egos. But when she begins having affaires she is collateral damage because ‘a whore de combat,’ as the narrator explains, she sleeps with men without collecting payment, which raises suspicion as to the possibility of her being a spy. For Shorty, affairs with men are a form of protection because if someone can claim her as his, then she belongs and is not just an exile. This strategy of evading exile works for Shorty throughout the war in Spain and after in France, where she gets married and awaits her passport. It works so well, that the narrator presumes her to be dead, and is surprised to meet her in Paris.
With the outbreak of WWII, Shorty is forced into exile once more and the narrator pronounces her again dead.

Two unpublished manuscripts, *Peace On Earth* (1937) and “A Love Story with Ramifications” (circa 1950) which remain in the Gellhorn Collection at Boston University engage with the early stages of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath, do bear some resemblance to her published fiction in terms of plot structure and the citizen/exile characters. There is the romantic relationships forged at the time of war or political unrest, and the protagonist is a female character who unlike her lover survives though she is exiled in the process. In this respect both manuscripts parallel Gellhorn’s own relationships in the 1930s with Bertrand de Jouvenel and Ernest Hemingway. But these manuscripts are worth considering, even if briefly, as they reflect Gellhorn working out her politics in fiction and continuing to rewrite the new war narrative through the perspective of the citizen/exile.

*Peace On Earth* (POE) is the peace novel Gellhorn begin in 1934 and completed in February 1937, just before she left for Spain. Although a note written in in Gellhorn’s hand and dated 1980, which is attached to the manuscript, reads “Novel fully finished in February 1937 never shown to anyone since I judged it worthless after a year’s work,” she did show it to Allan Grover, a writer and her lover at the time. His opinion that it read like a “political tract” made Gellhorn abandon it and go off to war in Spain (Moorehead MGATCL). The female protagonist in POE is a poor, young French student, Niki Benoit, who loses her job in a shop, which she hoped would allow her to return to the university. The man she falls in love with is Paul de Vaucour, an aristocrat turned socialist journalist whom she hears speaking at a political meeting about fostering friendly relations with Germany rather than looking on as the country recedes further into poverty and political extremist. Niki and Paul are both in part Gellhorn and their
class backgrounds and the conflict this precipitates in their relationship illustrate not only Gellhorn’s own ambiguity about peace politics but propaganda aimed at left leaning individuals in the first half of the 1930s.

Paul’s privileged background makes him blind to the struggles of the working class people, many of whom are homeless and eke out a living by doing day work. Niki feels more at home with those struggling individuals as she only has a roof over her head because Paul has asked her to move in. While Paul considers Niki to be “tiresome and vulgar” when she talks of needing a job to save money for school, he does not, in a manner true to someone who comes from privilege, recognize the cost of Niki doing the marketing on a tight budget, as well as cleaning their apartment, washing his clothes, darning his socks and having his shoes resoled (Ch.1, pg 3; Ch. 4, pg29). Ultimately, as unemployment and strikes in France increase, Niki decided to join the Communist party and soon challenges Paul’s peace politics: “It’s more than war and peace, it’s how people want to live. It’s whether life is worth living under certain systems or not. Just peace isn’t enough”(Ch.5; pg. 19). In response, he calls her a Marxist who is of little use to him (Ibid.). Niki’s decision to leave Paul is an act of resistance to class oppression, refusing to participate in daily routine of economic consumption, as she abandons the gendered existence of marketing, cleaning and darning socks. Her return to her parent’s home in Grenoble and undertaking the study of law reflects her desire to understand and educate herself. She tells her father “There isn’t much a woman can do but if I had a profession like [being a lawyer], I might be useful to people and anyhow people would respect me” (Ch .9, pg. 15). The last image of Niki the readers see is her reading the letters of Sacco and Vanzetti, which speak to her of the same struggle she has seen in Paris, “the people under the bridges, …girls working in Bon
Marche, and everything the Comrades talked about” (Ch. 9; 16). This suggests Niki is searching for the source of labor resistance by turning to Sacco and Vanzetti, who were executed in 1927.

What in part redeems Paul’s character is his decision to go to Spain and report on the war, and it is in Spain that he realizes that “only men who had suffered for a long time could be as positive and as desperate as [those fighting for the Republic]” (Ch.9; pg. 6). When Paul returns from Spain he is denounced as a Communist by his employer, and the novel ends with his death at the hands of the police attacking a group of peaceful strikers. Niki’s Communism and Paul’s newfound anti-Fascism, foreshadow that to combat fascism alliances irrespective of class, nationality and politics will have to be made for there to even be a chance at peace. In regards to this, POE is more radical than Gellhorn’s other fiction as it explores how shifting political ideologies and media censorship increase the cost of truth.

The second manuscript “A Love story with Ramifications” (ALSWR) is a draft of a story which Gellhorn penned sometime between 1948 and 1952 while living in Mexico, and hoped to develop into a novel53. Unlike POE which spans two years, ALSWR looks back at the Spanish Civil War through the eyes of an exile, Raquel, living in Mexico. Born into a wealthy Spanish family, Raquel was sent to Paris to learn French while her family considered perspective candidates for marriage. But like Niki in POE, Raquel meets a charismatic politically active Frenchman and joins the Communist Party. When the war breaks out, Raquel leaves her French lover and returns to Spain where she meets Jorge, a doctor. Both volunteer in hospital serving the Republican Spain. But after Jorge dies towards the end of the war, Raquel makes her way to Mexico as the Nationalist declare victory over Republican Spain. What is important about

53 Martha Gellhorn Collection Box 1 Folder 27 Note dated September 21, 1965 attached to ALSWR – “this one I think, hope, pray may flow on into a novel unless all the bloody traveling + errand-- running shakes it loose.” A second draft of the story in the same folder has the following note from January 2, 1965 attached “I am only saving, for possible publication, one short story—about Mexico herein enclosed.”
ALSWR is that as late as the mid-1960s Gellhorn was still thinking about Spain and those who had been exiled at the end of the war.

The Taro Record

The death of Gerda Taro in Brunete in July of 1937 propelled her into the public eye with the extensive coverage of her grandiose funeral in Paris and was featured in the very picture magazines which until recently had been printing her photographs without crediting her. There is a morbid spectacularity to the narrative of Taro’s body being transported and put on view at every stop: first in the Madrid home, Alianza, of poet, Rafael Alberti and his wife, Maria Teresa Leon, then in Valencia and finally in Paris at the Maison de la Culture along with a small exhibition of her photographs (Rogoyska 226). Taro’s employer, Ce Soir assumed the responsibility of arranging her funeral and when to great lengths publicizing it, and profiting in the process, printing her photographs and condolences sent in from numerous correspondents in Spain, having representatives from the magazine, from Photographers Union and World Committee of Women Against War and Fascism deliver speeches at the funeral, and hiring Alberto Giacometti to create a sculpture to adorn her grave. The no-expense spared funeral for Taro was clearly a political strategy but wouldn’t all this money have been better spent feeding and clothing the people still living and fighting in Spain?

The story of Gerda Taro, which has been recounted by her and Capa biographers, reads much like a script from a film, especially since the name Gerda Taro was invented by the young female photographer in Paris to shed the stigma of her refugee status and help launch her career. It begins with Gerta Pohorylle, who though a daughter of Eastern European Jewish couple that emigrated from Eastern Galicia to Stuttgart and then was forced to relocate to Leipzig, until 1933 led a life no different from that of any middle-class German girl. In Leipzig, Gerta attended
Gaudigshule school where the students where predominantly Jewish, interested in and active politically. In contrast to her life and social circle in Stuttgart where she did not reveal much about her family and remained silent when her friends made anti-Semitic comments, the time spent in Leipzig offered Gerta the opportunity to discuss the impact of Hitler regime on the future of Germany and to become politically active. Although most of Gerta’s friends as well as her brothers belonged to organizations such as Socialist Union of Students and the Union of Communist Youth, she was not a member. Instead, Gerta used the combination of her political education from Gaudigshule and her knowledge of the bourgeoisie, to defy the anti-Semitism and increasing Nazi oppression. One instance involved Gerta visiting her Stuttgart friends and challenging the false safety class status offered. She had been one of them but now she revealed her Jewishness and admitted to having friends and relatives who supported leftist politics. As Jane Rogoyska observes though Gerta confronting her bourgeoisie friends did not prompt them to rethink their acquiescence with Nazi rule through their class privilege, but it “show[ed] them how Nazism was affecting someone they knew and liked, a friend, an individual”(25). The second instance was her staying in Germany, even though many of her Jewish friends had left, and under the cover of her stylish clothes and well-practiced middle-class act, distributing anti-Nazi reading materials.

In the course the first three years of the 1930s, Gerta ceased to be bourgeoisie and German, and emerged as a politically active Jewish woman, which in effect was equivalent of forfeiting her citizenship and accepting inevitable exile. The first step to exile was her arrest in March 1933 for her anti-Nazi activism. But three months later, the Polish consulate intervened in her case since her parents’ birthplace, Galicia, was as of 1918 part of Poland, making Gerta a Polish citizen (Rogoyska 19, 26). After her release from prison, with the Polish passport and
money from her bourgeoisie German friends from Stuttgart, Gerta left for Paris. It was in Paris in 1934 that Gerta met Endre Erno Friedmann, and soon the two of them would adapt their professional names of Gerda Taro and Robert Capa. Like Gerta, Endre was Jewish, originally from Hungary, who prior to coming to Paris, had lived in Berlin where he apprenticed as a photographer. The two fell in love and soon began working together, after Endre taught her how to develop photographs. With anti-Semitism on the rise in France, they decided to change their names and create new identities for themselves, not only to help their photographic endeavor but to evade persecution. Gerta changed her name to Gerda Taro, most likely with the American actress Gerda Garbo in mind. While Endre, in keeping with the theme of American film, simply dropped a letter from Frank Capra’s name, the American film director, and became Robert Capa. Because Gerda was fluent in French and had the look, which even thought she was poor, carried the air of class sophistication, they were able to sell Capa’s photographs to various photo agencies, like Alliance Photo. Although with changing her name as will leaving Germany, Taro abandoned the life of privilege, her class education provided her with a set of resources like knowledge of languages, which included German, French, and English, stylish clothing, as well as an air of feminine grace and confidence, without which the career of Robert Capa would not have proceeded as it did.

The arrival of the Mexican Suitcase containing rolls of film taken by Gerda Taro, Robert Capa, and David Chim during the Spanish Civil War, at the ICP in 2007, and publication of her biography in German and French by Imre Schaber in 2006, marked the beginning of renewed efforts to recover Taro and her photographs. While valuable, works of fiction like Susana Fortes’ Waiting for Robert Capa (2011) and Francisco Maspero’s Out of the Shadows: A Life of Gerda Taro (2009), and biography like Jane Rogoyska’s Gerda Taro: Inventing Capa (2013) repeat or
reimagine the story of Gerta Pohorylle/Gerda Taro rather than present a more sustained and critical study of her photographs. Granted this has much to do with the scarce amount of material on Taro much of which is embedded in the Capa file, the joint byline of CAPA ET TARO as well as Capa himself. After Taro’s death in Spain the press ran several stories on Taro in spreads that featured her photographs and bestowed on her the title of first woman photographer killed in Spain. But there were several details in these articles which were not only untrue but cast Taro and her work into obscurity. For one the Communist Party claimed her as a member, which suggested that the photographs Taro took were in service to the party propaganda. Then there was Capa’s claim that Taro was his wife, which on the one hand ensured that her work was preserved, but on the other, contributed to her photographs being second to his, the more famous one of the two. Since majority of Taro’s published photographs were credited either to Capa or attributed with their joint byline and because the two of them often worked closely together and shared equipment, it was assumed that with the exception of Taro’s action shots from Brunete, all the photographs in the Capa file which fit the category of woman’s angle on war (i.e. women and children) were taken by Taro. Thus just like Gellhorn, the relationship with a fellow artist and gendered genre contributed to Taro’s work meriting less critical attention.

What further buried Taro within the Capa photo file, was the publication of Death in a Making (1938) (DITM), a book of photographs from Spain by both photographers. Capa, who conceived of the project, is identified as the author, and the photographs included therein are attributed to “Robert Capa and Gerda Taro”. The story of their work is Spain is retold by Jay Allen, a Chicago Tribune reporter who met Capa in March of 1937. In the introduction, Allen repeats untruths he has heard from Capa, like the idea that he and Taro reached Paris with a couple of franks between them which implies they met before then (3). And Allen admits that he
did not get to know Taro well as when he met her briefly in early July 1937, as she had “become legend” to him based on what others have told him. Allen continues with the following sadly prophetic statement: “I may be wrong but I feel that Gerda Taro, already legend in that last of the world capitals, Madrid, will grow. Much will be written and much more unwritten until later” (3). He was wrong.

Much like in life, after her death Taro’s photos in this book are presented as part of the CAPA &TARO label, privileging Capa. Moreover, Capa’s dedication in the book, which reads “For Gerda Taro, who spent one year at the Spanish front, and who stayed on” does not recognize Taro as a war photographer, and suggests, to borrow Hemingway’s phrase, that Taro was a “war tourist”. This is also what the choice of photograph of Taro included on the dedication page suggests. The photo of Taro, not in Spain, but one taken by Capa in Paris on May 1, 1937, in which she is dressed in a hat with a scarf around her neck buying lilies of the valley (Fig.4). In the text and captions, Capa employs the first person plural pronoun-- “We reached Barcelona on August 5”; “we met peasants streaming in to join the defense of their country”; “we reached Madrid” -- which suggests his and Taro’s shared exile and homelessness (6,8,18). But this written record created by Capa in DITM once again links Taro to Capa in Spain, even though in spring and summer of 1937 she was there without Capa taking pictures. Consequently, DITM relegates Taro to status of Mrs. Capa rather than a photographer committed to documenting struggle.

Most scholars agree that Capa and Taro’s relationship, because they had so much in common-- their politics and exile status-- had a more of a partnership quality. Taro’s focus, as Schaber points out, on people transforming into collectivity, as individual faces and gestures symbolic of everyone’s war experience, speaks to Taro’s understanding of events in Spain,
which were informed by her own experience as a child in Germany and young adult in Paris.
And I would add here, that Taro’s emergence as a photographer with an intuitive perspective was informed by her middle-class background, her later position as an object of persecution and the object in the camera’s eye. One example of Taro’s ability to embody the struggle of others is her standing in for the prostitute for the cover story in 1936 Regards “The Tragic Fate of Fallen Woman”. The empty gaze of Taro’s large eyes, the pronounced lines of the forehead and handkerchief balled up in hand propping up her chin, is a haunting and powerful image.

Because Taro understood not only how to photograph people but also how to be photographed since she stepped in several times like in the instance of “the Fallen Woman” when Capa needed a model, her photographs reveal she was successful in establishing visual rapport with people. The photographs of the militia women training in Barcelona that Taro took during her first trip to Spain document the early stage of the Spanish Civil war, when women were being recruited and trained for combat. Many of the compositions seen in the photographs, which were featured in August 1936 speared in Vu, can also be seen in photographs Taro took of the men at the front in the course of her year in Spain (Fig. 8).
Fig. 8. Gerda Taro’s photographs of women in Barcelona 1936 featured in Special Edition of *Vu* August 29, 1936. Gerda Taro, copyright International Center of Photography.

The group of militiawomen receiving instructions in firing rifles, the three militia women standing with their arms around each other who appear like Amazons due to the shot having been taken from below and the two militiawomen reading orders reflect instances of initiation of women into the routines of military. As these are some of the earliest war photographs Taro took in Spain, how appropriate that she documented the making of the militiawomen. Their flattering monos, short hair and smiling faces suggest that the women want to retain their femininity yet their sartorial choices are practical. The pants do not restrict movement but are flattering and
synched at the waist. Hats are not bourgeoisie markers and hair worn short or curled tightly is not just a nod to the new woman. These are all part of a uniform and an interpretation of gender in war. Photographing these women was most likely what gave Taro the idea to don a mono herself.

The photograph of a girl holding a gun, the one below the group of women with guns and just opposite the heading “When Women Intervene-Portraits of Miliawomen in Barcelona” is reminiscent of Alfred Kantorowicz’s description of Taro, mentioned in this chapter previously, carrying a dainty revolver on her person. Is it possible that Kantorowicz had seen this photograph taken by Taro and in his mind the two became interchangeable? Similar was the case of Capa’s “Falling Soldier” which became synonymous with the photographer himself, the best war photographer who caught the instance of death with his camera. But the militarist who instead of a uniform, wears a white rolled-up shirt and pants, which are too big for him, held up by a belt and suspenders, appears weak in comparison to Gerda Taro’s now iconic figure of militiawoman practicing shooting. She is wearing wide-legged pants, which afford her comfort to bend down and kneel, and also, if she were to stand up, could be easily mistaken for an ankle-length skirt. On her feet are kitten-heeled, laced shoes, markedly feminine and not exactly suitable for gun training maneuvers on the beach. She appears confident, holding the gun in just one hand as she leans forward, resting her upper body on her bent knee, to align her eye with the target marker of the gun, poised to take a shot. Capa’s soldier arrested in his descent down a hill by a bullet, his bent knees and his upper body flung backwards, lets the as wooden handled rifle slip from his outstretched hand at the moment of the bullet’s impact. While equally powerful, Capa’s photograph of death and Taro’s of a new perspective on war challenge us to reconsider the preconceived notions about the category of war photography and its inherent scripted-ness.
In the photographs of civilians, Taro’s subjects are not caught by surprise or intruded upon in moments of grief or despair. The ability to assume the function of the photographer, as well as bridge the distance between herself and those she photographed is reflected in the cover photo of Regards issue from June 10, 1937 (Fig. 9).

Fig. 9. Gerda Taro’s photograph on cover of Regards June 10, 1937. Gerda Taro, copyright International Center of Photography.

The photograph was taken in Valencia the day after the city was bombed. The people in the photo are most likely relatives of the bombing’s victims who are waiting outside the hospital. The vertical lines of the metal fence emphasize the hostage – like situation of the civilians, young and old – in Spain. The men, who stand behind the women, appear more animated, looking to the side or with their mouths open caught in mid-sentence. Yet women, who are in the first row, right behind the fence, appear calm and determined; one of them meets the camera’s eye and her look communicates her disbelief spelled out in the caption: “Guernica! Almeria! Et
demain?” Each of these town have been bombed and the people have become refugees; if tomorrow more towns are bombed, those in republican Spain who survive will be sent into exile.

Fig. 10. From Martha Gellhorn Collection with the following caption written on the verso: “This is a refugee, trying to lift her bundle onto a truck, trying to get everything she owns into a truck that will take her away out of Madrid”

Just as Taro was able to empathize with the people she photographed in Spain as both were exiles, Gellhorn understood the longing of those exiled in Spain for the security of citizenship that a passport offered. Although both women were in Spain in April 1937, they did not meet. On her first trip to Spain, Gellhorn stayed at the Hotel Florida during her time in Madrid, from March 27, 1937 until early May. According to some scholars, Taro too was at the Hotel Florida where she and Capa allegedly stayed in April of 1937. Hemingway who was also
there met both photographers, and while he immediately took to Capa, according to Ted Allan, Taro to the famed writer seemed like a “femme fatale.” Yet even though Gellhorn and Taro did not meet, their being in Spain and documenting the lives of people who like them chose exile over oppression, and citizens who preferred life as refugees rather than exiles, was a demonstration of their standing in solidarity. As women who did not belong to any political party and came from a privileged background, Gellhorn and Taro’s commitment in Spain continues to be challenged to this day. Setting the record straight, which current research by literature, visual culture and feminist scholars, who continue to unearth documents and ephemera buried in the archives are working towards, is a real possibility and what remains to be seen is how these renegade narratives will reorient where we stand when we look back on the decade.
Chapter 2

The Class Informant in Virginia Cowles’ *Looking for Trouble* and Gamel Woolsey’s *Malaga Burning: An American Woman’s Eyewitness Account of the Spanish Civil War*

Among Virginia Cowles’s papers at the Imperial War Museum (IWM) in London, a draft of an article simply labeled “Rue 10 Lincoln Paris VIII” begins with a description of an attractive blond woman with “silver fox flung over the back of her chair” sitting at a table of the Gran Via restaurant in Madrid with a young Spanish army officer (1)\textsuperscript{54}. The Gran Via, which catered to “government officials, army officers, prostitutes and foreign press,” was considered “privileged one”(1). Virginia Cowles, who sits with the members of the press, is not sure what to make of the woman who continuously refills the officer’s wine glass. Until she realizes the woman is a “stool pigeon” when the following “drama” unfolds:

As the officer lifted the glass to his lips, [the stool pigeon] turned and gave a quick nod across the room to a man in a brown suit whom I knew to be a member of the secret police. He slipped from his chair, came forward and spoke to the officer. The latter protested but the man motioned to a guard standing near the door and a minute later the officer was ushered from the room. The officer was a “fascist suspect” and as for the blonde, her affiliations were left in little doubt, …she followed the police inspector back to his table.

The setting and the intrigue portrayed by Cowles would make for a successful script for a spy film. And maybe that is why Cowles omitted this incident from the Republican Spain section in her book, *Looking For Trouble* (1941) (LFT). When in the spring of 1937, Cowles arrived in

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\textsuperscript{54} Uncatalogued Paper of Virginia Cowles. Imperial War Museum, London.
Madrid she quickly realized that everyone was suspicious of everyone else, and her polished appearance prompted disdainful glances reserved for Franco supporters to be shot her way.

On May 2, 1938, the *Evening Standard* announced that Virginia Cowles, soon to be published author, has gone back to Spain. “Woman Goes Back to the War” written by Randolph Churchill emphasized Virginia Cowles being upper-middle class, single and with a serious case of wanderlust:

The daughter of a well-known New York doctor, Miss Cowles set sail three years ago from New York in search of adventure. She first went round the world and wrote a book about her experiences which will be published next month. Bored with globe-trotting, she decided to become a war correspondent. She visited both sides in Spain and her articles have been published in serious papers in England and America⁵⁵.

The last detail of this biographical portrait by Churchill shows that Cowles’ class privilege enable her to do as she pleases and nothing is impossible, even becoming a war correspondent if she so desires. In closing, Churchill adds the following which reads like a matrimonial advertisement:

Miss Cowles is not beautiful, but she is intelligent and attractive. Being an American, she understands clothes and knows how to make the best of herself. When she is tired of looking at wars, she will make someone an excellent wife⁵⁶.

In the photograph, which accompanied this piece in the *Evening Standard*, smiling Cowles wears a small cap, and a fur which recalls that of the stool pigeon from the draft of her article. It is

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⁵⁵ Uncatalogued papers of Virginia Cowles, Imperial War Museum, London.

⁵⁶ In this piece from the *Evening Standard*, R. Churchill also states: “Before she left she had tea with me. She tells me that when she gets back from Spain she plans to write a novel.” There are no materials or any mention among Cowles’s papers at the Imperial War Museum to indicated that she followed through with the intention of writing a novel.
possible Randolph Churchill’s facetious portrayal of his friend Virginia Cowles was a response to her forthcoming book. In *Men Are So Friendly* (1938) Cowles, under the pseudonym Nancy Swift and guise of a humorous travelogue, pokes fun at wealthy men of her class like Randolph Churchill. But it is also very likely that he was keeping up her cover as an American society girl with a knack for fashion, who was in fact a special correspondent and whose October 17, 1937 article exposed the belligerent support of Nationalist Spain by German and Italian forces\(^{57}\). The article was cited by Mr. Lloyd George in the House of Commons, who having met her afterwards was surprised to learn that “the authority he had quoted was an American girl of 27” \(^{58}\).

Although for Virginia Cowles, like for Martha Gellhorn and Josephine Herbst, the Spanish Civil War was the first war she reported, when she arrived in Spain it was on a freelance assignment with a weekly paper, Hearst’s New *York Journal and American*, where she had been a regular contributor to the Sunday March of Events section since 1933. In 1935, Cowles reported on the raise of fascism in Italy where she interviewed Mussolini and his Air Marshal, Italo Balbo, stationed in Libya. By the time Cowles left Spain her articles were appearing in “serious papers”, as Randolph Churchill pointed out, both weekly and daily in United States and England, which included *Sunday Times, New York Sunday Times, Daily Telegraph* and the *Evening Standard*. She went on to cover World War II fitted with a telegram from General

\(^{57}\) Cowles’ article, “Realities of War in Spain- Military Odds on Franco-Valencia’s Army Muddle,” to which R. Churchill is referring here was published in *The Sunday Times* on October 17, 1937. Uncatalogued Papers of Virginia Cowles, Imperial War Museum, London.

\(^{58}\) In *Looking for Trouble*, Cowles recounts being received at a lunch by Lloyd George, who when he referred to her Spanish article in his speech in the House of Commons believed its author to be a man, with “with surprise which almost bordered on resentment” releasing the source he quoted “was just a green young woman”(113). But by the end of the lunch he “seemed to have forgiven [her]…not being a general” and before she left gave her a “jar of honey and a dozen of apples” from his farm (Cowles 114).
Eisenhower that read “Miss Cowles could go where she liked and see whomever she liked in the sector under [his] command and should receive all possible assistance”.  

By 1941, Cowles republished her war articles in *Looking for Trouble* (1941), and continued to research and write books on subjects of government, politics and historical biographies. Considering all of the above, it is rather surprising that Cowles, who covered both sides of the Spanish Civil War, and was very likely the only woman correspondents to do so, and her war writings received the least critical attention of the women correspondents discussed in this and other chapters.

What correspondents who met her in Spain recall most vividly and almost every book on Spanish Civil war and journalism scholarship does not fail to mention, is that Virginia Cowles when to Spain in high heels. While Gellhorn’s “green chiffon scarf” has been equated with the image of American celebrity, Cowles’ high heels have become her trademark as an American socialite with friends in high places. In WSSD Paul Preston makes a polite mention of Cowles and compares her to Lauren Bacall(168). Ernest Hemingway, regarded her as an uninformed war tourist in Spain who thought the Internationale was “a pretty song”. Many critics who had reviewed the 2011 edition of *Looking for Trouble* found Cowles’ look incommensurate with objective reporting. And finally, Robert Stradling, in *Your Children Will Be Next*, denounces Cowles, along with Herbert Matthews and Ernest Hemingway, as a biased journalist who wrote in service of the “‘capitalist press’”(121).

In this chapter I will consider Virginia Cowles’ LFT, specifically the first two sections in which she recounts her visits to both the Republican and Nationalist side of the Spanish Civil War.

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59 According to a February 20, 1991 note written by Cowles’ husband, Aidan Crawley, which is among Virginia Cowles’ papers at the IWM, the telegraph from Eisenhower had been lost but this is the message it communicated.

60 The comment about the Internationale made by Hemingway was mentioned by Carlos Garcia Santa Cecilia in his presentation at the January 31, 2011 celebration of the publication of Spanish translation of Cowles’ *Looking for Trouble*. 

War, as an example of documentary of struggle from the perspective of a class informant. This concept derives in part from transnational feminist discourse’s “native informant” whose ‘racialized’ look and knowledge of a first world language qualify her as interpreter of the Other in terms of western values. And also in part from Virginia Woolf’s TG argument that “daughters of educated men” should work from within to critique their own class and expose priceless cost of privilege (126). As such, the class informant is someone who can successfully pass for a member of a certain class and does so with the explicit purpose of critiquing it from the position of an insider. But while such position informs objectivity, on the one hand it exposes the class informant to charges of being a class traitor and on the other, failing to reject one’s own class status. Though Virginia Cowles was branded as a wealthy American socialite, she was in fact poor and was raised by a single mother without any financial support from her father. Yet as a daughter of a prominent New York psychologist and neurologist, Dr. Edward S. Cowles, and a woman who came from a respected Boston family, the Jaquiths, Virginia Cowles had access to upper class contacts and resources. By employing her class privilege, Cowles secured access to high ranking officials and places where a press pass would not allow her entry. The fact that she refused to write her articles which unquestionably placed the Republicans on the side of truth and the Nationalists on the side of revolt and violence, she was viewed with suspicion and was considered dangerous enough to warrant threats of imprisonment in Spain.

I begin this chapter by tracing the emergence of Cowles’s class consciousness and pursuit of a career in journalism, which establish her class informant perspective. Then I analyze how the class informant perspective in the Spanish Civil War writings in LFT qualifies the text as a

61 The term ‘class informant’ is one which I modeled on ‘native informant’ used by She-Mei Shih in her article “Towards an Ethics of Transnational Encounter, or “When” Does a “Chinese” Woman Become a “Feminist”? which appeared in Differences 13.2 (2002): 90-126.
documentary of struggle which translates the Spanish Republican cause to the wealthy and privileged. Also I consider her early and probably the only work of fiction, *Men Are So Friendly* (1938), as well as the 1967 study, *1913: An End and a Beginning*, dealing with international atmosphere in 1913 as depicted by the press, to show Cowles’ interest in experimenting with narrative genres to compose documentary texts. Cowles’ papers, housed at the Imperial War Museum in London, because they are scant suggest that she did not keep records as a precaution and possibly to retain control of her image. To offer another example of a text composed in the voice of a class informant, in this chapter I also discuss Gamel Woolsey’s *Malaga Burning* (1939), an account of one of the earliest bombardments by Nationalists of civilian population during the Spanish Civil War, which has been overshadowed by later, larger scale bombings population in Spain like April 26, 1937 destruction of Guernica. Interestingly enough, Cowles obtained admission of responsibility for the bombing of Guernica from a Nationalist soldier as early as October of 1937, which was not officially recognized until 1970s. Because like Cowles, Gamel Woolsey came from a wealthy family, her account of the destruction of Malaga as she experienced it while living in a house with hired help, had been dismissed for years as an instance of a Southern romance set in Spain. But I argue that Woolsey’s account of the period from July through October of 1936, is too a documentary of struggle from the perspective of a class informant which records the cross-section class response to the outbreak of war and violence set against the backdrop of Malaga burning as a result of Nationalist bombardment.

The position of the class informant is problematic due to its proximity to the upper class and need to be objective about what she sees as well as critical of where she stands. In “Documentary,” Storm Jameson challenges the notion that socially responsive literature of the period should only concern itself with the working-class subject. “The process of change, of
decay, of growth,” Jameson points out, “is taking place everywhere all the time; it does not matter where you open up the social body if you know what you are looking at” (10). Cowles and Woolsey, unlike majority of correspondents and writers, did not come to Spain with fully formulated opinions about the two sides. They remained in their class position, which gave them unobstructed view of those in power on both sides of the Spanish cause. The fact that Cowles and Woolsey published their Spanish Civil War writings immediately after the war, 1941 and 1939 respectively, attests to their recognizing the repercussions of the “malevolent neutrality” of European powers and the United States on future international crisis.\footnote{In *Malevolent Neutrality* Douglas Little argues it was not appeasement that motivated U.S. and England’s non-intervention stance towards Spain in the civil war of 1936-39, but belief Soviet influence was more dangerous than fascism and desire to retain foreign investors, most clearly example of which was the Rio Tinto mining company. Virginia Cowles’ January 18, 1938 *Daily Telegraph* article “How Franco Gains Credits Aboard: Sterling from Rio Tinto Company Equal to Value of Exports- Main Method For Financing War” brought this issue to light.}

**American Society Girl in Madrid**

In a photograph taken in Madrid in April of 1937, and attributed to Joan Worthington, Virginia Cowles is not hard to miss as she is the best dressed one of all the people there (see figure 11). Excluding the three soldiers, Liston Oaks, a liberal journalist in a long coat and beret, and Kajsa Rothman, a Swedish interpreter in a leather jacket, look like characters in a spy movie. Hemingway, standing right behind Oaks, curiously sans mustache and wearing a light coat is almost unrecognizable.
It seems to be a cold day as most have their hands in their pockets. Although Cowles too wears a beret, it sits stylishly on the side of her head. She is not only appropriately dress for the weather in a long coat and gloves on her hands, but as she holds what appears to be a bunch of papers in her hand. Unlike the others who are spectators, she is in fact working. Unfortunately the rubble strewn ground obstructs the view of her feet and if she is wearing her trademark high heels, they are not visible here.

In preparing for her trip to Spain, Cowles packed her typewriter, “three wool dresses and a fur jacket”- and as all sources do not fail to mention - a pair of high heel shoes\(^\text{63}\). Her friends in Paris told her it would be safer if she “dress[ed] shabbily” in Spain, otherwise she will be

\(^{63}\) Interestingly enough, in her description of Hemingway in Spain, Cowles notes that he wore “a pair of filthy brown trousers and a torn blue shirt” which he justified saying that was “all [he] brought with [him]”(LFT 35). But Constancia de la Mora, in her memoir, *In Place of Splendor: An Autobiography of a Spanish Woman*, recalls Hemingway visiting the censors’ office in Valencia always neatly dressed and making all the young secretaries swoon.
“bumped off” in the streets; some suggested men’s clothes; others rags and tatters” (LFT 8). No one advised her to bring food or cigarettes, which Cowles realized upon her entry into Madrid were in very short supply. Martha Gellhorn in her notes from Spain, mentioned on April 8, 1937 that Virginia Cowles came to “Madrid in only high-heeled slippers”64. Josephine Herbst confirms this writing that in Spain Cowles “[wore] tiny black shoes with incredibly high heels. I often wondered how she navigated over the rubble from the Florida to the Gran Via” and “heavy gold bracelets on her slender wrists “(SBSOS 169-170). These observations have been read by Paul Preston and Carlos Garcia Santa Cecilia, as “catty” and “cruel and envious.” But, in fact Cowles herself in the only ‘journal’ entry of hers from Spain that survives, dated April 11, 1937, mentioned that because her “shoe hurt” she set caution aside and “walked down the Gran Via, which was a very foolish thing to do as the shells were whistling over every few seconds”(LFT 37)65.

While Cowles’ choice of footwear was not particularly suited for war, it was what she wore every day and what allowed her to pass for a member of the upper class. She wore high heels to meet with Mussolini in 1935, mentioning in her article that they “click[ed] appallingly on the marble floor” as she was led into the Duce’s office(E-3). And she wore heels to inspect the first line trench in Morata, which she described in her second article from Republican Spain. But the sensational aspect of this article was not her footwear, but her being detained by the Russian General of Hungarian birth, General Gal, to whom she constituted an ideological challenge. For Gal, Cowles was the embodiment of bourgeois privilege and he intended to convert her to Communism. This key incident to which I will return to later on in this chapter,

64 Martha Gellhorn Collection Howard Gotlieb Archival and Research Center, Boston University, Boston.
65 Dated April 11, 1937, part of this entry Cowles included in LFT and it was reproduced in its entirety in the 2011 Spanish translation of LFT.
challenges the narrative purported by most correspondents and writers who vigorously supported
the Republican cause and turned a blind eye to the fascist-like presence and practices of
Communist Soviet agents in Spain.

The Cowles File

To date there has been no critical scholarship of Cowles journalism published and no
biography. The chapter on the Spanish Civil War in Anne Sebba’s Battling for the News: The
Rise of the Woman Reporter is the most substantial source of information on Virginia Cowles,
and is based on interviews with Cowles’ daughter, Harriet Crawley, and Martha Gellhorn. After WWII Virginia Cowles married Aidan Crawley, a journalist, and fighter pilot who spent
four years in German work camp and in 1945 was elected to the Parliament, and made England
her permanent home (Crawley 11). Today, Imperial War Museum (IWM) in London is where
Virginia Cowles’ papers are held. Unlike Gellhorn and Herbst’s materials and papers pertaining
to the Spanish Civil War which fill several folders in their respective collections, Cowles’ papers
fit into just one box the content of which consists of a scrapbook with her articles, drafts of
Spanish Civil War articles, two photographs and few letters. Howard B. Gotlieb wrote to Cowles
on July 20, 1964 expressing interest in her papers in hopes of establishing a Virginia Cowles
Collection. If Cowles had agreed, her papers would today be housed alongside those of Martha
Gellhorn, at the Howard B. Gotlieb Archival and Research Center at Boston University. There is
no response letter to Gotlieb among Cowles’ papers at the IWM. Taking into consideration
Anne Sebba’s point that for safety reasons Cowles wrote her articles on Spain in Paris and

66 Gellhorn and Cowles met in Spain, and continued to meet in various places of conflict- Czechoslovakia and
Finland-and WWII. In 1946, together they wrote a play Love Goes to the Press which was favorably received in
London but was not appreciated by American audiences.
67 According her daughter, Harriet Crawley, Virginia Cowles was a very private person. During her time in Spain
she neither kept a diary nor wrote letters. It was only after her death in September of 1983, that Harriet found her
mother’s Spanish Civil War articles and decided to donate them to the IWM.
London, it is possible that she did not keep any notes. And if she did, it is very possible that she destroyed them, not wanting them come back to haunt her especially once her husband became a political figure. It is a well-known fact that just as the secret police in Spain kept files on everyone, so did the FBI. As Cowles continued to research and write, having left the post of foreign correspondent after WWII, another explanation for why she did not want to deposit her papers in the archive is that she was still actively pursuing documentary work until her death.

According to Harriet Crawley, when Cowles’ LFT was first published in June 1941, “it was an instant bestseller” with “four re-prints that year and another four in 1942. After that nothing: there were no more re-prints because there was no more paper”(1,10). The September 8, 1941 Best Sellers list from the New York Times confirms Crawley’s claims. Katherine Woods of The New York Times, her August 1941 review of LFT, “Europe on the Verge and After”, praised Cowles for her “freshness and courage, thoroughness and enterprise, the poised and clear-eyed skill of an amazingly brilliant reporter” she was when she arrived in Spain, which were “far better than experience.” Charles Poore in August 8, 1941 Books of the Times for New York Times, also praised Cowles for writing with “brio, clarity and wit” and notes that although at times LFT is crowded with “Impressive Names” it is very likely that “if she had snobbishly refused to meet these clay-footed celebrities, she’d never have got their stories.” These initial reviews all praise Cowles’ industriousness and her reporting skills, and make no allusions that her success was derived from her being an “American Socialite.”

Although the 2010 Faber Finds edition of Virginia Cowles’ LFT was intended to resurrect Cowles from omission in ranks of war reporters, the reception it received from reviews suggests Cowles’ high heels stuck in contemporary critics’ craw as much if not more than they

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did some of her contemporaries in Spain. Christopher Hudson of *Daily Mail* was not too impressed with Cowles’ “gift for simplifying…politics,” and *The Telegraph*’s Charles Moore concluded Cowles “had the most marvelous time, and she does not solemnly pretend otherwise.” Only Caroline Moorehead, the author of Martha Gellhorn’s biography, offered a more genuine praise for LFT, stating that it “is a reminder of how excellent a reporter” Cowles was. Much better reception was given to the 2011, Spanish translation of Cowles’ Spanish Civil War portion of LFT, *Desde las trincheras: Virginia Cowles, una corresponsal americana en la Guerra Civil española*, published by Siddhart Mehat Ediciones and with a preface by her daughter, Harriet Crawley, to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Cowles’ birth. In honor of its publication, on January 31, the International Institute in Madrid hosted an event with presentations by D. Diego Hidalgo, President of FRIDE, A European Think Tank for Global Action, Carlos Garcia Santa Cecilia, journalist, and Harriet Crawley.

The line of argument adapted by Harriet Crawley, Anne Sebba, and Carlos Garcia Santa Cecilia, who are committed to preservation and recovery of Cowles’ work, is that curiosity and ability to make friends with influential people enabled Cowles to gain entry first into Republican and then Nationalist Spain. As Carlos Garcia Santa Cecilia argues, the portrayal of Cowles as “a privileged American woman” resulted from “the cruel and envious description written [of Cowles] by…Josephine Herbst” and accusation of her “being [a] naïve American reporter” by Hemingway (1)\(^{69}\). Yet Garcia Santa Cecilia’s charge against Herbst is unfounded. As in fact Herbst’s description of Cowles in Spain compliments her good looks “[Cowles] is young and pretty, dressed in black,” and Herbst made no comments, good or bad, about Cowles’ journalism (SBSOS 170). Though he does not cite the source, Garcia Santa Cecilia notes that Cowles

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\(^{69}\) From transcript of Cecilia’s presentation made on January 31, 2011 at the International Institute in Madrid to celebrate the Spanish translation of sections on Spain from Cowles’ LFT.
responded to Hemingway’s charges of her being a “naïve American reporter”, but she never
denied or disputed being portrayed as a “privileged American woman” (1). This was due, I
would argue, to the fact that that was the image of her created in Hearst newspapers. And Cowles
cultivated it because it facilitated her going places in Spain which her affiliation with Hearst did
not afford.

**Another Wealthy American Woman in Spain**

Although Gamel Woolsey was not a journalist, but a poet and aspiring writer who came
to Spain with her husband Gerald Brenan in 1935, her account, *Malaga Burning: An American
Woman’s Eyewitness Account of the Spanish Civil War*, of the bombing of Malaga in July 1936,
as well as her home in a village nearby is probably one of the first documents of Nationalists’
indiscriminate bombings of civilians. As Zalin Grant, who wrote the introduction to the 1998
dition, writes, it is “simply one of the best- though least known-books on that conflict,
distinguished not for its ‘facts’ but for an emotional truth found at a much deeper level” (9).
Although first published in 1939 under the title of *Death’s Other Kingdom*, the book was
overshadowed by events leading up to the outbreak of World War II. In 1971, Zalin Grant, a
journalist and writer moved next door to Brenan in the village of Alhaurín el Grande, where
Woolsey lived in those early months of the Spanish Civil War, and the two men became friends.
After Woolsey death in 1968, Brenan had been trying unsuccessfully to reissue *Death’s Other
Kingdom*. After the two men bonded over their war experiences, and because Grant was from
South Carolina, like Woolsey, Brenan asked him for help in reissuing Gamel’s Spanish Civil
War book.

In 1998, Grant published the book under the title *Malaga Burning: An American
Woman’s Eyewitness Account of the Spanish Civil War* (MB), and wrote an introduction. In it,
Grant notes that the “condescending foreword” by John Cowper Powys, brother of Llewelyn Powys with whom Woolsey had an affair before she married Brenan, contributed significantly to the book being ignored by reviewers in 1939. As Emma Garman suggests John C. Powys “misrepresented” Gamel’s “subtle meditation on the psychological impact of war as ‘a tender and wistful threnody over ‘Old Spain' by a daughter of the 'Old South’.” But Grant, in qualifying Gamel’s account in MB as “emotional truth”, because it does not include specific dates or analysis of the warring factions in Spain, focuses on the experience of the Spanish people “executed as if she were using a carpenter’s level” to offer a “gaze into the depth of Spanish nature,” to a degree reiterates Powys’ claim of Woolsey’s class bias (11, 13). While Woolsey’s classed tinted gaze via which readers see her home and the hired help cannot be denied, I consider this to be essential to the author’s framing of her witness believing naively that her privilege comes with immunity to violence. Yet as her home becomes a target of Nationalist bombs and searches by local forces organized to discover and eliminate pro-Franco sympathizers, Woolsey observes that everyone exhibits a predisposition for violence unleashed by the flames that engulf Malaga.

**Becoming Class Informant**

In the four years prior to her arrival in Spain, Cowles’ articles had appeared not only in March of Events but also in *Collier’s, Boston Post and Harper’s Bazaar* and mainly dealt with lives of Boston society, cultural observations from her travels to the Far East in 1934, and meeting with Mussolini in 1935, just after her invaded Abyssinia. But her trip to Spain, similar to that of Martha Gellhorn and Josephine Herbst, was not a result of an assignment. Recalling the circumstances of her departure for Spain, Cowles write:
When the war broke out in Spain, I saw an opportunity for more vigorous reporting; I thought it would be interesting to cover both sides [of the Spanish Civil War] and write a series of articles contrasting the two. I persuaded Mr. T. V. Ranck of the Hearst newspapers that this was a good proposition and happily set off for Europe. I knew no one in Spain and hadn’t the least idea how one went about such an assignment. (LFT 8)

The fact that she “persuaded Mr. T.V. Ranck of the Hearst newspapers” that Spain would be a good story to report on, might have had something to do with the fact that Cowles had secured the interview with Mussolini through her own contacts. Ranck’s acceptance of her proposal to cover the war in Spain is particularly interesting as Hearst, according to both Paul Preston and Peter Wyden, was a conservative publisher and did not publish news from Republican Spain. It is possible that Cowles’ idea of covering both sides of the war was strategic knowing full well about Hearst’s political leanings.

Because her articles on Spain would appear in the March of Events, and in order not to alienate the audience to which this Sunday section of the paper was targeted, Cowles knew she had to employ the woman’s angle. While Elsie Robinson, with whom Cowles shared the March of Events page, dealt with the struggles of educated middle class youth and patriotism in her articles, Cowles in being billeted as “daughter of Dr. Edwin Spencer Cowles and New York Social Registerite” appeared as an example of the very group Robinson highlighted as particularly disadvantaged at the time. The Hearst paper’s editors called Cowles’ first article from Spain: “American Girl Says Life Goes on Placidly in Shell-Swept Madrid.”
It was published on June 27, 1937, alongside Elsie Robinson’s “Youth at ‘Dead-End’: What’s the Cure?” Cowles begins her article in a tone of the “American Girl”, noting the proximity between the “enemy batteries” and Madrid in terms of New York City landmarks and the surreal sight of “streets crowded with carefree people” which she would expect to find in any large U.S. city. In her articles as well as in LFT, to render the surreal of Spain familiar to her readers, Cowles makes use of terms relating to the movies as she describes scenes full of actors and extras waiting for the director to say “action.” And halfway into the article, there is a change of scene where Madrid becomes a “third line trench” and idling actors become animated at the sound of “a sharp hiss” and “they fling themselves flat on the ground” (4-M). But when they hear “a languid swish,” they know “they have time to run for cover” (4-M). She also astutely observes that in Madrid, women have done away with wearing hats and waiters do not wear suits to denote their breaking away from the upper class decorum. The fact that in the photograph, which accompanies this article, Cowles sports a hat, is not merely a publicity stunt of the Hearst editors. It was a conscious choice on Cowles’ part, as she was aware that in order to be taken seriously as a foreign correspondent from Spanish Civil War by her readers, she had to convincingly pass as the genuine article: wealthy upper-class woman.


At a January 31, 2011 event celebrating the Spanish publications of Virginia Cowles’ Spanish Civil War articles, Desde las trincheras: Virginia Cowles, una corresponsal americana en la Guerra Civil española, Carlos Garcia Santa Cecilia, a journalist, in his talk identifies March 30, 1937 as the day Cowles first arrived in Spain.
remained until the early fall of 1938, and then made a second trip to the Republican side, to Barcelona in February 1938. As Cowles confesses in the first chapter LFT, “Trip to War”

I had no qualifications as a war correspondent except curiosity. Although I had travelled in Europe and the Far East a good deal, and written a number of articles, mainly for the March of Events section of the Hearst newspapers, my adventures were of a peaceful nature. In fact, after a twelve months’ trip from London to Tokio[sic] in 1934, I had written an article for Harper’s Bazaar which soon dated sadly. It was called: “The Safe, Safe World.” (7-8).

Referring to her reporting prior to Spain as “adventures” Cowles, like Gellhorn in her introduction to TFOW, places herself outside the category of news correspondents. At the same time, she is careful to point out to that she had journalistic experience writing, not reporting, international stories for March of Events, weekly Sunday section in the Hearst newspapers, which were of “peaceful nature.” By including these details about her journalistic work, Cowles alerts the reader to the gendered and classed persona of a female reporter who writes for a weekly column. Just as all her pre-Spain March of Events articles were human interest stories about the lives and styles of the wealthy written by a “daughter of a doctor and Social Registrate”, Cowles had to adapt that persona and genre of news story to her reportage from Spain.

While initially Cowles’ plan to cover both sides of the Spanish Civil war may strike the reader as a lofty and nearly impossible, characteristic of someone with social status and financial means, this was not exactly the case. Though by name Virginia Cowles was linked to the upper-middle class, as Harriet Crawley reveals, Cowles grew up poor. Virginia Cowles’ father,

72 All citation from Cowles’ Looking for Trouble come from the 2010 Faber Finds edition of the text.
Dr. Edward Spencer Cowles, a Harvard educated psychiatrist and neurologist, and her nineteen year old mother, Florence Wolcott Jaquith, who came from a prominent Bostonian family, eloped in 1906. Their divorce in 1910, the year Virginia was born, became the talk of Boston society. Florence supported herself and her two daughters, Mary and Virginia, by working as a society editor of the *Boston Advertiser* and later *Boston Breeze*. Though she sued Dr. Cowles for alimony, he did not pay it. Virginia and Mary attended the Waltham School for Girls, where Virginia, as Harriet Crawley points out, “was voted not the pretties…nor the most accomplished, but the girl ‘most likely to succeed’” (3). In 1926, at the age of sixteen, Virginia Cowles left school and began selling advertising for *Harper’s Bazaar* and then advanced to writing photograph captions for the magazine (Crawley 4).

Having made enough money to buy a used car, Cowles drove across U.S. with some friends. Although she made the trip in 1926, unlike Gellhorn and Herbst who had done so in the 1930s and witnessed the impact of the Great Depression, the fact that she was only sixteen at the time and covered the expenses of the trip with the money she earned, attest to her independence and resourcefulness which were a combination of her upper-class background and working-class life. Like Gellhorn whose mother was a social activist, Cowles was, “determin[ed] to follow her own mother’s example,” despite a “childhood [that] was hard…poor” Cowles possessed a “fierce desire to make her mark in life,…and hold her head high…and not indulge in self-pity. She was a proud and determined woman, but with a strong streak of femininity” (Crawley 3). As Virginia Cowles came of age in the 1920s, she understood and knew how to employ her “strong

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73 *New York Times* obituary from January 13, 1932 “Mrs. Edward S. Cowles: Society Editor of Boston Breeze Is Dead in a Hospital”.

74 There is no record, according to Harriet Crawley, of what Virginia saw or what her impressions were of U.S. after her road trip. Also, there is nothing among Cowles’ papers at IWM related to this cross country road trip.
streak of femininity,” which in Spain consisted of wearing high heels and gold bracelets, in a way that afforded her agency and class authority.

The most curious portion of Virginia Cowles’ biography, and quite possibly one of the main reasons why she continues to be branded as a society girl first and reporter second, is her society debut in 1928. Since Cowles made her coming out debut in Boston, this rite of passage was most likely arranged for her with the help from her maternal grandparents. This event in Cowles’ life has been confirmed by Harriet Crawley, her daughter, and therefore, cannot be dismissed as a publicity stunt concocted by Hearst newspapers. Moreover, Cowles is mentioned in three *New York Times* announcements, between April 3 and Dec 17, 1933, as participant in a fashion show and theater event organized by Junior Group for the benefit of a hospital, nursery and a music school. Because her name afforded her access to the society circles of Boston and New York, it is not surprising that Cowles’ made her journalistic debut in *Collier’s* on September 16, 1933, with “Society Girl” which she co-wrote with Peggy LeBoutillier:

“Virginia Cowles made her debut in Boston in 1928-1929. A year later Peggy LeBoutillier came out in New York. They’re been through the approved mill-the right schools, the right parties, the right people. And here’s what they think of the formula.” Between September of 1933 and 1934, Cowles published thirteen articles in *Collier’s, Boston Post* and *Hearst’s March of Events*, about debutantes, their quest for a husband, divorces, women’s emancipation as detrimental to romance and men who expect to be entertained rather than be entertaining. These articles on the conundrums and practices of the Boston and New York society, attest to Cowles’ understanding

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that to grow as an observer and social critic of the upper class -- a member of which she was able to pass for -- she had to write within the confines of the image of “Daughter of Dr. Edward Spencer Cowles and New York Social Registrite, who made her debut in Boston in 1928-29”. That image would remain with her for the duration of her work for the Hearst newspapers, until July of 1937, captured in the photographs of Cowles -- her hair bobbed, at times wearing a smart, small hat, and a modest smile-- which accompanied her articles.

The poverty, strikes and hunger of Americans struggling during the Great Depression, were the subject of most literature and journalism in the 1930s, and engaged writers in debates about the place of politics in their work. Proletarian literature and discourse which focused on the issues of “the other twenties”—strikes, unemployment and class conflict— carried on with focus on the struggle of the workers, or the more inclusive category of people, as Kenneth Burke argued at the American Writers’ Congress in 1935, into the 1930s and the Great Depression (Shulman 15). But Cowles did not engage with the subject of the “other thirties”, unlike Gellhorn and Herbst who commented on the impact of New Deal policies on the poor and working-class people. Instead Cowles retained her focus on the wealthy that the privation of the decade had not touch. Her articles are still valuable documents of the period especially in regards to her class informant perspective.

To illustrate how Cowles used her early journalistic career to forge her class informant perspective, a brief consideration of her 1934 article on divorce is worth pausing over. In her February 4 March of Events article, “Virginia Cowles Sees More Divorces as Depression Ends,”

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76 Only one article, which appeared on Dec. 3, 1933 in the Boston Post

“Boston Society Girl Reveals Innermost Secrets of the “Debutante’s Delight” acknowledges Cowles’ mother “Everybody in Boston knows Virginia Cowles. She is the daughter of the late Mrs. Jaquith Cowles, and Dr. Edward S. Cowles of New York, and made her debut in 1928.”
Cowles analyzes the married society woman whose only goal is to achieve “direct fame” and “not [be merely] a reflection” of her husband’s success. Such a woman, Cowles continues, “uses as much thought and energy as a writer, a business executive, or a statesman” to “secures a local, and often national fame, through the publicity of photographs, advertisements, fashion magazines, gossip columns,” but ultimately gets bored, blames her husband and opts for divorce. Cowles cautions that such misguided path to independence through marriage and divorce, results in society divorcees struggling to find work and support themselves. Is it possible this article reflects Cowles’ fears about fully cross over into the upper class sphere through marriage seeing as she had been presented to society over five years ago? Could this be seen as an expose on the lives of women of her class? It seems that this article is an instance of Cowles telling on the class she was born into and to a degree telling on herself. In other words, while Cowles’ name places her close enough to pass, her poverty and journalistic ambitions place her far away enough in terms of financial resources to fully participate.

In her January 21, 1934 article, “Young Women Have Killed Romance in Rush for Emancipation” Cowles wrote that first “came the automobile. And on the heels of the automobile, the World War. These two events joined forces in creating a new civilization for women. Women started going places and doing things; the automobile providing the means; the war the opportunity”.

Interestingly enough, on back of that very article by Cowles, photographs labeled “Uncensored War Pictures-American casualties in the Argonne, where our soldiers fell almost as thick…with their graves and those of Germans who fell fighting them” and “Sinking of German Zeppelin, bound for London air raid, off the coast” were published in New York.

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77 Is it possible that these images from the Spanish American War and WWI along with Mussolini’s invasion of Abyssinia in early October of 1935, prompted Cowles to arrange with Hearst for her first international story in Italy?
*American and the Journal.* It is possible that such images from the WWI prompted Cowles to begin thinking about transitioning into international journalism.

In the summer of 1934, Cowles set out with her sister, Mary, for a year-long trip to the Far East. In 1934 Cowles persuaded Hearst to consider publishing articles from her Far East trip on which she set out with her sister that summer. The arrangement was more of a free-lance one rather than an assignment, similar to the one Gellhorn negotiated with the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1931 offering to write articles from her U.S. cross country trip, as in both instances, the women reporters covered their own expenses. While Gellhorn secured complimentary train tickets from Missouri Pacific Railway in exchange for mentioning the railroad company in her articles, Virginia Cowles and her sister, Mary, used life insurance policy money they received after their mother’s death on January 12, 1932. By March of 1935, fourteen articles by Cowles appeared in March of Events on Burma, India, China, Japan and Philippines. Though many of Cowles’ articles, just like the ones she had been writing up until this point, focused on topics of romance and marriage, several like the ones from Burma and India addressed women’s roles and rights, and influence of Hollywood on women in China as well as their bossing of husbands.

She also wrote about kidnappings, piracy and spies in China and Japan. But to the editors and to readers of the March of Events section, she remained the “Daughter of Dr. Edward Spencer Cowles and New York Social Registerite, who made her debut in Boston in 1928-29” who was now “on a voyage around the world.” What did change was Cowles’ photograph from one of her wearing a small cap and a white collar, to a more serious one on December 9, 1934 in which

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Cowles is not smiling, and her serious expression is matched by her wearing a round collar with a thin ribbon tied in a bow.

Cowles used her experiences from the trip to the Far East to write a book, *Men Are So Friendly* (MASF) which she published in 1938 under the pseudonym Nancy Swift. The nameless narrator of MASF tells the reader at the outset of the book that she is “an Intellectual, who writes articles for the Hearst newspapers” unlike her travel companion, her sister Mary, whose sole objective is to track down an American Navy ship, and meet a husband (8). In the course of their journey, the narrator tries to make contacts and get audience with important government officials. But more often than not, she ends up in company of men who either are short on money or female company, sometimes both, yet always up for drinks and a party. Although MASF was only published after Cowles has gone to Spain, it coincided with her transitioning from “American socialite” who wrote for Hearst to foreign correspondent who wrote for serious papers. Cowles had already visited both Republican and Nationalist Spain and was a more frequent contributor to the *Sunday Times, The Telegraph, New York Times* and possibly the *Evening Standard*. The difference in Cowles’ and Hearts’ political perspective is reflected in the final scene of the book, where upon her return to the U.S. the narrator is invited to dinner at Mr. Hearst’s ranch and assumes “he’s so pleased with [her] articles he wants to offer [her] a fabulous job” but instead Mr. Hearst only tells her to “have some more lobster”(188).

In *The Times* review of MASF, Webb Miller called the book “Funnier than anything of its kinds since Gentlemen Prefer Blonds” while Maurice Richardson called the book a story of “Beautiful Dumb-Bells.” Lord Birkenhead, pronounced it to be an enjoyable read as did Beverly Nicholls, and complimented Cowles for “skat[ing] carefully over the thinnest ice”.  

80 A page from an unidentified paper with these four reviews of MASF can be found among Virginia Cowles papers at the IWM.
compliment must have been directed at Cowles’ critique of men in MASF, as the narrator does point out that much like women, men suffer from delusions of grandeur and possess a penchant for clothes. Miller’s comparison of MASF to Anita Loos’ 1925 *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is an accurate one as the general premise of the two is similar. But unlike Lorelei in Loos’ book, who is persuaded by a friend to share her story, the narrator in MASF takes to putting her adventures down on paper even though “no one cared to hear about our travels, in fact they seemed eager to escape them” (189). Clearly Virginia Cowles is the narrator who not only pokes fun of herself for falling short as journalist but then she is an “intellectual who writes for Hearts newspapers,” (1). In Paris, the narrator attends a meeting with the ambassador in the American Embassy but as she has “nothing to say to him” all she can ask him is “how he has managed through the riots in Paris” (11). Also, the fact that the narrator is a reporter for Hearst papers does not often open door to important offices. When she visits the Ministry office in Tokyo and asks for a visa to Manchuria, the chief of press “bangs his fists on the table” and asks “just what is Mr. Hearst’s Japanese policy?” the narrator this “[n]aturally ” is a “very difficult” question to “respond to” because “ I never read anything in the Hearst papers except the articles I write myself so I smiled and said, and what do you think?” (142). The narrator’s admission that she “never read[s] anything in the Hearst papers” other than her own articles is not merely an indication of her vanity and ignorance. What this seemingly inconsequential statement reveals is that the narrator, like Cowles, is very well aware that Hearst is a newspaper that focuses on sensational accounts and human interest stories, and its pro-Nationalist Spain policy is, it is not one shared by the narrator.

While such incidents, as the mocking title of the book aptly sums them up, reflect the sad state of patriarchal inefficiency, the narrator reveals that her perspective is tinged with class and
race stereotypes not uncommon, though not exclusive, to the wealthy. The narrator describes the servant and tour guide, Bill, whom she and her sister hire in India, as a “very black and very small” man “with a pair of bowed legs and a Ghandi loin cloth” whose “head was wrapped in a top-heavy white turban and from his ears swung thing gold loops” (30). When Bill buys himself a hat and suit, the women grow critical of him as they feel he spends more time putting on airs of an upper-class gentleman than working. On another occasion, when the two women are met by the chief of staff sent by the Maharaja, to the narrator he appears to be “a great black monster” who “seemed to appreciate all of my sister’s efforts, leering at her all through dinner” (60). During after dinner walk, when the chief of staff, “his black face shining in the moonlight”, “[gives]” them “a squeeze”, the very next morning the two women leave India (60-61). In contrast, when an oil field worker in Burma, Spike takes the narrator for a ride to a secluded area and begins making sexual advances, she puts out her cigarette on the passenger seat which causes a small fire and her molester runs out of the car (74).

At the conclusion of her tour of the Far East, Virginia Cowles wrote “A Safe, Safe World” for the March 1935 issue of Harper’s Bazaar, praising the ease with which she and her sister were able to book transport and accommodations and those who fear that the East is “a vast expanse of lawlessness, primitiveness, disorder” may rest easy as “the sun never sets on the British Empire. The British govern Ceylon, India, Burma, three-fourths of Malaya…the French control Indo-China, the Dutch the East Indies, America the Philippines” (105). But as by October Cowles would be reporting on the situation in Italy following the country’s invasion of Abyssinia, her observations about the international presence in the East in the Harper’s Bazaar article, which she noted in LFT “soon dated sadly”, reflect that her trip had provided her with a political education. And once again, Cowles approached Hearst but this time she had a more
political story in mind: the military buildup in Italy following the invasion of Abyssinia in early October 1935.

In the first of her three articles on Italy, “Virginia Cowles Pictures the Hectic Italian Capital at War” which appeared in March of Events on October 13, 1935, Cowles describes the crowds in Rome, which attend the screening of propaganda films and applaud in response to images of the Italian army and “strong, dynamic” Mussolini “addressing the public”(E-3). A similar public reaction was captured by Leni Riefenstahl in the 1934 Hitler propaganda film, *Triumph of the Will*, where crowds cheer for the new leader and women gaze at him adoringly licking their lips. On the streets of Rome, young men “in brown uniforms, boots laced half way up their legs, brown caps[on their heads]” that Cowles encounters are replicas of the Nazi youth Gellhorn had met in Berlin in 1932 (E-3). They tell Cowles that opportunity and adventure first, and duty to country second, is what prompted them to enlist to go to Africa. These young men’s sentiments, Cowles learns, are shared by people of all classes in Italy, who “are unified in opinion that Abyssinia is vital to the life in Italy”(E-3). Attempting to confirm what she has learnt from the people with the government officials proves impossible. Her press pass merely gets her an entry to the ministry of propaganda where every statement begins and ends with a fascist salute.

It is through her contacts that Cowles succeeded in securing an invitation from Italo Balbo, the Air Marshal of Italy, to visit him in Libya. This trip was the subject of her second article from Italy, “Virginia Cowles Sees Italians Under Governor Italo Balbo Transform Libyan Desert Sand Dunes into Garden Spots” which appeared on November 10, 1935 in March of Events. As Balbo had not only helped Mussolini assume power but also to establish the fascist party, he oversaw the training of Italian troops in case, as he told Cowles, the situation in Africa
will require further intervention. He also devotes himself to “work of civilization and peace which is being carried out in this colony” (E-2). Balbo’s rank and importance, are reflected in the “Moorish villa overlooking the sea” where he resides with his wife, and entertains commanders of the native troops, Air Force, and the Blackshirts. Cowles’ visit to Libya culminated with a flight in Balbo’s two-seater plane. As a souvenir, the Air Marshal gave Cowles a signed photograph of the two of them standing next to his plane (see figure 12).[^81]

[^81]: This is one of the two photographs in Cowles’ papers at the IWM. The second photo of VC in white faux fur and jauntily worn fur hat with man who became Lord Bangor photo dated 1940 Finland.

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Fig. 12. Virginia Cowles with Italian Ari Marshall, Italo Balbo in Tripoli, October 14, 1935.
Cowles intended her concluding remarks in the article about Balbo’s role in both rise of fascism in Italy, growing of Italian Air Force, as well as his calling Italian presence in Libya a “civilizing mission”, to be taken notice of by the international powers. In the photograph with Balbo, Cowles, in full-flight gear, appears nervous as she seems to be fidgeting with her fingers. She does not face the camera directly, and her body weight seems to be resting on her right leg. Are her feet hurting, seeing as she is wearing her requisite high heels? Maybe the flight has unnerved her or is she uncomfortable posing for a picture with Balbo. Her interview with Mussolini, which she conducted in November 1935, did not put her any more at ease about Italy’s future plans.

In “Virginia Cowles Sees Duce as Dapper Nietzsche Superman,” as she waits to be admitted to Mussolini’s office, Cowles wonders about the man whom “Italians consider a god, the French a daredevil, the English a lunatic;” one who “battered his way from obscurity to the most spectacular role in modern civilization” and “lifted his country from impotency to power” and in the process alienated “fifty nations”(E-3). Living up to his reputation, Mussolini highjacks the interview and rather than answer questions, he puts questions to Cowles. What he tells Cowles about “Fascism, politics, America,” he requests that she not publish. The only material Cowles walks away with is her impressions of the Duce. She describes Mussolini as a “dapper” man, of “medium height” with hair “almost white at the temples”, who appeared before her in a “light gray sport suit.” But while his outward appearance reads to Cowles as modern, his “peculiar strutting step, his head back, his chest thrown out” made him look as if his “body was too large for his limbs”(E-3). To compensate for his unimposing stature, Mussolini embraces “fierce patriotism, his dogmatic philosophy,…intolerant ambition” which to Cowles are “virtues.

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82 November 17, 19135, March of Events in *New York American – A Paper for People who Think*, “Virginia Cowles Sees Duce as Dapper Nietzsche Superman.”
[of] yesterday” and make the Duce look like “a man who [is] a cruel anachronism to the twentieth century” but a dangerous one nevertheless (E-3).

Although Cowles’ meeting with Mussolini earned her a mention in The Washington Post on November 30, 1935, which referred to her as a writer- “Writer Finds Italy Solidly Behind Il Duce”, the Hearst editors continued to brand her as “American Girl” and “N.Y. Society Girl” when she began contributing articles from Spain. Was this a clear demonstration Hearts’ support for Nationalists in Spain? It was only when Virginia Cowles secured a contract with The Sunday Times that she was able to escape the paternalistic and patriotic branding. But whether for security reasons or simply because the editors of Sunday Times feared that their reading audience would doubt the credibility of the news if it were attributed to a woman, Virginia Cowles’ name did not accompany many of her articles. Instead, her articles were attributed to the gender non-specific “experienced observer” or “special correspondent”. This was the case with her October 17, 1937 article, “Realities of War in Spain-Military Odds on Franco-Valencia’s Army Muddle” in which Cowles revealed just how many Italians (80,000) and Germans (10,000) were fighting in the Franco ranks. This article made Cowles’ name in the press and also illustrates her ability to make contacts with influential people. In an October 23, 1937 letter to her father, Cowles wrote:

I have risen to astounding heights, please don’t laugh! Am enclosing an article I wrote on Spain when I came out of the Franco side, two weeks ago. It was published in the London Sunday Times …Before it was published, however, a diplomat in the London Foreign Office read it and liked it and asked if he could show it to his chief… Sir Robert Vansittart [the Under Secretary of State] told me it was one of the most objective articles they had read on the Spanish situation…Eden had read it and sent it to the Prime Minister

…[who] read it and circulated it to the cabinet. …Eden made his speech on Britain’s policy and in the speech he emphasized several points I made, and for the first time Great Britain tightened up on her foreign policy and laid down an ultimatum to Italy. When the article appeared in the Times on Sunday…and all the other papers picked up my figures…for the first time Rome had a statement as to the numbers she had in Spain. She indignantly claimed only 40,000 which of course is untrue…Yesterday in the House of Commons in debate on Foreign Affairs, my article was quoted three times. So if the trip to Spain proves nothing else, at least I think I struck a shrewd blow for democracy.  

Clearly, what Cowles had seen in Italy in 1935, the mobilization and invasion of Abyssinia, were the initial stages of Mussolini’s towards an attempt at building an empire, and now Italy’s support of Franco in Spain reveals the Duce is not alone. Cowles realizes that the fascist brotherhood -- Spain, Germany and Italy -- poses a considerable threat to world peace:

I fear that Europe will go to war in the near future anyway for if Franco wins, France and England will one day be forced to fight a combined Italy, Germany and Spain. And considering how close the last war was, with this setup which strategically is far better it wouldn’t be any joke.  

Dr. Edward S. Cowles, forwarded a copy of Virginia’s letter as well as her article to Eleanor Roosevelt on November 18, urged the First Lady that she pass this information from his daughter, who has been “around the world studying governments” and “has been in Spain also—in the front trenches and on both sides,” to the President.  

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84 Uncatalogued Virginia Cowles’ papers. IWM, London.
85 Ibid.
The content of Cowles’ scrapbook, which can be found among her papers at the IWM in London, shows that she wrote ten articles about Spain. Of these, three were published in Hearst papers, March of Events section on June 24, July 4, and July 11, 1937 and focused on republican Spain. The next three articles, which appeared on October 17, 20 and 26, 1937 in either the Daily Telegraph or the Evening Standard, dealt with the nationalist Spain. The clipping of another article Cowles wrote, “Faction in Spain-Nationalist Discord” in which she discusses the factions within Nationalist Spain, does not provide the name of the paper or date when it appeared. But since it deals with nationalist Spain and Cowles is identified as “Correspondent Lately in Spain”, it was most likely published either Sunday Times, Daily Telegraph or the Evening Standard since her name did not appear in the byline of these papers. Cowles’ January 9, 1938 article in New York Times Magazine presented an overview of issues of class, economics and tradition which played a role in which side the Spaniards support. That same month, on the 18th she published an article in the Daily Telegraph on how Franco is financing the war. And in April 10, 1938, both The Times and New York Times ran an article by Cowles on the daily routine of war in Republican Spain.

The publication dates of Cowles’ articles when compared against LFT, reveal Cowles wrote and submitted her articles on Spain in Europe, between her visits to Spain. In LFT Cowles does not provide specific dates of her arrival and departure from both Spains. What she does mention is that she left for Spain “a week after the battle of Guadalajara” and since the battle ended on March 18, 1937, this would date Cowles departure for Spain to March 25, 1937 (LFT 7). After Cowles left Republican Spain she went to Paris where she met her sister, and the two spent the summer in Saint Jean-de-Luz (LFT 61-62). From there Cowles made her way into Nationalist Spain in August of 1937 (69). Sebba’s observation that Cowles “waited until she was
on neutral territory before writing” and that “[h]er aim, she still insisted, was not only to see both sides and contrast them, but to predict a result,” appears valid (97). Especially, if considered in light of Cowles’ October 23, 1937 letter to her father in which she shared with him the news of her starting work for the *Evening Standard* and future career ambitions:

I am starting to work next week on Beaverbrook’s paper, the Evening Standard. I am going to try it for a couple of weeks and see what kind of a job it develops into—I don’t want to get side-tracked into writing “women’s page stuff”, but if I can get onto the political end I wouldn’t object—I would love it. My ultimate ambition is to work on the London Daily Times (The Sunday Times is only a weekly paper owned by another man) but they have such a prejudice against women, feel it is better to have an established job before I approach them.

The excerpt from Cowles’ letter reveals her apprehension about being required to work her way up again from “women’s page stuff”, this time with the *Evening Standard*, as she previously had with the Hearst paper. Yet she understands that newspapers work, especially of the political kind into which she wants to break into still belongs to men, and she needs to build her reputation with the *Evening Standard* to facilitate her transition from weekly to daily paper. Like Gellhorn and Herbst, Cowles did not want to be locked into the “women’s page stuff” category. But while Gellhorn and Herbst following their return from Spain hoped to translate their war experiences into fiction, Cowles, having paid her dues writing for March of Events, hoped to pursue a career as a political journalist. With her name, connection and fashionable look, Cowles could make her way into the society circles in England, just as she had been able to do so in Italy and Spain. A post as a political journalist would allow Cowles to employ her perspective of class informant to critique from inside the class of “educated men’s daughters” (Woolf).
Sebba interprets the progression of Cowles’ journalistic career differently, explaining the gender neutral designation of “special correspondent lately in Spain” which Sunday Times used for Cowles’ Spanish articles as a means for Cowles to avoid violating the contract she had with Hearst(101). Yet if Cowles was in fact under contract with Hearst until the end of 1937, as Sebba claims, how was she able to publish the two articles on Nationalist Spain in October of 1937 under her name in newspapers other than Hearst. The first of these two, “…so The Spaniard Said: “Who’s running this country, anyway?” Article written in the Gran Hotel, Salamanca, where Franco has his headquarters” by Virginia Cowles, was published on October 20, 1937. The second “NOT FRONT PAGE NEWS, BUT…exciting if you’re there yourself” appear on October 26, 1937 with the following blurb: “Virginia Cowles is a young, dark, glamorous American writer who has been covering the Spanish War-from both fronts. Was arrested at San Sebastian, with Rupert Bellville, wealthy Old Etonian airman, in whose plane she was travelling. She is now on holiday in London.” While these two article clippings found in Cowles’ scrapbook do not contain information about the newspapers in which they were published, the fact that they were published on Wednesday October 20 and Tuesday October 26, 1937 proves these did not appear in March of Events in Hearst newspapers, or Sunday Times. Moreover, if Cowles were in fact bound by a contract with Hearst until the end of 1937, she would not be planning to take a job with the Evening Standard at the end of October 1937, which she mentioned in the above quoted letter to her father.

**Looking for Trouble**

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87 Although Sebba claims Cowles’ first Sunday Times article was published on October 20, 1937, that is incorrect. The correct date is October 17, 1937. Also, on page 101 of her book Sebba attributes two articles of Cowles to Sunday Times which is incorrect as “How Franco Gains Credit Abroad” appeared in Daily Telegraph on Jan 18, 1938, and the second article which included the blurb about Cowles being “a young, glamorous American…” was published on a October 26, 1937, which was a Tuesday.
In the prologue to LFT which includes Cowles’ reporting from the Spanish Civil War and WWII, Cowles included an excerpt from Winston S. Churchill’s *The World Crisis: The Aftermath* (1929) and a portion of her article in which she described witnessing bombing of London in May of 1941. These two texts constitute a cautionary frame, where the former questions how the victors of WWI—“the men at the head of Great Britain, United States and France” who “seemed to be the masters of the world”—would deal with their “absolute and incomparable” victory, while the latter identifies Spain in 1936 as the place where historians will have to turn to “for the first rumble of gunfire to break the stillness of the European continent” (1,3). Cowles echoes here what many other reporters, like Gellhorn and Herbst, who went to Spain did, that the European powers had failed to recognize the gravity of situation in Spain in 1936, and now, in 1941, have no time to waste.

Cowles classifies LFT as “my story” in the prologue, and like Gellhorn, terms what she had witnessed to “a part…small in the picture history will record” but which has shown her that “war to-day is a…struggle to keep justice and mercy on earth, and to preserve the very dignity of man” (3). By emphasizing that she had seen a portion of a larger historical war record, Cowles establishes something akin to biographical pack with the reader, cautioning against expectations of a complete historical record. All she has reported is what she has seen. Cowles begins to map her experience in Spain in terms of what she knew before she went to Spain as well as what she had seen there, drawing on the knowledge obtained through self-education, her experience and news coverage in the papers. Recalling that while on the 10th of May, the London *Daily Telegraph* reported that Franco’s forces had attacked Madrid and succeeded in breaking through the city’s defenses, soon she learnt that this was not true. On the contrary, the Battle of Guadalajara was “the first major victory for the Republic” (Ibid., 7). Alerting her readers to the
biases of news reports from Spain, Cowles seeks to establish her credibility and as she is committed to presenting an accurate account of the situation in Spain she plans on visiting both sides of the Spanish Civil War. What follows is a close reading of a two chapters from the Republican Spain section of LFT, “Life in Madrid” and “Civilian Army”, and a chapter “Fall of Santander” from the Nationalist Spain section of LFT, which is based on her October 17, 1937 Sunday Times article about the direct involvement of German and Italian military in support of Franco, and also includes her visit to Guernica.

**Republican Spain**

The three encounters in Madrid Cowles recounts -- one with Pepe Quintanilla, the head of Republican counter-espionage, with El Guerrero’s battalion in Guadarrama and with Communist General Gall’s International Brigade Battalion in Morata -- present a vivid picture of the various rungs of power within Republican Spain. Unlike Madrid depicted by Gellhorn in her articles where the people of Madrid are unified in their struggle and resistance to fascism, here Cowles presents an atmosphere filled with suspicion and intrigue. To Cowles upon her arrival, Madrid seemed “as unreal as a huge movie set swarming with extras ready to play a part” but there was a sinister undertone to the scene with secret police, fearful people and censors all suspicious of foreigners and reporters, especially well-dressed, attractive women (Ibid., 9).

Cowles’s high heels, a wool dress and gold bracelets render her suspect in the eyes of people in Spain. What’s more her lack of political party affiliation, cast her in the role of a war spectator, or worse yet, a spy. While in Valencia, a city through which Cowles entered Spain, she is surprised to see no signs of war, except that all the working-class people are wearing black, and “stare darkly at [her],” or specifically her suitcase which is “red and yellow… General Franco’s colours” (9-10). On the way to Madrid, she is questioned by a Catholic priest with
whom, she and Mellie Bennet, “American woman…who worked in the propaganda department”,
drive from Valencia:

“You, I presume, are an anarchist?

“No,” [Cowles] said.

“A communist?”

“No.”

“A Trotskyist?”

Here Mellie Bennet intervened. “Tell the old devil to shut up.” (LFT 13)

Cowles does not ask the priest what makes him think she is an anarchist, a communist or a
Trotskyist, as clearly her appearance matches none of the above. But what most likely piqued the
priest’s curiosity is Cowles’ clothes which distinguish her as belonging to the upper class. Since
all the wealthy and upper class Spaniards, who side with Franco, had either fled Madrid or had
been shot, the city is a home to mainly working class population, with small business owners and
foreigners constituting a minority. Although the Germans and Italians who joined with Franco
were now seen as the “the foreigner invaders”, the prejudice against foreigners extended to those
of other nationalities. The only guarantee against being suspected as a “foreign invader” was
being a member of the communist party. To control any dangerous individuals, various
measures have been implemented like martial law, frequent document checks, especially of those
driving in cars, and files are kept on all members of foreign press (Ibid., 33). Although, Cowles
admits she “never witnessed any ‘atrocities’” in Madrid, the Communist and surveillance fervor,
made her conclude that it was very likely “many thousands of innocent persons were dragged
from their beds and shot without trial” (Ibid., 34).
What makes Cowles confident in making her claim about violence committed against people in Madrid, is having had lunch with Pepe Quintanilla, or as Hemingway introduced him to her and Josephine Herbst as “the chief executioner of Madrid.” Quintanilla’s neat appearance affected by a gray suit and horn-rimmed glasses initially makes Cowles judge him to be an intellectual. But his “ingratiating [manner] to the point of sycophancy” and his “bright…marble-brown eyes” prompt Cowles to pronounce him to exude “all the traditional sadism of Spain” (Ibid.). This statement by Cowles evokes images of Goya’s “Disasters of War” sketches of savage violence and prompts her readers to recognize this imagery in Spanish Civil War photographs of dead civilians and soldiers. When asked by Hemingway about executions of those wrongly accused, Quintanilla simply replies that “it is only human to err” and such people “died very well…in fact, magnifico!” with “his voice rose on the last word to a note of rapture and his eyes gleamed with relish” (Ibid.). The language used by Cowles to describe the pleasure Quintanilla derives from telling her, Hemingway and Herbst about executing people, both guilty and innocent, conveys a level of excitement that borders on sexual arousal. In MB, Gamel Woolsey uses the phrase “pornography of violence” to describe disturbing enjoyment she seen expressed at the sight of Malaga burning after it was bombed. She notes that both the wealthy and working class people are susceptible to this perverse feeling brought about by scenes of death and destruction, or “arson, I am sure, is a vice of the nature of an erotic crime: it is rape on a grand scale” which is a narcotic to the perpetrators of such assault and their supporters who become “drugged with the lust of burning” (54, 57).

Quintanilla’s passions are so aroused while recounting the scenes of “pornography of violence”, that he proposes marriage to Virginia Cowles. This part of the lunch is missing from Cowles’ LFT, but Herbst included it in TSBSOS. Herbst recalls Quintanilla putting his hand on
Cowles’ knee and saying to her “We will all go to my house. I will divorce my wife and marry you” (SBSOS 170). Then he shows her a picture of his son and adds “you won’t have to make another. Just be my wife. My wife can cook. I have lived with her so long that it is just mailing a letter, and my only worry is will the stamp get on”(Ibid.). Cowles replies: “I’m afraid when you get tired of me you’ll make me be the cook,” which made everyone at the table laugh (Ibid.). The fact that Herbst recorded this incident shows that she was impressed with Cowles’ ability to think on her feet and deliver the clever remark to lighten the tense atmosphere. While to the Executioner, Cowles is an object of lust, to the Soviet Communist General Gal she is a contemptible bourgeois.

During her visit, when the General decides she is ready to visit the trenches, he parades her in front of the soldiers and explains her visit by telling them “I’m bringing you a wife, boys, how would you like a wife?” (2-E). Although Cowles mentioned this detail about her visit to the Morata front in her July 4, 1937 article, she edited it out from the LFT chapter, “Civilian Army.”

Her invitation to lunch from General Gal is in fact a ruse arranged by authorities and the general. A week prior, Cowles along with Kajsa, the Swedish linguist who worked with the censors, and Jerome Willis of Agence d’Espagne, had chanced upon the headquarters en route to Morata front but were refused access by General Gal. He told Cowles to write her “story from the garden. No one will know the difference” and presented her with a red rose which she refused (LFT 46). Whether the gift of the red rose was a test and meant as a Communist symbol is uncertain, but what had in fact transpired between Cowles leaving Madrid and chancing upon the headquarters is that the authorities warned the General about Cowles’ non-Communist status and instructed

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88 July 4, 1937 New York Sunday American and the Journal article by Virginia Cowles “300 U.S. Youths Fight 74 Days Without Rest in Spanish Front Trenches.”
that he not show her too much. When she accepts his lunch invitation a week later, Cowles is unaware of the his plan to teach her “what we are fighting for” and only learns about it from Santiago, the soldier who drives her to the front, who tells her “You are not a Communist and you are suspect” and the General “wants to convert you” (Ibid., 49). “Although orders from Moscow were to side with democracies against Fascism,” Cowles points out “they were to spread Marxism and that’s why political commissars were instilled in army to convert as many as possible” (Ibid., 32).

General Gal detains her for three days at his Marxist training camp. During meals he demonstrates the virtues of Communism to Cowles by inviting the soldier who serves food to sit and join them for a glass of champagne (Ibid., 50). His soldiers who only speak Russian remain silent during his diatribes. It is Cowles’ “bourgeois education,” that has prevented her from learning about class-struggle and Revolution (Ibid., 52). Gal uses himself as an example and tells her stories of growing up in Ukraine in poverty, living “like an animal” (Ibid.). Of course, Gal does not realize that just as his uniform and rank have enabled him to leave behind life of poverty in Ukraine, Cowles’ shoes and bracelets, which offend him and which he tells her to take off if she wants to see the trenches, aid her in crossing class barriers and borders. When he takes her to see the trenches, Cowles learns from the American volunteers, who had been recruited by the Communist party that they had been fighting for the past seventy-four days with no relief in sight. On the third day, when he finally consents to let her leave, Gal advises her to “Read works of Lenin…when you are well instructed, join the Party…You will be useful as an under-cover agent” (Ibid., 53). Ironically, when she returns to Madrid, she is admonished by the censors for visiting the Soviet headquarters which are ‘forbidden to journalists” (Ibid., 54).
Unlike at Morata, at the Guadarrama front, where an all-Spanish battalion under the leadership of El Guerrero is stationed, Cowles is received so warmly that she feels “smothered with hospitality” as the soldiers crowd around her and insist on showing her “their guns and tanks with childish delight” (Ibid., 43). El Guerrero, who wears a green turtleneck and carries himself with “swagger and bravado,” has earned his nickname, ‘the warrior,’ for having fought through the winter in the mountains and even though he lost most of his men, succeeded in holding off the attack (Ibid.). Cowles looks with disbelief at the battalion known to be “the toughest of the tough” the ranks of which include: men diligently working on copying the phrase “Beat Fascism by learning to read and write”; a blushing youth of nineteen that hands her a bouquet of wild flowers, who has killed twelve men in their sleep with a grenade; and a young girl “with plucked eyebrows, rouged lips and wearing men’s clothes” who had made it through the winter offensive (Ibid.). This is a unique image of a female soldier unlike the sexualized militiawoman featured in propaganda posters and the gun wielding girl in Gerda Taro’s photographs. Is the men’s clothing and odd grooming of facial hair a safety precaution or is it a rendition of the new woman look with thin eyebrows and androgynous outfit? El Guerrero tells Cowles his pregnant wife too had fought alongside him but has now gone to Madrid to give birth.

There is none of the belligerence of General Gal or cold brutality of the Executioner in El Guerrero and he does not take to spouting political ideologies. The three men are as different as their ranks and their attire, which denote a hierarchy not to dissimilar from that of class. The men in Guadarrama are poor men and farmhands, boys really, not Soviet trained soldiers who sat to dinner with General Gal. But the idealism of El Guerrero’s battalion, which Cowles admires, is also the very thing that has the potential to fuel a more “savage… battle” (Ibid., 45).
These encounters in Republican Spain make Cowles consider “the human side” of war, or “the forces that urged people” like the Executioner, the General and El Guerrero’s battalion, “to such a test of endurance and the paradoxical mixture of fierce and gentle qualities their suffering produced”, especially when “a man shot his brother not because he disliked him, but because he disagreed with him” (Ibid., 61).

**A House with a View**

Although Gamel Woolsey and her husband, Gerald Brenan had been living in near Malaga since 1935, when the war breaks out in July 1936, they realize their British citizenship will not exempt them from suspicion. The couple moved to Spain to escape the instability of Europe, not because they were political refugees or persecuted minority, but simply because the cost of living in Spain was low. They wanted to live off the “produce of our own garden and orchards” and enjoy that “nothing ever changed” Malaga made it the ideal choice for Woolsey and Brenan (MB 25). But as Woolsey paints the scene of her home in Malaga where the gardener, Enrique, tends to the tomatoes, the cook, Maria, haggles over eggs at the gate, and Pilar, María’s daughter, does the housekeeping, it begins to resemble the setting from novels about a life of privilege, not struggle. This becomes especially palpable when Woolsey expressed her affection for the servants using the paternalistic analogy stating that their relationship is not merely predicated on “monthly wage, hiring and giving notice, as she “could as soon have given [her] children notice”(Ibid., 30). While Woolsey does not see herself as an employer, her concern over class distinction is aroused when Pilar begins wearing “an old coat of [Woolsey’s’]” and “to [her] distress leaving off graceful peasant shawl”( Ibid., 31). The class hierarchy is clearly understood by Woolsey’s cook and Pilar’s mother, Maria, who explains to her employer that she scolds her granddaughter, Mariquilla because “I want to bring her up to do me credit when she is
you servant…not to be my shame” (Ibid., 30). By including these numerous instances of class conscious commentary, Woolsey establishes herself as an outsider in Spain and a privileged woman with hired help. Yet as she records the events she witness- first the bombing of Malaga, then of the village where her home stands and finally her home- her critique extends to both the irrational violence of the “uncontrollable” loosely affiliated with the Republican cause as well as the disregard of the Nationalists for human lives of Spaniards as well as foreigners.

When the bombing of Malaga begins in July 1936, Woolsey realizes none one is safe but in an effort to present her home as English and Spanish, she hangs both flags in their garden (Ibid., 41). But even when a bomb hits close to Woolsey’s home, literally the neighboring home, and a group of men whose leader is armed with a “child’s toy sword” search her home for weapons but depart abruptly after they open her underwear drawer, Woolsey becomes more determined to remain in the village (Ibid., 36). Listening to radio broadcasts made by the Republicans and Nationalists, Woolsey notes that both sides employ propaganda. The unfounded atrocity stories disseminated by Franco supporters, both Spaniards and wealthy foreigners, are matched by those of the working class who appeal to Woolsey “express[ing] their outrage about the bombing of Malaga and when acts of violence are committed by Republicans they argue ‘[The Nationalists] are worse, they do worse things than us and they are educated men…us poor ignorant creatures’” (Ibid., 90). It is very likely that the fact that Woolsey is a wealthy foreign woman prompts the local, working class people to assume she harbors pro-Franco sympathies. Speaking of themselves in self-deprecating manner, as “poor ignorant creatures”, could be seen as their keeping their guard up seeing as Woolsey has given shelter to Don Carlos, an impoverished nobleman.
Although Woolsey and Brenan are aware that Don Carlos’s sympathies lie with the Nationalists, they decided to invite him and his family to hide in their home from the more radical pro-Republicans. But they begin to fear for their lives as well as the lives of their hired help, after they come upon Don Carlo on the roof of their home dancing while watching another round of bombing of Malaga. This blatant instance of “pornography of violence”, places Woolsey’s home under surveillance and subject to random searches by local authorities. In order to protect themselves and their home, Woolsey and Brenan exhaust all options in order to get Don Carlo and his family safely out of Malaga. While they do not condone Don Carlo’s behavior nor share his political views, if they had turned him over to local militia, who would most certainly imprison and then execute him, their hands would be just as blood stained as those of the Nationalists responsible for bombing innocent civilians. Nevertheless, when she receive a telegram from foreign office urging all English to leave Spain on the next destroyer, Woolsey declares she is staying as she feels “safer among these dangerous ‘reds’ the Foreign Office was painting in such lurid colors” (Ibid., 67). Much like Woolsey, Cowles, after she makes a trip to Nationalist Spain declared that her sympathies are with the Republicans.

**Nationalist Spain**

When Cowles arrived in Salamanca in August of 1937, she was “not prepared for such an open flaunting of the Fascist alliance” in Franco’s headquarters where “posters of the Dictators” where prominently displayed, “odd in contrast they offered: Mussolini in a steel helmet with his chin thrust out, was stern and belligerent, while Hitler stared wistfully into space calling on Europe to defend itself against Bolshevism” (LFT 68). While in Madrid, just few months ago, she saw bombed buildings which “bore jagged wounds” and “women crying and begging to be
let into the Gran Via restaurant where correspondents and military on leave ate, in the hotel in Salamanca

German colonels [sat] drinking café-au-lait while Spanish general staff-officers, with bright blue sashes tied round their waists, strode importantly across the marble floor. Italians, booted and spurred, usually with a girl on each arm, came jingling down the stairs, and Foreign Legionaries in green shirts, their caps tipped jauntily to one side, argued with the desk clerk for rooms. It was difficult to get rooms at the Gran Hotel as most of the rooms were occupied by the Germans…guarded by Guardia Civile in shiny hats and with long rifles (Ibid., 69).

This description of masculine military attire with all its foreign variants, demonstrates Cowles’ ability to perceive, based on the behavior and location within lobby of the hotel, how the nationalities rank within Franco’s forces. Clearly the “Foreign Legionaries” occupy the lowest rung of the Fascist hierarchy, while the Italians are boastful as they play the starring role in Franco’s northern offensive. Her deduction based on what she had seen in the Gran Hotel are confirmed in the evening at a large rally replete with torches and a bombastic speech, not too different from those staged in Nazi Germany, by a new Italian Ambassador and presentation of “Moorish cavalry …[in] their white robes” is staged celebrate the fall of Santander (Ibid., 70).

But just like in Madrid, the mood in

hotel lobby was one of boredom and suspicion. Newcomers were eyed warily, and on the wall was a sign which said, “Sh! Spies!” It added that if anyone attempted to discuss the military situation you should denounce them immediately and thus save your country. (Ibid., 69)
But in Salamanca, Cowles’ bourgeois look—high heels and gold bracelets—lends itself to her being received with all the respect due a lady. The foreign press bureau chief in Salamanca, Pablo Merry Del Val, furnishes her not only with passes to Santander but also a driver, Ignacio Rosalles, a Barcelona millionaire. While it is uncertain whether the news of Cowles’ arrest in San Sebastian, where she attempted to enter Nationalist Spain without a visa few weeks earlier, had reached Salamanca, Rosalles might have been informed of Cowles’ visit to Republican Spain as before he takes her to Guernica, he asks if she had been influenced by “lying Valencia propaganda” and adds “now you can see for yourself”(Ibid., 71).

Cowles not only got to see Guernica, which after its bombing on April 26, 1937 remained a “subject of bitter controversy” but spoke with a local man who confirmed that Nationalists, more specifically Italians and Germans were responsible for reducing the town to a “sea of bricks”(LFT 71). After this eyewitness whom Cowles asks whether he had been present at the time of the “destruction,” nods, she asks that he tell her and Rosalles what happened: “[he] waved his arms in the air and declared that the sky had been black with planes—“Aviones,” he said: “Italianos y Alemanes”(Ibid.). Rosalles quickly protests saying that “Guernica was burned” and denounces the old man as a “Red;” in response, the old man points out that there was nothing left to burn after four hour bombardment(Ibid.). If the stop in Guernica and the witness account were not proof enough, Cowles obtains a confession from the culprits themselves when Rosalles takes her to an estate now occupied by General Davilla, the commander of the Northern army (Ibid., 75). After Rosalles brings up Guernica and the ‘lying old man’ one of Davilla’s offices asserts “But of course it was bombed. We bombed it and bombed it and bombed it, and bueno, why not?” (Ibid.). Although Rosalles tells Cowles that he would not write about Guernica if her were her, she did so in her October 17 Times article. In 2011, at the celebration of
publication of Spanish translation of Cowles’ LFT sections on Spain, Carlos Garcia Santa Cecilia pointed out the fact that Cowles was one of the first reporters to obtain verification as early as fall of 1937 from a Spanish officer on the Nationalist side that Guernica was burned (1).

Guernica was not the first instance of civilians killed in an aerial bombardment by Franco’s planes. It was preceded by Getafe, which was bombed on October of 1936 by Nationalists who sought to and did capture the airbase near the town. Reviews of key texts on Spanish Civil War history and scholarship show that Getafe has been omitted from list of “open cities” bombed by Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War. By definition an open city is one whose city limits do not encompass any strategic war posts or military industries, and attacking such a locale is motivated purely by the objective to instill terror and weaken morale of the enemy by killing innocent civilian. From the fact that during the war no Spanish newspapers reported on Getafe, it could be concluded that the town was considered a ‘military objective’ because of its proximity to an airbase. But Robert Stradling in Your Children Will be Next, points out that Getafe was covered by the press, but only the international press, which leads him to asserts that “‘Getafe’ was a *story intended exclusively for distribution outside of Spain*”, targeted at the audience of “‘the democracies’” by the propaganda machine of Republican Spain (96). Tetuan bombed in January 1937, Albacete in February and Durango in March of the same year, Stradling points out also did not make the news (Stradling 121,136, 219). And neither did the July 1936 bombing of Malaga which Woolsey describes in her book, and which is also missing from Stradling’s book and most of Spanish Civil War scholarship; only Malaga’s second bombing in 1937 is included.

Although Woolsey does not provide the exact date in July 1936 when Malaga was bombed, she refers to BBC reporting that Malaga, an important port “was probably completely
destroyed” after an “oil tank was hit sending billowing black smoke over the town” (MB 164). But Woolsey who went to town the following day, learnt that the people actually piled wet sea sand over underground petrol tanks, and run off the oil, in effect saving the city from being completely burned to the ground (Ibid.). In the following days the bombing target extended beyond Malaga, and a bomb is dropped on Gypsy camp, killing everyone except (Ibid).

Eventually, Gamel and Brenan’s home is hit too when one day, as Gamel recounts 70 bombs rained on her home. The shell-shock Gamel suffers as a result, makes her fear any noise reminiscent of a plane and her “garden…seemed to [her] after that raid a defenseless place open to attack from the Prince of the Air and all his evil Legions” (Ibid., 191).

Guernica, a town of much significance to Basque nationalism, which was bombed for three hours on April 26, 1937, and resulted in 1,645 civilian casualties and 889 injuries, is cited as the example of terror of total warf (Graham 308, Ametzaga 35). The potential military targets near Guernica, a bridge, railroad tracks and two small munitions factories, remained completely intact, which made the international community and the press denounce this blatant act of aggression perpetrated against civilians, especially since it was carried out in the afternoon on market-day when the town center was heavily populated. In response, Nationalist Spain denied any responsibility for this massacre and claimed to have undisputable aerial photographic proof of Guernica having been in fact burned by the Basques themselves; this remained the official version until 1970 (Ametzaga 37).

Although Cowles, as Carlos Garcia Santa Cecilia pointed out, was one of the first reporters to obtain confirmation of Nationalists responsibility for this act of terrorism, Stradling does not acknowledge this. Instead, he lumps her in the star studded group with Ernest Hemingway, Herbert Matthews and Vincent Sheean writing for the ‘capitalist press’ and who as
a result of propaganda became “delirious advocates of the Republic” (121). As proof of his allegations against Cowles, Stradling points out that she “asserted (wrongly) that Franco’s chief headquarters, Burgos, was never bombed during the entire war’, but also (equally wrongly) that ‘Salamanca, Valladolid, Seville and other Nationalist cities only suffered a few attacks’”(70). It bears repeating here, that Cowles, unlike Hemingway, Matthews and Sheean, was writing for weekly publications. Also, prior to arriving in Nationalist Spain, she had visited Republican Spain. As a woman reporter whose passport bore stamps from Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia, and who had initially entered Nationalist Spain without a visa and was threatened with prison, Cowles knew she had to be careful about verifying information so as not to appear suspicious. That is not to say, she succumbed to Nationalist propaganda. But is it more likely that the bombings of Burgos, Salamanca, Valladolid, Seville and other Nationalist cities were denied by Nationalist themselves when Cowles inquired about these. This would follow with Franco’s officers making press statements, which made them appear victorious, invincible and righteous in the eyes of their supporters and their critics. Following the bombing of Guernica, Gen Gonzalo Queipo de Llano announced on the radio that “If we had bombarded [Guernica], we should not have deny it, since we would have been within our rights, just as the reds destroyed Oviedo, Toledo and other such towns”(qtd. Ametzaga 37). Thus in effect, these inaccuracies in Cowles articles illustrate just how far the Nationalists were willing to go for the cause of fascism, which Stradling himself points out when he writes: “Franco’s airmen were blasé about… possibility of ‘collateral damage’ inflicted on their own cities by the enemy”(187). More importantly, unlike the reporters Stradling accused of pandering to the theme of “massacre of the innocents,” Cowles who was in Republican Spain at the time of the bombing of Guernica did not
report on it in any of her articles. Cowles also did not report any atrocities taking place in Republican Spain as she had not witnessed any.

In her October 17, 1937 article, in which she wrote about her visit to Guernica, Cowles also revealed the significant presence of Italian and German forces in Franco’s army, with the support from which she predicted the General would “bring the war to the end by the spring” (LFT 69). Although the war ended in spring of 1939, the parade Cowles saw in Santander was a preview of the Nationalist victory. The Republican prisoners with “in rags [who] looked half starved” with “arms and legs done up in dirty bandages” who “eat ravenously” from cans distributed by nationalists appeared in “pitiful contrast to the last Republican soldiers” Cowles had seen (Ibid., 73). The republican supporters sat in “debris, their bundles and bags piled up beside them, gazing on the celebration with tears running down their cheeks,” street vendors and waitresses cast “hostile stares” at the victors, “women and children patiently wait[ed] for news of the prisoners”, while wounded Republican soldiers looked down on this scene from hospital windows (Ibid., 74). Of course, Cowles also notes there were a good number of Spaniards who put up a front, cheering the loudest with the crowds of Franco’s supporters and who unfurled the fingers of their clenched fists into the fascist salute (Ibid.).

Woolsey observed a similar scene in Lisbon, where she and Brenan stopped on their way to England in October 1936, “People are not always engaged in making war after all-they also cheat dictators and tease policemen”(MB 202). The act of defiance against authority she observes is enacted by two fisherwomen “great amazons with big baskets of fish on their heads, striding splendidly along” who only put on shoes, the wearing of which “The Dictator” had made a law to dispel the notion that Portugal is a poor country, when they sees a police man approaching (Ibid., 201). When they notice Woolsey has been watching them and smiling, they
return a “half smile of complicity,” the kind locals reserve for foreign, wealthy individuals and thus communicate that as they see her, Woolsey is on the side of the ruling authority (Ibid., 202).

What Cowles witnessed in Salamanca reaffirmed her “sympathies …[for]the struggle of the Republic against military and landlord class, rebelling to recapture their old-time privileges” (LFT 105). Because Cowles does not confirm the atrocity stories about “Reds” in republican Spain, she becomes suspect and is branded as a “sob-sister” by Captain Aguilera, which he tells her he “hates worse than a Red,” and then proceeds to deliver a classist tirade that “people are fools and much better off told what to do than trying to run themselves” (Ibid., 90). Just as she became a woman wanted for questioning in Republican Spain following her three day visits with General Gal, in Salamanca Captain Aguilera reports on Cowles’ Republican sympathies and makes sure she is refused a car by the press bureau. Once again, just like in Republican Spain Cowles becomes a wanted woman, and to make her escape calls on her influential friends.

**Committed Documentarian**

Randolph Churchill 1938 prediction that when Cowles gest “tired of looking at wars, she will make someone an excellent wife” was only half accurate. Though WWII was the last war Cowles reported on and few years later she got married, she did not stop researching and studying governments. Consisting of seven section, each devoted to one of the major cultural centers of the western world- London, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Rome, Paris and New York- Cowles’ *1913: an End and a Beginning*, documents the sociopolitical atmosphere drawing on news stories, society pages and photographs of the day. Embarking on this project in 1960s, attests to Cowles remaining an autodidact, committed to documentary practice she began in the 1930s. Focusing on the most popular news stories of 1913, the year before the outbreak of the
Great War, Cowles presents a record of the competing class perspectives which speak to the conflict between the new and the old.

In the London section, Cowles shows that the marriage of “ancient monarchy” and “modern democracy” allowed for the “aristocratic family” to remain “firmly in the saddle” in England (15). Though the Victorian propriety was being challenged by modern music and entertainment, the fashionable society, which longed for the regal ceremony of King Edward’s court, were not impressed by King George and Queen Anne, who were fonder of stamp collecting and antiquing, than entertaining. The war in the Balkans was replaced on the front pages of newspapers by the story of Emily Davison, a “militant suffragette” who threw herself under the king’s horse at the derby which resulted in her sustaining grave injuries and dying soon after (Ibid., 39). While Davison’s act of protest against patriarchal oppression captured the attention of international news media, and her funeral became a mass event spearheaded by Sylvia Pankhurst, daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst, the founding mother of women’s movement in England, the upper class and the Queen denounced Davison as a “horrid woman” whose stunt had resulted in the “jockey …[being]knocked about” (Ibid.). The critique of society women, concede with the opinion of the liberal government leader, Mr. Asquith, who did not think that the “‘legislation’ would be more ‘respected’ or ‘our social and domestic life’ more ‘enriched’ if women had the vote” (Ibid.,50). Women’s suffrage, the Marconi scandal and revealing styles of modern dress, were discussed alongside challenges from Germany vying for the title of top naval power, and United States coming into its own as an economic powerhouse (Ibid., 56-57).

Cowles’ sources of information are prominent newspapers of the time – *Daily Mail, Times* - as well as letters and books of politicians, influential society women and suffragettes -Lady Ripon,
Lady Diana Manners, Lloyd George, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Walter H. Page, and Sylvia and Emmeline Pankhurst.

In 1913, Cowles looks beyond the ‘authoritative’ historical narrative, and by turning to biographies and newspapers, follows in the footsteps of Virginia Woolf’s scrapbooking which the author employed as part of her writing process of TG. Jane C. Marcus, Woolf scholar who wrote the introduction as well as annotated the 2006 edition of TG, explains that Woolf in composing the modernist documentary that is TG was “asking us to join her in researching questions about the relation of women to ‘facts’, and unsettles us by turning to sources in biography, autobiography, letters and the daily newspaper, all notoriously excluded from the realms of academic, political or historical factual reality” (xlviii). Like Woolf, Cowles peppers 1913 with such impressive cast of actors, supporting actors and understudies many of whom reappear throughout the sections on Berlin, Italy, Paris and New York, to show her readers how the ruling classes benefit from the status quo.

Also, like Woolf, Cowles includes two inserts of photographs culled from pages of newspapers and archives related to 1913. Images of the royal family appear next to Emily Davidson’s falling under the hoofs of the horse, and the Pankhursts sisters, Christabel in refuge in Paris, and Sylvia in London. The final page features the leading political players: Winston Churchill on horseback, Lloyd George addressing strikers, Asquith, the liberal government leader and staunch opponent of suffragettes; Sir Edward Grey, the foreign secretary who presided over the Balkan Peace Conference; and Walter H. Page, the American Ambassador and critic of London’s life and society. This gallery of powerful patriarchal figures is much like the five photographs included by Virginia Woolf in the original edition of TG (1938): Lord Baden-Powell, a military hero and founder of the Boy Scouts; Stanley Baldwin, former Prime Minister
and Chancellor of Cambridge University; Lord Hewart, the Judge Lord Chancellor; Cosmo Gordon Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and last but not least, the state trumpeters of the Household Cavalry- excised from all subsequent editions and only restored in 2006. As Jane C. Marcus notes, in her introduction to the 2006 edition of TG “if you have read [it] without the photographs, you have not read the book Virginia Woolf wrote. The photographs of English professional men in their garb of power,… are there to alert us to the origins of war and fascism” (lxii). Although Cowles was not a pacifist like Woolf, it is not impossible that 1913 was inspired by TG. When placed side by side, Cowles’ 1913 could be seen as a post-prequel to Woolf’s TG, identifying the very members of the powerful class who resist suffrage and class parity which threaten their privilege and status and for which they are willing to wage war.

The position of a class informant Cowles and Woolsey employed in their writing about Spain contributed to their writing falling into obscurity. Much like Martha Gellhorn and Josephine Herbst, discussed in the preceding and following chapters respectively, Cowles learnt in Spain that objective reporting was counterproductive to the narrative of struggle the Republican and Nationalist Spain intended for the papers and history books. Like Woolsey who offered shelter in her home in Malaga to both the working class people as well as the family of pro-Franco Don Carlo, Cowles’s LFT is a unique documentary text in that it brings together accounts of struggle from the two Spanish fronts and in so doing exposes the hierarchy of privilege as it operated among the wealthy pro-Francoists as well as pro-Republican Spain international community.

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89 These men were identified by Rebecca Wisor in her dissertation “My country is the whole world:” Three Guineas and the Culture of Pacifist Dissent”
Chapter 3

“Fighting for Some Beyond”: Josephine Herbst’s *The Starched Blue Sky of Spain* and Muriel Rukeyser’s *Savage Coast*

In Josephine Herbst’s *Rope of Gold* (1939), when the protagonist, Victoria Chance finally arrives in Realnego 18, the remote village in the mountains of Cuba inhabited by sugar farmers and their families, she meets their leader who has become legend. Although Lino Alvarez is a man wanted by the police and authorities for having successfully resisted the assault of militiamen, when Victoria shakes his hand, it feels “strong, warm and trusting” (383). As a way of introducing her, the vice president of Realnego 19, Navarro, tells Lino that she “doesn’t speak very well but understands everything. Comprende totes” (383). A similar incident is described by Herbst in “The Starched Blue Sky of Spain” (TSBSOS), which was first published in 1960 in the *Noble Savage* and later in 1991 in *The Starched Blue Sky of Spain and Other Memoirs* (TSBSOSAOM). When the car in which Josephine Herbst is travelling from Madrid to Valencia en route to US, stops at a gas station, a young Spanish officer approaches her and asks if she remembers him. To refresh her memory, he tells her they had met when she visited a lookout point at Guadalajara, and then he proceeds to proudly announce that he is now attending school. Seeing this exchange an elderly Spaniard approaches them, and addressing the Spanish officer asks if Herbst is a “commander?” as “there were women soldiers in Spain, it was not so strange a question as it seems” (TSBSOSAOM 177). The officer tells the older man that she is American and turns his attention back to Herbst. But the older man, who is unable to follow their conversation in English, exclaims “But she understands everything!” to which the officer responds in affirmative adding “Muy inteligente” (Ibid.). The old man corrects the officer and calls Herbst “Valiente” (Ibid.).

Although Josephine Herbst spent some time in Mexico in early 1930s, the little Spanish she knew was not the same and not enough to effectively communicate with people in Cuba and
Spain. Yet in her war writing and fiction, both Herbst and her female protagonist although they do not speak the language are able to establish a rapport with people and earn their trust. The fact that they are American women does not suffice as explanation for the positive reception they receive from people engaged in a struggle with their governments and the ruling class. As discussed in the two previous chapters, female gender and foreignness more often than not was equated with questionable commitment and class colored gaze. Although Herbst did not speak Spanish, she was able to communicate to the people she would meet that their struggle was not unfamiliar to her or to the people in many other places she had visited. To convey this, rather than asking questions, Herbst spent much of her time with the people, actively observing their routines. This was not done in an attempt to pass, but in an effort to learn about their lives without interrupting and disrupting their routines. As mentioned previously in chapter one, big part of the daily war routine in Spain was waiting, and Herbst made that part of her documentary practice. Her constancy drew people to her who found comfort in listening to her as well as having her listen to them when they had something to tell. Through this practice of active observation, Herbst was able to glean much about peoples’ struggle within the struggle.

Although today Herbst’s fiction is just as little known as her journalism and her memoir, the documentary of 1930s struggle within the struggle which she devoted much of her life to and did not complete is reflected by the great amount of materials currently housed at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. Drawing on archival research, I argue that Josephine Herbst’s TSBSOS is an example of a documentary of struggle within struggle, which focuses on the acts of resistance to fascism and oppression that took place in small towns and villages as well as within the International Brigades at the time of the Spanish Civil War where foreigners and Spaniards built coalitions across boundaries of language and culture. I credit
Herbst’s ability to document this particular aspect of the Spanish Civil War to her active observer approach which she developed through her travels and reporting on the Great Depression in US and sociopolitical situations in Germany and Cuba in the 1930s. Tracing Herbst’s development as an active observer which began with her growing up in an impoverished middle-class family in the Mid-West and she continued to hone through her travels and in writing, functions as a transition to discussion of Herbst’s fiction. A section from *Rope of Gold* (1939), which is also considered in this chapter, illustrates how by framing past events with present events emphasizes the appeal these make for engagement of the “universal spectator” or “moral addressee” (Azoulay 390). In the portion of the chapter where TSBSOS section of Herbst’s memoir is closely read, I also include examples from Muriel Rukeyser’s recently discovered and published Spanish Civil War novel, *Savage Coast* (2013)(SC), which is another example of a documentary of struggle within a struggle.

Both Herbst and Rukeyser were experienced American journalists who had followed the press coverage of Sacco and Vanzetti execution, and contributed articles on the Scottsboro Case. Their fiction appeared in the March 1936 *Parisian Review*, and the two women corresponded briefly in 1940s about the possibility of collaborating on a “biography, novel as biography” of Kathe Kollwitz, a German artist famous for the protest art. This is an important point of connection as TSBSOS and SC very closely parallel Herbst and Rukeyser’s own experiences in Spain. Both women made only one trip to Spain during the war and their stay was relatively short in comparison to that of the other women discussed in preceding chapters. Nevertheless, Herbst’s TSBSOS and Rukeyser’s SC document the conflicted response in small towns and villages to the international presence in Republican Spain set against the backdrop of besieged

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Republican governments’ efforts to wage war against Franco and pro-Franco foreign invaders (Germans and Italians), and to garner support from foreign democracies.

The concept of “universal spectator” or “moral addressee” I refer to in this chapter comes from Ariella Azoulay’s *The Civil Contract of Photography*. These are helpful in broadening the perspective on documentary of struggle which is often presented as a triangular relationship between those who are victims, those who document their victimhood and those who will be prompted by such documents into action. This relationship is contingent on what Azoulay refers to as the civil contract of photography, which involves the “photographed persons” as agents or “participants citizens just the same as I am. Within this space, the point of departure for our mutual relations cannot be empathy or mercy. It must be covenant for rehabilitation of their citizenship in the political space within which we are all ruled” (17). Although not physically present, the “universal spectator” or “moral addressee” mediates the exchange of gazes between the photographed person and the photographer’s camera through which they enter into the civil contract. While Herbst and Rukeyser did not take photographs in Spain, the images of the civil contract in their writing abound and challenge this contract in documenting the struggle within the struggle in Republican Spain. In other words, Herbst and Rukeyser as active observers of the people’s struggle in Spain by being physically present interrogate both the mediating function of the “universal spectator” or “moral addressee” and the “photographed persons” ability to convey their citizenship.
Photographs of War Citizens

Fig. 13 Photographer unknown. No caption. Beinecke. Josephine Herbst’s Papers⁹¹.


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⁹¹ Back of the photograph inscribed “Rosa Gorey[sic].” Box 62, Spain folder: Personal papers, letters, misc from trip to Spain. Josephine Herbst Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

⁹² Handwritten on back of photograph “American Lincoln Brigade”. Box 100 folder: Photographs of different people. Josephine Herbst Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.
When placed side by side, the two photographs of militia women offer a rich case study of the gaze in war photographs. First, the studio portrait was most likely intended as a keepsake for a sweetheart. The fact that it is a color photograph with an ornate décor backdrop makes for a very curious war photograph. The militiawoman appears out of place in the sumptuous hallway, replete with grand, white stair case, heavy curtain and Persian rug, which are more fitting for an upper-class Spanish lady. Also her lips and cheeks both of which look flushed give the photograph a doctored quality. Where these touch-ups intended to make her more feminine, seductive? The flirtatious, almost flushed with excitement appearance of her face and her solid, compact body clad in uniform emphasize both her femininity and her role as a modern woman in the profession. Yet the manner, in which she is posing, with her hand in her pants’ pocket and the stylishly worn hat, is reminiscent of an image from a fashion magazine. The staged quality of the photograph suggests that it was the photographer who instructed the militiawoman to assume this pose by imagining that she is posing for her sweetheart and not for a camera. It is possible that the militiawoman recognizes the artifice of this photographic narrative. Her smile is one reserved for the outsiders who fail to recognize that such photograph is a document of her crossing class and gender boundaries reflected in the expensive backdrop and her military uniform.

The black and white snapshot was taken outside and depicts a militiawoman walking down a street. If John Berger’s concept that depictions of men and women often fall along the lines of the former acting and the latter appearing, in this second one the militiawoman embodies a soldier returning from battle. The house without a door which is visible in the background locates her outside the realm of the domestic. With a rifle hanging on her shoulder and hand in her pocket, she is a seasoned and confident militiawoman. The coat over what appears to be a
light color mono is long and heavy, and the blanket worn like a sash, is probably what functions as her bed. Her short hair appears thick with dust and dirt, and though her eyes are weary, like those of someone who had not slept, she seems to be straining to look off to the right, away from where the photographer stands. Her lips are either tightly closed or maybe they appear this way because she is trying to control a smile. Is she aware of the camera and refuses to meet its gaze? Unlike the studio photograph, taken indoors and staged, this outside snapshot aims to show the militiawoman as an active member of the military. Yet in both photographs, the militiawomen retain their agency and do not submit to the gaze of the camera. Though it may seem like a minor detail, the fact that they keep one hand in the pocket of their pants, suggests they are holding something back, as if they had not yet decided whether they want to enter into the social contract via the camera with the “universal spectator.”

While both photographs can be found in Josephine Herbst’s Papers at the Beinecke, it is unclear whether these had been given to her in Spain by the militiawomen themselves or by a photographer. Also, it is hard to tell whether it was Herbst who wrote the inscriptions on the back of the photographs. In her notes from Spain and letters in which she recounts her time in Spain, Herbst made no mention of these or other photographs. And none of the photographs, even though there are twenty-nine in the folder labeled “personal papers, letters, addresses, misc from trip to Spain” were reproduced by Herbst in TSBSOS when it appeared in the Noble Savage and later as part of her memoirs. It is important to note that none of these are images of “ruined houses and dead children” that Virginia Woolf refers to in TG. Instead, the photographs Herbst kept from the Spanish Civil War show the daily struggle and resistance to fascism engaged in by civilians. There is no question that Herbst recognized the documentary value of photographs, and

93 The photographs in Box 62 folder “personal papers, letters, addresses, misc from trip to Spain” depict both soldiers and civilians. Herbst appears in two photographs taken in Alcala de Henares, and one of these is reproduced as figure 16 later on in this chapter.
saved them with all other papers and materials from Spain. But by not including them in
TSBSOS, she demonstrated her commitment to preserving the agency of the photographed
people.

1930s Struggle

In early March of 1937, Herbst told Maxwell Perkins she was going to Spain, to which he
responded “What is the matter with you… Hemingway’s gone off, Dos Passos is there, Martha
Gellhorn is going. And now you. Don’t you know Madrid is going to be bombed out?”
(TSBSOSAOM 132). The only answer Herbst could give him was “because” (Ibid.). According
to Diane Johnson, Herbst “liked being where things were happening—hence the trip to Spain”
which echoes the morbid curiosity charge leveled at Gellhorn and Cowles by other scholars and
critics (xx). But Martha Gellhorn putting away her pacifist book, and declaring herself an anti-
fascist after reading anti-Republican Spain propaganda in German newspapers, and Virginia
Cowles, who reported on the fascist designs of Mussolini, convincing the editors of pro-fascist
Hearst’s papers to let her cover both sides of the Spanish Civil War, were committed and
experienced journalists. And just like their male counterparts, these women’s fear of missing out
on Spain was much greater than possibility of death. For Herbst going to Spain “was the question
of [her] own fate…as much as it was any actual convolution going on in that country,” since she
had been documenting struggles in US, Europe and Latin America as early as 1930
(TSBSOSAOM 133).

Herbst was granted a visa to Spain from by the General American Consulate on March
23, 1937 in Paris94. On March 25, 1937 Herbst obtained a pass from the Spanish Embassy in
Paris which permitted her to travel in the Republican Spain’s territory. Valencia was Herbst’s

94 All this information comes from the documents, passports and bills found in Josephine Herbst’s Papers at the
Beinecke Box 62.
point of entry into Spain as a letter of introduction she obtained from on K.K. Timann on March 26, 1937 was addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Alvarez Del Vayo, whose offices were in Valencia. In the letter, Timann states Herbst had been “sent to Spain by an American News Syndicate” and pointing out the “weakness of [Republican Spain’s] propaganda in U.S.” he asks that the “weight of [Herbst’s] name in American press” combined with her being “entirely devoted to our cause will have extraordinary value”. And to illustrate Herbst’s devotion to the Spanish cause, Timann adds that she will “do a lecture tour in U.S. after her return”. The very next day, March 27, Herbst left Paris and arrived in Valencia. On April 1, 1937 Herbst, a North American writer, was given a safe conduct pass permitting her to travel to Madrid and back to Valencia valid for ten days by the Colonel in the Ministry of War. Then on April 3, 1937, Herbst was given a pass to “move freely around Madrid” by the Army Corp Bureau Chief, M. Salgado. A bill from the Hotel Florida indicates, Herbst stayed in Madrid from April 21 through April 27, 1937. On April 25, she was given a ten day safe conduct pass to the front by the Minister of War. On May 6, according to another safe conduct pass, Herbst left Madrid to Valencia, where she arrived on May 8 and she stayed there at Hotel Victoria until May 12 in. From Valencia she made her way to Barcelona where she remained until 14 of May, according to her passport. From there she traveled to Paris en route to U.S.

The expiration dates on the passes given to Herbst indicate the restrictions on foreigners in Republican Spain, especially women journalists on “special assignment” who were constantly on the move. Herbst mentions in TSBSOS that unlike the passes and documents of male reporters she traveled with in Spain, hers were reviewed more often and more closely by sentries at checkpoints. In an entry made on April 28 in the journal she kept in Spain, Herbst notes that the car she was traveling in to visit the Thaelmann Brigade was stopped by guards who only
wanted to see passes for women. On the way back the next day, the car was stopped several times and “no one’s pass asked except mine-mujer (woman) not wanted in Madrid”\textsuperscript{95}. Another group of women in Spain who were under constant surveillance were the prostitutes who often entertained correspondents and soldiers at the Hotel Florida, and were just as often arrested. Outside of Madrid, Herbst observes the “proud authority of the Spanish woman” which to her is most pronounced in “women of sixty” who “come proudly home, erect magnificently wrathful as they shook their fists at far distant towers of enemy smoke piercing the sky, or burst out into gorgeous obscenities oddly mixed with symbolic religiosity, which reduced my memory of fashionable ladies back home, with their little stereotyped lavender curls and their mincing high heels, to a parody of a potential they had forfeited”\textsuperscript{95}(SBSOSAOM 161). Herbst’s commentary on “fashionable ladies back home” is very similar to her disparaging comments about Martha Gellhorn in Spain\textsuperscript{96}. It seems that Herbst was critical not so much because she was jealous, but because their stereotypically western feminine appearance made them more conspicuous in a manner synonymous with the upper-class. This could cast suspicion not only on Gellhorn, but other correspondents, as to whether their sympathies lay with the Nationalist or Republican Spain.

Although in TSBSOSAOM Herbst calls her arrival at the Hotel Florida in Madrid as “cozy” where Hemingway, wearing “kind of khaki uniform with polished boots,” and appearing very much at home, welcomed her with a hug and a jokingly chastised her for letting a sixty-pound fish get away during their fishing trip in Key West few years ago, she felt out of place

\textsuperscript{96} Herbst’s comments about Martha Gellhorn are relatively tame in TSBSOS in comparison to what she wrote in her Spanish Journal. In an entry made on April 22, Herbst wrote “hate this quality too prevalent here, catering to somebodies. Complete provincial quality lack of judgment. Basing reactions on most chest-thumping obviousness. Pushing whore like M gets pretty much around on what she’s got. Don’t mean in the head. The pants. Plays all. Takes all. Never speaks to anyone not a name. Glib stupid tongue.” (Beinecke, Herbst Box 62/Spain folder: JHerbst journal Spain.)
The “knapsack” with “a package of tea, some chocolate bars, and six packs of cigarettes,” her knowledge of German and some Mexican Spanish and “the typewriter,” she felt “held a ghost of a chance against the new weapons” (Ibid., 133). Herbst came to dislike the “tiresomely superficial” atmosphere at the Hotel Florida. The impressions of the Hotel Florida were echoed by Arturo Barea, Madrid censor, in autobiography *The Forging of a Rebel*: “Apart from some hard-working ‘veterans’ of Madrid, such as George Seldes and Josephine Herbst, the foreign writers and journalists revolved in a circle of their own and an atmosphere of their own, with a fringe of men from the International Brigades, Spaniards who touts for news, and tarts” (643).

Her reasons for going to Spain in spring of 1937, were similar to those which took her to Germany in 1935:

I hoped to find in Spain an antidote to the poison I found in Germany when, in 1935, I went back to a country familiar to me…to discover if there was any actual underground movement…There were always people, real people, each of them an individual spirit with its own peculiar past. (TSBSOSAOM 134-35)

Though the Spanish Civil War was the first, and the only war, Herbst would report on, coming from an impoverished middle-class Iowa family, whose class and financial standing was reduced in the beginning of the twentieth century, struggles of farmers and workers were not unknown to her. Her fiction and journalism, which she began publishing in early 1920s and based on her travels through the U.S., Latin America and Europe, attest to her propinquity for seeing and establishing rapport with people across classes and cultures. Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua, author

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97 Herbst was critical of writers like Hemingway in what she describes as uniform, and Rafael Alberti “in his sparkling boots and with his camera in hand, and his propensity for arranging groups for pictures, then leaping into the center of the group at the last moment while he thrust the camera into someone else’s hand” (TSBSOSAOM155).
of 1985 biography, *Josephine Herbst*, categorizes Herbst’s articles as “documentary reporting” aimed at “evoking both intellectual and emotional responses in their audience” (105). While Robert L. Craig suggests Herbst wrote in the style of “advocacy journalism” as her articles “focused on how alliances between business, industry, government and the military oppressed common people when they attempted to organize politically” (117). Both Bevilacqua and Craig’s observations support the reading of Herbst’s journalism as that composed by an active observer dedicated to translating the struggle for the “universal spectator.” As a whole, Herbst’s writing reflects her commitment to documenting 1930s struggle, the importance of which she recognized before many of the government New Deal agencies, like the FERA and FSA, began to do so.

Herbst spent the 1920s and 1930s traveling around US, and to Germany, Cuba and Spain, which in 1940s were cited as evidence of her Communist sympathies, and caused her and her work to fall into obscurity. Because Herbst went to Spain in April 1937 without an assignment and her articles focused on issues of class oppression and exploitation, she had a difficult time placing them with publishers. Her critics accused her of being a Communist and keeping silent about the party’s spreading influence in Spain. Though her Trexler trilogy, published in 1933, 1934 and 1939, was praised by her champions as an important proletarian and radical text of the decade, they found her silence on Spain confounding. But Herbst was not silent about Spain. She not only remained active in supporting the Spanish cause after returning to U.S. in July 1937, she published four articles, and wrote a play, and an autobiographical essay, “The Starched Blue Sky of Spain” (TSBSOS). This essay was the beginning of a project which would occupy Herbst until her death in 1969. With the publication of a biography by Elinor Langer, *Josephine Herbst: The Story She Could Never Tell*, in 1983 and of *The Starched Blue Sky of Spain* and

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98 The three books which comprise Herbst’s Trexler Trilogy- *Pity is Not Enough* (1933); *Executioner Waits* (1934) and *Rope of Gold* (1939) were praised and compared to that of Dos Passos.
Other Memoirs in 1991, many believed the time had come for rediscovery of Josephine Herbst’s work.

Belonging to the generation of Hemingway and Dos Passos, more than that of Gellhorn and Cowles, by spring of 1937 Josephine Herbst was an established novelist and journalist with a list of publications that included four books, twenty short stories and over a dozen articles which appeared in *Smart Set, New Masses, Parisian Review, American Mercury*, and *Scribner’s.* The first two tomes of her Trexler trilogy, *Pity is Not Enough* (1933) and *Executioner Waits* (1934), were described by Bruce Catton as “the American success story in reverse,” and earned her the praise from critics who considered her “one of the few American important women novelists” (qtd. Langer 145). Herbst was also known as a socially and politically engaged writer, who closely followed the Sacco and Vanzetti’s case as well as the violence against miners in Harlan County, Kentucky and the Scottsboro trial. While she did not go to Alabama, Herbst did write an article for the *New Masses,* “Lynching in the Quite Manner,” in support of the unjustly accused nine African-American boys in the Scottsboro case. She also traveled extensively in 1930s and reported on the impact of the Great Depression on farmers in her home region of Midwest, on the conditions of sugar farmers in Cuba for *New Masses,* and increasing Nazi censorship and oppression in Germany for *The New York Post.*

**Becoming an Active Observer**

Herbst’s education and class awareness began at home with stories of her family’s migration, struggle and failure to attain middle-class status. Her parents’ origins were on the East Coast, in Pennsylvania, where their families settled having emigrated from Switzerland and

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99 Herbst contributed this article to *Negro Anthology* (1932) compiled by Nancy Cunard, an American-born activist, poet and journalist who also went to Spain during the war and began the campaign *Writers Take Sides* in support of the Republican Spain.
Germany. But as newlyweds, Herbst’s parents, William Benton Herbst and Mary Frey Herbst, moved to Sioux City, Iowa where her father began a farm implement business. The business was never substantially profitable, and when Herbst was nineteen her father was forced to close it and began working in a hardware store. In her 1933 *Scribner’s* article “Feet in the Grass Roots” on Iowa farmers strike, Herbst recalled how as a child she accompanied her father on trips to collect outstanding bills from which he returned empty handed but she came back informed about farmers’ lives. She wrote:

As I child I drove all over this country with my father,… [we]would take the team and drive around to see what cash we could pick up on old debts….My father lost his business trusting farmers who could not pay their debts. Land prices climbed during those years. Yet he went out burdened with outlawed debt of farmers who year after year didn’t have cash to meet their payments. Some farmers sold out and came to town, but I never saw a farmer living “high.”…The town man grumbles more than any farmer I ever heard of, but he likes to talk of the bellyaching farmer.

Year later, Herbst would recast the memories of these trips she took with her father and include her younger sister, Helen, as a short story, “You Can Live Forever” (1934). In the story, Amos Wendel, an everyman character, attends the Industrial Workers of the World convention on invitation of his coworker, Gus, and brings his two daughters, Victoria and Rosamund, along.

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100 Herbst travelled through the Dakotas and Nebraska; republished in *Scribner’s* 1937 January issue under the title “Farmer’s Holiday” and in 1940 included in *Modern American Vistas* edited by Howard W. Hintz and Bernard D.N. Grebanier and published by Dryden Press in New York.

101 Herbst incorporated Wendel family from “You Can Live Forever” into her trilogy, the first volume of which, *Pity Is Not Enough*, would appear also in 1934. Also the protagonist of “Top of the Stairs” (1930) and “A Very Successful Man” (1933), David Trexler, is the wealthy uncle in the trilogy. The characters of Victoria and Jonathan Chance from the trilogy, based on Josephine Herbst and John Herrmann, first appeared in “The Golden Harvest” (1936).
After the convention is broken-up by quarrelsome townspeople, Gus invites the Wendels to his home but they are treated with suspicion by few of the convention participants who join them there. The presence of Victoria and Rosamund is representative, as Barbara Wiedemann points out, of the young women of the new generation “becoming socially aware”(84).

If William B. Herbst provided his daughter with the opportunity to see first-hand the disparity between the struggling farmers and small town business owners whom capitalism pitted against each other, it was her mother, who inspired the passion for reading and writing in Josephine. Mary Frey Herbst, whose learning was sacrificed so that her brothers could pursue higher education, was a resourceful housewife, who stretched the family’s humble resources as far as they would go, and a skilled story teller. Her stories of the Frey family and uncle Joe, “Poor Joe,” who made and lost a fortune after the Civil War, inspired Josephine and her Trexler trilogy 102. In her memoirs, Josephine Herbst recalls often finding her mother pouring over books and letters at the kitchen table after she had cleaned up the kitchen and everyone had gone to sleep. The Herbst matriarch encouraged her four daughters, of which Josephine was the third, to travel and pursue higher education before they got married. In her first short story, “The Elegant Mr. Gason,” published in *Smart Set* in 1923 under the pseudonym Carlotta Greet, Herbst reimagined her mother’s account of first love as a story of a married woman whose middle-class comforts make her question the choices she made. Emily Bowden, based on Mary Frey Herbst, a middle-class wife and mother, recalls her first love, Mr. John Gason, while preparing a meal in a kitchen for her two teenage daughters and husband who had just returned from England. What prompts Mrs. Bowden to think of John is the mocking comments of her daughters and husband about the young Gason, John’s son, they had met on their trip. The reader is made privy to

102 Josephine Herbst, to whom friends referred to as Josie, was named after her mother’s brother, the “Poor Joe”. Herbst drew heavily not only on her mother’s stories but on letters and other family ephemera which hung in the family’s barn like “four swaying sacks…sacks of family loot hanging from the attic rafters” (TSBSOSAOM 38).
Emma’s memories of John with whom she spoke of literature and life, ideas and opinions her daughters and husband know nothing about nor care about since these have no value to their middle-class, consumer driven lives. As her family interrupts these reminiscences and calls her to join them in the living room, Mrs. Bowden remains in the kitchen imagining meeting her first love for the first time.

One of Herbst’s earlier essays “Iowa Takes to Literature,” which appeared in 1926 issue of The American Mercury, reveals the young writer’s criticism of small town pretentiousness to cultural and literary enrichment in the form of gossip rather than informed and sustained inquiry. Taking to task the daughters and wives of Iowa’s business men, Herbst pokes fun at the clubs formed by these women whose household chores have been eased and reduced by modern conveniences of appliances. While their fathers and husbands go to lodges in an attempt to “get as far away from the early things” in Iowa’s instances hogs and corn which are the mainstay of their business, the middle-class women in their own clubs take upon themselves to set the tone of “civilization in the state” with clumsy attempts at snobbery and elegance. Herbst concludes by calling Iowans “modern pioneers” contending with noise of radios, speed of cars and, in the case of women, convenience of household appliances who have not profited by the prosperity brought freedom as the “half-baked knowledge has dulled rather than sharpened Iowa female brain” (470).

Both “The Elegant Mr. Gason” and “Iowa Takes To Literature” reflect Herbst’s reservations about marriage and small town life, and at the same reveal her ambivalence regarding the future of individuals like the Gaston men, Emily and Iowans, or “modern pioneers.” In her first two novels, Nothing is Sacred (1928) which deals with consequences the desire of middle-class lifestyle has on families, and Money for Love (1929) which reflects the
artificiality of modern romance, Herbst further explored those very issues of class and gender.

While the two eldest Herbst sisters forfeited the opportunity to continue their education, married and settled in Sioux City, when Josephine graduated high school, that offer from an uncle to finance a college education was no longer available. But encouraged and inspired by her mother, Mary Frey Herbst, and her frequent talk of life “back east” where the Frey relatives settled in Pennsylvania in the 1700, in 1919 Josephine Herbst headed to New York City. But before that Josephine Herbst spent nine years working to obtain a college degree beginning at Morningside College, then transferring to University of Iowa, and after a hiatus during which she worked as a teacher, enrolling in University of Washington in Seattle and finally in 1918 earning her degree in English at University of California, Berkeley. In the 1920s, Herbst went to Europe, and lived in Germany for three years where she was “ordained a dollar Princess with no more than $300 a year” before she made her way to Paris, where she met other American writers, among them Ernest Hemingway and her husband, John Herrmann (TSBSOS 133).

During the latter portion of the 1920s and all through the 1930s, Herbst continued her education as a writer and journalist, while traveling and working in New York, Russia, Europe and South America. But she ultimately settled in a rustic cottage in Erwinna, Pennsylvania, not too far from where the first Freys settled, and made it her home until her death in 1969. It was through the numerous trips to “Germany, Cuba, Mexico, Latin America, the Midwest, and Spain” that Herbst came to recognize, as Diana Johnson points out, the importance her small town upbringing had on “her writing and her life” (xxiii). Although Johnson does not elaborate on this point, Herbst’s travels in a way seemed to have been an attempt on her part to reenact the immigrant experience of her ancestors. She would draw on her travels as well as on her mother’s

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103 In her 1951 essay “My Pennsylvania Dutch Home”, which was published in the June issue of Tomorrow, Herbst recalled her mother often speaking how “everything ‘back east’ had been built to last for all eternity…In comparison a mid-west town was flimsy” (TSBSOSAOM 18).
stories and the family papers “letters, journals, account books, and worthless deeds,” which her mother much like the family archivist kept in the Herbst home attic in “four swaying sacks,” for her trilogy (TSBSOSAOM 39). Gathering oral histories and personal ephemera became a lifelong practice for Herbst as among her papers, which are housed at the Beinecke, there is a treasure trove of just such materials from the Spanish Civil War.

Personal Politics

But Herbst’s recordkeeping has come under fire from those close to her, like Hilton Kramer, her friend of latter years and executor of her papers housed at the Beinecke, and Elinor Langer, her scholarly champion and biographer. Just as Josephine Herbst’s opinions and her life were full of contradictions -- she disliked the Midwest yet returned to it throughout her life and revisited it in her fiction, she supported ideologies of the Left but was critical and suspicious of its practice, her family’s loss of the middle-class standing and her hard won college education made her a champion for the disposed and persecuted -- so was her writing through which Herbst sought to document the complexities of 1930s struggle.

Langer in her biography of Herbst, which was ten years in the making, presents Herbst “as a radical heroine and martyr of the feminist movement”, labels which Hilton Kramer considers inadequate. To him in the last decade of her life, Herbst was

a failed writer and as a failed woman…Call her, if you like, a heroine and a martyr—that, certainly, will be the approach of those now bent on enlisting Josie Herbst in their various causes—but to do so is, among much else, to sentimentalize a tragedy. It was, in any case, as an example of a certain kind of failure that we knew her, and as a failure, oddly enough, that she made her claim upon us.
For Hilton Kramer the ultimate instance of Herbst’s failure as a writer was her inability to complete TSBSOSAOM. This was due, Kramer contends, to Herbst’s inability to come to terms with an affair she had with a young painter, Marion Greenwood, whom she met at an artist colony in Yaddo in 1932 and the fact that this affair led to the break-up of her marriage to John Herrmann and divorce in 1940. Like this affair, Kramer argues, “Josie could never deal with either the sexual or the political events that had destroyed her life, and neither could she deny them” and this contributed to her being unable to finish her memoirs. Moreover, Kramer maintains that because Josephine could not cope with the romantic ‘failures’ in her life and kept her younger writer friends, in the latter part of her life, who were unfamiliar with the radical period of 1930s, in the dark about her past, attest to her being a Stalinists. As he puts it “It is in the nature of Stalinism for its adherents to make a certain kind of lying—and not only to others, but first of all to themselves—a fundamental part of their lives.” Yet, Kramer, whom Herbst named the executor of her papers, admits to having censored much of the Herbst’s archive.

While Herbst has been discussed as radical, proletarian and feminist writer in numerous studies on literature in 1930s, it is the label of Communism which had been pegged on her in the 1940s that has been most enduring. Like many writers and artists who supported the Spanish cause and went to Spain in the 1930s, Herbst was accused of Communist activity in 1940s, but to date, no proof has been found confirming this charge. In “Yesterday’s Road” section of TSBSOSAOM, Herbst discusses this juncture of her life. Langer’s thorough research in this respect elucidates that because Herbst and Herrmann attended the International Writers’ Congress in Russia in 1930 and in her journalism Herbst sided with struggling farmers and their families in U.S. and Cuba, she has been branded a Communist. As Langer points out, while John Herrmann did join the party in 1931 and moved to Washington in 1934 to work for the party,
“Josie was more irate with the tunnel vision perspective of the radical movements in 1930s” which “much like the professional and literary circles were fortified by exclusion of women- the radicalness of the politics retained the sex bias” (100). Leftist politics offered an alternative in terms of language of equality and community, as Alice Kessler-Harris and Paul Lauter point out but “the Left tended to subordinate problems of gender to the overwhelming tasks of organizing the working class and fighting fascism” (ix). In a June 12, 1952 letter to Gerhard P. Van Arkel, Herbst listed her affiliations with various organizations to dispel any lingering suspicion that she belonged to the Communist party. In that list, she included her serving as a treasurer on a “committee for Browder for president of the CP—this was a committee for literary people and Waldo Frank was treasurer” adding that if she “had been a “secret member” she “would not so publically serve on this committee”\footnote{Herbst, Josephine. Letter to Gerhard P. Van Arkel. 12 June 1952. Josephine Herbst’s Papers. Beinecke. Yale University, New Haven.}.” She spoke at the first League of American writers conference in 1935, adding “I never became a member of this body, never paid dues, and withdrew thereafter…After 1939 I had no connection with any of these committees whatsoever”\footnote{Ibid.}. In 1935, Herbst was also on the board of directors of the League of Women Shoppers. By 1940, on her voter registration card she identified herself as a democrat.

**Special Assignment and Woman’s Angle**

According to Bevilacqua, Josephine Herbst was always on “special assignment” which is valid a designation seeing as throughout her career as a journalist, Herbst reached out to various publication with story ideas (104). As early as 1933 Herbst convinced *New Republic* to publish her coverage of Farmers’ Second National Conference in Chicago. In the end the article appeared in early 1934 in *New Masses*, and then was reprinted in *Labor Monthly*, as editors of
*New Republic* found it to be too in favor of farmer’s demands and critical of Roosevelt’s New Deal programs. This led to Herbst being asked by *New Masses* to travel in fall of 1934 to Iowa, Nebraska, and the Dakotas, and report on the farmers’ situation. Also, *New Masses* ran three articles by Herbst based on her trip to Cuba to cover the sugar farmers’ struggle there in spring of 1935. In the latter part of that same year, Herbst was in Berlin on assignment for a six part series, which appeared in the *New York Post*, on growing underground resistance to Nazi oppression and censorship.

Recalling in a 1966 letter to Helen Yglesias of *The Nation*, Herbst writes that she went to Spain in “February 1937 as a free-lance correspondent” and that she remained “there until July.” Since twenty-nine years had elapsed, Herbst’s misremembering that she in fact left Spain in June, as the visa stamps in her passport indicate, is possible. But the statement that she had gone over to Spain in 1937 without an assignment, clarifies the mystery of why there aren’t any news stories from Spain written by Herbst. Several Herbst scholars as well as Paul Preston have made the claim that Josephine Herbst was a NANA correspondent in Spain. While among Herbst’s papers there is a letter from NANA naming her as a correspondent, it is dated March 28, 1938, and pertains to her trip to South America, not to Spain. It is true that Herbst tried to secure an assignment with NANA as that would have made her entry into Spain easier and covered her travel expenses, she was not successful or rather, her literary agent, Maxim Lieber failed to deliver on his promise.

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106 The article “Farmers Form a United Front” appeared in *New Masses* 10 (Jan 2, 1934): 20-23, and was accompanied by the letters exchanged between Herbst and editors of *New Republic* regarding commission and then refusal to print the article. In February, the article was reprinted as “American Farmers Ride into Action” in *Labor Monthly* 16 (Feb 1934): 114-19.

In a letter to Lieber dated August 27, 1937, Herbst wrote:

I still think that if I had gone myself to NANA before I left I might have gotten a definite contract for a definite number of articles. I say that I might have done it myself on the basis of the work I did for the New York Post. At the time, when I left for Germany…as you remember you talked to Saylor and he was simply uninterested. When I went down myself, I got what I wanted and an advance also^{108}.

What most likely happened was that Lieber secured for Herbst a letter from NANA identifying her as a special correspondent, similar to that which Gellhorn obtained from Collier’s before her departure to Spain. As Herbst explains in TSBSOS, “I was on a special kind of assignment, which meant I would write about other subjects than those covered by the news accounts” (139).

The only document which suggests that Herbst may have had in her possession such a letter from NANA is a letter dated March 25, 1937, written for Herbst by the Ambassador of Spanish Republic to the authorities and Popular Front Militia asking that they extend all courtesies to “Josephine Herbst-Herrmann correspondent of the North American News Alliance Agency”^{109}.

None of the five safe conduct passes which were issued to Herbst in Spain identify her as a correspondent of NANA.

There is some discrepancy in accounts offered by Herbst’s scholars as to whether she wrote about Spain following her return to U.S. in July of 1937. Johnson states that Herbst’s “staunch inability to be dishonest …kept her from writing about Spain just after her visit there during the civil war. Rather than distort, [Herbst] would set the subject aside. When she came to write about it, she captured with absolute freshness, after more than twenty years, the contradictions of the civil war”^{xx}. On the other hand, Langer notes that Herbst’s wrote about “collectivization of land and factories [in Spain],” which were subjects “more favorable to the


^{109} Josephine Herbst Papers. Beinecke, Yale University, New Haven.
anarchist, than to the Communist position, and in the end she published only half dozen minor and unpolitical articles about Spain” (227-228). Unfortunately in the biography, which opens with Herbst’s reflections on seeing a film on the Spanish Civil War in 1960s, Langer does not mention the titles or where Herbst published these “half dozen minor and unpolitical articles” about Spain. These are also absent from the list of Herbst’s publications included at the end of Langer’s biography. Bevilacqua in her 1985 Herbst biography and Barbara Weidemann in her 1998 study if Herbst’s short fiction provide more complete lists of Herbst’s publication, including the four articles—“Spanish Village” in The Nation, “Housekeeping under Fire” in Woman’s Day, “Evening in Spain” in The Fight Against War and Fascism, and “Night Comes to the Valley” in Direction—she wrote about the Spanish Civil War.

In opening lines of TSBSOS, Herbst herself asserts that “[a]part from few news accounts, a few descriptive articles, I have never written anything about Spain,” and in the next sentence adds “It had got locked up inside of me” (132). This last statement is a clear indication that what Herbst saw and heard in Spain was important enough to hold on to, but at the time no one was interested. Here Langer’s claim about Herbst’s perspective not falling in line with that of the Communist party leading to rejection of the articles is on point. The clearest example of Herbst’s writing on Spain being rejected because it did not espouse the dominant political perspective is the case of the play, Spanish Road, which Herbst wrote, following her return from Spain, with Nathan Asch. The Theater Union which closely adhered to Communist party’s ideology felt the play contained “some basic ideological flaws” and the producer told Herbst to make changes in accordance with the party’s ideologies (Langer 230). She refused and attempted to convince the producer to relent, arguing their ultimate goal was the same—aiding the Spanish cause—but he would not budge (Langer 230-31). Frustrated Herbst called the producer a “stupid son of a bitch”
and “slapped him hard on the face” (Ibid.). The play premiered on March 22, 1938 but neither Herbst nor Asch was given credit. Aside from copy of the play’s program from The Living Newspaper, which credits the League of American Writers as the “collective author,” no other materials relating to the play are among Herbst’s papers.110

Before Herbst left for Spain, only The New Republic contacted her and expressed interest in articles on Spain.111 Bruce Bilven, one of the editors, wrote Herbst on March 10, 1937 asking for articles on “what the daily life of the people behind the lines is like. To what extent do the normal occupations of the workers continue? Do the street cars run, are the theaters open, does journalism continue? How does the situation affect the life of children, of all ages?” Essentially Bilven was asking Herbst to write articles from the woman’s angle, or human interest stories. But just as it happened with Herbst’s 1933 article on the Farmers’ Conference in Chicago, The New Republic decided not to publish the Spanish articles Herbst submitted after her return from Spain. On October 15, 1937 Malcolm Cowley, another editor of The New Republic, returned Herbst’s “Spain Behind the Fighting Lines” not because as he points out it “conflicts” with the “selections from a Volunteer in Spain,… the series of five articles of deponent,… two very long articles by Ralph Bates, plus another compilation of Hemingway’s newspaper stories,” but because there is too much material on Spain and she took too long to submit it. As the manuscript of “Spain Behind the Fighting Lines” is not among Herbst’s papers, it is uncertain whether she published it under a different title. But what this incident once again illustrates is

110 On March 22, 1938, an adaptation of the play The Spanish Road Josephine was put on by The Washington New Theater. Copy of the program can be found in Elinor Langer collection of J.H YCAL MSS 475 at the Beinecke in Box4/folder Miscellaneous Correspon. And Other JH materials (81a). According to the program, this two act play broken down into twelve and sixteen scenes, respectively, dramatizes the story of the Spanish Civil War beginning with Old Spain, the Election, rise of Franco, and War, and then progressing to scenes dealing with Nazi Concentration Camp, Paris Street, Somewhere in U.S.A. and International Brigade. Sylvia R. Milrod is named as the director. In the bottom, right hand corner of the first page Josephine Herbst wrote “Idiots: Nathan Asch+ I wrote + directed it. J.H.”
111 All the correspondence mentioned in this section can be found in Josephine Herbst Papers at the Beinecke, Yale University, New Haven.
that news media outlets when having a choice opted for those articles written by men, like Hemingway. As previously noted in chapter one, Hemingway’s Spanish articles lacked engagement with the subject, “the daily life of people behind the lines” which is what The New Republic asked Herbst to report. As Nora Ruth Roberts argues in “Hemingway and Herbst in Spain”, in contrast to Hemingway and other male reporters, Herbst wrote about Spain in a “distinctly feminine voice” to conveyed to the readers the grander aspect of the Spanish Civil War or what “the ordinary people were fighting for” (204). The gendered quality which Roberts ascribes to Herbst’s articles once again illustrates the category of human interest story, or woman’s angle, within which women reporters were expected to write about the war.

*The Nation* also cited oversaturation of material on Spain and preference for Louis Fisher’s articles as reasons for returning Herbst’s two articles which were initially accepted. On July 28, 1937 Margaret Marshall wrote Herbst asking for edits to an enclosed article previously submitted and inquiring about “the other article you were going to send in.” Herbst submitted two articles to *The Nation* both of which pleased the associate editor, Margaret Marshall who in her letter from August 4, 1937 states she liked these better than “the first…we are using one of them in our next issue. I am turning over the other to Freda Kirchway. It is quite possible that we cannot use more than two in which case it would seem to me that the two should be the ones you have just sent since they are really of a piece.” But on August 20, 1937 Kirchway returned the two articles Marshall passed on to her, saying “I like immensely the one that we printed” referring to “Spanish Village” which appeared in the August 14, 1937 issue, “but the one on the social evening and the second new piece on agriculture, etc. seemed to me rather less interesting.” Furthermore, Kirchway adds that since Louis Fisher has returned to Spain, the
magazine will be receiving a substantial amount of Spanish coverage, much more than they can accommodate.

The two articles *The Nation* rejected, “Evening in Spain” and “Night Comes to the Valley” were published in *The Fight: Against War and Fascism* in November 1937 and *Direction* in April 1938, respectively. In July 1937, Herbst was approached by *The Fight* and *Woman’s Day* with requests for articles on Spain. In a July 19 letter, Joe Pass of *The Fight* asked for “an article up to about 2000 words- a human interest story.” Herbst agreed to submit an article not for the August but for a future issue, and Pass in his August 20 letter reiterated that he is looking for “a human interest story” which shows “something about the women in Spain, especially about the working-class women, it would help a great deal”. Similarly, Isobel Walker Soule of *Woman’s Day*, wrote on August 31, asking for an article on Spain, yet offered Herbst some more freedom in terms of focus “a thousand word article…on Spain’s children, women, wounded workers, anything you want to write and from any angle”. Herbst submitted “Housekeeping under Fire” which appeared in the inaugural issue of *Woman’s Day* on October 1, 1937.

While all four publications asked Herbst to write human interest stories about Spain, she was reluctant to do so as she expressed it to Max Lieber in her August 1937 letter “You know quite well I wont[sic] write the kind of stuff the women’s journals want112.” But just like Gellhorn and Cowles, and many other women journalist at that time, Herbst knew she needed to write within the parameters of the human interest story or woman’s angle but to also find a niche of her own within this genre. This is not to say that Herbst was blind or indifferent to women’s role and struggle in Spain. On the contrary, women and women’s issues are very much present in

112 Josephine Herbst Papers. Beinecke, Yale University, New Haven.
the four articles she published on Spain as well as her autobiographical essay, TSBSOS, just as they are in her per-Spain articles on U.S., Germany and Cuba. The scene Herbst had seen in U.S. in 1933 with farmers’ wives and children working long hours, was the same in Cuba in 1935, where a farmer’s wife from Realnengo 18, who shoulders the entire burden of supporting the household and four children while her husband fights to keep their land, tells Herbst “Always this struggle…never any end. Struggle, struggle” (49;10)\textsuperscript{113}. In Germany, housewives who cannot get butter in stores are critical of the circus-like spectacle orchestrated by Hitler for May Day festivities, and denounce the hatred authorities perpetrate by discouraging them from shopping in Jewish-owned stores; as Fran Pommer of Essen told Herbst “it would be better if the men now alive were no more\textsuperscript{114}.”

The perseverance, strength and courage of Spanish women in struggle is what Herbst documents in the aptly titled “Housekeeping under Fire” article for Woman’s Day. This brief article which consists of six photographs with captions and one column of written text reflects the resourcefulness of Spanish women and children. They make homes in the underground or “warehouse basement[s],” as depicted in the first photograph, where a mother and her four children appear in a scantily furnished interior engaged in domestic tasks of sewing and stoking a fire in a small stove (16). The economy of the language used by Herbst attests to the limited resource these women have at their disposal to care for their families. They make fire with mere wood chips, and turn potatoes, olive oil and an egg into a meal. The other five photographs of women holding a baby boy, doing their hair, cooking on a small fire on the street, lying awake


\textsuperscript{114} The second of six articles by Herbst in Behind the Swastika series in New York Post, published on October 29, 1935, and subtitled “Underground Newspapers Increase their Circulation Rapidly in Dogged Campaign to Overthrow Hitler” (second page one). Josephine Herbst papers Beinecke Box 64/folder: Behind Swastika partial.
between sleeping children, and standing on line at a soup kitchen are what commonly would be filed under family snapshots, yet here figure as evidence of total warfare, where daily tasks of housekeeping are matter of life and death.

Scenes of women’s courage also appear in the other three Herbst’s articles which focus on the lives in small towns and villages outside of Madrid. In “Spanish Village,” women use the same potato omelet recipe which they prepare over outside cooking fires just like the women in Madrid, described by Herbst in “Housekeeping Under Fire.” The ten wealthy men who until 1936 owned the fertile lands where grapes, olives, wheat and corn were grown, in the village of Fuentidueno de Tajo\textsuperscript{115}, have since abandoned it. Of the village men, “sixty…had gone to the front, and twenty more were drilling in the fields used for threshing grain” (169). The women and elderly now work in the fields, and with the proceeds from their first successful grape crop they bought an irrigation pump. This has allowed them to plant tomatoes, peppers and melons to enrich their diet, something the wealthy landlords had not allowed (169). While the living conditions are poor, as many houses have been bombed by fascist planes, everyone earns a wage for their labors: “Every working man gets five peseta a day; women get three fifty and children two-fifty” (169)\textsuperscript{116}. On Sundays, the village people put on their best clothes, watch the men train for battle and young women ask Herbst’s companions to take their “pictures to send to their husbands at the front” (170). No photographs of women from this photo shoot in Fuentidueno de Tajo are included in the article, but there are three unlabeled photographs in Herbst’s papers that

\textsuperscript{115} This was the village where Joris Ivens and Hemingway filmed their documentary, \textit{The Spanish Earth}.

\textsuperscript{116} In Madrid in May 1937, Herbst conducted with an interview Arturo Barea about agrarian reform in this region of Spain. This information about farm collectivization and wages cited here comes from that interview the transcript of which can be found at Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, in Elinor Langer collection of J.H YCAL MSS 475, in Box 4.
were most likely taken earlier that day depicting the women washing clothes in a river and a woman in a headscarf.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 15. No caption, date or name accompanies this photograph.\(^{117}\)

This photograph was probably not one which the woman wanted taken with the intention of sending it to her husband. The black scarf around the woman’s head frames her smiling face. She is not old, or at least does not look older than mid-thirties as her lively eyes and smile betray. Yet the black headscarf adds a somber quality to her appearance. Is she in mourning? Two other women who are also present in the photograph do not face the camera and their blurry figures stand in sharp contrast to the smiling woman. Though she looks at the camera her hands have not stopped working with a piece of cloth. The photographer seemed to have walked in on the women folding laundry, and approached one of them, asking her to smile for the camera. Even though she obliged the photographer with a smile, the woman in the headscarf is not smiling for him or for the camera. In part, her smile might have been elicited by Herbst who might have been present at the moment the photograph was taken. Also, like the smile of the militiawoman

\(^{117}\) Josephine Herbst Papers, 1901-1969. Beinecke. Box 62, Spain, folder “personal papers, letters, addresses, misc from trip to Spain.” Yale University, New Haven.
in figure 13, this woman’s smile communicates her pride in the work for the village and its people, and in participation as a citizen of the Republican Spain.

Herbst’s two other articles “Evening in Spain” and “Night Comes to the Valley” are accompanied by illustrations. The four illustrations captioned “The Fascists’ God,” “We Shall Win in the End,” “Do Not Give Up!,” and “They Bury Seed, Not Corpses” by Castelao appear at the top of the first page of “Evening in Spain”(13). Sadly in the only available copy of this article they have been replaced by four black rectangles. Drawings by Luis Quintanilla, a “Loyalist, war hero recently come from Teruel” whose work at that time was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, illustrate “Night Comes to the Valley.” A drawing called “Catalan Soldier” appears on the second page, while four occupy the last page (19). The top two of those four depict women and children and bear the captions “Women Go Mad” and “Andalusians bombed from the air”, while the two bottom ones portray men, unshaven with almost identical appearance “Death in the Trenches”, and “Civil Guards Taken Prisoner”(21).

In “Night Comes to the Valley”, Herbst continues the story she began in “Spanish Village.” As Herbst’s companions begin to take photographs, the children crowded clamoring to be taken. Old women hastily took off scarfs from their heads, took a posture of complete tranquility planting their canvas-shod feet firmly and looking the camera in the eye. A Spanish militia man leaped over the rocks to bring his wife …She came out with face washed a golden brown, hair somehow brushed to a miracle of silky smoothness, earrings like ripe red seeds.(20)

It seems that the elder women assume a challenging pose in front of the camera. The fact that they bear their heads and assume positions of unmovable composure and look directly at the
camera suggests they are exercising their agency by communicating with their gestures and presentation that they are ready to be photographed. They are almost bracing themselves for and against the camera shot. The young woman is thrust in front of the camera by her husband, who most likely wants the picture for himself.

Herbst begins the story of “Spanish Village”, Alcala de Henares, the birthplace of Cervantes, which until recently had been a popular tourist destination, by noting that in the last month it had been bombed twenty times. The tourists have been replaced by the Rakosis battalion, named for a Hungarian revolutionary, which includes Spaniard, Balkans, Germans, French and Americans who are “outcasts in their own country” (18,20). The soldiers flock to Herbst who speaks German, as if she were “their last contact with the outside world” and tell her of their lives back home, about persecution and exile. Like the women and children of Madrid and Barcelona who live in basements, described by Herbst in “Housekeeping under Fire,” majority of the Alcala de Henres women, children and few elderly made their homes in the mountains. An “American boy” tells Herbst that the night he spent with the Spaniards living in the mountains was “the best in his life” (20). Similar to her visit to Realnego 18 in mountains of Cuba, Herbst is invited to visit the Spaniards’ cave dwellings. There a group of women show her a newborn baby and express their concern for milk which is scarce. Clearly the women felt they could trust Herbst. Because Herbst had seen the same struggle among families in the Midwest, and because she knew better than to arrive empty handed, she has brought canned milk as a gift for her hosts.
It is very possible that this photograph captures Herbst being shown the baby born in the caves. The women and girls in this photograph outnumber the men. Set against the background of the dry earth on the slope of a hill behind them, they appear lost. Their gazes reflect this as some look off in the distance like the elderly woman seated in the far right and the woman who stands with her back to the camera, just behind Herbst. Herbst is the only one, except for the man in the far left, wearing a beret. Yet she does not appear as an outsider, a foreigner in the photograph. On the contrary, she is very much part of the group of women surrounding the mother with child. Herbst’s seems to be saying something to the proud, smiling mother and gesturing with her hand towards the baby. The man in a dark jacket, to the left of Herbst, appears to have interrupted her and thrust himself between her and the mother. Unlike him, Herbst’s presence in this photograph is neither one of intrusion nor one of inclusion. Interestingly enough, there are no photographs among Herbst’s papers or in any books on the Spanish Civil War of her

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118 Josephine Herbst papers. Beinecke, Yale University, New Haven.
in any of the cities she visited. The above photograph and another shot in which Herbst looks at the camera, both taken in the village of Alcala de Henres, are the only ones of her in Spain. This is indicative of her perspective on the struggle of the people in Spain, both Spaniards and those who supported the Spanish cause, and their joint effort to foster communication across barriers of culture and class.

In “Evening in Spain” Herbst explores the challenge of establishing relations within the International Brigades as well as with the Spaniards in towns and villages where the soldiers are stationed. As a way to express their gratitude, the soldiers organize an evening of entertainment for their hosts. Earlier that day leaflet from enemy planes was dropped which read:

_Foreigners of the International Brigades:_
You have been cheated by shameless recruiting agents.
If you come over to Nationalist Spain you will not be harmed.
Your lives will be spared and you will be sent back to your homes.
Several of your comrades who came over voluntarily have already been repatriated.
FRANCO promises it.(13)

The blatant propaganda of this message is intended to undermine the International Brigades’ support for the Spanish cause as well as weaken their resolve. That evening the “16 nationalities of soldiers” who “have been uprooted” from their countries come together with the townspeople in their new, though not permanent home, of Spain to demonstrate their commitment. They do so through performances: Czech soldiers singing in Spanish, a man from Budapest playing a violin, a group of Italians singing, and a skit about Hitler’s radio broadcasts in which he “calls for more room for Germans” and more children, which is countered by a Spanish broadcast announcing to its listeners that to throw over an oppressor all they need to do is unite (30). In a response to the
International Brigades’ performance, a group of young girls from the village sing which makes their “parents in the room …[weep] with pride” (30). Before everyone sits down to dinner, a Spaniard makes a speech about working together in the village and about internationalism which to him “wasn’t a sound coming from the mouth. It was something they studied to arrive at, not just in the future but now. …the little children were being taught the first steps toward the kind of world they were all fighting for” (30). It is through this social evening of music, entertainment and food that the Spaniards and their foreign supporters establish a rapport and commit to struggling together.

In a draft version of “Evening in Spain”, Herbst described what she saw that night as her first close up of war. The pictures and books, it seems to me, gave too much attention to going over the top. War is by no means confined to action. In this particular war the kind of headway made in back of the lines is strategic. The problem among the fighting troops are complicated by the different nationalities. In the Thaelmann battery of seventy men there are sixteen different nationalities. There is the question of food; a fine delicatessen ham and butter sent to Germans was completely unappreciated by the Spaniards who had never tasted butter and didn’t want to, craved olive oil and rice. But an even more delicate adjustment is that between the troops and townspeople”119.

While Gellhorn and Cowles’s accounts from the Spanish Civil War include their observation of soldiers’ lives, training, and injuries sustained at the front, Herbst in her articles and in more detail in TSBSOS explores the challenges that not only lack of military training but language and culture posed to cohesion of the battalions. Rather than depicting the military clichés of order,

preparedness and hierarchy of ranks, in a manner of “pictures and books” which most often are intended to present a clear delineation of heroes and the enemies, Herbst includes the concerns and fears of civilians and soldiers who were not only fighting against an enemy, but also for some beyond” (TSBSOSAOM 135). The “Evening in Spain” reflects the first steps to that “beyond” many fought for in Spain.

The Starched Blue Sky of Spain

In late 1950s, at the same time as Martha Gellhorn was putting together The Face of War, Josephine Herbst, too began work on a book project turning to the journal she kept in Spain and the articles she wrote following her return to U.S. In the title section of her memoir, “The Starched Blue Sky of Spain”, Herbst describes the daily routine of the correspondents in Madrid:

Hemingway had two cars for his use with gas allowance, but he was working on the Spanish Earth 120. It didn’t make for a good feeling among some other correspondents, particularly those who were not on regular assignments and had only short time allotted to them. I didn’t feel so good myself seeing those cars go off. Other people came out of the hotel and set off briskly, but where did they go?...Everyone knew where he was going, what he was doing, except me. Everyone talked learnedly during the evening meal on the Gran Via about the number of shells that had come in, number of people killed. (138-39)

120 Joris Ivens, Hungarian documentary filmmaker, who was aided by Hemingway, both creatively and financially in making of the film. Upon its completion in May of 1937, Martha Gellhorn arranged for the documentary to be screened for the Roosevelts and the president’s advisers at the White House. President Roosevelt felt the documentary lacked a clear connection between the two story lines: that of Fuentidueno de Tajo villagers digging an irrigation ditch and guerrillas planning to blow up a bridge, which was imperative to transport of supplies and food. While the film failed to change Pres. Roosevelt’s neutrality stance towards the plight of the Spanish Republic, Hollywood was a more receptive audience.
Echoing the observation made by Gellhorn about the “war correspondents, experienced men,” Herbst highlights the hierarchy among the correspondents in Madrid. Though somewhat ambiguous, Herbst places herself neither with the correspondents without assignments nor with the ones on assignment. She names Hemingway as a specific example of the latter, because they were contemporaries and fellow writers from the Midwest who apprenticed in Paris in the 1920s. And Hemingway was in Spain on assignment with North America Newspaper Alliance (NANA), the news agency for which Herbst too hoped to report on the war. Herbst, unlike Hemingway did not go to Spain “to be the war writer of [the] age” and did not believe that “War gave answers… What was the deepest reality there was in an extreme form here, and to get it [one] had to be in it”(Ibid.150). While Hemingway occupied a suite in the Hotel Florida with a cupboard stocked with provisions, got passes to the front, and invitations to parties hosted by various political and military officials, Herbst did not feel at home in Spain. Except for her brief stay with the Hungarian, the Rakosis battalion stationed on the Jarama front, and with the remaining residents of Alcalá de Henares, looked after by the mayor’s wife, as she recorded in the journal she kept in Spain, for the most part she felt guilty about eating and anxious about whether her journalism would in some small portion repay the hospitality she received.

Although TSBSOS is the fourth and last section of her memoir, with its other three parts covering Herbst’s childhood, the 1920s and early 1930s, it was in fact the cornerstone of this large project as Herbst envisioned it, and the first section she wrote and published. She described TSBSOSAOM, in a letter of November 12, 1959 which accompanied a copy of the SBSOS section to Lawrence Seymour of Atlantic Monthly, as a book that is to be about life as well as literature…There is more about Spain in the book but [“The Starched Blue Sky of Spain”] will, I think, give you some idea… For this book is to be
about ideas, as they distinctly emerged in the life of writers, and in the work. The impulses back of modern art and modern writing were all entwined and the background to all this is to be welded together in a continuity that often takes a definitive narrative form, as in the section you will see, and where the issues about the Spanish war began to emerge through the reactions, also, of Hemingway and Dos Passos, in their opposing views.\textsuperscript{121}

The falling out between Hemingway and Dos Passos over the disappearance of Jose Robles captures the conflicting positions assumed by those who supported the Republican cause in Spain. Whether Jose Robles was in fact guilty of communicating classified information to the enemy or was simply a victim of the contagion of suspicion which plagued individuals with foreign affiliation is unclear to this day. But as Herbst became involved in this intrigue at her first port of call in Spain, in Valencia, where she was told of Robles’ death and made to swear not to reveal the identity of the person who imparted this knowledge to her, she quickly recognized the duplicitous atmosphere in Spain as reminiscent of what she had seen as early as 1930 in Russia and as recently as 1935 in Germany and Cuba.\textsuperscript{122}

To trace and document the contradictions of the 1930s decade, Herbst turned to her files which contained letters she had exchanged with both, “most of the ‘best’” writers of her generation and later generations. These she supplemented with library research. Continuing in that same letter of November 12 to Seymour Lawrence, Herbst wrote

I don’t see writing chopped off by generations, or even by periods of time. The underlying material that should be the writer’s concern and that sometimes gets lost… has also been blurred by the critics who have made an incantation of a few names and so

\textsuperscript{121} Josephine Herbst Papers. 1901-1969. Beinecke, Yale University, New Haven.
\textsuperscript{122} See Paul Preston’s \textit{We Saw Spain Die: Foreign Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War} for a detailed account and discussion of this incident.
have obscured from view the actual multicolored thing which was really there. I would like to give the color back to what often seems a monotonous scene.

I spent some months at Newberry Library to do research on the background. That is, the period from 1910 to 1920—after that, I know it first-hand. And some of this material is to leak through… It is to be a very personal kind of history too. A kind of personal memoir that makes re-seeing, if I can use such a word, come true.

Herbst, like Gellhorn and Cowles, sought to document the people’s experience of the Spanish Civil War as she had witness it. Having learnt through her education as a journalist often on ‘special assignment’, Herbst, like Gellhorn and Cowles who were and remained for the duration of their writing careers and lives avid readers and researchers, cross referenced what she knew and learnt against what she did not know through research. But unlike Gellhorn, whose Spanish Civil War articles focused on the experience of war in cities like Madrid and Barcelona, and Cowles who reported from both the Republican and Nationalist Spain, Herbst was interested in exposing the complexities and contradictions, often omitted from accounts of the war so as to present a clear picture, that permeated people’s daily lives during the Spanish Civil War.

People’s struggle was what Herbst had been documenting since the 1920s and what informed her understanding of class and gender oppression. In an additional note penned the next day, on November 13, to Seymour Lawrence Herbst explained

I am not interested in expounding differences in factional politics… I want to explore why the 30s was so claustrophobic when its internationalism in a political sense was so pronounced… There was a vast amount of hospitality in the twenties. In the thirties the divisions set up. The cold war pretty well congealed much…. The design of the book has
to be internal design, which allows me to roam in time and place with the focus on meaning\textsuperscript{123}.

In spring of 1960, Herbst published “The Starched Blue Sky of Spain” in the first issue of \textit{The Noble Savage} (NS), a short-live literary magazine edited by Saul Bellow. Seymour Lawrence wrote her a letter of praise and added that one of the editors who also read the piece felt it had “great quality and first-rate human reactions that [made him like Herbst] much better than Martha Gellhorn”\textsuperscript{124}. In the spring of 1961, “A Year of Disgrace,” appeared in the third, and final issue of NB\textsuperscript{125}. It was not until 1968 that “Yesterday’s Road” was published in the \textit{New American Review} by Theodore Solotaroff. And it was Solotaroff who ultimately edited these three sections as well as one previously unpublished section, “The Magicians and Their Apprentices,” which with the introduction by Diana Johnson were published with HarperCollins Publishers as TSBSOSAOM in 1991.

According to a Dec 18, 1962 letter to Seymour Lawrence, initially Herbst was planning to call the memoir “The Burning Bush.” But by March 23, 1967 as a letter from Peter Davidson, who took over for Seymour Lawrence at Atlantic Monthly Press, the publisher to which Herbst agreed to give the first reading of the memoir, she decided on “The Starched Blue Sky of Spain” as the title which Davidson called “a splendid title!” The structure and order of sections in the book as Herbst described it in a July 1964 letter to Davidson was to be

not strictly about the 30s. Nor is it dealing with chronological time. It actually begins with 1930 and a trip to Russia with correspondences to a most important first journey in my life, over the mountains of Oregon to the coast. This section is called The Magicians

\textsuperscript{123} Josephine Herbst Papers 1901-1969. Beinecke, Yale University, New Haven.
\textsuperscript{125} In the SBSOSAOM, “A Year of Disgrace” is incorrectly noted as having appeared in Noble Savage no. 2.
and their Apprentices. The trip to Russia was the beginning of a reversal; before that, it had all been outward flow toward Europe. There are about 35 pages about early Iowa but none of this I-ME tiresome stuff. In fact, that has been the problem, I hate these personal anecdotal narcissistic visions. But the witness has to be validated—for what one sees is through the screen of what one is. There are sections about the twenties, but mostly dovetailed in with later episodes to give correspondences. For instance, a long section, printed in Nobel Savage called A Year of Disgrace was about the 20s. There is more about Spain than was printed in the Noble Savage called A Starched Blue Sky of Spain. There is a long section about Hemingway and other people in the 30s, called The Hour of Counterfeit-Bliss…

The “Hour of Counterfeit Bliss” as its own section is absent from the memoirs but Hemingway, Dos Passos, as well as Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles appear in TSBSOS. As the above quoted description of the memoir illustrates, the amount of material, revisions and scope of the project while fascinating proved detrimental to its completion. Also, Herbst remained true to her autodidact ways and while working on SBSOSAOM, continued to read about Spain and the 1930s: Elliot Paul’s *The Life and Death in the Spanish Town*, James Agee and Walker Evans’ *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, Vincent Brome’s *The International Brigades*, and Dan Aarons’ *Writers on the Left*. In 1962, Herbst read Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook*, which as Langer points out, made her think about “political and moral integrity…difference between being an anachronist and an artist” and made her realize that “history was moving on” (318).

While she was working on TSBSOSAOM, Herbst was also writing a series of interrelated stories, tentatively entitled “The Watcher with the Horn” (TWWTH), each focusing on a writer and all connected by a recurring female character, Margaret Heath, based on the author herself.
Of these, she only published “The Hunter of Doves,” which fictionalizes her friendship with Nathaniel West, in *Botteghe Obsure*, an Italian periodical, in 1954\textsuperscript{126}. Of particular interest to this chapter are the two stories from this project which exist in manuscript form among Herbst’s papers, “Outside Time” about Gustav Regler, a German writer who was the commissar of the XIV brigade in Spain, and “Bright Signal” about Ernest Hemingway. The first recounts Regler’s return from exile in Mexico after the Spanish Civil War and the second describes Hemingway, renamed Jonathan Redding, before he came to Spain.\textsuperscript{127} The fact that Herbst was working on TWWTH and SBSOSAOM shows that not only was she constantly revising but that she was excavating of all that she had seen in Spain, all “that had got locked up inside of” her (SBSOSAOM 132). Her passports, hotel bills and safe conduct passes from Spain, all of which she kept, prove that Herbst always intended to return to the subject of Spain in writing.

Elinor Langer describes Herbst’s TSBSOSAOM as “convoluted and serpentine, so filled with forebodings and recapitulations…that it is ultimately more as a condition of her life in the present than as a commentary on the past that it left its mark” (304). Alfred Kazin’s *New York Times Book* review, “Josie at the Center of Things,” was more favorable: “Every word of it is in contrast to the commercial swamp and academic frivolity of American writing today. It is a startling personal document that tells more about the political and social life once led by an independent American writer than anything you will find in the literary histories now being prepared under university auspices”(2). But he criticized Herbst for being jealous of “Ms. Gellhorn’s good looks and finery” and not addressing the “full complexity of the political struggle behind the lines” (16). Jan Clausen, on the other hand, in her review for *The Nation*,


\textsuperscript{127} Check box and folder number
calls TSBSOSAOM “a radical document…with enough truth about historical motivations and human texture of the political life” (594-595). Also Clause brings up a great point that Herbst and many other “rebel women writers” like Tillie Olsen, Zora Neale Hurston and Muriel Rukeyser “who came to prominence between the world wars,” had been for years sentenced to “exile of their out-of-print novels, their reportage moldering in defunct left journals, their unfinished manuscripts, their hidden correspondence” (Ibid.). While Herbst’s work has been read alongside that of Tillie Olsen and Zora Neale Hurston, TSBSOSAOM has not been considered in relation to Muriel Rukeyser’s writing on Spain. The two women, though they did not know each other at the time of the Spanish Civil War, met sometime before the fall of 1941.

**Telling the Truth**

Describing her life as one “lived in the first century of world wars,” Muriel Rukeyser, poet, writer and activist, paid close attention and reported on many of the same social and political conflicts in U.S. as Herbst, before going over to England in 1936. Rukeyser, born in 1913 to a middle-class, wealthy Jewish family, grew up in Manhattan on Riverside Drive. A “child of city,” as Marilyn Hacker describes her, Rukeyser observed and interacted with people from various class and ethnic backgrounds. She began writing poetry in high school and continued writing while a student at Vassar College. Like countless Americans during the Depression, Rukeyser’s father, a concrete salesman went bankrupt, and Rukeyser left college after two years and began working as a journalist.

Much like Herbst, as well as Gellhorn and Cowles, Rukeyser realized that for the nations who adapted the “neutrality” stance, Spain was considered a place to “stop communism” while the true villain, fascism, was allowed to flourish (Kennedy-Epstein 2). As a young girl of
fourteen, Rukeyser followed the press coverage of events leading to the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. In 1931 she went to Alabama to report on the Scottsboro Case and was arrested for fraternizing with African-Americans. The next cause which Rukeyser lent her support to was the negligent exploitation of miners by their employers in West Virginia who attempted to cover-up the harmful exposure to gases which caused scoliosis. In 1936, Rukeyser went to London and was planning a trip to Finland and Russia, but was asked by *Life and Letters To-day* to travel to Spain and cover the People’s Olympiad scheduled for July 19-26 1936 in Barcelona. The five days Rukeyser spent in Spain in July 1936 coincided with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, and she witnessed the first response of the Spaniards and foreigners to the fascist supported coup. Rukeyser spent only five days in Spain yet was profoundly affected by what she had seen there, and wrote a novel, *Savage Coast* (SC), shortly after her return. Like Herbst in *TSBSOS*, Rukeyser drew on her experiences in Spain as well as the articles she had written for *The Life and Letter To-Day, New York Times* and *New Masses*, and her poetry. She also documented her journey out of Spain in a poem “Mediterranean” and in 1974 recast that experience in an essay “We Came for the Games” published in *Esquire*. The protagonist in SC, Helen, like Rukeyer, travels from Paris to Barcelona by train which stops in a small town of Moncada. There she spends three days before being driven with a group of People’s Olympiad participants to Barcelona in a truck with armed guards. It was in the town of Moncada, or more specifically from the window of the train that Helen observes the first response to the war. While Rukeyser’s SC documents the first steps toward international mobilization in support of Republican Spain, Herbst’s *TSBSOS* continues by documenting the experiences of those fighting with the International Brigades almost a year after the outbreak of the war.
In the end of the third section of her poem, “Käthe Kollwitz,” originally published in *The Speed of Darkness* in 1968, Muriel Rukeyser’s speaker asks “What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life?”, and answers “The world would split open.” When Rukeyser submitted SC, which she wrote shortly after she left Spain in summer of 1936, her publisher, Covici-Friede dismissed the manuscript, calling its protagonist “abnormal”. Luckily Rukeyser did not abandon SC, and as Rowena Kennedy-Epstein, the scholar who discovered it among Rukeyser’s papers at the Library of Congress, writes in the introduction to the first, 2013 edition “[Rukeyser] continued to edit the manuscript, working on it throughout the war, publishing articles and poems on her experience in Spain”(x). The three of her five day stay in Spain, Rukeyser spent on a train and in a small town of Moncada where the train stopped. This provided Rukeyser with the opportunity to witness the mixed response to the start of the first total modern war. While Helen, the protagonist of SC based on the author herself, feels the foreign occupants of the train should express their support for the people of Spain, her fellow traveler, a Swiss man, disagrees, stating that as “foreign nationals…we have no place in their politics”(76).

Similarly, Herbst refused to claim expertise or offer an analysis of the politics in Spain during the war. Because she is writing twenty years later, Herbst’s begins TSBSOS section of her memoir by addressing the issue of her presumed silence about Spain and what she had seen there in 1937. Everyone wanted Herbst to provide the “authoritative answer” on the Spanish question, and all she had in her arsenal were contradictory accounts (TSBSOSAOM 131). Upon her return from Spain in summer of 1937, Herbst writes: “You could not begin to talk in terms of contradictions. Everybody…wanted the authoritative answer….But it may have seemed to me
that what I had brought back was too appallingly diffuse” (Ibid. 131)128. The fifty-two folders of TSBOSAOM’s manuscripts in various stages of revision, notes on possible projects, letters as well as photographs, and children’s drawings from Spain show that Herbst found the “antidote to the poison” of fascism in Spain, but because what she found came from people who “were in it”, the exiles turned international brigadeers and the poor and working class Spaniards, and was contradictory, it could not be reduced to a black and white image of enemy and victim. As a result her writing, like that of Gellhorn and Cowles though for different reasons, has been questioned as to its truthfulness.

In TSBOSAOM, Herbst presents the Spanish Civil War as the result of the 1930s breakdown of financial and economic infrastructure through the collusion between the upper-class and governments, and its impact on the farmers. The perspective of class struggle was the one which Herbst had employed in her 1930s journalism. In TSBOSAOM she compares the experience of “pick[ing] up twigs to make a fire” with the mayor’s wife in the village where the Spanish Earth was being filmed, to the twigs she had seen in 1935 “old women in Germany” gather in the forest and carry “on their backs” to make a fire (164, 135). Herbst also points to the barricades, “the vestiges of outmoded fighting,” erected throughout Barcelona in May of 1937 where she had seen Anarchists and Communists fight, with the former accusing the latter of siding with Franco. This to Herbst was not merely an illustration of factionalism among Republican ranks, but the phenomenon particular to the Spanish Civil War, which was “the last war in which individuals were to enter fully with their individual might. But what a welter of conflicting views

128 In a 1939 letter John Dos Passos wrote to inquire about the situation in South American where Herbst was staying at the time. He follows up his rhetorical statement “I bet South America’s a mess- I’d love to go there but not to write about” is followed by his support of Herbst’s not writing about Spain as he continues “Mighty Laudsome of you not to have written about it. There ought to be a series of medals struck off for people who refrain from writing about subjects they don’t understand-we wouldn’t need many.” He concludes the letter with a reminiscence “shall always remember how human you looked and acted at the old Florida that morning- amid many depressing circumstances that was one thing that med me fee l good” (Box 5, folder labeled Dos Passos).
this implies! The soldier is not only fighting against an enemy but also for some beyond” (Ibid. 135). It was “for some beyond” that International volunteers came to Spain. In SC, Helen looked toward it in July of 1936, as she traveled on a train from Paris into Spain: “Let it all pass, American strikes and civil cases, grievances in love, looking for rest, seeing only tensions everywhere, nightmares of coming struggle, the concentration camp, the gas-mask face, nigh voices, German pain, threat of all forms of war” (Rukeyser13). So did Herbst, a “vivid dreamer” who in spring of 1937 saw “there were intimations of possible miracles in Spain” (TSBSOSAOM 134). But Vincent Brome writing his 1966 book, International Brigades, could not imagine or see it.

Rather than accepting the assignment to review Vincent Broome’s book, The International Brigades for The Nation in 1966, Josephine Herbst submitted a letter “explaining why [she] felt she couldn’t properly review the book” which the magazine ran in lieu of a review.129 In what The Nation titled “Spain’s Agony: A Period of Exposure,” Josephine Herbst declares that she remains partisan in regards to the Spanish Civil War, just as she was almost thirty years before when she arrived in Madrid in early April of 1937. While she declares that she does not like Brome’s book, she recognizes that it is a work of research and it would read better alongside George Orwell’s Homage to Catalonia and Hugh Thomas’ The Spanish Civil War. Yet her review is not merely an exercise in sacrificing Brome’s work at the altar of ‘better’ books by other men—she mentions George Orwell and Arthur Koestler -- on Spanish Civil War, which have been misread as proof that Spain was a pawn in Russian’s Communist game. Reminding the readers of the 1930s historical and political context, a time when the United States and Britain refused to help the Republican Spain, and at the same time alienated its own working class with unemployment checks and WPA jobs, Herbst points out that “Communists had

dynamism no party in Spain possessed; they had discipline, organizing capacity, drive, understanding of modern machinery, political technique; something new in Spanish history. Their missionary fervor appealed to many youths” (91,93). This, according to Herbst, is at the root of Brome’s failure to recognize why so many international volunteers came to Spain to support the Republican cause. Consequently, Brome’s lack of attention to the forces that inspired the International Brigadiers, Herbst points out, results in his complete omission of the subject of the “civilian population who took the brunt of the hardships and who also suffered daily casualties” (93).

The serenity and severity of the title – *The Starched Blue Sky of Spain* – reflects the exposure and dangers faced by people in rural regions during the Spanish Civil War. But it was outside of Madrid and other major cities of Spain, in villages and at the front that Herbst felt more at home. There she slept on the cold floor and spoke with people to whom she was “like news of an outside world in which they still had a place because they were not forgotten” (TSBSOSAOM 148). On days she did not have transportation or passes to the front, Herbst would simply sit in the hotel lobby “savoring a piece of bread and some tea”, and talk with the “boys on leave [who] would have a chance to drop in to see me” (Ibid., 138). These visits would be interrupted by the scent of food cooking in Hemingway’s room and although he would extend the invitation to Herbst, she would refuse it in solidarity with the visiting soldiers—“you couldn’t run off from your visitors. Tomorrow they might be dead” (Ibid.). The topics of the conversations at the Hotel Florida that Herbst has with both the correspondents and soldiers stand in stark contrast to what is communicated to her outside of Madrid, on the front near small towns and villages.
What Herbst’s TSBSOSAOM offers is a broader more complex picture of daily challenges to communication and compromise between the internationals and oppressed Spaniards who did not fully agree with each other but recognized the importance of commitment to struggling together. While most of the news correspondents she encountered in Madrid were after measurable facts “number of shells that had come in, number of people killed”, Herbst wanted to know the people (Ibid. 139). At the same time she was interested in how the Spaniards really felt about the influx of some many foreigners, even soldiers. As Herbst notes the Spaniards are “proud and so deeply self-reliant, that also has been a wrench to be brought to a pass where outside help was needed” (Ibid. 162). The Republican war propaganda often depicted the savagery and violence of the Moors, German and Italian fascists fighting within the ranks of Franco’s Nationalist forces. Herbst was particularly interested in the foreign presence in Spain, especially in terms of reception by Spaniards of foreign aid and support as well as fear of those foreigners who aided Franco -- Italians and Germans. There were conflicting reports about the reaction among Spaniards to this foreign invasion and this Herbst notes was particularly the case where the International Brigades were stationed near villages and had to devise ways of winning over the locals. One such instance was the social evening organized by the Thaelmann battalion which Herbst attended, and described in her article “Evening in Spain”.

Unlike in Hotel Florida where she refuses Hemingway’s invitation to a feast of eggs and ham, at Murata Herbst joins two soldiers in peeling potatoes and falls into easy conversation with them. While the soldiers are pleased at the sight of a woman at the front, because she is a writer whose articles on Cuba they had read, they are comfortable talking with her naturally rather than regaling her with stories of blood and bravery. Most reporters who visit the front enjoyed watching the soldiers train, but Herbst prefers observing them when they are “loafing around.”
She often refers to the soldiers as “boys” whose “youthful bodies” are disguised by the uniforms “masking their innocence” (142). Back home, they “could not bear to shoot a rabbit” while here they are handling dated guns that often failed, or pull pins out of grenades too early and ended up injured or dead.

In SC, Helen witness just such young boys with odd collection of guns in their hands leave on a truck from Moncada, a small town where the train she is traveling on to Barcelona has stopped indefinitely due to a general strike in response to Franco’s rebellion. As the truck is about to depart, an old woman runs up “[lays] hold of one of the boys, dragging at his leg… His face changed; his lips closed twice, mumbling… as he recognized his mother…the truck started to roll… Dragging, the old woman” who “stumbled a few steps with it, as the boy watched her holding his leg, still astonished, still motionless” (Rukeyser 38). This silent scene speaks volumes through the exchange between the old mother and her young son. Helen who does not speak Spanish can only describe the young man’s response to his mother’s physical refusal to let him go as “mumbling”. Even if Helen understood what the boy “mumbled” she would not be able to translate it as this is the first image of armed response to conflict she is yet to observe.

The challenges to military cohesion among the soldiers of International were not limited to language barriers and their different tastes in food. Because they had been at the front for sixty days and the promised relief had not shown, many refuse to take the typhoid vaccine. The doctor tells “the men …to take off their tunics” hoping “the presence of a woman might shame the boys into submission” (TSBSOSAOM 144). The Americans comply and stand in line “stripped, to the waist, the pale cage of their ribs looked pathetically vulnerable” (Ibid. 144). But the British and Polish soldiers are adamant about not taking the vaccine claiming it will weaken their arms.
Later Herbst learns that their disobedience is in effect a strike against not getting the promised leave.

The insight on the war that men of International Brigades provide Herbst with, stands in stark contrast to how they are depicted by majority of the correspondents. “None of [the soldiers]” Herbst writes “was trying to live up to any heroic image of the soldier; their modesty was one of their most engaging traits” (Ibid. 146). They openly criticized the inflated reports of victories published in the papers as well as “too little [being] done by the homebodies in America, Franc and England who might have gone out on prolonged strikes to protest the infamous nonintervention pact or might even have dipped down more substantially into their own pockets” (Ibid. 146). Once Herbst establishes a rapport with the soldiers and gains their trust, they begin to talk about their fallen comrades whom they remember not as soldiers but for “simplest ordinary things; the way one rolled cigarette, or another had squatted in the dust to make good maps of their position with his finger” (146). When those same soldiers visited Herbst at the Hotel Florida on leave, they would not mention any of this, and instead would talk of war and casualties. Herbst concludes TSBSOS by setting the record straight. Even though a Spanish soldier refers to her as “muy inteligent” and an elderly Spaniard calls her “Valiente”, Herbst writes that upon her departure from Spain she was neither. The only act of courage she attributes to herself is writing in her journal while in Spain, as a means to “put heart in myself” (178).

Herbst wrote frankly both in the journal she kept in Spain and in TSBSOS that she had proven time and time again in her life to be a coward, would sicken at the sight of blood, and when she set out for Spain she “certainly didn’t run to it as crowds do to a fire. I was respectful and frightened” (TSBSOS 133). On one of the most belligerent shellings on Madrid in Spring of
1937, which began in the early hours of April 22, 1937 and during which Hotel Florida was struck, Herbst watched as all the correspondents, soldiers and prostitutes ran out of their rooms in state of distress and partial undress, and when Hemingway asked her how she was, all she could say was “fine in a funny voice…Surprised to find my voice almost gone” (4). Limited in the Spanish she spoke and familiar with German, Herbst relied on her ability to establish rapport with locals to earn the trust of Spaniards and to learn about their lives through active observation.

Helen in Rukeyser’s SC experiences something similar during her stay in Spain. On the train to Barcelona, Helen is unable to join the conversation of Catalan women who are “leaning forward, screaming in argument, friendly, shrill, at the top of the voice, yelling across Helen, filling the room with fists, round and shaking before each other’s faces”(15). As her Spanish dictionary fails her, all she gathers is what comes through the women’s body language and few familiar sounding terms: “flat-faced older woman threw “monarquica” at the fashionable one, who streamed wrath and contempt now…All others flared up…punctuated “communista, republica, anarquista” sometimes, “socialista” and often, with hatred, “Feixista”(Ibid. 15-16). Once the train stops in Moncada, a small town thirty miles from Barcelona, Helen relies on her knowledge of French to communicate with the occupants of the train, majority of who are foreign athletes. But she can only laugh along with the fruit seller in town who seeing her “point[ing] at the peaches” and “count[ing] twelve on her fingers” recognizes her as one of the foreigners, “Extranjeros” (Ibid. 36). By the time Helen arrives in Barcelona, she no longer feels like a foreigner. She, like Rukeyser herself, responds to the call delivered as part of the speech in Barcelona to those who still have countries to go back to, to “leave” and “carry to [their countries]… some of them still oppressed and under fascism and military terror, to the working people of the world, the story of what they seen now in Spain” (Ibid. 268).

130 Josephine Herbst’s papers. Beinecke, Yale University, New Haven.
War and Fiction

Unlike Hemingway, Herbst found it difficult to write fiction about Spain following her return to the States in summer of 1937. In the final book of her trilogy, Rope of Gold (ROG), published in 1939, she included two brief insert relating to Spain, “My country ‘tis of thee; Wo ist das Land? Paris 1937” and “If you take me to Kirkwood, I’ll get to St. Louis all by myself: Tortosa, Barcelona Road, 1938.” Lyrical and set apart in italicized font, similar inserts appear in each of the six parts of the novel. Paul Shulman in Power of Political Art observes that Herbst’s inclusion of this “interchapter on defeat in Spanish Civil War” was Herbst’s way of “confronting one of the most demoralizing defeats for the 30s Left and attempt to go beyond it” (131). Victoria Wendel Chance, the recurring female character in the trilogy who is based the author, is skeptical about “paper revolutions,” just as Herbst was about her writing getting lost in the market saturated with books on Spanish Civil War that simplified the issues involved to provide the audience with the desired “authoritative answer” on Spain (Shulman 132).

The “My country…” interchapter in ROG reads like a tribute to the fallen soldier, composed in remembrance of Carlo Rosselli, an Italian anti-fascist activist critical of the Communist party in Spain where he fought with the Matteotti Battalion in the Spanish Civil War, and who was killed in France by French Nazi sympathizers in June of 1937. Herbst used the murder of Rosselli to draw attention to the international fascist and anti-fascist presence in Spain, particularly Italian and German. The presence of German and Italian anti-fascists parallels the section in ROG where Victoria Chance succeeds in earning the trust of the staff with Trabajadores paper in Cuba.

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What ultimately persuaded them to trust her was her telling the story of her German exile friend, Kurt Brecht\(^\text{132}\), about whose arrest she learns from their paper. She then is assigned to record stories of sugar plantation workers who come to the paper’s office “as to home, here their stories were shelved up against time, against death and for some end to far off easily to believe”(359). Unlike Victoria, Lester Tollman, her fellow reporter, cannot get anywhere, because he doesn’t know how to listen and instead inquires about facts like those with which the government officials are all too happy to provide him. Victoria, on the other hand, listens to stories of workers and creates a space for them to exercise their rights and have their voices heard.

The last interchapter in ROG, which is followed by four sections from which Victoria is absent reads like a letter from one of the American Volunteers in Spain to a friend back home. It is quite possibly intended to capture the response of the supporters of the Spanish Republic to the October 1938 dissolution of the International Brigades. The speaker calls himself “one of you ‘got to show me’ boys. I got to see, taste, feel proof. Reading does me no good”(407). What the speaker had seen in Spain was Germans and Italian fascist intent on “rub[bing] us off” while democracies avert their gaze: “I don’t want to look, it’s too painful”(407). To the speaker democracies are cowardly as they persist in responding to appeals for help with “go away and let me think”(407). But the Spaniards continue to fight and live, farm and bear children. The disembodied voice of the speaker in the interchapter, transforms into Steve Carson, a son of an independent social activists and farmer in ROG. At the end of the novel, he has left his young wife and their child, and returned to Chicago to join his old coworkers in a sit-in at a factory. As Steve’s gaze pans over the factory floor where his friends lay in wait, this image bears a close

\(132\) It is very likely that Herbst based the character of Kurt Brecht in ROG on Gustav Regler.
resemblance to soldiers in the trenches. They are hungry and cold. But they are steadfast in their resolve and take turns to sneak out to the gate and call out to pedestrians hoping to garner support “Brother and sisters, we’re only fighting for our human rights, better to die like men than live like dogs on the speedup” (Ibid. 429). This scene of Steve and other strikers awaiting arrival of the police and the interchapter on Spain’s disbanding of the International Brigades in Spain reiterates Herbst’s vision of the 1930s as a decade of various fields of struggle against the enemy of the people, who assumed many guises: the fascist, the capitalist and the repressive government and non-interventions democracies.

Like Gellhorn and Cowles, whose work was challenged by critics and scholars on the grounds that they did not tell the whole truth, Josephine Herbst’s TSBSOSAOM was received with doubt as to its accuracy and objectivity. Women reporters’ access to the source of information, especially in the time of war, and their work ethic were a point of contention among reporters and editors. As Huges has pointed out the predominant perspective of women reporters was that they were undisciplined and ruled by emotions. Josephine Herbst in “Year of Disgrace”, the second section of TSBSOSAOM, which is a commentary on the 1920s as she experienced it working and living in metropolitan capitals of the world -- New York, Berlin and Paris -- wrote “women had been given the right to vote, but if they were now ‘emancipated’, it was not through suffrage but by jobs, birth control, even Prohibition”(73). This statement is aimed at debunking the myth of patriarchy granting women the right to vote as unlocking the door to social parity and pointing to the work done by women in the social trenches, the leg work done by mothers, the working women and social activists committed to the struggle. As the recent discovery of Muriel Rukeyser’s SC by Rowena Kennedy-Epstein, who had previously published archival research on Rukeyser’s support for the Spanish cause, “Barcelona, 1936 and Spanish Civil War
Archive,” illustrates, much more work remains to be done. The documentaries on the 1930s by women writers like Herbst and Rukeyser reflect the “some beyond” fought for by the people of the 1930s.
Afterword: The After Image of 1930s

We recall the old saying: Si vis pacem, para bellum. If you want to preserve peace, arm for war. It would be in keeping with the times to alter it: Si vis vitam, para mortem. If you want to endure life, prepare yourself for death”
-Sigmund Freud, 1915

Susan Sontag in Regarding the Pain of Others criticizes Virginia Woolf’s TG (1938) for absence of photographs and misses the author’s entire objective. Seeing as there is a long history of debate over the photographs in Woolf’s TG, Sontag feels confident about making claims without confirming or finding a copy of the text to substantiate her claims. As Jane C. Marcus notes, in her introduction to the 2006 edition, “if you have read Three Guineas without the photographs, you have not read the book Virginia Woolf wrote. The photographs of English professional men in their garb of power,…, are there to alert us to the origins of war and fascism” (lxii). There are two sets of photographs in Virginia Woolf’s TG: those of “dead children…houses [which] a bomb has torn open” (14) which the narrator repeatedly refers but refuses to show, and five, black-and-white photographs of male dignitaries. The first set, the “ruined houses and dead bodies” (26), Woolf believed, “are violent” and could only elicit a violent response (14). At the same time, these photographs are inextricably connected to the ones Woolf did reproduce: Lord Baden-Powell, a military hero and founder of the Boy Scouts; Stanley Baldwin, former Prime Minister and Chancellor of Cambridge University; Lord Hewart, the Judge Lord Chancellor; Cosmo Gordon Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury; and last but not least, the state trumpeters of the Household Cavalry (lxii). Woolf’s contemporaries could easily identify these men, who paraded in their dazzling and excessively decorative robes at various public ceremonies and whose photographs adorned the pages of newspapers.

This is not the case for the later generations as the photographs were omitted from subsequent editions, and were not restored to the American edition until 2006. Today, we not
only know the names of the British male dignitaries, whom Alice Staveley has identified, but thanks to the incredible research of Rebecca Wisor, which culminated in her dissertation, “My country is the whole world:” *Three Guineas* and the Culture of Pacifist Dissent”, we see that these photographs are meant to encourage “resistant reading” and to develop strategies to “actively question the world” around us (Wisor 204).

The photographs of the British patriarchal figures are meant to encourage the reader to critically engage with visual media, to pay attention to what we are shown, what we consume and what in turn consumes us. If a photograph of uniformed Franco or Mussolini were placed next to the photographs of British dignitaries they would cut a splendid patriarchal picture -- we might wonder if they use the same tailor. Instead of interpreting the photographs for us, Woolf levels her critique of patriarchy from the vantage point women of her class have been thoroughly instructed in -- attire and its role in attracting the opposite sex. The dazzling, expensive and excessive uniforms and ceremonial costumes promote power, competition and ambition to rise in the ranks of hegemonic masculinity, all of which have been discouraged as shallow vanity in women, and promote desire to wage war (Woolf 27). This rhetorical strategy is Woolf’s way of calling attention to women’s limited access to education and professions and emphasizing that critique must start at home, where women’s work is co-opted in support of maintaining the status quo, how prevalent and normative the seductive promotion of patriarchy and war ideology is, and how photography may facilitate inquiry and critical thinking, instead of violence.

How does Woolf’s polemic of TG fit with that of the women documentarians discussed in this dissertation, depression reporters who actively pursued the profession of foreign correspondents and went on to cover the Spanish Civil War? The photographs which accompanied Martha Gellhorn’s *Collier’s* articles and those taken by Gerda Taro of dead
civilians were the very images Woolf refused to reproduce. Like Gellhorn and Taro, Virginia Cowles, Josephine Herbst, as well as Gamel Woolsey and Muriel Rukeyser firmly believed that European democracies and the US failed in their duties as members of United Nations by not coming to the aid of the people of Spain. Would Woolf have considered these women’s support for the Spanish Civil War to be the prime example of the violent response brought about by war photography?

I see the documentaries of struggle discussed in this dissertation as subsequent volumes to the project Woolf began in TG. With the exception of Gellhorn’s first edition of TFOW, none of the documentaries reproduce war photographs from Spain. Instead, the women reporters rendered into words the “single plot of war” consisting of “hunger, homelessness, fear, pain and death….Refugees, dragging themselves and whatever they could carry away from war to no safety” (TFOW 7-8). In choosing to go to observe the war and exposing themselves to violence, the women war correspondents, who can pass or belong to the upper class, challenge their ‘educated’ fathers and brothers, as well as mothers and sisters, to see beyond the frame of traditional war images. Such images are constructed to incite violence as Woolf maintains. But the images of total modern war require new ways of seeing and reading, and the women correspondents have educated themselves in these on the job. After the dead bodies are removed from the bomb torn buildings, those who survived the bombing will remain there, despite being exposed to the danger of future bombardments and the elements, because that is their home.

The reading of an important contemporary text which writes all of these issues into our recent history of war and its representation harks back to Pat Barker's earlier graphic and disturbing fictions of the new Jack the Ripper in Northern England and her powerful and heart-wrenching account of World War I in the Regeneration trilogy. An image of a raped woman
appears twice in Barker’s *Double Vision* (2003): the first time as a flashback experienced by Stephen Sharkey, a writer, and second time as a photograph taken by Ben Forbishier. Stephen recalls the scene where a girl in a stairwell of an apartment building in war-torn Sarajevo is “huddled on a mattress…[doesn’t] speak or cry out or try to get away…Eyes wide open, skirt bunched up around her waist, her splayed thighs enclosing a blackness of blood and pain” and him, falling to his knees beside her and fixing her skirt, pulled it down over her thighs (45). In Ben’s photograph, which Stephen finds years later when looking through Ben’s photographs for images to include in a book on war, the girl appears as they found her, with her skirt pulled up. While Stephen is shocked by the photograph, he realizes that “ethically, Ben had done nothing wrong. He hadn’t staged the photograph. He’d simply restored the corpse to its original state. And yet it was difficult not to feel that the girl, speardeagled like that, had been violated twice” (102). Ben’s photograph is simultaneously, we might argue, a document of violence and staging of a rape scene. On the one hand, his decision to go back under sniper fire and lift the girl’s skirt back up to take the photograph can be read as an effort to expose rape as weapon of war. On the other hand, by lifting the girl’s skirt back up, not only does Ben tamper with the body, but in this scenario, in snapping the shot of the girl, he stands in for the perpetrator of the crime. Yet both readings are difficult to substantiate on the basis of the subjective descriptions of the photograph provided in Baker’s text, and we must ask ourselves –“has anyone ever seen a photograph of a rape?” (Azoulay 251). While such photographs exist, public’s visual access is restricted, limited to one carefully selected, representative image, which is but a fragment of rape (Ibid.).

Rape as a war crime and a weapon of control is a shadowy presence in many of the works of the women writers and photographers considered in this dissertation. In Gamel Woolsey’s MB, it is Malaga burning and its destruction heightening people’s propensity for violence like a
drug or aphrodisiac – the image of “pornography of violence.” It accompanies the female war reporters and photographers-Gellhorn, Cowles, Herbst, and Taro - on the Spanish front where they are viewed with suspicion as spies or leered at as prostitutes. Though they incur the scorn and ridicule from both males and females in their profession as well as the very people they want to help, overdressing and feigning feminine feebleness are premeditated choices on their part, made in the interest of self-preservation and conviction. The control of the feminization of their bodies was a professional act of styling themselves to get the work done. Much of what they saw and reported was challenged for lack of proof or evidence and the only response they could offer is that their writings “are true, they are what I saw” (Gellhorn 6).
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