

**Catherine Mary McLoughlin**

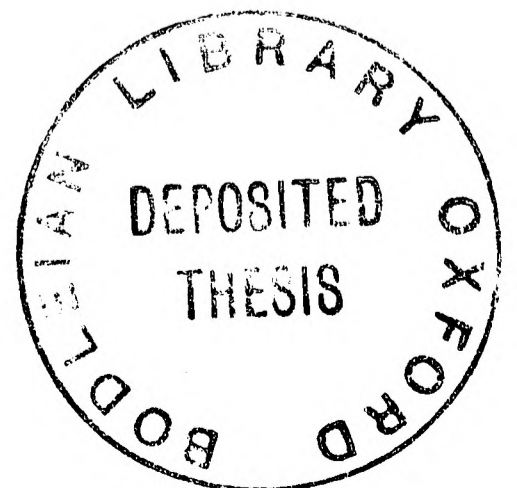
**Somerville College**

**MARTHA GELLHORN:  
THE WAR WRITER IN THE FIELD AND IN THE TEXT**



**Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
University of Oxford,  
Trinity Term 2004**

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**ABSTRACT**

How war is depicted matters vitally to all of us. In the vast literature on war representation, little attention is paid to the fact that where the war recorder<sup>1</sup> stands crucially affects the portrayal. Should the writer be present on the battle-field, and, if so, where exactly? Should the recording figure be present in the text, and, if so, in what guise?

‘Standing’ differs from person to person, conflict to conflict, and between genders. Therefore, this thesis focuses on one particular war recorder in one particular war: the American journalist and fiction-writer, Martha Gellhorn (1908-98), in the European Theatre of Operations during World War Two. The fact that Gellhorn was a woman affected how she could and did place herself in relation to battle – but gender, though important, was not the only factor. Her course in and around war was dazzling: hitching rides, stowing away, travelling on dynamite-laden ships through mined waters, flying in ancient planes and deadly fighter jets, driving from battle-field to battle-field, mucking in, standing out. Her trajectory within her prose is equally versatile: she zooms in and out like a camera lens from impassiveness to intense involvement to withdrawal.

The thesis is organised along the same spectrum. The first two chapters plot the co-ordinates forming the zero point on the graph of Gellhorn’s Second World War writings (earlier American war correspondence, the 1930s’ New Reportage, Gellhorn’s upbringing and journalistic apprenticeship). Chapter Three then shows her in the guise of self-effacing, emotionally absent recorder. Moving from absence to presence, Chapter Four considers Martha Gellhorn in the field and Chapter Five ‘Martha Gellhorn’ in the text. Chapter Six describes the shift from presence to participation, before reaching the end of the parabola in Gellhorn’s disillusionment in the power of writing to reform and her concerns about women’s presence in the war zone.

Given that positioning is the central concern, it is important to note the placement of Martha Gellhorn within the thesis itself. She stands as the central, pivotal example of the war recorder, illuminated by various contexts and comparisons with other writers (notably Ernest Hemingway, to whom she was married from 1940 to 1945). As a result of this approach, there are necessarily stretches of the text from which she is absent, as the survey turns to theoretical and comparative discussion. The hope is that this methodology reveals why Gellhorn, in the field and in the text, went where she did.

**83,500 words**

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘recorder’ is used to cover all those who represent war (journalists, fiction-writers, photographers etc).

IN MEMORIAM  
6 JUNE 1944

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## Permissions

Quotations from Martha Gellhorn's published and unpublished writings and photographs of her are used by kind permission of Dr. Alexander Matthews.

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The quotation from *Men at War* by Ernest Hemingway is used by permission of Random House Inc.

## Note on References and Abbreviations

### Works by Martha Gellhorn

*The Face of War* (cited as *FoW*). This thesis uses the first American edition (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959) for quotations from the ‘linking passages’ between the collected articles (with the exception of five quotations from the 1998 edition (Cambridge: Granta), which is cited as *FoW 1998*). Unless a particular comparative bibliographical point is being made, however, quotations from the articles are taken from the *Collier’s* originals.

*The Heart of Another* (cited as *HoA*). This was first published by Scribner (New York: 1941). This thesis uses the first British edition (London: Home & Van Thal, 1946).

*The Honeyed Peace* (cited as *HP*). This was first published by Scribner (New York: 1953). This thesis uses the first British edition (London: Andre Deutsch, 1954).

*Liana* (cited as *L*). This was first published by Scribner (New York: 1944). The only quotation in this thesis from *Liana* is from Gellhorn’s Afterword to the Penguin / Virago edition (London: 1987): this is therefore the edition used.

*Love Goes to Press* (cited as *LGTP*). This was not published contemporaneously and so the edition used in this thesis is the University of Nebraska critical edition of 1995, edited by Sandra Spanier (Lincoln, Nebraska, and London: 1995).

*The Lowest Trees Have Tops* (cited as *LTT*). This thesis uses the first American edition (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1969).

*Point of No Return*. This was first published by Scribner as *The Wine of Astonishment* (New York: 1948). This is the edition used in this thesis, cited as *WoA*. However, some quotations are from the Bison Books edition (Lincoln, Nebraska: 1995), and these are cited as *PNR*. *Point of No Return* is always used as the title as it was Gellhorn’s original choice.

*A Stricken Field* (cited as *SF*). This thesis uses the first American edition (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940), except for some quotations from Gellhorn’s Afterword to the Virago edition (London, 1986), which is cited as *SF 1986*.

*Travels with Myself and Another* (cited as *TMA*). This was first published by Dodd, Mead (New York: 1978). There is only one quotation from *Travels with Myself and Another* in the thesis and it is taken from the British edition of 1979 (London: Allen Lane).

*The Trouble I've Seen*. This was first published by Morrow (New York: 1936) (and in Britain by Putnam (London: 1937), the edition to which H. G. Wells wrote the Preface). This thesis uses the first American edition of Gellhorn's novellas (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993). This collection first appeared in Britain (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992). The footnote citation is therefore *Novellas*.

*Two By Two*. Quotations from the short story 'Till Death Us Do Part' in this collection appear in Chapter Five. The collection was first published by Sinclair-Stevenson (London: 1958). This thesis uses the first American collection of Gellhorn's novellas (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993). The footnote citation is therefore *Novellas*.

*The View from the Ground* (cited as *VfG*). This thesis uses the first American edition (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988), with two exceptions. The first is that quotations from *Collier's* articles are from the originals. The second is that quotations from Gellhorn's FERA reports (included in this volume as 'My Dear Mr. Hopkins') are taken from <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts>>.

*What Mad Pursuit* (cited as *WMP*). This thesis uses the first and only American edition (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1934).

*The Wine of Astonishment*. See *Point of No Return*.

Gellhorn's articles are cited by day, month and year of publication (titles are added when only the year is known). Her unpublished writings are cited by title (sometimes shortened). Her letters are cited by recipient, date and folio (with recto (r) or verso (v)) (eg. f. 1r). Full details are given in the Bibliography. 'Gellhorn' in a citation always refers to Martha Gellhorn.

## General References

References to books and articles other than by Martha Gellhorn are given in the footnotes in the form 'author-page number'. If more than one work by the same author is cited, these are distinguished by year. If more than one work by the same author in the same year is cited, these are distinguished by 'a', 'b' etc. If authors with the same surname are cited, they are distinguished by first names, *except* that 'Hemingway' always refers to Ernest Hemingway. Anonymous items are cited by title (sometimes shortened) and date. The reader can find full bibliographical details of all works cited in the Bibliography at the end.

## Introduction

In war, position is vital. Short-term tactics and long-term strategy are about gaining ground. War is located in real terrain and experienced spatially: its terminology is that of fronts and rears, flanks, lines, movements, zones and territory. Conflict is the politicisation of land: as the great Prussian military theorist, Carl von Clausewitz, wrote, ‘it is difficult to distinguish between the abandonment of intentions and the abandonment of the battlefield’.<sup>1</sup> Position is equally vital in writing about war. Should the writer be present on the battle-field, and, if so, where exactly? Should the recording figure be present in the text, and, if so, in what guise?

In the vast literature on war representation,<sup>2</sup> little attention is paid to the fact that how conflict is written about is radically affected by the stance, and hence the standing, of the recorder.<sup>3</sup> In the twentieth century, though, such matters formed an increasingly important part of theoretical debate. This thesis considers the various standpoints available to the war recorder, identifying the axes (field and text) and plotting the co-ordinates (degree of engagement). Specifically, it concerns the positionings of Martha Gellhorn (1908 – 1998), American journalist and fiction writer, during the years 1937 to 1945.<sup>4</sup> That she happened to be a woman affected her siting in the war zone (a predominantly male space), though gender is not the exclusive focus of the thesis. Gellhorn shifted along a spectrum of involvement, ranging from dispassionate observation through emphatic presence to proactive participation in the course of conflict. The same can be said about the ‘Martha Gellhorn’ (and the other fictional women war reporters) constructed in her writings.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Clausewitz, 234.

<sup>2</sup> An idea of which is given below.

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘recorder’ is used in this thesis to cover all those who represent war (journalists, fiction-writers, photographers etc).

<sup>4</sup> It also covers her later writings relating to this period.

<sup>5</sup> This raises an immediate theoretical point: to what extent is it valid to treat the textual reporter as coincident with the reporter in the field? In his essay ‘What is an Author?’, Michel Foucault distinguishes between texts, usually scientific, which are received for themselves in the anonymity of established or re-demonstrable truth, and literary texts which are only accepted ‘when endowed with the author-function’. Where signs referring to the author appear in texts lacking this author-function, they refer to a real speaker (Foucault, 179-80, 181, 182). It is the argument of this thesis that war

What, precisely, is meant by field and textual ‘positionings’? The former embraces practical matters such as access to the front; ‘getting there’;<sup>6</sup> status; presence; priority; proximity; perspective; dress and comportment. Textual positioning comprises political, ethical and emotional acts of self-location which go to the heart of the function of the war recorder and which involve considerations such as tone, voice, ‘objectivity’ / ‘subjectivity’ and perlocutionary effect (or potential to ‘make a difference’). Both derive from the distribution of the incidents of combat in relation to the recording individual (a distribution contingent on personal perception as well as on the current state of communications technology) and from the degree of that individual’s emotional engagement with the encounter.

Martha Gellhorn was well aware of the issues. In a long letter to her Bryn Mawr tutor and life-long friend, Hortense Flexner, written in the early 1970s after her seventh trip to Israel, she discussed the construction of a new novel (never written) about the peoples of that land. The passage is so significant, it must be quoted at length:

What beats me is the tone; I mean the tone of my voice when writing. Personal? Am I there too? Impersonal, the camera eye? I think that would be technically impossible; they were talking to me - to each other too - - but I don’t see how I can except myself. Yet, can I, would that be best? The narrator who is not there, has no opinion, reports? The new style (vide Mailer, Frady – so good in Harper’s on Egypt, Jordan, Israel) is very much to be present: Mailer as egomania, Frady referring to himself as ‘he’, as a litmus paper, sounding board, or even as if he were the public. Very odd but successful technique. I don’t know, I don’t know and this frets me most. In all my war reporting, I said ‘We’, which was correct for you are never alone in war, and think I hardly used myself, though I can check on that.<sup>7</sup> The first person singular makes me shy: idiotic.

And if I am there, is it possible to be there, in the curious way I was, without ever thinking - - until now, weeks afterwards - - that I must have seemed very peculiar indeed to them: very old, out of the blue, a foreigner, a woman alone. [...] I was Martha; the young live by their first names [...] My last name meant nothing, just a funny name which people find hard to take in.

This all worries me, clearly. The approach: the form or style will depend entirely on whether I am there or not there. It is, I think easier for me not to be there, if I can swing it.

[...] Do I write, in my own person, a prologue or epilogue, with my own summing up views?

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representation is an authorial special case: the textual war reporter is *both* a signifier for a recording individual in the field *and* a linguistic construction.

<sup>6</sup> The definition of ‘there’ – the version of pastoral that is the battle-field – is discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>7</sup> She did, as this thesis will show.

[...] In journalism, I do guide, in the sense that I collect the facts and arrange them as best I can for interest and movement and then somehow tell the reader the meaning of the facts. But here?

[...] And yet, how, how, how to write it? What tone? What form? I wonder if it could be varied? I mean, write one chapter as reportage, using 'I', the narrator; write one chapter as a sort of short story, and if the narrator is there at all, have her 'she'. Might that work? I have a feeling that somehow the sound must change - - yet I truly do not know how to do it, and also I have no confidence in my writing.<sup>8</sup>

In this remarkable passage, the entire gamut of field and textual positionings is represented and the complex relation between them exposed. A difference between male and female writers is suggested (the 'egomania' of Mailer's first person makes Gellhorn 'shy'), as is the possibility of varying approaches in different genres ('in journalism, I do guide [...] but here?'). Though she nowhere else set out the dilemmas so explicitly, there is every reason to assume that Martha Gellhorn approached each of her writing projects with the same deeply-felt concerns about authorial presence, tone and voice.

The idea that positioning is constructed, rather than natural, is not new. As the art theorist Erwin Panofsky has suggested, 'perspective' (from the Latin, 'perspectiva' – seeing through) is 'symbolic form' rather than neurological absolute;<sup>9</sup> perspectival construction is a 'systematic abstraction from the structure of [...] psychophysiological space.'<sup>10</sup> John Berger has pointed out that (linear) perspective since the Renaissance has centred everything on the eye of the beholder: while this has become the conventional perception of what is 'real', there is 'an inherent contradiction in structuring all images of reality to address a single spectator who could only be in one place at a time'<sup>11</sup> – the so-called 'view from nowhere'.<sup>12</sup> Ernst Gombrich makes the same point: perspective is that which 'enables us to eliminate from our representation anything which could not be seen from one particular vantage point'.<sup>13</sup> If, as

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<sup>8</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, early 1970s, ff. 14<sup>r</sup>-16<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Panofsky, 27.

<sup>10</sup> Panofsky, 30.

<sup>11</sup> Berger, 16.

<sup>12</sup> Nagel, 20, 140.

<sup>13</sup> Gombrich, 193.

Jonathan Crary has it, the observer is ‘one who sees within a prescribed set of possibilities’ (literal and metaphysical),<sup>14</sup> perspective can be understood as *weltanschauung*.<sup>15</sup>

In the present context, Panofsky’s formulation of painterly perspective as the ‘transformation of psychophysiological space into mathematical [or artistic / visual] space’<sup>16</sup> becomes, with regard to the orientation of the figure of the war reporter, the transformation of psychophysiological space in the field into textual space. Perspective is constantly being constructed – and not just constructed, but also shifted, zooming in and out like a camera lens. As a result, the siting of the reporter ‘produces’ the space of war, in a way similar to that suggested by the geographer Henri Lefebvre in his insight that ‘the whole of (social) space proceeds from the body’:<sup>17</sup> the figure of the recorder becomes the point from which – whether in field or text – the perceived scene radiates or emanates.<sup>18</sup> As the *New York Times* Second World War reporter, Herbert Matthews, put it:

For the individual, even though he be a newspaperman taking part in it, history in the making is a personal experience. Like everything else, it all depends on the point of view.<sup>19</sup>

This thesis therefore identifies and provides theoretical explanations for a spectrum of authorial alignments, and illuminates the contradictions and overlaps inherent in it. There are accounts of different versions of ‘self’ and the relations between them, different stances and different writerly textures. Given that positioning is the chief concern, it is important to note the placement of Martha Gellhorn within the thesis itself. She stands as the central, pivotal example of the war recorder, illuminated by various contexts and comparisons with other writers (notably Ernest Hemingway, to whom she was married from 1940 to 1945). As a

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<sup>14</sup> Crary, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Mitchell, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Panofsky, 66.

<sup>17</sup> Lefebvre, 405.

<sup>18</sup> This thesis would therefore refute the claim that, since ‘there is no viewpoint without vanishing point and no vanishing point without viewing point’, the ‘annihilation of the subject as center’ is therefore ‘a condition of the very moment of the look’ (Bryson, 91). Vanishing point produces viewer as much as viewer produces vanishing point. But the situation is complicated if another observer enters the scene: Sartre’s examination of the looked-at looker (Sartre, 1969, 252-302) is discussed in Chapter Six.

<sup>19</sup> Herbert Matthews, 1937, 13.

result of this approach, there are necessarily stretches of the text from which Gellhorn is absent, or in the background (particularly Chapter One), as the survey turns to theoretical and comparative discussion. The hope is that this methodology reveals why Gellhorn, in field and in text, went where she did.

Chapter One, *Points of Departure*, examines the literary antecedents and contexts which intersect to place Gellhorn as a reporter on the brink of the Second World War. Earlier American war correspondents (Margaret Fuller, Ambrose Bierce, Walt Whitman, Stephen Crane, Cora Taylor, Richard Harding Davis and Edith Wharton) and the 1930s' New Reportage are both analysed to reveal how the reporter orients himself or herself in relation to the reported subject. Chapter Two, *'An Education at Last'*,<sup>20</sup> provides a brief account of Gellhorn's upbringing and covers her reportorial apprenticeship in Depression America and the Spanish Civil War.

The four remaining chapters then examine the positions which Gellhorn occupied during the Second World War. Chapter Three, *'A Walking Tape Recorder With Eyes'*,<sup>21</sup> begins at one end of the spectrum: the reporter as mechanistic, dispassionate, self-effacing recorder. This includes an analysis of the eye- / I-witness in Gellhorn's war writings, concluding with the question of whether it is necessary to be present at a conflict in order to describe it.

The demands of presence lead on to Chapter Four, *Being There: the Field*. This opens with the question, 'being where?', and offers an analysis of the charged, arguably pastoral, space that is 'the front'. It then investigates the logistics and gendering of 'getting there' and 'getting there first', considering the various options available in the period to women who wished to see the front (e.g. nurse, auxiliary, reporter, troop entertainer, prostitute) and focusing on the specific challenges faced by the woman war correspondent. The chapter then examines Martha Gellhorn's own 'getting there', in particular her rivalry with Hemingway, drawing on recently-released material held by the Bodleian Library.

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<sup>20</sup> The title is taken from *VfG*, 67.

<sup>21</sup> The title is taken from Gellhorn's reflections on the 1939-40 Russo-Finnish conflict (*FoW*, 44).

Chapter Five, *Being There: the Text*, discusses Gellhorn's writerly construction of reportorial presence both in her dispatches and in her fictional works.

The sixth chapter, *From Presence to Participation*, moves along the spectrum of positionings to consider the potential for intervention on the part of the war recorder. It begins with an examination of the theoretical background to such possibilities, taking in New Reportage aesthetics and Sartre's concept of *littérature engagée*. It then considers the practical opportunities for, and restrictions on, reportorial participation in the period, such as the Geneva Convention. The following section analyses Gellhorn's own journalistic theory and practice, finding a trajectory of growing disillusionment on her part in the power of writing to reform. The rest of the chapter then examines how she dramatises these issues in her fiction, particularly the effect – potentially chaotic – of introducing the glamorous woman reporter into the male space of war.

What does this approach add to existing work in the area? Two contexts are relevant here. The first comprises works specifically about Martha Gellhorn. There are only two full-length published studies and both are biographical: Carl Rollyson's *Beautiful Exile: The Life of Martha Gellhorn* (2001) (a re-working, after Gellhorn's death, of his *Nothing Ever Happens to the Brave: the Story of Martha Gellhorn* (1990)) and Caroline Moorehead's *Martha Gellhorn: A Life* (2003). Another full-length, but unpublished, work is also biographical, though it does contain literary criticism: Jacqueline Orsagh's fine Michigan State University Ph.D. thesis, *A Critical Biography of Martha Gellhorn* (1977). Gellhorn also features in Jean Gallagher's *The World Wars Through the Female Gaze* (1998), Bernice Kert's *The Hemingway Women* (1983), and Rena Sanderson's article 'Hemingway's Literary Sisters' (2002). Articles by Sandra Spanier ('Rivalry, Romance, and War Reporters' (2002)) and Phyllis Lassner ('Camp Follower of Catastrophe' (1998)) are devoted to her. There is also one other unpublished doctoral thesis and some unpublished Master's theses.<sup>22</sup> Other

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<sup>22</sup> Hinton, 2000; Feinberg, 1993; Siler, 1994; Winkler, 1994; Wherry, 1990.

pieces referring to Gellhorn are reviews and obituaries. The first main contribution of this thesis therefore is its extended critical and theoretical readings of her writings, which have not (in contrast with her life) elsewhere received such a detailed account.

The second relevant context comprises studies of war recording and, in particular, of the woman war correspondent.<sup>23</sup> The former include histories of journalism,<sup>24</sup> theoretical works on media (written both from a 'media studies' perspective<sup>25</sup> and from a literary critical perspective)<sup>26</sup> and literary critical works on war writing.<sup>27</sup> The approaches taken by these studies are too various to enumerate, ranging, as they do, over wars, periods and literatures. Nonetheless, despite this profusion of interest, a gap still remains. The second main contribution of this thesis is its extended analysis of the figure of the war reporter in fiction and journalism, in particular the woman war reporter. While female war correspondents have been written about, this tends to have been in an anecdotal way: chronological lists of Joan of Arcs. Why this has been the case forms part of the subject-matter of this thesis: briefly, women's contribution to war has either been regarded as ancillary, and therefore underplayed, or as exceptional, and therefore over-played. By contrast, the present aim is to explore the constructed nature of such varying alignments.

A final preliminary issue remains for this Introduction. Gellhorn wrote both journalism and fiction about the Second World War. How should the two genres be treated in

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<sup>23</sup> Eg. Edwards, 1988; Kay Mills, 1990; Sebba, 1994; Sheldon, 1999; Sorel, 1999. There are also works on women's placing and involvement in war through the ages: e.g., Adie, 2003b; Goldstein, 2001 and the accompanying website, <[www.warandgender.com](http://www.warandgender.com)>; Laffin, 1967; Muir, 1993; Rustad, 1982; Terry, 1988.

<sup>24</sup> E.g. Collier, 1989; Downs and Downs, 1991; Hohenberg, 1967; Inglis, 2002; Knightley, 2000a; Schudson, 1978.

<sup>25</sup> Eg. James Carey, 1989; Cohen and Young, 1973; Fowler, 1991; Hartley, 1982; McNair, 1999; and Parenti, 1993.

<sup>26</sup> Eg. Fishkin, 1985, and Frus, 1994.

<sup>27</sup> These are too numerous to list here, but those which have been found particularly helpful to this thesis include Aichinger, 1975; Armstrong and Tennenhouse, 1989; Beidler, 1998; Benson, 1968; Bergonzi, 1980; Buitenhuis, 1989; Craig and Egan, 1979; Fussell, 1975, 1989 and 1990b; Harvey, 1998; Hynes, 1992; Klein, 1994; Leed, 1979; Limon, 1994; Monteath, 1994; Piette, 1995; Rawlinson, 2000; Scarry, 1985; Shay, 1995; Tritle, 2000; Walsh, 1982.

the discussions of her 'war writing' which follow? Do they contribute different ingredients to authorial positioning? Should debate be prefaced with statement of generic status? The problem is a general one, complicated by the proliferation of hybrid forms: the 'non-fiction novel', the 'New Journalism', 'faction', 'docudrama', 'mockumentary', 'infotainment' – all of which combine elements of what have traditionally been cast as journalism and fiction.<sup>28</sup> As E. L. Doctorow put it, accepting a 'best novel' award in 1975 from the National Book Critics Circle, 'there is no more fiction or non-fiction – only narrative'.<sup>29</sup> There is some temptation, therefore, to accept self-labelling as definitive. But the purpose of this section is to consider, not so much 'how are journalism and fiction to be distinguished, if at all?', as 'is it useful to maintain a journalism / fiction divide in the arguments of this thesis relating to authorial alignment?' Before addressing this, some general points about what constitutes Gellhorn's Second World War journalism and fiction need to be made.

Many of Gellhorn's short stories about the war first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* and were later collected in *The Heart of Another* (1941) and *The Honeyed Peace* (1953). Another story referred to in this thesis, 'Till Death Us Do Part' was first published as part of a collection called *Two By Two* in 1958. The rest of her World War II fiction comprises the novels *A Stricken Field* (1940), *Liana* (1944) (set in the Caribbean, this makes brief reference to the war as a distant event), *Point of No Return* (first published as *The Wine of Astonishment* in 1948), *The Lowest Trees Have Tops* (1969) (again, war features at a distance) and the play *Love Goes to Press* (1946), co-authored with Virginia Cowles. The Second World War journalism with which this thesis is concerned comprises the articles Gellhorn wrote for *Collier's* magazine, the first published on 17 July 1937 and the last on 14 December 1946. These articles were later collected (along with later pieces) in *The Face of War* (various

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<sup>28</sup> These hybrids have been analysed at length, though continue to defy easy generic categorisation: see Anderson, 1987 and 1989; Connery, 1992; Eason, 1990; Flippen, 1974; Jensen, Summer 1974; Johnson, 1971; Lounsberry, 1990; Sims, 1984; Warnock, 1989; Webb, Summer 1974; Weber, 1980; Zavarzadeh, 1976.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Hollowell, 3.

editions from 1959), *Travels with Myself and Another* (1978) and *The View from the Ground* (1989).

Founded by Peter Collier as *Collier's Once A Week* in April 1888,<sup>30</sup> the magazine for which Gellhorn corresponded was a pioneer in illustrated, and photo-, journalism and one of the 'muck-raking' periodicals of the early years of the twentieth century<sup>31</sup> under the crusading editorship of Norman Hapgood. One of its contributors, the reporter and photographer Frederick Palmer, recalled:

Robert Collier had made his weekly a valiant organ of the progressive period in the muck-raking era when President Roosevelt sounded his battle-cry against the malefactors of great wealth.<sup>32</sup>

By the late 1930s, *Collier's* was a weekly featuring news, art, photography and serialisation of fiction and non-fiction,<sup>33</sup> according to its fiction editor, 'designed to appeal to a broad cross section of men and women with widely different social, economic and educational backgrounds'.<sup>34</sup> Each issue was of about 74 pages; the paper size was between A3 and A4;

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<sup>30</sup> In the period in which Gellhorn was corresponding for it, the magazine's name was *Collier's. The National Weekly* but in this thesis it is referred to, for simplicity's sake, as *Collier's*.

<sup>31</sup> Inglis, 41.

<sup>32</sup> Palmer, 235.

<sup>33</sup> <<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAcolliers.htm>>.

<sup>34</sup> Burger, vii.

each cover bore striking artwork by Lawson Wood, Alan Foster, Arthur Crouch and others, reproduced in colour. The cost was 5¢, until 9 May 1942 when (without explanation) it went up to 10¢. On the masthead of the issue carrying Gellhorn's first article, William L. Chenery was listed as the Editor, Charles Colebaugh as the Managing Editor and Thomas H. Beck as the Editorial Director. Among the sub-editors were Walter Davenport ('Politics'), Aimee Larkin ('Distaff'), Quentin Reynolds ('Sport') and Kyle Crichton ('Screen and Theater'). Page 4 carried three columns: 'Next Week', trailing future articles; 'This Week', briefly describing the contents; and 'Any Week', a set of brief and humorous topical observations, often referring to readers' letters. By the beginning of 1941, however, the 'Next Week' column – perhaps due to political or logistical uncertainties – had been dropped. As for the publication's political leanings, in January 1940, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was apparently contemplating a career in journalism when his presidential term came to an end, signed a contract with the magazine to become a contributing editor and to supply a minimum of 26 articles a year. Roosevelt died before his name could be added to the masthead, but *Collier's* has been described as his 'mouthpiece'.<sup>35</sup>

Certain points arise from the publishing circumstances of Gellhorn's articles in *Collier's* which demarcate them as a particular kind of journalism (as well as contributing to what might be termed 'institutional' positioning). Firstly, the articles are long. These are not front-page splashes, but extended essays frequently running to three or more pages, usually with the first two pages near the front of the magazine and the rest continued at a later point. This, of course, produces a hiatus in the reading experience which might have been filled with perusal of other articles or advertisements. Secondly, although the magazine appeared weekly, Gellhorn's articles have a sporadic distribution.<sup>36</sup> Though coterminous with the

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<sup>35</sup> Winfield, 63, 172.

<sup>36</sup> They appear fairly regularly, though not every week, from July 1937 until December 1938 (covering the Spanish Civil War, pre-war France and Britain and the annexation of the Sudetenland); they next appear in January and February 1940 (the Russo-Finnish war); next from May to August 1941 (the Sino-Japanese war); then in November and December, 1942 (Puerto Rico and Surinam); then the bulk almost weekly from March 1944 to September 1945 (the Normandy invasions, the Eighth Army's progress up Italy; the Allies' advancement across Fortress Europe; the Battle of the Bulge; the entry

chronology of the war, their appearances are too uneven – even with the ‘Next Week’ trailers – to form an ‘inter-narrative’: there is no sense that the reader is being given the ‘latest instalment’. Thirdly, although Gellhorn filed her copy by radio (and her articles are all headlined, for example, ‘Radioed from France’, suggesting a degree of urgency), she was not working to tight deadlines. Furthermore, there was often a significant time gap between a given event and publication of Gellhorn’s account of it in *Collier’s*,<sup>37</sup> with the result that readers, having already received the facts as ‘news’, would be looking for a different, perhaps more reflective or analytical, treatment of them. Fourthly, the articles’ paratextual contexts – advertisements, editorials, other articles – influence their reception. Of course, it must be remembered that experience of reading the pieces is not limited to contemporary or later perusals of *Collier’s*. Gellhorn’s journalism can also be ‘received’ via later collections. This gives rise to bibliographical points of comparison which will be made throughout this thesis. Fifthly, this is *war* journalism: certain points current in much journalism theory must be modified accordingly. The following, then, are what Gellhorn’s *Collier’s* correspondence was *not*: brief, sensational, regular or written under time pressure. In the comments on journalism that follow, these qualifications should be borne in mind.

Reality of referent is today the criterion most frequently used to distinguish journalism and fiction. In these terms, broadly speaking, the former is ‘true’, the latter ‘made up’. It was not always so. Lennard J. Davis advances the ‘tentative theory’ that the English ‘news / novels discourse’ of the sixteenth century (a discourse which took the generic form of the printed ballad) constituted ‘a kind of undifferentiated matrix’ which would bifurcate into

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into Germany; the liberation of the death camps; the return home of the troops). The last two articles, in 1946, concern the Nuremburg Trials and the Paris Peace Conference.

<sup>37</sup> To give one example, Gellhorn’s account of D-Day+1 (7 June 1944), ‘Hangdog Herrenvolk’, only appeared in *Collier’s* on 29 July 1944.

journalism and history on the one hand, and prose fiction on the other.<sup>38</sup> Only in the seventeenth century, when news came to be defined ideologically, was there a ‘pressing need’ to establish legally the nature of ‘factual’ information, which might then be banned.<sup>39</sup> But Michael Robertson persuasively suggests that the ‘New Journalism’ of the late nineteenth century remained a ‘fact / fiction discourse’ ‘fruitfully ambiguous in genre and truth status’.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the similarities between sensationalistic reporting and literary realism – a shared interest in contemporary urban life, a growing commercial sense on the part of both genres’ practitioners – provoked in men of letters a reaction which Lawrence Levine has termed a ‘sacralisation’ of the art of fiction.<sup>41</sup>

By the twentieth century, this generic parting of the ways had resulted in a professionalised journalism with its own ethos and etiquette. Now, that the events described have actually occurred is an assumption brought to serious newspaper reading,<sup>42</sup> an assumption which underlies the special contractual relationship between periodical and reader. Illustrating the nature of this contract, Emmet Crozier, who worked with Edgar M. Moore on the *New York Globe* during the First World War and went on to be a foreign correspondent in the Second, recalled that Moore would bring in ‘odd fragments’ about the war, claiming that they had been told to him by returned soldiers. ‘Five or six years later’, he confessed to Crozier that they had all been made up. Crozier’s reaction was to feel that they ‘had played a shabby trick on *Globe* readers and on the integrity of journalism’: his book on the Western Front was an attempt ‘to straighten it out’.<sup>43</sup>

But whether the specific nature of this modern contractual relation distinguishes journalism from fiction is doubtful when the subject is war. As John Hollowell has pointed

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<sup>38</sup> Davis, 67.

<sup>39</sup> Davis, 71.

<sup>40</sup> Robertson, 5, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Levine, 83-168. Gellhorn herself reveals something of this attitude when she tells Eleanor Roosevelt that reviews describing *The Trouble I’ve Seen* as journalism ‘nearly broke my heart’ (letter of 1/2 November 1941, f. 1’).

<sup>42</sup> Smith, 152.

<sup>43</sup> Crozier, vii, viii. Similar anguish greeted recent revelations that a *New York Times* reporter, Jayson Blair, had faked details to authenticate his ‘date-lines’ (the dates-plus-location which attest to a journalist’s ‘being there’).

out with regard to the ‘explosive social events’ of the 1960s,<sup>44</sup> in times when social reality becomes ‘serious’, fictional forms seem bound to be realistic (if not realist). In relation to war fiction, moreover, the gauge almost always used is that of authenticity.<sup>45</sup> Phyllis Frus argues that the ‘reality of referent’ criterion is apt to render what it designates as fiction ‘nonpropositional, and thus unlikely to be a factor in the politics of ordinary life, the domain of social experience and public expression where change is possible’.<sup>46</sup> But war literature (or, perhaps, anti-war literature) is highly ‘propositional’.

Distinguishing Martha Gellhorn’s war journalism from her fiction on the basis that the latter involves ‘the suspension of truth claims’<sup>47</sup> therefore produces a warped result. Her novels and short stories contain the same detailed accuracy as her articles: they are often based on the same experiences. A significant, early (non-war) instance is ‘Justice at Night’, an account of a lynching in Mississippi, which first appeared in the *Spectator* on 21 August 1936 and was later collected in *The View from the Ground*. This bibliographical circumstance places it as ‘fact’ – indeed, it is referred to as an ‘event’ in the volume<sup>48</sup> and in the magazine it appears alongside ‘propositional’ pieces such as ‘The Spanish Shambles’<sup>49</sup> (an anti-interventionist article on the Spanish Civil War) and ‘The Lesson of the Games’<sup>50</sup> (on the Berlin Olympics).

‘Justice at Night’ is a powerful piece. When one of the lynchers holds up a jug of kerosene to pour over the victim, a young black man named Hyacinth, he ‘shiver[s] suddenly and [comes] to life’:

His voice rose out of him like something apart, and it hurt one’s ears to listen to it; it was higher than a voice can be, not human.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Hollowell, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Knibb, 7, 12.

<sup>46</sup> Frus, x.

<sup>47</sup> Frus, 13.

<sup>48</sup> *VfG*, ix.

<sup>49</sup> 21 August 1936b.

<sup>50</sup> 21 August 1936a.

<sup>51</sup> Gellhorn, 21 August 1936, 305.

Hyacinth is then put on a car roof, a noose around his neck attached to a tree: when the car drives away he ‘skid[s] and [fights] an instant – less than an instant – to keep his footing or some hold, some safety.’<sup>52</sup> The torching of the body produces ‘a hissing sound’ and ‘a smell’.<sup>53</sup> Hyacinth’s movements, his unearthly voice, the image of the legs skidding on the moving car roof, the sound of the burning, the smell: all these sense-impressions convey a real experience that made a deep and shocking impact on the first person narrator. Mundane details such as the price of the hire car and its breaking down contribute to the effect of authenticity. As a consequence of the publication, Gellhorn was asked to appear as a witness before a Senate Committee on an anti-lynching bill.

In fact, ‘Justice at Night’ is fictitious, though based on real-life encounters (with a truck driver who had just been to a lynching and with a man whose son had been lynched).<sup>54</sup> As Gellhorn, in a late interview, indicated, the stylistic effects are produced by generic cross-pollination:

In journalism you are of course reporting exactly what you see but at the same time you point of view being your own and your sympathy being your own so you can use some of the skills of fiction to make it alive.<sup>55</sup>

The piece is a good example of what Gay Talese, speaking about the New Journalism of the 1960s, termed the ‘larger truth’:<sup>56</sup> lynchings did occur, though this particular one did not. The same ontological status might be granted to other of Gellhorn’s writings, such as *The Trouble I’ve Seen*, composite pictures of Depression experiences, which tend to be labelled ‘fiction’ because, unlike her official FERA reports, they do not refer to real-life individuals. Whether a piece by Gellhorn is ‘journalism’ or ‘fiction’, therefore, does not radically affect either its flavour of authenticity or its authorial positioning.

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<sup>52</sup> Gellhorn, 21 August 1936, 305.

<sup>53</sup> Gellhorn, 21 August 1936, 305.

<sup>54</sup> Orsagh, 59; Caroline Moorehead, 112-14. Gellhorn wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt that she had been sent ‘a picture of a lynching [...] A little tree and a limp dead negro, as quiet as the tree’ (letter of 2 December 1936, f. 3’).

<sup>55</sup> Nicholas Shakespeare, ‘Omnibus’, 1991.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Nicolaus Mills, xii.

The next question is whether the professionalisation of journalism has consequences which distinguish it from fiction-writing in terms of authorial siting. Are different generic ethics in play? Does journalism belong to a public arena, fiction to a private space? In the United States, journalism was institutionalised early: Joseph Pulitzer helped found the first university school of journalism, at Columbia, in 1913, and, of course, established the prizes for ‘serious journalism’, especially ‘that which has helped social reform’, which still bear his name.<sup>57</sup> In a 1893 essay, ‘The Man of Letters as a Man of Business’, William Dean Howells, while remaining friendly to the press, remarked that to write ‘to pay [...] provisions bills’ was ‘ridiculous’, ‘repulsive’ and ‘shabby’: literature was, and should remain, ‘the most intimate [...] of the arts’.<sup>58</sup> This hierarchical division between ‘private’ fiction, the preserve of the gentleman-amateur, and ‘public’, commercialised journalism provides the dramatic tension in Henry James’ *The Bostonians* (1886). The journalist in this novel, Matthias Pardon, appears thus:

For this ingenuous son of his age all distinction between the person and the artist had ceased to exist; the writer was personal, the person food for newsboys, and everything and every one were every one’s business. All things, with him, referred themselves to print, and print meant simply infinite reporting, a promptitude of announcement, abusive when necessary, or even when not, about his fellow-citizens. He poured contumely on their private life, on their personal appearance, with the best conscience in the world.<sup>59</sup>

The opposition between *belles lettres* and commercialised journalism (a specious one, given that James himself was a shrewd negotiator in the literary market-place and even wrote for the *New York Sun*)<sup>60</sup> assumes further significance as another set of values are loaded onto the scales. Basil Ransom, an opponent of women’s rights and of Verena Tarrant’s public speaking, bursts out:

The whole generation is womanized; the masculine tone is passing out of the world; it’s a feminine, a nervous, hysterical, chattering, canting age.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Inglis, 46.

<sup>58</sup> Howells, 3, 2.

<sup>59</sup> James, 1967, 129.

<sup>60</sup> Robertson, 21, 39, 40.

<sup>61</sup> James, 1967, 334.

To translate the private sphere into the public – to make ‘the person food for newsboys’ – is gendered as feminine, ‘mediocre’.<sup>62</sup> There is some irony in this given that, in the nineteenth century, newspapers were owned, edited, written and read almost entirely by men,<sup>63</sup> and given the enormous difficulties Martha Gellhorn and other aspiring women journalists would face in the profession – but the point for present purposes is the cultural down-grading of journalism by James, Howells and others precisely on the grounds of its professionalised nature.

One professional journalistic requisite in particular has been ‘objectivity’. The concept is explored in detail in Chapter Three, but here it can be noted that, for at least part of journalism’s development, it has been not so much the unbiased representation of ‘truth’ as ‘technique and goal’.<sup>64</sup> In an article arguing for objectivity’s status as ‘strategic ritual’, Gaye Tuchman lists the procedures which permit its assertion: the presentation of conflicting possibilities; the presentation of supporting evidence; the judicious use of quotation marks; and the structuring of information in an appropriate sequence.<sup>65</sup> Of course, ‘objectivity’ as journalistic hallmark is not an absolute: John Hollowell, referring to the New Journalism, notes that ‘a tendency to self-display’ – in particular attention to how the story is obtained – has itself become ‘part of the action’.<sup>66</sup> The result is a ‘blur between public and private worlds’,<sup>67</sup> between the news-subject and the reporter’s personality. Mick Hume takes the point even further, referring to a kind of journalism which exists ‘to give a sense of purpose and self-importance to the journalists themselves’, a ‘twisted sort of therapy’.<sup>68</sup> Objectivity and self-display are constructions: Gellhorn’s fiction and journalism feature them both. The approach taken here is therefore not to set up a ‘subjective’ / ‘objective’ opposition in relation to fiction and journalism, but to identify a range of authorial orientations across the generic divide.

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<sup>62</sup> James, 1967, 334.

<sup>63</sup> Robertson, 37.

<sup>64</sup> Smith, 152.

<sup>65</sup> Tuchman, 664-9.

<sup>66</sup> Hollowell, 52, 49.

<sup>67</sup> Hollowell, 58.

<sup>68</sup> Hume, 4, 18.

Professional journalism, of course, has its own compositorial methods: as mentioned, Gellhorn's pieces were radioed in and subjected to editing and placement within specific paratextual contexts. These do contribute to authorial siting. Journalism, unlike (generally speaking) fiction, is associated with newness, speed (Matthew Arnold's 'literature in a hurry'),<sup>69</sup> newsworthiness<sup>70</sup> and ephemerality.<sup>71</sup> It is also, in two senses, 'datable':<sup>72</sup> referable to a specific event in time and, consequently, limited to it.<sup>73</sup> It is also *edited*, although, in the case of Gellhorn's *Collier's* pieces, there was minimal editorial intervention.<sup>74</sup> The demands of space have stylistic consequences: the *Kansas City Star* style-sheet, for instance – 'Use short first paragraphs. Use vigorous English. Be positive, not negative.' – has been credited with influencing the famous Hemingway terseness.<sup>75</sup> In the October 1941 edition of *Horizon*, in a 'manifesto' entitled 'Why Not War Writers?', Arthur Calder-Marshall, Cyril Connolly, Bonamy Dobrée, Tom Harrisson, Arthur Koestler, Alun Lewis, George Orwell and Stephen Spender argued that creative writers 'bring home with a depth and vividness impossible to the writer of a newspaper report or feature article, the significance of what is happening all about us'. The writing of Hemingway, Malraux and Silone on the Spanish Civil War 'was deeper, more humanly appealing and more imaginative than newspaper men had time or space for.'<sup>76</sup> Gellhorn herself, interviewed late in life, concurred:

Fiction is much harder [than journalism] to do, much more rewarding to me and the advantage of it is you have much more time, you have as much time as you want, as

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<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Frus, 17, but otherwise unsourced. With modern technology, news is now capable of being 'real-time' – that is, instantaneous (McNair, 62).

<sup>70</sup> Stuart Hall's 'criterion of the significant' (Hall, 86).

<sup>71</sup> Brake, 'Rogery and Woe', lecture given on 12 May 2003.

<sup>72</sup> John Carey, xxix.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Ezra Pound's 'literature is news that STAYS news' (Pound, 13).

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Caroline Moorehead, 4 December 2003. Gellhorn herself stated, 'They [the *Collier's* editors] never cut or altered anything I wrote. They did, however, invent their own titles for most of my articles' (*FoW*, 13). In a letter to *Collier's* editor Charles Colebaugh of 22 October 1938, she wrote, 'I am calling my article "Mr. Chamberlain's Peace". That seems to me a perfect description. But if you don't like that, I suggest as an alternative, "Obituary of a Democracy". Both are accurate.' (f. 3<sup>r</sup>). *Collier's* opted for the latter. In the same letter, Gellhorn remarked, 'I am not writing these things [the British betrayal of Czechoslovakia at Munich] in my article. Perhaps I am wrong, but I have always tried to be as non-political and pictorial as possible for you, believing that was the way you wanted things done' (f. 3<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>75</sup> Frus, 17. But see the discussion of the origins of Hemingway's style in Chapter Three.

<sup>76</sup> Calder-Marshall et al, October 1941, 236-7.

much space as you want [...] so you can go into a degree of detail which you can never do in journalism.<sup>77</sup>

To the art historian, Bernard Berenson, she wrote: 'I love journalism, that base trade, but love my own version of it, which has nothing to do with news but only to do with facts.'<sup>78</sup>

Gellhorn, as noted, was writing subject to the exigencies of magazine, rather than newspaper, publication. As Corker tells newly-recruited war correspondent William Boot in Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* (1948):

News is what a chap who doesn't care much about anything wants to read. And it's only news until he's read it. After that it's dead. We're paid to supply news. If someone else has sent a story before us, our story isn't news. Of course there's colour. Colour is just a lot of bull's-eye about nothing. It's easy to write and easy to read but it costs too much in cabling so we have to go slow on that.<sup>79</sup>

'*Collier's*,' noted Nigel Nicolson in an early review 'gave Miss Gellhorn the licence to go wherever she wanted, and the time and space to be discursive. She was not required to produce hard news. Her business was to get herself to the war, and to say what war felt like.'<sup>80</sup> The magazine was a large enough canvas for Gellhorn to 'colour', obeying the dictum that Mary Douglas refers to in *A Stricken Field*: 'make it clear, make it colorful, make it lively.'<sup>81</sup> Her pieces are trailed, variously, as 'a vivid picture', 'a drama-laden [...] picture'.<sup>82</sup> But the magazine's 6.2cm column width produced a contrasting stylistic consequence: Gellhorn's pieces are cast in extremely short – usually two- or three-sentence – paragraphs. Reproduced in *The Face of War* and other collections, these mini-paragraphs are merged into larger wholes. On occasion, this results in a slight change of emphasis, sometimes even of sense. Here, for example, is a paragraph division in 'The Wounded Come Home', first published in *Collier's* on 5 August 1944:

The ship's crew became volunteer stretcher-bearers, instantly.  
Wounded were pouring in now [...]<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Nicholas Shakespeare, 'Omnibus', 1991.

<sup>78</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 15 March 1954, f. 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> Waugh, 69.

<sup>80</sup> Nicolson, 517.

<sup>81</sup> *SF*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> 'Next Week' 30 July 1938, 10 September 1938 and 13 January 1940.

<sup>83</sup> 14.

And here is the same passage in *The Face of War* (1959):

The ship's crew became volunteer stretcher-bearers, instantly. Wounded were pouring in now [...] <sup>84</sup>

The change is slight but there is an appreciable difference in narrative effect. The former version gives the sense that the wounded pouring in is a fact which occurs *after* the crew become stretcher-bearers: a temporal issue. In the latter version, the crew seem to become stretcher-bearers *because* the wounded are pouring in: a motivational issue. It may be stretching the point, but it is arguable that the latter then assumes a teleology absent from the former.

Length and a period for reflection seem to have tonal, as well as semantic, consequences: a certain grandiosity, even sentimentality, which hover over Gellhorn's journalistic style become, in her post-war pieces (collected articles and fiction), more overt. This will be explored in detail in Chapter Three, but here a brief example can be given. In its original incarnation, in *Collier's* of 28 October 1944, 'Cracking the Gothic Line' contains the line:

And it is awful to die when you know that the war is won anyhow. <sup>85</sup>

In *The Face of War* (1959) this becomes:

And it is awful to die at the end of summer when you are young and have fought a long time and when you remember with all your heart your home and whom you love, and when you know that the war is won anyhow. <sup>86</sup>

The latter version contains more melodious (anapaestic / trochaic) cadences ('it is àwfùl tō diē āt thē ènd òf sùmmër'), plus Hemingway-esque asyndeton (four 'ands') and emotive vocabulary ('heart', 'home', 'love'). The effect is more mawkish, less clear-eyed. Here it is again in *Point of No Return*:

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<sup>84</sup> 144.

<sup>85</sup> 57.

<sup>86</sup> 167.

There was only time to live through, and though the present was interminable and tomorrow was more of today, and all of it endless, his only real occupation was waiting.<sup>87</sup>

Tone is a factor in authorial construction and positioning and, in Gellhorn's case, does seem to have been affected by the peculiar conditions of magazine journalism. Nonetheless, the picture is one of different degrees of tonal intensity, rather than of radically different voices sounding in her correspondence and fiction.

Fictional and journalistic composition therefore do produce differing effects in the complex matrices of authorial siting, but rather than treat the two genres as separate, the approach of this thesis is to view them as an ontological continuum. Where the real differences in authorial alignment occur is in the extent to which fiction permits Gellhorn to *dramatise* the effects of reportorial intrusion into the war space. This, though, belongs strictly to the subject-matter of this thesis rather than to an account of its methodology.

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'The imagination has a longer reach,' wrote Nadine Gordimer, referring to the difference between 'testimony' and 'imaginative writing' in post-apartheid South Africa: 'when testimony has been filed, out of date, poetry continues to carry the experience from which the narrative has fallen away'.<sup>88</sup> It is a point also made by Susan Sontag in her perception that time eventually positions most photographs at the level of art: the image that mobilises conscience is always linked to a given historical moment.<sup>89</sup> Planes of alignment in relation to historical subject-matter like wars fall through various dimensions: time, space, politics, ethics, personal feeling. This thesis tries to discover Martha Gellhorn, war reporter, (and 'Martha Gellhorn', 'war reporter') at the intersections, which lie in both the field and in the text.

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<sup>87</sup> *WOA*, 56.

<sup>88</sup> Gordimer, 41, 42.

<sup>89</sup> Sontag, 21, 17.

## CHAPTER 1

### POINTS OF DEPARTURE

This chapter plots the co-ordinates that constitute the ‘zero’ (or starting) point on the graph of Martha Gellhorn’s Second World War writings. The first of these is the ‘New Reportage’ and the depiction of social conditions which formed the precursor to the representation of conflict. The second is the American war writing that pre-dated her career.

#### THE NEW REPORTAGE

From 26 to 28 April 1935, the inaugural American Writers’ Congress met at Mecca Temple, New York City (Gellhorn was to give a paper at the second). Speaker after speaker gave the ‘American Writer’ a very precise positioning: part of an international, reforming movement against the threats of capitalism and fascism. Specifically, the American Writer was expected to take an active role in ‘building a new world’,<sup>1</sup> a process which the conference, as the Call to Congress promised, would facilitate:

This Congress will be devoted to the exposition of all phases of a writer’s participation against war, the preservation of civil liberties and the destruction of fascist tendencies everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

Any doubt as to the generic form this participation would take was removed by a paper by Joseph North, editor of the radical magazine, *The New Masses*.<sup>3</sup> The title of North’s paper – ‘Reportage’ – introduced the term, if not the genre, to the United States. Not confined to works of non-fiction, reportage’s aim was ‘to present the fact, the occurrence, in all its open and hidden aspects’. The form, North proclaimed, had ‘evolved into one of the most important [...] of the revolutionary movement’.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Frank, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Hart, 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> Martha Gellhorn had lunch on her 29<sup>th</sup> birthday with Joseph North in Spain, during the Civil War: at the end of the day, he was ‘still there but drunker and very nice’ (‘Diary’, for 8 November 1937, unfoliated).

<sup>4</sup> North, 120.

In '30s Europe, the 'presentation of fact' was a key means of educating and, crucially, mobilising public opinion. The first International Writers' Congress for the Defence of Culture was held in June 1935 in Paris; others followed in Barcelona, Madrid and Valencia.<sup>5</sup> At the Paris Congress, the French delegation argued for a return to humanist encyclopaedism. In the Soviet Union, 'socialist realism' was the official artistic doctrine from 1934.<sup>6</sup> Reporting to the American Writers' Congress, Matthew Josephson noted that Soviet authors 'participated by turning their craft into an instrument of the revolution', the social novel being seen as 'an instrument of political education'.<sup>7</sup> In Britain, Victor Gollancz's Left Book Club was founded in 1936 'to help in the terribly urgent struggle for World Peace and against Fascism by giving to all who are determined to play their part in this struggle such knowledge as will immensely increase their efficiency.'<sup>8</sup> The following April, a new journal, *FACT*, edited by Storm Jameson, Stephen Spender and others, was launched. Its inaugural editorial states its revolutionary ambitions:

Encyclopaedists led by Diderot were responsible for the French Revolution. Their essential work was the spreading of *information*. This knowledge produced action. *FACT*'s editors are endeavouring to be the modern encyclopaedists.<sup>9</sup>

Jameson opens her article, 'Documents', in *FACT*'s 15 July 1937 edition by claiming that a socialist literature must be 'intimately concerned with the changing world'.<sup>10</sup> If social revolution, or, at least, activism, was the documentarist project's objective, its remit was equally ambitious. The 'Mass Observation' experiment, launched by Charles Madge and Tom Harrison to gather and disseminate facts, aimed to reveal the conditions of life in all parts of Britain. The journey naturally became both the practical and literary means of achieving this geographical range: examples include Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) and *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937); J.B. Priestley's *English Journey* (1934) and Jack Hilton's *English Ways* (1940).

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<sup>5</sup> Monteath, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Piper, 134.

<sup>7</sup> Josephson, 43, 44.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, 1997, 166; <<http://www.wcml.org.uk/lbcbooks.html>>.

<sup>9</sup> 'Ourselves', 6-8.

<sup>10</sup> Jameson, 1937, 9.

America had its own documentarist tradition. North explicitly acknowledged the work of Agnes Smedley, John Spivak and John Reed, and before them, Stephen Crane and Richard Harding Davis.<sup>11</sup> These, too, were travelling eye-witness reporters, foreshadowing Martha Gellhorn's status in war. Spivak toured the country with a lecture on European fascism entitled 'I Saw'.<sup>12</sup> Smedley had personally experienced the subject of her *China's Red Army Marches* (1934). 'This book is a slice of intensified history – history as I saw it,' wrote Reed in the preface to his account of the November Revolution, *Ten Days That Shook The World* (1919).<sup>13</sup> He continued:

I must confine myself to a chronicle of those events which I myself observed and experienced, and those supported by reliable evidence. [...] In the struggle my sympathies were not neutral. But in telling the story of those great days I have tried to see events with the eye of a conscientious reporter, interested in setting down the truth.<sup>14</sup>

Reed places himself within the field, observing and experiencing; in the text, by means of the first person singular; and simultaneously in both by reproducing facsimiles of passes issued to him by the Military Revolutionary Committee of Petrograd.<sup>15</sup>

As subject-matter, foreign revolutions were replaced by domestic conditions in the post-Crash '30s. Invoking the etymology of 'documentary',<sup>16</sup> many works took the form of a words-and-pictures journey through the underside of America: Erskine Caldwell and

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<sup>11</sup> North, 120. He might also have mentioned the reforming journalism of 1902-12 (for which Theodore Roosevelt coined the term 'muckraking') in *Everybody's*, *McClure's*, *The Independent*, the *Cosmopolitan* and *Collier's*, which included articles by writers such as Ida M. Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens, whose series for *McClure's* were collected as *History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904) and *Shame of the Cities* (1904), respectively.

<sup>12</sup> Stott, 34.

<sup>13</sup> Reed, ix.

<sup>14</sup> Reed, ix, xiii.

<sup>15</sup> Reed, 136, 137. As will be seen, this bibliographical tactic reappears in the memoirs of war reporters. The Imperial War Museum's *Women and War* (13 October 2003 to 18 April 2004) exhibited Martha Gellhorn's passport (issued by the United States Immigration Service, Florida, dated 26 December 1942, signed 'Martha G. Hemingway'). Passports, bearing photographs and visas, are evidence of presence and itinerancy.

<sup>16</sup> From the Latin, *documentum* – proof, lesson (*docere*, to teach) (OED). The French termed travel films '*documentaires*'. In a February 1926 *New York Sun* review, the British film producer, John Grierson, described Robert Flaherty's *Moana*, a film about South Sea Islanders, as a 'documentary' (Hardy, 11): this was the first instance of its use to describe factual works. But Grierson defined 'documentary' as 'the creative treatment of actuality' (Hardy, 11): the informative 'shorts' that did 'not dramatise or reveal in an aesthetic sense' were not what he intended by the term (Grierson, 79). Similarly, the film-maker Joris Ivens opined, 'the distinction between *document* and *documentary* is quite clear. Do we demand objectivity in the evidence presented at a trial? No, the only demand is that each piece of evidence be [a] full [...] subjective, truthful, honest presentation of the witness' attitude' (Ivens, 137).

Margaret Bourke-White's *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) and *Say, Is This The USA?* (1941), Dorothea Lange and Paul Taylor's *American Exodus* (1939), James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1939), Oliver La Farge and Helen Post's *As Long As The Grass Shall Grow* (1940), Eleanor Roosevelt (Martha Gellhorn's mentor) and Frances Macgregor's *This Is America* (1942), Eudora Welty's *One Time, One Place. A Mississippi Album* (1971, but featuring photographs taken in 1929). Gellhorn's own Depression work, *The Trouble I've Seen* (1936), grew out of her travels as a field reporter for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration.

In theoretical terms, Keith Williams positions the New Reportage as a reaction against Modernism's experimentalism: it would not, however, regress to the unproblematised realism of the nineteenth-century novel, with its dangerous tendencies to conceal both its own fictiveness and the subjective status of reality.<sup>17</sup> The genre would, instead, evince a *reasoned* objectivity, which did not simply present a fact but showed how it came into existence and its consequences: what the Soviet documentarist Sergei Tretyakov termed 'the biography of things'.<sup>18</sup> 'To the writer of reportage, the fact he is describing is no corpse,' wrote North, 'it is alive, it has a place on earth'.<sup>19</sup> The anthropomorphic metaphor recurs in two key essays of the 1930s by the Hungarian Marxist theorist, Georg Lukács: 'Reportage or Portrayal?' (1932) and 'Narrate or Describe?' (1936). Lukács distinguished between 'narration', the mode of lived-through experience, and 'description' or external observation.<sup>20</sup> The latter would result in 'still lives', 'corpses': inhuman, unimaginative presentations of objects which ignored their modes of production.<sup>21</sup> Lukács termed this superficial objectivity, 'reportage',<sup>22</sup> its writers in

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<sup>17</sup> Williams, 1991, 13; 1997, 164-5.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Williams, 1991, 138. Williams perceptively points out that this approach fills the gap identified by Roland Barthes in his analysis of myth (Williams, 1990, 105). 'In passing from history to nature, myth [...] abolishes the complexity of human acts' (Barthes, 1993, 145).

<sup>19</sup> North, 121.

<sup>20</sup> The distinction corresponds to Plato's mimetic and diegetic modes as set out in *The Republic* (393-394): the former a kind of ventriloquism or dramatisation, the latter overt authorial explication (Plato, 149-57). More simply, these modes might be stated as 'show' and 'tell'.

<sup>21</sup> Lukács, 1970, 130, 133; 1980, 54.

<sup>22</sup> Lukács, 1970, 134; 1980, 48.

the main petit-bourgeois opponents of capitalism. Yet he also identified a 'genuine reportage', which would 'always present a connection, disclose causes and propose consequences'.<sup>23</sup>

What, then, were the recourses available to the bourgeois writer of New Reportage hoping to avoid descriptive deadness? 'The middle-class writer,' noted Storm Jameson, 'does not even know what the wife of a man earning two pounds a week wears'.<sup>24</sup> There was only one way to find out: the writer 'should be willing to go and live for a long enough time at one of the points of departure of the new society'.<sup>25</sup> Empathy, then, was the '30s *zeitgeist*. William Stott claims that Whitman's line, 'I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there',<sup>26</sup> was much quoted in the period, while a popular tag-line was Jack Pearl's vaudeville refrain, 'Vas you dere, Sharlie?'.<sup>27</sup> Both fiction and non-fiction insisted on the credentials of their author's experience, a requirement parodied by James Thurber in the blurb for *My Life and Hard Times* (1933):

[Mr. Thurber] has not worked as a cow-puncher, ranch-hand, stevedore, short-order cook, lumberjack, or preliminary prize fighter.<sup>28</sup>

If lived experience of Depression conditions could not be gained personally, the other obvious source was the people themselves. Arthur Calder-Marshall pointed out the 'command of language and vividness of description' of the depositions in the Report of the Gresford Colliery disaster reprinted in *FACT*. The same applied, Calder-Marshall continued, to the verbal statements made to the police and in the 'everyday conversation of workers'.

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<sup>23</sup> Lukács, 1980, 49.

<sup>24</sup> Jameson, 1937, 10-11.

<sup>25</sup> Jameson, 1937, 13, original emphasis. Accordingly, the genre has obvious affinities with the 'New Journalism' of the 1880s and again of the 1960s. The former has been described as 'the journalistic art of structuring reality, rather than recording it' (Smith, 168). The four key devices of the latter, according to Tom Wolfe, were 'scene by scene construction; the recording of dialogue in full; the presentation of each scene through the eyes of a participating character and the recording of everyday details' (Wolfe, 31). But although emphasis was placed on the reporter doing his or her own 'leg-work' (Nicolaus Mills, xiv), this seems to have been for reasons of surface vividness rather than for ontological validity.

<sup>26</sup> From 'Song of Myself' ('Leaves of Grass', 1855 version, section 33, l. 832) (Whitman, 1965, 66).

<sup>27</sup> Stott, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Thurber, back cover blurb. Also quoted in Stott, 37.

This was because ‘the worker takes his imagery from experience, the semi-articulate bourgeois from the phrase book’.<sup>29</sup> The approach was mirrored in other spheres: the use of the case-study and ‘participant-observer’ method pioneered at the sociology department at the University of Chicago in the 1920s; the ‘worcorrs’ (worker correspondents) of *The New Masses*; pulp ‘confession literature’.<sup>30</sup>

What of political alignment? The radicalism of these ’30s documentarist works is still at issue.<sup>31</sup> Stott argues that what began as oppositional under Herbert Hoover became institutionalised under Franklin D. Roosevelt. Hoover minimised the effects of the 1929 Crash in order (to give Stott’s charitable explanation) to restore consumer confidence: as a result, FDR inherited a situation about which the basic socio-economic data were unavailable.<sup>32</sup> From Stott emerges a picture of government-sponsored fact-finding driven by the President’s personal inquisitiveness. Key to this project was the work of the Federal Emergency Relief Agency (FERA), which sent out field reporters (among them Martha Gellhorn and Eudora Welty) to observe conditions. This information was then re-delivered to the nation by FDR via his radio ‘Fireside Chats’.<sup>33</sup> Another New Deal agency, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), promoted, through its arts projects, American culture of all kinds. Martha Gellhorn herself wrote an article for *The Spectator* praising these enterprises:

There are more murals in America now than anyone dreamed existed before; there is a vast geographic, historic, economic guide book of America in progress, employing thousands of jobless writers and journalists; there are orchestras everywhere you turn [...] Someone deserves congratulations.<sup>34</sup>

The image of a kindly, fireside President is undermined by Stott’s separate suggestion that the real motive for uncovering the bleak facts of the Depression was to gain sympathy for the administration’s New Deal reforms. Crucially, the facts related were remediable.<sup>35</sup> Daniel Aaron’s assessment seems accurately to encapsulate the mood of uneasy acceptance:

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<sup>29</sup> Calder-Marshall et al, 1937, 39-40.

<sup>30</sup> Stott, 156, 164, 192.

<sup>31</sup> Gellhorn’s own siting in relation to the New Deal is discussed in Chapter Two.

<sup>32</sup> Stott, 68, 71, 92.

<sup>33</sup> Stott, 96.

<sup>34</sup> Gellhorn, 10 July 1936, 52.

<sup>35</sup> Stott, 18, 21.

The New Deal was at least beginning to grapple with the problems of the Depression; undoubtedly the Roosevelt administration won over a good many incipient radicals.<sup>36</sup>

Even so, as Williams suggests, although documentarism had gone mainstream, the radical agenda of the journals of the 1910s and '20s (*The Masses*, *The Comrade*, *The Liberator*, *The New Masses*) endured in aesthetic form: the fragmentary, object-loaded, textually self-reflexive nature of '30s New Reportage subtly disrupted the representational complacencies of the New Deal.<sup>37</sup>

This section now looks more closely at two New Reportage texts. James Agee and Walker Evans's extraordinary account of Alabama tenant cotton farmers and their families, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1939), is predicated upon direct experience. Using King Lear's 'Take physick, pomp; / Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel'<sup>38</sup> as both epigraph and methodology, Agee claims that he 'would do just as badly to [...] eliminate myself from this picture as to simplify or invent character, places or atmosphere'.<sup>39</sup> Yet, in Agee's case, empathy assumes mystical qualities:

I lie down inside each one [...] I become not my own shape and weight and self, but that of each of them [...] I know almost the dreams they will not remember.<sup>40</sup>

Watching Evans photograph the Ricketts family, he is peculiarly sensitive to their possible discomfort:

All this while it was you I was particularly watching, Mrs. Ricketts; you can have no idea with what care for you, what need to let you know, oh, not to fear, not to hate us, that we are your friends.<sup>41</sup>

Strong feelings of love and sexual desire complicate the writer's attitude to his subjects, so that he regards his task as a 'betrayal' of his 'beloved', 'obscene', 'terrifying', a 'parading' of

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<sup>36</sup> Aaron, 1977, 156.

<sup>37</sup> Williams, 1997, 173. Williams detects the influence of the Russian Formalists in these practices (Williams, 1991, 30), in particular Victor Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie* (defamiliarisation): 'art [as] a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object' (Shklovsky, 18).

<sup>38</sup> III.iv.33-4.

<sup>39</sup> Agee, 240. Walker Evans comments that parts of the text 'read as though they were written on the spot' but in fact Agee wrote up his observations later (Evans, xi).

<sup>40</sup> Agee, 58.

<sup>41</sup> Agee, 365.

‘nakedness, disadvantage and humiliation’, his status that of a ‘spy’.<sup>42</sup> The configuration – the uneasy, ‘non-belonging’, ‘too much seeing’ reporter – is particularly prevalent in wartime and will be seen again in Martha Gellhorn’s sense of her relation to her subjects.

Though at one point Agee begs, ‘in God’s name don’t think of it as art’,<sup>43</sup> his plea sits oddly with unmistakable strategies of aestheticisation in the work. Rejecting naturalism as ‘at best never much more than documentary’, Agee criticises the latter for lacking ‘poetry or music’.<sup>44</sup> By contrast, *Famous Men* is expressly cast in ‘sonata form’,<sup>45</sup> with two quotations providing the first and second ‘subjects’: the section beginning ‘poor naked wretches’ from *Lear*<sup>46</sup> and Marx’s ‘workers of the world unite’,<sup>47</sup> respectively. The compositional technique recalls Reed’s *Ten Days* and Dos Passos’s *U.S.A.* (collected 1938): in sections with titles such as ‘On the Porch’, ‘Colon’, ‘Intermission’, there are straight descriptions, reproduced conversations, quotations, reflections on poetics. Literary influences include Hopkins, Emily Dickinson and, particularly, Whitman,<sup>48</sup> in passages such as this:

Each is composed of substances identical with the substance of all that surrounds him, both the common objects of his disregard, and the hot centers of the stars.

[...]

I do [...] seriously believe that the universe can be seen in a grain of sand.<sup>49</sup>

But aestheticisation is not limited to structure and prose style. Despite his stated intentions, Agee’s human subjects are transformed into artistic objects, an effect perhaps even more evident in Evans’s photographs, in which the elements of deprivation – rusting textures; bare furnishings; unsmiling faces – acquire a certain monochrome beauty. (The same effect recurs in the spare prose of Gellhorn’s *The Trouble I’ve Seen*). Such an effect, of course, raises an ethical question: the legitimacy of framing the poor for aesthetic contemplation. Agee’s Whitmanesque, secularised transcendentalism might provide some moral basis – ‘plain

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<sup>42</sup> Agee, 439, 7, xxii.

<sup>43</sup> Agee, xxii, 233, 15.

<sup>44</sup> Agee, 237.

<sup>45</sup> Agee, xix.

<sup>46</sup> III.iv.28-36. Later, Agee specifically notes that the project will involve ‘parading the nakedness’ of deprived human beings (Agee, 7).

<sup>47</sup> Opening words of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848).

<sup>48</sup> Agee specifically mentions Whitman as an influence (Agee, 353).

<sup>49</sup> Agee, 56, 242.

objects and atmospheres have a sufficient intrinsic beauty'<sup>50</sup> – but a strain of authorial unease about his enterprise cannot be repressed in the work.

Engagement with, and aestheticisation of, the subjects are, in *Famous Men*, perhaps unusually overt.<sup>51</sup> To give a brief counter-example, Erskine Caldwell's and Margaret Bourke-White's words-and-photos *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) conforms more to the New Reportage recommended practice of unmediated transcription. Italicised direct quotations are provided and the enterprise is more strictly anonymous, mentioning only two subjects by name. The captions under Bourke-White's black-and-white photographs sound like verbatim quotations: 'What my men-folks have a powerful gnawing for right now is a slab of sow-belly to eat with this cornbread'.<sup>52</sup> The prose dealing with the emotive subject of share-cropping is tersely informative: single clause sentences, active verbs, simple vocabulary:

The house was dirty and disheveled. He and his wife no longer had any pride in their home or in their appearance. They went unwashed. Itch and pellagra spread among them.<sup>53</sup>

Nonetheless, there is a certain subtle 'arrangedness' about *You Have Seen Their Faces*. Ironic gaps sunder captions and pictures. For 'Belmont, Florida', the text is 'Little brother began shriveling up eleven years ago'. The photograph shows a black child with withered limbs and mouth sores sitting on a splintered chair: behind him the walls are papered with newspaper adverts for automobiles – 'A dynamite cap 70 miles an hour'.<sup>54</sup> In her 'Notes on Photographs' at the end of the volume, Margaret Bourke-White lists the sizes of camera and films she took with her: 'I carried lenses of varying focal lengths to give a choice of perspective.'<sup>55</sup> Explicitly 'composed',<sup>56</sup> the portraits (both photographic and written) of these 'Faces' therefore belie the rawness of their first impressions. Both Agee's overtness and Caldwell and Bourke-White's more subtle insinuation, therefore, expose the complexity of

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<sup>50</sup> Agee, 239.

<sup>51</sup> Walker Evans remarked, 'I didn't identify myself subjectively nearly as much as Agee did. I was working objectively, on the visual material in front of me' (quoted in Hawthorne, 14).

<sup>52</sup> Caldwell and Bourke-White, photograph before p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Caldwell and Bourke-White, 31.

<sup>54</sup> Caldwell and Bourke-White, photograph before p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Caldwell and Bourke-White, 52.

<sup>56</sup> Caldwell and Bourke-White, 51, 53.

authorial siting in the New Reportage, a complexity reiterated in Gellhorn's writings as she simultaneously observed and experienced the effects of war.

In 1936, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War provided a new phenomenon to analyse and participate in. The Call to Congress issued to American Writers in January 1935 was premonitory: 'this Congress will be devoted to the exposition of all phases of a writer's *participation against war* [...] and *the destruction of fascist tendencies everywhere*'.<sup>57</sup> For the next nine years, the 'worcorrs' would give way to the 'warcorrs', but to what extent was a form developed to convey Depression conditions apt to convey the conditions of conflict?

It was particularly apt, having been honed in similar circumstances. Industrial plant was suggestive of matériel: here is Theodore Dreiser on the Carnegie steel works:

There is such popping and spluttering here as might justly be classified as explosions. The blast and roar with which some parts of the metal are reduced remind one vividly of artillery practice at close quarters.<sup>58</sup>

Instances of industrial unrest were themselves war-like: large firms like Goodyear Tyres bought army-type machine-guns, gas guns and grenades: munitions 'entirely unsuited for use except in carrying out offensive action of a military character against large crowds of people'.<sup>59</sup> John Hevener describes the industrial dispute between the coal miners and operators of Harlan County, Kentucky, as a 'prolonged and violent conflict':<sup>60</sup> in such encounters as 'the Battle of Evarts' (5 May 1931), 'machine gun, rifle and pistol bullets flew for half an hour' and there were 'between four and 11 deaths'.<sup>61</sup>

Consonant with this, the language used to characterise such disputes is bellicose, divisive. Florence Reece's song makes the point:

If you go to Harlan County  
There is no neutral there.  
[...]  
Which side are you on?

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<sup>57</sup> Hart, 10-11, my emphasis

<sup>58</sup> Dreiser, 1927, 21. Gellhorn is known to have read Dreiser (Gellhorn, letter to Bernard Berenson, 30 March 1954, f. 1'). As described below, she was also involved in a 'clash' with FERA authorities at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

<sup>59</sup> Craig, 150-1.

<sup>60</sup> Hevener, 1978, p. ix.

<sup>61</sup> Levy, 1970, p. 33.

Which side are you on?<sup>62</sup>

Dreiser's *Harlan Miners Speak* (1932), a collection of essays and witness statements taken by Dreiser and his colleagues, opens with a statement of purpose of the 'National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners', formed 'to aid workers organize and defend themselves against terror and suppression'.<sup>63</sup> The Committee (which included, alongside Dreiser, John Dos Passos, Sherwood Anderson and Bruce Crawford, publisher of *Crawford's Weekly*) is described as an 'invading body', whose mission is to enter the Kentucky coal-fields, 'inform the American public of what [is] going on' and 'persuade officials [...] to a more equitable course of action'.<sup>64</sup> Dreiser writes of a 'besieged community'; of requiring 'military protection'; the owners are 'making war' on the miners.<sup>65</sup> In another essay in the collection, Lester Cohen comments:

Today Kentucky is again a 'dark and bloody ground'. Harlan and Bell counties have heard the rattle of machine guns, the roar of dynamite, the curses of thugs, and the multitudinous voices of industrial warfare.<sup>66</sup>

This deploys typical war writing tropes: ordnance onomatopoeia, accumulation of short phrases to mimic the bustle of battle, concentration of values in the 'ground'. The last contains ironic resonances: as Melvin P. Levy points out in another essay in the volume, mining had destroyed the superior geological strata of the region, while the coal produced had been taken 'to the war-accelerated factories of the Great Lakes'.<sup>67</sup> The Committee members themselves are regarded 'pretty much as a spy is regarded in wartime'.<sup>68</sup> both Crawford and Boris Israel were shot in the legs. This illustrates a key point: while a bourgeois writer could perhaps never hope truly to understand the experience of the very poorest in the Depression from within, war could be the experience of anybody. This fact contributed, in the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War, to the overwhelming impetus to reach the front.

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<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Hevener, x. Boris Israel, in *Harlan Miners Speak*, commented, 'in a war you're either on one side or the other' (Israel, 81).

<sup>63</sup> Dreiser, 1970b, ix.

<sup>64</sup> Dreiser, 1970a, 4-5.

<sup>65</sup> Dreiser, 1970a, 5, 7, 8.

<sup>66</sup> Cohen, 18-19.

<sup>67</sup> Levy, 24, 23.

<sup>68</sup> Crawford, 75.

## PREVIOUS AMERICAN WAR WRITING

The second axis of influence is American war writing prior to Martha Gellhorn's own beginnings. An exhaustive history is outside the scope of this thesis, but this section aims at least to identify some key preoccupations and themes. It examines seven American writers who recorded war in journalism and in fiction (in Walt Whitman's case, in poetry), from the revolutions in Italy of 1848-9 to the First World War. These seven have been chosen because their positionings in relation to conflict helped create the options available to Martha Gellhorn. In particular, all engaged with the fact that, with the exception of the Civil War, war reporting for Americans is always the task of 'bringing home' the unfamiliar and often an occasion for piquing an isolationist nation into intervention. The seven are Margaret Fuller, Ambrose Bierce, Walt Whitman, Stephen Crane, Cora Taylor, Richard Harding Davis and Edith Wharton.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, newspapers obtained accounts of battles from active combatants:<sup>69</sup> from the beginning, therefore, presence and participation had huge epistemic significance for the gathering and dissemination of information about war. The Mexican War (1846-8) was the first to be extensively reported by American newspapers: indeed, proprietors such as George Wilkins Kendall, founder of the New Orleans *Picayune*, actually agitated for the war in the first place.<sup>70</sup> According to John Hohenberg, 'it was the fashion for correspondents to prove their daring by fighting rather than sit on the side-lines as non-combatants', and, in a manoeuvre that has become a trope of reportorial behaviour, Kendall, one of 40 correspondents in Mexico, captured a Mexican Cavalry flag, was mentioned twice in dispatches and wounded in the knee – behaviour indistinguishable from that of a military combatant.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Robertson, 141.

<sup>70</sup> Hohenberg, 39.

<sup>71</sup> Hohenberg, 25, 39, 42.

Horace Greeley's *New-York Daily Tribune* published dispatches from Margaret Fuller, who was based in Rome during the revolutionary years of 1848-9. Originating as a series of travel letters which Fuller personally posted and which took around a month to reach America, the pieces appeared in the newspaper with a date-line and the opening, 'Messrs. Greeley and McElrath:'.<sup>72</sup> The personal, epistolary approach also provided the aesthetic for the dispatches: travel-writing was already an 'over-worked genre' and Fuller believed that originality in it was best achieved by a 'focus on the personal'; furthermore, her fellow Transcendentalists<sup>73</sup> held that the 'center of interest' of such writing lay not in what the traveller saw or did but in self-portrayal.<sup>74</sup> Here, then, are the proto-poetics of presence (deriving from a separate strand than the New Reportage) and the ur-aesthetics of the reportorial figure. Visual representation played a large part in this construction of this figure. In Fuller's case, the governing image is a painting by Thomas Hicks, entitled 'Margaret Fuller during the siege of Rome' (*Fig. 1*).<sup>75</sup>



*Fig. 1*

A pensive Fuller is shown sitting in a marble loggia, her hands lying empty on her lap, the city silhouetted through the arches behind her: she is not recognisably a war correspondent, nor under fire, but these are generically early days.

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, the reproduction of the dispatch of 10 June 1849 in Fuller, 1991, p. xiv. John McElrath was Greeley's business partner. Henry James' fictitious woman reporter, Henrietta Stackpole, in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), sends 'letters' to her newspaper, *The Interviewer* (James, 1984, 139).

<sup>73</sup> Fuller was a member of the Transcendental Club and edited *The Dial* from January 1840 to March 1842 (Reynolds and Smith, 4).

<sup>74</sup> Reynolds and Smith, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Reproduced in Fuller, 1991, p. ii and here from <<http://www.academic.reed.edu>>.

Like many of the New Reporters of the 1930s, Fuller's early experience was in writing about social problems: her first European dispatches concerned Lyons weavers and the Glasgow poor. When the uprisings in Italy began, she was effectively rendered a war reporter. Her dispatch of 27 May 1849 (published in the *New-York Daily Tribune* on 23 June 1849), relates:

I have, for the first time, seen what wounded men suffer. The night of the 30th April I passed in the hospital, and saw the terrible agonies of those dying or who needed amputation [...] almost all the foreigners are gone now, driven by force [...] I shall not go until the last minute.<sup>76</sup>

By now Fuller had become the *regolatrice* (director) of a Rome hospital,<sup>77</sup> a significant fact in terms of placement. On the one hand, hospital work signifies direct participation in the war experience: the recording individual leaves off pure observation and takes on a practical task. On the other, what is being experienced is not battle itself but the physical signs of battle's effects, in this case the injuries of those recuperating or dying. In the Peircean sense, these signs are iconic.<sup>78</sup> Hospital scenes, therefore, are representative of a particular sub-genre of war writing: concentration on the 'outskirts' of war (at least when combat is located as the central experience) – such phenomena as eve-of-battle scenes, preparation, waiting and recovery. An apt term for this sub-genre is *parapolemic*: the temporal and spatial borders of war. Martha Gellhorn herself filed many reports about hospitals<sup>79</sup> and, of course, the point has gender implications. Ward visits, among other similar phenomena, were part of what was already becoming known as 'the woman's angle'.<sup>80</sup>

The injured and dying constitute a specific type of parapolemic: 'aftermath'. The word's non-metaphorical meaning is 'the crop of grass which springs up after the mowing in early summer':<sup>81</sup> figuratively, it signifies a harvest of wounds and dead bodies produced after

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<sup>76</sup> Fuller, 280.

<sup>77</sup> Fuller, 280.

<sup>78</sup> In Peircean semiotics, the dead and wounded would signify battle in the same way that smoke signifies fire (Peirce, 226-8).

<sup>79</sup> E.g. 'From Madrid to Morata' (24 July 1937), 'Visit to the Wounded' (October 1937), 'Men Made Over' (20 May 1944), 'The Wounded Come Home' (5 August 1944) and 'You're On Your Way Home' (22 September 1945).

<sup>80</sup> See the discussion of Walt Whitman below.

<sup>81</sup> OED 1.

humans have been ‘mown down’. Timothy O’Sullivan’s photograph, ‘A Harvest of Death, Gettysburg, July 1863’, a scene of bodies lying lumpishly in a field, is an early visual realisation of this meaning.<sup>82</sup> Mary Borden, a nurse during the First World War, whose work is discussed in Chapter Four, made the same imaginative connection:

There has been a harvest. Crops of men were cut down in the fields of France where they were growing. They were mown down with a scythe, were gathered into bundles, tossed about with pitchforks, pitchforked into wagons and transported great distances and flung into ditches and scattered by storms.<sup>83</sup>

Gellhorn also used the topos: ‘now the fields sprouted dead Germans in dark swollen lumps’.<sup>84</sup>

Yet Margaret Fuller (like Martha Gellhorn) did not confine herself to the parapolemical. Refusing to leave the barricaded city, on July 6 she was writing, ‘now the balls and bombs began to fall round me also’, though she was unable ‘to feel much for myself’ as her heart ‘bled daily more and more’ for the wounded and dying.<sup>85</sup> This is a stance at the very centre – literally and emotionally – of war. Later in the dispatch, a further adjustment is made to her positioning as she attempts to mobilise the American people. It takes the form of a direct appeal:

I see you have meetings, where you speak of the Italians, the Hungarians. I pray you *do something*; let it not end in a mere cry of sentiment. [...] Our government must abstain from interference, but private action is practicable, is due. Send money, send cheer – acknowledge as the legitimate leaders and rulers those men who represent the people.<sup>86</sup>

Certain hallmarks, then, distinguish Fuller’s war dispatches: radical social and political commitment; a refusal to leave the war zone; hospital visits as a means of attesting to the effects of the conflict but accompanied by personal experience of being under fire; and a desire to stir to action, if not an isolationist government, at least an understanding American

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<sup>82</sup> Reproduced in Gardner, plate 36; see also Trachtenberg, 102, and Lewinski, 49.

<sup>83</sup> Borden, 60-1.

<sup>84</sup> *WOA*, 185.

<sup>85</sup> Fuller, 303. The dispatch was published in the *New-York Daily Tribune* on 11 August 1849.

<sup>86</sup> Fuller, 311.

public. Such hallmarks might form a template for Martha Gellhorn's own positioning in relation to the Spanish Civil War.

It has been claimed that the American Civil War (1861-5) 'institutionalised' the role of war correspondent.<sup>87</sup> Certainly, the number of reporters that covered it – over 250 according to Downs and Downs<sup>88</sup> – suggests a growing professionalisation, but the exact nature of the role was still open to definition. Paradoxically perhaps, given the geographical proximity of the hostilities to where the newspapers were published, the fledgling poetics of presence and participation become problematic in both journalistic and fictional Civil War accounts.

On Lincoln's call to arms, Ambrose Bierce immediately enlisted in his local regiment, the 9<sup>th</sup> Indiana Volunteers. He participated as a combatant in some of the Civil War's bloodiest engagements, including Shiloh, Chickamauga and Franklin, sustaining a gun wound in 1864.<sup>89</sup> Yet, despite his centrality to the combat, Bierce's Civil War writings are notable for a number of 'distancing' effects. The most obvious is time: Bierce's fictional *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* was first published in America in 1891,<sup>90</sup> while his factual accounts appeared in journals up to forty years after the conflict and were first published in collected form only in 1909.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, their inspiration seems to have been several journeys of reminiscence Bierce made, beginning in 1903, to Civil War battlefields rather than the original experiences themselves.<sup>92</sup> As the author acknowledges: 'And this was, O so long ago!'<sup>93</sup>

'What I Saw of Shiloh' was first published in the *Wasp* on 23 and 30 December 1881 (and in the *San Francisco Examiner* on 19 and 26 June 1898), although the original encounter

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<sup>87</sup> Robertson, 141.

<sup>88</sup> Downs and Downs, 14.

<sup>89</sup> Joskin and Schultz, x-xi.

<sup>90</sup> It was published in Britain as *In the Midst of Life* (1892) (Quirk, 2000, xv).

<sup>91</sup> Joskin and Schultz, ix.

<sup>92</sup> Bierce, 1998, 1.

<sup>93</sup> Bierce, 1998, 24.

at Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee, had taken place on 6 April 1862.<sup>94</sup> It contains this striking passage:

In subordination to the design of this narrative, as defined by its title, the incidents related necessarily group themselves about my own personality as a center; and, as this center, during the few terrible hours of the engagement, maintained a variably constant relation to the open field already mentioned, it is important that the reader should bear in mind the topographical and tactical features of the local situation.<sup>95</sup>

This is a key statement of positioning: a gifted topographical engineer who had studied the subject at the Kentucky Military Institute and who acted as regimental cartographer,<sup>96</sup> Bierce never describes a battle without giving precise particulars of the physical terrain. The piece contains literal point of view ('lying flat on our faces between the guns we were screened from view by a straggling row of brambles')<sup>97</sup> as well as more value-laden self-location ('inglorious beneath showers of shrapnel darting divergent from the unassailable sky').<sup>98</sup> 'Darting divergent' and 'unassailable' are not the diction of direct, emotional engagement: there is something theatrical about how the scene is word-painted. Though presented as fact, the stage is set for a farce in which the narrator-officer (and Bierce had carried out his share of 'misguided' orders from above)<sup>99</sup> is a player.

Early in the piece, Bierce sees a Confederate soldier with a head wound:

The brain protruded in bosses, dropping off in flakes and strings. I had not previously known one could get on, even in this unsatisfactory fashion, with so little brain. One of my men, whom I knew for a womanish fellow, asked if he should put his bayonet through him. Inexpressibly shocked by the cold-blooded proposal, I told him I thought not.<sup>100</sup>

The appalling head injury is the occasion for a coolly sardonic characterisation of the narrating officer. 'Even in this unsatisfactory fashion' is an understatement revealing a failure of imagination and empathy, given the horrific details of the previous sentence. 'I

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<sup>94</sup> Joskin and Schultz, 10.

<sup>95</sup> Bierce, 2000, 20.

<sup>96</sup> Quirk, ix, i.

<sup>97</sup> Bierce, 1998, 21.

<sup>98</sup> Bierce, 1998, 21.

<sup>99</sup> Quirk, xi.

<sup>100</sup> Bierce, 1998, 19.

knew for a womanish fellow' suggests the speaker is a superficial judge of character. The final 'I thought not' expresses a woefully attenuated response. Through this self-sabotaging narratorial voice, Bierce assembles a complicated stance. Though writing from the midst of combat, he nonetheless creates a persona comically unable to engage with it.

Tom Quirk notes that Western journalism (Bierce wrote for the *San Francisco Examiner*) was 'notoriously fierce and coarsely comic': even by these standards, his humour 'makes one a little bit ashamed to laugh.'<sup>101</sup> There are further distancing devices. Bierce's factual account of Chickamauga was first published as 'Chickamauga' in the *San Francisco Examiner* on 24 April 1898. Before this, on 20 January 1889, his fictional dramatisation of the battle, again titled 'Chickamauga', appeared in the *Examiner*.<sup>102</sup> The latter is the story of a six-year-old boy who wanders into the forest, falls asleep and wakes to see wounded men creeping back from the front. Jumping on the back of one, he finds the man lacks a lower jaw: 'from the upper teeth to the throat was a great red gap fringed with hanging shreds of flesh and splinters of bone'.<sup>103</sup> (Injuries in Bierce's work are frequently to the head: he was shot in the head himself.) Lurid detail again conveys the reality of presence but a certain unflinching quality suggests emotional remoteness, an effect reinforced by the use of the definite article rather than possessive pronouns. That the boy is a deaf mute is also suggestive: transformed from physical into psychological terms (Bierce is adept at reporting the sounds of battle and does not claim, as many war writers do, to be rendered speechless by it), it represents the emotional detachment of the recording individual.

Bierce's positioning as a war recorder is therefore a complex assemblage. Topographical detail locates him in both field and text as the observer / participant who constructs the space of war. At the same time, self-sabotaging humour and a farcical sense of theatricality create a tonal detachment which mirrors the real distances from war of time and space. This latter prefigures instances in which Martha Gellhorn dissociates herself – either in the interests of 'objectivity' or in final disillusionment about her ability to intervene in war.

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<sup>101</sup> Quirk, xxiv.

<sup>102</sup> Joskin and Schultz, 29.

<sup>103</sup> Bierce, 23.

Walt Whitman's<sup>104</sup> engagement with the American Civil War was the mirror image of Ambrose Bierce's: Whitman personally witnessed no battles but his emotional investment in the conflict was one of exceptional depth.<sup>105</sup> Editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* from 1846, Whitman built a reputation as a radical Democrat and polemical journalist.<sup>106</sup> Before losing his job (for allegedly advocating the licensing of prostitutes and the rights of unmarried women to experiment with sex),<sup>107</sup> he led a successful campaign to raise a monument to the borough's Revolutionary War dead. For Whitman, therefore, as for Margaret Fuller before him and Gellhorn after, issues of social reform constituted a journalistic apprenticeship. The newspaper business – in particular, the 'turbulent world of New York journalism',<sup>108</sup> – has also been credited with forging his 'authentic idiom',<sup>109</sup> a 'new way of writing for American literature'<sup>110</sup> (a description which has also been applied to Ernest Hemingway's democratically pared-down prose). Ralph Waldo Emerson called *Leaves of Grass* a mixture of 'the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *New York Tribune*'.<sup>111</sup>

Whitman was at home in Brooklyn when the Civil War broke out. His brother, George Washington Whitman, immediately enlisted in the 51<sup>st</sup> New York Regiment, but it was only when George was reported wounded at the Battle of Fredericksburg that Whitman himself broke what he described to Emerson as his 'New York stagnation'<sup>112</sup> and went south in search of his brother. He spent ten days at the 51<sup>st</sup>'s camp in Falmouth, Virginia, visiting the Lacy Mansion, requisitioned as a hospital. He returned to New York only briefly during the remainder of the war, taking a job in the Union Army's Paymaster's office in Washington

<sup>104</sup> For an account of Margaret Fuller's influence on Whitman, see Larry J. Reynolds, 62-78.

<sup>105</sup> The publishing history of Whitman's much revised Civil War poems is extremely complicated. To give a simplified account: many were contemporaneously published in newspapers and later collected as *Drum-Taps*, a 'little book', (1865) and *Sequel to Drum-Taps* (1865-6). Subsequently, they were incorporated as a 'cluster', 'Drum-Taps', in the *Leaves of Grass* editions of 1867, 1871, 1872, 1876, 1881 and 1891-2 (Blodgett and Bradley, xxx-xxxii, and Moon, 172, 199). Whitman's prose pieces on the war also appeared first in contemporary newspapers. They were later collected as *Memoranda During the War* (1875) (*MDW*) (it was Whitman's original hope to publish this during the war, following Louisa May Alcott's *Hospital Sketches* (1863)), which became a section of *Specimen Days* (1882) (Zweig, 11).

<sup>106</sup> Zweig, 3.

<sup>107</sup> Morris Jr., 18.

<sup>108</sup> David S. Reynolds, 171.

<sup>109</sup> Matthiessen, 618.

<sup>110</sup> Morris Jr., 61.

<sup>111</sup> Zweig, 8.

<sup>112</sup> Morris Jr., 47.

D.C.,<sup>113</sup> and spending his free time touring camps, contemplating deserted battle-grounds, viewing columns on the march ('I stood unobserv'd in the darkness and watch'd them long')<sup>114</sup> and, above all, visiting tens of thousands of wounded and dying young soldiers in the hospitals serving the conflict. In 'Three Years Summ'd Up', he estimated that he had made over 600 hospital tours and gone among 80-100,000 of the wounded and sick, 'as sustainer of spirit and body in some degree, in time of need'. The visits varied from an hour or two to all day or night, for 'with dear or critical cases, I generally watch'd all night.'<sup>115</sup>

'Watching' over a 'dear' patient, perhaps while the young man sleeps, encapsulates Whitman's intimate tenderness towards his 'cases'. He went 'at night to soothe and relieve.'<sup>116</sup> Over one young man, he 'linger[ed], soothing him in his pain.'<sup>117</sup> Very often he simply sat in silence with them: twilit, holy vigils. Roy Morris Jr. describes Whitman's feelings towards the injured soldiers as 'sexual, if largely sublimated'.<sup>118</sup> Whitman himself wrote of one patient returning his kisses 'fourfold',<sup>119</sup> of another laying his hand on his knee: '[he] would keep it so for a long while [...] I loved the young man.'<sup>120</sup> His ward rounds 'arous'd and brought out and decided undream'd-of depths of emotion'.<sup>121</sup> The lingering intensity of these emotions is expressed in 'The Wound-Dresser':

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,  
 Straight and swift to my wounded I go.  
 [...]
 I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet unavoidable.  
 [...]
 From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,  
 I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the matter and blood.  
 [...]
 These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep in  
 my breast a fire, a burning flame.)  
 [...]
 (Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd

<sup>113</sup> Morris Jr., 83.

<sup>114</sup> 'Down at the Front', Whitman, 1963, 70. First published in *MDW*.

<sup>115</sup> Whitman, 1963, 112-3. First published in the *New York Weekly Graphic* (no date given).

<sup>116</sup> 'Patent-Office Hospital,' Whitman, 1963, 40. First published in the *New York Times*, 26 February 1863.

<sup>117</sup> 'Two Brothers, One South, One North', Whitman, 1963, 107. First published in *MDW*.

<sup>118</sup> Morris Jr., 101. The degree of 'sublimation' is disputed (see Moon, 211).

<sup>119</sup> 'A New York Soldier', Whitman, 1963, 57. First published in the *New York Times*, 11 December 1864.

<sup>120</sup> 'Death of a Pennsylvania Soldier', Whitman, 1963, 103-4. First published in *MDW*.

<sup>121</sup> 'Three Years Summ'd Up', Whitman, 1963, 113. First published in the *New York Weekly Graphic* (no date given).

and rested,  
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)<sup>122</sup>

Ambrose Bierce's term for such palliative instincts, as quoted above, was 'womanish'. In a February 1882 piece for the *Women's Journal* entitled 'Unmanly Manhood', a reviewer commented:

Whitman is an author who for all his physique and his freedom from home-ties, never personally followed the drum, but only heard it from the comparatively remote distance of the hospital.<sup>123</sup>

In this instance, it is not strictly Whitman's role of tending to patients that is being gendered as feminine. During the Civil War, male hospital attendants outnumbered female by about five or six to one, and the legendary Clara Barton, nurse at Lacy Mansion and 'dead shot with a pistol', was held to be 'more boy than girl'.<sup>124</sup> Whitman himself wrote in 'Female Nurses for Soldiers': 'it remains to be distinctly said that few or no young ladies, under the irresistible conventions of society, answer the practical requirements of nurses for soldiers.'<sup>125</sup> Caring for the sick was not automatically considered a female occupation. What is being configured as 'unmanly', then, is *distance* – Whitman's 'comparative remoteness' from the action (albeit a 'remoteness' enabling greater intimacy). Here, comparison can be made with Martha Gellhorn. In 1996, she recalled:

I never knew any men reporters who ever went near a hospital and I was a great frequenter of hospitals because that's where you really see the price of war. But I didn't have deadlines, most of the men did. Also they were much more interested in temporary military gains and losses, which I wasn't.<sup>126</sup>

By the time Gellhorn was reporting, military nursing was virtually exclusively a female occupation. But, again, the gender divide is not so much between aggression and tenderness as between proximity and distance (as well as between deadline-types). Yet this is

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<sup>122</sup> Whitman, 1965, 310-11.

<sup>123</sup> Higginson, 33.

<sup>124</sup> Morris Jr., 113, 53.

<sup>125</sup> Whitman, 1963, 88. First published in the *New York Times*, 6 March 1865, as 'A Few Words About Female Nurses for Soldiers'.

<sup>126</sup> Freedom Forum European Centre, 1996.

complicated by the fact that, in her tremendous efforts to reach the front, Gellhorn was obliged to exploit her femininity as well as evince 'masculine' toughness. She wrote:

I am astride the sexes, having the mind (and tastes and instincts) of neither a man nor a woman, but a scrambled mixture of both.<sup>127</sup>

Sharing the androgyny of the speaker of 'Song of Myself' ('maternal as well as paternal', 'the poet of the woman the same as the man'),<sup>128</sup> this configures a war reporter who exploits both 'masculine' nearness and 'feminine' remoteness.

Yet this dichotomy, too, demands caution. In a piece, 'The Real War Will Never Get in the Books', first published (in part) in the New York *Weekly Graphic*, Whitman presented a revised notion of 'centrality':

And so good-bye to the war. [...] to me the main interest [...] is the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and in those specimens amid the hospitals, and even the dead on the field [...] Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors [...] of the Secession War; and it is best they should not – the real war will never get in the books. [...] Its interior history will [...] never be written. [...] The hospital part of the drama from '61 to '65 deserves to be recorded [...] It seem'd sometimes as if the whole interest of the land, North and South, was one vast central hospital, and all the rest of the affair but flanges.<sup>129</sup>

The problem enunciated here is not the gap between rhetoric and reality but the precise definition and location of the 'real' war. Unlike Margaret Fuller, Whitman did not have to bring home a foreign setting or a foreign cause to the American people. Like Bierce, he had instead to convey to his compatriots another unfamiliarity: the bloody truth about battle. For him, that lay in the wards. When Martha Gellhorn locked herself in the toilet of a hospital ship as a means of getting to the D-Day beaches in June 1944,<sup>130</sup> she was emulating Whitman's re-definition of the 'real' war experience: parapolemics become central as a means of accessing truth.

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<sup>127</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Bernard Berenson, 17 August 1958, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>128</sup> 1855 version, sections 16, l. 332; 21, l. 425 (Whitman, 1965, 44, 48).

<sup>129</sup> Whitman, 1963, 115-18.

<sup>130</sup> See Chapter Four.

In the Preface to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman wrote that the poet ‘must flood himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic tides.’<sup>131</sup> Although his Civil War poems and prose are intimate expressions, a louder ‘public voice’ (Whitman was ‘fascinated’ by public speaking)<sup>132</sup> also sounds in them. The most telling instance of this again occurs in ‘The Wound-Dresser’. Into the version of the poem included in the 1881 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman inserted three lines previously used as a prefatory epigraph for the whole ‘Drum-Taps’ cluster:<sup>133</sup>

(Arous’d and angry, I’d thought to beat the alarum, and urge  
relentless war,  
But soon my fingers fail’d me, my face droop’d and I resign’d  
myself,  
To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch the dead;).<sup>134</sup>

The first line blares noisily through deeply private images: the wound ‘with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so sickening, so offensive’.<sup>135</sup> Analogously, the public version of Whitman was literally outstanding. ‘I create an immediate sensation in Washington Street,’ he wrote to a friend, ‘everybody here is so like everybody else – and I am Walt Whitman.’<sup>136</sup> In the hospitals, his charismatic presence formed a cynosure: ‘it is delicious to be the object of so much love and reliance,’ he wrote.<sup>137</sup> In ‘My Preparations for Visits’, he related:

In my visits to the hospitals I found it was in the simple matter of personal presence, and emanating ordinary cheer and magnetism, that I succeeded and help’d more than by medical nursing, or delicacies, or gifts of money, or anything else. During the war I possess’d the perfection of physical health.<sup>138</sup>

An image emerges of a larger-than-life Whitman walking the wards, upright where the soldiers are bed-ridden, in perfect health where they are wounded, ‘magnetic’ and cheerful where they are dying. It is the figure of the ‘master’ from an early poem, ‘Pictures’ (1825):

<sup>131</sup> Whitman, 1965, 726.

<sup>132</sup> Zweig, 11.

<sup>133</sup> See Blodgett and Bradley, 308-9n, and Moon, 173.

<sup>134</sup> Whitman, 1965, 309.

<sup>135</sup> Whitman, 1965, 311.

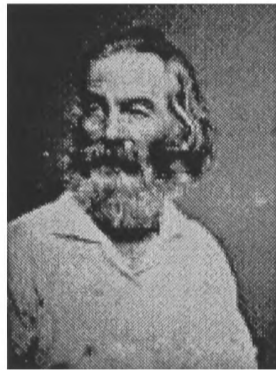
<sup>136</sup> Quoted in Zweig, 15, but otherwise unsourced.

<sup>137</sup> Quoted in Zweig, 20, but otherwise unsourced.

<sup>138</sup> Whitman, 1963, 51-2. First published in *MDW*. Whitman’s health did, in fact, deteriorate in the infectious atmosphere of the hospitals and he also sustained a deep cut to the hand when handing instruments to a surgeon during an operation (Morris Jr., 119-20).

Here Athens itself, - it is a clear forenoon,  
Young men, pupils, collect in the gardens of a favorite master, waiting  
for him, [...]  
Till, beyond, the master appears advancing - his form shows above the  
crowd, a head taller than they,  
His gait is erect, calm and dignified - his features are colossal.<sup>139</sup>

This is the forerunner of the version of the war recorder explored in Chapter Six: lone, peripatetic, ambiguously sited between subject and reader, literally eccentric (*Fig. 2*).<sup>140</sup>



*Fig. 2*

As Paul Zweig notes, it was an endless performance: ‘Whitman was a self-made man in the most complete sense: self-constructed, made out of an idea; a personage who had written his own part.’<sup>141</sup> A century later, Ernest Hemingway was putting on a very similar act.

*The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) is a Civil War story remarkable for both its author’s and its chief protagonist’s (lack of) experience of that conflict. Having enlisted, Henry Fleming waits impatiently to enter battle and acquire the wound which will be the sought-after badge not only of his courage but also of his presence: ironically, the injury he does sustain is iconically misleading as it results from his having been hit on the head by a fleeing artillery man whom he pesters for information. The novella is a concentrated – and comic – play on the epistemics of presence: Fleming says that he has fought and is believed when in fact he has fled, but is not believed when he actually does fight. Like Stendhal’s

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<sup>139</sup> Whitman, 1965, 644-5.

<sup>140</sup> This image of Whitman is reproduced from <<http://www.usc.edu>>.

<sup>141</sup> Zweig, 16.

equally diffident Fabrizio del Dongo in *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839),<sup>142</sup> he has retrospective doubt about the status of his own combat experience:

It suddenly occurred to the youth that the fight in which he had been, was, after all, but perfunctory popping. In the hearing of this present din he was doubtful if he had seen real battle scenes.<sup>143</sup>

While Henry Fleming could be said to have fought in a battle without knowing about it, his creator seemed to have known about the same battle without fighting in it. Stephen Crane was born in 1871, some six years after the Civil War ended. This has provoked various critical reactions, underlining the great significance of ‘being there’. ‘This young man has the power to feel,’ said the normally disparaging Bierce. ‘He knows nothing of war, yet he is drenched with blood.’<sup>144</sup> Ernest Hemingway found the novel a ‘great boy’s dream of war that was to be truer to how war is than any war the boy who wrote it would ever live to see.’<sup>145</sup> But Harold Frederic’s review in the *New York Times* of 26 January 1896 was more circumspect:

It seems as if the actual sight of a battle has some dynamic quality in it which overwhelms and crushes the literary faculty of the observer. At best he [Crane] gives us a conventional account of what happened, but on analysis you find that this is not what he really saw but what all his reading has taught him that he must have seen.<sup>146</sup>

Theodore Dreiser remarked that Crane ‘could never have witnessed personally what he writes of’.<sup>147</sup> Martha Gellhorn commented:

I’ve read a fine book called ‘The History of Rome Hanks’<sup>148</sup> [...] the wonder of the book is the way that boy writes about the Civil War as if he had fought in it. I don’t think Crane is as good.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Fabrizio is comically unsure whether or not he has participated in the Battle of Waterloo: ‘His chief sorrow was that he had not asked [...] “Have I really taken part in a battle?” It seemed to him that he had, and he would have been supremely happy if he could have been certain of this. [...] Was what he had seen a real battle? And, if so, was that battle Waterloo? [...] He was always trying to find in the newspapers, or in published accounts of the battle, some description or other which would enable him to identify the ground he had covered’ (Stendhal, 77, 88). Martha Gellhorn also notes, ‘it is remarkable how quickly soldiers start sight-seeing where they have fought, perhaps trying now to discover what really happened’ (Gellhorn, 28 October 1944, 57).

<sup>143</sup> Crane, 1975, 49.

<sup>144</sup> Quoted in Aaron, 1973, 215.

<sup>145</sup> Hemingway, 1966b, 11. Ironically, then, Hemingway criticised Willa Cather’s *One of Ours* (1922), on which *The Red Badge* was a ‘crucial influence’ (Lee, 1986, ix), for its second-hand battle scene (see Chapter Four).

<sup>146</sup> Quoted in Aaron, 1973, 219.

<sup>147</sup> Dreiser, 1977, 57.

<sup>148</sup> By Joseph Stanley Pennell (1944).

<sup>149</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, 17 May 1944, f. 2<sup>f</sup>.

Crane himself informed a reporter en route to the Graeco-Turkish War of 1897, that ‘he was off to Crete because, having written so much about war, he thought it high time he should see a little fighting.’<sup>150</sup> Having witnessed the Battle of Velestino, he told Joseph Conrad that *The Red Badge* was ‘all right’.<sup>151</sup>

The seeking of retrospective authentication (‘did I fight in a battle?’ / ‘did I describe a battle?’) makes it possible to liken Crane’s own epistemological approach to warfare to that of his creation, Henry Fleming. It drew immediate satire, such as the anonymous, ‘I Have Seen A Battle’, in the *New York Tribune* of 18 May 1897:

I have seen a battle.  
I find it is very like what  
I wrote up before.  
I congratulate myself that  
I ever saw a battle [...]  
I am sure of my nose for battle.  
I did not see any war correspondents while  
I was watching the battle except  
I.<sup>152</sup>

The first (and obvious) satiric point is that the famous war writer has finally witnessed a battle, the second is that now the act of witnessing has, ironically, taken precedence over the subject witnessed. It is as though, in an effort to compensate for previous lack of war experience, the acquisition of such experience has taken centre stage: egocentricity has replaced ‘bellocentricity’. Yet Crane’s encounter with the Battle of Velestino requires closer attention. The best starting-place is a visual record. On 13 June 1897 the *New York Journal* published a two-page spread on the battle with the headline, ‘That Was the ROMANCE, | This Is the REALITY, | The Battle To-day in Greece | --- a Fact. | by | STEPHEN CRANE.’, accompanied by an illustration by Dan Smith with the following caption:

Mr. Stephen Crane, Novelist and Special War Correspondent for the Journal on the Battlefield of Velestino in the Thick of the Fighting.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Quoted in Robertson, 141.

<sup>151</sup> Quoted in Colvert, xix. Notably, Crane’s *The Open Boat* (1897) has the subtitle, *A Tale Intended to Be After the Fact*.

<sup>152</sup> Quoted in Crane, 1964, 1-2.

<sup>153</sup> Crane, 1971, 451. The piece is collected as ‘A Fragment of Velestino’ (Crane, 1971, 27-44).

The various ‘codes’ in this caption, decrypted, convey that the *Journal* enjoys the services of a renowned war writer whose credentials of personal experience, if previously limited (‘Novelist’), are now enhanced by presence (‘on the Battlefield’) and even participation (‘in the Thick of the Fighting’). In fact, although the illustration does show a panorama of the battle-field, Crane is shown ‘in observation’<sup>154</sup> – hardly ‘in the thick’ of it. The stance is repeated in his written accounts of the engagement. ‘This was my first big battle,’ he confesses rather breathlessly, in an article syndicated as ‘Crane at Velestino’ that appeared in various U.S. papers on 11 and 12 May 1897, continuing:

The roll of musketry was tremendous. From a distance it was like tearing a cloth; nearer it sounded like rain on a tin roof and close up it was just a long crash after crash.<sup>155</sup>

This description, while apparently attesting to the reporter’s proximity, in fact masks his actual position: Crane could have heard the ‘close up’ musketry from a safe point behind the lines. Elsewhere in the piece, he reveals information which again questions his precise location:

Some other correspondents saw more of the battle than I did. I was rather laid up [...] I only arrived at noon of the second day.<sup>156</sup>

Another curious comment is let slip: ‘I saw no correspondents and supposed them all to be in the thick of the fray’.<sup>157</sup> If correspondents ‘in the thick of the fray’ were invisible to Crane, this seriously undermines the *New York Journal’s* claim that its special correspondent wrote from ‘the thick of the fighting’. The point was also made satirically by Charles Battell Loomis in a piece entitled ‘ST-PH-N CR-AN-’ published in *The Critic* on 1 May 1897:

Able students of the art of war who read my ‘Red Badge of Courage’ said that beyond a doubt I must have borne arms in our Civil War but as a matter of fact I wasn’t even borne in arms until a year or so after it was finished. Now, if I could write so graphic and convincing an account of a conflict, the varying colors of which had faded and gone before I came upon the scene, it follows that I ought to be able to write an account of the present Graeco-Turkish war that shall be at least as highly

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<sup>154</sup> Crane, 1971, 451. The OED gives as the definition of ‘thick’ as in ‘in the thick’ (B1b): ‘the position, time, stage, or state in which activity is most intense’. The expression therefore has co-ordinates of space, time and duration.

<sup>155</sup> Crane, 1971, 19.

<sup>156</sup> Crane, 1971, 18.

<sup>157</sup> Crane, 1971, 22.

colored as any other man's and that too from a point where I am able to give my whole attention to writing [...] and am in no danger from stray bullets. From what the critics say, I know all about war without ever having been near one. What have I to expect by being on the scene except an incapacitating wound?<sup>158</sup>

In 1897, a photograph was taken of Stephen Crane as a war correspondent, an early example of what became a popular genre (*Fig. 3*).<sup>159</sup> Crane is armed, wearing quasi-military riding gear, holding a lit cigarette and sitting on a large pile of (fake) rocks. Though posing in an Athens studio, he wears apparel that suggests, if not active combat, at least some experience of the rough outdoors conditions that are the lot of armies in the field. The image has a twin (*Fig. 4*). Cora Taylor (later 'Cora Crane')<sup>160</sup> is sitting at the same angle as her partner, on the same fake pile of rocks. Instead of riding breeches, however, she has on a voluminous skirt; no gun is discernible in the picture but a water-bottle hangs on a sling round her neck and her right hand rests on what could be a case for field glasses. Already more restricted than her male counterpart (skirt instead of breeches), she carries not the conventional symbol of combat (another 'badge of courage'?) – a gun – but an item (the water-bottle) encoding both the giving of sustenance ('a woman's role is to tend male warriors') and the need for it ('a woman will feel thirsty in the field').

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<sup>158</sup> Loomis, 50-1.

<sup>159</sup> *Figs. 3 and 4* are reproduced in Crane, 1971, between pp. xiv and xv.

<sup>160</sup> The two never went through a marriage ceremony (Stallman, 1968, 304).



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

It would be fitting if the case on which Cora Taylor's right hand rests did contain field glasses because she tried so hard to see the field. Under the name Imogene Carter, she wrote in the *New York Journal* on 30 April 1897:

I am quite sure that the Journal will have the only woman correspondent within even the sound of the guns [...] at first I was flatly refused letters of introduction to people at the front in an effort to make my going impossible. But as a matter of fact, I do not believe altogether in the point of view of the women of Athens, and, at any rate, I am going.<sup>161</sup>

There is a determination in this that is lacking in Stephen Crane's more attenuated 'I was rather laid up [...] I only arrived at noon of the second day':<sup>162</sup> for Cora, it seems, being 'within the sound of the guns' was the least proximity that would suffice her. In her next dispatch (10 May 1897), she related:

I was among the last of the correspondents to leave the field. Shells screamed about me as I went toward the station, and I had one narrow escape. The soldiers were amazed at the presence of a woman during the fighting.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Carter, 1971a, 268.

<sup>162</sup> Crane, 1971, 18. It is fair to say that Joseph Conrad described his friend Crane as 'white-faced with excitement' at the prospect of seeing war (Robertson, 137).

<sup>163</sup> Carter 1971b, 272.

It is thought that Stephen Crane 'had a hand' in some of Cora's dispatches: indeed, their inclusion in Fredson Bowers' edition of his war reportage is justified on 'the possibility that [they] may contain some bits of Crane'.<sup>164</sup> Yet the last quotation certifies Cora's presence, traceable in the reaction of the soldiers: had she not at least been there, there would have been no amazement at a woman's presence to record. Her determination reappears in her dispatch of 14 May 1897, a decisive rejection of the parapolemic to which female reporters were already confined:<sup>165</sup>

In Athens one can get an idea of war which satisfied, it is true, the correspondents of many London newspapers, but surely this is not the whole of war. War here is tears and flowers and blood and oratory. Surely there must be other things. I am going to try and find out at the front.<sup>166</sup>

By this time, it is evident, perceptions of the war correspondent were becoming entrenched. Presence and proximity are aligned with truth and also, crucially, masculinity. Whitman's 'real war' – 'the hospital part of the drama'<sup>167</sup> – is decisively rejected by Cora Taylor ('tears and flowers and blood and oratory') but, as she goes in search of 'other things', she, too, must assume the guise (albeit a feminised version) of what is becoming a stereotype: the heroic, outdoorsy, hardened reporter. In one more respect, too, Taylor's experiences foreshadow Martha Gellhorn's. The soldiers' 'amazement' at her very presence in the field anticipates to the sexual tensions introduced into the war zone by the glamorous Second World War female reporter.

In a letter to his mother of May 1897 from Athens, Richard Harding Davis noted, 'he [Crane] has not seen as much as I have for several reasons but then when a man can describe battles as well as he can without seeing them why should he care?'<sup>168</sup> But after the Spanish-American War of 1898, Davis seems to have changed his mind:

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<sup>164</sup> Crane, 1971, 523.

<sup>165</sup> Michael Robertson notes that, in the 1890s, journalistic culture reinforced masculine identity – women reporters were 'atypical' – and suggests that the main motivation to 'see war' was 'the cult of the strenuous life' (Robertson, 4, 140). Theodore Roosevelt's *The Strenuous Life* was published in 1899.

<sup>166</sup> Carter, 1971c, 267.

<sup>167</sup> Whitman, 1963, 115-18.

<sup>168</sup> Quoted in Stallman and Hagemann, 1964, 7.

The best correspondent is probably the man who by his energy and resource sees more of war, both afloat and ashore, than do his rivals, and who is able to make the public see what he saw.<sup>169</sup>

Davis (1864-1916), who began his career on the Philadelphia *Record and Press*, later corresponding for the *New York Evening Sun*<sup>170</sup> and *Collier's Weekly* (and thus Martha Gellhorn's predecessor), epitomised the correspondent-as-man-of-action.<sup>171</sup> For Booth Tarkington, he was 'the beau ideal of jeunesse dorée'.<sup>172</sup> Winston Churchill recalled a 'peculiar thrill' on meeting him.<sup>173</sup> 'He was almost too good to be true,' wrote Gouverneur Morris, 'he stood six feet and over, straight as a Sioux chief.'<sup>174</sup> His colleague John McCutcheon remarked that he was 'a conspicuous figure [...] wherever he went, he was pointed out [...] he was living a life of make-believe, wherein he was the hero of the story'.<sup>175</sup> These comments reveal a Davis of Whitmanesque proportions, another 'eccentric' in the etymological sense (although he did carry his bath-tub everywhere),<sup>176</sup> who lived his own myth (in a memorial piece first published in *Collier's*, Finley Peter Dunne remarked that Davis's 'personality had a larger circulation than his literature').<sup>177</sup> As such, he appears another proto-Ernest Hemingway, though his distinctive quality also foreshadows Martha Gellhorn's experience of standing out on the battle-field.

Davis's 'star quality' replicated the poesis of Stephen Crane's war pieces: '*I have seen this battle*' (rather than Cora Taylor's '*I have seen this battle*'). Photographs again provide important clues. One, captioned 'Firing from the trenches at Velestinos [sic]',<sup>178</sup> places Davis in the trenches with the soldiers, albeit behind their backs as they lean forwards to fire. *Figure 5*, taken during the Spanish-American War, shows him armed, mounted, literally in the field.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Colvert, xxvi.

<sup>170</sup> Bradley, 58-9.

<sup>171</sup> See Chapters Four and Five.

<sup>172</sup> Tarkington, ix.

<sup>173</sup> Churchill, 1916, v.

<sup>174</sup> Gouverneur Morris, 1916, vii, xiii.

<sup>175</sup> McCutcheon, x, xii.

<sup>176</sup> McCutcheon, x.

<sup>177</sup> Dunne, vii.

<sup>178</sup> Reproduced in Davis, 1898, between pp. 230 and 231.

<sup>179</sup> Reproduced from <<http://www.spanamwar.com>>.



*Fig. 5*

When, in January 1898, the *Springfield Republican* published a picture of Davis in his war kit, other correspondents enjoyed a little gentle teasing: ‘it may be ungracious to criticise such a work of art,’ said ‘The Lounger’, ‘but it would be interesting to know how Mr. Davis proposed to extract that revolver from under his armpit’.<sup>180</sup>

In fact, Davis did achieve a significant degree of participation. In his memoir of the Spanish-American War, *The Rough Riders* (1899), Theodore Roosevelt recalled:

It was Richard Harding Davis who gave us our first opportunity to shoot back with effect. He was behaving precisely like my officers, being on the extreme front of the line, and taking every opportunity to study with his glasses the ground where we thought the Spaniards were [...] ‘There they are, Colonel; look over there; I can see their hats near that glade.’<sup>181</sup>

Assimilated with the combatants, Davis here facilitates the course of conflict: he was even made a member of the regiment and given the same medal.<sup>182</sup> In his memoirs, Davis recounts being captured as a spy<sup>183</sup> and lovingly describes how he accepted the surrender of a small Cuban town, afraid that if he did not take up the offer of the capitulating Spanish officer ‘he would surrender to Paget or Jimmy’.<sup>184</sup> ‘The Taking of Coamo’ would make a fine story of reportorial initiative had not Davis also written a piece entitled ‘How Stephen Crane Took

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<sup>180</sup> Quoted in Bradley, 55

<sup>181</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, 1899, 90-1.

<sup>182</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, 1916, vii.

<sup>183</sup> Davis, 1915, ch. 2; Wood, v.

<sup>184</sup> Davis, 1911, 110.

Juana Dis':<sup>185</sup> one account of a reporter accepting a surrender may excite admiration but when they all do it, a certain staginess creeps in.

Yet, despite the humour and the glamour, Davis's writing acknowledges a more serious epistemological point: the need for presence to validate accounts of conflict. Paratexts point to experience and authenticity. *With The Allies* (1915) contains a reproduction of Davis's passport<sup>186</sup> and the dust-jacket of *With the French in France & Salonika* (1916) advertises the former work as follows:

A first-hand account [...] These descriptions are by a correspondent who has actually been in the thick of the fighting. Furthermore, they are by a writer with great experience in war matters, an intimate knowledge of military situations under modern conditions and a most vivid manner of telling. The book is well illustrated from photographs taken at the front.<sup>187</sup>

'The thick of the fighting' again has advertising potency here. The 'overcoming of immense obstacles to being there' trope which is its necessary prelude features prominently in Davis's writing, also reinforcing certain values – bravery, persistence, reliability – which form an aura around the intrepid reporter. A section titled 'Battles I Did Not See' reveals that in their efforts to witness the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), Davis and his fellow reporters travelled half-way round the world, waited four months at Tokio, endured a ten-day sea-voyage, followed the army for 12 days and were kept in a compound where five out of 18 got dysentery.<sup>188</sup> He adds:

The correspondents for the dailies had the official accounts of battles brought to them [by the Japanese]. But for our purposes [i.e. writers for magazines] it was necessary we should see things for ourselves. For, contrary to the popular accusation, no matter how flattering it may be, we could not describe events at which we were not present.<sup>189</sup>

This again introduces the generic variable of magazine versus newspaper writing into the poetics of presence (as well as possibly containing one more dig at *The Red Badge of Courage*).

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<sup>185</sup> Davis, 1964.

<sup>186</sup> Davis, 1915, between pp. 52 and 53.

<sup>187</sup> Davis, 1916b, dust-jacket.

<sup>188</sup> Davis, 1911, 215-6.

<sup>189</sup> Davis, 1911, 221-2.

France and Britain refused to accept correspondents at the outset of the First World War but reporters rushed to the front anyway. Hohenberg writes of a ‘new concept’ of foreign correspondents in wartime: ‘regulated and censored’.<sup>190</sup> The censor to the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) was one Frederick Palmer, sometime war reporter for *Collier’s Magazine* and therefore, like Davis, Gellhorn’s predecessor. Before the First World War was over, the value of controlled press coverage had been recognised and some 60 Americans were accredited to the AEF as correspondents, their material subject to Palmer’s clearing. Using cable at the ‘double urgent’ rate – 75¢ per word – it was possible to print news from the battlefields of Europe in New York with the same day’s date, a technological advance which, in George Washburn Smalley’s words, conferred ‘the peremptory brevity which arrested attention’.<sup>191</sup>

Now, for Richard Harding Davis, ‘being there’ took on new ethical and political significance:

The loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, the wrecking of cities, and the laying waste of half of Europe cannot be brought home to people who learn of it only through newspapers and moving pictures and by sticking pins in a map. Were they nearer to it, near enough to see the women and children fleeing from the shells and to smell the dead on the battle-fields, there would be no talk of neutrality.<sup>192</sup>

The task of the reporter had become not only to ‘bring home’ the war to a distant audience but to bring the audience to the war – in the specific form of encouraging volunteers and lobbying for government intervention. Davis was politically involved: one of his last acts was to ask ‘how he could be most useful in building up sound public opinion in favour of such preparedness as would give us a real peace insurance,’ and Leonard Wood described his death as ‘a real loss to the movement for preparedness’.<sup>193</sup> But in a late letter to his wife, Elizabeth McCoy Davis,<sup>194</sup> Davis questioned his efficacy, anticipating doubts that Martha Gellhorn would many times express about the project of representing war:

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<sup>190</sup> Hohenberg, 217.

<sup>191</sup> Smalley, 125.

<sup>192</sup> Davis, 1915, 8.

<sup>193</sup> Wood, v. ‘Preparedness’ was the First World War interventionist doctrine propounded by Theodore Roosevelt: see the discussion on Edith Wharton below.

<sup>194</sup> Previously known as ‘Bessie McCoy’, dancer, singer, and incarnation of the Yama Yama Girl (Downey, 228) – a fitting spouse for the glamorous Davis.

I have been to the trenches [...] Believe me, no one has yet told the story of the trench war. Anyway, in spite of all the photographs and articles, to me it was all new. I was allowed to go alone and given *carte blanche* to see wherever I wished – I saw everything, but it would not be possible to write of it yet.<sup>195</sup>

Journalists frequently appear in Davis's fiction. The fittingly titled story, 'The Reporter Who Made Himself King', concerns an aspiring young war correspondent, Albert Gordon,<sup>196</sup> who finds himself in the unlikely position of American Consul on the Pacific island of 'Opeki'. Crucially, the Yokohama Cable Company has laid a cable on the island. With slight creative exaggeration of an encounter between a German vessel and the Opekans, Gordon provokes a full-scale international incident: requests for syndication arrive from all over world; the Secretary of State, the London *Times* and the British Embassy all make contact; and, as the story ends, warships mass off the coast.<sup>197</sup> This comic tale makes some serious points. First, there is the 'snowballing' effect of journalistic language (a single cannon becomes 'the whole battery' and two huts 'the houses of the people').<sup>198</sup> Secondly, there is the extraordinary power of the cable – particularly when in exclusive hands. Thirdly, there is, in John Seelye's words, an image of America as 'benevolent harbinger of civilisation'<sup>199</sup> – baseball is introduced to the island – although surely ironised here as Albert must slink away, having wrought chaos. Lastly, there is the expanding figure of the reporter himself. Adorned with medals reading 'Connecticut Agricultural State Fair. One Mile Bicycle Race. First Prize',<sup>200</sup> Albert metamorphoses not only into the King of Opeki, but the sole source, guarantor and centre of the story.

Within this group of reporters, Francophile and Paris resident Edith Wharton cuts the most anomalous figure. Best known as a fiction writer, she did, nonetheless, send dispatches to *Scribner's Magazine* during the First World War, collected as *Fighting France: From*

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<sup>195</sup> Davis, 1917, 390.

<sup>196</sup> John Seelye points out the 'Anglophilia' of the name, suggesting it derives from the Prince Consort and the hero of Khartoum (Seelye, 59).

<sup>197</sup> Davis, 1916a, 314, 316.

<sup>198</sup> Davis, 1916a, 310.

<sup>199</sup> Seelye, 29. Davis was, in Seelye's view, an advocate and practitioner of American 'new imperialism'.

<sup>200</sup> Davis, 1916a, 271.

*Dunkerque to Belfort* (1915). Equipped with ‘amazing executive abilities’,<sup>201</sup> Wharton also established three major war charities,<sup>202</sup> putting vast amounts of work into managing, fund-raising and publicising. Though obviously never a combatant (despite feeling like a ‘deserter’ on holiday in England during the first battle of the Marne),<sup>203</sup> she visited the French front ‘from end to end’.<sup>204</sup> She wrote essays on the French way of life (collected as *French Ways and Their Meaning* (1919)) with the (propagandist) ‘idea of making France and things French more intelligible to the American soldier’,<sup>205</sup> and compiled a ‘gift-book’, *The Book of the Homeless* (1916), soliciting contributions from distinguished writers and artists, to raise money for her charities.<sup>206</sup> She wrote two novels (*The Marne* (1918) and *A Son at the Front* (1923)) and several short stories about the war. At home in Paris, she experienced bombardment personally.<sup>207</sup> In her writings, she strove to counter Woodrow Wilson’s non-interventionism and persuade Americans that their duty was to fight for France. In 1917, General John Pershing wrote to her:

Your work stands out pre-eminently in the long list of devoted efforts that our people have voluntarily given to France. The [American] Red Cross is now undertaking to co-ordinate these endeavors and I shall consider its mission a brilliant success if it even approximates your splendid achievement.<sup>208</sup>

Yet despite such acclaim, the ‘totally inexperienced’ Wharton found charity work hard-going. ‘I am conscious of luke-warmness in regard to organised benevolence’, she confessed in her autobiography, *A Backward Glance* (1934).<sup>209</sup> To the art historian Bernard Berenson (who would, in his old age, become Martha Gellhorn’s correspondent),<sup>210</sup> she swore, ‘as soon as

<sup>201</sup> Price, 1996, 180

<sup>202</sup> Price, 40, 48; Wharton, 1934, 340, 346.

<sup>203</sup> Letter to Sara Norton, 2 September 1914, Wharton, 1988, 335.

<sup>204</sup> Wharton, 1915, 216.

<sup>205</sup> Wharton, 1934, 357.

<sup>206</sup> Despite Charles Scribner’s reservations, the introduction was written by Wharton’s friend, Theodore Roosevelt (Price, 44-5). Wharton makes explicit reference to Roosevelt’s policy of ‘preparedness’ (expounded in *America and the World War* (1915) and *America and Preparedness* (campaign speeches of 1916 collected in 1917)) in *A Son at the Front* (Wharton, 1995, 176).

<sup>207</sup> Wharton, 1934, 358.

<sup>208</sup> Quoted in Price, 122-3.

<sup>209</sup> Wharton, 1934, 341.

<sup>210</sup> As early as 1934, *What Mad Pursuit* has Judith Narden reading Berenson’s *History of Art* (WMP, 6).

peace is declared I shall renounce good works forever!<sup>211</sup> These opposing urges – to withdrawal and to involvement – also recur *within* Wharton's works.

It was a visit to a hospital at Châlons-sur-Marne for the French Red Cross which made Wharton 'feel the urgency of telling my rich and generous compatriots something of the desperate needs of hospitals in the war-zone.'<sup>212</sup> A series of further trips to the front in 1915 provided the material for *Fighting France*. The project involved Wharton negotiating two 'aporias' (in the etymological sense of routes impervious to passage): the gap between (expatriate) civilian life in Paris and the front, and the gap between her American readership and the European war. The first was a practical matter:

Foreign correspondents were still rigorously excluded from the war-zone; but M. Cambon, after talking the matter over with General Joffre's chief-of-staff [...] succeeded in convincing him that [...] the description of what I saw might bring home to American readers some of the dreadful realities of war. I was given leave to visit the rear of the whole fighting [...] and did so in the course of six expeditions, some of which actually took me into the front-line trenches.<sup>213</sup>

Travelling in cars and carts, Wharton saw field hospitals and ambulances ('I don't know anything ghastlier & more idiotic than "doing" hospitals en touriste, like museums!' she wrote to Mary Berenson).<sup>214</sup> In Lorraine, she entered the first-line trenches. The party 'stole down and down', a sense of 'imminent hatred lurking only a few branch-lengths away'.<sup>215</sup> 'The knowledge,' Wharton records, 'made one's heart tick a little.'<sup>216</sup> *Figure 6* shows her with Walker Berry and two French officers in the battle area, Verdun, February 1915.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Wharton, 1988, 341.

<sup>212</sup> Wharton, 1934, 352.

<sup>213</sup> Wharton, 1934, 352, 352-3.

<sup>214</sup> Wharton, 1988, 346.

<sup>215</sup> Wharton, 1915, 130-1.

<sup>216</sup> Wharton, 1915, 132.

<sup>217</sup> Reproduced in Wharton 1988, between pp. 274 and 275, from the Beinecke Library, Yale University.



*Fig. 6*

Literally at the forefront of the conflict, Wharton nevertheless felt a psychological distance from it. She repeatedly evokes the contrast between the beauty of France and the grim realities of war, and her own constant surprise at it. The disparity is most intense in Paris where there is an ‘air of reviving activity’ and people are ‘completely oblivious to the nearness of the enemy’.<sup>218</sup> This, then, is the *political* aporia which Wharton’s writings had to bridge: the gap between the war and her compatriots’ experience, whether in Paris (where American expatriates’ talk of ‘the last play, the newest exhibition, the Louvre’s most recent acquisitions’<sup>219</sup> disgusted her) or on the other side of the Atlantic. Her strategy was to convey the geographical and moral merits of France to American readers in order to make them feel that they must be defended (a tactic to be redeployed a generation later by Martha Gellhorn in relation to England). After 14 months of war, Wharton reports, the attitude of the French people ‘is one of exaltation, energy, the hot resolve to dominate the disaster’.<sup>220</sup> For some, the attempt to persuade by invoking America’s own way of life and ideals succeeded: one contemporary review commented that Wharton ‘illuminate[d] for her countrymen the figure

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<sup>218</sup> Wharton, 1915, 45.

<sup>219</sup> Wharton, 1934, 337.

<sup>220</sup> Wharton, 1915, 225.

of France at war'.<sup>221</sup> For others, it back-fired: another reviewer spoke sharply about the contrast drawn between 'coarse pioneer faults' and faults 'contingent on an ancient civilisation': 'can it be possible that America will survive this apologist and France this defender?'<sup>222</sup>

Wharton's novel, *A Son at the Front* (1923), contains another array of aporias. There is the obvious gap between the front (known only, as Shari Benstock points out, through rumour, speculation and clairvoyance)<sup>223</sup> and the rear. There is the time lapse between the war and the novel's publication. ('Where in the world has Mrs. Wharton been all this time?' asked one reviewer in 1923;<sup>224</sup> others spoke of 'tardiness',<sup>225</sup> 'an odd sense of belatedness',<sup>226</sup> a story 'out of date'.)<sup>227</sup> There is the 'unbridgeable abyss'<sup>228</sup> between the artist, John Campton, and his son George, whose true intentions elude Campton for most of the novel (although the reader long guesses them). The gulf is complicated, but never eradicated, by Campton's growing feeling (intended as a parallel to American public opinion with regard to the country's involvement as a whole?) that George ought to fight, and to want to fight. There is another disparity, economic this time, between Campton and the Brants. There is the experiential difference between the combatants and those who view the war as 'unwarrantable interference' with their private plans and to whom, in any event, approaches to the front are 'sternly forbidden'.<sup>229</sup> There is the generational divide. Campton remarks:

'Men of our age are the chorus of the tragedy [...] As soon as I open my lips to blame or praise I see myself in white petticoats, with a long beard held on by an elastic, goading on the combatants in a cracked voice from a safe corner of the ramparts. On the whole I'd sooner be spinning with the women.'<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Kelly, 462 (quoted in Tuttleton, 1992, p. 222).

<sup>222</sup> 'French Ways and Their Meaning', 25 September 1919, 241 (quoted in Tuttleton, 273).

<sup>223</sup> Benstock, xiv.

<sup>224</sup> Rascoe, 17 (quoted in Tuttleton, 329).

<sup>225</sup> Lovett, 105 (quoted in Tuttleton, 331).

<sup>226</sup> Boynton, 61 (quoted in Tuttleton, 334).

<sup>227</sup> F., H. De W., (quoted in Tuttleton, 340).

<sup>228</sup> Wharton, 1995, 98, 212.

<sup>229</sup> Wharton, 1995, 11, 71.

<sup>230</sup> Wharton, 1995, 103.

Finally, there is the particularly blatant difference between fighting Europe and pre-*Lusitania*, non-interventionist United States: ‘cant and cowardice had drugged and stupefied her into the strange belief that she was too proud to fight for others.’<sup>231</sup>

But perhaps the most significant aporia in *A Son at the Front* is the age-old one between art and life. Shari Benstock makes the intriguing point that, in the novel, the ‘front’ is hidden from view even though Wharton, with her first-hand *Fighting France* experiences, could have described it in detail had she chosen to.<sup>232</sup> Campton, in the early months of the conflict, feels that ‘if ever there came a time for art to interpret the war [...] the day was not yet.’<sup>233</sup> There is a need for distance, for aporia, before art can engage with experience. Before Wharton could write *A Son at the Front* or ‘deal objectively with the stored-up emotions of those years’, she had ‘to get away from the present altogether.’<sup>234</sup> Her sentiments prefigure Martha Gellhorn’s, expressed in her withdrawals from war.

In September 1919, the *Women’s Home Companion* carried a short story by Wharton, ‘Writing a War Story’. The piece concerns a Miss Ivy Spang of Cornwall-on-Hudson who ‘had published a little volume of verse before the war.’<sup>235</sup> In France, where she pours tea ‘in a big Anglo-American hospital’, Miss Spang is asked to contribute a ‘war story’ to a forthcoming anthology, the significantly titled ‘Men-at-Arms’.<sup>236</sup> Initially ‘dizzy with

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<sup>231</sup> Wharton, 1995, 135.

<sup>232</sup> Benstock, 1995, xiii.

<sup>233</sup> Wharton, 1995, 71.

<sup>234</sup> Wharton, 1934, 369.

<sup>235</sup> Wharton, 2001, 247.

<sup>236</sup> Wharton, 247.

triumph' at the request, she then struggles to find an opening and a plot, and is saved only by her old French governess who has a copybook full of stories she took down from soldiers in a Military Hospital during 1914. 'Mademoiselle' supplies Miss Spang's rendition of one of these tales with 'certain consecutiveness' but polishes the rustic speech in which she originally transcribed the story so that it issues forth 'in the language that a young lady writing a composition on the Battle of Hastings would have used in Mademoiselle's school days.' When the anthology comes out, Miss Spang is upset that her soldier patients pay exclusive attention to the photograph of her in nurse's uniform accompanying the piece, and is further disappointed when a famous novelist patient, Harold Harbard, tells her she has 'mauled' an 'awfully good subject' and himself requests a copy of the photo. Harbard is perplexed: 'You were angry just now because I didn't admire your story; and now you're angrier still because I do admire your photograph. Do you wonder that we novelists find such an inexhaustible field in Woman?'<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Wharton, 260.

The tale addresses matters which, a generation on, would confront Martha Gellhorn directly. The two women writers in the story, Ivy Spang and Mademoiselle, both face the primary difficulty of gaining first-hand experience of their subject matter: the story eventually published is at least third-hand. Even to obtain this material, they must perform parapolemical work in hospitals. They encounter generic difficulty: not specifically a gender issue, it faces all those who seek to convey the complex, massive phenomenon that is war. How indeed to begin, to end, to find appropriate words? The interest taken in the photo is premonitory: as Martha Gellhorn explicitly owned, femininity could be a way of gaining access to material during conflict (and hence readers), but it could also be a bar. Neither the lowly pourer of tea nor the glamorous figure in uniform is taken seriously as a writer of war. The reaction of the third writer in the story, Harold Harbard (another proto-Ernest Hemingway?), suggests that the incident will be used to present a humorous picture of female inconsistency. The position of the fourth writer in the piece – Edith Wharton herself – is ambiguous. Is the story a sly dig at some of her less talented rivals – or a wry expression of the prejudice she encountered in her own attempts to write about war?

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If the New Reportage and previous American war writing are seen as ‘axes’ of influence, their intersection provides the ‘co-ordinates’ for Martha Gellhorn’s reportorial beginnings. The New Reportage provided her with a literal apprenticeship, bringing issues of ‘being there’ – both practical and theoretical – to the fore. Agee and Evans, Caldwell and Bourke-White, and the rest, all faced, and variously responded to, the problems of how precisely the recording individual should relate to, and be placed regarding, his or her human subjects: an ongoing problem during war. Their example showed that ‘objectivity’ was not necessarily the same as ‘impartiality’, while the experiences of Dreiser and others proved that

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industrial unrest itself was warlike – not only in terms of its violence but also in its demand for participation.

It would be helpful if the seven earlier American war writers discussed in this chapter each contributed a paradigm of positioning but, of course, they do nothing so simple. What they do reveal are the complex strands which make up the war recorder's standpoint. In the field, such standpoints are affected by politics, gender, protocol, practicalities and institutional limits. These matters feed into the standpoint which can be adopted in the text: they therefore influence *status*, or validity and integrity. Above all, the seven writers chosen reveal that the progress of the war reporter, in field and in text, must be one of exceptional agility and motility. The movement from position to position is subtle, daring and lightning-fast.

The twin photographs of Stephen Crane and Cora Taylor as war correspondents provide a lasting image for the themes of this section, evidence of a bifurcation in the fortunes of men and women journalists which widened before drawing close again. This bifurcation accounts for the peculiar intensity of women reporters' determination to reach the front. 'If the train from the Finnish border to Petrograd was stopped,' wrote Louise Bryant, a pioneer reporter of the Russian Revolution, 'I had made up my mind to walk.'<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Bryant, 27.

## CHAPTER 2

### ‘AN EDUCATION AT LAST’<sup>1</sup>

Martha Gellhorn’s family tradition was one of liberalism and reform.<sup>2</sup> Her maternal grandparents, the Fischels, settled in St. Louis, Missouri. Dr. Washington Fischel was an ‘eminent physician’ while Martha Ellis Fischel helped found the Society for Ethical Culture, agitated for an eight hour working day for servants and developed the idea of domestic work as a ‘science’ with acknowledged skills. Their daughter, Edna, Gellhorn’s mother, was an active social reformer. According to a local history, she served on the St. Louis’ Mayor’s Race Relations Commission, the Homer G. Phillips Advisory Committee, the boards of the Urban League and the People’s Art Center, the committee to mediate the Funsten Nut Company strike, the Social Security Commission, the Slum Clearance Commission, the Mayor’s Committee to resolve the International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union reorganising strike, the Governor’s Committee on the Status of Women, the Committee to Revive the Missouri Constitution, the League of Women Voters and the Citizens’ Committee on Nuclear Information.<sup>3</sup> She established a progressive school; founded the American Association for the United Nations; helped found the American League of Women Voters; was an active suffragist; and campaigned for ‘wrapped bread, free clinics, smoke abatement, tuberculosis-screened milk, improved divorce laws and stricter child-labour laws’.<sup>4</sup> The *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat* said that ‘her unselfish devotion has figured for years in many civic enterprises’.<sup>5</sup> The *Greater St. Louis Magazine*, in a piece entitled ‘Dame Edna of Saint Louis,’ said:

It would be impossible to list all the projects she backed. [...] She was not a feminist, but a citizen who happened to be a woman. [...] If a secular age such as ours can be said to produce saints, she like her friend, Eleanor Roosevelt, is one.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *VfG*, 67.

<sup>2</sup> Where used on its own, the surname ‘Gellhorn’ refers to Martha Gellhorn, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> Corbett, 234.

<sup>4</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 20.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Martha Gellhorn Sees Spain as Breeding Place for World War’, 28 January 1938, 2C.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Dame Edna of Saint Louis’, November 1968, 21, 22.

Martha's second husband, T. S. Matthews, noted that his mother-in-law's 'civic firepower has been estimated as "the rough equivalent of six marine battalions"'.<sup>7</sup> Edna Gellhorn herself said of her own activities, 'I was inspired by the message that women had something to contribute.'<sup>8</sup> For Martha, she was 'miraculous' – 'beautiful, brave, selfless [...] always ready to laugh and admire and love and see.'<sup>9</sup>

Gellhorn's father, George, 'a brilliant physician-surgeon',<sup>10</sup> born and educated in Germany, was Professor of Gynaecology and Obstetrics at St. Louis University School of Medicine and consultant at four city hospitals.<sup>11</sup> In 1923 he published a monograph, *Non-Operative Treatment in Gynecology* [sic], dedicated 'To My Wife',<sup>12</sup> in which he made his own contribution to the amelioration of the female condition:

The realization has slowly gained ground that certain gynecologic complaints are not due to lesion of the genital organs but have their roots in some other organ, or else are caused by purely psychic factors.<sup>13</sup>

He was an exacting father. In a letter of summer 1935 to Martha, he wrote exasperatedly:

Show the world, show your mother and your father that you can do more than merely talk about the things you can do.<sup>14</sup>

The Gellhorn home at 4366 McPherson Street, St. Louis,<sup>15</sup> welcomed visitors. Critical argument was encouraged. Gellhorn attended the progressive John Burroughs School founded by her mother<sup>16</sup> and in 1926 went, as had Edna herself, to the liberal women's college, Bryn Mawr. Liberalism, active reform, open-mindedness and thinking for oneself were Gellhorn's familial heritage.

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<sup>7</sup> T. S. Matthews, 12-13.

<sup>8</sup> Corbett, 235.

<sup>9</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Bernard Berenson, 17 August 1953, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> 'Martha Gellhorn Sees Spain as Breeding Place for World War', 28 January 1938, 2C.

<sup>11</sup> George Gellhorn, iii.

<sup>12</sup> George Gellhorn, v.

<sup>13</sup> George Gellhorn, vii.

<sup>14</sup> George Gellhorn, letter of Summer 1935, f. 4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> *What Mad Pursuit* is dedicated to it.

<sup>16</sup> The original John Burroughs, a teacher and naturalist from New York state, became a friend of Walt Whitman during the Civil War (Morris Jr., 150f).

### **‘A Hurry to Get Started’<sup>17</sup>**

‘The Thirties’ is a section in *The View from the Ground* written by Gellhorn in 1989 and intended to function as an introductory afterword to her pieces collected from that decade. As such, it demands a cautious critical approach: ‘the Martha Gellhorn of the ’30s’ is not necessarily coincident with ‘the Martha Gellhorn of the ’30s as recollected by the Martha Gellhorn of 1989’. Nonetheless, with that caveat, it is instructive to see how Gellhorn (re)constructs her ’30s persona and preoccupations.

An exuberant sense of new freedom and possibilities emerges: ‘my life began in February 1930’.<sup>18</sup> A remark elsewhere even better captures her feeling at the start of the decade: the biographical note to the 1987 Penguin / Virago edition of *Liana*, presumably written or at least approved by Gellhorn, says that she was ‘in a hurry to get started’.<sup>19</sup> In this spirit of impatience, to ‘get things done’, she left Bryn Mawr at the end of her junior year and by February 1930 was aged 21 and in Paris, already the veteran of a cub reporter job on the *Albany Times Union* and with articles published in the *St-Louis Post Dispatch* and the *New Republic*.<sup>20</sup>

This sense of impatience, to get started on things, to reveal, reform, redress, never leaves Gellhorn’s writing. Her account of her time in Paris, conforming to one of the principal traits of the New Reportage, emphasises the value of personal experience and empathy. The years 1930 to 1934 were, for her, ‘an education at last’.<sup>21</sup> She is careful to dissociate her existence in Paris from that of ‘the cozy literary world’ inhabited by the ‘gifted Americans and British’ who settled in the city in the ’20s.<sup>22</sup> Such a world was not ‘real life’:

Real life was the terrible English mill towns, the terrible mining towns in northern France, slums, strikes, protest marches broken up by the mounted Garde Republicaine, frantic underpaid workers and frantic half-starved unemployed. Real life was the Have-nots.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *L*, 1.

<sup>18</sup> *VfG*, 66.

<sup>19</sup> *L*, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Orsagh, 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> *VfG*, 67.

<sup>22</sup> *VfG*, 67. Hemingway is obviously included in this implied criticism. *What Mad Pursuit* refers to ‘that deadly group who fought in the war and calls itself “The Lost Generation”’ (*WMP*, 75).

<sup>23</sup> *VfG*, 68.

Stating her priorities, Gellhorn is also here revealing that she travelled and saw these things for herself. But her knowledge, in true New Reportage tradition, goes beyond that of mere external observation: she has experienced personally the conditions that she will write about:

Because of my own poverty, fretting over centimes, make-do or do-without, keeping up my appearance on half a shoe string, I absorbed a sense of what true poverty means, the kind you never chose and cannot escape, the prison of it.<sup>24</sup>

This is, as noted, a retrospectively constructed existence. To see her '30s' thematic and stylistic tendencies in their original inchoate form, it is necessary to turn to one of Gellhorn's earliest articles, 'Toronto Express', published in *The New Republic* on 30 April 1930. The piece takes the classic New Reportage form of the recounted journey (by train from Albany to Toronto), opening with a statement of personal observation: 'I have been looking at these people [the other passengers] [...] There was not one face that said anything: that had any apparent interest in living or going on a trip.'<sup>25</sup> This might be taken as the normal boredom caused by a long train ride, but Gellhorn metaphorises the journey so that what she sees on the North Americans' faces is political apathy. She compares the 'deadness' of the Toronto-bound passengers with the attitudes of those she has met on European train journeys. On a Paris to Grenoble trip, for example, there was 'a feeling that the train and the compartment were a world apart, new and full of brief possibilities'.<sup>26</sup> Even more significantly, on the train from Breslau to Berlin:

[a] man remarked that there would be another war [...] I said, No, I didn't believe him [...] all I could say was, No, we won't have it. Then he stood up and bowed and smiled at me and my insistence and said: *Le flambeau est à vous tous. Portez-le.*<sup>27</sup>

Again, on a trip from Aix-les-Bains to Geneva, Gellhorn recognised that journeys, for Europeans, 'hold the elements of the impossible: new people, new places, the uncertainty and fascination of traveling'.<sup>28</sup> The open-endedness of journey is, in Europe at least, aligned with

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<sup>24</sup> *VfG*, 68.

<sup>25</sup> 'Toronto Express', 30 April 1930, 297.

<sup>26</sup> 'Toronto Express', 30 April 1930, 297.

<sup>27</sup> 'Toronto Express', 30 April 1930, 297.

<sup>28</sup> 'Toronto Express', 30 April 1930, 298.

political unease and uncertainty regarding imminent war. By contrast, in ‘all the trains across this country [America]’ people are ‘taking things so for granted’. In this sense, ‘Toronto Express’ may be read as a dramatisation of, and the earliest instance of Gellhorn warning against, political complacency.

In France, Gellhorn wrote her first novel. *What Mad Pursuit* was published in 1934, though Gellhorn later suppressed it as juvenilia. Certain passages do smack of undergraduate humour though there are also instances of writing as striking as anything Gellhorn produced: a villa ‘simper[s] on a hill’; someone’s arms hang ‘like cut branches at his side’; the sky resembles ‘a blue plate glass from Woolworth’s’; the beach lies like ‘a blond eyelash’ between the pine-trees and the sea.<sup>29</sup> As a whole, the work presents many of the themes which Gellhorn treated throughout her career, as well as her first fictional woman reporter, Charis Day. Charis, hailed as ‘a latter-day, perverse, and female Galahad’<sup>30</sup> and a ‘Joan of Arc’,<sup>31</sup> protests no less than five causes in the novel: seven blacks wrongly accused of rape; a friend’s expulsion from college; the state’s treatment of an old war veteran (‘you’ve got to do something’);<sup>32</sup> the Woolen Mill workers’ strike and the false imprisonment of a ‘dangerous Red’ framed for a labour bombing.<sup>33</sup> The sense is, however, that these instances are vehicles for studies in indignation rather than, as in ‘Toronto Express’ or in Gellhorn’s later work, attempts to invoke similar anger in the reader. Perhaps surprisingly for a novel about conscience written in France in the early ’30s, there is no allusion to fascism or the rise of Hitler.

Where the novel does anticipate Gellhorn’s later writings is in its characterisation of the woman journalist. One of the epigraphs is taken from Thomas Wolfe’s *Look Homeward, Angel* (1929): ‘the hunger that haunts and hurts Americans and makes them exiles at home

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<sup>29</sup> *WMP*, 91 127 196 200.

<sup>30</sup> *WMP*, 23.

<sup>31</sup> *WMP*, 80.

<sup>32</sup> *WMP*, 29.

<sup>33</sup> *WMP*, 107-8.

and strangers wherever they go.’<sup>34</sup> Charis, too, is a solitary itinerant (‘I don’t do anything [...] I move’),<sup>35</sup> the roving reporter whose must remain essentially separate from those she observes:

She felt herself apart from all this [sic] people, and without means of understanding them or sharing in their lives. And gradually she wondered if she belonged anywhere, if there was any purpose to her goings and comings.<sup>36</sup>

‘I’m always alone’, she says more than once,<sup>37</sup> and the syphilis she has contracted by the end isolates her still further as she avoids human contact. Within the male culture of the newsroom, Charis feels her pariah status particularly acutely. The reporters of the Philadelphia *Clarion Trumpet* – ‘a miserable blatt’<sup>38</sup> – regard her ‘as a lady and pointedly didn’t invite her on their parties.’<sup>39</sup> When asked to join in their roulette game, ‘no one ever received the Legion of Honor with more respectful gratitude than that with which she accepted this invitation to be one of the boys.’<sup>40</sup> She gambles heavily, ‘hoping that they would think her a good sport, hoping that they would include her in their parties’ and drinks whisky, ‘which she abhorred’, to win their good favour.<sup>41</sup> Even so, she is transferred to ‘the Woman’s Page’: ‘you’re much too fiery for straight reporting’.<sup>42</sup>

Charis’s experiences in the journalistic milieu prefigure Gellhorn’s in the war zone: gender identity becomes cause for anxiety. It occurs to Charis ‘as a happy shock’ on her nineteenth birthday ‘that her appearance [is] useful’.<sup>43</sup> Her court appearance in defence of the Woolen Mill strikers causes the prosecutor to feel he has lost, ‘all because this girl was pretty’.<sup>44</sup> The result is that Charis herself becomes the story – ‘COLLEGE GIRL REPORTER DEFENDS STRIKERS’ is the Drayton *Herald’s* headline<sup>45</sup> – another instance of the reporter as

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<sup>34</sup> *WMP*, preliminary pages. The other epigraph is from Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* (1929): ‘nothing ever happens to the brave’.

<sup>35</sup> *WMP*, 154.

<sup>36</sup> *WMP*, 148.

<sup>37</sup> *WMP*, 74, 273.

<sup>38</sup> *WMP*, 26.

<sup>39</sup> *WMP*, 41.

<sup>40</sup> *WMP*, 42.

<sup>41</sup> *WMP*, 42.

<sup>42</sup> *WMP*, 65.

<sup>43</sup> *WMP*, 46.

<sup>44</sup> *WMP*, 63.

<sup>45</sup> *WMP*, 60.

‘distinctive’. She broods, ‘didn’t anyone realise that the strikers had been brutally beaten up and arrested on a false charge and that she wasn’t a cute little girl looking for publicity?’<sup>46</sup>

The overriding sense is one of powerlessness. ‘I am nothing and I’ve done nothing. I don’t fit in anywhere; I’m not needed; I don’t matter,’ thinks Gellhorn’s 19-year-old heroine.<sup>47</sup> Principled stands and bold gestures achieve nothing: ‘why did one always fail to do whatever it was that made an ending a success?’<sup>48</sup> She tells herself:

Not heroes, not heroes, not heroes; only polliwogs,<sup>49</sup> embryos that won’t grow into anything; not heroes and never will be [...] We’d better take Turkish baths and keep our looks, it’s all we’ve got. Just our faces and there are better faces.<sup>50</sup>

This image of abortion (‘embryos that won’t grow into anything’), hinting at Charis’ own, unmentioned termination, looks towards the end of Gellhorn’s war writing and its disillusionment in the power to accomplish.

In the same *New Republic* issue as ‘Toronto Express’ there is (to make a ‘co-textual’ point) an article by E. G. Nourse entitled ‘Hard Times for Farmers’ which takes as its subject ‘America’s most pressing domestic problem, the long-continued depression in agriculture’.<sup>51</sup> Gellhorn had thought ‘trouble [...] a European speciality’, but in 1934, she writes, ‘it dawned on me that my own country was in trouble [...] I decided to return and offer my services to the nation’.<sup>52</sup> The tone is typically self-mocking but adds unmistakably to the carefully (and retrospectively) constructed persona: that of the writer, who, like the soldier, will ‘serve’. Gellhorn’s ‘service to the nation’ in the Depression took the form of acting as a field reporter (note here the faint, premonitory hint of ‘battle-field reporter’) for the New Deal Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA).

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<sup>46</sup> *WMP*, 65.

<sup>47</sup> *WMP*, 150.

<sup>48</sup> *WMP*, 65.

<sup>49</sup> Tadpoles.

<sup>50</sup> *WMP*, 74.

<sup>51</sup> Nourse, 30 April 1930, 288.

<sup>52</sup> *VfG*, 69.

The FERA had been established by the Federal Emergency Relief Act of 12 May 1933 to dispense relief (\$500 million appropriated by Congress) to the unemployed.<sup>53</sup> As Gellhorn recounts it, Harry Hopkins, its director, ‘was hiring a few people to travel around the country and report back to him on how [it] worked in practice’.<sup>54</sup> At the outset, then, Gellhorn’s reportorial remit was within the aegis of the New Deal. For two years, she travelled the country, receiving \$75 a week, train vouchers and \$5 a day travel allowance for food and hotels.<sup>55</sup> She recollects writing ‘innumerable reports’ of which she kept no copies. What does remain of her FERA fieldwork are six early reports (from Gaston County, North Carolina (11 and 19 November 1934); Massachusetts (25 November 1934); Providence, Rhode Island (25 November 1934); and Camden, New Jersey (25 April 1935)),<sup>56</sup> three of which are reproduced as ‘My Dear Mr. Hopkins’ in *The View from the Ground*, and *The Trouble I’ve Seen*.

Gellhorn’s FERA reports are cast in epistolary form. Certain constructions convey a sense of scrupulous fairness, of reasoned objectivity, though anger still comes through. ‘I’m giving you this picture as I have been able to see it and through the eyes of the people (supposedly informed) with whom I talked,’ she states,<sup>57</sup> noting that she has visited homes and workplaces, spoken to owners and employees, the unemployed, union presidents, social workers, teachers and doctors in order to present a balanced picture. These people are quoted directly, voice after voice:

‘It’s a terrible thing when decent people have to beg...’ ‘We always tried to be as honest and decent as we could and we’ve worked all our lives; and what has it come to...’ ‘What’s the use of looking for work any more; there isn’t any. And look at the children. How would you feel if you saw your own kids like that: half naked and sick...’<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Orsagh, 23.

<sup>54</sup> *VfG*, 69.

<sup>55</sup> *VfG*, 69.

<sup>56</sup> These are reproduced at <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts>>.

<sup>57</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop22.htm>>.

<sup>58</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop22.htm>>.

Her arrangement of facts is methodical: in the New Jersey report, 'housing' is followed by 'household equipment', 'health' and 'prostitution'.<sup>59</sup> Representative 'cases' are labelled as such. Statistics, particularly the amount of relief a family is receiving, are stated meticulously. The style is simple, laconic, economic: paragraphs are short. Causes and consequences are given:

I have seen a village where the latrines drain nicely down a gully to a well from which they get their drinking water. Nobody thinks anything about this; but half the population is both syphilitic and moronic; and why they aren't all dead of typhoid I don't know. (It would probably be a blessing if they were.)<sup>60</sup>

The last quotation also illustrates a contrasting feature of the accounts – the presence, both textual and actual, of the reporter: self-identifying as a witness ('I have seen'), sarcastic ('nicely'), angry ('why they aren't all dead [...] I don't know'), concerned ('nobody thinks anything about this'). Alongside the carefully constructed objectivity, there is, then, a personal, emotional response which seems anything but an artificial construct. This response is recreated in the reader by the writer's eye for the telling individual detail. Particularly memorable is the draw where the prizes are 'a chicken, a duck, four cans of something, and a bushel of potatoes' and the people wait 'with passionate eagerness' to see if they are going to be able to take some food home.<sup>61</sup>

The principal themes of Gellhorn's FERA reports are the eroding faith in the President; the fact that it is formerly respectable people who are being brought to destitution and the human consequences of this; the corruption of factory owners and some Relief administrators; and the importance of home, property and the ability to plan for the future. Having written her views to Harry Hopkins, Gellhorn was next to treat these themes in different literary form.

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<sup>59</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop01/htm>>.

<sup>60</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop08.htm>>.

<sup>61</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop01/htm>>.

*The Trouble I've Seen* defies easy generic categorisation. In 'The Thirties' section of *The View from the Ground*, Gellhorn refers to it as 'my book on the unemployed'.<sup>62</sup> Graham Greene reviewed it in *The Spectator* under 'Short Stories'.<sup>63</sup> The *New York Times* reported that 'after turning in her report [to Hopkins]', Gellhorn 'rewrote four sections of it as short stories that formed a novel on a central theme'.<sup>64</sup> The *New York World Telegram* found the pieces 'so true they that they hurt'.<sup>65</sup> The *Times Literary Supplement* review stated:

These pieces are presented as fiction, and doubtless are intended as such with all the usual 'no reference to any living person' implication; but the author, Mr. H. G. Wells and the publisher both inform us, has actually been a FERA worker, and knows beyond a doubt what she is writing about.<sup>66</sup>

Gellhorn wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt that the fact that 'they kept saying [it] was journalism [...] nearly broke my heart'.<sup>67</sup> *Trouble* is included in *The Novellas of Martha Gellhorn* (1992) where it is described as 'a collection'.<sup>68</sup> Perhaps this is the most apt term for the work, which consists of four accounts or case-studies: 'Mrs. Maddison', 'Joe and Pete', 'Jim' and 'Ruby'. But there is a further generic ambiguity. While 'My Dear Mr. Hopkins' is pure fact, the cases which make up *The Trouble I've Seen* are not descriptions of real individuals, but composite portraits based on what the writer has observed. They are, therefore, in the mode of what Lukács termed 'reportage novels'.<sup>69</sup>

The first 'case' in the collection, 'Mrs. Maddison', illustrates an aspect of the Depression which seems particularly to have moved Gellhorn: the steady economic decline of formerly decent, respectable people. Whatever may have been envisaged for the American

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<sup>62</sup> *VfG*, 68.

<sup>63</sup> Greene, 950.

<sup>64</sup> 'Hemingway Weds Magazine Writer', 22 November 1940, 25.

<sup>65</sup> 'Girl Investigator Writes of Experiences in FERA', 19 September 1936.

<sup>66</sup> 'The New Novels - American Tragedies', 6 June 1936, 477. Wells wrote the preface to the Putnam edition.

<sup>67</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 1/2 November 1941. A decade later, receiving the same criticism for *The Honeyed Peace*, she confided to Bernard Berenson, 'having considered myself a story teller all my life, I am beginning to wonder' (Gellhorn, letter of 11 September 1953, f. 1<sup>v</sup>); 'I begin [...] to wonder whether I am a teller of stories at all?' (Gellhorn, letter of 17 August 1953, f. 1<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>68</sup> *Novellas*, x.

<sup>69</sup> Complicating Lukács's 'narrate / describe' dichotomy (mentioned in Chapter One) was a separate, tripartite, generic division. Here the distinction is between reportage, the novel and the reportage novel – i.e. 'fact' (the actual), 'fiction' (the invented) and 'faction' (the composite or representative). Although Lukács warned that the reportage novel might only provide an unsatisfactory version of the truth, the narrative mode (that of revealing causes and consequences) would redeem it (Lukács, 1980, 51-2).

people by her Founding Father near-namesake,<sup>70</sup> Mrs. Maddison is now living in a riverside shack, the walls papered, ironically enough, with advertisements for consumer luxuries.<sup>71</sup> The first scene presents the character dressing up in pitiful patched and second-hand clothes in order to go up-town to the Relief office. Assessing herself in the cracked mirror, she is satisfied that she looks like ‘a woman who had clothes and a place to put them on nicely’ for ‘she didn’t want the relief people to put her in the same class with the negroes, who unconcernedly paraded their want’.<sup>72</sup> Later, the reader is told about her attempts to cover the walls of the shack:

It had taken her several weeks, and finally she’d gone to the public library and been eager about wanting old magazines to read. “I wouldn’t tell them I used them on my walls,” she said to Maybelle. “They’d think I was poor and begging for something. But just wanting to read; well, that’s something even rich folks can do.”<sup>73</sup>

This verges on snobbery on Mrs. Maddison’s part. There are two possible thematic justifications for it. The first is to show exactly where the Depression had its impact: on the lives of the lower middle-classes, the American heartlands. The second is to allow the portrayal of the devastating human consequences when self-respect is finally lost.

Richard Sennett, writing on the sociology of respect, remarks that ‘the hard counsel of equality comes home to people within the welfare system when they feel their own claims to the attention of others lie solely in their problems’,<sup>74</sup> an observation that might be the theme of *The Trouble I’ve Seen*. Federal relief produces a troubled response in both those who dispense and receive it. As Gellhorn notes in ‘My Dear Mr. Hopkins’, home visits by means-assessing relief workers hurt and offended the unemployed.<sup>75</sup> In a May 1935 article in *Survey Graphic*, a magazine dedicated to social problems (and the publication in which

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<sup>70</sup> James Madison (1751-1836).

<sup>71</sup> The same phenomenon appears in *Famous Men*, in which both text and photographs reveal a mantelpiece decorated with calendars and adverts – in this case, however, of digestive remedies, silently testifying to the inadequacies of Depression diets (Agee, 163-4). The Farm Security Administration photographers, Walker Evans among them, were instructed to capture ‘the wall decorations in homes as an index to the different income groups and their reactions’ (quoted in Tagg, 126).

<sup>72</sup> *Novellas*, 4.

<sup>73</sup> *Novellas*, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Sennett, xv.

<sup>75</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop22.htm>>.

Gellhorn's article, 'Returning Prosperity' was published on 26 February 1937), Russell H.

Kurtz wrote:

The American temperament does not welcome the thought that relief, on a large scale, is to be with us for a long time to come. The prospect is depressing to a people who are tired of the whole 'un-American' experience of doling out public aid to men whose only request is that they be allowed to earn their own way. Relief is defeatist: it chafes our national spirit and humbles our pride.<sup>76</sup>

The point is dramatised in 'Joe and Pete':

'I won't have strangers coming in my house poking around. I can work,' Pete said. And then, suddenly, he shouted it, waving his arms crazily over his head. 'I can work! I can work!'<sup>77</sup>

This captures the frustration and bewilderment earlier reported by Gellhorn to Hopkins: 'they are, for no reason they can understand, forced to be beggars asking for charity'.<sup>78</sup> As a consequence, the characters insist that relief is a right rather than a favour. 'I'll get what's my right but I'll not have anyone thinking I'm charity,' vows Mrs. Maddison, insisting, 'a self-respecting woman's gotta right to [ask for work]'.<sup>79</sup> A powerful effect is achieved when a character who has faced extreme deprivation is given a 'treat' by the relief system and yet cannot enjoy it in the knowledge of its source. "'Charity food, that's what I'm eating,'" storms Bill suddenly, having been eating in silence his mother-in-law's lavish dinner of tinned salmon and tomatoes, "'just old canned stuff they give to paupers and niggers. Can't git our own stuff; has to be give to us. I don't take any of that Relief; by God, I'd rather starve.'"<sup>80</sup>

But a worse response even than this is the loss of self-respect and, consequently, hope: what Gellhorn, in her FERA reports, calls 'the demoralization point'.<sup>81</sup> Two things are key to preventing demoralisation, summed up in Mrs. Maddison's musings to herself:

We were real folks once; we had places to live, and we had families, and we knew what we'd be doing the next year and the next one.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Kurtz, reproduced on <<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s>>.

<sup>77</sup> *Novellas*, 73.

<sup>78</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop22.htm>>.

<sup>79</sup> *Novellas*, 4, 8.

<sup>80</sup> *Novellas*, 14.

<sup>81</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop01/htm>>.

<sup>82</sup> *Novellas*, 8.

Pride in property ('we had places to live') and the ability to look to the future ('we knew what we'd be doing') are essential, Gellhorn suggests, to the maintenance of human dignity (Sennett configures them as the possibility for self-development, self-sufficiency and the ability to give back to others).<sup>83</sup> Maybelle looks at her houseboat 'with love and anxiety',<sup>84</sup> while Mrs. Maddison tends her shack 'with passionate care':<sup>85</sup> 'now,' she feels, it is 'a place any woman might be proud to live in'.<sup>86</sup> This makes her 'feel like a woman of property',<sup>87</sup> and, crucially, she is even able to begin to make plans for a parlour. The section titled 'Mrs. Maddison Returns To The Land' exposes the failure of the New Deal 'rural rehabilitation' project.<sup>88</sup> Intended to be a means of providing work and subsistence for the unemployed, the enterprise instead consigned people to inadequate housing and back-breaking work on unpromising soil. Nonetheless, Mrs. Maddison views 'their land, the acres which were theirs' as something that will make them 'respectable, steady, rooted people with a future'.<sup>89</sup>

The obvious expression of the link between owning land and having a future is planting: putting seeds in the ground signifies belief in some degree of permanence. The ability to plan, to aspire, even to dream, Gellhorn shows, is sustaining and slow to die. Having been made unemployed, Pete is excited to earn a dollar raking gravel and immediately begins to imagine the possibilities of selling gum and shoestrings:

Active, and hopeful, his mind plotted the new luminous future. He could probably get a store before he was through.<sup>90</sup>

Jim has dreamt of becoming a surgeon; when he buys an accordion, he sees himself as a talented musician:

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<sup>83</sup> Sennett, 63-4.

<sup>84</sup> *Novellas*, 4.

<sup>85</sup> *Novellas*, 10.

<sup>86</sup> *Novellas*, 11.

<sup>87</sup> *Novellas*, 11.

<sup>88</sup> Of which the subjects in *Famous Men* are also clients. One family is given a 'sick steer to do their plowing with; [...] no seed or fertilizer [...] until the end of May' (Agee, 35).

<sup>89</sup> *Novellas*, 30.

<sup>90</sup> *Novellas*, 76.

He knew he would be able to play the accordion at once, because he wanted to [...] It was reason enough to live until spring.<sup>91</sup>

Jim and Lou indulge in pure fantasising, describing to each other their 'days' spent riding, driving, eating at the Country Club and planning which colleges to send their imaginary offspring to. These 'alternative realities' – daydreams, plans, the adverts on Mrs. Madison's walls, Ruby's coasting – function as psychological oases in these Depression narratives (such devices are also used in war narratives). The inability to construct them is the 'demoralisation point'. In 'Joe and Pete', Mabel's reaching of this point seems the natural outcome of a number of overwhelming setbacks:

She was too tired now to argue this thing. What did it matter, anyhow? There were only a certain number of reasons for living, and then you didn't have them any more. 'What's the difference,' she said slowly [...] 'We haven't got the baby, so it don't matter. We don't have to do all this. We don't have to.'<sup>92</sup>

The reader is inclined to agree with Mabel because the narrative has led inexorably to this point: the experiences, in Lukács' terms, have been 'lived through'. A similar effect is achieved in Gellhorn's accounts of the experience of looking for work. In 'My Dear Mr. Hopkins', she reports that it takes 'from three to six months for a man to stop going around looking for work',<sup>93</sup> after which he gives up in self-disgust. The reader gets vicarious understanding of this gradual, insidious process through Pete, whose day of trudging after jobs in the rain leaves him 'soaked' and 'breathless'<sup>94</sup> – less obviously employable than when he started out – and Jim who after a week of walking starts to 'look like a tramp'.<sup>95</sup>

So far, both 'My Dear Mr. Hopkins' and *The Trouble I've Seen* display the typical characteristics of the New Reportage: reasoned objectivity; dramatised facts that have been personally witnessed or experienced;<sup>96</sup> self-reflexivity. But to what extent do they share what

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<sup>91</sup> *Novellas*, 103.

<sup>92</sup> *Novellas*, 73.

<sup>93</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop01/htm>>.

<sup>94</sup> *Novellas*, 63.

<sup>95</sup> *Novellas*, 97.

<sup>96</sup> The French translation of *The Troubles I've Seen*, *Détresse Américaine*, was praised, *Globe-Democrat* readers were told, by Léon Daudet as follows: 'the simplicity and exactitude of her picture of these sufferers shows that she feels their troubles profoundly' (Olga Clark, 1C).

might be termed the New Reportage's 'perlocutionary' element – the intention and effect of making a difference? To answer this, it is necessary to consider their – and their author's – precise relation to the Roosevelt New Deal.

'It was the only time that I have fully trusted and respected the American Presidency,' writes Gellhorn in 'The Thirties': 'the New Deal, the Roosevelt regime, was truly geared to concern for the majority of the citizens'.<sup>97</sup> Gellhorn enjoyed a personal relationship with the Roosevelts. Edna Gellhorn and Eleanor Roosevelt had been friends since college days.<sup>98</sup> After a few months as a FERA field reporter, 'so outraged by the wretched treatment of the unemployed',<sup>99</sup> Gellhorn sent in her resignation to Harry Hopkins but he persuaded her instead to talk to Mrs. Roosevelt, who invited her to dinner, giving her the chance to speak directly to the President. Later, having been 'fired'<sup>100</sup> from the FERA after an incident discussed more fully below, Gellhorn accepted the Roosevelts' invitation to live for a while with them at the White House. In her 'My Day' column, Eleanor Roosevelt herself describes reading 'Mrs. Maddison' to an audience at the Colony Club, New York City:

I cannot tell you how Martha Gellhorn, young, pretty, college graduate, good home, more or less Junior League background, with a touch of exquisite Paris clothes and 'esprit' thrown in, can write as she does. She has an understanding of many people and many situations and she can make them live for us.<sup>101</sup>

The admiration was mutual. Gellhorn corresponded with Eleanor Roosevelt for years, describing her after her death as 'a cherished friend'.<sup>102</sup> There seems to have been real affection between the two, as their letters reveal. Gellhorn opens one letter to the First Lady, 'what a schemozzle!', and concludes it:

I love you enormously as you know, and think you are an absolute blooming wonder, as you also know. Always,  
Marty<sup>103</sup>

Elsewhere, she confessed:

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<sup>97</sup> *VfG*, 72.

<sup>98</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 96.

<sup>99</sup> *VfG*, 70.

<sup>100</sup> *VfG*, 72.

<sup>101</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, 29.

<sup>102</sup> *Novellas*, xiii.

<sup>103</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, 16 May 1948, f. 1'.

I realize that I write to you just as if you were you, or H. G. Wells, or someone I know very well. And not at all as if you were the most important woman in America (as you are). It isn't disrespectful, is it? I'd hate to seem that, for one second.<sup>104</sup>

Much later in life, to the art historian, Bernard Berenson, she said frankly:

Roosevelt was a charmer and a superbly gifted politician; but she was all the nobility, all the conscience, all the soul; and she was it alone - - a shy woman, hungry for tenderness and warmth [...] one of the very few really great of the world.<sup>105</sup>

Mrs. Roosevelt gave Gellhorn advice on her writing ('Mr. Hemingway is right. I think you lose the flow of thought by too much rewriting'),<sup>106</sup> concluding her letter, 'of course, you may come here [the White House] at any time you feel like it. Much love'.<sup>107</sup> In her introduction to the collected 'My Day' columns, Gellhorn wrote:

*Empathy* is not my favourite word, I use it as shorthand for wisdom of heart and imagination. With Mrs. Roosevelt, empathy reached the rank of genius; nothing in the human condition [...] was beyond her understanding.<sup>108</sup>

If the First Lady's influence did not extend to prose style – 'as these columns prove, she was [...] not a writer; they are artless,' commented Gellhorn<sup>109</sup> – it nonetheless appears to have

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<sup>104</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, 2 December 1936, f. 4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> Gellhorn, 10 August 1953, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, letter to Martha Gellhorn, 16 January 1937, f. 1<sup>r</sup>. Gellhorn had written that 'the book [*The Trouble I've Seen*] is horribly bad [...] Hemingway says the thing to do is simply write it and be brave enough to cancel it out if it's no good' (Gellhorn, letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, 16 January 1937), f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>107</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, letter of 16 January 1937, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>108</sup> Gellhorn, 'Introduction to *My Day* Columns', 1989, ix-x.

<sup>109</sup> Gellhorn, 'Introduction to *My Day* Columns', 1989, xi.

been a benign, and lasting, source of inspiration. It would not be going too far to suggest that Gellhorn saw Mrs. Roosevelt as a second mother.

From these brief biographical details, it is tempting to site Gellhorn's accounts of '30s America within the auspices of the New Deal, literally inside the Roosevelt White House. The title, *The Trouble I've Seen*, comes, of course, from the black spiritual, one version of which goes 'Nobody know de trouble I see / Nobody knows but Jesus'. In addition to adverting, once again, to the author's personal witnessing of the 'trouble', it hints, that, apart from this, it is known only to a higher authority. In Gellhorn's accounts, that authority isn't so much Jesus as FDR: she writes of the people having 'an almost mystic belief in Mr. Roosevelt': 'he is at once God and their intimate friend'.<sup>110</sup> The President's picture is up in every household, holding 'the place of honor over the mantel' like 'the Italian peasant's Madonna'.<sup>111</sup> Mrs. Maddison comments that, 'Mr. Roosevelt's a fine man. He's got a good kind face and he's doing what he can for us'; she has 'an entirely personal conception of Government' – relief means that 'Mr. Roosevelt [was] not forgetting her'. Dismayed that Alec and Sabine have given up on rural rehabilitation, her final act on the farm is to write a letter to the President, explaining their problems and excusing her son.<sup>112</sup>

Yet, at the same time that Gellhorn records this faith in the President, she describes the inadequacies of New Deal reforms. The rural rehabilitation project is a disaster. The FERA subsidises private industry 'by the giving of supplementary relief to people employed in private industry but not making a subsistence living':<sup>113</sup>

One might also note that the ERA [sic] preserves a fine labor market for these seasonal industries, which casually lay people off knowing they can always get them back when they need them.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop08.htm>>. In a letter of 3 December 1938 to Mrs. Roosevelt, Gellhorn commented on Spain: 'there is some confusion as to who is God, whether it is the Quakers, or the Red Cross, or the White House, or the Roosevelts' (Gellhorn, 3 December 1938, f. 1').

<sup>111</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop08.htm>>.

<sup>112</sup> *Novellas*, 26, 30, 34.

<sup>113</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop01/htm>>.

<sup>114</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop01/htm>>.

The Administration pays doctors who are positively dangerous, fails to ensure that union members are re-employed after strikes (Pete's fate), takes sides, has administrators who are 'criminally incompetent'. 'The similarity in relationships between relief administrators and dissatisfied relief clients and industrial magnets [sic] and dissatisfied labor would be laughable, if it weren't sad and revolting,' Gellhorn says candidly.<sup>115</sup> Disease, malnutrition, overcrowding, lack of sanitation, unemployment, inadequate education and child prostitution (the subject of 'Ruby') continue. Shoe factories are closing while the poor have nothing to put on their feet. A 'serf class' is being created. In these circumstances, it makes Gellhorn 'raging mad to hear talk of "red revolution"'.<sup>116</sup>

Ultimately, text cannot contain her rage. In Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, as Gellhorn recalls it, she found the unemployed 'victimized as often before by a crooked contractor'. She continues the anecdote:

I convinced a few hesitant men to break the windows of the FERA office at night. Afterwards someone would surely come and look into their grievances. Then I moved on to the next stop, Seattle, while the FBI showed up at speed in Coeur D'Alene, alarmed by that first puny act of violence. Naturally the men told the FBI that the Relief lady had suggested this good idea; the contractor was arrested for fraud [...] and I was recalled to Washington.<sup>117</sup>

The moment is an important one, revealing, as it does, the fine line Gellhorn trod between direct action and writing with directness. At this point, it would be possible to locate her stance outside the auspices of the New Deal and in critical opposition to it – but it was now that she accepted the Roosevelts' invitation to live at the White House.

Her stay was short but symbolic: there is something in the manner of 'returning to the fold' about it which complicates her positioning in relation to the Rooseveltian New Deal. If Coeur d'Alene had been aligned with the suffering underclass, with Dreiser-like progressive / revolutionary intention, culminating in direct action, the return to the White House placed her alongside the liberal New Deal believers like Eleanor Roosevelt herself, for whom propaganda and persuasion took the place of violent protest. But Gellhorn soon found that

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<sup>115</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop01/htm>>.

<sup>116</sup> <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hopkins/hop08.htm>>.

<sup>117</sup> *VfG*, 71. The incident echoes Charis Day's experiences in *What Mad Pursuit*: her editor tells her, 'a

she ‘needed the complete mole existence for writing and departed from the White House [...] as soon as a friend offered me his empty remote house in Connecticut’.<sup>118</sup> There she completed *The Trouble I’ve Seen*, described by Graham Greene as ‘explicitly political’.<sup>119</sup> Gellhorn’s trajectory from Coeur d’Alene to Pennsylvania Avenue to writerly seclusion in Connecticut can, perhaps not too fancifully, be seen as metaphor for her political alignment. She was both insider and outsider with regard to the New Deal, but her natural movement was from action in the field to uncompromising criticism within the text.

### THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

From 4 to 6 June 1937, the Second American Writers’ Congress took place at Carnegie Hall, New York City. In his introduction to the conference’s collected papers, Joseph Freeman notes that, at the time, ‘the front pages [of the newspapers] were carrying reports of the civil war in Spain, and, a month later, added reports of Japan’s assault upon China’. As at the inaugural congress two years before, Freeman reveals, the present emphasis was upon experience, participation and the remediable power of writing: delegates felt themselves to be ‘pre-war’ rather than ‘post-war’ and were ‘passionately interested in [...] how they could assist the world struggle against fascism’. Having temporarily turned, in the disillusionment caused by the Treaty of Versailles and the New Economic Policy in Russia, to ‘naturalistic descriptions of the American scene, aesthetic experiments in the capitals of Europe [...] and the exploration of the unconscious’, American progressive writing had now, with ‘the advent of the Nazis’ and the ‘economic crises’, gained a ‘second wind’. Indeed, ‘direct economic experience’ of unemployment on the part of American writers themselves had sharpened their awareness ‘about the fundamental problems of modern life’.<sup>120</sup>

Titles of the papers given at the conference reveal the prevailing preoccupations: ‘The Writer and Politics’ (Earl Browder), ‘The Dialectics of Culture Under Nazism’ (Henry

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reporter is supposed to collect news [...] not to be a labor agitator’ (*WMP*, 59).

<sup>118</sup> *VfG*, 72.

<sup>119</sup> Greene, 950.

<sup>120</sup> Freeman, 9, 24, 27, 33, 16.

Slochower), 'A Writer's Social Obligations' (Eugene Holmes), 'The American Writer Faces the Future' (Granville Hicks). In 'The Democratic Tradition in American Letters', Newton Arvin argues that individual action on the part of writers represents a 'necessary breach' with American literary tradition but nonetheless petitions a canon which can be made use of in 'our own struggles'.<sup>121</sup> Other speakers, like Arvin, use bellicose language in calling for direct participation. World events have personally affected writers, claims Malcolm Cowley, citing Hitler's rise to power (the exiling of German writers, the book-burnings); the New Deal (the devaluation of the dollar bringing expatriate writers home, the Federal Writers' Projects); the CIO (the rise of trade unionism in the arts) and the Moscow Trials. Writers now 'ought to stay home and fight'.<sup>122</sup> Browder reiterates the theme:

Writers can stand aside from the struggles that are now rending the world [...] only at the cost of removing themselves from the life of the people, which is to say, from the source of all strength in art. [...] The Ivory Tower has been irretrievably shattered by the bombs of Hitler and Mussolini. [...] We must always remember [...] that the struggle in which we are enlisted is a war.<sup>123</sup>

Similarly, in the course of demanding assistance for the Soviet Union, Holmes claims that 'in the wake of the social obligation to fight fascism there is the imperative obligation to help to change the world. Interpreting it is no longer enough'.<sup>124</sup> Finally, there are the words of Granville Hicks:

What of the author who tells us politics is none of his – or her – business? [...] The only problem with this program of aloofness is that it will not work [...] Try to be aloof while the storm-troopers' clubs are beating upon your skull!<sup>125</sup>

While the belligerent language of the conference speakers is directed against the 'twin evils'<sup>126</sup> of war and fascism, the Call to Congress sites the conflict more explicitly: 'Spain is

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<sup>121</sup> Arvin, 35, 43 and passim.

<sup>122</sup> Cowley, 1937, 44, 45.

<sup>123</sup> Browder, 48, 49.

<sup>124</sup> Holmes, 175.

<sup>125</sup> Hicks, 187.

<sup>126</sup> Hicks, 188.

the first real battlefield'.<sup>127</sup> Papers on 'The Writer Fighting in Spain' and 'The Writer and War' were given by Martha Gellhorn and Ernest Hemingway respectively.

Gellhorn gave her paper on the afternoon of 5 June to a closed session of the congress at the New School for Social Research. 'Writers Fighting in Spain' could as easily be re-titled 'Fighters Writing in Spain': Gellhorn describes those on the Republic's side who learn play-lines, compose poetry and produce newspapers during stints in the trenches. These are the ultimate exemplars of the participant-writer but the journalists in Spain also work 'under great danger', dodging shells to get to the Telefónica in order to wire home their pieces.<sup>128</sup>

Gellhorn concludes:

A writer must also be a man of action now. Action takes time, and time is what we all need most. But a man who has given a year of his life, without heroics or boastfulness, to the war in Spain, or who, in the same way, has given a year of his life to steel strikes, or to the unemployed, or to the problems of racial prejudice, has not lost or wasted time [...] If you should survive such action, what you have to say about it afterwards is the truth, is necessary and real, and it will last.<sup>129</sup>

Stanley Weintraub describes Gellhorn's performance as 'Hemingwayish'<sup>130</sup> but this is more than a fine-sounding peroration. It contains three key points. Firstly, the writer is specifically defined as a man of action<sup>131</sup> (the gender implications will be explored in subsequent chapters). Secondly, direct personal experience is specifically linked to truth. Thirdly, the economic problems of the Depression (to which Gellhorn herself had given a year of her life as a FERA reporter) are specifically aligned with the Spanish Civil War.

The centrality of writing to the war in Spain has been extensively noted: Valentine Cunningham describes the urge to 'go over' and produce some kind of eye-witness (or 'I-witness') testimony as a 'compulsion'.<sup>132</sup> The challenge issued by Nancy Cunard, W. H. Auden and others (published in 1937 by *The Left Review* as *Authors Take Sides on the*

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<sup>127</sup> Hart, 1937, 196.

<sup>128</sup> Gellhorn, 'Writers Fighting in Spain', 1937, 66-7. In his paper, Hemingway noted that American correspondents in Spain work for an average of \$65 per week 'uninsured' (Hemingway, 1937, 70).

<sup>129</sup> Gellhorn, 'Writers Fighting in Spain', 1937, 67-8.

<sup>130</sup> Weintraub, 283.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Falstaff: 'The undeserver may sleep, when the man of action is called on' (*II Henry IV*, II.iv.406).

<sup>132</sup> Cunningham, 1986, xxiv.

*Spanish War*) was uncompromising: ‘the equivocal attitude, the Ivory Tower, the paradoxical, the ironic detachment, will no longer do’.<sup>133</sup> While a minority of writers who answered maintained, textually and actually, their ‘ironic detachment’ – T. S. Eliot’s famous response was that, ‘while I am naturally sympathetic, I still feel convinced that it is best that at least a few men of letters should remain isolated, and take no part in these collective activities’<sup>134</sup> – the overwhelming majority replied with passionate support for the Republican side.<sup>135</sup> The policy of non-intervention regarding Spain adopted by the United States, Britain and France utterly dismayed many, provoking in writers a contrary impulse that was as aesthetic as it was political. As Gellhorn told the congress, ‘we have [...] the vital job of shaping history’.<sup>136</sup>

At the time that Gellhorn delivered her congress paper, she had spent about three months in Spain.<sup>137</sup> In December 1936, in Key West, Florida, she had met Ernest Hemingway. When she arrived in Madrid in late March of 1937, Hemingway was already there, a correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA).<sup>138</sup> Other journalists in Madrid included Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times*, Jay Allen (*Chicago Tribune*), Sefton Delmer (*Daily Express*), Arthur Koestler (*News Chronicle*), Antoine de St-Exupéry (*Paris Soir*), Mikhail Koltsov (*Pravda*) and Ilya Ehrenberg (*Izvestia*); George Orwell, too, had come to Spain, ‘with some notion of writing newspaper articles’.<sup>139</sup>

Gellhorn’s own status in Spain was initially ambiguous. In the summer of 1936, as she recalls it in *The Face of War*, she had been doing research for a novel (never published) in the Weltkriegsbibliothek in Stuttgart:

The Nazi newspapers began to speak of fighting in Spain. They did not talk of war; the impression I got was of a bloodthirsty rabble, attacking the forces of decency and order. This Spanish rabble, which was the duly elected Republic of Spain, was always referred to as ‘Red Swine-dogs.’ The Nazi papers had one solid value: Whatever they were against, you could be for.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>133</sup> *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, 1937, unpaginated.

<sup>134</sup> *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War*, 1937, unpaginated.

<sup>135</sup> Even if, as Valentine Cunningham points out, the compilers ‘fiddle[d] their results a little’ (Cunningham, 1988, 438).

<sup>136</sup> Gellhorn, ‘Writers Fighting in Spain’, 1937, 67.

<sup>137</sup> March to May 1937. She returned twice more in 1937 and 1938.

<sup>138</sup> Baker, 451f.

<sup>139</sup> Orwell, 2.

<sup>140</sup> *FoW*, 9.

As a result, there occurred a shift in Gellhorn's political leanings – 'I had stopped being a pacifist and become an anti-fascist'<sup>141</sup> – a discernible move towards activism. She returned briefly to America (the visit during which she met Hemingway) and in New York, an editor<sup>142</sup> of *Collier's* weekly magazine, gave her a letter which 'said, to whom it might concern, that the bearer, Martha Gellhorn, was a special correspondent for *Collier's* in Spain'.<sup>143</sup> Armed with this, Gellhorn arrived in Barcelona in early March 1937 and made her way via Valencia to Madrid. There she 'tagged along behind the war correspondents [...] did nothing except learn a little Spanish and a little about war, and visit the wounded'<sup>144</sup> until 'either Hemingway or [Herbert] Matthews, but she thinks, probably Hemingway'<sup>145</sup> suggested that she write, as the only way in which she could serve the *Causa*. Gellhorn continues the story:

I mailed my first Madrid article to *Collier's*, not expecting them to publish it; but I did have that letter, so I knew *Collier's* address. *Collier's* accepted the piece and after my next article put my name on the masthead. I learned this by accident. Once on the masthead, I was evidently a war correspondent. It began like that.<sup>146</sup>

Hemingway put the circulation of *Collier's* at the time as 'a million':<sup>147</sup> in fact, in 1936 it was 2.4 million.<sup>148</sup> Gellhorn wrote three articles about Spain for *Collier's*, one for *Story Magazine* and one for *The New Yorker*;<sup>149</sup> she also transmuted her experiences into several fictionalised accounts: *Zoo in Madrid*, *About Shorty* and *A Sense of Direction*.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> *FoW*, 10.

<sup>142</sup> Carlos Baker and Caroline Moorehead name the provider of the letter as Kyle Crichton (Baker, 462; Moorehead, 129), who was 'screen and theater' editor for *Collier's*.

<sup>143</sup> *FoW*, 11.

<sup>144</sup> *FoW*, 12.

<sup>145</sup> Orsagh, 68.

<sup>146</sup> *FoW*, 12. In fact, Gellhorn's first article published in *Collier's* was 'Only the Shells Whine' (17 July 1937): the issue has her name on the front cover (rather than on the 'masthead', which the present author takes to be the list of editors and sub-editors that appears on page 4 of each issue). Her next piece to appear was 'Men Without Medals' (15 January 1938) when her name is again on the cover. Her name first appeared on the masthead on 6 January 1940, when she was billed as 'Scandinavia'. She remained as 'Martha Gellhorn – Scandinavia' until 12 October 1940, and was then 'Martha Gellhorn – Articles' from 19 October 1940 to 22 March 1941; 'Martha Gellhorn – The Orient' from 29 March 1941 to 6 September 1941; 'Martha Gellhorn – Articles' again from 13 September 1941 to 26 December 1942; 'Martha Gellhorn – Invasions' from 24 June 1944 to 7 October 1944; and 'Martha Gellhorn – France' from 14 October 1944 to 29 September 1944.

<sup>147</sup> Orsagh, 68.

<sup>148</sup> Ayer, 1188.

<sup>149</sup> Another article, 'The Third Winter', appears in *The Face of War* (1959 and later editions), dated as November 1938, but it has not been possible to track down its original publication: possibly it was not published contemporaneously.

<sup>150</sup> These stories are discussed in subsequent chapters.

Gellhorn's Spanish Civil War writings display many of the features of her New Reportage Depression writings. 'Only the Shells Whine', published in *Collier's* on 17 July 1937 and trailed with the information that Gellhorn had 'for six weeks [...] lived in [the] city [Madrid]',<sup>151</sup> provides examples. At the outset, the correspondent-persona is sited in field and text:

At first the shells went over: you could hear the thud as they left the Fascists' guns, a sort of groaning cough, then you heard them fluttering toward you. As they came closer the sound went faster and straighter and sharper and then, very fast, you heard the great booming noise when they hit.<sup>152</sup>

Having established 'presence' – and precise spatial location within the war scene – Gellhorn uses a zoom-lens technique to home in on particular incidents. Thematically, rather than typographically, her methodology resembles collage: her own experiences in the city at war are interspersed with vignettes of the economic and social existence of the *Madrileños*. A little boy is killed in the square when a 'small piece of twisted steel, hot and very sharp' takes him in the throat; the writer visits a shoe shop, a family in their roofless apartment, the Palace hotel which has been turned into a makeshift hospital, the theatre; speaks with a concierge, a Spaniard waiting for the shells to stop, a soldier.<sup>153</sup> The bombing described at the beginning is subtly shown to have effects on real lives. Here, as Lukács demanded, are facts made vivid because they are dramatised with their causes and consequences.

Consonant with this is the verbatim reproduction of the words of those who have personally experienced the war's effects. Here, from 'City at War', are two Spanish women whose apartment has been bombed:

They were chatty and glad to be alive and they said everything was quite all right – look, the whole back of the apartment could still be lived in, three rooms, not as bright or as nice as the rooms that had been destroyed, but still they were not without a home. If only the front part didn't fall into the street and hurt someone.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> 'Next Week', 10 July 1937, 4.

<sup>152</sup> Gellhorn, 17 July 1937, 12.

<sup>153</sup> Gellhorn, 17 July 1937, 64, 13, 65.

<sup>154</sup> Gellhorn, 2 April 1938, 19.

This is ‘letting the people speak’, but the apparent objectivity of the passage demands closer scrutiny. It is significant *how* the women’s words are conveyed: the use of free indirect discourse means that, grammatically speaking, the writer could not be more closely allied with their point of view. This grammatical proximity recapitulates a political proximity. The quiet, courageous stoicism of those on the side of the *Causa* is constantly registered. ‘It is very regrettable,’ Gellhorn quotes her hotel concierge saying about the bombed-out rooms.<sup>155</sup> The shoe salesman tells his customers politely, ‘I think we had better move farther back into the shop. The window might break and cut you’.<sup>156</sup> A Hungarian lying in hospital refuses politely ‘to talk about his wound because it was of no importance [...] at any rate he would be able to limp’.<sup>157</sup> At times, this heroism becomes almost self-parodying – the salesman pointedly unconcerned about his own safety, the Hungarian limping manfully on – but the key point here is the partisan nature of Gellhorn’s own political sympathies, expressed implicitly in these examples in her admiring depiction of the Republicans and elsewhere more overtly. (Nowhere does she report anti-Franco atrocities.)<sup>158</sup> Philip Knightley claims that personal engagement in a cause renders war correspondents ‘unable to fulfil their duty’, a weakness he finds ‘unforgivable’.<sup>159</sup> New Reportage theorists, of course, did not regard partisanship as unethical – theirs was, after all, a leftist agenda – but it should be registered that, in Gellhorn’s work, ‘letting the people speak’ has a tendency to become a somewhat un-journalistic ‘accepting unquestioned what the people say’.

That said, Gellhorn’s political stance, while obviously favourable to the Spanish Republic, cannot be given the precise co-ordinates of that of, to take one example from among many, George Orwell. For a start, republican sympathy could be located within a number of anti-fascist positions: the Anarchists, the Stalinists, the Trotskyists, to name but few. Orwell actually fought for the Trotskyist *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM), and *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) demonstrates not only greater physical immersion

<sup>155</sup> Gellhorn, 17 July 1937, 13.

<sup>156</sup> Gellhorn, 17 July 1937, 13.

<sup>157</sup> Gellhorn, 17 July 1937, 65.

<sup>158</sup> A point also made by Caroline Moorehead (150).

<sup>159</sup> Knightley, 2000a, 234, 232. Conversely, Fred Inglis argues that no journalist should be required to

in the conflict than Gellhorn (he was shot through the neck), but also a greater degree of political affiliation. Unlike Gellhorn, however, Orwell states his aim as not to idealise those who fight. The result, tonally, is a curious equanimity, dispassionateness become almost perverse. Here, for example, is the moment that Orwell is hit:

The whole experience of being hit by a bullet is very interesting and I think it is worth describing in detail.<sup>160</sup>

The comparison with Orwell is made to illustrate another set of co-ordinates: greater physical and political involvement, but also greater emotional detachment, with regard to the Spanish war.

How, in this her first conflict, does Gellhorn construct and place the correspondent-persona? One element of this has already been suggested: in ‘Only the Shells Whine’, the journalist enters the Spanish family’s ruined apartment and – via the first and second persons singular – is also present in the text. Sounds and sensations place the reporter’s actual presence beyond doubt:

I went downstairs into the lobby, practicing on the way how to breathe. You couldn’t help breathing strangely, just taking the air into your throat and not being able to inhale it. [...] suddenly a shell landed, and there was a fountain of granite cobbles flying up into the air, and the silver lyddite smoke floated off softly.<sup>161</sup>

Equally important is Gellhorn’s textual persona who is already being constructed as a fearless, feeling, independent woman (rather like her construction of the Republican Spaniards), with a self-deprecating attitude. To the concierge who apologises for the bombing, Gellhorn reports, ‘I said yes, indeed, it was not very nice, was it?’<sup>162</sup> This sounds like Orwellian understatement (‘being hit by a bullet is very interesting’), with the difference that Gellhorn is recording contemporary fortitude, rather than a retrospective dispassionateness which seems to diminish, not just the threat of the moment, but the entire experience. It also sounds like Hemingway understatement but, again, there is a curious

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‘extinguish human emotion and judgments’ (Inglis, 21). The debate is resumed in Chapter Three.

<sup>160</sup> Orwell, 137.

<sup>161</sup> Gellhorn, 17 July 1937, 12.

<sup>162</sup> Gellhorn, 17 July 1937, 12.

difference. Here is a typical example, from Hemingway's first dispatch from Spain, dated 18 March 1937:

Only by a half-hour had we missed flying into the dog-fight in which the Insurgent planes were driven off by Government pursuit ships. Personally I didn't mind. We were a trimotor job ourselves, and there might have been confusion.<sup>163</sup>

'There might have been confusion' is airily brave but Hemingway's litotic humour, unlike Gellhorn's, tends to be an expression of (understandable) fear, rather than bravery. While the textual Hemingway is saying, 'I didn't want to be in an aerial dog-fight', the textual Gellhorn is saying 'I didn't mind the bombs'.

But presence alone is not enough. Gellhorn's accounts of Spain contain instances of what might be termed the 'normality trope', a device by means of which, firstly, Gellhorn suggests war's closeness by means of familiar comparisons and, secondly, reveals Americans' involvement in the conflict.<sup>164</sup> An instance of the former comes from 'Only the Shells Whine':

It seemed a little crazy to be living in a hotel, like a hotel in Des Moines or New Orleans, with a lobby and wicker chairs [...] and meantime it was like a trench where they lay down an artillery barrage.<sup>165</sup>

As suggested earlier in relation to 'Toronto Express', there is also an ideological element to the simile: if being in the Spanish Civil War is like being in a hotel in Iowa, it is also true that the war *is* close to Iowa because of its political significance. The same point is made by the second version of the 'normality trope' mentioned above. These instances are from 'Men Without Medals':

It was a strange thing, walking through that olive grove, bending your head against the dusty wind, and seeing the faces from Mississippi and Ohio and New York and California, and hearing the voices that you'd heard at a baseball game, in the subway, on any campus, in any hamburger joint, anywhere in America. [...] The plain [outside Madrid] lay below us, as quiet and beautiful as wheat fields in Idaho.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Hemingway, 1998, 257.

<sup>164</sup> Similar use of familiar comparisons by Richard Harding Davis is described above.

<sup>165</sup> Gellhorn, 17 July 1937, 18.

<sup>166</sup> Gellhorn, 15 January 1938, 10.

Again, the point for Gellhorn's readers is not just that Americans have voluntarily participated in the war but that America – like it or not – is in it (in the sense of being affected by it), too, and hence the official policy of non-interventionism cannot quarantine the country from European events.

These instances, then, are attempts to pique and mobilise public (and Presidential) opinion. In this sense, writing, with a specific real effect in mind, becomes perlocutionary. Gellhorn made other practical contributions. She undertook a 22-lecture tour of the US to gain support and money for Spain (her speaking skills were singled out for praise in a *New York Times* article).<sup>167</sup> She wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt of the importance of the United States repealing the Neutrality Act:

We sit here and hope to heaven that a sense of justice and a sense of self-protection will guide the House and the Senate. [...] All along it has made me proud to know that you were always understanding this [...] But words are going to do nothing [...] Around now, the people of Spain need airplanes.<sup>168</sup>

Interviewed by her home paper, the *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat*, she insisted:

'There has been complete indifference to the war in Spain because of the misinformation given out about the situation. [...] I don't believe people have realized that their own democracies will surely be threatened if the Spanish democracy is defeated.'<sup>169</sup>

The anonymous interviewer commented:

Just let this adventurous young woman get a whiff of some social crisis, and before you can say 'Jack Robinson', she's 'in' on the ground floor championing the under dog with all the courage and enthusiasm of which she's capable. [...] When the flood broke out last Spring in Southern Missouri, Miss Gellhorn arrived with the Red Cross and the relief nurses, assisting in the actual work of repair and, at the same time, gathering material for her prolific articles. She has poked her decorative little nose into the labor conditions in the English textile factories, the home life of the share-croppers of the South and the workings of the boom towns of the Texas oil fields.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> 'Women Lecturers Found Unpopular', 28 November 1937, 1-2.

<sup>168</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, 24/25 April 1938, ff. 2<sup>r</sup>, 4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>169</sup> 'Martha Gellhorn Sees Spain as Breeding Place for World War', 28 January 1938, 2C.

<sup>170</sup> 'Martha Gellhorn Sees Spain as Breeding Place for World War', 28 January 1938, 2C. Gellhorn herself would use this flood to render intelligible to *Collier's* readers the practical and political plight of the Sudetendeutsch: 'I have seen the way refugees live in America when the Mississippi rises and drives them from their homes. These people were fleeing too, from something they had not made, as innocent as the people who escape the danger of the rising river' (Gellhorn, 10 December 1938, 28).

The defeat of the Spanish Republic, closely followed by the Nazi-Soviet Pact, caused deep disillusionment in writers on the Left. Critics have defined the moment as the point ‘at which writers [...] gave up politics completely’;<sup>171</sup> ‘the end of [...] socialist realism’;<sup>172</sup> ‘the decay of liberalism’;<sup>173</sup> the forcing back of writers to ‘absolute doubt’.<sup>174</sup> ‘The journey [...] which was supposed to accelerate the doubting leftist author into commitment and action [...] ended by returning him sooner or later to the personal, the inactive, the uncommitted,’ writes Cunningham.<sup>175</sup> These assessments, while true, deserve qualification in the present case: Gellhorn carried her participatory idealism into her Second World War writings, to which this thesis will now turn. But of Spain, she did write later: ‘nothing in my life has so affected my thinking as the losing of that war. It is, very banally, like the death of all loved things’.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Benson, 276.

<sup>172</sup> Cunningham, 1980, 86.

<sup>173</sup> Homberger, 39.

<sup>174</sup> Piette, 82.

<sup>175</sup> Cunningham, 1988, 460.

<sup>176</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, 8 June 1940, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

## CHAPTER 3

### ‘A WALKING TAPE RECORDER WITH EYES’<sup>1</sup>

On 26 January 1918, a two-page photographic spread was published in *Collier’s* magazine. Under a photograph of a medium-sized dust-cloud is the caption, ‘The man who took this snapshot of an exploding shell was under fire for hours – hours with sudden death’. Under a photograph of a blurred dirigible on the facing page are the words, ‘The man who made this picture of a Zeppelin also spent hours on the job – hours with an airbrush’. The text under the first photo explains:

Nine out of ten real war photographs are as unexciting as the two reproduced above – both of which were taken from cover because the photographer would have been instantly shot if he had exposed himself. To the uninitiated eye the photographs on the opposite page – all three of them fakes – are more like war. It is only when you look closely at the picture of the Zeppelin that you realise how the photographer cut a photograph of a Zeppelin in two, joined the parts at an angle, and painted in the smoke.<sup>2</sup>

The piece invokes two expectations brought to war recording: authenticity and ‘excitement’. It also hints at another, crucial to the first two: proximity (‘taken from cover because the photographer would have been instantly shot if he had exposed himself’). The positioning to be explored in this chapter corresponds to *Collier’s* first photo: that of the candid ‘camera eye’, a shorthand (potentially misleading) for ‘objective truth’.<sup>3</sup> As noted in the opening chapter, ‘objectivity’ was a key element of the New Reportage aesthetic, and from the beginning it was demanded of war representation that it be realistic. As an authorial stance, ‘objectivity’ is, in field and text, at the far end of the spectrum from engagement: in this configuration, the reportorial figure is, at least at first sight, effaced, non-intervening, dispassionate, ‘under cover’.<sup>4</sup> Martha Gellhorn, who occupies the position at various

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<sup>1</sup> *FoW*, 44.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Real War Pictures and the Other Kind’, 26 January 1918, 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> Virginia Woolf called photographs of the Spanish Civil War ‘crude statement[s] of fact’ (Woolf, 125).

<sup>4</sup> Storm Jameson had written in *FACT* in 1937: ‘As the photographer does, so must the writer keep himself out of the picture [...] The emotion [...] must not be squeezed from it by the writer, running forward with a, “When I saw this, I felt, I suffered, I rejoiced”’ (Jameson, 1937, 15-16). (This rejects, almost word for word, Whitman’s ‘I am the man, I suffer’d, I was there’ quoted in Chapter One.)

junctures in her prose, likened it to being ‘a walking tape recorder with eyes’,<sup>5</sup> an image which encapsulates the idea of mechanical, emotionless, unmediated transcription. Yet, as will be explored in this chapter, Gellhorn had a problematic relationship with ‘objectivity’, and ‘a walking tape recorder with eyes’ becomes not so much a figure for genuineness as for a certain tonal control (albeit a control which on occasion ‘slips’ or ‘blinks’) appropriate to the solemn task of bearing witness. Consequently, the alignment begins to bleed into the next positioning on the spectrum: to witness, in however self-effacing a way, is contingent on being there to see.

### THEORIES OF OBJECTIVE TRUTH

‘Objectivity’, as Anthony Smith points out, is the term used to describe the most enduring quality exacted of journalism. A newspaper’s readers expect the events it reports to be ‘true’; that those to which it gives greatest importance are worthy of priority; that a process of checking will have been carried out; that information placed in various categories (sport etc.) will belong in them; and that information concerning goods for sale will be presented differently from other information.<sup>6</sup> These principles also underlie certain requirements made by some of war writing (whether journalism or fiction). ‘The ideal of truth inherent in entirely unpretentious objectivity,’ writes W. G. Sebald, ‘proves itself the only legitimate reason for continuing to produce literature in the face of total destruction.’<sup>7</sup> The purpose of this section is to investigate the ontogeny of such assumptions and requirements; to answer the questions, ‘to what extent, and why, was objectivity important when Martha Gellhorn was reporting the Second World War, and what at that time was meant by ‘objectivity’?’

Journalistic objectivity, like any idea, has a history.<sup>8</sup> Early (seventeenth-century) licensing of the press in England was not so much a form of censorship as an attempt on the

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<sup>5</sup> *FoW*, 44.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, 152.

<sup>7</sup> Sebald, 53.

<sup>8</sup> What follows in this paragraph is derived from Smith, 1978.

part of the authorities to prevent people being deceived: the argument against it was that truth and lies should be allowed to engage in open encounter. In the eighteenth century, the licensing system failed. The preoccupation of journalism was not so much the accurate reporting of facts as the fate of the various political factions: indeed, there were no techniques for providing an ‘unblemished version of events’.<sup>9</sup> The only guarantee of accuracy was provenance. As the *Daily Courant*, the first daily in English, promised in its debut edition of 21 April 1702:

It will be found from the Foreign Prints [...] that the Author has taken care to be duly furnished with all that comes from Abroad in any language [...] at the beginning of each Article he will quote the Foreign Paper whence ‘tis taken [...] Nor will he take it upon him to give any comments or conjectures of his own, but will relate only the Matter of Fact.<sup>10</sup>

This is objectivity as impartiality (or, rather, impersonality): as titles from the period – *The Mercury*, *The Post Boy*, *The Courant* – indicate, papers regarded themselves simply as passive ‘carriers’ of news. Consonant with this was the development of shorthand in the 1750s: a person could now specialise in observing an event and recording it with precision. In Smith’s words, the reporter acquired an ‘aura of neutrality’ as an impersonal transmitter of event to reader.<sup>11</sup>

In the United States, papers were originally party organs, and therefore unashamedly partisan. Two developments changed this situation: the rise, in the 1830s, of the penny press and the advent of the telegraph.<sup>12</sup> The penny papers were ‘impartial and independent’ while the telegraph enabled the emergence of wire agencies such as the Associated Press (AP) (founded 1848),<sup>13</sup> which, supplying information to many clients simultaneously, had to be ideologically neutral to be acceptable to them all.<sup>14</sup> As Phyllis Frus points out, wire technology also meant that one observer was interchangeable with another, generating a

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<sup>9</sup> Smith, 158.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Smith, 159.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, 162.

<sup>12</sup> The telegraph was invented by Samuel Morse in 1844 and the Atlantic cable was laid in 1866 (Hohenberg, 14, 16).

<sup>13</sup> Schudson, 4.

<sup>14</sup> McNair, 31.

standardised, impersonal prose style unattributable to any particular writer.<sup>15</sup> This replicated the effect of shorthand, suggesting a directly proportional correlation between speed of communications technology and impartiality of prose. Concurrent with telegraphic developments was the emergence of the role of editor and the ensuing development of the newspaper-as-organisation, with professional codes and ethics, such as the guarantee of authenticity.

The sensationalistic circulation wars of the 1880s and '90s caused a sea-change. With the so-called 'Yellow Journalism' of papers such as Pulitzer's *New York World* and Hearst's *New York Journal*, writers and correspondents became 'big names', spelling the end of objectivity-as-impersonality. Instead, there was a growth in 'new genres of subjective reporting', such as the political column.<sup>16</sup> The signed news story began to appear: by the 1930s, by-lines would be used 'liberally'.<sup>17</sup> During and after the First World War, the burgeoning public relations industry spawned a distrust of official 'facts', consonant with contemporary modernist scepticism and the collapse of the belief that transcendent 'truth' existed and could be accessed. A resolution passed by the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1933 stated that 'editors should devote a larger amount of attention and space to explanatory and interpretative news'.<sup>18</sup> Practitioners of journalism had arrived, from a different direction, at the same conclusion as New Reportage theorists: the facts must be explained.

'Objectivity', then, is historically specific. As Martha Gellhorn began her career in the 1930s,<sup>19</sup> the term no longer meant – could no longer mean – unadorned 'truth' neutrally mediated. Yet if the metaphysic foundered, the ideal did not. As methodology, it persisted as eye-witness journalism and a continuing reluctance to accept official versions of 'the facts'. As style, it continued in three ways. The first was by means of devices such as verbatim reporting, the use of statistics, the citing of sources, the incorporation of original documents

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<sup>15</sup> Frus, 67.

<sup>16</sup> Schudson, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Schudson, 145.

<sup>18</sup> Schudson, 148.

<sup>19</sup> The word was in 'common parlance' by that decade (Schudson, 156).

and the use of corroborative evidence. The second was in the practice of providing interpretation of, or contextualising, the facts. The third was in the tendency to reveal, rather than conceal, partiality and textual constructedness. Such methodology and style, as discussed in Chapter One, were hallmarks of the New Reportage. But things are different in war, and objectivity is no exception: the next task is to examine the influence on the concept of wartime conditions.

If, by the late 1930s, objectivity was understood and deployed principally as a set of stylistic conventions, it was due, in part, to the decline in the reputation of transcendent truth – the so-called ‘grand narratives’ rejected by Modernism. In war, access even to lowly narratives is under threat. During the Second World War, according to Phillip Knightley, ‘correspondents argued that even if they wanted to challenge the official version of events, they could not because they were totally dependent on the military to be able to see the war at all.’<sup>20</sup> Daniel Boorstin’s concept of the ‘pseudo-event’ – a planned ‘synthetic novelty’ such as an interview or press conference<sup>21</sup> – is particularly prevalent in war due to the relative ‘eventless-ness’ of the phenomenon: this produces natural distortion.<sup>22</sup> Evelyn Waugh’s *Scoop* makes the point satirically: here is *Daily Beast* proprietor, Lord Copper, instructing William Boot:

With regard to Policy, I expect you already have your own views. I never hamper my correspondents in any way [...] Remember the Patriots are in the right and are going to win [...] That is the *Beast* policy for the war [...] We shall expect the first victory at the beginning of July.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, the psychological effect of conflict, according to W. G. Sebald, has a deleterious effect on accurate recall:

People who have escaped with nothing but their lives do generally have something discontinuous about them, a curiously erratic quality, one so much at variance with authentic recollection that it easily suggests rumour-mongering and invention [...] the apparently unimpaired ability – shown in most of the eye-witness reports – of

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<sup>20</sup> Knightley, 2000a, 352.

<sup>21</sup> Boorstin, 9.

<sup>22</sup> According to Frus, news management in war goes even beyond the ‘pseudo-event’ (Frus, xv).

<sup>23</sup> Waugh, 42.

everyday language to go on functioning as usual raises doubts of the authenticity of the experiences they record.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, at the same time as it gives rise to censorship and propaganda and impairs personal recollection, war, as noted at the outset of this chapter, demands authentic recording. When Sebald calls for imperfect reminiscences to be supplemented with ‘artificial and synoptic’ views,<sup>25</sup> it is an instance of war intensifying the demand for traditional objectivity.

The revised notion of objectivity as a set of stylistic conventions therefore demands careful scrutiny when it appears in wartime. Gaye Tuchman has described this version of the concept as a ‘strategic ritual’, performed by journalists as a defensive measure against forms of attack from criticism to libel suits.<sup>26</sup> For objectivity in Second World War journalism, however, this interpretation may be anachronistic. Rather than forming a defensive strategy, it seems to have been a complex engagement with the notion of trust, falling within James Carey’s class of ‘communication-as-ritual’, in the sense of a shared rite purporting to promote and enable participation, fellowship, communion and community.<sup>27</sup> In particular, ‘proofs of honesty’ enlist readers’ and audiences’ support: Thomas Doherty cites Hollywood’s two-pronged tactics of exposing the tricks of enemy propaganda and revealing its own constructedness with behind-the-scenes shots and explanations of film-making technology.<sup>28</sup> Of course, trust could be manufactured cynically: Frus, for instance, argues that journalistic allusions to the process of covering a story can mask the fact of collusion in and contribution to the story<sup>29</sup> – this is objectivity as double-bluff. Overall, it seems right to conclude of the Second World War period that objectivity continued to be a construct, though it was also haunted by more traditional epistemics and seems to have been a key part of communication made in good faith.

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<sup>24</sup> Sebald, 25-6.

<sup>25</sup> Sebald, 26.

<sup>26</sup> Tuchman, 663, 676.

<sup>27</sup> James Carey, 15, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Doherty, 34.

<sup>29</sup> Frus, vi.

## ‘EXACTLY AS IT WAS’<sup>30</sup>

‘I wasn’t objective about Dachau,’ said Martha Gellhorn in a television interview with John Pilger in 1983, ‘what was there to be objective about?’ She continued:

I did not invent anything. I did neither suppress nor invent, I reported it exactly as it was. If you report what you see, unless your eyes are bad, I don’t see how you can be other than objective. You don’t conceal anything, you don’t add anything, it’s there in front of you. That’s what you see, that’s what you report.<sup>31</sup>

‘I wasn’t objective’ and ‘I reported it exactly as it was’ would appear to be antonyms. Gellhorn’s remarks therefore reveal the complexity of her attitude towards ‘objectivity’, and also suggest that a re-definition is in order. If she thought she wasn’t being objective, ‘objective’ must have meant something other than faithful reporting, for this latter was of supreme importance to her. She had ‘an almost pathological reverence for the truth,’ noted Rosie Boycott, ‘[...] no fiction could be as important as the need to bear witness to the atrocities.’<sup>32</sup> What Gellhorn meant by ‘all this objectivity shit’<sup>33</sup> seems to have been a combination of a stylistic construction and a species of reportorial ethics: the representation of a balanced range of opinion, or even a pointed lack of stated opinion. Her ethics worked differently. ‘The core of Martha really was: [...] who are the baddies? Who are the goodies?’ said Victoria Glendinning.<sup>34</sup> When it came to a subject like Dachau, how could anyone not say what they thought? What could possibly be the ‘balancing view’?

The point, therefore, is not to search for impartiality in Gellhorn’s writings. ‘You go into a hospital, and it’s full of wounded kids,’ she once said:

So you write what you see and how it is. You don’t say there’s 37 wounded children in this hospital, but maybe there’s 38 wounded children on the other side. You write what you see.<sup>35</sup>

‘Objectivity’ in her work must therefore be understood in other terms: above all as a matter of stylistic restraint. Evident even in her remarks to Pilger, this comprises emphatic, briskly

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<sup>30</sup> Gellhorn in Pilger, ‘The Outsiders’, broadcast interview, 1983.

<sup>31</sup> Gellhorn in Pilger, ‘The Outsiders’, broadcast interview, 1983.

<sup>32</sup> Boycott, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 6.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Ferrari, 40.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Lyman, B11, and ‘Obituaries – Martha Gellhorn’, 17 February 1998, 23.

structured sentences; hard, clear images; a deliberate suppression of emotion and a determinedly unflinching gaze ('she did not flicker an eye-lid,' commented Nigel Nicolson in a review of *The Face of War*).<sup>36</sup> The steady gaze invokes the figure of the eye-witness reporter, a construction which will be returned to in the last section of this chapter. In the discussion which follows, special attention will be paid to Gellhorn's (and others') accounts of the Nazi death camps, for it is in relation to this subject in particular that the tension between an indispensable tonal control and an equally visceral emotional response is in starkest relief.

### 'A SECOND WAY OF TELLING'

A passage from Gellhorn's article 'Obituary of a Democracy' (first published in *Collier's* on 10 December 1938) – an instance of a war reporter reporting on a report of war – acknowledges two modes of relating traumatic events. The Czech leader, Edouard Beneš, is describing the Nazis' annexation of the Sudetenland:

He began to talk in a gray, matter-of-fact voice. He spoke like a professor, making his points on the map. There were only two ways that people spoke in Czechoslovakia, and this was the second way. When they talked they all spoke with terrible and violent control; but later, as the story went on, the control snapped and people – these serious, quiet, inarticulate people – wept as they talked, with fury and helplessness. Or else they talked coldly, stating facts, trying to keep their voices and their minds dead.<sup>37</sup>

The 'second way of telling', that of 'terrible and violent control', of speaking 'coldly, stating facts' in 'gray, matter-of-fact' voices, is presented as an admired ideal in Gellhorn's work, an operational poesis that, for her, appears to have been self-authenticating. Her early conception of journalism was as 'a guiding light':

If people were told the truth, if dishonor and injustice were clearly shown to them, they would at once demand the saving action, punishment of wrong-doers, and care for the innocent.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Nicolson, 517.

<sup>37</sup> Gellhorn, 10 December 1938, 33.

<sup>38</sup> *FoW*, 1.

Later, more disillusioned with the power of writing to change things ('the guiding light of journalism was no stronger than a glow-worm'),<sup>39</sup> she nonetheless kept faith in its ability at least to record:

I now think the act of keeping the record straight is valuable in itself. Serious, honest, journalism is essential, not because it is a guiding light but because it is a form of honorable behavior.<sup>40</sup>

The 'second way' of telling is therefore not solely a stylistic matter: aligned with a certain set of 'honorable' values, it actually becomes the means of defending them. In Gellhorn's writing, the mode is synonymous with authorial effacement and explicit repudiations of personal feeling, the implication being that the presence of such feeling might, or might be perceived to, compromise 'truth'. Frequently, she described her role in relation to war as that of a 'witness',<sup>41</sup> a word which evokes the solemn forensic standards of the law court.

'Forensic' seems an apt word to describe a tone and methodology the necessity of which, with regard to war crimes, seems to have been, from the beginning, universally understood. A party of 18 American newspaper and magazine editors, among them William L. Chenery of *Collier's*, who visited Buchenwald and Dachau at Eisenhower's invitation, felt able to report only when they had:

visited and spent considerable time investigating the prison camps [...] interviewed recently freed political prisoners, slave laborers and civilians of many nationalities [...] studied a great mass of documents covering the German occupation of France which contained photographic evidence and testimony taken in many places and painstakingly authenticated with the sworn statements of witnesses and victims.<sup>42</sup>

The Second World War correspondent, Iris Carpenter, said, in her 1946 memoirs, of Buchenwald and Oswiecim (Auschwitz):

It is hard to write of it all without yielding to the temptation to color-sweep and word-picture one's own emotion and reaction. Accordingly, correspondents agreed to document what they saw in the baldest statement of plain fact. We chronicled the fantastic, dreadful narrative of what Nazidom was [...] in the simplest language and with the most carefully authenticated evidence we could find.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *FoW*, 2.

<sup>40</sup> *FoW*, 2.

<sup>41</sup> *FoW* 1998, 381, 382.

<sup>42</sup> 'Editors Condemn Nazis' Brutality', 6 May 1945c, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Carpenter, 303.

The *New York Times* noted the judicial air with which Senator Aben W. Barkley and Congressman R. Ewing Thomason read an account of the camps to a Congressional Committee considering the unprecedented charge of ‘crimes against humanity’:

Both Messrs. Barkley and Thomason put the extraordinary indictment in level, passionless tones, like prosecutors opening the trial of a case of high crime. There was no demonstration in either House; members sat with faces sick with horror. The proceeding took a judicial tone. [...] The report said emphatically that all conclusions were reached only on three classes of evidence: visual inspection of camps by members, testimony of eye-witnesses to atrocities and common and universally agreeing knowledge of each camp. Not even the evidence of the Allied military authorities was included.<sup>44</sup>

The same standard of evidence was praised by Gellhorn in one of her last pieces of the period for *Collier's*, ‘The Paths of Glory’ (published on 9 November 1946), on the Nuremberg Trials:

It was a quiet court and a cold one. There was no anger here and no hate and no question of vengeance.<sup>45</sup>

The president of the tribunal, the British Attorney-General, Geoffrey Lawrence, speaks in the ‘second way’: a ‘slow, careful and immensely quiet voice reading without haste or passion’.<sup>46</sup> It is a voice that, for Gellhorn, stands as ‘a symbol of what all civilised people want and mean by justice’,<sup>47</sup> a value also conferred by the quality of the admitted testimony: ‘all proved, all sworn to by witnesses, the witnesses checked and counterchecked, the documents verified’.<sup>48</sup>

Numerous examples in which Gellhorn states and deploys the ‘second way of telling’ can be given. The Polish doctor who shows her round the clinic in Dachau speaks ‘with great detachment’.<sup>49</sup> The point is expanded as Jacob Levy steps into her shoes in *Point of No*

*Return:*

The doctor watched with that polite smile; his cold eyes watched to see how an outsider would receive news from this world of darkness where they all lived. [...] He

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<sup>44</sup> White, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Gellhorn, 9 November 1946, 21.

<sup>46</sup> Gellhorn, 9 November 1946, 74.

<sup>47</sup> Gellhorn, 9 November 1946, 74.

<sup>48</sup> Gellhorn, 9 November 1946, 76.

<sup>49</sup> Gellhorn, 23 June 1945, 16.

could do nothing except keep a record for the future, if there was a future. [...] He had learned to observe everything, dispassionate as the dead.<sup>50</sup>

In *A Stricken Field*, American reporter Mary Douglas muses when she gets to Prague:

There were the flat basic facts that you had to assemble: how many coal mines had the Nazis taken; how much of the textile industry, the glass, the porcelain, the sugar was lost; how many hectares of timber, hops, flax, tobacco had been seized; what had happened to the railroads; [...] Statistics were only black marks to her, and if she learned that an unpronounceable Czech manufacturing town had become German it meant nothing, until she thought of the people who worked in the factories, and where would they go now; you would see them on the roads, with bulging sacks over their shoulders, walking from place to place, looking for jobs that had disappeared forever behind an unreasonable line of barbed wire.<sup>51</sup>

Mary thinks of the ‘dreary interviews’ she must do ‘to get the facts about the break-up of their economy’<sup>52</sup> and the implication is that the practices of objective journalism are at best wearisome. Yet, the Sudetens’ account of what has happened which she agrees to smuggle out at the end of the novel impresses her by being ‘a simply worded statement’ that ‘read[s] flatly, being written with no emotion’.<sup>53</sup> For the refugee who entrusts her with it, ‘to tell the truth, so that it shall not disappear and be forgotten, is our fighting’.<sup>54</sup> Phyllis Lassner rightly contends that *A Stricken Field* is an argument ‘against modernist privileging of suggestion over verisimilitude’ for the reason that Gellhorn ‘refuses to endanger victims by risking the possibility that readers may fail to understand’.<sup>55</sup> Tonal control is also a form of ‘fighting’ – evidence of the author’s absolute determination that the status of what she says will be impervious to challenge. In this sense, the ‘second way of telling’ is, for Gellhorn, its own validation.

What, then, are the stylistic elements of this mode of discourse? What is clear – revealed by Gellhorn’s correspondence – is how deeply she reflected upon the creative

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<sup>50</sup> *WoA*, 277-8.

<sup>51</sup> *SF*, 21.

<sup>52</sup> *SF*, 210.

<sup>53</sup> *SF*, 280.

<sup>54</sup> *SF*, 284.

<sup>55</sup> Lassner, 799.

process. In letter after letter, she agonises about what she has produced. From Finland, she wrote to Hortense Flexner:

I reread my first article, the one about the crossing,<sup>56</sup> and found it unspeakably lousy as I find all the others. I am ashamed of such writing but it goes too fast and I do not have time, or perhaps will or talent, to do it really well.<sup>57</sup>

To Denver Lindley, a *Collier's* editor, she wrote on 1 June 1938, 'I want to know what you think about this':

I am just about gaga. Before I started to write this out, I threw out at least half my notes. Then I wrote it and cut it 3 times. Then I couldn't read it anymore and had it copied. Then I cut it again, as you will see. And it is still too long and I can't make sense about it anymore, having worked on it too long.<sup>58</sup>

She concluded, 'you can decide better yourself what sections to leave out.'<sup>59</sup> After D-Day, she wrote to her mother:

Did two stories,<sup>60</sup> neither very good, in an uninterrupted 24 hours; just to get something off to the magazine which was cabling desperately.<sup>61</sup>

To her Scribner's editor, Max Perkins, she wrote, seeking reassurance about *Point of No Return*:

I find the whole book terrible; worse every time I look at it. [...] Do you think it is so visibly worse than *Liana*, in writing and construction, that I will get laughed out of the business?<sup>62</sup>

To Bernard Berenson, she wrote:

You suggested in your last letter that perhaps I was born to write; and I do not doubt that, nor have I ever doubted it. The only question is: write how, well or badly? [...] I am sure that I am not as good a writer as I insist on being. So I write, rather sadly, what I consider to be honorable stuff, from time to time, and it too is bought; and I look at it thinking how much better it ought to be. A certain amount of vitality and hope disappear when one finally decides one is not going to be Tolstoy.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> This refers to 'Slow Boat to War' (Gellhorn, 6 January 1940).

<sup>57</sup> Gellhorn, 20 December 1940, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 1 June 1938, f. 1<sup>r</sup>. The article referred to, which seems to be about Spain, appears never to have been published.

<sup>59</sup> Gellhorn, 1 June 1938, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> 'Over and Back' (Gellhorn, 22 July 1944) and 'Hangdog Herrenvolk' (Gellhorn, 29 July 1944).

<sup>61</sup> Gellhorn, 14 June 1944, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> Gellhorn, 11 January 1948, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> Gellhorn, 18 July 1950, f. 1<sup>r-v</sup>.

Perhaps the most revealing letter is one in which she criticises Berenson's own style, having been asked by him for her views on his 'Sketch for a Self Portrait'. 'Why do you invert so many sentences?' she asks, suggesting that 'This turmoil has never quite subsided, not even now.' is better than 'Quite subsided this turmoil never has, not even now.'<sup>64</sup> She explains:

I don't see what you gain by that inversion; I think it is an awkward usage; no one talks like that, the sound is not better, nor the sense clearer. [...] I am also touched by an occasional archaic slang, 'frosh and sopher,' for instance. That has a curious quaintness like a Norfolk jacket; do you do it on purpose?<sup>65</sup>

Here, then, are the foundations of Gellhorn's own style: aimed at reproducing the rhythms and sounds of current speech; clear; felicitous.<sup>66</sup> 'I think I ought to learn to leave more out,' she wrote elsewhere, 'gaps of portentous silence should appear, and words should not be so accursed explicit.'<sup>67</sup> But what is perhaps more important to note is that Gellhorn laboured intensively over her prose (as to whether it *becomes* laboured, see the discussion in 'Blinks' below): for her, creativity was a crafted, managed, above all a *controlled*, practice.

To name specific influences on this prose is difficult as the record of Gellhorn's reading is patchy, though, apparently, 'a book a day' was her 'average consumption'.<sup>68</sup> Probably the best source of information is her correspondence, through the 1950s, with the art historian, Bernard Berenson. In these letters, she mentions approvingly the Bible;<sup>69</sup> *The Education of Henry Adams*;<sup>70</sup> Walter Pater;<sup>71</sup> Dostoevsky;<sup>72</sup> Dreiser;<sup>73</sup> Edmund Wilson;<sup>74</sup> Flaubert;<sup>75</sup> Bertrand Russell;<sup>76</sup> Ivy Compton-Burnett;<sup>77</sup> Isaiah Berlin;<sup>78</sup> L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*;<sup>79</sup> 'that cautionary and tormenting diary of Virginia Woolf' ('I learned something

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<sup>64</sup> Gellhorn, 17 July 1953, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> Gellhorn, 17 July 1953, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> That these might also be the defining characteristics of Hemingway's style is explored further below.

<sup>67</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Bernard Berenson, 8 August 195?, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Sandy Gellhorn, 13 November 1969, f. 34<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 31 May 1950, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>70</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 13 May 1950, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>71</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 25 April 1953, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 15 March 1954, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 30 March 1954, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 14 December 1955, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>75</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 14 March 1956, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 8 January 1959, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>77</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 12 December ?1959, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 12 December ?1959, f. 3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 12 December ?1959, f. 3<sup>r</sup>.

of spiritual usefulness from one entry' – the value of gentle exercise and reading good writing);<sup>80</sup> T. S. Eliot's *The Confidential Agent*;<sup>81</sup> E. M. Forster's *The Hill of Devi* (an 'absolute delight');<sup>82</sup> Claud Cockburn's *In Time of Trouble*;<sup>83</sup> Meyer Levin's *Compulsion*;<sup>84</sup> John Cheever's *The Wapshott Chronicle*;<sup>85</sup> Madame Yourcenar's *Memoirs d'Hadrien* ('wonderful');<sup>86</sup> Chekhov;<sup>87</sup> and Henry James.<sup>88</sup> In other correspondence, she writes of finding D. H. Lawrence 'dreadful and undisciplined'.<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, Kay Boyle and Katherine Anne Porter made her 'excited and eager and alert' but 'finally there was nothing to see'.<sup>90</sup> 'Normal' Mailer was 'very childish' though she was 'deeply impressed by his vitality'.<sup>91</sup> Arthur Koestler, Nelson Algren, Nicolas Aldanov and Ira Wolfert she found 'full of juice, with good sharp new eyes'.<sup>92</sup> As a child, she 'adored' Browning.<sup>93</sup> She knew Colette, H. G. Wells, Graham Greene, Dorothy Parker, Somerset Maugham and Rosamond Lehmann personally. In a letter of 30 October 1969 to George Paoloczi-Horvath, she recommended reading 'the real vocabulary of communication, the words that are short and have solid meaning and color. Try thrillers, also to get an idea of speed': named writers are Nicholas Blake, Edmund Campion, Michael Innes and Martin Woodhouse.<sup>94</sup> In the same letter, she records making 'a last attempt at Proust': 'he bores me so much that I get cramps in my legs, and I can hardly prevent myself from crying SHIT aloud.'<sup>95</sup> Instead, she has taken up again *Men Without Women*.

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<sup>80</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 14 November ?1959, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>81</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 12 December ?1959, f. 3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 27 December 1953, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>83</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 23 March 1956, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 4 October 1957, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>85</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 4 October 1957, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>86</sup> Gellhorn, undated letter, f. 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>87</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 6 September 1956, f. 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>88</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 10 March 195?, f. 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>89</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, 17 May 1944, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>90</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Max Perkins, 17 October 1941, f. 3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>91</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Sandy Gellhorn, 13 November 1969, f. 34<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Allen Grover, 14 July 1943, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> Gellhorn, 'Saturday at Creve Coeur', undated, 2.

<sup>94</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 30 October 1969, f. 3<sup>r</sup>. Alfred Gellhorn confirms that his sister was 'semi-addicted' to thrillers (email to author, 1 December 2003).

<sup>95</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 30 October 1969, f. 4<sup>r</sup>.

One Second World War correspondent whose prose style Gellhorn is definitely known to have admired was Alan Moorehead,<sup>96</sup> like Mary Welsh Hemingway, a reporter for Beaverbrook's *Daily Express*. Here is Moorehead on the fighting at Salerno:

Slowly the time passed. We were all keyed up. Towards midnight we were disturbed by a sound overhead. These weren't British planes. German bombers! Flying out to sea. The moon shone as a weak crescent, very low on the horizon. We recognised nothing at sea. Suddenly on the horizon terrific AA fire opened up: 'A Convoy'.<sup>97</sup>

This is laconic to the point of being elliptical. Gellhorn rarely reaches this level of terseness. Her prose is built up of short, simple sentences, simple vocabulary, co-ordinating conjunctions and few descriptive words. The style it most resembles is, as others have noted, Ernest Hemingway's.

With regard to this, Victoria Glendinning raises an intriguing point:

If you read [Gellhorn's] earlier war reporting, it's very like the work of Hemingway – you know, these short, declarative sentences, and very few adjectives. [...] I sometimes wonder who learned from whom. Maybe the Hemingway style was really the Martha Gellhorn style. I wouldn't be surprised.<sup>98</sup>

Gellhorn herself early said that she wanted to avoid 'parodying' Hemingway's prose<sup>99</sup> and comparisons with him made her angry:

I am accused of writing, thinking, talking like Mr. Hemingway and as yet people have only not told me that I had a black moustache, but that will come.<sup>100</sup>

Yet she conceded (in a sentence that itself reveals the affinity) that he had 'magic':

He doesn't know how it comes or how to make it, but when I read his book<sup>101</sup> I see it, clear as water and carrying like the music of a flute and it is not separate from what he writes, but running all through it.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with Caroline Moorehead by the author, 4 December 2003. The two met in Italy during the war.

<sup>97</sup> Alan Moorehead, 38. Alan Moorehead had, according to his compatriot, Phillip Knightley, 'the detachment of being Australian'. He also, like Gellhorn, 'went virtually [sic] where he liked, following what he considered to be the story, forging his own fame, seeking his own destiny' (Knightley, 2000b, xv).

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Ferrari, 37-38.

<sup>99</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 126.

<sup>100</sup> Letter to Hortense Flexner, 'Saturday' (no month or year given), f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>101</sup> The draft *For Whom The Bell Tolls*.

<sup>102</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, 8 June 1940, f. 2<sup>r</sup>. She went on to call *Green Hills of Africa* 'lamentable' (Gellhorn, letter to Bernard Berenson, 14 April 1954, f. 1<sup>v</sup>): 'not funny only mean, not straight only pompous and the boasts come out in the sneering tone' (f. 1<sup>v</sup>). Hemingway himself intimated that Gellhorn had learned from him (Hemingway, letter to Bernard Berenson, 27 May 1953, f. 2<sup>r</sup>; exact words cannot be quoted for copyright reasons). In another letter to Bernard Berenson (9

Debate in fact still rages over where Hemingway's style itself 'came from': most recently, Ronald Weber has disputed Charles Fenton's 1954 thesis that it was forged in the newsrooms of the *Kansas City Star* and the *Toronto Daily Star*<sup>103</sup> (though Hemingway did, significantly, acknowledge one 'carry-over': 'discipline').<sup>104</sup> Certainly, in a 21 July 1918 piece for the *Kansas City Star*, 'At the End of the Ambulance Run', the young reporter was still writing like this:

It was merely one of the many cases that came to the city dispensary from night to night – and from day to day for that matter; but the night shift, perhaps, has a wider range of the life and death tragedy – and even comedy, of the city.<sup>105</sup>

The 'mature' Hemingway would not include redundancies such as 'and from day to day for that matter' or 'perhaps', nor the abstractions of 'tragedy' and 'comedy'. But the pieces also contain such laconic histories as 'At another time (it happens quite often) a young girl took poison.'<sup>106</sup> This stylistically foreshadows the documentary vignettes of *in our time* (1924), included as inter-chapters in *In Our Time* (1925), where Hemingway himself claimed the style to have originated:<sup>107</sup>

There was a woman having a kid with a young girl holding a blanket over her and crying. Scared sick looking at it. It rained all through the evacuation.<sup>108</sup>

Already, then, 'At the End of the Ambulance Run' has the direct force of Hemingway's developed style. It is a style also evident in a 4 March 1922 piece for the *Toronto Daily Star*, 'Try Bobsledding If You Want Thrills', now leavened with self-deprecatory humour:

If you want a thrill of the sort that starts at the base of your spine in a shiver and ends with your nearly swallowing your heart, as it leaps with a jump into your mouth, try bobsledding on a mountain road at 50 miles an hour. [...] There is a steering wheel about twice as big as a doughnut for the victim in front to hang on to.<sup>109</sup>

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July 1955), he enclosed a cutting of Gellhorn's short story 'The Smell of Lilies' from the *Atlantic Monthly* (August 1956), which he had extensively annotated, criticising and mocking her style – again, it is not legally possible to quote from it.

<sup>103</sup> Weber, 1990, 6.

<sup>104</sup> Weber, 1990, 8.

<sup>105</sup> Hemingway, 1970, 28.

<sup>106</sup> Hemingway, 1970, 31.

<sup>107</sup> Robertson, 202.

<sup>108</sup> Hemingway, 1926, 27.

<sup>109</sup> Hemingway, 1985, 101.

This is very similar to Gellhorn's 'Night Life in the Sky' (*Collier's*, 17 March 1945, discussed in Chapter Five): 'I thought that (a) my stomach was going to be flattened against my backbone, and (b) that I was going to strangle.'<sup>110</sup> But Gellhorn was writing dryly, acerbically, directly at 21, as one of her earliest articles, on the matinée idol Rudy Vallée, shows:

It is a respectable voice, and it is a relief to have a man sing like a human being and not like a hydraulic drill. Perhaps the secret lies in the Vallée type of beauty, which reminds one of the Lifebuoy Soap advertisements, or the Sloan's Liniment pictures in their better moments.<sup>111</sup>

The point here is not to try to 'prove' whether the style originated with Hemingway or Gellhorn – the matter is probably insoluble and 'plain speaking' was anyway in the air – but to identify and characterise it.

At base it is a mode which elicits, rather than expresses, emotion: if not overdone, it comes across as hard and true. Here, for example, is Hemingway opening 'The G.I. and the General' (*Collier's*, 4 November 1944):

The wheat was ripe but there was no one there to cut it now, and tank tracks led through it to where the tanks lay pushed into the hedge that topped the ridge that looked across the wooded country to the hill we would have to take tomorrow.<sup>112</sup>

And here is Gellhorn opening 'Cracking the Gothic Line' (*Collier's*, 28 October 1944):

The Gothic Line, from where we stood, was a smashed village, an asphalt road and a pinkish brown hill. On this dusty mined lane leading up to the village, the road and the hill, the infantry was waiting to attack. They stood single file, spaced well apart and did not speak.<sup>113</sup>

And here is the same passage in its 1959 version in *The Face of War*, 'The Gothic Line':

The Gothic Line, from where we stood, was a smashed village, an asphalt road, and a pinkish-brown hill. On a dusty mined lane leading up to the village, the road and the hill, the Canadian infantry was waiting to attack. They stood single file, spaced well apart, and did not speak and their faces said nothing either.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Gellhorn, 17 March 1945, 31.

<sup>111</sup> Gellhorn, 7 August 1929, 311.

<sup>112</sup> Hemingway, 4 November 1944, 11. This could be the opening of *A Farewell to Arms* (1929): 'In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains.' (Hemingway, 1999, 1).

<sup>113</sup> Gellhorn, 28 October 1944, 24.

<sup>114</sup> *FoW*, 166.

Hemingway's is the sparest of the three (only two adjectives), though Gellhorn's first version is very similar. Her second version is an example of the effect produced when the control slips. Adding clarifying details ('a dusty mined lane', 'Canadian infantry') and punctuation (the hyphenated 'pinkish-brown') may help the sense, but seems fussy. 'And their faces said nothing either' actually detracts from the original impact of a silent, waiting army. Gellhorn's lapses of control are important and are discussed in detail later in the chapter, but for the moment it can be observed that the original opening of 'Cracking the Gothic Line' shows her restrained tone at its truest and most authoritative: sombre, sonorous, relentless.<sup>115</sup>

### THE UNFLINCHING GAZE

Gellhorn closes her 1940 novel, *A Stricken Field*, with the woman war correspondent protagonist, Mary Douglas, flying out of Czechoslovakia to the west and safety. 'Not one' of her fellow passengers 'looked out the windows behind them at the wand-like steeples of Prague growing smaller and finer in the distance.'<sup>116</sup> Her *Collier's* article 'Dachau: Experimental Murder' opens with the same perspectival motif: the reporter up in an aeroplane. Again, none of passengers in the C-47 out of Germany looks out of the windows, all turn away from the country 'with hatred and sickness'<sup>117</sup> until a soldier says suddenly: 'We got to talk about it, see? We got to talk about it if anyone believes us or not.'<sup>118</sup> In *Point of No Return*, Jacob Levy, like Gellhorn touring the newly liberated Dachau, keeps coming up against the same truth. Immediately inside the camp, 'he started to turn and go back' but is deterred by the risk of 'calling attention to himself and probably being asked for his pass.'<sup>119</sup> Led by a former inmate, Heinrich, who speaks in an 'amiable dead voice',<sup>120</sup> with 'grey unexcited contempt',<sup>121</sup> through the 'still or swaying bodies' of the prisoners, Jacob keeps his

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<sup>115</sup> This was, incidentally, the general tonal atmosphere of contemporary publications. The *New York Times* of the late war period is remarkable for the number of advertisements it carried for black clothing: Abraham & Straus's 'Everlasting Lure of Black', B. Altman & Co.'s 'Summer Black' and Russel's 'Your Coat in Black Persian' in a single issue (6 May 1945a; 6 May 1945b; 6 May 1945d).

<sup>116</sup> *SF*, 300.

<sup>117</sup> Gellhorn, 23 June 1945, 16.

<sup>118</sup> Gellhorn, 23 June 1945, 16.

<sup>119</sup> *WoA*, 272.

<sup>120</sup> *WoA*, 276.

<sup>121</sup> *WoA*, 278.

eyes on his feet.<sup>122</sup> Finally, as Heinrich leads him the long way round to the gate and they come upon the pile of corpses:

Jacob Levy could not turn back. He could not, in front of this man who had lived here for twelve years, break and run.<sup>123</sup>

A crucial element of the 'second way of telling' for Gellhorn is the imperative not to 'break and run': the necessity of the unflinching gaze.

Clear-sightedness, both literal and figurative, is at a premium in conflict. Here is the art critic Robert Hughes on Francesco de Goya:

The words he wrote on one plate of his great series of etchings, *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (The Disasters of War) are still the declaration of every documentarian, every realist, every artist who would be thought unflinching: *Yo lo vi*, 'I saw it'. And these are balanced by their contrary, the title of another 'Disaster': *No se puede mirar*, 'One cannot look at this'.<sup>124</sup>

In the late war period, the point is at its starkest in the context of the news beginning to filter through about the liberated Nazi death camps. Alan Moorehead, visiting Belsen, found that, in the women's barracks, 'having no stomach for this sort of thing I was only able to look for a second or two':<sup>125</sup>

'I've had enough of this,' I said to the captain.  
'Come on,' he said, 'you've got to go through one of the men's huts yet. That's what you're here for.'<sup>126</sup>

But, as though Moorehead has closed his eyes, there is a lacuna in the text: the next thing that is mentioned is the party emerging from the men's barracks 'into the light again'.<sup>127</sup> The gaze

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<sup>122</sup> *WOA*, 273.

<sup>123</sup> *WOA*, 284.

<sup>124</sup> Robert Hughes, 4. Gellhorn herself said of Goya's etchings, 'what wonders they are' (Gellhorn, letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, 3 December 1938, f. 2').

<sup>125</sup> Alan Moorehead, 254.

<sup>126</sup> Alan Moorehead, 255.

<sup>127</sup> Alan Moorehead, 255.

has, momentarily, been averted. The issue was a live one. The *New York Times* reported on 2 May 1945 that newsreels taken by the Army Signal Corps of the recently opened-up Nordhausen, Buchenwald, Ohrdruf and Hadamar and shown in theatres in the city had been ‘generally received by audiences in silence or with muttered expressions of outrage.’<sup>128</sup> The article continued:

Although some of the reels were prefaced with warnings to the audience not to look ‘if you are susceptible to gruesome sights’, there were no indications that many persons took refuge in shutting their eyes, and the response apparent in theaters indicated that the patrons were determined to see.

Only the manager of the Radio City Music Hall declined to show the reels as the venue was ‘patronized by a large proportion of women and children’ and he ‘felt it a protection to them to keep the films from their eyes.’ Overall, coverage of the death camps by the paper itself was relatively low-key. The liberation of Dachau, for instance, merited a small column at the bottom of the front page on 1 May 1945 and continued on page 5<sup>129</sup> where it was surrounded by ads for Bergdorf Goodman and other Fifth Avenue boutiques.<sup>130</sup> Only a small photograph was published on 11 May, taken by the US Signal Corps of ‘Wedding Rings of Buchenwald Victims’,<sup>131</sup> and on 8 May an article entitled ‘Oswiecim Killings Placed as 4,000,000’ appeared on page 12.<sup>132</sup>

For Gellhorn, looking was a moral imperative from the beginning. The reporter heroine of her 1934 novel, *What Mad Pursuit*, confronted with her first corpse in the city morgue, forces herself to steel her nerves:

You are a reporter, she told herself. You were sent here to get a story. Get the story. You can’t faint, you coward; you can’t faint; this is your job.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> ‘Camp Horror Films Are Exhibited Here’, 2 May 1945, 3.

<sup>129</sup> ‘Dachau Captured by Americans Who Kill Guards, Liberate 32, 000’, 1 May 1945, 1, 5.

<sup>130</sup> The article reappeared, in condensed form, in the review of the week’s news on Sunday, 6 May 1945 (‘Story of Dachau’, 6 May 1945e, E2). There were also short pieces on the camps on 6, 14 and 16 May (‘Editors Condemn Nazis’ Brutality’, 6 May 1945c; ‘Nazi Horrors Told by Saltonstall’, 14 May 1945; White, 16 May 1945).

<sup>131</sup> ‘Wedding Rings of Buchenwald Victims’, 11 May 1945.

<sup>132</sup> Sulzberger, 8 May 1945.

<sup>133</sup> *WMP*, 36.

Gellhorn frequently linked sight and objective truth. ‘The point of these articles is that they are true,’ she remarked of her collection of Second World War journalism, ‘they tell what I saw’.<sup>134</sup> She promised to act as the ‘eyes for [people’s] conscience’, occupant of ‘a ringside seat at the spectacle of history in the making’.<sup>135</sup> In the epigraph to *A Stricken Field*, ‘from a Medieval Chronicle’, the importance of the steadfast, unaverted gaze is asserted (and gendered):

There were young knights among them who had never been present at a stricken field. Some could not look upon it [...] Then Jean de Rye, an aged knight [...] who had been sore wounded in the battle, rode up to the group of young knights and said, ‘Are ye maidens with your downcast eyes? Look well upon it. See all of it. Close your eyes to nothing.’<sup>136</sup>

In Gellhorn’s work, the unflinching gaze is a matter both of a refusal to overlook and a refusal to spare the reader (though, again, the point must be made, as with her Spanish Civil War pieces, that, even if she witnessed them, there is no record of atrocities on the Allied side).

This makes for uncompromising description, as in the following:

The Germans thought it would be a good idea to put human beings into these boxes and literally burn them alive. It would take quite a while to die in those closed metal-lined boxes. First your feet burned, and when in agony you tried to raise yourself, you reached for red-hot hooks. As you could not stand, you were forced to lean against the side walls of the box, also red hot.<sup>137</sup>

Here the mundaneness of tone (‘thought it would be a good idea’, ‘quite a while’) seems to act as an instrument of detachment, in a way similar to that in which the photographer Margaret Bourke-White, writing of Buchenwald, regarded her camera:

I kept telling myself that I would believe the indescribably horrible sight [...] before me only when I had a chance to look at my own photographs. Using the camera [...] interposed a slight barrier between myself and the white horror in front of me.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> *FoW*, 8.

<sup>135</sup> *FoW*, 1, 2.

<sup>136</sup> *SF*, preliminary pages. The epigraph was written by Ernest Hemingway because Gellhorn could not find the passage she was looking for in Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War* (Hemingway, 1996b, 327). This thesis would take issue with Jean Gallagher’s account of the disrupted female gaze in *SF* (Gallagher, 1998): the novel is peculiarly clear-sighted.

<sup>137</sup> Gellhorn, 4 November 1944, 74.

<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Moeller, 209.

Gellhorn's tonal equivalent of the cold camera-eye serves to hold the faces of her readers towards the horror, a practice explained elsewhere in her impatience with those who are not there in person to see: 'you wonder what happens to a magnificent division of brave men after the war. And you wonder who is going to thank them and how, and will it be enough?'<sup>139</sup>

But on 3 February 1945, a letter Martha Gellhorn never intended the public to see was published in *Collier's*.<sup>140</sup> The editorial decision to go against her wishes was taken because the piece was 'so revealing of the war-weary state of mind'.<sup>141</sup> Gellhorn had written of what she elsewhere called her 'journalistic saturation point':<sup>142</sup>

Today I saw pictures of two bodies, dug up from some boneyard in Toulouse. They were the bodies of what had once been two Frenchmen aged 32 and 29, but they had been tortured by the Gestapo until they died. I look at anything, you see, because I do not admit that one can turn away; one has no right to spare oneself. But I never saw faces (decayed in death, of course, anyhow) with gouged-out eyes. I thought I'd seen it all but evidently not.<sup>143</sup>

In a letter to her mother, she expressed the same sentiment:

My horror about the war has gotten beyond the place where I can control it [...] every dead seems to be part of me, and I have a feeling of such absolute and terrible despair that I can scarcely handle it.<sup>144</sup>

It is the language of limits reached: 'I must have a rest,' she told her editors.<sup>145</sup> But she did not, and what lay ahead was Dachau, where she was to write:

Then because very simply I could listen to no more, my guide [...] took me across the compound to the jail. In Dachau if you want to rest from one horror you go and see another.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Gellhorn, 2 December 1944, 70.

<sup>140</sup> 'I shall never forgive *Collier's* for their lapse in taste and honour in publishing pieces of a letter I wrote them very late at night when I was too tired and too disgusted not to tell the truth,' she wrote in a post-war letter to Allen Grover (Gellhorn, 12 March 1945, f. 1<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>141</sup> Porter, 3 February 1945.

<sup>142</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, 20 December 1940, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>143</sup> Porter, 3 February 1945.

<sup>144</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 14 November 1944, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>145</sup> Porter, 3 February 1945.

<sup>146</sup> Gellhorn, 23 June 1945, 28.

The point here is that for Gellhorn, as for other journalists, ‘looking’ was a matter of emotional self-discipline, something that she often had to force herself to do, frequently with traumatic consequences. The same is true of her tonal control. While admiring the ‘slow, careful and immensely quiet voice’ of the British Attorney-General at Nuremberg,<sup>147</sup> Gellhorn was also feeling, as she watched the defendants, ‘such outrage that it choked you’:<sup>148</sup>

Because of this unimposing gang [...] ten million soldiers, sailors and airmen and civilians are dead as victims of war, and twelve million men, women and children are dead in gas chambers and furnaces. In great common graves where they were shot, in the stockyards that were concentration camps, dead of hunger and disease and exhaustion, dead all over Europe. And all these deaths were horrible. What these men and their half-dozen deceased partners were able to do, no famines, no plagues, no acts of God ever did: They produced destruction as the world has never seen destruction.<sup>149</sup>

This is not (to say the least) the language of the impersonal, unfeeling observer, the journalist as mechanistic recorder. There is prejudice in the very fact that Gellhorn is, in assuming the defendants’ guilt, prejudging (albeit with good reason) the outcome of the trial. ‘Paths of Glory’ therefore suggests a latent fact about the controlled tone: that it must be deliberately assumed or learnt – a matter of conscious suppression of an instinctive response, rather in the manner of a doctor acquiring emotional distance. On this point, Second World War correspondent Iris Carpenter is enlightening:

The trait that anyone living in a front-line hospital would choose to borrow from the nurses, could he choose any he wanted to make the living easier, would be the way nurses can seemingly leave hospital in the hospital. [...] A blind drops in the mind over all they have left behind – or so it seems. It does not take many weeks of living in a hospital to find, however, that the blind does not shut the harrowing from a nurse’s mind any more than it would from anyone else’s however often she drops it. The strain tells – tells heavily and variously.<sup>150</sup>

Few of the hospital personnel, in fact, ‘succeeded in quite sealing themselves inside the chrysalis of complete detachment’.<sup>151</sup> Gellhorn’s own precise words indicate an act of will: ‘*I [...] turned myself into a walking tape recorder with eyes*’.<sup>152</sup>

<sup>147</sup> Gellhorn, 9 November 1946, 74.

<sup>148</sup> Gellhorn, 9 November 1946, 21.

<sup>149</sup> Gellhorn, 9 November 1946, 21.

<sup>150</sup> Carpenter, 50-1.

<sup>151</sup> Carpenter, 147.

<sup>152</sup> *FoW*, 44, my emphasis.

In this sense, control (emotional as well as tonal) can be seen as self-protective, a defence mechanism: Gellhorn wrote that she suspended thought and judgement ‘for the purposes of mental hygiene’.<sup>153</sup> Again, here is her account of the gas chambers in ‘Death of a Dutch Town’:

These twelve hundred Jews, old and young, men, women and children, were taken to a rather nice-looking building and told they could have showers. As they had lived in misery and filth for months, they were very happy. They were ordered to undress and leave their clothes outside; notably they were to leave their shoes. From vents which looked like air vents, the Germans pumped what they call ‘blue gas’ into the clean white-tiled bathrooms. It appears that this gas works faster on slightly humid naked bodies. In some few minutes, twelve hundred people were dead, but not before the SS man had heard them scream and had watched them die in what agony we cannot know. Then the shoes were all carefully sorted and sent back to Germany, and before the mass cremations, all gold fillings and gold teeth were removed from the corpses.<sup>154</sup>

This is rhetorically a highly complex piece, not least because its restrained matter-of-factness suggests – and thereby invokes outrage at – the matter-of-factness (as well as the fact) of the killings. Nonetheless, emotive words are very few. In the light of this, it is useful to compare with it another account Gellhorn gave of her reaction to the gas chambers, through the fictionalised figure of the journalist Mary Hallett (‘Marushka’) in her short story, ‘Till Death Us Do Part’:

They found her [Marushka] in bed in the dingy Hotel du Pré on the Left Bank. She was frightening to see, and babbled about the number of sacks of human ash to be used as fertilizer which you could hope to get in a good day’s work at the crematorium, and the month’s quota of female hair for mattresses which kept very steady, year after year, and how it was surprising the amount of gold you could collect from teeth, which of course had to be removed before the crematorium but would that be after the gas chamber or before?<sup>155</sup>

That Gellhorn could envisage a response bed-ridden and ‘babbling’ indicates that the calmness of the previous account was a deliberate textual strategy which took strenuous personal effort to achieve.<sup>156</sup> The point is that, just as the gaze falters, the tonal control slips:

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<sup>153</sup> *FoW*, 44.

<sup>154</sup> Gellhorn, 23 December 1944, 59.

<sup>155</sup> *Novellas*, 298.

<sup>156</sup> Gellhorn was not alone in this. Alan Moorehead’s account of Belsen contains the dispassionate sentence, ‘There were many forms lying on the earth partly covered in rags, but it was not possible to say whether they were alive or dead or simply in the process of dying’ (Alan Moorehead, 251). But later comes this: ‘it seems a pity to give way to the downright childishness of saying that all Germans are natural black-hearted fiends capable of murdering and torturing and starving people at the drop of a

indeed, paradoxically, it seems to be the very practice of tonal restraint which catalyses the emotional response. The following section looks at the points at which the ‘walking tape-recorder with eyes’ blinks, and is replaced by a very human presence. At the outset, it is worth quoting remarks Gellhorn made at a 1996 round-table discussion organised by the Freedom Forum European Centre:

The thing about objectivity absolutely fascinates me. The assumption being that the reporter is made of plastic or something of the sort, and has no reaction to anything.

You know, you’re supposed to see death and destruction and just regard that as if you have no opinion about it. I find that absolutely mad. I don’t see how any human being, male or female, cannot react to what it sees, and we react emotionally, not only intellectually, both.

I mean obviously sentimentality has to be avoided, but the idea that there is such a thing as total objectivity assumes that the human being has no feelings, has no reaction to anything and is totally cold to anything it sees, which I find impossible, I mean subhuman, not normal, so all they’re trying I suppose to have you do is not be totally on one side or the other, maybe that’s what they mean by objectivity.

But of course emotional reactions are valid. They’re valid in the reporter, they’re valid in the writing and they’re valid in the reader or the viewer, and it would seem to be very useful in fact to use them, to work on them in order to evoke in people sympathy, and sympathy is I suppose a subjective feeling.<sup>157</sup>

#### ‘BLINKS’

Gellhorn was ‘pessimistic that her reports would change policies,’ according to her brother, Alfred, ‘but she was passionate that “the record” be kept. [...] She also wanted her distress and disgust with the power crazed heads of government who instigated or sanctioned organized murder to be loudly heard.’<sup>158</sup> But in the course of maintaining the level tone necessary for the proper ‘keeping of the record’, Gellhorn’s ‘distress and disgust’ (she said of Munich, ‘I am so angry and so disgusted that I feel a little dazed’),<sup>159</sup> as well as her partisanship, on occasion show through. ‘Blinks’ such as this have at times been regarded as peculiarly feminine.<sup>160</sup> At the 1996 discussion mentioned above, BBC editor Fiona Murch

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hat’ (Alan Moorehead, 258) – of course, in the act of not giving way to the sentiment, Moorehead nevertheless expresses it. Iris Carpenter, despite vowing only to document ‘in the baldest statement of plainest fact’, nonetheless found herself giving a German hausfrau ‘a very full and brutal word-picture before I could regain my self-control’ (Carpenter, 303, 308).

<sup>157</sup> Freedom Forum European Centre, 4-5.

<sup>158</sup> Alfred Gellhorn, email to the author, 4 December 2003.

<sup>159</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, 19 October 1938, f. 1’.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Hemingway’s ‘Are ye maidens with your downcast eyes?’ (*SF*, preliminary pages), quoted above.

noted that ‘often women journalists don’t have the same resistance [as men] to something that is emotional’.<sup>161</sup> Others concurred with the perception. Kate Adie observed ‘an automatic suspicion that if women are working on a story, that you are going for the soft underbelly of the story and you have somehow come back in a ragged emotional state, unable to cope with the rigours of professional journalistic standards’.<sup>162</sup> Joan Hoey of the London International Exchange pointed out that ‘the humanisation of war reporting is called the feminisation of war reporting’,<sup>163</sup> while the journalist Mary Ann Fitzgerald argued that ‘women have more genetic compassion’.<sup>164</sup> The gendering of war reportage is discussed more fully in the next chapter but here it can be registered that tone itself has gender connotations.

Gellhorn’s belief that it was her ‘duty’, even ‘mission’,<sup>165</sup> to record meant that she agonised about what she produced, going over her work again and again.<sup>166</sup> This practice of intense re-writing was not, however, possible for her original *Collier’s* pieces, which had to be finished in a relatively short space of time, but only for her collected pieces, the linking sections in the collections and her fiction. It is in these latter incarnations that, the immediate context past, the impression is strongest that Gellhorn felt she was writing ‘history’,<sup>167</sup> for ‘the record’, and there are two tonal results. The first is a tendency to sentimentalise, the second to moralise.

*The Face of War* provides examples. On 18 February 1959, Gellhorn wrote to Bernard Berenson that she had finished the first draft: ‘now the rewriting will start’.<sup>168</sup> Six months previously, she had told him:

I have been doing a book [...] obsessed, sweating, haunted, and bowed daily over one’s typewriter. [...] I selected some 20 articles from all my war reporting (from

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<sup>161</sup> Freedom Forum European Centre, 3.

<sup>162</sup> Freedom Forum European Centre, 4.

<sup>163</sup> Freedom Forum European Centre, 6.

<sup>164</sup> Freedom Forum European Centre, 7.

<sup>165</sup> Caroline Moorehead, interview, 4 December 2003.

<sup>166</sup> Caroline Moorehead, interview, 4 December 2003.

<sup>167</sup> *SF*, 9.

<sup>168</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 18 February 1959, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

four different wars), tidied up the worst grammar, cut out the worst long-windedness, and wrote introductions to each war [...] I am calling this book 'The Face of War'.<sup>169</sup>

'Hacking away' at this task had taken her 'the last five or more months, but steadily and fiercely in the last six weeks'.<sup>170</sup> In her Introduction to the published (1959) edition, she stated that the collected articles were:

Reprinted as originally published except: where the grammar was so snarled as to be meaningless, I tidied it a bit; where hasty repetition of words became too irritating, I found some variations; where extraneous material or the long-windedness of those who write too fast was a real interference, I cut. As any reader will see, this was the lightest, quickest first-aid job.<sup>171</sup>

'The lightest, quickest first-aid job' is a something of an understatement: the variants between the original and collected articles run, in each case, into the hundreds. The 'rewriting', as Gellhorn's letters to Berenson suggest, was intense. The account of Dachau is a good example to focus on in detail as it occurs in original *Collier's* form (as 'Dachau: Experimental Murder'),<sup>172</sup> in *The Face of War* (as the more resonant synecdoche, 'Dachau') and in *Point of No Return*. Gellhorn herself stated that, in the collected piece, she 'inserted ten sentences'.<sup>173</sup> In fact, there are some 165 variants between this version and the original. Many of these are accidentals but there are also significant substantives.<sup>174</sup> Here, for example, is 'Dachau: Experimental Murder' on the crematoria:

We have all seen the dead like bundles lying on all the roads of half the earth, but nowhere was there anything like this.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 17 August 1958, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>170</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 17 August 1958, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>171</sup> *FoW*, 245.

<sup>172</sup> Gellhorn, 23 June 1945, 30.

<sup>173</sup> *FoW*, 245.

<sup>174</sup> The following are some of the additions in 'Dachau': 'The Polish surgeon had only his four front upper teeth left, the others on both sides having been knocked out by a guard one day, because the guard felt like breaking teeth. This act did not seem a matter of surprise to the doctor or to anyone else. No brutality could surprise them any more. They were used to a systematic cruelty that had gone on, in this concentration camp, for twelve years.'; 'Now in the clean empty building a woman, alone in a cell, screamed for a long time on one terrible note, was silent for a moment, and screamed again. She had gone mad in the last few days; we came too late for her.'; 'What had killed most of these people was hunger; starvation was simply routine. A man worked those incredible hours on that diet and lived in such overcrowding as cannot be imagined, the bodies packed into airless barracks, and woke each morning weaker, waiting for his death.'; 'The same half-naked skeleton who had been dug out of the death train shuffled back into the doctor's office. He said something in Polish; his voice was no stronger than a whisper. The Polish doctor clapped his hands gently and said, "Bravo." I asked what they were talking about.' (*FoW*, 237, 238-9, 239, 241-2).

<sup>175</sup> Gellhorn, 23 June 1945, 30.

In 'Dachau', this becomes:

We have all seen a great deal now; we have seen too many wars and too much violent dying; we have seen hospitals, bloody and messy as butcher shops; we have seen the dead like bundles lying on all the roads of half the earth. But nowhere was there anything like this.<sup>176</sup>

In *Point of No Return*, the same pile of bodies are described thus:

On the right was the pile of prisoners, naked, putrefying, yellow skeletons. There was just enough flesh to melt and make this smell, in the sun. The pile was as high as a small house. On the left was a mound of S.S. troopers, dressed in their black uniforms, and looking like giants compared to the faggots of the Dachau dead.<sup>177</sup>

And here is Jacob Levy's considered reaction to them:

He thought the war was a good thing and he would write and tell Poppa so. They did not make the war because of Dachau; if they had, he would certainly have heard about Dachau long ago. But in the end, they reached it. And the S.S. guards were there, piled up dead in a mound; and their dogs were dead. So the war was a good thing.<sup>178</sup>

The simple declarative sentence of the original version becomes, in the collected piece, something rhetorical: the anaphoric accumulation (the repeated 'we have seen...') creates, even in a few clauses, an emotional crescendo effect. Reserve and rectitude turn into their opposites: more 'writerly', the impact is paradoxically less sure. Notably, both versions are 'ekphrastic' in that they connote an absent image: the reader is told what the bodies are *not* like. In the novel, by contrast, the scene is given concrete particulars: colours, smells, dimensions. But the last-quoted passage, Jacob's definitive comment on Dachau, has a hollow ring. A carefully contrived simplicity ('the war was a good thing') verges on the simplistic, even sentimental.

The linking passages in *The Face of War* also contain writing of which the following is typical:

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<sup>176</sup> *FoW*, 240.

<sup>177</sup> *WoA*, 284.

<sup>178</sup> *WoA*, 304-5.

Before any city was cleaned of its rubble and made whole, before the remnants of a tortured people found their home in Israel, before the last already forgotten burned pilot had suffered the last stitching skin graft, the human race was busy hating and fearing again, and growing new cancers. [...] If we will not learn, is there any hope for us? The answer is that we cannot help hoping; we do not control it. We are given a supply which only runs out in death, perhaps because each one of us knows love, the source of hope.<sup>179</sup>

Gellhorn seems here to have adopted the role of public conscience, even seer: in this persona, a certain pomposity begins to creep into her statements. She acknowledged as much herself, writing to Bernard Berenson that *The Face of War* would not ‘please anyone’, that the links were ‘heavy, angry, moralizing introductions, which will bore, irritate and embarrass everyone.’<sup>180</sup> ‘It is hard,’ she confessed in the general introduction, ‘not to sound like a harangue, not to boom or squeak.’<sup>181</sup> This public voice, moreover – monitory, counselling – has the effect of cancelling out authorial effacement. In place of the dispassionate, unflinching, all-seeing ‘walking tape recorder with eyes’, is the human reporter, disgusted and enraged by what she has seen. The next section provides a brief introduction to the figure of the eye-witness, crucial to war literature and to Gellhorn’s work in particular.

## THE EYE-WITNESS

The implied contract between eye-witness reporter and reader (‘you can believe it because I saw it happen’) is one of enormous potency. In English Law, it underpins the type of evidence known as ‘direct testimony’ (as opposed to hearsay): ‘a witness’s statement that he perceived a fact in issue [...] with one of his five senses, [i]n other words, [...] testimony relating to facts of which the witness has or claims to have personal or first-hand knowledge.’<sup>182</sup> The term ‘witness’ itself is pleasingly polysemic. The OED gives various definitions: ‘attestation’; ‘the action or condition of being an observer of an event’; ‘testimony’; ‘evidential mark or sign, a token’; ‘a manuscript or early version which is regarded as evidence of authority for the text’ (a kind of copy-text – Martha Gellhorn’s on-

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<sup>179</sup> *FoW*, 243-4.

<sup>180</sup> Gellhorn, 17 August 1958, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>181</sup> *FoW*, 5.

<sup>182</sup> Keane, 8.

the-spot scribblings, perhaps, as opposed to the versions of her articles which appear in her collections?); ‘one who testifies for Christ [...] esp[ecially] by death, a martyr’; ‘to be present as an observer at; to see with one’s own eyes’.<sup>183</sup> The multiplying connotations are of authenticity, presence, truth, proof, verification. In religious terms, ‘to witness’ signifies, *inter alia*, to bear faith, particularly by martyrdom, but the earliest biblical ‘witnesses’ were stones used to demarcate territory<sup>184</sup> – a nice instance of a witness creating, as well as observing, the subject space. Whether the witness can be an actor-in-events is debatable, but in every sense, the presence of the figure as onlooker is assumed.

The image and aesthetic were present in Depression literature – Agee described himself as a ‘bodyless eye’<sup>185</sup> – in wartime, it became more vital than ever. Gellhorn’s *Collier’s* predecessor, Frederick Palmer, chose as the epigraph to his war memoirs, *With My Own Eyes* (1934), Plautus’s ‘one eyewitness is worth ten hearsays’,<sup>186</sup> while in *his* memoirs, *More Than Meets the Eye* (1961), *Collier’s* photographer Carl Mydans noted, ‘the camera must always be there.’<sup>187</sup> In *Eyewitness in Abyssinia* (1937), *New York Times* reporter Herbert Matthews stated:

I know that the accounts of the battles which I sent my paper were correct, for the simple reason that I saw [...] them with my own eyes.<sup>188</sup>

This was corroborated by Joris Ivens in *The Camera and I* (1969), ‘Matthews never believed anything he had not seen with his own eyes.’<sup>189</sup> Indeed, such was the accepted importance of the eye-witness account, that it even gained satirical treatment in Evelyn Waugh’s *Scoop*:

‘Why, once Jakes went out to cover a revolution in one of the Balkan capitals. He overslept in his carriage, woke up at the wrong station, didn’t know any different, got out, went straight to a hotel, and cabled off a thousand word story about barricades in the streets, flaming churches, machine guns answering the rattle of his typewriter as he wrote, a dead child, like a broken doll, spread-eagled in the deserted roadway below his window – *you* know. [...] in less that a week there *was* an honest-to-God revolution underway, just as Jakes had said.’<sup>190</sup>

<sup>183</sup> As noun: 2a, 2b, 2d, 7, 7c, 8a; as verb: 4.

<sup>184</sup> Genesis 31: 45-52.

<sup>185</sup> Agee, 187.

<sup>186</sup> Palmer, v. In *What Mad Pursuit*, Charis Day’s fellow students are ‘cribbing Plautus’ (*WMP*, p. 7).

<sup>187</sup> Mydans, 8.

<sup>188</sup> Herbert Matthews, 1937, 15.

<sup>189</sup> Ivens, 112.

<sup>190</sup> Waugh, 70.

When reluctant reporter-to-be William Boot asks his editor if going to war-torn Ishmaelia ‘mightn’t be rather dangerous?’, he is told:

‘You’ll be surprised to find how far the war correspondents keep from the fighting. Why Hitchcock reported the whole Abyssinian campaign from Asmara and gave us some of the most colourful, eye-witness stuff we ever printed.’<sup>191</sup>

But these comic examples make a serious point: eye-witness testimony is a construct, or set of stylistic conventions, as much as an epistemology, even when not assembled with such blatant artificiality as this. In *The World Wars Through the Female Gaze*, Jean Gallagher theorises a number of ways of seeing and being seen in conflict: the ‘passive spectator[ship] accorded to most female witnesses’; the ‘specularising male gaze’; the ‘unified subject’ of totalitarian propaganda.<sup>192</sup> For her, the ‘female gaze’ disrupts oppressive attempts to impose vision through being ‘open to rifts, schisms and difference’.<sup>193</sup> Gallagher’s thesis of the female gaze is not entirely convincing: as examples quoted above show, male viewers also on occasion looked away. Nonetheless, Gallagher is right to emphasise the politicised nature of the eye-witness. The ‘seeing is believing’ trope retains great force in war literature. The next chapter considers the significance, in field and text, of ‘being there’ to see.

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<sup>191</sup> Waugh, 32.

<sup>192</sup> Gallagher, 3, 21, 81.

<sup>193</sup> Gallagher, 81.

## CHAPTER 4

### BEING THERE: THE FIELD

‘Perhaps,’ mused Martha Gellhorn, ‘it is impossible to understand anything truly unless it happened to you, yourself’.<sup>1</sup> American war reporting up to the brink of World War Two was a history of developments in communications technology aimed at getting the correspondent (and hence the reader) ever closer to the action. The ethics and aesthetics of the New Reportage demanded that the reporter gain personal experience of the subject-matter. Philip Rahv, in a 1940 article, ‘The Cult of Experience in American Writing’, found the difference between European and American ‘left-wing’ writing of the ’30s, to be that the former comprised the expression of ‘political ideas and beliefs’ while the latter comprised ‘class war as an experience’.<sup>2</sup> ‘Being There’ was firmly established as the *sine qua non*. At the same time, it also raised the paradox with which the previous chapter concluded: the subjectivity of presence undermines the ‘objectivity’ of empirical verification. Might it not, indeed, be possible to get *too* close?

The question helps to introduce the themes to be treated in this chapter and the next. ‘Being There’ is not just a matter of presence. It is also a question of *where*, precisely, to be, and how to get there, when to get there, and how close or distant (geographically, physically, politically, emotionally) to place oneself in relation to the subject when one has arrived. Discussion of these complex theoretical points is, of necessity, lengthy, and Martha Gellhorn’s own positioning in the field is reserved for the final section.

#### PRESENCE

A history of being there is coterminous with war recording. Given that this stretches over several millennia, only the briefest of examples can be given here, with the caveat that, while presence has always been a priority, the actual experience of access remains specific to each conflict. Thucydides, Xenophon and Polybius were all generals; Arrian and Aeschylus

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<sup>1</sup> Gellhorn, 6 May 1944, 65.

<sup>2</sup> Rahv, 419.

had military experience. In his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides gives an account of his methodology:

With regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war I have made it a principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have described or else I heard of them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible.<sup>3</sup>

Shakespeare's war reporters – those figures who bring news of the trend of fortunes on the battlefield – enhance the status of their accounts by vouching for their presence at the scene which they describe.<sup>4</sup> In *II Henry IV*, for instance, Northumberland, hearing the (erroneous) information from Bardolph that the rebels' side is winning, asks anxiously: 'How is this deriv'd? Saw you the field?'<sup>5</sup> A 'certain lord, neat, and trimly dress'd', 'perfumed like a milliner' and holding his snuff-box to his nose to protect himself from the smell of the corpses,<sup>6</sup> is, when he attempts to interview Hotspur, given short shrift:

He questioned me: amongst the rest, demanded  
My prisoners in your Majesty's behalf.  
I then, all smarting with my wounds being cold,  
To be so pest' red with a popinjay,  
Out of my grief and my impatience  
Answer'd neglectingly I know not what –  
He should, or he should not – for he made me mad  
To see him shine so brisk, and smell so sweet,  
And talk so like a waiting-gentlewoman  
Of guns, and drums, and wounds.<sup>7</sup>

This is also significant in terms of the gendering of war reporting. Here, the figure who reports on, but does not participate in, combat is effeminate, a 'waiting-gentlewoman', specifically contrasted with 'many a good tall fellow'.<sup>8</sup>

In the twentieth century, titles of journalists' memoirs from the First and Second World Wars continue to underline the great premium attached to being there: Richard Harding Davis, *With the Allies* (1915), *With the French in France & Salonika* (1916); Frank

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<sup>3</sup> Thucydides, 24.

<sup>4</sup> Sheppard, 161.

<sup>5</sup> I.i.23-24.

<sup>6</sup> *I Henry IV*, I.iii.33, 36.

<sup>7</sup> *I Henry IV*, I.iii.47-56.

<sup>8</sup> I.iii.62.

Palmer Sibley, *With the Yankee Division in France* (1919); Arthur Ruhl, *Antwerp to Gallipoli: A Year of War on Many Fronts – and Behind Them* (1916); Granville Fortescue, *At the Front with Three Armies. My Adventures in the Great War* (1914); Harold Ashton, *First from the Front* (1914); Charles H. Grasty, *Flashes from the Front* (1914); Frederick Palmer, *With My Own Eyes: A Personal History of Battle Years* (1934); M. N. Jeffries, *Front Everywhere* (1935); Herbert Matthews, *Eyewitness in Abyssinia. With Marshal Badoglio's Forces to Addis Ababa* (1937); and Ed Murrow, *This is London* (1941). Statements and hard evidence of presence pepper these accounts and are invariably used as advertising material by publishers. Frederick Palmer's *With My Own Eyes* features reproductions of a letter from Theodore Roosevelt by way of a 'passport' and of Palmer's 'credentials with the British Army'.<sup>9</sup> The end-pages of the book contain further authenticating detail:

America's most famous War Correspondent [...] saw many wars before the World War [i.e. World War I] – the Greco-Turkish in 1895, he was with the American troops throughout the Philippine conflict; saw the Spanish-American War; accompanied the Allied contingents [...] during the Boxer rebellion; endured the hardships and dangers of the unwelcome observer during the Russo-Japanese war; and watched, understood and described that usually insoluble mystery – warfare in the Balkans.<sup>10</sup>

The message is clear: experiencing war confers the authority to describe war: in Palmer's case, it also conferred the authority to censor war. Sixty years later, the back cover blurb of BBC reporter John Simpson's memoirs, *Strange Places, Questionable People* (1998), was making similar claims: 'from being punched in the stomach by Harold Wilson [...], to escaping summary execution in Beirut, flying into Teheran with the returning Ayatollah Khomeini, and narrowly avoiding entrapment by a beautiful Czech secret agent, John Simpson has had an astonishingly eventful career.'<sup>11</sup>

Presence continues to be significant: indeed 'being there' has recently itself become the subject of intense reporting (or 'meta-reporting'?) and a heavily politicised issue. The

<sup>9</sup> The first chapter of Gellhorn's *Travels with Myself and Another* is entitled 'Credentials' and Gellhorn claims, 'after presenting my credentials [...] you will believe that I know whereof I speak' (*TMA*, 12).

<sup>10</sup> Palmer, end-pages viii.

<sup>11</sup> Simpson, back cover.

Second Gulf War inaugurated the term, if not the concept, ‘embedded’ journalism, with the US Armed Forces announcing on 3 March 2003:

About 800 members of the press – including 20 percent from non-U.S. media – will be assigned slots in specific ground units, aviation units, ships and headquarters throughout the combat zone. They will remain ‘embedded’ with those units as long as they wish and are supposed to have what these Pentagon ground rules described as ‘minimally restrictive’ access to U.S. forces throughout their day.<sup>12</sup>

Eventually, out of the 1,000 journalists covering the war, around 150 were embedded with the British forces and 660 with the Americans.<sup>13</sup> For some commentators, the result was that ‘the coverage of certain aspects of the war was more detailed, because of the privileged access that these journalists were granted’<sup>14</sup> but this is disputed by, among others, John Simpson. Simpson preferred not to be an ‘embed’, noting that those embedded ‘were beholden to those they had to report on’.<sup>15</sup> But *not* being embedded had other consequences. Nelson and Rose report:

The Pentagon, in several meetings with editors, warned of the safety risks in covering a war. ‘The battlefield’s a dangerous place, and it’s going to be a dangerous place even embedded with our forces. It will be even a more dangerous place, though, for reporters that are out there not in an embedded status,’ said deputy Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman at a late February briefing.<sup>16</sup>

The overtones are that non-embeds might actually be targeted by *coalition* forces. Many saw embedding as a means for the military to control the media, hence its institution and encouragement by the Pentagon.

So far, consideration of the importance of ‘being there’ has been confined to the writer of journalism about war. But the same credentials have been demanded of the fiction-writer, too. Ernest Hemingway, for example, wrote to Edmund Wilson on 25 November 1923, criticising Willa Cather’s *One of Ours* (1922) for its lack of first-hand knowledge of combat. According to Hemingway, Cather had derived her final scene in the trenches from

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<sup>12</sup> Leaper, Löwstedt and Madhoun, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Nelson and Rose, B1.

<sup>14</sup> Leaper, Löwstedt and Madhoun, 76.

<sup>15</sup> Simpson, ‘War Reporting: the New Vulnerability’, lecture given on 27 June 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Nelson and Rose, B10.

D. W. Griffiths's *Birth of a Nation*: 'I identified episode after episode. Catherized. Poor woman she had to get her experience from somewhere.'<sup>17</sup> Later, in the notorious *New Yorker* profile by Lillian Ross:

He mentioned a war writer who, he said was apparently thinking of himself as a Tolstoy who'd be able to play Tolstoy only on the Bryn Mawr field-hockey team. 'He never hears a shot fired in anger, and he sets out to beat who? Tolstoy, an artillery officer who fought at Sevastopol, who knew his stuff, who was a hell of a man anywhere.'<sup>18</sup>

Presence combined with 'invention', Hemingway explained in *Men at War* (1942), produced the highest form of truth:

A writer's job is to tell the truth. His statement of fidelity to the truth should be so high that his invention, out of his experience, should produce a truer account than anything factual can be.<sup>19</sup>

But later, in *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), Colonel Cantwell remarks that 'almost any liar writes more convincingly than a man who was there'.<sup>20</sup> Jacqueline Orsagh interprets this as a slur on Gellhorn,<sup>21</sup> Hemingway's reasoning being that she wrote so well about war, she couldn't have been there. Even the inconsistencies reveal the importance of the link between presence and evocation.

'Being there', furthermore, has been applied as a litmus-test not only to journalism and fiction about war, but to *criticism* of those genres, as an exchange between Paul Fussell, Michael Walzer and Ian Clark makes clear. In his essay, 'Thank God for the Atom Bomb', Fussell, himself a Second World War veteran, argues that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a necessary and welcome end to the appalling experiences of hundreds of thousands of combatants. In 'An Exchange of Views', printed in the same collection, Walzer disagrees: 'with Fussell, seemingly there are no limits at all [...] the bombing was an act of

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<sup>17</sup> Hemingway, 1981, 105.

<sup>18</sup> Ross, 41. It is not known which writer is being referred to here. The reference to the *Bryn Mawr* hockey team might be a jibe at Gellhorn, who attended the women's college.

<sup>19</sup> Hemingway, 1966b, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Hemingway, 1996a, 128

<sup>21</sup> Orsagh, 196.

terrorism'.<sup>22</sup> But it is Fussell's contention that the views of those who did not fight themselves are of an inferior order of validity. 'Pace Fussell,' says Clark, entering the argument, 'moral judgement is not tied to direct experience. The gulf can be bridged by imagination and empathy'.<sup>23</sup> In his introduction to E. B. Sledge's *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* (1990), Fussell reprises his theme. Sledge's account is worthy because he knows that bullets 'snap' whereas 'authors and screenwriters think they whine'. 'It is artillery shells that whine,' adds Fussell, 'while mortar shells whisper faintly'.<sup>24</sup> These additional details, not to be found in Sledge's description, make the point – which is not so much that Sledge knows war but that *Fussell*, a veteran like Sledge, does, and, by implication, is qualified to judge accounts of it. It is in this context that a distinguished writer on war like John Keegan feels obliged to open his *The Face of War* (1976):

I have not been in a battle; nor near one, nor heard one from afar, nor seen the aftermath [...] And I grow increasingly convinced that I have very little idea of what a battle can be like.<sup>25</sup>

If 'being there' is important, it is even more important to be there *first*. The many legendary instances of priority trumping presence (or newsworthiness trumping epistemics) include Marguerite Duras reaching Dachau for the *Herald Tribune* before the American troops arrived; Doon Campbell getting first to the Normandy beaches for Reuters; Max Hastings of the *Evening Standard* walking first into Port Stanley in 1982; Bob McKeown making the first live broadcast (for CBS) from Kuwait City in 1991; Tim Marshall (Sky News) welcoming British forces into Pristina in 1999; and, in the Afghan War of 2002, John Simpson 'liberating' Kabul.<sup>26</sup> Journalists' memoirs frequently boast of scoops (a combination

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<sup>22</sup> Fussell, 1990b, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Ian Clark, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Fussell, 1990a, xviii.

<sup>25</sup> Keegan, 15.

<sup>26</sup> Burkeman, 3.

of getting there first and getting the news back first): Sefton Delmer, for instance, records his triumph in sending ‘the first uncensored dispatch from a London staff reporter to cover the [Spanish] revolutionary scene’ and notes that ‘my report splashed on the front page was the first dispatch to be published by any British paper from the armies advancing on Madrid’.<sup>27</sup> To anticipate later discussion on the role of female war reporters, it is worth noting that ‘women’s firsts’ form a sub-genre of this phenomenon: Iris Carpenter remarks that she was ‘one of the first women to land’ on the first air-strip established by the Allies in France.<sup>28</sup> Such ‘firsts’ themselves become the ‘peg’ or ‘frame’<sup>29</sup> for the news material, transforming the reporter into the story, a siting discussed in further detail later.

Why is it particularly important to ‘be there’ at war? Eric J. Leed has suggested that battle is ‘learned’ through ‘physical immersion’: knowledge of war is, like sexual knowledge (or, more mundanely, the ability to ride a bicycle), ‘acquired in the body’.<sup>30</sup> To write about war, therefore, becomes a right to be earned: as Jonathan Shay puts it, if a person is willing to experience ‘some of the rage, terror, grief etc.’, ‘the combatant is less likely to shout, “You weren’t there, so shut up!”’<sup>31</sup> This right may even be experienced as an obligation: John Simpson claims that journalists ‘wanted to be there [in Iraq] as they felt it was their duty – this mattered more than their personal safety.’<sup>32</sup> According to Lawrence Tritle, there is a gulf of ‘embarrassment’ between those with combat experience and those without, accounting for the ‘cryptic and elusive language’ of relations of war which tells the listener that ‘since you didn’t participate [...] you must remain outside.’<sup>33</sup> This attitude, of course, serves to exclude

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<sup>27</sup> Delmer, 1961, 268, 275.

<sup>28</sup> Carpenter, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Norris, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Leed, 74.

<sup>31</sup> Shay, 189.

<sup>32</sup> Simpson, ‘War Reporting: the New Vulnerability’, lecture given on 27 June 2003.

<sup>33</sup> Tritle, 107, 127.

women (traditionally non-combatants) from the art of true war representation. 'Being there' therefore becomes mystic knowledge, even myth. It can, however, be challenged: the opposing argument is that the gap is fertile for creative exploitation. André Malraux learned of the fighting in Barcelona and Toledo from a distance, Victor Serge was never in Spain after 1917, Arturo Barea saw no combat, Picasso painted *Guernica* in Paris.<sup>34</sup> Stephen Spender commented on the last:

*Guernica* is in no sense reportage; it is not a picture of some horror which Picasso has seen and has been through himself. It is the picture of a horror reported in the newspapers, of which he has read accounts and perhaps seen photographs.

This kind of second-hand experience, from the newspapers, the news-reel, the wireless, is one of the dominating realities of our time. The many people who are not in direct contact with the disasters falling on civilization live in a waking nightmare of second-hand experience because the person overtaken by a disaster has at least a more limited vision than the camera's wide, cold, recording eye, and at least has no opportunity to imagine horrors worse than what he is seeing and experiencing.<sup>35</sup>

The art of *not* being there, so conceived, might actually bring the viewer or reader closer to the essence of the experience. Supporting this argument are the various (still faint) questionings of the authenticity of the survivor's viewpoint. To survive is itself an atypical combat experience: as John Limon points out, 'war is war only if it generates non-survivors'.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, as Robert Graves observed (perhaps defensively) in a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* on 26 June 1930:

But what is meant by the *truthfulness* of war books? [...] I would even paradoxically say that the memoirs of a man who went through some of the worst experiences of trench warfare are not truthful if they do not contain a high proportion of falsities. High explosive barrages will make a temporary liar or visionary of anyone.<sup>37</sup>

Evelyn Hinz notes that Ovid's biological theory of genesis 'locates the agonistic principle within the human psyche', giving this as the explanation of why those who have never been in war can write about it 'so well'.<sup>38</sup> The point here is not to undermine – or underestimate – the

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<sup>34</sup> Craig, 261-2.

<sup>35</sup> Spender, 67-8.

<sup>36</sup> Limon, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Graves, 534.

<sup>38</sup> Hinz, ix.

importance of ‘being there’ but to stress that ‘presence’ covers a continuum of engagement, including the imaginative.

### **BEING WHERE?**

So, if the war recorder must ‘be there’, where (or what) exactly is ‘there’? The answer seems to be ‘the front’, a word in itself suggestive of priority and precedence. The OED gives the definition ‘the foremost line or part of an army or battalion’,<sup>39</sup> but this is problematic. A line, conventionally figured, is without depth. It is possible to be in front of it (though this would involve the paradox of being in front of the front) or behind it but, unless a member of it, not ‘within’ it. Fortunately, the OED provides another, more helpful definition, a ‘wider [in two senses] sense’: ‘the foremost part of the ground occupied, or in wider sense, of the field of operations; the part next the enemy’.<sup>40</sup> Thus re-configured (or widened), the front becomes, not a line, but a space – a space, indeed, with strategic and political significance (‘next the enemy’), capable of being demarcated. Neatly enough, this must be a front with a back.<sup>41</sup>

‘The front’, the locus of ‘being there’, is indeed a highly charged space, at once shifting and exclusive, delimited and self-regulating. In the light of these properties, an appropriate term for its construction and tendencies is ‘pastoral’. The term, obviously, is intended here in a radical sense: the front is no Arcadia. Nonetheless, it is ‘a space apart’ (a literal enclosure – battle, for the most part, takes place outdoors), a place where things are different. As such, it resembles the type of pastoral setting (often a wood) which is set against ‘official’ society (often the court) and which functions as a critique of it.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, given that the front is as much experiential as physical, Helen Cooper’s formulation of pastoral as ‘a mode of thought’<sup>43</sup> well describes it. As the geographer J. Nicholas Entrikin explains, ‘the geographical concept of place refers to an areal [sic] context of events, objects

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<sup>39</sup> II.5.a.

<sup>40</sup> II.5.c.

<sup>41</sup> Or, at least, a ‘rear’.

<sup>42</sup> As adumbrated by Gifford, 24.

<sup>43</sup> Helen Cooper, 1977, 2.

and actions, including natural elements and human constructions, both material and ideal [...] both a centre of meaning and the external context of our actions'.<sup>44</sup>

It is in, and in relation to, this 'place', the front, that the war reporter sites himself or herself. It is therefore possible to see the reportorial figure as, like the shepherd,<sup>45</sup> both itinerant and liminal – constructions which will be examined later. Mary Borden, a First World War nurse and writer of war sketches, used the apt term 'forbidden zone' for her writings because:

The strip of land immediately behind the zone of fire where I was stationed went by that name in the French Army. We were moved up and down inside it; our hospital unit was shifted from Flanders to the Somme, then to Champagne, and then back again to Belgium, but we never left 'La Zone Interdite'.<sup>46</sup>

As this suggests, the 'front' is a shifting rather than a stable concept or experience. It is also, crucially, a gendered space. Daphne Spain expands the concept: for her, 'women and men are spatially segregated in ways that reduce women's access to knowledge and therefore reinforce their lower status'.<sup>47</sup> Spain is here discussing the layout of American colleges but the idea applies to war in general and the Second World War in particular: excluded from the combat zone, women lack knowledge of it – to their obvious detriment as journalists. The next section considers the various means by which women did gain access to this space.

### THE GENDERING OF GETTING THERE

The gendering of war is ancient but not absolute. The idea that Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus (or that fighting is a natural male activity, domesticity a female) is paradigmatic<sup>48</sup> but, as Cooper, Munich and Squier point out, obscures the real complexity of the issue, overlooking both female aggressiveness and male tendencies to non-aggression.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Entrikin, 6-7.

<sup>45</sup> See Marx, 43.

<sup>46</sup> Borden, preliminary pages, unpaginated.

<sup>47</sup> Spain, 3.

<sup>48</sup> The sociologist Joshua S. Goldstein argues that the fact that war is, cross-culturally, 'masculinely gendered' is due only in small part to minor biological differences: for the most part, it is caused by the cultural moulding of tough, brave men, who feminise their enemies to encode domination (Goldstein, 406).

<sup>49</sup> Cooper, Munich and Squier, 1989b, xiii, and Cooper, Munich and Squier, 1989a, 10.

There are recorded instances since the seventeenth century of individual women becoming soldiers, most often disguising their sex in masculine attire.<sup>50</sup> DeAnne Blanton and Lauren M. Cook show that over 250 women fought in the American Civil War, though their service ‘did not affect the outcome of battles [or] [...] alter the course of the war’.<sup>51</sup> What changed the situation was the increasing regimentation both of the military and of battle: once the field had been ‘colourful and confusing’,<sup>52</sup> but by the nineteenth century there were uniforms and hence uniformity.<sup>53</sup> Disguising one’s sex was accordingly more difficult. Women were edged off the field.

Margaret and Patrice Higonnet propose the model of the ‘double helix’ to illustrate the ‘persistent system of gender relations’ which, in modern warfare, remains a ‘structure of subordination’.<sup>54</sup> The conceit is that, with women occupying one ‘strip’ of the helix and men the other, however high women ascend, their standing will always be considered inferior to men’s. If women move into the factories when male factory workers move into the battle zones, this thesis therefore runs, factory work is re-configured as ancillary. The double helix effect may account for the connection made by the time of the First World War between anti-militarism and feminism: writing in 1915, C. K. Ogden and Mary Sargent Florence considered that ‘war [...] has kept women in perpetual subjection’ as it ‘creates a nucleus of exclusively male professions’.<sup>55</sup> For some feminists, the question was therefore whether women should accept male-defined support roles (the ‘nurturers of warriors’), given that this was a species of subjection.<sup>56</sup> It was in this vein that Virginia Woolf was to express admiration, in *Three Guineas* (1938), for a woman who declared that she would not even ‘so much as darn a sock’ to help the war effort.<sup>57</sup> Other feminists, including Emmeline

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<sup>50</sup> See Adie, 2003b, chapter I.

<sup>51</sup> Blanton and Cook, 204.

<sup>52</sup> Adie, 2003b, 16.

<sup>53</sup> Adie, 2003b, 17.

<sup>54</sup> Higonnet and Higonnet, 34.

<sup>55</sup> Ogden and Florence, 57, 112.

<sup>56</sup> Kamester and Vellacott, 15.

<sup>57</sup> Woolf, 241-2.

Pankhurst, took the line that the opportunity to serve formed part of women's rights.<sup>58</sup> No one, however, went so far as to claim that such rights included that of taking up arms.<sup>59</sup>

The capacities in which women could get to see the front (or, at least, get near it) in the First and Second World Wars – as opposed to performing 'war work' outside the front – were, therefore, limited: the various branches of the auxiliary services, nursing, 'troop entertaining', prostitution.<sup>60</sup> Arthur Ruhl, reporter for *Collier's*, met a 'pale, Broadway tomboy sort of girl' on the ship on his way over to Europe on the outbreak of World War I:

'Listen here! [...] I'm going to see this thing – d'you know what I mean? – for what it'll do to me – *you* know – for its effect on my *mind!* [...] I don't mind things – I mean blood – *you* know – they don't affect me, and I've read about nursing – I've *prepared* for this! Now, I don't know how to go about it, but it seems to me that a woman who can – *you* know – go right with 'em – jolly 'em along – might be just what they'd want – d'you know what I mean?'<sup>61</sup>

Caroline Matthews, M.B., Ch.B., volunteered to serve at her own expense with the Serbian Field Army Unit. As her ship set sail, Matthews saw 'a fine manly group' of 'dockers and Tommies' on the quay,<sup>62</sup> and reflected:

Their fellow-countrywomen were sailing to a foreign land, midst the perils of War, for Britain's greater glory [...] We women could not give our lives for Britain in the same manner which is open to our brothers, but war brings more in its train than the carnage of battlefields [...] Thank God, we women can 'do our bit' – beneath the Red Cross – for the Crosses of St. George, St. Andrew, St. Patrick and St. David!<sup>63</sup>

Later, Matthews makes a further observation regarding women's roles in war: 'for once I was glad to be a woman. Had I been a man my life would have been of value to the Empire'.<sup>64</sup>

There are various positionings here, creating a somewhat confusing picture of the woman in war: both valuable and devalued (able to do something men cannot but only because their

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<sup>58</sup> Adie, 2003b, 60.

<sup>59</sup> Adie, 2003b, 63.

<sup>60</sup> It is not being suggested that women took up these roles solely as a form of sight-seeing, but 'seeing action' was at least one motivation. Incidentally, Gellhorn's fiction presents a number of these roles: the overwhelming majority of her women at war are correspondents, but Dorothy Brock in *Point of No Return* is in the American Red Cross, Daphne Rutherford in *Love Goes to Press* is a troop entertainer and Jessica de Camberges in *His Own Man* works in a refugee centre. A number of her female characters also provide sexual gratification to soldiers.

<sup>61</sup> Ruhl, 2.

<sup>62</sup> Caroline Matthews, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Caroline Matthews, 2-3.

<sup>64</sup> Caroline Matthews, 69.

lives are unimportant); at once 'free lance' (self-financing), partisan (working for the glory of Britain) and neutral (under the Red Cross).

It is significant that the unknown girl on Arthur Ruhl's ship and Caroline Matthews are healthcare workers. Sandra M. Gilbert's thesis with regard to the First World War is that women's roles, limited though they were, could actually be empowering. While the violence of conflict dehumanised and emasculated men (transforming them into the denizens of 'No Man's Land'), the women who tended them remained (for the most part) whole, healthy and strong.<sup>65</sup> Seen in this light, women's wartime occupations, far from 'support roles', were positions of dominance, rendering the war a 'festival of female misrule'.<sup>66</sup> This view is to some extent corroborated by Caroline Matthews: the women setting forth to war are clearly elevated in some way above the 'dockers and Tommies' who must remain on the quay. Yet it remains the case that these occupations were ancillary – and women who took men's jobs for the duration were paid less than the men they replaced had been.<sup>67</sup> Women were still not fighting at the front.

Gilbert argues that the dominance conferred by these roles was reversed in the Second World War, 'when the front became indistinguishable from the home front',<sup>68</sup> returning women to passive, supportive, domestic occupations.<sup>69</sup> There is some truth in this. Naomi Mitchison, who had worked as a nurse at St. Thomas' Hospital in the First World War,<sup>70</sup> spent the Second in Scotland writing a diary for the Mass-Observation Project. Told by the Local Defence Volunteers that women could act as fire-watchers and runners 'but it couldn't be official', Mitchison wrote, 'I feel I'm being frustrated all the time.'<sup>71</sup> Women's status in the Second World War was as complex as the myriad individual experiences it embraced but, overall, seems to have conformed to the 'double helix' model. In Britain, a women's reserve force, the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) was formed in 1938.<sup>72</sup> In

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<sup>65</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert, 1987, 233-4. This thesis is taken up in Gilbert and Gubar, 1989.

<sup>66</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert, 1987, 239.

<sup>67</sup> Longenbach, 101.

<sup>68</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert, 1987, 245.

<sup>69</sup> The argument is expanded on by Susan Gubar in Gilbert and Gubar, 1994, chapter 5.

<sup>70</sup> Sheridan, 16.

<sup>71</sup> Mitchison, 67-8, 85.

<sup>72</sup> Gwynne-Vaughan, 93.

1941, its members were given full military (but not combatant) status. The Secretary of State for War, Captain H. D. R. Margesson, warned the House of Commons:

Women will, of course, be employed only on work for which they have a special aptitude, but the House should know that such work includes duties at searchlight and gun stations.<sup>73</sup>

In May 1941, a bill to establish the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was introduced to Congress by Representative Edith Nourse Rogers.<sup>74</sup> A House Resolution of May 1942 created the WAAC with an authorised strength of 150,000.<sup>75</sup> American women were called up for 'essential work, nursing, or the armed services': 'they [...] served in war zones, flew planes, "manned" anti-aircraft guns and were dropped behind enemy lines as spies';<sup>76</sup> by the end of the war, 350,000 had served<sup>77</sup> and had received full military status when, in 1943, the WAAC was replaced by the Women's Army Corps (WAC).<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, they were not classified as combatants. The ack-ack girls could not actually fire the anti-aircraft guns.<sup>79</sup> The roles available to women, compared to men's, remained limited and ancillary.<sup>80</sup> As a Second World War song, sung to the tune of 'The Old Grey Mare', had it:

I don't wanna march in the Infantry,  
Ride in the Cavalry, shoot in the Artillery.  
I don't wanna fly over Germany.  
I just wanna be a WAAC.

We're the WAACs and every one a soldier,  
To class we go, no rifle on our shoulder,  
But we work to send a man who's bolder  
So we'll all go free.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Hansard, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, Vol. 370 (18 March – 10 April 1941) col. 1699.

<sup>74</sup> Rustad, 27.

<sup>75</sup> Rustad, 28.

<sup>76</sup> Sheldon, 127.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Burke, 127.

<sup>78</sup> Rustad, 28.

<sup>79</sup> Adie, 2003b, 134. Women members of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), still officially part of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY), were, however, parachuted into France and led bands of Maquis in guerrilla warfare and sabotage (Muir, 87).

<sup>80</sup> Sheldon, 274.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Burke, 129.

In 2004, women, though full members of the British and American armed forces, still do not fight in the front line: the debate as to whether they should be allowed to do so continues to rage.

In Martha Gellhorn's article 'Postcards from Italy', published in *Collier's* on 1 July 1944, three roles for women can be discerned. There is, of course, Gellhorn's own: that of journalist providing information about a particular theatre of combat (or, at least, about the conditions for its male players). The others are depicted in two photographs accompanying the piece. The first of these is captioned, 'USO shows in Italy are glory for the soldiers and as tough for the troupers as anything they've done. Here Janet Evans and Sgt. James Hearne do a turn' (*Fig. 1*).<sup>82</sup> In the photo, Sgt. Hearne and the unranked Janet Evans are dancing (the 'Hands, Knees and Boomps-a-Daisy?'): specifically, they are bumping their bottoms together. Hearne is in uniform while Evans is wearing what might be described as 'half-uniform': a military-style cap and jacket twinned with an extremely short flared skirt which she is witching up with one hand to reveal her knickers.

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<sup>82</sup> Gellhorn, 1 July 1944, 41.



*Fig. 1*

The second photo is captioned, 'In the tent hospitals the injured cheer one another up. True to the tradition, Lieut. Cordelia Cooks, first Army nurse to be wounded in Italy, tends an artilleryman' (*Fig. 2*).<sup>83</sup> The anonymous artilleryman is lying in bed while Lieut. Cooks takes his pulse. Though nursing is her profession, it is not clear why Lieut. Cooks should be taking

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<sup>83</sup> Gellhorn, 1 July 1944, 41.

a pulse while a patient herself. Indeed, her expression and the way her hand lies on his wrist suggest not so much a clinical procedure as a touch that is almost one of salvation.



*Fig. 2*

Significantly, these images are not mentioned in Gellhorn's text. What they silently reinforce are, of course, the stereotypes of women in combat: the text might be that of the woman as information-giver but the images are of the woman as nurturer and as provider of titillation.

### **‘That Most Horrific of all the Horrific Developments of Modern War’<sup>84</sup>**

In her pointedly-titled memoirs, *No Woman’s World* (1946), Iris Carpenter, correspondent for the North Atlantic Newspaper Alliance (NANA) and others, gives a clear idea of the restrictions faced by women reporters in the Second World War:

The British and American War Departments differed officially in their attitude toward that most horrific of all the horrific developments of modern war – the woman war correspondent. The British War Office, voicing the dictates of Monty, who regarded women in the field as bad luck, bad business, and something to be scotched vigorously as an enemy advance,<sup>85</sup> said flatly, ‘We will not tolerate them’.

[...] The Americans, on the other hand, admitted that ‘certain phases of war should be covered by women’. They issued them with uniforms, inoculations, the simulated rank of Captain, the handicap of military discipline, and the alleged status of a fully accredited correspondent. [...] It was generally conceded that sex could be a handicap, but had better not be, since ‘womanhood’ as such had no place on a battlefield.

[...] Most American commanders would concede, if forced to, that there were angles of the war picture which could better be written about by women. Some would even go so far as admitting that since a man’s viewpoint and a woman’s differed so widely, no picture could be complete unless it carried both. Invariably, however, they preferred to have it done on somebody else’s territory.<sup>86</sup>

The double helix effect is once again in play. The role of war correspondent is a special case: not a support occupation in the conventional sense, it is still distinct from the actual fighting and, within it, women tend to be subordinated, literally, in terms of where they are allowed to go, and professionally, in terms of the kind of stories they are allowed to write.<sup>87</sup> Daphne Spain’s concept of the gendered space as an exclusive and excluding locus of knowledge is particularly apt in a discussion of the access issues confronting women war journalists: the theme is one of a hierarchy of information, with women reporters for the most part restricted to the home and the factories – those ‘left behind’. In the 1930s, Gellhorn’s mentor Eleanor Roosevelt decreed that only women could cover her press conferences,<sup>88</sup> a notable fillip, but

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<sup>84</sup> Carpenter, 32.

<sup>85</sup> This ‘joke’ – women’s presence as form of hostility – recurs in war representation. Kate Adie quotes some promotional Navy literature (unsourced): ‘many a hard-bitten skipper has been shaken as no attack on the voyage has shaken him by the arrival of a trim Wren Boarding Officer’ (Adie, 2003b, 145).

<sup>86</sup> Carpenter, 32-3, 34.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Fashion, cookery and domestic economy, furniture, the toilet, and (less exclusively) weddings and what is called society news’, enumerated Arnold Bennett in *Journalism for Women* (1898) (Bennett, 88).

<sup>88</sup> Kay Mills, 1997, 43. Mrs. Roosevelt’s briefings were attended by *New York Herald Tribune* correspondent Ruth Gruber, who described them as ‘a gentle poke in the stomach to her husband for his all-male conferences’ (Gruber, 20).

otherwise women correspondents were barred from press briefings until late in the Second World War<sup>89</sup> and not officially allowed to go to the front. The consensus seems to be that they won overseas assignments only by agreeing to cover the ‘women’s angle’ for a growing female readership.<sup>90</sup> In the period under consideration, Aimee Larkin was still listed on the *Collier’s* masthead as the ‘Distaff’ editor but, judging from the adverts the magazine carried, Gellhorn was in fact writing for a fairly balanced mix of the sexes. ‘Visit Italy’ for example, is accompanied by ads for ‘Sani-Flush’ (‘I used to be a glamour girl. Well, go right on being all that’s lovely. Don’t do that offensive task by hand. Sani-Flush makes toilet bowls sparkling white the quick, easy, sanitary way’) and ‘Jones’ Haps’ (‘Men find comfort never known before, thanks to HAPS, the ONE-piece Shirt ’n’ Shorts! [...] Guaranteed the most convenient underwear you ever wore, or money back’).<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, as Gellhorn herself owned, the ‘woman’s angle’ was an ‘innocuous’ means to ‘get there’.<sup>92</sup>

‘Getting there’ has both ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ aspects:<sup>93</sup> in the Second World War it embraced crossing the Atlantic as well as gaining entry to messes and riding in fighter planes. Once in France, women reporters were confined to field hospitals which were, paradoxically, nearer to the enemy lines than the press camps occupied by the male journalists and therefore more dangerous.<sup>94</sup> ‘Why none of us ever got killed, hurt or taken prisoner,’ writes Carpenter, ‘no one will ever know.’<sup>95</sup> The women could not leave the hospitals without the Commanding Officer’s permission and only then with officer escort (the officers were unwilling to leave the hospitals); they had to beg for transport and ‘risk their necks’ by jeeping in forward zones without briefing.<sup>96</sup> Their copy had to be sent through the ordinary field-message service, arriving four to seven days after it was written and making no sense

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<sup>89</sup> Sorel, xiv.

<sup>90</sup> Kay Mills, 1997, 46; Edwards, 5.

<sup>91</sup> Gellhorn, 6 May 1944, 65.

<sup>92</sup> Freedom Forum European Centre, 3.

<sup>93</sup> To give a *reductio ad absurdum*: Kay Mills recalls being told by one hiring editor that her usefulness was limited: “‘I need someone I can send anywhere [...] what would you do if someone you were covering ducked into the mens’ room?’” (Mills, 1990, 1).

<sup>94</sup> Carpenter, 47.

<sup>95</sup> Carpenter, 47. Anne Sebba makes the point that men’s ‘clubbiness and booziness’ enable them to get stories, while women must set forth alone to gather material, thereby incurring greater danger (Sebba, 139).

<sup>96</sup> Carpenter, 47-8.

anyway as it was censored in London rather than in the field.<sup>97</sup> ‘Under such circumstances,’ Carpenter reflects, ‘it seemed obvious that the women correspondent nuisance would be short-lived. Hospital stories were no longer automatic column fillers. Trying to get anything else meant breaking the rules.’<sup>98</sup>

Nonetheless, despite these limitations, American and British women did attain the war zone – and often attained it first. As well as Carpenter and Gellhorn, Margaret Bourke-White (photographer for *Life*), Mary Marvin Breckenridge (of CBS), Lee Carson (International News Service), Ruth Cowan (Associated Press), Virginia Cowles (*Sunday Times*), Mary Welsh Hemingway (*Daily Express*), Marguerite Higgins (*New York Herald Tribune*), Helen Kirkpatrick (*Chicago Daily News*), Lee Miller (photographer for *Vogue*), Anne O’Hare McCormick (*New York Times*), Inez Robb (International News Service), Sigrid Schultz<sup>99</sup> (*Chicago Tribune*), Ann Stringer (UP), Dorothy Thompson (*New York Herald Tribune*) and Sonia Tomara (*New York Herald Tribune*) all reported from the European Theatre of Operations during World War Two.<sup>100</sup>

### MARTHA GELLHORN IN THE FIELD

What, then, was Martha Gellhorn’s relationship with that mystical zone, the front? The pattern is a curious one: a rhythm of intense engagement and absolute withdrawal. This

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<sup>97</sup> Carpenter, 48.

<sup>98</sup> Carpenter, 48.

<sup>99</sup> An article by Schultz, billed as ‘a famous correspondent, with many years’ experience in Germany’ (Schultz, 11) appeared in the same edition of *Collier’s* (25 March 1944) as Gellhorn’s ‘Hatchet Day for the Dutch’.

<sup>100</sup> Edwards, *passim*. <<http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/wcf/wcf005.html>> provides a list of accredited American women correspondents during World War II: they were not, of course, accredited to the *front*.

section concentrates on one particular issue of access, the rivalry between Gellhorn and Hemingway over witnessing D-Day, but first a brief overview of her Second World War career is in order.

Gellhorn left Spain in April 1938 and flew to Czechoslovakia, then under threat from the Nazis. She went on to cover the state of preparedness in Britain and France, then returned to Spain for the final winter of the Civil War. She then returned to the United States and Cuba for a year, finding the home outside Havana, La Finca Vigía, that she and Hemingway would share. Her next trip to Europe was in November 1939 to cover the Russo-Finnish conflict, returning to America at Christmas and Cuba in January 1940. There followed almost a year in the US and Cuba, during which, on 21 November 1940, she married Hemingway. Their 'honeymoon' took them to China, where they witnessed the Sino-Japanese War (January – April 1941), and Gellhorn went on alone to Singapore, Hong Kong and the Dutch East Indies, arriving back in the United States in May 1941. She then remained with Hemingway in Cuba until a six-week trip to observe the effects of the Second World War in the Caribbean and South America in the autumn of 1942. It was then back to Cuba and Hemingway until October 1943 when Gellhorn flew to Britain. She returned to the Finca in March 1944 to persuade Hemingway to join her in the European Theatre of Operations (ETO): they travelled separately back to Europe in the May. Gellhorn then remained in Europe for the rest of the war: reporting from England, and following the US armies through Normandy, Italy, liberated France, the Battle of the Bulge, Germany and the opening of the death camps.<sup>101</sup>

The two main periods of intense engagement with the conflict in the ETO therefore come at either end of the war: first Czechoslovakia and Finland, then the push from D-Day. It is worth quoting Gellhorn at length on her feelings during the period of withdrawal:

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<sup>101</sup> Orsagh, *passim*. This rhythm is made to seem deliberate in a *Vogue* article on Gellhorn: 'Mrs Ernest Hemingway [...] divides her life into two halves: one year spent quietly, novel writing; one year, dangerously, as staff correspondent for Collier's' ('News Makers and News Breakers', March 1944b, 43).

We were drinking daiquiris in a mingy little bar on the Mexican border and talking about cattle-raising in Arizona. A tattered Indian child came in, with some clutched newspapers and said, 'Con la guerra, la guerra' mildly. No one noticed him the first time round. Then the word caught, we called to the boy, he sold us a Mexican paper, damp with his own sweat. Smearly type announced Pearl Harbor and America's declaration of war. It seemed a dreadful way for a great nation to get into a war – blown in, with its fleet down.

Between that time and November 1943, when I finally reached England (filled with joy to be there, to be home in the world again), I was paralyzed by conflicting emotions: private duty, public disgust and a longing to forget both and join those who were suffering the war. It is too hard to sit on the outside and watch what you can neither help nor change; it is far easier to close your eyes and your mind and jump into the general misery, where you have almost no choices left, but a lot of splendid company.<sup>102</sup>

Gellhorn here uses the word 'caught' to express the claims of war, a choice which suggests a certain inescapability about her attraction. The word 'paralyzed' is also significant. What Gellhorn is describing is a personal 'lull', analogous to 'lulls' at large. The 'lull' is an interlude in the midst of conflict (or between conflicts), a temporary cessation of hostilities, characterised both by quiescence and by anxiegenic suspense ('when will things start up again?'). As such, it is a charged temporal space in the way that 'the front' is a charged physical space: this time, a space of tensely suspended animation. Indeed, Henry Green, in his short story 'The Lull' (1943), which concerns London firemen waiting for the Blitz to resume, uses this very word: the men 'are passing through a period which may be compared with the experience of changing fast trains' as an unseen approach 'keeps them *suspended*'.<sup>103</sup> The experience is well summed up in Gellhorn's word 'caught' – incidentally, the title of a 1943 novel by Green, again concerning the London Auxiliary Fire Service and exploring different states of capture.<sup>104</sup>

The lull, the 'meantime', is a space aside from war. It is reconfigured (albeit in relation to a different conflict – the Korean War) in Gellhorn's novel, *The Lowest Trees Have Tops* (1967), a work explicitly preoccupied with temporal space. The narrator, Susanna, is a

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<sup>102</sup> *FoW*, 107.

<sup>103</sup> Green, *Summer 1943*, 17, my emphasis. Commenting on Green's story, Rod Mengham notes that Michael Walsey's official account of the Wartime Fire Service contained a chapter entitled, 'Waiting, Waiting, Waiting' (Mengham, 456).

<sup>104</sup> Green, 1943.

journalist who has withdrawn (or retired) to the paradisaical Mexican village of San Ignacio del Tule, where ‘the chief commodity [...] is time and the people [...] enjoy wasting it’.<sup>105</sup>

Susanna muses:

In the afternoons, I lay on a mat on the lawn, watched the clouds and daydreamed [...] Somewhere beyond our plateau, in the real world, people suffered and contended [...] Here in this glowing air, time seemed to be standing still, which was my favourite way for time to act.<sup>106</sup>

This, then, is suspended time, or ‘no time’. Though Susanna describes it as her ‘favourite way for time to act’, there is a greater sense in the novel that suspended time is oppressive. On hearing that there has been an armistice in Korea, Susanna ‘bursts into tears’.<sup>107</sup> Given that she does not know anyone fighting there, her emotion puzzles her neighbour, who assumes that she is weeping ‘from joy’.<sup>108</sup> A likelier interpretation is that the tears derive from a sense of being excluded, from missing out on action of historical significance, albeit wilfully.<sup>109</sup> Unsurprisingly, at the end of the novel, Susanna is planning to leave Tule for Paris.

Martha Gellhorn’s attitude to war was much the same. Though she withdrew from it, the ‘lulls’ were difficult periods for her. War drew her, however much she hated it. In a sense, ‘being there’ defined her: in a letter to Hortense Flexner, she wrote despairingly of life at the Finca, ‘I saw myself forever tied down to telling the servants to scrub the bathroom floors’.<sup>110</sup>

The issue came to a head in the rivalry between Gellhorn and Ernest Hemingway to ‘be there’ on D-Day, 6 June 1944 (otherwise known as the Normandy Invasions or ‘Operation Overlord’). Recently released material held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford – a cache of letters between Gellhorn, Hemingway and Gellhorn’s mother – sheds light on the matter.

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<sup>105</sup> *LTT*, 9.

<sup>106</sup> *LTT*, 55.

<sup>107</sup> *LTT*, 66.

<sup>108</sup> *LTT*, 67.

<sup>109</sup> Gellhorn herself confessed that, in Mexico, she could not think rationally about Korea: ‘so I have switched my mind about and tried to think of Sandy [her adopted son]’ (Gellhorn, letter to Bernard Berenson, 18 July 1950, f. 1’).

<sup>110</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 1940, f. 1’.

This material is discussed below, but at the outset a preliminary point needs to be addressed. In correspondence with Sandra Spanier over *Love Goes to Press*, Gellhorn pressed her view that reference to the ‘D-Day saga’ between Hemingway and herself was ‘needless’, ‘irrelevant’ and ‘distasteful’.<sup>111</sup> In the light of this, can an extended analysis of the matter be justified? The decision to offer one in the present case has been made in the knowledge of Gellhorn’s dislike of being paired with her former husband: ultimately, the choice was made on the grounds that her comments related only to the D-Day rivalry in the context of the plot of *Love Goes to Press*; that her record (as will be seen) speaks for itself; that it is important to establish the exact sequence of events (the precise dating of Gellhorn’s landing has not been attempted elsewhere) and that it is a unique opportunity to observe the differing fortunes of men and women in the field.

The cache in question is Bodley MS. Eng. c. 6174 (formerly MS. Res. c. 597). The relevant letter is from Ernest Hemingway to his mother-in-law, Edna Gellhorn,<sup>112</sup> dated 18 February 1945.<sup>113</sup> This letter, written when Hemingway was staying at the Paris Ritz, is self-exculpatory in tone (by this time the couple were estranged) and much of its antagonism towards Gellhorn centres on his perception of her treatment of him when he was in hospital in London with concussion after a car accident in May 1944. In the March of that year, Gellhorn, who had been reporting from England and Holland, returned to Cuba for another attempt to persuade her husband to go to the ETO: the assistant British Air Attaché, Roald Dahl, would allocate him a seat on a plane across the Atlantic if he would report on the RAF in any American publication. The result was, Gellhorn told Bernice Kert in an interview on 15 February 1982, that ‘Ernest began at once to rave at me, the word is not too strong [...] my crime really was to have been at war when he had not, but that was not how he put it. I was supposedly insane, I only wanted excitement and danger, I had no responsibility to anyone, I

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<sup>111</sup> Spanier, 2002, 274.

<sup>112</sup> Where reference is made in this section to ‘Gellhorn’, it is to Martha Gellhorn, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>113</sup> The letter, unfortunately, can only be summarised as permission to quote directly from it has been withheld by the Hemingway Foundation and Simon & Schuster (though not by the Bodleian).

was selfish beyond belief'.<sup>114</sup> The memory sums up a personal relationship whose very dynamic centred on the issue of 'being there'.

Hemingway did, in the end, choose a magazine to write for. That the publication he selected was *Collier's* – Gellhorn's magazine – has, as with so much about their lives, been variously interpreted. Each publication could only have one accredited correspondent to cover the European theatre: by choosing *Collier's*, it could be said that Hemingway did Gellhorn out of a job. She told Bernice Kert in an interview on 15 February 1982: 'I was totally blocked [...] having taken *Collier's* he automatically destroyed my chances of covering the fighting war'.<sup>115</sup> The term 'fighting war' is revealing: another war – that is, the parapolemic war of hospitals and the home front – would be all that was left for Gellhorn. She expanded on the point in the Afterword to the 1995 edition of *Point of No Return*:

These [PRO] officers permitted only one correspondent from a magazine to report in combat zones. As I had taken second place on my magazine, I was forbidden to work where the war was being fought. This was absurd and intolerable. I went AWOL.<sup>116</sup>

Yet there is another angle. As Iris Carpenter noted, the U.S. War Department's ruling was that female correspondents could 'go no farther forward than women's services go [...] Women were accredited to the war zones. They did not have accreditation to military units, as required for admission to press camps at the front'.<sup>117</sup> If it wanted front-line coverage, therefore, *Collier's* would have had to have found someone other than Gellhorn anyway. But Gellhorn's sense of injustice at Hemingway's choice remained for the rest of her life. His decision had a further consequence which illustrates gender difference in access to war: Hemingway flew to London while Gellhorn crossed the Atlantic as the only passenger aboard a ship with a cargo of dynamite, arriving to find him in hospital after an accident following a party.

In his letter to Edna Gellhorn in the Bodleian cache, Hemingway complains that Martha had visited him in the hospital and told him that they would not share a room in the

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<sup>114</sup> Kert, 391.

<sup>115</sup> Kert, 392.

<sup>116</sup> *PNR*, 329.

<sup>117</sup> Quoted in Michael Reynolds, 92.

hotel. She would no longer take his surname or remain faithful.<sup>118</sup> The matter is a tricky one to judge. Accusing Gellhorn of competitiveness, Hemingway only reveals his own frustration or resentment at her independence, particularly as expressed in her mobility as a war journalist. In a coda to the letter,<sup>119</sup> in which Hemingway morbidly writes that he expects his children to die, he praises his new partner, Mary Welsh, in terms that suggest his true assessment of Gellhorn's 'place': he has always needed to be looked after and that is what wives are for. Quite what Edna Gellhorn – Bryn Mawr graduate, founder member of the National League of Women Voters, Civil Service Commissioner and activist in the United Nations – must have made of this sentiment is only to be imagined.

Hemingway gives a specific example of Gellhorn's 'competitiveness': visiting his Division, she claimed to have seen more war than he had.<sup>120</sup> Protesting to his mother-in-law, he lists the campaigns that the Division has participated in: the Normandy invasions, Paris, St. Quentin, Le Cateau-Cambrésis (Hemingway calls it 'le Cateau'),<sup>121</sup> St. Hubert, Houffalize (Hemingway calls it 'Hauffalege'),<sup>122</sup> Bastogne, entering Germany, the Siegfried Line, the Schnee Eifel, the Hürtgenwald and Luxembourg.<sup>123</sup> But crucially, Hemingway doesn't refer to these as having been accomplished by 'the Division'. Rather, he uses the first person plural: 'we'.

A casual reader of the letter might therefore be forgiven for assuming that Hemingway personally participated in all the campaigns he mentions. The reality was rather different. As a war correspondent, Hemingway was strictly a non-combatant and therefore not a member of any military unit (though he did closely attach himself to the Fourth Infantry Division and others).<sup>124</sup> His actual direct participation in combat consisted of leading some

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<sup>118</sup> Hemingway, 18 February 1945, f. 1<sup>v</sup>. As early as October 1941, Gellhorn resisted Hemingway's attempts to persuade her to publish *The Heart of Another* under the name 'Martha Hemingway', although it was copyrighted by 'Martha Gellhorn Hemingway' (Kert, 364; Michael Reynolds, 51).

<sup>119</sup> Hemingway, 18 February 1945, f. 4<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>120</sup> Hemingway, 18 February 1945, f. 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>121</sup> Hemingway, 18 February 1945, f. 3<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>122</sup> Hemingway, 18 February 1945, f. 3<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>123</sup> Hemingway, 18 February 1945, f. 3<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>124</sup> Malcolm Cowley wrote in a *LIFE* profile: 'Officially Hemingway was a correspondent for *Collier's* attached to the Third Army, but he didn't enjoy being an observer and wrote only enough articles to keep from being sent home [...] he attached himself to the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of the First Army, where he found good friends and a satisfactory amount of fighting' (Cowley, 87). See Chapter Six for further discussion of the point.

irregulars in the defence of Rambouillet on 19-20 August 1944 and defending a command post in the Hürtgenwald on 22 November 1944. As the Geneva Convention prevented correspondents from bearing arms, he faced army interrogation in respect of the former activity. But he watched the Normandy invasions from a transporter. He did not actually participate in capturing the French towns of St. Quentin and Le Cateau-Cambrésis but went through them, when they had already been captured, en route to rejoining Colonel Buck Lanham and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment at Pommereuil on 3 September 1944. He accompanied the regiment through the Belgian towns of St. Hubert, Houffalize and Bastogne as an observing journalist. The first American tanks went into Germany on 12 September 1944: Hemingway watched. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment attacked the Schnee Eifel, a wooded ridge in Germany, on 14 September 1944: Hemingway was in bed with a cold. After a period back at the Paris Ritz, he rejoined the 22<sup>nd</sup> as an observer on 15 November 1944 for an 18-day offensive to clear a path through the Hürtgenwald (thickly-forested hill country west of Düren, Germany). After another stay at the Ritz, he went back to the 22<sup>nd</sup> in the second week of December 1944 when the Germans launched an attack on the American First Army's defence line at Luxembourg: he arrived after the worst of the offensive had been contained.<sup>125</sup>

The technique used in the letter to convey the impression of direct participation is extremely simple: a subject pronoun. A similar trick of the light occurs in a letter Hemingway wrote to his middle son, Patrick, on 15 September 1944:

Dearest Mousie,

It has been about 2 months since Papa came back to France after landing on D-Day on Omaha Beach.<sup>126</sup>

Hemingway did not, in fact, set foot on the invasion beaches: indeed, Bernice Kert puts the time he spent in the landing-craft, before being returned to the transport *Dorothea L. Dix*, as 'moments'.<sup>127</sup> But the simple elision of the word 'the' before 'landing' creates the impression that he did land: re-insertion of the 'the' would more accurately convey that the landing had

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<sup>125</sup> Baker, 639-6.

<sup>126</sup> Hemingway, 1981, 570.

<sup>127</sup> Kert, 405. Dorothea Dix (1802-87) was Superintendent of Women Nurses for the Union forces

been made by others. Then, there is the version given by Leicester Hemingway, who states that his brother ‘went ashore under heavy fire in a 36-foot LCVP, through antitank obstacles on Fox Green beach’ and recalls him saying ‘afterward’:

Once we waded ashore, they [the Germans] began doing their stuff. I said [to a Lieutenant], ‘let’s get up the beach to where we can shoot back,’ and I kicked him squarely in the butt as I got going forward [...] he followed with his men and we moved further in.<sup>128</sup>

This is a reported conversation subject to the vagaries of Leicester Hemingway’s memory over nearly 20 years. Nonetheless, in this instance, the language attributed to Hemingway stops being merely elliptical and begins to suggest that the ‘fact’ of the landing was becoming vital to his vision of himself. Even Gellhorn reported in an acerbic ‘V-Mail’ to her mother shortly after D-Day (14 June 1944):

Bug had done a very fine long story; he was over in the first wave on D day, in naturally the most perilous circumstances.<sup>129</sup>

As Gellhorn did not see Hemingway from before D-Day until the liberation of Paris,<sup>130</sup> this is again hearsay evidence. In these instances, a myth is being formed (the mythopoeic process is discussed further in the next chapter). An inaccurate impression is left uncorrected so that the cumulative evidence says: Papa fought on D-Day. Clearly, combat experience – and superior combat experience, at that – is vital to Hemingway’s self-assessment and assessment of the situation with Gellhorn.

Though it anticipates discussion in the next chapter on the writerly construction of the reporter, it is worth looking here at the textual expression of the rivalry between Gellhorn and Hemingway over D-Day, as evidenced in the *Collier’s* edition of 22 July 1944.<sup>131</sup> The magazine’s front cover sets the tone: ‘**Voyage to Victory / by / Ernest Hemingway**’. Inside, in the column headed ‘This Week – Articles’, the leading item is: ‘Ernest Hemingway,

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during the American Civil War (<<http://www.civilwarhome.com/dixbio.htm>>): a nice irony.

<sup>128</sup> Leicester Hemingway, 242.

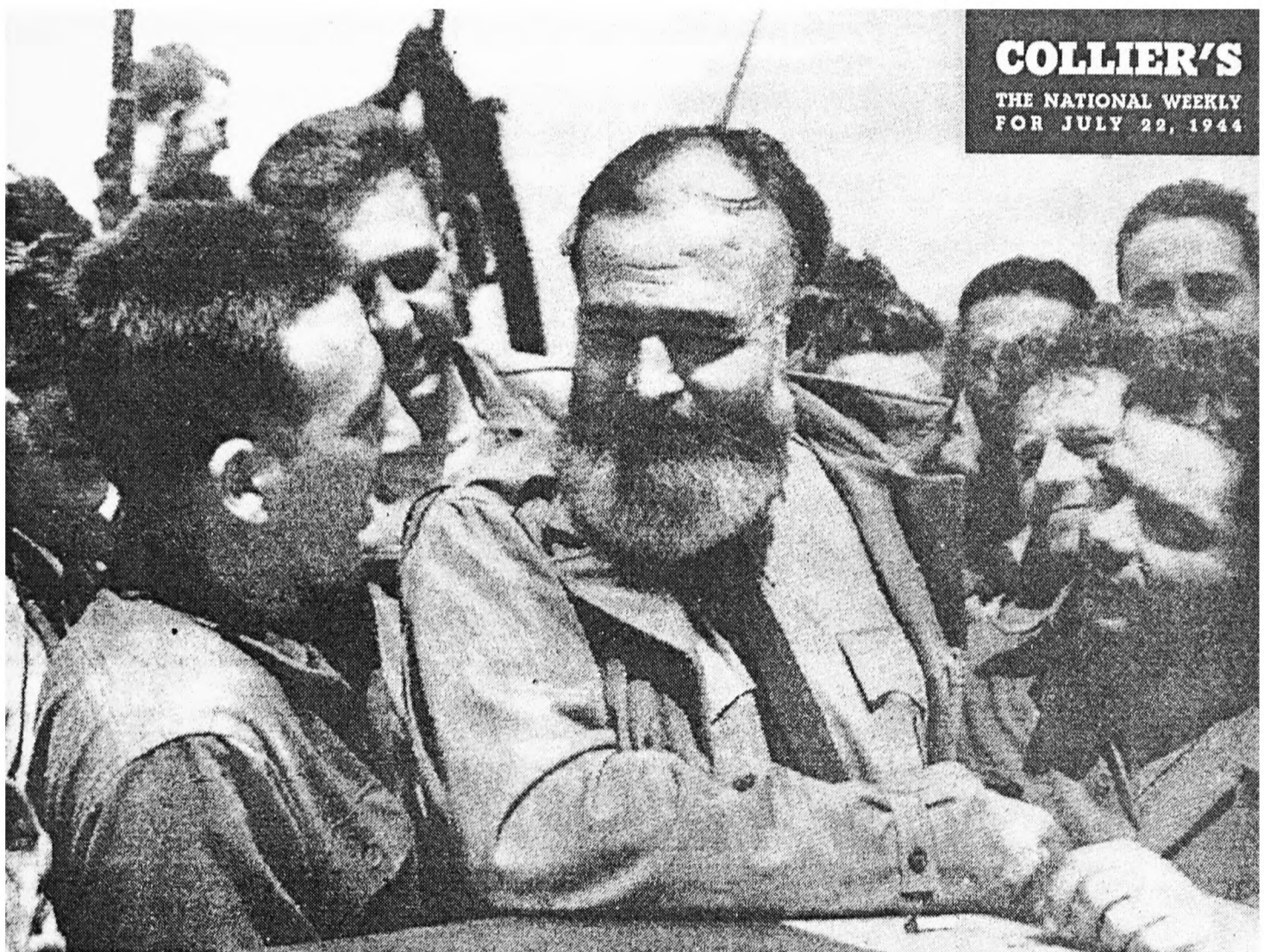
<sup>129</sup> Gellhorn, 14 June 1944, f. 1’.

<sup>130</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 265.

<sup>131</sup> See also Spanier, 2002.

Voyage to Victory. Collier's correspondent rides in the war ferry to France'.<sup>132</sup> Third in the list (after 'The Great Zagma [...] How to Swallow a Sword') is another item: 'Martha Gellhorn, Over and Back. The invasion has become a commuter's war'.<sup>133</sup> A subtle hierarchy is already in place.<sup>134</sup>

Hemingway's piece occupies pages 11-13 and 56-7 of the edition; Gellhorn's is on a single page, 16. Page 11 carries a large photograph of Hemingway, bearded, uniformed, surrounded by young troops, very much the wise veteran, 'Papa'-incarnate (*Fig. 3*).



*Fig. 3*

It is captioned, 'Ernest Hemingway, who gained his first fame as a war reporter in 1918, chats with G.I.s before leaving to cover biggest action yet'.<sup>135</sup> the impression is that it is the reporter who is off to face the greatest danger. The headline reads (slightly more honestly): 'Collier's

<sup>132</sup> 'This Week', 22 July 1944.

<sup>133</sup> 'This Week', 22 July 1944.

<sup>134</sup> It was ever thus: news of the couple's marriage was headlined in the *New York Times*, 'Hemingway Weds Magazine Writer' (22 November 1940), 25.

<sup>135</sup> Hemingway, 22 July 1944, 11.

famed war correspondent watches, as our fighting men battle across the beaches into Normandy'.<sup>136</sup> Pages 12 and 13 carry photographs of D-Day by the *Collier's* photographer, Joe Dearing. One depicts a group of troops on board ship studying a chart, captioned, 'We had studied the charts, the silhouettes, the data on the obstacles in the water and the defences all one morning'.<sup>137</sup> Another shows landing-craft being lowered from a transporter,<sup>138</sup> the perspective that of a person on the transporter. The photos on page 13 are of troops running onto the beach from the sea, with the photographer (and hence the reporter?) obviously already aground, and of troops standing beside a tank, looking ahead (*Fig. 4*). The images (and their captions) therefore establish a veteran's perspective.



"The beach had been defended as stubbornly and intelligently as any troops could defend it. And we had taken the beach"

*Fig. 4*

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<sup>136</sup> Hemingway, 22 July 1944, 11.

<sup>137</sup> Hemingway, 22 July 1944, 12, added emphasis. The emphasis is added because the 'we' gives the impression that Hemingway is a member of the company.

<sup>138</sup> Hemingway, 22 July 1944, 12.

Page 16, which carries Gellhorn's piece, also has a photograph (*Fig. 5*). This time, it is credited to the U.S. Signal Corps: in other words, it is an official, pooled image, deemed, by some editorial choice, to be appropriate.<sup>139</sup> It shows a wounded G.I., knees buckling, being supported by two other soldiers, one of whom is black (black soldiers made up the auxiliary corps).



*Fig. 5*

The caption reads:

<sup>139</sup> In a letter to *Collier's* editor, Charles Colebaugh, of 22 October 1938, Gellhorn commented, 'I have noticed that you always use better pictures for my articles than the ones I provide' (Gellhorn, 10 December 1938, f. 3<sup>r</sup>).

Back from the hell of Normandy beaches, this American paratroop officer is helped ashore by members of a medical corps unit, en route to hospital – and home.<sup>140</sup>

The headline to the article says, ‘Already the invasion has become a commuters’ war, as fighters shuttle between England’s ports and Normandy’s beaches’.<sup>141</sup> There is no photograph of Martha Gellhorn. The difference between the paratextual messages of the two articles could not, therefore, be more striking. Hemingway’s experience of D-Day is news. Though published in the same edition, Gellhorn’s piece is about an experience become familiar, even routine, ‘commuter’-like.<sup>142</sup> The photographs reinforce the impression. The ones accompanying Hemingway’s piece might be an illustration of his own (fictitious) victorious landing. The one with Gellhorn’s piece is parapolemical: the wounded soldier, the auxiliary corpsmen.

These paratextual positionings were, of course, the choice of *Collier’s* editors, who can perhaps be forgiven their enthusiasm for the big name author of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.<sup>143</sup> But, it is important to note, within the texts themselves, the positioning continues. Hemingway opens his piece:

No one remembers the date of the Battle of Shiloh. But the day we took Fox Green beach was the sixth of June, and the wind was blowing hard out of the northwest.<sup>144</sup>

‘We’, of course, could legitimately refer to ‘our troops’. Yet the impression remains, uncorrected, irresistible and even almost comical, that Hemingway was one of the ones who ‘took Fox Green’. This impression persists to the end:

If you want to know how it was in an LCV(P) on D-Day when we took Fox Green beach and Easy Red beach on the sixth of June, 1944, then this is as near as I can come to it.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Gellhorn, 22 July 1944, 16.

<sup>141</sup> Gellhorn, 22 July 1944, 16.

<sup>142</sup> It was only on 5 August 1944 that her piece, ‘The Wounded Come Home’, was published, revealing that she had travelled across the Channel on a hospital ship (see later).

<sup>143</sup> Sandra Spanier’s recent article on the *Collier’s* archives reveals that an unknown hand scrawled across Hemingway’s ‘Voyage to Victory’ cable, ‘Lead All Hemingway’ (Spanier, 2002, 270). Spanier goes on to show that Gellhorn’s ‘Hangdog Herrenvolk’ was cabled to *Collier’s* on 13 June 1944, the same day as ‘Voyage to Victory’, but twenty-five minutes earlier (9.55pm as opposed to 10.20pm). ‘Over and Back’ was in fact cabled on 14 June. Details that placed Gellhorn on the invasion beach were omitted in the published texts (Spanier, 2002, 270-2).

<sup>144</sup> Hemingway, 22 July 1944, 11.

<sup>145</sup> Hemingway, 22 July 1944, 57.

These closing words are then followed by a set of boxed italics:

While Mr. Hemingway was cabling this article, General Montgomery revealed in an interview that a German division was sent up to thicken the coastal defenses at the spot where Collier's correspondent landed. 'We hit it right on the nose,' Mr. Hemingway cabled.<sup>146</sup>

The effect would be to make the 'famed' correspondent's exploits all the more heroic, were it not for the vital point that Hemingway did not land.

Gellhorn recalled of her own experiences of D-Day:

The U.S. Army public relations officers, the bosses of the American press, were a doctrinaire bunch who objected to a woman being a correspondent with combat troops. I felt like a veteran of the Crimean War by then, and I had been sent to Europe to do my job, which was not to report the rear areas or the woman's angle. The P.R.O.s in London became definitely hostile when I stowed away on a hospital ship in order to see something of the invasion of Normandy. After that, I could only report the war on secondary fronts, in the company of admirable foreigners who were not fussy about official travel orders and accreditation.<sup>147</sup>

Having spent the morning of June 6 in 'a great guarded room in the Ministry of Information' in London,<sup>148</sup> Gellhorn immediately set off for the south coast ports (unidentified at this point, presumably for security reasons). In a D-Day 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary piece, she recounted:

A military policeman stopped me and asked me my business. I said I was just going to interview the nurses, the women's angle for *Collier's*, the American magazine I was working for. Nobody gave a hoot about the women's angle, it served like a perfect forged passport. As soon as I got aboard, I found a toilet and locked myself in.<sup>149</sup>

Here the fact of being a woman and covering 'the women's angle', serves almost to efface Gellhorn from the field, to render her invisible, even as, paradoxically, it gives her access.<sup>150</sup>

The piece continues: 'we waded the last strip of water on to a beach of big sliding pebbles'.<sup>151</sup>

'The Wounded Come Home', published in *Collier's* on 5 August 1944, describes her

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<sup>146</sup> Hemingway, 22 July 1944, 57.

<sup>147</sup> *For*, 108.

<sup>148</sup> Gellhorn, 22 July 1944, 16.

<sup>149</sup> Gellhorn, 3 June 1994.

<sup>150</sup> Gellhorn commented in 1996: 'A thing I've used wonderfully in my time – when I had no papers and I was stopped by the guard, I said, "Oh, I'm just doing a woman's angle, I just want to interview the nurses". The minute you say a woman's angle it just seems so innocuous, that you can get there.' (Freedom Forum European Centre, 3).

<sup>151</sup> Gellhorn, 3 June 1994.

‘wad[ing] ashore, in water to our waists’ to recover the wounded.<sup>152</sup> Gellhorn, unlike Hemingway, therefore did land on Omaha beach, although there is some confusion as to exactly when. Her article, ‘Over and Back’ (*Collier’s*, 22 June 1944), describes the port scene on ‘D-plus-one’.<sup>153</sup> Yet ‘The Wounded Come Home’, the account of her stowing away on the hospital ship, states that the ship pulled ‘out of harbour that night’ and ‘crossed by daylight’ to France.<sup>154</sup> This could indicate that Gellhorn hid in the ship on the night of 6-7 June and crossed early in the morning of 7 June, so arriving on Omaha Red beach (and disembarking in order to help stretcher men back onto the ship) on D-Day+1, though it is also possible that ‘that night’ refers to 7 June, which would put her landing on D-Day+2. A line in a letter of 4 August 1944 to Hortense Flexner clinches it:

Teechie dearest; I saw it alright. [...] I went over myself the night of the second day on a hospital ship [...] I went ashore looking for wounded too.<sup>155</sup>

Gellhorn’s landing was thus 8 June 1944: D-Day+2.

The escapade had three consequences. The first was that Gellhorn was arrested and interned in a nurses’ camp in England. She escaped and hitched a flight to Naples.<sup>156</sup> The second was that she therefore became ‘unaccredited’, unofficial, more than ever itinerant, facing more difficulty than ever in attaining the front: as she put it in an interview of 31 October 1980 with Bernice Kert, ‘I had no papers, no travel orders, no PX rights, nothing. I was a gypsy in that war in order to report it’.<sup>157</sup> In a letter to her editor, Wallace Meyer, she recalled, she was forced to ‘bum’ her way around the European Theatre: ‘it was always that: never could do anything right, because of being a woman’.<sup>158</sup> The third consequence, as Jacqueline Orsagh notes, was that, Hemingway was ‘so infuriated’ that Gellhorn had landed on the invasion beaches ‘that he convinced himself it never happened, explaining that Martha could not have made the landing because she did not have the proper credentials’.<sup>159</sup> This

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<sup>152</sup> Gellhorn, 5 August 1944, 74.

<sup>153</sup> Gellhorn, 22 July 1944, 16.

<sup>154</sup> Gellhorn, 5 August 1944, 14.

<sup>155</sup> Gellhorn, 4 August 1944, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>156</sup> Orsagh, 175-6.

<sup>157</sup> Kert, 410.

<sup>158</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Wallace Meyer, 1948, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>159</sup> Kert, 406. Hemingway questions Gellhorn’s war experience and motives at length in a letter to

might explain Hemingway's reply to his brother, Leicester's, question, 'How did Marty make out?':

'She did everything possible to make the landing,' Ernest said, giving her full credit. 'Went over on a hospital ship. Got good human interest stuff. They refused to let her ashore because she didn't have accreditation to this area. A damned shame. She got good stuff though, and then came back here.'<sup>160</sup>

What makes this striking is that it is all *strictly* true. Gellhorn really did 'go over on a hospital ship'; she did indeed 'get good human interest stuff' (later written up in 'The Wounded Come Home'). The military authorities did 'refuse to let her ashore' – but it is at this point that the account becomes deceptive because Hemingway omits to tell the whole truth: despite the official 'refusal', he neglects to inform his brother, Gellhorn went ashore anyway. Jacqueline Orsagh notes simply, 'he never forgave her'.<sup>161</sup>

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'It has always seemed to me that the war has been omitted as a field for the observation of the naturalist,' wrote Ernest Hemingway, adopting a tone of scientific fastidiousness in his short story, 'A Natural History of the Dead' (1939).<sup>162</sup> This chapter has tried to characterise the war zone as a 'field of observation': a literal outdoor space but also an ideological and political / military construction; ambiguous in outline; protean in shape; a locus where 'things are different'; most crucially, a gendered place. As Hemingway notes in 'A Natural History', 'regarding the sex of the dead it is a fact that one becomes so accustomed to the sight of all the dead being men that the sight of a dead woman is quite shocking'.<sup>163</sup>

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Bernard Berenson (Hemingway, 27 May 1953), which unfortunately cannot be quoted for copyright reasons.

<sup>160</sup> Leicester Hemingway, 243. Cf. Hemingway's letter to Maxwell Perkins of 14 January 1940 on 'Blood on the Snow': 'Read Marty's piece this week in *Colliers*. It isn't so good militarily but boy she got out to that front when not a single correspondent had been there' (Hemingway, 1996b, 278).

<sup>161</sup> Orsagh, 175. In later life, Gellhorn attempted a partial defence of her former husband's myth-making: Hemingway did become 'a shameful embarrassing apocryphiar about himself', 'but he was not like that in Spain' (Gellhorn, 'On Apocryphism', 1981, 301).

<sup>162</sup> Hemingway, 1993, p. 417.

<sup>163</sup> Hemingway, 1993, p. 418.

The woman in the war zone does indeed provoke 'shock', underlining the figure's errant, contingent status. The Gellhorn-Hemingway rivalry over D-Day has been examined in some detail as it illustrates the practical issues facing women correspondents in general, and Gellhorn in particular, in the field. But these matters become increasingly issues of representation. Next to be considered is therefore another species of positioning: the war reporter in the text.

## CHAPTER 5

### BEING THERE: THE TEXT

Though the two are distinct, the textual war reporter derives from the writer's positioning in the field. Accordingly, placement within the text is a gendered phenomenon. This chapter considers both the *figure* of the war reporter and his or her *orientation*. The former is a question of how the reporter is presented thematically: his or her role or persona.<sup>1</sup> The latter is a matter of how the figure is angled, 'spatially', emotionally and politically, with regard to the subject-matter. The first section considers the examples of Ernie Pyle and Ernest Hemingway. The next section examines in detail the textual 'Martha Gellhorn'.

#### TEXTUAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND ORIENTATIONS

In the Second World War, accredited male correspondents again had to wear officer uniform less insignia, while women wore the same uniform with skirts or slacks and berets.<sup>2</sup> (Martha Gellhorn herself had 'an identity war correspondent card with the simulated rank of captain and attendant privileges').<sup>3</sup> Sartorial requirements, as already suggested, contribute to the construction of the reporter figure, not least because the wearing or not of uniform (or quasi-uniform) reflects the degree to which the reporter is assimilated with the combatants. John Simpson, for example, feels 'not enthusiastic' about wearing military uniform when reporting,<sup>4</sup> an aspect of aiming for impartiality. At the other extreme, the war photographer Don McCullin has created a persona as a combatant figure: the front cover of his *Unreasonable Behaviour: An Autobiography* (1992) carries a photograph of him in fatigues, a helmet, unshaven, obviously in the war zone.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This might be likened to the Renaissance art theorist Leon Battista Alberti's concept of the figure who, from within a depicted scene, interprets the action for the viewer's response: 'in an *istoria* [a dramatic composition] I like to see someone who admonishes and points out to us what is happening there; or beckons with his hand to see [...] or invites us to weep or to laugh together with them' (Alberti, 78). John R. Spencer comments that 'not only is the perspective construction to form a spatial link between the painting and the observer, but the commentator is to establish the emotional link' (26).

<sup>2</sup> Moeller, 183.

<sup>3</sup> Kert, 384.

<sup>4</sup> Simpson, 'War Reporting: the New Vulnerability', lecture given on 27 June 2003.

<sup>5</sup> McCullin, front cover.

The correspondent Ernie Pyle travelled to the Normandy Beaches on an LST and went ashore at Omaha on D-Day+1. He frequently refers to ‘my boys’, ‘my crew’,<sup>6</sup> though more in the sense of a loving father (he also uses the word ‘beloved’)<sup>7</sup> than of a participating member. His description of D-Day, lacking Hemingwayesque heroics, is cast in the first person plural: ‘our troops faced such odds that our getting ashore was like my whipping Joe Louis down to a pulp [...] facing us, were more enemy troops than we had in our assault waves’.<sup>8</sup> Even in this fragment there is a subtle range of placings. The ‘enemy troops’ are sited spatially in such a way as to place Pyle himself in the position occupied by the American soldiers (‘facing us’). Nonetheless, the reporter also distances himself from the G.I.s: the ‘our’ of ‘our getting ashore’ signifies ‘Americans’’. Pyle is simultaneously with the soldiers and commenting on them.

‘To any individual,’ comments Pyle, ‘the war is seldom bigger than the space of a few hundred yards on each side of him. All the war in the world is concentrated down into his own personal fight’.<sup>9</sup> This is an expression of personal perspective ‘producing’ the space of war. Elsewhere, Pyle uses the second person singular to draw his distant readers into the experience, again giving spatial co-ordinates:

The nearer guns would fire and the ground under your bedroll would tremble and you could feel the awful breath of the blast push the tent walls and nudge your whole body ever so slightly [...] It didn’t really seem true. Three weeks ago I was in Miami, eating fried chicken, sleeping in deep beds with white sheets.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Pyle deploys a device key to the textual positioning of the reporter in relation to war (one that will be considered further in discussion of Hemingway and Gellhorn): humour.

Given eau de vie by the ‘grateful French’, Pyle comments:

Eau de vie is a savage liquid made by boiling barbed wire, soapsuds, watch springs, and old tent pegs together. The better brands have a touch of nitroglycerine for flavour.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> E.g. Pyle, 299.

<sup>7</sup> Pyle, 195.

<sup>8</sup> Pyle, 278.

<sup>9</sup> Pyle, 200.

<sup>10</sup> Pyle, 175.

<sup>11</sup> Pyle, 292.

It is a light-hearted moment among so much that is unbearable, but it also has a serious point. This kind of humour encodes the following about the war reporter: bravery; an ability to withdraw, temporarily, from the relentless horror; self-deprecation. Pyle drinking eau de vie is not the reporter-as-hero or the reporter-as-star. Which brings the discussion to the case of Ernest Hemingway.

‘Ernest Hemingway, Fighting-Man’ was one of Ernest Hemingway’s greatest fictional achievements. The creation could be termed ‘Hyperreal Hemingway’,<sup>12</sup> given its ontology as a simulated concentrate of the actuality, more ‘Hemingway-esque’ than the man himself. This, then, is the ‘Hemingway’ of the lookalike competitions; of the Hemingway safaris and shoots; of the Hemingway-themed hotels; of the bars from Paris to Pamplona to Havana advertised as being those that Hemingway frequented;<sup>13</sup> of the ‘Papa Doble’; of perpetuating fictions such as Michael Palin’s *Hemingway’s Chair* (1995).<sup>14</sup> That the process was – and remains – one of artifice has been felt by various Hemingway commentators. ‘Nobody would ever let papa just be human,’ said his son Gregory.<sup>15</sup> ‘To me,’ said the poet John Pudney, who met him in World War II, ‘he was a fellow obsessed with playing the part of Ernest Hemingway and “hamming” it to boot: a sentimental nineteenth-century actor called upon to act the part of a twentieth-century tough guy.’<sup>16</sup> ‘He enjoyed playing the role of Papa, and found it a comfortable way to distance himself and deal with people who treated him as a great man,’ said one biographer, Jeffrey Meyers.<sup>17</sup> ‘Increasingly, [his] life was becoming his story, which he rehearsed and refined, embedding it with such vivid details that it would be difficult later to sort out his fictions,’ said another, Michael Reynolds.<sup>18</sup>

The basic building-blocks were what Roland Barthes has termed ‘biographemes’:

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<sup>12</sup> For an account of the hyperreal, see Baudrillard, 1-28.

<sup>13</sup> A phenomenon so extensive as to invite parody, viz. Patrick Caulfield’s painting, *Hemingway Never Ate Here* (1998-9).

<sup>14</sup> Palin, 1995.

<sup>15</sup> Gregory H. Hemingway, 90.

<sup>16</sup> Baker, 597.

<sup>17</sup> Meyers, 392.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Reynolds, 114.

Si j'étais écrivain, et mort, comme j'aimerais que ma vie se réduisît, par les soins d'un biographe amical et désinvolte, à quelques détails, à quelques goûts, à quelques inflexions, disons: des 'biographèmes'.<sup>19</sup>

Like the mytheme, basic component of myth, the biographeme is the structural unit of biography, and, like mythopoeia, 'biopoeia' (or 'autobiopoeia') is what Barthes elsewhere called 'a conjuring trick', the emptying out of history from reality.<sup>20</sup> The creation of 'Ernest Hemingway' should accordingly be seen as a palimpsestic process of fictionalisation: an assemblage of biographemes from which 'reality' has slowly been emptied out, leaving only image.

Hemingway's self-construction as a war reporter has already been seen in the previous chapter in his *Collier's* account of D-Day. An earlier piece, 'The Saving of Madrid', in the British journal, *FACT*, of 15 July 1938, is more restrained, though it does place the reporter in the physical centre of the conflict. The article is introduced as 'direct eye-witness reports of the Spanish war by Ernest Hemingway, the famous American author'.<sup>21</sup> It is written in the first person singular and contains liberal use of the phrase 'I saw'. The very act of writing is situated under fire:

At the moment of writing this despatch back in my hotel a shell came down on the roof of a building just behind the hotel exploding with a great whoom, and looking out of the window I saw no single person leave the line where they were standing to buy food.<sup>22</sup>

Of Brihuega, Hemingway remarks, 'you may not like it, and wish to believe it is propaganda, but I have seen the battlefield, the booty, the prisoners and the dead'.<sup>23</sup> Again, a subtle positioning is going on here, a gap being created and exploited between reporter and reader.

This is unusual: by contrast, the standard method is to draw the reader in to the experience (as

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<sup>19</sup> Barthes, 1971, 15: 'If I were a writer, and dead, how I would like a friendly and relaxed biographer to reduce my life to a few details, a few personal tastes, a few turns of phrase: to certain "biographèmes", let's call them' (my translation).

<sup>20</sup> Barthes, 1993, 142.

<sup>21</sup> 'Introduction', 15 July 1938, 4. *Life* magazine of 12 July 1937 gives a rare reading of Hemingway's political orientation: 'Since *The Sun Also Rises* Mr. Hemingway's delight in splendid Spanish poseurs has given way to a humanitarian sympathy for the rising Spanish masses' (Hemingway, 12 July 1937, 20).

<sup>22</sup> Hemingway, 15 July 1938, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Hemingway, 15 July 1938, 13.

Pyle does, for instance, in *his* use of the second person singular). But the experiential gap underlines the superior combat knowledge of the reporter – a strategy key to building the Hemingway reportorial persona.

It is not, though, the only strategy, and the complexity of the persona should not be underestimated. Two of Hemingway's 1944 articles, 'Battle for Paris' and 'How We Came to Paris' (published in *Collier's* on 30 September 1944 and 7 October 1944 respectively) furnish further evidence. In 'Battle for Paris', Hemingway carefully builds up a geographical positioning, inflected to reveal his personal, specialised knowledge of the area ('terrain,' he said elsewhere, 'is everything. If you don't have that, you have nothing').<sup>24</sup> Since, as he acknowledges, 'war correspondents are forbidden to command troops',<sup>25</sup> this legitimises his actions:

I knew the country and the roads around Epernon, Rambouillet, Trappes and Versailles well, as I had bicycled, walked and driven a car through this part of France for many years. It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the contours of a country best, since you have to sweat up the hills and can coast down them. Thus you remember them as they actually are.<sup>26</sup>

The piece continues:

After the U.S. Army reconnaissance units were withdrawn, the force defending Rambouillet was composed of mixed patrols of regulars and guerrillas [...] I do not know if you understand what it means to have troops out ahead of you and then have them withdrawn and be left with [...] a large and beautiful town, completely undamaged and full of fine people, on your hands. There was nothing in the book issued to correspondents for their guidance through the intricacies of the military affairs which dealt with this situation; so it was decided to screen the town as well as possible and, if the Germans, observing the withdrawal of the American force advanced to make contact, to provide them with the necessary contact. This was done.<sup>27</sup>

This passage places official and unofficial troops on equal standing ('mixed patrols of regulars and guerrillas') and conveys the impression that the writer is personally responsible

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<sup>24</sup> 'The Hemingways in Sun Valley. The Novelist Takes a Wife', 6 January 1941, 52.

<sup>25</sup> Hemingway, 30 September 1944, 83.

<sup>26</sup> Hemingway, 30 September 1944, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Hemingway, 30 September 1944, 84.

for the town's safety ('on your hands'). The use of the passive again elides responsibility on the part of the writer: 'it was decided', 'this was done'.

'Battle for Paris' ends mysteriously – 'it was necessary for me to leave on a patrol to St. Remy les Chevreuses'<sup>28</sup> (*necessary?*) – and the tale is taken up in 'How We Came to Paris', a piece replete with beautifully executed irony. It contains the following exchange:

By the time the contact was over, the column had two dead and five wounded, one tank burned up, and had knocked out two of the seven enemy tanks and silenced all of the 88s.

'*C'est un bel accrochage*,' the underground leader said to me jubilantly.

This means something like, 'We have grappled with them prettily' or 'We have tied into them beautifully,' searching in mind for the exact meaning of *accrochage*, which is what happens when two cars lock bumpers.

I shouted, 'Prettily! Prettily!'

At which a young French lieutenant, who did not have the air of having been mixed up in too many *accrochages* in his time but who, for all I know, may have participated in hundreds of them, said to me, 'Who the hell are you and what are you doing here in our column?'

'I am a war correspondent, monsieur,' I replied.

The lieutenant shouted: 'Do not let any war correspondents proceed until the column has passed. And especially do not let this one proceed.'

[...] I feared hostility might be creeping into his voice.<sup>29</sup>

There are various points to make about this: the revelation of alien status ('what are you doing here in our column?'), self-identification ('I am a war correspondent' – though the thrust of the piece is that the reporter is entitled to priority), self-deprecation ('especially do not let this one proceed'). As this shows, while the Hemingway reportorial persona is undoubtedly self-promoting – it might even be said self-glorifying – there is also a complicating self-mocking quality to it. The effect of the humour is actually to undermine the carefully built-up *machismo*, to reveal its very artificiality. This is Hemingway sending up 'Hemingway', a distancing of self from textual persona that was explicitly owned (though the textual persona, could, of course, be reconstructed in real life: for *Daily Express* reporter, Alan Moorehead, in 1944, 'it was a little galling to find Ernest Hemingway sitting in the dining-room over a bottle

<sup>28</sup> Hemingway, 30 September 1944, 86.

<sup>29</sup> Hemingway, 7 October 1944, 65, 67.

of Heidsieck [...] he had liberated the Ritz just an hour before.')<sup>30</sup> Charles Collingwood recalled that:

After the war [Hemingway] asked me if I remembered a time in France when he had asked my opinion of a piece he had written for COLLIER'S and I said it sounded like a parody of Ernest Hemingway. "You were right, of course," he said.<sup>31</sup>

The last-quoted passage from 'How We Came To Paris' contains a further element, which emerges in the ironic cry 'Prettily! Prettily!'. As previously mentioned, it is notable that Hemingway's despatches are flecked through with instances in which the reportorial figure quails before conflict. These are often expressed as humorous understatement, in the same article, for example, in the sentence 'it was much too beautiful for me, who had never been a great lover of contact anyway, and I hit the deck as an 88 shell burst alongside the road'.<sup>32</sup> This is not to criticise what is an entirely legitimate and understandable response but to flag another complexity in the 'Hyperreal Hemingway' reportorial persona.

#### 'MARTHA GELLHORN' IN THE TEXT

If being there is predominantly a male experience, presence becomes, *prima facie*, a masculine textual quality. Gellhorn herself experienced this phenomenon: requested to provide biographical information to prove she had 'been there' in order to validate *The Wine of Astonishment*, she commented to her editor, Wallace Meyer:

It is damn silly to beat your brains out for 14 months trying to write a book that is not a woman's book, and then have to explain how you came to be that way. [...] This is only useful to show that I had a good chance to look at a lot of men in combat [...] But something is always forgotten: the women of the countries where war was being fought – Italy and France and Holland and Belgium and Germany – simply stayed at home and saw combat: the war was fought all over them. And the women of England stayed home and learned about bombs. Anybody who was there knows; and my only advantage was that I was supposed to be writing about combat and combat troops, and I wore a uniform, and so I covered more mileage.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Alan Moorehead, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Meyers, 404. The piece referred to, according to Meyers, is 'War in the Siegfried Line'. This is a somewhat odd attribution as this article is for the most part verbatim quotation of a Captain Howard Blazzard's recollection of events. Hemingway contents himself with saying, 'if you want to know [...] get someone who was there to tell you' (Hemingway, 18 November 1944, 73).

<sup>32</sup> Hemingway, 7 October 1944, 65.

<sup>33</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 1948, ff. 1<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>.

This section covers first Gellhorn's construction of the reportorial figure in her journalism and then in her fiction. But, as a preliminary, getting a sense of how others represented Gellhorn *qua* correspondent helps to gauge her own self-creations, in life and in her writings.<sup>34</sup> Here, for example, is Sefton Delmer, referring to the Spanish Civil War:

When blond and beautiful writer Martha Gellhorn came with us<sup>35</sup> – she was to become Hemingway's third wife – he lectured her on how to observe things as a writer.<sup>36</sup>

Here is fellow American journalist Josephine Herbst on the same period:

Martha Gellhorn sailed in and out [of Madrid's Hotel Florida] in beautiful Saks Fifth Avenue pants, with a green chiffon scarf wound around her head.<sup>37</sup>

Here is Gustav Regler, also on the Spanish Civil War:

[...] the most devoted of all [was] Martha Gellhorn, witty and humane, of the best St. Louis stock [...] she saw our brigade in the making, strolled with Pacciardi in no-man's-land, provided the doctor with his first bandages, saw our amateurish weapons and wondered at the almost incredible modesty of our troops.<sup>38</sup>

Here is Mary Welsh:

I remember a cocktail party for Martha Gellhorn Hemingway months before, during which Miss G. had devoted her entire attention to a couple of Polish pilots.<sup>39</sup>

Here is Virginia Cowles:

A tall, blonde girl with a brilliant gift for writing and a passionate concern for the underdog, she refused to take the woes of the world lightly.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> To anticipate discussion in the next chapter, the gaze of others, in Sartre's words, 'confers spatiality upon me. To apprehend oneself as looked-at is to apprehend oneself as a spatializing-spatialized. But the Other's look is not only apprehended as spatializing; it is also *temporalizing*' (Sartre, 1966, 266, original emphasis). These representations are therefore a form of positioning.

<sup>35</sup> That is, with Delmer, Hemingway and Herbert Matthews on their drives to various Spanish fronts.

<sup>36</sup> Delmer, 1961, 329.

<sup>37</sup> Herbst, 138. Herbst records Hemingway referring to Gellhorn as 'El Rubio' – 'The Blond' – somewhat oddly using the masculine article.

<sup>38</sup> Regler, 283.

<sup>39</sup> Mary Welsh Hemingway, 1977, 93. Could the 'two Polish pilots' have metamorphosed into the 'Three Poles' of Gellhorn's 18 March 1944 *Collier's* article?

<sup>40</sup> Cowles, 133.

And here is Joyce Grenfell meeting Gellhorn at a party at the Duff Coopers:

I thought her affected, surface bright and worthless. But after dinner, when we were girls together, she let down and the glimpses of reality were more encouraging. But there is a type of American new-intellectual who buzzes with know-all earnestness that I find rings hollow. She is obviously capable: I wonder how she writes.<sup>41</sup>

There are a number of elements here: Gellhorn is at once attractive to men but inexperienced as a writer; the object of envy for other women; rude; intelligent; a passionate social reformer and a distinctively glamorous figure. Some of these, as is shown later, correspond to aspects of Gellhorn's own self-portraits. The most notorious depiction of Martha Gellhorn, the portrayal of 'Dorothy Bridges' in Hemingway's play, *The Fifth Column* (1938), is discussed later in comparison with Gellhorn's own play, *Love Goes to Press*.

Paratextual detail surrounding Gellhorn's Second World War articles in *Collier's* magazine makes its own contribution to her reportorial persona. She is billed so as to give the impression that she is a staff-writer, rather than an occasional freelance:<sup>42</sup> indeed, her name appears on the masthead of editors. A positioning as 'roving emissary' is reinforced by the editorial language: 'into this tense and anxious country Collier's sent Martha Gellhorn'.<sup>43</sup> That the articles derive from the very centre of the conflict is reinforced by the legend 'Radioed from [X place]'. Further examples include: 'from the scene of Germany's triumph Martha Gellhorn sends you';<sup>44</sup> 'history being made as you read';<sup>45</sup> 'from their front-row seats

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<sup>41</sup> Grenfell, 26. And here, after the fact, is William Boyd, in *Any Human Heart* (2002), through his protagonist Logan Mountstuart who is visiting the Spanish Civil War: 'Martha is a tall leggy blonde, not spectacularly pretty, but good fun and bracingly sure of herself, in that particularly American way. She and Hemingway must be lovers by now, though they are very discreet about it' (191).

<sup>42</sup> 'Miss Gellhorn' ('Next Week', 30 July 1938), 'Collier's correspondent' (Gellhorn, 6 August 1938, 13), 'Collier's Martha Gellhorn' (Gellhorn, 20 January 1940, 9), 'Martha Gellhorn, Collier's staff correspondent' ('Next Week', 27 January 1940), 'a Collier's correspondent' (Gellhorn, 26 December 1942, 25), 'first girl correspondent to go on a combat mission' ('This Week', 17 March 1945) and 'Collier's girl correspondent' ('This Week', 30 June 1945). A *New York Times* article, 'Hemingways On Way Here', of 23 November 1940, also described her as 'a staff member of Collier's'. By contrast, *Collier's* billed Hemingway as 'Collier's famed war correspondent' (Hemingway, 22 July 1944, 11).

<sup>43</sup> 'Next Week', 1 October 1938.

<sup>44</sup> 'Next Week', 3 December 1938.

<sup>45</sup> 'Next Week', 13 January 1940.

in Europe's war theater Collier's staff correspondents report to you weekly';<sup>46</sup> 'behind the front in gallant little Finland';<sup>47</sup> 'come behind the lines with Collier's staff correspondent';<sup>48</sup> 'under appalling difficulties, Martha Gellhorn made her way to the Canton fighting front'.<sup>49</sup>

In 'The Week's Work' for 6 May 1944, Amy Porter wrote:

Martha Gellhorn gives you a three-dimensional view of Cassino in her article, Visit Italy [...]. As a war correspondent for Collier's, Miss Gellhorn is one of the very few women reporters who actually get to the front. To gather material for this story, she jeeped along a road under constant enemy observation and spasmodic shellfire to the barracks on the outskirts of Cassino. [...] From the barracks she walked three quarters of a mile toward an antitank gun emplacement to a point where she could watch the brown smoke of German shellbursts in near-by buildings and the white-plumed bursts of American phosphorus shells.<sup>50</sup>

A photograph shows Gellhorn standing by a soldier, a snow-capped mountain in the background, eyes narrowed, gazing left to an unseen point, field glasses in hand: very much the observing correspondent (*Fig. 1*).



*Fig. 1*

<sup>46</sup> Gellhorn, 29 January 1940, 12.

<sup>47</sup> 'Next Week', 3 February 1940.

<sup>48</sup> Gellhorn, 10 February 1940, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Gellhorn, 28 June 1941, 16. 'This Week' of 30 June 1945 confesses, in a spirit of de-mob light-heartedness, 'Collier's girl correspondent never does get to cross the Elbe!'.  
<sup>50</sup> Porter, 6 May 1944, 70.

But no photographs of Gellhorn accompany her articles (except in ‘These, Our Mountains’, which bear the credit ‘taken by Ernest Hemingway’<sup>51</sup> – somewhat oddly, since they also show him – and ‘Her Day’, which is a shot of Gellhorn, Hemingway and Madame Chiang-Kai Shek sitting round a table).<sup>52</sup> Their absence is consonant with reportorial self-effacement (as well as revealing that photographs, usually radioed back to *Collier’s* by Joe Dearing, were not taken specifically to illustrate the text). But, accompanying two of Gellhorn’s articles, are drawings. Those illustrating ‘Blood on the Snow’ (27 January 1940) are by Gregor Duncan. These show a glamorous ‘girl correspondent’, blonde and lipsticked, who is identified with Gellhorn by the use of direct, first person singular quotations from the text as captions (*Fig. 2*):



*Fig. 2*

<sup>51</sup> Gellhorn, 28 June 1941, 16.

<sup>52</sup> Gellhorn, 30 August 1941, 16. ‘Her Day’ is presumably a play on Eleanor Roosevelt’s syndicated column, ‘My Day’, so linking the ‘First Ladies’ of China and America. There are also photos of Gellhorn accompanying Porter, 4 March, 1944, and 3 February 1945.

The other article illustrated with drawings is 'Night Life in the Sky' (17 March 1945), an account of an extremely brave action on the part of Gellhorn – taking a flight in 'the glass bulb between the twin tails' of a Black Widow fighter plane. The girl reporter figure is this time even more closely identified with Gellhorn as captions of first person quotations from the text are reproduced as though in handwriting, giving them the look of diary entries. The editorial introduction makes explicit the danger:

Collier's girl correspondent sat on a wobbly crate and flew over Germany looking for enemy planes at night. Her nose ran, her oxygen mask slipped off, her stomach got mad, she was scared and she froze.<sup>53</sup>

The drawings, however, completely undermine the effect of courage – albeit 'girl courage' – that has been built up since what they depict is an extraordinary-looking (masculine?) individual with a protruding jaw and unfeasibly long arms (*Fig. 3*):

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<sup>53</sup> Gellhorn, 17 March 1945, 18.



Fig. 3

The overall idea of Gellhorn produced by the paratextual material in *Collier's* is therefore a complex one: the magazine's 'own' envoy, placed at the centre of dangerous conflict (explicitly at the front) yet described as a 'girl' and depicted both as a glamour-figure and as ugly / masculine. The significance of this combination is returned to in the next chapter.

If this complex is the *Collier's* version of Gellhorn-as-reporter, what message emerges from her own texts? 'Night Life in the Sky', to continue the analysis, is the extreme of assimilation into the military's own experience: Gellhorn is, in effect, part of the crew of a fighter plane. After enduring the agonies of anticipation – 'no one spoke in the jeep'<sup>54</sup> – Gellhorn is inserted into a small space in the tail of the plane:

The radio operator was delegated to give me the necessary information. This was all so hopelessly mad that it could only be taken as a joke. He said in the dark, 'If anything happens, you turn this handle.'

'What handle? Where?' I said to myself nervously; I could not find the wretched thing.

'That will open the trap. Then turn this other handle on the right; it's wired but you won't have any trouble. That will drop the ladder out, and then all you have to do is fall out backward. You know where your ripcord is, don't you?'

'Yes,' I said sadly.

'If anything goes wrong with those two, you turn this handle on the cowling, and that whole piece of glass will fall out, and you can climb out through that; it's a little narrow with all those clothes on, but it will be all right, I guess. Well, that's about all,' said he. 'Have you got a cushion for her?' he asked the crew chief, and from nowhere a rather flat little sofa cushion appeared and was put on top of the wooden crate which was to be my seat. No one was intended to ride back here in the glass bulb between the twin tails, and there was no seat or safety belt.

'Oh, and here is your oxygen mask,' said the radio operator. 'It plugs in here and this is your earphone plug-in.'

I had given up hope by now; it was all too complicated, and I thought gloomily that every one of these darned wires would come undone, I would fall out without meaning to or get hurled off my crate and mashed against the confused steel sides of my little glass case and I was already cold, and so I decided to try very hard to think of something else, like for instance a nice hot bath or next summer or going to the movies.<sup>55</sup>

This is a multi-layered set of positionings: hints are given so that the reader is left in no doubt as to the danger of the enterprise – the lack of seat or safety belt, the escape hatch being too narrow, the suggestion that Gellhorn may not even know how to operate her ripcord. This works to emphasise the reporter's bravery, an effect reinforced by the use of humorous understatement ('I said sadly', 'mashed', 'a nice hot bath'). At the same time, this is a gendered experience: the correspondent is specifically sited in a place where 'no one was intended to ride' and the almost ludicrous gesture of her being given a cushion to sit on is recorded. The 'glass bulb between the twin tails' is, indeed, reminiscent of the space

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<sup>54</sup> Gellhorn, 17 March 1945, 19.

<sup>55</sup> Gellhorn, 17 March 1945, 19.

occupied by Randall Jarrell's Ball Turret Gunner. Waking to 'black flak', the gunner, on his violent death, is 'washed [...] out of the turret with a hose'.<sup>56</sup> Gilbert and Gubar suggest that this is an image of abortion, the turret a grotesque uterus.<sup>57</sup> Gellhorn's siting by the RAF may similarly be seen as a placing which reflects perceptions of her role as a female in war: an automatic separation of the woman from the warriors.

Gellhorn goes on to convey the sensation of absolute flight:

We simply hurtled into the night and soared for the stars. I have never been part of such a take-off; and the actual feeling of flying became so intense that one felt free of the plane and as if one were moving nakedly and with no hindrance through a sky [...] At hundreds of miles an hour we fled blindly through the night.<sup>58</sup>

The reporter is now one with the experience – the high point of assimilation – but the alignment shifts again:

We climbed in a matter of seconds from 11,000 to 22,000 feet. That does not sound like much written out but it felt like nothing human. One's body turned to iron and was crushed down, feeling as if an enormous weight were pressing on something that would not yield. My oxygen mask was too large and had to be held on. As I held it with my right hand and held onto some kind of steel shelf with my left hand (so as not to fall backward off my darling little crate), I thought that (a) my stomach was going to be flattened against my backbone, and (b) that I was going to strangle. [...] I had now reached a stage of dull resignation and I only prayed that we would stop doing whatever we were doing, and do something else.<sup>59</sup>

The correspondent's inexperience and fear now slightly distance her from the men in the front of the plane (who find the patrol 'boring'),<sup>60</sup> reflecting the physical distance between them. It is not, after all, an absolute 'fit', just as the reporter's equipment is the wrong size. At the same time, the positioning is adjusted slightly, again by understatement: the use of '(a)' and '(b)', the description 'dull resignation'. There is a faint self-mocking quality to this which re-invests the reportorial figure with courage. A final device reinforces this effect:

The pilot said, 'See the flak?' I had seen it away to the left. I thought it was low and far away, and I was sad for the unlucky men who were getting it. This proves forever the 'Ignorance is bliss' school of thought; the flak was shooting at us, the distance

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<sup>56</sup> Jarrell, 277.

<sup>57</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, 1994, 238.

<sup>58</sup> Gellhorn, 17 March 1945, 19, 31.

<sup>59</sup> Gellhorn, 17 March 1945, 31.

<sup>60</sup> Gellhorn, 17 March 1945, 31.

was too close for comfort, and I imagined that the shells went no higher than the tracers.<sup>61</sup>

Like Hemingway's addendum to his D-Day report ('We hit it right on the nose.'),<sup>62</sup> this late-disclosed information (another reference to physical positioning) serves to underline the danger to which the reporter has exposed herself.

'Night Life in the Sky' is the closest that Gellhorn as reporter gets to the battle experience – and, incidentally, is the most candid confession of her fear. Overall, in the dispatches, a character is being constructed, a 'Martha Gellhorn' who shares many of the attributes of the flesh-and-blood Martha Gellhorn and who can be summed up as a fearless, feisty, independent individual with a nice line in understated humour.<sup>63</sup> 'The Wounded Come Home' (published in *Collier's* on 5 August 1944) places this figure in a hospital ship serving the Normandy invasions (the experience described in Chapter Four). Gellhorn relates:

The endless varied ships in this invasion port were gray or camouflaged and they seemed to have the right idea. We, on the other hand, were all fixed up like a sitting pigeon. Our ship was snowy white [...] with many bright new red crosses painted on the hull and painted flat on the boat deck. [...] There was not so much as a pistol on board in the way of armament, and neither the English crew and ship's officers nor the American medical personnel had any notion of what happened to large, conspicuous white ships when they appeared at a war, though everyone knew the Geneva agreement concerning such ships, and everyone hoped the Germans would take the said agreement seriously.<sup>64</sup>

Here the *faux-naïveté* of tone reveals both the danger of the situation and an apparently sanguine attitude to it. In the version of the piece collected in the 1959 edition of *The Face of War*, Gellhorn inserted the word 'wistfully' between 'everyone' and 'hoped' in the last clause,<sup>65</sup> an addition that reinforces the humour-driven impression of *sang-froid*.

Finally, 'Cracking the Gothic Line', 'radioed from Italy' and published in *Collier's* on 28 October 1928, comprises a range of reportorial constructions and orientations. The piece opens, typically, with a geographical siting: 'the Gothic Line, from where we stood, was

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<sup>61</sup> Gellhorn, 17 March 1945, 31.

<sup>62</sup> Hemingway, 22 July 1944, 57.

<sup>63</sup> Gellhorn's brother, Alfred, still speaks of his sister's 'glorious sense of humour and [...] joy in laughter' (email to the author, 1 December 2003).

<sup>64</sup> Gellhorn, 5 August 1944, 14.

<sup>65</sup> *FoW*, 141. This is retained in later editions: see, for example, *FoW 1998*, 119.

a smashed village, an asphalt road and a pinkish brown hill'.<sup>66</sup> The third persons singular and plural are used – 'the infantry', 'they'<sup>67</sup> – but so, too, are the first persons singular and plural ('from where we stood'), creating a dialectic of assimilation and detachment. The distance between observer and participant is rendered in explicit spatial terms:

We watched the battle for the Gothic Line from a hill opposite, sitting in a batch of thistles and staring through binoculars. Our tanks looked like brown beetles.<sup>68</sup>

What here is an optical effect of distance is rendered later as a psychological position:

Meanwhile you could sit in the sand with a book and a drink of sweet Italian rum and watch two British destroyers shelling Rimini just up the coast, see German shells landing on the front three kilometers away [...] hear a few German shells whistle overhead to land two hundred yards father down, and you were getting a fine sunburn, and life seemed an excellent invention.

Historians will think about this campaign far better than we can who have seen it.<sup>69</sup>

Reading, drinking rum and getting 'a fine sunburn' while others are shelled and a city destroyed expresses considerable emotional distance, even while other indicators – shells landing only a few hundred yards away, contemporaneity opposed to history – suggest proximity. It is clear by now that Gellhorn's war journalism comprises complex gradations of engagement and withdrawal on the part of the reportorial figure.

Encapsulating this figure is the notion of kinesis. The reporter is the opposite of what Gaston Bachelard, in his analysis of 'topophilia', terms the 'sheltered being':<sup>70</sup> inhabitant of hotels, camps and foxholes, the war journalist's existence is one of danger, contingency, shallowness, impermanence, itinerancy. On not a few occasions, reporters have been mistaken for spies,<sup>71</sup> a phenomenon suggestive of borderline status – the journalist and the spy must both be part of, but essentially separate from, the subject of their observation.

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<sup>66</sup> Gellhorn, 28 October 1944, 24.

<sup>67</sup> Gellhorn, 28 October 1944, 24.

<sup>68</sup> Gellhorn, 28 October 1944, 57. As mentioned, Amy Porter commented that Gellhorn's 'Visit Italy' was a 'three-dimensional view of Cassino' (Porter, 6 May 1944, 70).

<sup>69</sup> Gellhorn, 28 October 1944, 58.

<sup>70</sup> Bachelard, xxxi, 5.

<sup>71</sup> E.g. 'To Be Treated As a Spy', Davis, 1915. Given the greater contingency of their status, as compared to men's, women in war are particularly vulnerable to accusations of espionage. There were many successful women spies in the Second World War (see Schofield, 1992).

Arthur Ruhl referred to ‘excursions’ arranged by the authorities in the First World War,<sup>72</sup> underlining the fact that visits to the front by non-combatants (whether journalists or politicians) were a form of carefully-managed tourism. His vocabulary of ‘strolling’ and ‘motoring’ conjures up nothing so much as a picture of the war reporter as a day tripper out for a charabanc drive.<sup>73</sup> Gellhorn’s dispatches frequently take the form of journeys, exploiting different modes of transport (ship, fighter plane, bomber, train). She was, in John Simpson’s words, ‘one of the great travellers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’.<sup>74</sup> But on occasion, Gellhorn expressed scepticism about the figure of the travelling correspondent. In *What Mad Pursuit*, Charis Day feels herself to be ‘a chronic tourist, with all the uselessness of the breed’.<sup>75</sup> ‘Portrait of a Lady’, refers to war reporting as ‘tourism’,<sup>76</sup> and in ‘About Shorty’, the woman journalist narrator disparagingly refers to herself and her colleagues as ‘Press tourists’.<sup>77</sup> Stressing again the comparative safety of the visitor, Gellhorn deprecatingly described herself as ‘an unscathed tourist of wars’.<sup>78</sup>

The last figure for examination is the woman war reporter in Martha Gellhorn’s fiction. The figure makes regular appearances:<sup>79</sup> Mary Douglas in *A Stricken Field* (1940), Ann Maynard in ‘Portrait of a Lady’ (1941), Elizabeth Dalton in ‘Goodwill to Men’ (1941), Jane Mason and Annabelle Jones in *Love Goes to Press* (1946); Lily Cameron in ‘Week End at Grimsby’ (1953), Mary Hallett in ‘Till Death Us Do Part’ (1958), Susanna in *The Lowest Trees Have Tops* (1969), and the unnamed reporters in, ‘Zoo in Madrid’ (1941), ‘A Sense of Direction’ (1941) and ‘About Shorty’ (1953). Of these, *The Lowest Trees Have Tops* is discussed in Chapter Four, and *A Stricken Field*, ‘Portrait of a Lady’, ‘Goodwill to Men’ and

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<sup>72</sup> Ruhl, 232-3.

<sup>73</sup> Ruhl, 129, 53.

<sup>74</sup> Simpson, 22 February 1998, 6.

<sup>75</sup> *WMP*, 148.

<sup>76</sup> *HoA*, 61.

<sup>77</sup> *HP*, 120.

<sup>78</sup> *FoW*, 12.

<sup>79</sup> Charis Day, in *What Mad Pursuit*, though a journalist, is not strictly a war reporter.

‘A Sense of Direction’ are examined in depth in the next chapter as they are more relevant to issues of participation.

‘Zoo in Madrid’ and ‘About Shorty’ both look back to the Spanish Civil War. In both, the unnamed narrator is a woman correspondent. ‘Zoo in Madrid’ pitches this figure, spatially and emotionally, both within and outside the conflict. Fighting is taking place ‘far down the street’<sup>80</sup> as the narrator and her companion, during a minor lull, visit the park and go to a bar. She reflects:

We were sick of the war. We had no right to be since we were not the men in the trenches nor were we the blind American in the hospital at Salices nor the little Spaniard in the first-aid post near Jarama, who had no arm.<sup>81</sup>

This geographical and experiential distance is, however, confused by a sense that the two *do* feel like weary veterans and share a camaraderie which gives them some degree of ‘ownership’ of the war. This ambiguity is stated in visual terms when the pair enter the zoological gardens:

We began to talk about how incredible it was to have everything mixed up together, the zoo and the gun positions behind the statue, and the café that grew up in one half of a shelled building.<sup>82</sup>

In ‘About Shorty’ the woman journalist narrator is a veteran, like Gellhorn, of Poland, Finland, China and the Paris Peace Conference, as well as the Spanish Civil War.<sup>83</sup> a member of the ‘voluntarily uprooted’.<sup>84</sup> But her sense of being a stake-holder is felt most strongly with regard to the Spanish conflict. ‘That defeat was ours,’ she reflects, ‘we carried it with us in our minds, in our hearts’;<sup>85</sup> ‘we owned the country [...] in a small but devoted

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<sup>80</sup> *HoA*, 110.

<sup>81</sup> *HoA*, 108.

<sup>82</sup> *HoA*, 111.

<sup>83</sup> *HP*, 122, 120.

<sup>84</sup> *HP*, 117.

<sup>85</sup> *HP*, 120.

way'.<sup>86</sup> But if ownership is stated explicitly, there is also acknowledgement of the limitations of journalistic participation: 'we had done nothing but accomplish an act of presence'.<sup>87</sup>

The story features a variation on the theme of involvement which is discussed in detail in the next chapter. Shorty, a German girl, is married to Otto, a Jewish doctor working in the International Brigades, considered by the Republicans to be 'the finest man in Spain'.<sup>88</sup> When she becomes the mistress of a Russian journalist and later a Spanish Colonel, a 'whore de combat',<sup>89</sup> the narrator's 'gentlemen war-correspondent friends' are 'surprisingly angry'.<sup>90</sup> Shorty, it is felt, is 'on Franco's side, distracting Juanito from his work and destroying Otto'.<sup>91</sup> This is a version of the woman at war encountered repeatedly in Gellhorn's work: sited parapolemically, she nevertheless interrupts and impedes the course of conflict, often with fatal results. In this story, the figure is 'redeemed': Shorty selflessly leaves her husband and baby in occupied Paris, knowing that, as a German anti-fascist, she would endanger them by her presence. The narrator herself finds her colleagues' 'free use of the Scarlet Letter tiresome and dishonest'.<sup>92</sup> 'About Shorty' is therefore a subtle collection of positionings: the narrating journalist is present (but 'only' present and feeling ambivalent towards her 'fine trade');<sup>93</sup> emotionally involved yet distanced through anonymity; sharing a bond with her male colleagues ('determined to do my job like a real newspaperman')<sup>94</sup> but not all their values; aware of the potentially lethal effect of female engagement in conflict yet nonetheless sympathetic towards Shorty ('probably Otto had a girl too').<sup>95</sup>

'Weekend at Grimsby' is another retrospective piece, nostalgic for the camaraderie and good times of the Second World War. The woman journalist narrator, Lily Cameron,

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<sup>86</sup> *HP*, 117.

<sup>87</sup> *HP*, 117.

<sup>88</sup> *HP*, 114.

<sup>89</sup> *HP*, 116. Hemingway also used this term (Caroline Moorehead, 136). The pun on 'hors-de-combat' carries the suggestion of outsidership.

<sup>90</sup> *HP*, 115.

<sup>91</sup> *HP*, 119.

<sup>92</sup> *HP*, 115.

<sup>93</sup> *HP*, 120.

<sup>94</sup> *HP*, 116.

<sup>95</sup> *HP*, 115.

finds the post-war period (the 'honeyed peace' of the collection's title) ghostly, unreal, desolate, unsatisfying, an 'endless duration':<sup>96</sup>

You always think in terms of war, Lily told herself, the war is over. The war was so easy compared to this that they ought to reverse the words; this is much harder and longer than war ever was.<sup>97</sup>

Visiting the Poles she once knew as aristocratic officers and who now, bathetically, have a fish business in Grimsby, Lily feels like 'a ghost going to a reunion with fellow ghosts.'<sup>98</sup>

What she finds instead is that the Poles have moved on: Sim is now with a very corporeal and unghostly local girl, with 'legs like tree-trunks', built on the 'scale of the Winged Victory'.<sup>99</sup>

Defined by their absence, the war years therefore represent for the narrator a time when she was most alive:

Witness the efficient way I advanced myself from Naples and Rome until I landed where I wished to be, in a line regiment of lovely goofy Poles, with sea bathing thrown in, at least in the summer.<sup>100</sup>

This is an 'engaged' position but it also suggests a somewhat superficial experience of war: a beach holiday in the company of attentive officers.

'Till Death Us Do Part' features two recorders of war: a photographer, Tim Bara, based on Robert Capa, and a journalist, Mary Hallett ('Marushka'), based on Gellhorn. Gellhorn and Capa were friends: Capa took photos after Gellhorn and Hemingway's wedding, which appeared in *LIFE* on 6 January 1941.<sup>101</sup> In the story, Bara / Capa is capricious (!), mercurial, charismatic; 'the most famous war photographer in the world'; 'a conceited opera singer' whose very presence confers newsworthiness on a conflict and who, like his pictures,

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<sup>96</sup> *HP*, 79.

<sup>97</sup> *HP*, 77.

<sup>98</sup> *HP*, 54. Gellhorn wrote to Bernard Berenson that she felt like a 'ghost' in post-war Europe (letter of 31 May 1950, f. 1<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>99</sup> *HP*, 75.

<sup>100</sup> *HP*, 55-6.

<sup>101</sup> 'The Hemingways in Sun Valley. The Novelist Takes a Wife', 6 January 1941. The magazine described the photos as 'intimate pictures of a great American at work and play' (49). A caption to a photo of Gellhorn with a rifle reads, 'Mrs. Hemingway's double-barreled Winchester shotgun is a birthday gift from her husband. Hemingway, an expert with firearms, taught her to shoot, is now proud of her marksmanship' (50). After these, there is a section headlined 'Life documents his new novel with war shots': photos taken by Capa during the Spanish Civil War are presented as illustrations of

is 'always prominently displayed'.<sup>102</sup> His death is reported in the *New York Times* 'in a box on the front page with a picture'.<sup>103</sup>

Bara / Capa is, therefore, himself 'news'. In the story, his itinerant nature is emphasised. His passport (Capa was a Hungarian exile) is 'rather a long document. It appears to be handmade. [...] It's different bits of paper, in different languages, with stamps on it, stuck together with Sellotape'. He has no next of kin, consul or permanent home, but lives 'in the moment'.<sup>104</sup> The photographer therefore takes on some of the qualities of his camera: the capacity to 'zoom' in and out (that is, to alter and exploit distance and perspective) and the detachment conferred by rootlessness. 'Marushka' shares these propensities: Bara notes that her attempt at post-war domesticity in London is like 'stabling a mule in a candy box'.<sup>105</sup> She has, he says, 'a pre-Soviet Russian soul, so fierce, so illogical, so elevated, so absurd.'<sup>106</sup>

This is a portrait of the war recorder as involved in conflict but nonetheless detached from it, circling round and within the subject. In this configuration, there are still further gradations. Lep, Bara's photographer friend, muses:

A writer can have what emotions he wishes or cannot avoid, at the time of getting his material; later he can sit down for a while and bring order out of what he saw and remembers. But for the photographer there is no time; there is only that one instant; he cannot afford any emotions for himself.<sup>107</sup>

Being there, for the photographer, is the *sine qua non*:

Bara was always there, where you had to be [...] always there, always seeing what had to be seen, always understanding what it meant, fast, fast, and with himself under control or forgotten, doing his work.<sup>108</sup>

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*For Whom the Bell Tolls* (52-7). An associate editor for this edition of *LIFE* was Carl Mydans, photographer for *Collier's*.

<sup>102</sup> *Novellas*, 273, 274, 278.

<sup>103</sup> *Novellas*, 277.

<sup>104</sup> *Novellas*, 271, 293.

<sup>105</sup> *Novellas*, 305.

<sup>106</sup> *Novellas*, 290.

<sup>107</sup> *Novellas*, 300.

<sup>108</sup> *Novellas*, 299, 300.

Indeed, Bara is not only present at combat but, on occasion, seems actually to metamorphose into a combatant: he ‘took pictures as if a camera was a gun [...] shot everything that moved’.<sup>109</sup> His pictures, which ‘force everyone to see what there was to fight’,<sup>110</sup> have a mobilising intent. Robert Capa’s own 1947 autobiography, *Slightly Out of Focus*, is an extended account of evasions of bureaucracy, to the point where, instead of ‘being there’ forming the pre-condition of taking pictures, taking pictures becomes the only means (through the gaining of accredited status) of being there: the photographer jumps with the American paratroopers into Sicily to avoid being deported back to the United States.<sup>111</sup>

Yet the camera eye, as argued in Chapter Three, is not necessarily the guarantor of ‘objective truth’. That Bara’s photos are artifices is undisguised: it is while choreographing two jeeps to seem like ‘a fine big body of troops’ – a tableau that is explicitly ‘posed’, ‘fake’<sup>112</sup> – that he is killed by a sniper. ‘Billings’ of the fictional *Herald* comments (recalling the title of Capa’s autobiography) that Bara’s photos of D-Day ‘were out of focus anyway.’<sup>113</sup> By coincidence, Robert Capa’s own ‘Instant of Death’ image from the Spanish Civil War – a Loyalist soldier apparently thrown back in the air by the force of a shot – has formed the focus of debate about photographic authenticity. It was captioned in *LIFE* of 12 July 1937: ‘Robert Capa’s Camera Catches a Spanish Soldier the Instant He is Dropped by a Bullet Through the Head in front of Cordoba’,<sup>114</sup> but whether the photograph really was an image of this referent has been questioned. Martha Gellhorn herself entered the debate on Capa’s side, writing to Cornell Capa that the doubt, raised by Phillip Knightley, was ‘disgusting rot’.<sup>115</sup> She prepared notes for a TV defence of Capa, her most explicit demand for ‘being there’:

To prove exactly how little Mr. Knightley understands real war and the work of correspondents and photographers, Knightley writes, ‘How did Capa come to be alongside him (the militia man), camera aimed at him, lens reasonably in focus, just

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<sup>109</sup> *Novellas*, 295.

<sup>110</sup> *Novellas*, 305.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Capa, 72-3.

<sup>112</sup> *Novellas*, 274. Capa himself was killed ‘in action’ – that is, in the act of photographing war – by a landmine at Thai Binh, in 1954, during the French colonial war in Indo-China, trying to get closer for a picture. Gellhorn’s story is set in the Indonesian uprising against the Dutch.

<sup>113</sup> *Novellas*, 274.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Death in Spain: The Civil War Has Taken 500,000 Lives in One Year’, 12 July 1937, 19.

<sup>115</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 12 November 1975, f. 1’.

as the man was shot dead?' Capa was there because that is where you had to be, where the action was - - combat photographs are taken in combat or not at all.<sup>116</sup>

It can be inferred from this that Capa – whose maxim was ‘if your pictures aren’t good enough, you’re not close enough’<sup>117</sup> – was risking death too: a case of the photograph conferring integrity on the photographer.

The taking of a photograph is in this sense also an expression of proximity. In the Second World War, the photographer reached the very centre of combat. Here is Capa on D-Day:

Shooting from the sardine’s angle, the foreground of my picture was filled with wet boots and green faces. Above the boots and faces, my picture frames were filled with shrapnel smoke; burnt tanks and sinking barges formed my background.<sup>118</sup>

Capa adds that when he tried to re-load his film, ‘the empty camera trembled in my hands. It was a new kind of fear shaking my body from toe to hair, and twisting my face’.<sup>119</sup> His 106 shots, taken despite the odds, were later reduced to eight when an ‘excited dark room assistant’ (the young Larry Burrows who himself went on to become a distinguished war photographer in Vietnam) turned the heat up too high and melted the emulsions. ‘The captions under the heat-blurred pictures read that Capa’s hands were badly shaking,’ Capa recorded in his autobiography:<sup>120</sup> an instance of the situation of the photographer being (erroneously) read out of a photo.

In these senses (the perspective and the emotional-physiological response recorded by the shot), a photograph is always of the photographer: from the photographic image it is possible to discern his or her position in relation to the photographed, in that the photographer is always where the picture is not (though, paradoxically, this also serves to put him or her ‘in the picture’). If the advent of the long lens meant the photographer could get further away, at least the illusion of closeness was preserved. Translated into reportorial terms, this aspect of

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<sup>116</sup> Gellhorn, ‘Notes for TV Interview in Defence of Robert Capa’ (1975), f. 3’.

<sup>117</sup> Lewinski, 92.

<sup>118</sup> Robert Capa, 148.

<sup>119</sup> Robert Capa, 148.

<sup>120</sup> Robert Capa, 151.

positioning is present in 'Till Death Us Do Part' as Marushka's response to the Nazi concentration camps. 'Bursting with angriness'<sup>121</sup> and 'frightening to see',<sup>122</sup> she displays an emotional engagement which corresponds to the photographer's shaking hand. It is a similar reaction to that noted by Cornell Capa when he wrote in the text accompanying the 1967 New York exhibition, 'The Concerned Photographer', of his brother's 'intense empathy and involvement'.<sup>123</sup>

There are other, simpler, ways in which a photographer's intervention in conflict can be effected. 'I hated myself and my profession,' commented Capa, as he photographed soldiers being stretchered out of returning bombers, 'this sort of photography was only for undertakers, and I didn't like being one. If I was to share the funeral, I swore, I would have to share the procession.'<sup>124</sup> A photograph is also the record of the fact that the photographer did not stop to help the wounded, of a particular outcome to an ethical dilemma which has often been deeply felt. It is significant that sight of the concentration camps has rendered Marushka bed-ridden: the war recorder silenced, inactive, impotent. 'Till Death Us Do Part' is an important register of positionings, exposing the potential and limitations of each.

The final texts for discussion in this chapter are Gellhorn and Cowles' play *Love Goes to Press* and *The Fifth Column*, Hemingway's Spanish Civil War play.<sup>125</sup> Hemingway's introduction to the latter sites the act of composition not just close to the action but at its centre: it is literally 'written under fire'.<sup>126</sup>

While I was writing the play the Hotel Florida, where we lived and worked, was struck by more than thirty high explosive shells. So if it is not a good play perhaps that is what is the matter with it. If it is a good play, perhaps those thirty some shells helped write it.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *Novellas*, 290.

<sup>122</sup> *Novellas*, 298.

<sup>123</sup> Cornell Capa, unpaginated.

<sup>124</sup> Robert Capa, 1947, 25.

<sup>125</sup> Hemingway's Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises* (1927) is a newspaperman, but his professional activities receive only cursory mention. Jake notes that an important part of the business's ethics is that 'you should never seem to be working' (Hemingway, 1994, 9).

<sup>126</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 6.

<sup>127</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 5. Hemingway elsewhere questioned the worth of the play (Hemingway, letter to Bernard Berenson, 14 October 1952, f. 2<sup>f</sup>; exact words cannot be quoted for copyright reasons).

The play features Philip Rawlings, a journalist and activist (who performs urgent yet mysterious tasks for the International Brigades), and Dorothy Bridges, also a journalist. Dorothy is described as a ‘bored Vassar bitch’.<sup>128</sup> Her understanding of the conflict appears limited:

PRESTON: Do you understand anything that’s happening here?  
DOROTHY: No, darling, I understand a little bit about University City, but not too much. The Casa del Campo is a complete puzzle to me.<sup>129</sup>

Her main object in life, it seems, is home-making designed to remove Philip from his duty:

DOROTHY: Don’t you want to have a long, happy, quiet life at some place like Saint Tropez [...] and go swimming and have children and be happy and everything. I mean, really. Don’t you want all this to end? I mean you know, war and revolution?  
PHILIP: And will we have the *Continental Daily Mail* for breakfast and brioche and fresh strawberry jam?<sup>130</sup>

Slight scorn becomes aggression:

PHILIP: Aren’t you a lady war correspondent or something? Get out of here and go and write an article. This is none of your business.<sup>131</sup>

It might be worth marrying Dorothy, Philip muses, ‘to see what the kids would look like’<sup>132</sup> but, in the end, he must ‘go alone’<sup>133</sup> because, as he tells her, ‘you’re useless, really. You’re uneducated, you’re useless, you’re a fool and you’re lazy’.<sup>134</sup> ‘Not useless,’ she replies, implying that he can at least sleep with her, but Philip rejects even this ‘commodity’.<sup>135</sup> Two other passages are worth quoting:

PHILIP: Granted she’s [Dorothy] lazy and spoiled, and rather stupid, and enormously on the make. Still she’s very beautiful, very friendly, and very charming and rather innocent – and quite brave.<sup>136</sup>

PHILIP: She [Dorothy] has the same background all American girls have that come to Europe with a certain amount of money. They’re all the same. Camps, college, money in family [...] men, affairs, abortions,

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<sup>128</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 9.

<sup>129</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 9.

<sup>130</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 27.

<sup>131</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 38.

<sup>132</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 44.

<sup>133</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 93.

<sup>134</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 93.

<sup>135</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 93-4.

<sup>136</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 50.

ambitions, and finally marry and settle down or don't marry and settle down. [...] This one writes. Quite well too, when she's not too lazy. Ask her about it all if you like. It's very dull though, I tell you.<sup>137</sup>

Jacqueline Orsagh comments:

Many have pointed to the unmistakable resemblance between the heroine and Martha Gellhorn as further evidence of Hemingway's affections. While that may be so, an analysis of the emotional, mental, and spiritual qualities of the heroine prompts one to speculate on the cause of Hemingway's distortion. He took Gellhorn's work, her ability to make rooms homey, her accent, her beauty, and her silver fox cape and used these items to make his heroine ridiculous. The author's attitude toward his heroine is not one of respect or indulgence; on the contrary, he convinces his readers that her purpose is merely sexual and therefore slight.<sup>138</sup>

It is not the intention here to contribute to the (probably irresolvable) debate on the extent to which 'Dorothy Bridges' of *The Fifth Column* illuminates the Gellhorn-Hemingway personal relationship (or, indeed, the Hemingway-Pauline Pfeiffer relationship). What instead is to be noted is the portrait of the figure of the female war reporter: ignorant, lightweight, prone to prioritise domestic issues, lazy, privileged, boring, solely a source of sexual satisfaction (a satisfaction which, at that, does not compare to that of serving the *Causa*). Unexpectedly, it is a rendition of the role which is reprised in *Love Goes to Press*.<sup>139</sup>

The two women war reporters in this play are Jane Mason of the (fictional) *New York Bulletin* and Annabelle Jones of the (fictional) *San Francisco World*. Gellhorn revealed of their composition:

The two female leads, Jane and Annabelle, were caricatures of Ginny [Virginia Cowles, her co-author] and me. It is very long ago, but I believe that Ginny wrote most of Annabelle (me) and I wrote most of Jane (Ginny).<sup>140</sup>

The play is, according to Gellhorn, 'a joke', a 'silly little tinsel play': it 'bears no resemblance whatever, of any kind at all, to war and war correspondents'.<sup>141</sup> Given this ontological status,

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<sup>137</sup> Hemingway, 1966a, 75.

<sup>138</sup> Orsagh, 88.

<sup>139</sup> The play was originally titled *Men Must Weep* (Spanier, 1995b, xiii).

<sup>140</sup> *LGTP*, ix.

<sup>141</sup> *LGTP*, vii; Gellhorn, letter to Charles Scribner, 31 December 1946, f. 2<sup>r</sup>; *LGTP*, vii.

it seems apt to treat 'Jane' and 'Annabelle' as caricatures – that is, as exaggerations based on a grain of truth.

Without doubt, the two characters display, on occasion, the admirable characteristics of the 'Martha Gellhorn' of the *Collier's* articles. They are feisty, independent women, more resourceful and scrupulous than their male counterparts, dedicated to their profession and completely fearless. Sandra Spanier rightly calls them 'funny, daring, sexy, quick-witted.'<sup>142</sup> But these positive traits are constantly undermined by others. One of the first things the audience learns about Jane Mason, for instance (significantly revealed by one of her male colleagues), is that she 'wouldn't get out of bed [...] in Helsinki on the grounds the climate was sub-human'.<sup>143</sup> This might seem to be the self-revelatory comment of a jealous competitor, but Jane's first remark to Annabelle reinforces the stereotype: 'I'll never forget when you turned up in Spain to battle for the under-dog in that black Schiaparelli number'.<sup>144</sup> Jane is not only lazy, afraid of the cold and obsessed with her appearance – 'Where *is* my lipstick?'<sup>145</sup> – but also falls for the plodding Philip (a choice of name suggesting a moment of revenge on the 'Philip' of *The Fifth Column?*),<sup>146</sup> whose idea of a suitable womanly occupation is re-reading the works of Trollope while making cheese. (Jane is at least relieved from this by sneaking off to report on the war in Burma instead of going to stay with Philip's mother in the English countryside.) The overall effect is confusing. While Jane is the embodied rejection of Dorothy Bridges' role, explicitly refusing the dull domesticity offered by Philip, she also displays (in abundance) the flighty, appearance-obsessed, 'feminine' qualities which render Dorothy lightweight. A contemporary review commented:

If this is the way Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles themselves behaved in the pursuit of their newspaper assignments, it would seem wise for the high command to banish all women journalists from the next war.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Spanier, 1995a, 81.

<sup>143</sup> *LGTP*, 12.

<sup>144</sup> *LGTP*, 19.

<sup>145</sup> *LGTP*, 40.

<sup>146</sup> Just as 'Jane Mason' might be an ironic allusion to Hemingway's affair with 'the beautiful Havana socialite', Jane Mason (Spanier, 2002, 266).

<sup>147</sup> Gilder, 18.

*Love Goes to Press* is, finally, a dramatisation of the gendering of access to war. The tension in the play between the male and female correspondents centres upon laying claim to information. Joe Rogers, divorced from Annabelle Jones, comments:

I'm allergic to newspaper women. I married one once. They never stop trying to scoop you, and when you scoop them they divorce you.<sup>148</sup>

It emerges, however, that perhaps the reality was rather different: 'what would you think,' asks Annabelle, 'if your husband's first conscious act after the honeymoon was to steal your stories?'<sup>149</sup> The issue, which has estranged them once, does so again after an abortive reconciliation when Joe usurps Annabelle's trip to Poland. The irony in the play is that it is another female character who actually achieves the greatest scoop of the moment: due to being confused with Jane, Daphne Rutherford, the ENSA troop entertainer, witnesses the Americans' taking of Mount Sorello. The irony resides in the fact that Daphne is exclusively composed of the most flippant of feminine qualities, first appearing to Jane and Annabelle in a mink coat and concerned about her chipped nail varnish.<sup>150</sup> That these qualities prevail both in 'getting there' and 'being there' suggests an inversion of the 'double helix'. As is argued in the next chapter, within the complex matrix of positionings which the woman war reporter may take up, Martha Gellhorn found this an ambivalent outcome.

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The range of textual positionings occupied by 'Martha Gellhorn' and her fictional female reporters matches Martha Gellhorn's own extraordinary progress through the war zone. The woman war writer is at once itinerant, deracinated, fearless, needy, staunchly independent, patronised, glamorous, masculinised, flighty and coolly humorous. Above all, she is *noticed*: the cynosure of field and text. As such, she alters the course of war, if only by diverting attention. Her being there is more than a simple act of presence.

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<sup>148</sup> *LGTP*, 10.

<sup>149</sup> *LGTP*, 19.

<sup>150</sup> *LGTP*, 38-9.

## THE END OF BEING THERE

Sefton Delmer opened the second volume of his autobiography, covering his years as a BBC broadcaster of 'black propaganda' to Germany during World War II, with a comment on his reportorial experiences in the Spanish Civil War and after:

What I had seen during those weeks that had followed the German breakthrough, had made me fiercely determined to abandon my work as a reporter and get myself a job more directly connected with the conduct of the war than writing articles about it.<sup>151</sup>

While this chapter has considered a range of textual positionings in relation to war, one aspect is still to be addressed. The next chapter moves from presence to participation, to consider the issue of the reporter's active engagement with war.

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<sup>151</sup> Delmer, 1962, 14.

## CHAPTER 6

### FROM PRESENCE TO PARTICIPATION

There often comes a time in the career of a war recorder when the need to put down the pen, camera or microphone and actually *do* something becomes, at last, overwhelming. ‘I was kept busy interpreting, consoling and calming,’ said Lee Miller of the American advance on St. Mâlo, ‘I forgot mostly to take pictures.’<sup>1</sup> ‘I took no more pictures,’ said Capa of D-Day, ‘I was busy lifting stretchers.’<sup>2</sup> ‘If you stand in front of a dying people, something more is required,’ said Don McCullin of Biafra, ‘if you can’t help, you shouldn’t be there.’<sup>3</sup> Leaving Poland, where the first Nazi bombs were being dropped, for Britain, Sefton Delmer swore to himself ‘that the observing and reporting stage of my wartime role was over, that by some means or other I would get into the fight myself.’<sup>4</sup> He went on to acquire a ‘dual capacity as a War Correspondent and a Psychological Warrior’, asked by Duff Cooper, Minister for Information, to do the BBC German broadcasts (he spoke German fluently) once or twice a week. In his biography, Delmer notes that his first task was therefore that of ‘replying to Hitler himself’: clearly an advance, in his eyes, on ‘mere’ journalism. Yet he also records a piece of Cooper’s advice: “‘Don’t drop your reporting for the *Daily Express* [...] that is valuable war work.’”<sup>5</sup>

This chapter is about the far end of the continuum of involvement, which began with self-effacing impassiveness and reached emphatic statements of presence. At what point – and this will be a matter of personal, as well as institutional, limits – does the war reporter go beyond empathetic engagement actually to participate in war? What, moreover, is the nature of the participation? The answer is, as Delmer’s experiences illustrate, another set of possibilities, this time ranging from writing ‘to make a difference’, through intervention of various kinds in the course of combat, to unhelpful interference, even hindrance, in it. This

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Penrose, 36.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Capa, 147.

<sup>3</sup> McCullin, 124.

<sup>4</sup> Delmer, 1961, 404.

<sup>5</sup> Delmer, 1962, 14-16, 20.

chapter details the various versions of involvement, and their intellectual background, before turning to Martha Gellhorn: firstly her journalistic aims and methodology and then how she dramatises these matters in her fiction.

Writing ‘to make a difference’ (or ‘perlocutionary’ writing) is the beginning of participation. Behind it lies the assumption that literature can bring about effects in the extra-textual world, a belief that entails a certain conception not only of textuality but also of the role and nature of the author. Roland Barthes’ 1968 essay, ‘The Death of the Author’, tends to be taken as a statement of the end of authorial involvement but, in fact, Barthes has this to say:

As soon as a fact is *narrated* no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death.<sup>6</sup>

But what is the situation if the fact *is* narrated with a view to acting directly on reality? What if writing is intended and taken to be *transitive*? The answer must be the resurrection of the author – a conception of the role which happens to fit the aesthetics of both the 1930s New Reportage and the Sartrean literature of commitment explored below.

For the former, as noted in Chapter One, the ‘presentation of fact’ was a key means of educating and, crucially, mobilising public opinion. The objective of social amelioration had an equivalent effect in poetics: if the writer was ‘there’ in the field, he was also ‘there’ in the text. As John Mander, in *The Writer and Commitment*, notes:

In the novel the author is present in his creation only in veiled, indirect, immanent form; in ‘documentary’ the author is a transcendent god who may visit and visibly interfere with his creation.<sup>7</sup>

‘A writer must be a man of action now,’ said Martha Gellhorn at the Second Congress of American Writers, 4-6 June 1937.<sup>8</sup> ‘Action’, in this context, requires unpacking. Gellhorn recalled of her early days at the Spanish Civil War:

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<sup>6</sup> Barthes, 1977, 142, original emphasis.

<sup>7</sup> Mander, 106.

<sup>8</sup> Gellhorn, ‘Writers Fighting in Spain’, 1937, 68.

I did nothing except learn a little Spanish and a little about war, and visit the wounded, trying to amuse or distract them. It was a poor effort and one day, weeks after I had come to Madrid, a journalist friend observed that I ought to write: it was the only way I could serve the *Causa*.<sup>9</sup>

This is writing-as-activism in the New Reportage sense of revealing facts to inspire reform. In this case and later during the Second World War itself, Gellhorn was writing for the eyes of Americans, trying to persuade them to help Spain and then other European states, through such means as material aid, volunteering and military action. Her intended audience was not only the *Collier's* readership but also her friends Franklin D. and Eleanor Roosevelt, whom she hoped to convince of the need to abandon the policy of non-interventionism. Her lecture tours and support for Joris Ivens' film *The Spanish Earth* were dedicated to the same end: to secure national participation. But the question remains: does this kind of 'action' go beyond 'disclosure to educate / mobilise'? Is there any more to participation by the writer than the simple act of telling?<sup>10</sup>

In 1940, the issue was debated in *Horizon*. In his 'Comment' for the May issue, Cyril Connolly announced:

The war is the enemy of creative activity, and writers and painters are wise and right to ignore it and to concentrate their talent on other subjects. Since they are politically impotent, they can use this time to develop at deeper emotional levels, or to improve their weapons by technical experiment.<sup>11</sup>

In the July issue, this was answered by a 'Letter from a Soldier'. Goronwy Rees disputed the idea that 'the war is the enemy of creative activity' (though conceded that 'a mind numbed by soldiering is hardly capable of formulating an idea or phrasing a sentence').<sup>12</sup> Rees's proposition was not that 'the writer should lay down his pen and take up arms'<sup>13</sup> – a

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<sup>9</sup> *FoW*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> One writer who did 'do more' in the Spanish Civil War was George Orwell, who, as noted in Chapter Two, fought for the Trotskyist POUM. Even so, he was to write: 'the period seemed to have been one of the most futile of my whole life. I had joined the militia in order to fight against Fascism, and as yet I had scarcely fought at all, had merely existed as a sort of passive object [...] I wish, indeed, that I could have served the Spanish Government a little more effectively' (Orwell, 82).

<sup>11</sup> Connolly, May 1940, 314.

<sup>12</sup> Rees, 467.

<sup>13</sup> Rees, 468.

‘misconception of the artist’s function’<sup>14</sup> – but rather that ‘the soldier has the right to ask that those with perception of values comprehend, analyse, illuminate, commemorate his sacrifice and his suffering.’<sup>15</sup> In the same issue, Connolly gave his response, an admission that now ‘we cannot afford the airy detachment of earlier numbers’, that hitherto *Horizon* had ‘failed to take the war sufficiently seriously’.<sup>16</sup> In October 1941, the journal carried a ‘manifesto’, ‘Why Not War Writers?’, signed by Arthur Calder-Marshall, Connolly, Bonamy Dobrée, Tom Harrisson, Arthur Koestler, Alun Lewis, George Orwell and Stephen Spender, which argued for making creative writing, like journalism, a reserved occupation:

Creative writers [...] have a skill, imagination and human understanding which must be utilized as fully as the skill of journalists. They bring home with a depth and vividness impossible to the writer of a newspaper report or feature article, the significance of what is happening all about us.<sup>17</sup>

This is some distance from Connolly’s original prescription that the writer should ignore the war. Nonetheless it too falls short of recommending that the writer put down his pen and take up arms. Gellhorn herself took the same line in a letter to her editor, Max Perkins of Scribner’s, in the month of the ‘manifesto’ issue:

It is as if all the time one were boiling inside with some kind of helpless ~~fury~~ indignation, enraged to see such a good-looking and possibly decent world always going to hell, and going to hell with such cruelty and waste [...] I must say I was very disgusted to see that Dos,<sup>18</sup> at the P.E.N. Congress in London, said that writers should not write now. If a writer has any guts he should write all the time, and the lousier the world the harder a writer should work. For if he can do nothing positive, to make the world more livable or less cruel or stupid, he can at least record truly, and that is something no one else will do, and it is a job that must be done.<sup>19</sup>

The matter is given lengthy theoretical treatment in Jean-Paul Sartre’s *What is Literature?* (1948), the ‘Bible of French Commitment’,<sup>20</sup> and extended exposition of Sartre’s concept of ‘committed literature’ (*la littérature engagée*). (Gellhorn read both Sartre and

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<sup>14</sup> Rees, 468.

<sup>15</sup> Rees, 468.

<sup>16</sup> Connolly, July 1940, 533.

<sup>17</sup> Calder-Marshall et al, October 1941, 236.

<sup>18</sup> John Dos Passos.

<sup>19</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 17 October 1941, ff. 2<sup>r</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Adereth, 38.

Camus.)<sup>21</sup> The date of first publication is significant. In her biography, *La force de l'age*, Simone de Beauvoir confessed of her and Sartre's student days:

Les affaires publiques nous assommaient; mais nous escomptions que les événements se dérouleraient selon nos désirs sans que nous ayons à nous en mêler.<sup>22</sup>

The Second World War – the Nazi Occupation and the Resistance – changed all that: ‘all at once we felt ourselves abruptly *situated*,’ Sartre writes.<sup>23</sup> The war, then, demanded something different on the part of the writer – *engagement* or commitment – and, although *What is Literature?* was published post-war, its thinking very much belonged to those years of conflict.

Commitment, Sartre makes plain in the first section, ‘What is Writing?’, is the preserve of the prose-writer. Poets do not ‘*utilize*’ words but render them into ‘phrase-objects’; while as for art – ‘that masterpiece, ‘The Massacre of Guernica’, does anyone think that it won over a single heart to the Spanish cause?’<sup>24</sup> The prose-writer, by contrast, ‘*makes use*’ of words: ‘to speak is to act’; ‘by speaking [...] I involve myself a little more in the world’.<sup>25</sup> Yet, in this first section, speaking has only limited perlocutionary effect: ‘the prose-writer is a man who has chosen a certain method of secondary action which we may call action by disclosure.’<sup>26</sup> At this point, Sartrean commitment seems little different from New Reportage encyclopaedism: the position occupied by Raymond Aron's potentially oxymoronic ‘committed observer’ (‘le spectateur engagé’):

To be at one and the same time the observer of history as it was unfolding, to try to be as objective as possible regarding that history, and to be not totally detached from it – in other words, to be committed. I wanted to combine the dual role of actor and spectator.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 318.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Public affairs bored us; but we counted on events unfolding according to our wishes without us having to involve ourselves in them’ (de Beauvoir, 19, my translation). Similarly, Judith Narden in *What Mad Pursuit*: ‘we didn’t think about it all, really. We just were, don’t you see’ (*WMP*, 134).

<sup>23</sup> Sartre, 2001, 163.

<sup>24</sup> Sartre, 2001, 5, 9, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Sartre, 2001, 11, 13, 13-14.

<sup>26</sup> Sartre, 2001, 14.

<sup>27</sup> Aron, 261.

But Sartre pursues the question, ‘why write?’ (the title of his second section). In an important passage he states:

The art of prose is bound up with the only régime in which prose has meaning, democracy. When one is threatened, the other is too. And it is not enough to defend them with the pen. A day comes when the pen is forced to stop, and the writer must then take up arms. Thus [...] literature throws you into battle. Writing is a certain way of wanting freedom; once you have begun, you are committed, willy-nilly.<sup>28</sup>

This is a call to arms that goes beyond the textual tactics of the New Reportage. Yet, despite the line, ‘a day comes when the pen is forced to stop’, it is not – yet – a bid to end writing. Indeed, the pen once taken up, certain ethical consequences ensue: ‘if a writer has chosen to remain silent on any aspect [...] of the world [...] one has the right to ask him, “why have you spoken of this rather than that?”’<sup>29</sup> Disclosure, therefore, must continue alongside extra-textual activism:

We must transform his [the reader’s] formal goodwill into a concrete and material will to change *this world* by specific means in order to help the coming of the concrete society of ends.<sup>30</sup>

The consequence of this is to raise another question: ‘for whom does one write?’, the heading of Sartre’s third section. (It is worth noting that Gellhorn asked precisely the same questions at the outset of her journalistic career: ‘how could I write about war, what did I know, and for whom would I write?’)<sup>31</sup> Sartre’s answer is ‘contemporaries’:

People of the same period and community, who have lived through the same events, who have raised or avoided the same questions, have the same taste in their mouths; they have the same complicity, and there are the same corpses among them.<sup>32</sup>

Works of the mind, like bananas, should be ‘eaten on the spot’, ‘freshly picked’: each book ‘proposes a concrete liberation on the basis of a particular alienation’ only understood by the

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<sup>28</sup> Sartre, 2001, 48-9.

<sup>29</sup> Sartre, 2001, 15. Adorno described this stance as “‘he who is not with me is against me’ emptied of theology’ (Adorno, 180).

<sup>30</sup> Sartre, 2001, 212.

<sup>31</sup> *FoW*, 12.

<sup>32</sup> Sartre, 2001, 51.

writer's own age and community.<sup>33</sup> A further aesthetic corollary attaches: Sartre remarks, in an echo of Lukács:<sup>34</sup>

After [Saint-Exupéry], after Hemingway, how could we dream of describing? We must plunge things into action. Their density of being will be measured for the reader by the multiplicity of practical relations which they maintain with the characters [...] Thus, the world and man reveal themselves by *undertakings*. And all the undertakings we might speak of reduce themselves to a single one, that of *making history*. So here we are, led by the hand to the moment when the literature of *exis* must be abandoned to inaugurate that of *praxis*.<sup>35</sup>

The Sartrean model is therefore of a 'situated' writer,<sup>36</sup> writing for his age (and within that age, for the proletariat, the last class that will rise up against alienation) a literature of disclosure ('*exis*') that is also one aimed at action ('*praxis*'): crucially, the writer will *also* be a man of action, this animating and validating his literary output. This last ingredient takes Sartrean aesthetics of commitment beyond those of the New Reportage.

But even this brand of writerly interventionism raises doubts. Theodor Adorno, writing on 'Commitment' in 1965, felt no wish 'to soften the saying that to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric':<sup>37</sup> the 'lyric' is often omitted from his words, obscuring the sense that it is to write anything other than protest literature after Auschwitz which is barbaric. Yet, he continued, 'when genocide becomes part of the cultural heritage in the themes of committed literature, it becomes easier to continue to play along with the culture which gave birth to murder.'<sup>38</sup> Instead, he called for 'autonomous' art to flourish:

Committed works all too readily credit themselves with every noble value, and then manipulate them at their ease [...] The notion of a 'message' in art, even when politically radical, already contains an accommodation to the world.<sup>39</sup>

Sartre himself arrived at a similar conclusion about words (in *Les Mots* (1964)), though from a different direction:

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<sup>33</sup> Sartre, 2001, 56, 248, 52.

<sup>34</sup> Sartre comments, like Lukács, on nineteenth-century bourgeois writers that they understood the proletariat 'with their heads not hearts' (Sartre, 2001, 92). He also observes approvingly that 'the American writer has often practised manual occupations before writing his books [and] he goes back to them' (Sartre, 2001, 128).

<sup>35</sup> Sartre, 2001, 183, original emphasis.

<sup>36</sup> Sartre, 2001, 115.

<sup>37</sup> Adorno, 188.

<sup>38</sup> Adorno, 189.

<sup>39</sup> Adorno, 193.

For a long while I treated my pen as a sword: now I realise how helpless we are. [...] Culture saves nothing and nobody, nor does it justify.<sup>40</sup>

To write in protest or to write without protest are therefore equally problematic: what, then, is left for the writer? Only silence. In his 1966 essay, 'Silence and the Poet', George Steiner notes that both Hölderlin and Rimbaud produced works of genius as young men and then stopped.<sup>41</sup> Identifying a 'powerful impulse' to silence in the twentieth-century, Steiner dates it, significantly, to 'c. 1914'.<sup>42</sup> The spectre haunting the literature of commitment, therefore, is the end of writing.

In war, this theoretical position is frequently matched by a practical humanitarian demand: if the pen is writing or the camera recording, then suffering is, by definition, continuing. Iris Carpenter describes a bombed school in England: 'we newspaper correspondents who were sent to cover the story brought out bits [of bodies] and sorted them into sacks.'<sup>43</sup> Gellhorn herself, on the hospital ship serving D-Day, helped feed the wounded, cut off their shoes, wash plasma bottles, light and hold cigarettes, pour coffee into bandaged mouths.<sup>44</sup> If this is participation which eases or perpetuates the course of conflict, beside it on the spectrum lies belligerence itself. The assimilation of the war reporter into the military has been explored in previous chapters: Richard Harding Davis's memoirs contain a photograph of 'an American war correspondent [John Bass] directing the fire of the Greeks' at Velestino.<sup>45</sup> But in the Second World War, the situation was governed by two Geneva Conventions. The first of these, 'The Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded on the Field of Battle (Red Cross Convention)' (1864),<sup>46</sup> made provision for how 'the sick and wounded' were to be treated. No distinction is made between soldiers and civilians. The second, 'The Convention Between the United States of America and Other Powers, Relating

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<sup>40</sup> Sartre, 2000, 157.

<sup>41</sup> Steiner, 69.

<sup>42</sup> Steiner, 69. In another essay, 'The Retreat from the Word' (1961), Steiner calls Hemingway's style 'a brilliant response to the diminution of linguistic possibility' (Steiner, 49).

<sup>43</sup> Carpenter, ix.

<sup>44</sup> Gellhorn, 5 August 1944, 15.

<sup>45</sup> Davis, 1898, between pp. 224 and 225.

<sup>46</sup> <<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/lawofwar/lawwar.htm>>.

to Prisoners of War' (1929), concerned the treatment of prisoners of war. Article 81 provided:

Individuals who follow armed forces without directly belonging thereto, such as newspaper correspondents and reporters, sutlers, contractors, who fall into the enemy's hands and whom the latter think expedient to detain, shall be entitled to be treated as prisoners of war, provided they are in possession of a certificate from the military authorities of the armed forces which they were accompanying.<sup>47</sup>

The law of conflict therefore detached the correspondent from the armed forces ('without directly belonging thereto') while according them the same protection if taken prisoner. Ontologically, this is an ambiguous position:<sup>48</sup> legally, it is a clear one. Correspondents in 1944 could not act as combatants, and it was for this reason that Hemingway was summoned for interrogation by the Inspector-General Third Army with regard to his activities at Rambouillet, charged with having 'persistently impeded the armies by trying to act like a character out of his own fiction'.<sup>49</sup>

The word 'impeded' is significant. The far end of the participatory spectrum-within-a-spectrum goes beyond intervention in combat to interference, even hindrance. Philippa Sheppard notes that Shakespeare's military messengers 'interrupt' the course of battle:<sup>50</sup> war recorders may halt the flow of action or even alter it. Gender is central to this issue, and in the discussion of Martha Gellhorn's journalism and fiction which follows, attention is paid to the effect of introducing females – glamorous females particularly – into the predominantly male arena of conflict.

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<sup>47</sup> <<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/lawofwar/lawwar.htm>>.

<sup>48</sup> The ambiguity is highlighted by subsequent legal reforms. The Geneva Conventions of 1949 extended all the protections due to combatants to war correspondents. They were not to be treated as spies and, even though their notebooks and film could be confiscated, they did not have to respond to interrogation. If they were sick or wounded, they were entitled to medical treatment and, if they were captured, they had to be treated humanely. This changed with the adoption of certain Protocols in 1977, which explicitly recognized journalists to be civilians and therefore due all the civilian (as opposed to military) protections. Now, journalists must not be deliberately targeted, detained, or otherwise mistreated any more than any other civilian. They therefore have an obligation to differentiate themselves from combatants by not wearing uniforms or openly carrying firearms. See <<http://www.globalissuesgroup.com/geneva/history.html>>.

<sup>49</sup> Baker, 653.

<sup>50</sup> Sheppard, 186.

## JOURNALISM AND ACTIVISM

Gellhorn's character as a participant has already been noted in her commitment to social reform. Her family history – particularly Edna Gellhorn's suffragism – was one of political activism. The magazine she corresponded for, *Collier's*, had a muck-raking tradition.<sup>51</sup> Her private views were the same. 'Do you think,' she asked Eleanor Roosevelt in 1938, 'any people have a right to a moral attitude which they will not back up with action?'<sup>52</sup> In the Second World War, however, opportunities for such action were limited. As a woman and a journalist, Gellhorn was barred from active combat. Having escaped from the internment imposed on her after her trip to Omaha beach, she wrote a haughty-toned letter to a Colonel Lawrence of the American Expeditionary Force's Public Relations Office:

As you know, General Eisenhower stated that men and women correspondents would be treated alike, and would be afforded equal opportunities to fulfill their assignments. This was later qualified to mean that, when American women military personnel (in this case Army nurses) went to France, women correspondents would also be allowed to cross. As far as I know, nurses were working in France towards the end of the first week of the invasion, but though eighteen days have now elapsed since the landing, women correspondents are still unable to cover the war.

[...]

I have tried to be allowed to do the work I was sent to England to do and I have been unable to do it. I have reported war in Spain, Finland, China and Italy, and now I find myself plainly unable to continue my work in this theatre, for no reason that I can discover than that I am a woman. Being a professional journalist, I do not find this an adequate reason for being barred.

[...]

I have, too frequently, received the impression that women war correspondents were an irritating nuisance, who, very tiresomely, kept asking to be allowed to do their job. I wish to point out that none of us would have our jobs unless we knew how to do them, and this curious condescending treatment is as ridiculous as it is undignified.<sup>53</sup>

'The only kick I have here', she told to her mother in a V-Mail, 'is that women correspondents are treated too much like violets.'<sup>54</sup> Her urge to participate on equal terms, to change things for the better, was ingrained.

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<sup>51</sup> Palmer, 235.

<sup>52</sup> Letter of December 1938, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Letter to Colonel Lawrence of 24 June 1944, ff. 1<sup>r</sup>, 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> Gellhorn, 14 June 1944, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

Yet Gellhorn's journalism (and her comments about her journalism) is restricted to hovering over the fine line between disclosure for its own sake and disclosure for the sake of reform: participatory possibly, but never radically interventionist. Privately, she told Bernard Berenson, she felt as if she 'were stuffing cake while the world starved', seeing 'no solution except to babble and forget.'<sup>55</sup> In her 1959 Introduction to *The Face of War*, she wrote:

When I was young I believed in the perfectibility of man, and in progress, and thought of journalism as a guiding light. If people were told the truth, if dishonor and injustice were clearly shown to them, they would at once demand the saving action, punishment of wrong-doers, and care for the innocent. [...] A journalist's job was to bring news, to be eyes for their conscience. I think I must have imagined public opinion as a solid force, something like a tornado, always ready to blow on the side of the angels.

[...] It took nine years, and a great depression, and two wars ending in defeat, and one surrender without war, to break my faith in the benign power of the press. [...] The guiding light of journalism was no stronger than a glow-worm.<sup>56</sup>

Finland taught her that 'I could not fool myself that my war correspondent's work mattered a hoot'; Java that 'nothing anybody wrote was going to shorten this torment, nor save one victim, white or brown.'<sup>57</sup> The most the war reporter could hope to achieve was 'keeping the record straight'.<sup>58</sup> If there was a particular moment when Gellhorn lost faith, it was Dachau which, as discussed later in this chapter, was her personal 'watershed'.<sup>59</sup> The ensuing strain of disillusionment accounts for her sporadic withdrawals from war, discussed in Chapter Four.

Wary scepticism therefore characterises Gellhorn's view on the reforming power of journalism. What action, if any, could her Second World War dispatches be hoped to inspire? Who, moreover, could be expected to take this action? The answer seems to be an American readership a long distance – geographically, psychologically, politically – from the killing-

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<sup>55</sup> Gellhorn, 18 February 1959, f. 1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> *FoW*, 1-2.

<sup>57</sup> *FoW*, 2-3.

<sup>58</sup> *FoW*, 4.

<sup>59</sup> Gellhorn, early 1970s, ff. 6<sup>r</sup>.

fields. In 1916, Theodore Roosevelt had battled against a Wilsonian anti-interventionism that, he claimed, 'would make Pontius Pilate quiver with envy.'<sup>60</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, Edith Wharton's writings were aimed at bridging the aporias between America and war-torn Europe during the same period. A generation on, Gellhorn despaired of the gap in her American readers' experience. Of the Gothic Line, she wrote, 'it is impossible to describe the hardships of their life; it would take too long and the words wouldn't mean anything';<sup>61</sup> of the Nazi torture rooms of Paris, 'you who are safe and will never be locked underground to die must force yourself to imagine this horror';<sup>62</sup> and, after a post-war tour of the United States:

The reality of most of the world now is hunger and desolation, gutted houses and factories [...] the burned-out tank, the ration tickets, the devious anguish of the black markets, the hopelessly repaired clothes, the cracked shoes and the wretched allotment of coal. I do not see how anyone can make that reality clear to Americans, because they have not felt it and experience is not communicated through the mind.<sup>63</sup>

In fact, in the late '30s, as Gellhorn began her career, the problem was even more complex: not just political isolationism / non-interventionism and public unawareness, but, as Nicholas John Cull puts it, an American public 'indignant at having been duped into World War One [and] still very suspicious of being propagandised'.<sup>64</sup> In *This Terrible Peace* (1939), the American journalist Helen Kirkpatrick offered a long, detailed list of reasons for this 'suspicion': Eden's resignation; Munich; the inadequacy of British defence preparations; Britain's failure to intervene in the Sino-Japanese War and over Abyssinia and German expansion; the 'Cliveden set's' 'peace at any percent'.<sup>65</sup> If American journalists at the beginning of the Second World War were to persuade – and the task of persuasion was to

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<sup>60</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, 1917, 142. Roosevelt was beaten for the 1916 Republican presidential nomination by Charles Evans Hughes, who went on to lose to Woodrow Wilson.

<sup>61</sup> Gellhorn, 28 October 1944, 6.

<sup>62</sup> Gellhorn, 4 November 1944, 74.

<sup>63</sup> Gellhorn, 4 August 1947, 27.

<sup>64</sup> Cull, 10, 29.

<sup>65</sup> Kirkpatrick, 15-41.

bring about US entry into a war which seemed very distant<sup>66</sup> – certain precautions had to be taken.

In politico-stylistic terms these resulted in a war reporting both subtle and self-reflexive: values are carefully encoded while the rhetorical tricks of suasion – or at least some of them – are deliberately exposed. The famous World War II broadcaster, Ed Murrow, for example, was firmly in favour of American entry and early quoted to his listeners the *Daily Express* telling the United States, ‘Don’t be like we were at Munich’.<sup>67</sup> The following are a few more examples from Murrow’s collected broadcasts, *This is London* (1941). First, on 26 August 1940, after a night of bombing in London:

Tonight they’re [the British] magnificent. I’ve seen them, talked with them, and I know.<sup>68</sup>

On 3 September 1940, in a rare example of Murrow not addressing his listeners as ‘you’:

One feels very small and humble. We can only continue to give Americans the news and the atmosphere in which it happens. They must reach their own conclusions.<sup>69</sup>

On 19 February 1941, after a factory visit:

Since some of you in America are working in factories making similar things, perhaps you’d like to hear about it [...] all the machines were American.<sup>70</sup>

Murrow notices ‘a shiny automatic machine made in Milwaukee’ and quotes its British operator as saying, “such a lovely machine – it never makes a mistake.”<sup>71</sup> In similar vein, the fabled war reporter, Ernie Pyle, told his American readers, ‘at home you have all read about London’s amazing ability to take it, and about the almost amazing calm of Englishmen in the face of Hitler’s bombs [...] I just want to confirm that what you have read in this connection is true’. On seeing in a tube station ‘the bundled-up, patched-up people with lined

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<sup>66</sup> Gellhorn viewed American entry as a means to defeat fascism: there is no sense that, unlike some intellectuals, she had a political vision of the war as ‘the [welcome] end of capitalism’ (see Piette, 40-1).

<sup>67</sup> Murrow, 143.

<sup>68</sup> Murrow, 165.

<sup>69</sup> Murrow, 168.

<sup>70</sup> Murrow, 252.

<sup>71</sup> Murrow, 253.

faces that we have seen for years sitting dumbly in waiting lines at our own relief offices at home', Pyle feels, in his 'obviously American hat', 'a terrible feeling of guilt'.<sup>72</sup>

These examples are rhetorically highly complex, but it is possible to single out a few noteworthy strands: the pointed even-handedness ('you must reach your own conclusions'); the implication that the British are plucky (translatable as 'their efforts deserve our support'); the superiority of American technology ('they really need us'); and the innocence of the victims ('it behoves us to help the less fortunate'). The same encoded messages appear in Martha Gellhorn's articles. Reviewing, in a series of pieces for *Collier's*, various countries' states of readiness at the outbreak of World War II, she emphasises a set of themes: democratic credentials (that is, conformity to traditional American ideals); preparedness, pluck and thrift; and the fact that, while it is too late for some nations, it is not for others.

Two of Gellhorn's *Collier's* articles in particular contain messages subtly designed to induce a desired reaction in American readers. The first is entitled 'The Lord Will Provide For England' and was published on 17 September 1938. Virginia Cowles, who accompanied Gellhorn on the fact-finding trip, provides the background:

Martha had come to England to write an article for *Collier's* magazine. Her editor, three thousand miles away in New York, was alarmed; he saw a civil war raging in Spain, he saw the French Army manning three frontiers; the German Army elated after its absorption of Austria; and the Czech Army digging in its third line of defence only twelve miles from Prague. He saw the British Isles, once immune from attack, now transformed through the development of aircraft into one of the most vulnerable places in Europe. 'What is the reaction of the British public?' he cabled. 'Are the people alarmed? What do they think of Fascism, or Aggression, or the possibility of war?'<sup>73</sup>

Gellhorn, Cowles reports, 'was at her wits' end': "'I can't cable back 'War! Who wants a war?'" she said indignantly'.<sup>74</sup> The article, nonetheless, conveys as much. On the first page

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<sup>72</sup> Pyle, 49, 53.

<sup>73</sup> Cowles, 132.

<sup>74</sup> Cowles, 132.

is a photograph which is a striking summation of its theme: it shows spectators at a bomb detonation demonstration holding their hands over their ears – England is preparing, it implies, but not listening. The London press, Gellhorn notes, ‘avoids scaring the readers’; radio ‘is [...] discreetly advised not to underline troublesome issues’; ‘newsreels are trimmed, so that bombed China and bombed Spain are avoided’.<sup>75</sup> More photos illustrate that ‘decontamination squads will rush to wash the streets of deadly gas after an air raid’ but no one seems to realise the implications: ‘it would be a relief,’ remarks Gellhorn, ‘to see some other folk as worried as I’.<sup>76</sup> At a lecture on air-raid warnings at a stately home, ‘a white-haired lady with small pearls in her ears’ says ‘somewhat crossly’ to the lecturer: “‘I do think ten minutes is an awfully small warning: it doesn’t give you much time to turn off the lights and close the windows and get everything ready to go down into the shelter.’” Gellhorn reflects, ‘the English are fortunate [...] they haven’t any imagination at all’.<sup>77</sup> Her indignation, Cowles recalls, ‘knew no bounds’.<sup>78</sup> The article, criticising England’s isolationism and complacency and failure to question what the rearmament might be about, works in a slightly different way to the examples from Murrow and Pyle already quoted. ‘Do not be like this – act!’ the message seems to be, rather than, ‘these people are like you – help them’.

But by 1 April 1944, the publication date of the second article, ‘English Sunday’, things have changed. Joe Dearing’s photographs for *Collier’s* are the mythemes of rural England: a thatched and beamed village street, fishing in the Thames, a country church – and a family at the fireside engaged in knitting (the grandmother), reading (the children), contemplation (the grandfather and the dog) (the missing generation, the parents, are presumably out on war work, or worse) (*Fig. 1*).<sup>79</sup>

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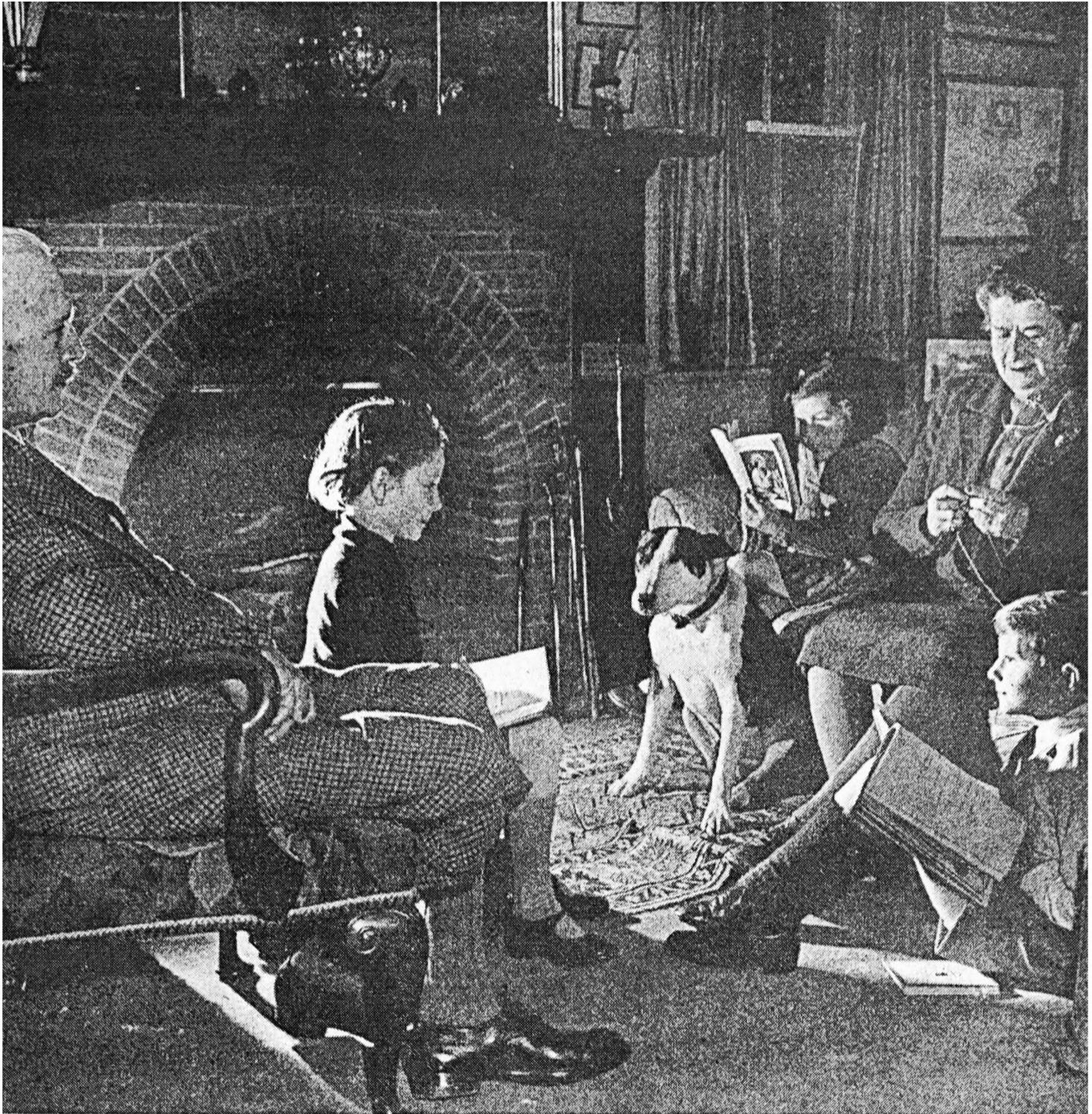
<sup>75</sup> Gellhorn, 17 September 1938, 15.

<sup>76</sup> Gellhorn, 17 September 1938, 17.

<sup>77</sup> Gellhorn, 17 September 1938, 36.

<sup>78</sup> Cowles, 136.

<sup>79</sup> Gellhorn, 1 April 1944, 60, 61.



*Fig. 1*

In this England, everyone looks ‘brushed and scrubbed and shabby’ and has ‘polished but cracking shoes’ (a complex image of effort, self-respect and poverty reminiscent of Gellhorn’s Mrs. Maddison in *The Trouble I’ve Seen*). The lock keeper, ‘who always won prizes for his flowers, would be spading the terraces where his begonias used to grow’, while spitfires drown out the vicar’s closing blessing<sup>80</sup> – an image reminiscent of the ending of the 1942 propagandist film, *Mrs. Miniver*. Back in the idyllic village, there is further unassuming heroism (indeed, the degree of selflessness begins to come across as faintly comic). Mrs. Thomas manages very well, Gellhorn notes, because:

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<sup>80</sup> Gellhorn, 1 April 1944, 61, 61.

Her husband believed she ate a hot meal every noon while he was at the factory. Actually she ate some bread and tea and perhaps a bit of cheese, and that way she could save her rations for the week end when he would be home.<sup>81</sup>

The general attitude is summed up as ‘we can’t complain, can we?’ It does not appear that political alertness is any greater in England than in 1938, but Gellhorn now recasts the atmosphere as a cheerful stoicism intended to reassure American readers. It is no longer a matter of drawing the United States into the war but maintaining public support for it at home.

In these instances, certain values and images are invoked to prick and then salve the American conscience for political ends. These values and images correlate to the idea of ‘England’ described by Christopher Mulvey in his analyses of nineteenth-century Anglo-American travel literature. Mulvey’s thesis is that American visitors (or, at least, those of them who were men of letters) looked for an ‘England’ that was ‘part nature and part dream or haunting’, a land of Shakespeare, ruins and gentle, cultivated landscapes, responding to what they found with a complex ‘mythopoesis’.<sup>82</sup> The ghost of this ‘England’ haunts Gellhorn’s ‘English Sunday’ and the ‘British pluck’ anecdotes of Murrow and Pyle: now, though, it assumes propagandist functions.

But appeals to a Jamesian idea(l) of literary England are no longer enough in the tough new world of the Second World War. Alongside these encoded messages are more overt stylistic attempts to maintain support for the war, to render what was happening in the European Theatre intelligible to home readers. These constitute another version of transatlantic mythopoesis, akin to what Paul Giles has termed the ‘virtualisation’ of America. Giles explains that a virtual image is ‘an image [...] of virtual foci’, ‘refracted’ or ‘inverted’ in a ‘foreign mirror’.<sup>83</sup> Literature written from positions of ‘estrangement’ (for Frederick Douglass, being a slave; for Henry James, being across the Atlantic) from America illuminates the nation’s ‘unconscious assumptions, boundaries, proscribed areas’ which

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<sup>81</sup> Gellhorn, 1 April 1944, 61.

<sup>82</sup> Mulvey, 1983, 10, 257; 1990, 7.

<sup>83</sup> Giles, 1-2.

‘national literature’ tends to leave ‘latent’ or ‘unexamined’.<sup>84</sup> For Giles, then, ‘a virtual America would be a mythic America turned inside out’ (though it might be argued that virtualisation is, itself, another form of myth-making that creates its own assumptions, boundaries and proscriptions).<sup>85</sup>

Applying this analysis to American war reporting from the European Theatre in fact produces some divergent results. One strategy dates from the early days of American international war journalism: trying to convey the strategic positions of the opposing Greek and Turkish armies at Velestino, Richard Harding Davis hit upon the idea of likening them to ‘two football teams when they are lined up for a scrimmage’.<sup>86</sup> Davis’s homebody comparisons grew sufficiently well known to be parodied by Charles Battell Loomis: ‘The effect of the Greek fire [...] was to color the fog beautifully and make Richard Harding Davis think he was at a pyrotechnic display at Coney Island’.<sup>87</sup> The ‘estrangement’ brought about by crossing the Atlantic here seems to have resulted in, if anything, a *reinforcement* of traditional national mythography. What is happening is metaphor or translation (both of which have the etymological sense of ‘carrying across’): unfamiliar scenes of war-torn Europe are being carried back across the ocean and reconfigured in familiar American reality. Gellhorn uses the same technique: land is ‘as flat as Kansas’,<sup>88</sup> a city ‘seems like a combination of Times Square on New Year’s eve, the subway at five-thirty in the afternoon, a three-alarm fire, a public auction and a country fair with the calliope playing’.<sup>89</sup> Yet this is not merely a one-way transaction. In another recurring trope, America is carried in the other direction across the Atlantic, in the sense that its full regional (though not necessarily ethnic) diversity is relocated in Europe:

Men from Georgia and Oklahoma and Texas and California found one another and spoke a word [...] the knowledge that there were other men from their own piece of home seemed to comfort them in the midst of all this strangeness and uncertainty.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Giles, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Giles, 14.

<sup>86</sup> Davis, 1898, 193.

<sup>87</sup> Loomis, 51. Davis’s colleague in the Spanish-American War and the Russo-Japanese War, John Fox Jr., said of him, ‘out of any incident or situation he could pick the most details that would interest the most people and put them in a way that was pleasing to the most people’ (Fox Jr., vii).

<sup>88</sup> Gellhorn, 17 June 1944, 60.

<sup>89</sup> Gellhorn, 7 June 1941, 13.

<sup>90</sup> Gellhorn, 22 July 1944, 16.

‘Bringing the war home’ therefore covers a complex range of strategies that nevertheless have in common that they invoke myths (whether ‘traditional’ or ‘virtual’) about both England and America. This outcome is unsurprising because such myths assume greater potency in wartime, when they are – or are represented as being – under threat.

Carefully-tailored hints to her American readership therefore reveal the perlocutionary intent of Gellhorn’s despatches. But, again, the questions must be asked. Can *tone* amount to activism? Are Gellhorn’s attempts to mobilise her readers anything more than well-meant disclosure? Was there, indeed, anything else she could do? These matters are dealt with at length through her fictional oeuvre, and it is to this that this chapter now turns.

#### FICTION AND ACTIVISM

Gellhorn’s fiction falls into two types. The first, considered in the present section, can be characterised as dramatised instances of practical, proactive attempts at benign intervention in conflict situations. The second, discussed in the next section, comprises cases where intervention becomes interference, involving specifically the effect of female presence – and its sexual consequences – in war.

Gellhorn visited Czechoslovakia in the spring and autumn of 1938, producing two articles for *Collier’s*: ‘Come Ahead, Adolf!’ (6 August 1938) and ‘Obituary of a Democracy’ (10 December 1938). She wrote *A Stricken Field* in Sun Valley, Idaho, in October 1939; it was published in March 1940.<sup>91</sup> The strategy of the articles feeds the preoccupations of the novel. ‘Come Ahead, Adolf’ is hortatory and monitory. Gellhorn comments that, despite the country’s willingness and readiness to defend itself:

One wondered how long any armed peace can last, and just how long the people in a country can bear the strain of waiting and watching, and how long Europe can impoverish itself for guns.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Orsagh, 92, 98, 108; Caroline Moorehead, 176-8, 198.

<sup>92</sup> Gellhorn, 6 August 1938, 45. Winston Churchill commented on the situation: ‘The Czechs had a million and half men armed behind the strongest fortress line in Europe, and equipped by a highly organised and powerful industrial machine’ (Churchill, 1950, 258).

‘Obituary for a Democracy’ was written after Munich.<sup>93</sup> Now anger is the overriding emotion. Gellhorn quotes a Corporal from the decommissioned Czech army who is walking home with his suitcase:

He began to talk, all by himself, as if he had to say it to somebody whether he was understood or not. ‘You realize we were all alone,’ he said. ‘England and France will see for themselves when it is Alsace-Lorraine he wants, or the colonies. Even the Poles will see when he wants the Corridor.’<sup>94</sup>

Czechoslovakia, Gellhorn implies, has indeed been talking to itself, misunderstood: it has been needlessly, and dishonourably, abandoned. Even so, as the quotation suggests, it is not all over: there is still time, there is still danger. England, France, the United States must be persuaded, warned or frightened into action before more democracies fall. (In ‘The Lord Will Provide for England’, written between her two Czech pieces, Gellhorn is scathing about British complacency: ‘Remember Czechoslovakia, the papers eagerly read and the speculation? We are on an island now, and the world is someplace else. This is England, and tomorrow there is probably a cricket match’).<sup>95</sup> *A Stricken Field* dramatises and contributes to the efficacy of her attempts to convince.

Gellhorn commented in her Afterword to the 1986 edition of the novel, ‘I found I could control and use the emotions of Spain [that is, the Spanish Civil War] in writing about Czechoslovakia’.<sup>96</sup> In her letters, she made the same connection: ‘Czecho made me fighting mad and sick with rage: but Spain has really broken my heart.’<sup>97</sup> Her theme – the necessity and limits of intervention on the part of governments and individuals – in fact matches both

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<sup>93</sup> The Munich Pact of 29 September 1938, concluded between Britain, France, Germany and Italy, allowed Hitler to annex the Sudetenland, a German-speaking area of Czechoslovakia, despite the fact that the Czech army was ready to defend it. The Nazis in the Sudetenland were led by Konrad Henlein. Non-Henleinists, Social Democrats, Communists, Jews and other minority groups were expelled from the area, becoming refugees.

<sup>94</sup> Gellhorn, 10 December 1938, 12. Virginia Cowles, in her 1942 memoirs, records a similar conversation with a Czech soldier: “‘When you get there [to France], you can tell them for us that one day they will look across that Maginot line of theirs and asks, ‘Where are those two million Czechs?’ And we won’t exist. They will fight alone”” (Cowles, 187).

<sup>95</sup> Gellhorn, 17 September 1938, 38. Similarly, Storm Jameson, in *Europe to Let* (1940), has the Czech General Jan Stehlík say about the English: ‘it doesn’t matter a damn about my little Heine and my Czech Bible, but your Shakespeare and your Bible, that’s terrible. You don’t care what happens to my soul, only about your own’ (Jameson, 1940, 116).

<sup>96</sup> *SF* 1986, 309. In fact, Spain does break into the text: seeing the Sudeten refugee children, Mary Douglas is moved to think of the children in Spain (*SF*, 82-3).

<sup>97</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, 8 June 1940, f. 2<sup>f</sup>.

political situations. The Afterword quotes one of her letters sent after Munich: 'I am wild with anger'.<sup>98</sup> Another letter records, 'I'll maybe lose my mind with the fury and the helplessness'.<sup>99</sup> An American diplomat, George Kennan, in 1938 a junior in the Prague American Embassy, recalls a morning when 'an attractive young lady wearing a collegiate American fur coat and tossing, in her indignation, a most magnificent head of golden hair' burst into the office and 'proceeded to burn us all up for our sleepy inactivity'.<sup>100</sup> The visitor – Gellhorn – spoke passionately about the Sudetendeutsch:

It was time for us to bestir ourselves. 'Why,' she demanded to know, 'don't you *do* something about it?'<sup>101</sup>

'What in the world could we "do" about it?' asks Kennan, noting the legation's lack of resources and the fact that this was in 'the days before Food for Peace and foreign aid'. He and his colleagues relegated Gellhorn 'to the category of ignorant, impractical do-gooders': 'we suspected that her fears were exaggerated'.<sup>102</sup>

'Why don't you *do* something about it?' might be *A Stricken Field's* epigraph (its actual epigraph demands unflinching acknowledgement of uncomfortable situations: 'Close your eyes to nothing').<sup>103</sup> Written and published pre-Pearl Harbor, this is a novel which dramatises issues of engagement in order to provoke engagement. The dust-jacket of the first edition proclaims:

*A Stricken Field* cannot fail to stir, and stir deeply, any man or woman who values the right of man to live as a free and independent citizen under his own government.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *SF* 1986, 307.

<sup>99</sup> *SF* 1986, 308.

<sup>100</sup> Kennan, 90.

<sup>101</sup> Kennan, 91.

<sup>102</sup> Kennan, 91. In fact, Gellhorn's assessment of the situation was correct: on 25 September 1939 Hitler said in Berlin that 'the Czechs must clear out of the Sudetenland by the 26<sup>th</sup>' (Churchill, 1950, 256). More than 20,000 Jews living in the Sudetenland became refugees (Martin Gilbert, 66) and of course this did not include the non-Jewish Sudetens also expelled by the Nazis.

<sup>103</sup> *SF*, preliminary pages.

<sup>104</sup> *SF*, dust-jacket.

The *New York Times* review concurred: ‘it is a book which should make all Americans conscious of living in a safe democracy.’<sup>105</sup> Having written for ‘Collier’s huge audience’, Gellhorn herself recalled, ‘gave me the brief illusion that I could affect how people thought by making them see what I have seen.’<sup>106</sup> Yet the doubt that inheres in this last quotation (perhaps deriving from the failure of ‘Come Ahead, Adolf!’ and ‘Obituary of a Democracy’ and her own practical efforts to stimulate intervention) permeates the novel. Arriving in Prague, the main protagonist, an American magazine journalist called Mary Douglas who has covered the Spanish Civil War,<sup>107</sup> finds the other (male) members of the press, sitting round a table, ‘each in the pose that would some day become famous in a photograph on the cover of his own book of reminiscences (if not already famous)’.<sup>108</sup> ‘Noting their well-fed, satisfied faces’, she realises with disgust that they are ‘thriving’ on the catastrophe.<sup>109</sup> Already, there is a sense of journalism as narcissistic, potentially impotent, possibly even predatory. This is reportage aimed not at moving but at titillation. Mary rejects it:

No propaganda they [her editors] would say. We want the inside story. Make it clear, make it colourful, make it lively. If I knew how, I would write a lament.<sup>110</sup>

To write to move, then, might be one form of action (as exemplified by the novel itself), but the work goes beyond this to consider what else might be done. There are three key instances. The first is the plot-strand involving the Communists remaining in Prague and their clandestine efforts on behalf of the victims of Fascism. Visiting them reinforces Mary’s sense of powerlessness:

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<sup>105</sup> Clayton, 1940.

<sup>106</sup> *SF* 1986, 303.

<sup>107</sup> ‘A transparent stand-in for Gellhorn’, in Orsagh’s view (Orsagh, 145).

<sup>108</sup> *SF*, 7. A line drawing of Gellhorn appears on the inside flap of the dust-jacket of the first edition of *For the Women*.

<sup>109</sup> *SF*, 10.

<sup>110</sup> *SF*, 82. Gellhorn seems to have been musing on this point of genre in her letters on the subject: on 8 June 1940, she wrote of ‘that land, those bald, always moving, forever hills, the claw sharp mountains, the green plains that go down to Aranjuez where they grow strawberries and asparagus. I don’t know. Maybe that is not a book but a poem. A lament.’ (Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, 8 June 1940, f. 2<sup>f</sup>) – the letter again assimilates Czechoslovakia and Spain.

Mary took cigarettes from her bag and offered them to Rita, who refused. She did not know what to say, she feeling soft and alien, possessed of every safety and every guarantee, and doing nothing to save these others, and unable to do anything.<sup>111</sup>

In the second instance, Mary's effect on the situation becomes positively deleterious. With a fellow journalist, Tom Lambert, she attempts to drive out to the country residence of the Czech President, Beneš, but in Wenceslaus Square the car hits a 'little man'. Mary and Tom take the man into the car and try to persuade him to go to hospital, but at the word, 'his eyes were brilliant with fear and he said, no, no, and fumbled with the door of the car.'<sup>112</sup> Then, a police whistle blows and Mary watches the little man:

He closed his eyes swiftly, as if the long pointed notes of the whistle hurt him. Then he slumped into the corner of the car, and his mouth sagged and trembled, and he could no longer keep back the despair that was blurring his face and bringing sharp tired tears to his eyes.<sup>113</sup>

There is real empathy in this description, but Mary and Tom have been thoughtless: in their attempt to save the Czech people, they have brought an individual Czech person – a Sudeten refugee – to the attention of the authorities. The little man is given 48 hours to leave Prague. Intervention by the press has been worse than useless.

The third instance which examines the limits of participation concerns another grand gesture. In her 1986 Afterword, Gellhorn noted that she 'had used two of my own small acts in that tragedy as part of the story'.<sup>114</sup> The first was her attempt to see Beneš, the other was delivering, on her second visit to Prague, a report on the Sudetendeutsch to the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sir Neill Malcolm. She also arranged a meeting between Malcolm, Sirovy, the Czech Prime Minister, and Faucher, former head of the French Military Mission,<sup>115</sup> aiming, at the very least, to get the 48-hour expulsion orders imposed on the refugees extended to a more reasonable fortnight. In *A Stricken Field*, Malcolm becomes

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<sup>111</sup> *SF*, 55.

<sup>112</sup> *SF*, 33.

<sup>113</sup> *SF*, 33.

<sup>114</sup> *SF 1986*, 312.

<sup>115</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 181-2.

‘Lord Balham’ and General Faucher ‘Labonne’. In front of the former, Mary Douglas has to find words that will persuade as never before:

She talked very fast, to say it all before she was interrupted. [...] She spoke of the little man who had harmed nobody [...] First, as she talked, she thought: this has to succeed, lay it on, lay on the charm, lay on the tears, anything, anything. But later, she forgot [...] who this English man was [...] what she remembered was the homeless people, and how little time was left for them.<sup>116</sup>

When she stops, she feels she has ‘been shouting in a cave with echoes’.<sup>117</sup> The 48-hour expulsion orders are commuted to a mere 24 hours. ‘I’m not Joan of Arc’, Mary tells herself, ‘I’m only a journalist’.<sup>118</sup>

In January 1940 came an incident of proactive intervention of a more personal kind. Returning to Cuba from Finland, where she had been reporting on the Russian offensive, Gellhorn stopped off in Paris. Gustav Regler, one-time communist, German novelist and member of the International Brigade in Spain, had (ironically given his anti-Fascist convictions) been interned as an enemy alien in a French concentration camp at Vernet.<sup>119</sup> Gellhorn tried in vain to pull strings to get him released.<sup>120</sup> She later recalled:

The only work I had to do in Paris was to try to rescue some friends who were imprisoned with the defeated Spanish army beside the Mediterranean, in holes dug on the beach at Argelès.<sup>121</sup> This project interested no one at all. As a successful politician said to me, while we both stuffed foie gras: My dear girl, a German and a former Communist, really, what do you expect? It was useless to point out that these men, forgotten behind barbed wire,<sup>122</sup> had been fighting Hitler long before anyone else thought of doing so, or had been forced to do so. I realized finally how unwise it was to be ‘prematurely anti-Fascist’.<sup>123</sup>

In the short story, ‘Goodwill to Men’, written in the spring of 1940<sup>124</sup> and published in *The Heart of Another* collection in 1946, an American journalist called Elizabeth Dalton

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<sup>116</sup> *SF*, 163.

<sup>117</sup> *SF*, 163.

<sup>118</sup> *SF*, 177.

<sup>119</sup> See Regler, ch. 16.

<sup>120</sup> Orsagh, 112; Caroline Moorehead, 138, 196.

<sup>121</sup> Argelès was a French concentration camp near Lourdes; Vernet is south of Toulouse.

<sup>122</sup> In his memoirs, Regler specifically mentions the barbed wire (Regler, 333).

<sup>123</sup> *FoW*, 74-5.

<sup>124</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 201.

attempts to get a German communist writer friend, Max Ohlau, who was badly wounded at Teruel, released from a French concentration camp. Elizabeth comments, hinting at the self-regarding though ineffective side of journalism: ‘I enjoyed very much the kind of life I had; it gave me a great sense of importance to be always in a violent expensive hurry’.<sup>125</sup> In Paris, she speaks to a French government minister; influential friends; various officials; Tom, an American journalist friend; and Karl Jensen, the head of the underground communists in the city. They all evade her politely. A French friend formerly known for her fearlessness tells her, ‘Forget your German Communist and eat a good lunch.’<sup>126</sup> In the past, Tom has been enthusiastic about the power of the press – “‘if we all blow it ahead of time [...] we can make it harder for the sons of bitches anyhow’” – but now he doesn’t ‘give a goddam what happens any more’.<sup>127</sup> Shaken, Elizabeth questions herself: ‘Who was I, this shrunken, almost invisible creature, to think I could help?’<sup>128</sup> Karl will do nothing to help because Max is useful as a martyr in prison and could prove ‘volatile’, that is, critical of the Party, if released: he tells Elizabeth, “‘I [am] trying to correct a too limited and subjective view of this problem. I hope you will help all the political prisoners.’”<sup>129</sup> The truth finally dawns: Elizabeth realises that Karl, whom she used to think of as an active force in Spain, ‘was not in Madrid [...] he sent men into Germany, he organised it, but he did not come himself’.<sup>130</sup> Karl, that is, has not personally engaged in events. Elizabeth’s last hope is that he will be forced to experience war non-vicariously:

I hope he [Karl] has to pay just once, he himself, with his fear and with the waiting nights [...] always knowing [...] that it could be you. I hope he gets caught [...] when the planes come over, I hope he lies at the edge of a road somewhere [...] with

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<sup>125</sup> *HoA*, 179.

<sup>126</sup> *HoA*, 170.

<sup>127</sup> *HoA*, 191.

<sup>128</sup> *HoA*, 205.

<sup>129</sup> *HoA*, 222, 221. This is chillingly reminiscent of the reaction Regler recalls of John Collier, communist activist and director of Roosevelt’s ‘Indian [i.e. Native American] Ministry’, whom Regler had asked for a lecturing job: “‘You have deserted us and that is treachery. No pity can be shown to traitors. Your idealism is dangerous [...] Nobody stays long in the top rank with us particularly when they have rebellious quirks. You have never grasped that. If you go on fighting against us we shall liquidate you’” (Regler, 365-6).

<sup>130</sup> *HoA*, 224.

only his hands over the back of his head and his face on the ground, he trying to flatten himself into the dirt.<sup>131</sup>

‘Goodwill to Men’, with its haunting line, ‘it could be you’, is about the individual’s plight and the individual’s response. Gustav Regler was released from Vernet because ‘Hemingway, Lady Willert, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and Martha Gellhorn had intervened on my behalf’,<sup>132</sup> but Gellhorn was to write in the 1959 Introduction to *The Face of War*:

If a life could be saved from the first of the Gestapo in Prague, or another from behind the barbed wire on the sands at Argelès, that was a comfort but it was hardly journalism.<sup>133</sup>

War cannot be stopped: at most only individual lives can be pulled from the wreckage. This, Gellhorn acknowledges, is scarcely the result of a writer mobilising opinion but of the bargaining power of passports and currency.

The last work to be considered in this section, *Point of No Return*, uses a specific issue – Jewishness – to explore the nature of possible participation. The matter has attracted critical and ethical debate. ‘To write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric,’ affirmed Adorno, but also commended Enzensberger’s retort: ‘literature must resist this verdict [...] be such that its mere existence after Auschwitz is not a surrender to cynicism.’<sup>134</sup> For Raymond Aron, the issue was also one of genre and voice: the following quotation is reminiscent of Mary Douglas’ findings in *A Stricken Field*:

My writing style falters in the face of events of such magnitude [the Shoah]. One can write about these tragic events only by analyzing them.<sup>135</sup>

M. Adereth notes that, in engagé novels, the story often concerns private individuals, busily trying to solve their personal problems and usually unaware of the role of politics in shaping their destinies: *Point of No Return* conforms to this pattern.

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<sup>131</sup> *HoA*, 225.

<sup>132</sup> Regler, 352.

<sup>133</sup> *FoW*, 2.

<sup>134</sup> Adorno, 188.

<sup>135</sup> Aron, 90.

Jewish blood was in Gellhorn's family: her father was a German Jewish atheist, her mother half-Jewish.<sup>136</sup> As a child, Gellhorn refused to attend a dance because a Jewish friend had not been invited.<sup>137</sup> In later life, between 1949 and 1971, she visited Israel seven times.<sup>138</sup> Israel was her 'commitment'.<sup>139</sup> Rosie Boycott calls it her 'blind spot',<sup>140</sup> on account of passages such as this from 'The Arabs of Palestine':

A thousand-year Muslim Reich, the African continent ruled by Egypt, may be a mad dream, but we have experience of mad dreams and mad dreamers. We cannot be too careful. The echo of Hitler's voice is heard again in the land, now speaking Arabic.<sup>141</sup>

The turning-point was Gellhorn's visit to Dachau in May 1945. She likened it to 'walking off a cliff and being concussed for life'; it was 'the difference between the young and us'.<sup>142</sup> Her response was to feel 'guilt, which I will never lose' for the fact 'that I did not know, realise, find out, care, understand what was happening at the time – and I should have'.<sup>143</sup> The sentiment is Sartrean – 'one is always responsible for what one does not try to prevent'.<sup>144</sup>

Ignorance and apathy were widespread. On 22 April 1944, *Collier's* published an article by Frank Gervasi, 'The Jew as Soldier', which gives an idea of attitudes towards Jews current even in liberal publications. Gervasi describes a British Jew saving a drowning Nazi and provides examples of Jews fighting: 'despite this,' he notes, 'the myth persists that Jews are not a belligerent people, but rather a race of merchants and moneylenders.'<sup>145</sup> He goes on to reassure his readers that 'Palestinian Jews are more like Americans than Russians, down to appreciation of ice-cream sodas and Cellophane packaging.'<sup>146</sup> The Nazis' anti-semitism is 'a cold-bloodedly designed policy calculated to bolster nationalism internally and to create political and economic problems within the democratic countries to which refugees fled.'<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 15, 16, 18.

<sup>137</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 19.

<sup>138</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 326.

<sup>139</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, early 1970s, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>140</sup> Boycott, 10.

<sup>141</sup> *VfG*, 221.

<sup>142</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, early 1970s, ff. 6<sup>r</sup>, 7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>143</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, early 1970s, f. 4<sup>r</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Sartre, 2001, 223.

<sup>145</sup> Gervasi, 11.

<sup>146</sup> Gervasi, 11, 28.

<sup>147</sup> Gervasi, 29.

The attitude expressed in the article is, though critical of anti-semitism, one in which the Jew is still firmly 'other', most evident in the surprising revelation that Jews like ice-cream.

*Point of No Return*, set during in the latter stages of the American campaign in Europe (from the Hürtgenwald to Berlin), concerns awareness, engagement and action – the moral necessity of becoming a stake-holder in the war being waged against Nazism. The two main protagonists are Lt. Col. John Dawson Smithers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and Jacob Levy, his jeep-driver. Jacob's ethnicity is noticed in the army (“‘I haven't got a Jew in my battalion’”) <sup>148</sup> but not regarded as a serious issue by himself. He comes from a family which represses its ethnic identity:

My old man don't belong to organizations or clubs and he don't see any other Jews but the Weinbergs and Isaacs because he says if you get in with a lot of Jews the first thing you know everybody's got trouble. <sup>149</sup>

Jacob has never been inside a synagogue; he has only considered the war so far as to think, 'what are the Americans doing here, and why didn't the Jews clear out of this stinking Europe long ago?' <sup>150</sup> He discards his Jewish identity without compunction: when he meets and falls in love with a catholic, Luxembourgish girl, Kathe, and she asks him his name, he gives that of his commanding officer, John Dawson Smithers, fearing that she will reject him if she realises he is Jewish. Jacob's love for Kathe gives him greater emotional investment in the war: worrying about her safety makes him realise 'this is the way men must feel when they [are] fighting at home'. <sup>151</sup>

But what finally engages Jacob Levy in World War Two is his visit to the liberated Dachau. Having seen its horrors, he drives his jeep into a group of laughing German civilians: <sup>152</sup> previously, he has borne no animosity towards the Germans, even hoping that he

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<sup>148</sup> *WoA*, 9. Aichinger describes anti-semitism in the American army in the European Theatre as 'endemic' (Aichinger, 56).

<sup>149</sup> *WoA*, 131.

<sup>150</sup> *WoA*, 135.

<sup>151</sup> *WoA*, 184.

<sup>152</sup> Ronald Monson of *The Daily Telegraph* also drove his car into a group of Germans after witnessing Belsen (Knightley, 2000a, 346).

has not caused those he has fought against too much suffering. Witnessing the death camp impels Jacob to insist on his Jewishness. In hospital after the crash, he tells his lawyer his name ‘ten times’ and his letter to Kathe directing her to forget him prints his signature ‘twice as large as the rest’.<sup>153</sup> The impact of this derives from his having previously exchanged his name for a WASP identity. But Jacob, having for the first time engaged in his ethnic community, receives confusing news: the Dachau inmates were not all Jews. Investment in the cause of the war, he quickly understands, must not just be on behalf of a particular group, but total: ‘it was one case where men were the same. Now he was glad he had done it for the others, too. He was glad he had been able to stop the laughing, once, for everyone.’<sup>154</sup>

For Jacob, at least, there is the possibility of individual action bringing immediate results. Such action, as already noted, would not be available to women witnesses of the same situation. The next section considers the participatory potential of the female non-combatant at war, as dramatised in Martha Gellhorn’s fiction.

#### **FICTION, GLAMOUR AND INTERFERENCE**

Gellhorn’s journalism was her own practical attempt to make a difference: to combat anti-interventionism, to help in individual cases and, later, to protest against nuclear proliferation. In her fiction already discussed, she dramatises the (limited) efficacy of this attempt. But, in the fiction discussed in this section, a much more negative view of ‘intervention’ emerges. Here, intervening is not benign, but becomes distraction, disruption, even fatal hindrance. Gellhorn’s anxieties centre on the figure of the woman war correspondent who is (as she was) glamorous, and who introduces sexual excitement and volatility into the male space that is the war zone. Given her own great efforts to enter the field, it is ironic that Gellhorn saw the ‘difference’ that women journalists make to be at best unhelpful, at worst positively harmful.

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<sup>153</sup> *WoA*, 297, 300.

<sup>154</sup> *WoA*, 304.

It is important to remember that Gellhorn grew up during the so-called ‘first wave’ of feminism, the era of the movement dedicated to achieving equal rights for women, particularly the vote, rather than to problematising the very nature of femininity (although Joan Riviere’s ‘Womanliness as Masquerade’ essay, a landmark piece positing the contingency of gender, was published in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* as early as 1929).<sup>155</sup> Edna Gellhorn was invited to become the first president of the national Suffrage Association.<sup>156</sup> Martha’s own ‘sort of feminism’, according to Caroline Moorehead, was that of seeing no conflict ‘between being a woman and achieving what you wanted.’<sup>157</sup> Rosie Boycott comments, ‘she took a dim view of any women who – as she saw it – needed to take shelter under the umbrella of the women’s movement in order to prove the qualities that she had spent her whole life demonstrating.’<sup>158</sup> These remarks underline that to impose a standard feminist (or anti-feminist) agenda on Gellhorn runs the risk of being anachronistic. In her war reportorial career, she adopted (or exploited) a spectrum of guises. Judith Butler writes:

Acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments [...] are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.<sup>159</sup>

Butler is here addressing the psychology of gender construction in the round, rather than particular, temporary career roles. Nonetheless, is it possible to derive from her argument an interpretation of the figure of the woman war reporter, as ‘performed’ by Gellhorn (and others), as protean, multi-faceted and fabricated? The conclusion of this section is that, while Butler’s notion of gender as performance (and performative), seems to fit the facts, it, too, is ultimately anachronistic. Gellhorn’s ‘guises’ were pragmatic, though a further layer of complexity informed them: an anxiety about the effect of female presence in the war zone.

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<sup>155</sup> See Phoca, 30.

<sup>156</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 21-2. She refused, but was active in local suffrage associations.

<sup>157</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 477.

<sup>158</sup> Boycott, 10.

<sup>159</sup> Butler, 136.

To some extent, this anxiety, and its real-life and fictional expression, is illuminated by sociological theories of ‘tokenism’, which are detailed at the end of the chapter.

What, then, were the ‘guises’ that Gellhorn and others adopted? The answer seems to be a paradoxical – and enduring – complex of toughness and glamour.<sup>160</sup> Here is Kate Adie on the point:

Wearing clothes that grab attention is wonderful on game shows and showbiz interviews, but if you insist on eye-catching garb, then you end up having your clothes discussed and your reports ignored. It’ll happen anyway if you’re a woman, with most viewers observing you lying on the deck of an operational aircraft carrier with jets streaking by and wondering why your shirt looks a bit crumpled. Better, I suppose, than being known as ‘that one with the sparkly jewellery’ or ‘her with the frilly blouses’.<sup>161</sup>

As a popular war song, sung to the tune of ‘Funiculee, Funicular’, had it:

Some join the WAACs to get a bit of glamour,  
What a mistake, what a mistake!  
[...]  
We know they will soon be making brown beds  
And scrubbing floors.<sup>162</sup>

The two adjectives Iris Carpenter uses to describe Ruth Cowan are ‘blonde’ and ‘dynamic’.<sup>163</sup>

She invokes Lee Carson with reference to ‘her lovely legs absorbed into their usual preposterous, shapeless, combat pants’.<sup>164</sup> Present at a visit by General Patton (a notorious opponent to women in the field) to the front, Carpenter recalls:

All I could do was stick my chin well into the collar of the GI coat borrowed to hide my feminine gender, and hope that none of the blond curls so carefully pinned up under the tin hat would escape to give me away.<sup>165</sup>

The image of tin hat and blond curls encapsulates the image: a femininity which can be hidden under masculine accoutrements but which, nevertheless, threatens constantly to break through – glamour beneath a G.I. coat.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Hermione Lee, noting that Gellhorn ‘trekk[ed] alone across the Pyrenees while writing fashion articles for American magazines,’ comments that ‘that sort of bold contrast was typical of her life’ (Lee, 1 November 2003, 13).

<sup>161</sup> Adie, 2003a, 263.

<sup>162</sup> Quoted in Burke, 128.

<sup>163</sup> Carpenter, 48.

<sup>164</sup> Carpenter, 208.

<sup>165</sup> Carpenter, 175.

<sup>166</sup> Or, as another popular song ran: ‘We don’t tote guns or bayonets, / Our powder comes in compact

Glamour was in the air in the late 1930s and early '40s: Hollywood's hey-day. Titles published in Britain and the U.S. in the period – covering novels, plays and what today are known as 'self-help' books – include Juanita Savage's *Southern Glamour* (1936), Evadne Price's *Glamour Girl* (1937), Harold Shumate's *Glamour Boy* (1939), Barbara Stanton's *Give Me Glamour* (1940), Kathleen Lindsay's *Glamour Girl* (1942), Paul Rénin's *Glamour* (1942), Lorraine Blythe's *Glamour Parade* (1946), Beatrice Eleanor Kent's *The Glamour of Friendship: and Other Poems* (1938), Peggy Fernway's (a pseudonym for Wilbur Braun), *The Glamour Girl; A Farce in One Act for the Fair Sex* (1936), Florence Ryerson's *Glamour Preferred: A Comedy in Three Acts* (1941), Terry Hunt's *Design for Glamour* (1945), Sali Löbel's *Glamour and How to Achieve It* (1938) and Ern and Bud Westmore's *Beauty, Glamour and Personality* (1947).

But glamour is a multifarious concept. The *Collier's* edition that carried Gellhorn's 'Children Are Soldiers Too'<sup>167</sup> also contained an article by the war correspondent Ruth Carson on black lingerie. Demand, Carson reported, was biggest 'around the camps and war plants', the best-selling items being 'gossamer-sheer, lace-rich nightgowns', followed by panties 'from \$1.95 to \$35 for a wisp of lace'.<sup>168</sup> But what could account for the popularity?

Ask the boys who buy it, and they say they like black lingerie because it's feminine, alluring, and more than a little bit wicked.

Ask the clerks who sell it and they'll say 'The war, new money, desire for extravagance and allure.'

[...] Ask the girls who buy it, and they'll give you the same reasons as the men – plus another: It's practical. It's good for travelling.<sup>169</sup>

These replies indicate the various facets of the phenomenon. The last is an interpretation (and justification) of glamour for consumption in the war period: the self-help books in particular (like their modern counterparts) have a hortatory, verging on didactic, tone. To give a specific example, Sali Löbel's entrancing book is sub-titled 'The Art of Living for

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sets. / We're petticoat soldiers, / Wacky WAACs!' (quoted in Burke, 132). Kate Muir notes that 'soldier girls are sexual icons' (Muir, 217).

<sup>167</sup> 4 March 1944.

<sup>168</sup> Carson, 19.

<sup>169</sup> Carson, 19.

Everywoman and Everyman.’ The first chapter sets out the ‘essential ingredients of glamour’:

- (a) Perfect Health.
- (b) The ability to succeed and yet to dream.
- (c) The power in the mind to winnow from life those things to remember and those to forget.
- (d) Work.
- (e) Laughter and Love.<sup>170</sup>

As Löbel notes, she has said ‘nothing about personal or physical beauty’:<sup>171</sup> glamour here is a mixture of cleanliness, exercise, industry and a cheerful outlook – all useful qualities, from a political point of view, to encourage in a population during war. Löbel’s other tips are also mindful of wartime economy: ‘shampoo the hair each week if a blonde and every ten days if a red-head or a brunette’; ‘better a heavy cloth coat [...] than a cheap dyed fur’.<sup>172</sup> In similar vein, a *Collier’s* article by Amy Porter, ‘You’d Never Know’, on the prime source of glamour, the movie industry, describes how ‘Hollywood discovers how to have a baby and still keep that slim and girlish figure.’<sup>173</sup> Lana Turner, Margaret Sullavan, Alice Faye, Joan Bennett, Rosalind Russell, Veronica Lake and Betty Grable are ‘Mommas all, and nothing bigger than a 25-inch waistline in the whole crowd.’<sup>174</sup> ‘Movie mothers try not to gain more than about twenty pounds,’<sup>175</sup> the reader is told. Film actresses were, crucially, role models, whose example was more likely to influence the wartime population than government exhortations.

In contrast, Hollywood make-up artists Ern and Bud Westmores’ *Beauty, Glamour and Personality* claims to be ‘the first to lay down fundamental principles governing the application of make-up as a means of dramatizing the personality and enhancing a woman’s charm.’<sup>176</sup> This, then, is a different version of glamour: a form of escapism from dull, albeit

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<sup>170</sup> Löbel, 11-12.

<sup>171</sup> Löbel, 12.

<sup>172</sup> Löbel, 61, 98. Similarly, an edition of *Vogue* carrying Gellhorn’s photo contained an article titled ‘According to Your Cloth’, which warned: ‘the coupons you have saved for spring must give you full measure of value in your suit or dress’ (March 1944a, 46).

<sup>173</sup> Porter, 29 January 1944, 16.

<sup>174</sup> Porter, 29 January 1944, 16.

<sup>175</sup> Porter, 29 January 1944, 17.

<sup>176</sup> Westmore, v.

dangerous, wartime conditions, and one which explicitly owns its illusory qualities. Containing photographs of Hollywood ‘stars’<sup>177</sup> such as Lana Turner, Sonja Henie, Rosemary Lane and Hedy Lamarr, the book features examples of what today are called ‘makeovers’: instances of the transformatory, protean nature of glamour, ‘the thing you so often see portrayed on the screen’.<sup>178</sup> *Daily Express* reader Mrs. Nichols thinks her changed appearance ‘greatly improved’ by Ern and Buds’ arts of maquillage but wipes all the make-up off before going home to her husband, worried about his reaction: ‘still, Mr. Nichols thought the permanent wave looked very nice.’<sup>179</sup> Ern and Bud remark:

Glamour [...] can both reflect and excite thoughts – the kind of thoughts which, in appropriate circumstances and surroundings may intoxicate the holder and beholder alike, and find swift and exciting expression without words – if you know what I mean!<sup>180</sup>

This, then, is glamour as allure:<sup>181</sup> transformative; sexually inviting and also sexually powerful; that specious ‘special something’ which makes a woman stand apart; dramatic and beguiling.<sup>182</sup> It is a version of the phenomenon familiar today as post-feminism, explained here by Camille Paglia, writing on Madonna:

Women’s sexual glamour has bewitched and destroyed men since Delilah and Helen of Troy. Madonna [...] has cured the ills of feminism by reasserting women’s command of the sexual realm.<sup>183</sup>

Glamour renders female reporters particularly egregious (in the etymological sense) within the war zone. The point made in Chapter Four is worth remembering here: the standardisation of military uniform in the nineteenth century made women (who did not wear it) ‘stand out’ (an irony as uniform itself is aimed at making a section of the community noticeably different).<sup>184</sup> It is a representation which is evident in the many titles of reviews

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<sup>177</sup> The book also has a little double twinkle-star motif on each page.

<sup>178</sup> Westmore, vi.

<sup>179</sup> Westmore, 10.

<sup>180</sup> Westmore, 18.

<sup>181</sup> ‘Glamour’, sharing its etymology with ‘grammar’, has a sense of ‘magic, enchantment, spell’ (OED 1): in the present instance, it is glamour’s ‘bewitching’ associations which are to the fore.

<sup>182</sup> Carole Angier makes the acute point, in relation to Gellhorn’s glamour, that ‘Martha was a natural self-publicist, who always got herself noticed’ (Angier, 6).

<sup>183</sup> Paglia, 10-11.

<sup>184</sup> Ewing, 11.

and articles relating to Martha Gellhorn predicated on the figure of the woman reporter as lone individual, the literal 'eccentric' in the belligerent context: 'A Woman at the Wars',<sup>185</sup> 'A World of Men',<sup>186</sup> 'A Woman at War with the World'.<sup>187</sup>

What happens, then, when such glamorous figures, with their heightened visibility, enter the war zone? As Higonnet and Higonnet point out, war politicises human reproduction, and hence the sexual act, for the simple reason that for warring nations maintaining the population level (and creating the next generation of warriors) is at a premium.<sup>188</sup> This politico-symbolic emphasis on women as reproducers increases the sexual tension that would be introduced in any event when women penetrate the predominantly male space of the front.<sup>189</sup> Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, Controller of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps and the Auxiliary Territorial Service, wrote:

No doubt the association of war and love is one of the oldest in our make-up and goes back to the roots of the subconscious and the earliest combats of two males for the female. Possibly the unconscious desire to leave offspring when life is to be risked is also a factor. At any rate, it is clear that, in war, the man is more ardent, the women more vulnerable.<sup>190</sup>

There are three key consequences. The first is that the effect is used to justify restricting women's access even further. Virginia Cowles recalled that during the Russo-Finnish war a Swedish woman journalist reported that a Finnish Press Officer had made advances to her: 'the authorities, exasperated [...] promptly slapped down the rule that no more women could

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<sup>185</sup> Nicolson, 1959.

<sup>186</sup> Cate, 4.

<sup>187</sup> Kathryn Hughes, 4. In this vein, Kate Adie compares women in war with the American 'female pioneer' (Adie, 2003b, 94).

<sup>188</sup> Higonnet and Higonnet, 37.

<sup>189</sup> Linda Mizejewski notes, in relation to the Second World War, that 'wartime sociological shifts result in male sexual anxieties that [...] are experienced more acutely than class conflict or other kinds of differences during the war years' (Mizejewski, 34).

<sup>190</sup> Gwynne-Vaughan, 49.

visit the front'.<sup>191</sup> The second, and related, consequence is a de-sexualisation on the part of women. Mary Borden reflected:

There are no men here, so why should I be a woman? There are heads and knees and mangled testicles. There are chests with holes as big as your fist, and pulpy thighs, shapeless; and stumps where legs once were fastened [...] How could I be a woman and not die of it?<sup>192</sup>

The third consequence is that the war experience for women becomes one of attracting notice and surprise.<sup>193</sup> Edith Wharton, for example, recalled that on her trips to the front during the First World War, she met with the 'speechless astonishment of officers and men at the sight of a wandering woman.'<sup>194</sup> *Vogue's* March 1944 edition contained a feature, 'News Makers and News Breakers', with photographs of Colonel Hobby (director of the American WAACs); Miss Florence Horsburgh, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health; Miss Barbara Ward, Foreign Editor of *The Economist*; Virginia Cowles and Gellhorn (Gellhorn's photo is by Lee Miller). It explains:

These are women in the news. Two of them – the chief of a women's army, and a Parliamentary Secretary – help to make it. The others record it: but with so sensational a success that in breaking the news, they have become News themselves.<sup>195</sup>

In Sartre's theory, being looked at entails 'an irruption of self'.<sup>196</sup> Indeed, another's look removes the possibility of perceiving the world because 'to perceive is to *look at*, and to apprehend a look [...] is to be conscious of *being looked at*'.<sup>197</sup> The result is a literal self-consciousness as the original viewing subject suddenly sees himself or herself as a contemplated object, or, in other words, perceives himself or herself from the outside. To translate Sartre's concept of 'le regard' ('the Look') from its specifically ontological context,<sup>198</sup> the woman war journalist's professional task of observing and reporting battle is compromised as she herself, by virtue of being 'news breaker', becomes 'news maker'. It is

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<sup>191</sup> Cowles, 301.

<sup>192</sup> Borden, 60.

<sup>193</sup> Jean Gallagher notes the distinction between the woman war recorder as 'ground of perception' and as 'object of contemplation' (17).

<sup>194</sup> Wharton, 1934, 351.

<sup>195</sup> 'News Makers and News Breakers', March 1944b, 42.

<sup>196</sup> Sartre, 1966, 260.

<sup>197</sup> Sartre, 1966, 258.

argued later in this chapter that Martha Gellhorn found the consequences of this switch in perception to be dangerous, even lethal.

Gellhorn was extremely conscious of her appearance and frequently acknowledged to be glamorous.<sup>199</sup> The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, in a ‘will-she-won’t-she’ piece on marriage plans to Hemingway, noted that ‘Miss Gellhorn spent a number of years in Paris, where she was correspondent for *Vogue*, a fashion magazine’.<sup>200</sup> Later her photograph, taken by Lee Miller, was itself to appear in the publication.<sup>201</sup> In 1934, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that she was ‘a familiar in all the great dress-making salons.’<sup>202</sup> *Time*’s review of *A Stricken Field* was headed ‘Glamor Girl’.<sup>203</sup> In a 1936 *Post-Dispatch* review of *The Troubles I’ve Seen*, Marguerite Martyn found it appropriate to note:

Tall, slim, blonde, with a gracefully poised head set off with the smartest of haircuts, it was the delight of Paris dressmakers to dress her up in their newest models and have her parade them, not as the usual mannequin at the race tracks, but as a personality among personages. She wore the first halter neck backless gown at the World Economic Congress in London [...] it became a hit that swept the fashion world.<sup>204</sup>

Gellhorn herself, in a letter of 15 December 1936, recalled of these experiences:

I was in Paris for a while last summer [...] There is terrible trouble in the world [...] but somehow it still matters whether Madam Zilch wore sequins or a fine gown made exclusively of cellophane and feather boas.<sup>205</sup>

On her first FERA field visit, to North Carolina, Gellhorn wore ‘a Schiaparelli suit in nubby brown tweed fastened up to its Chinese collar with large brown leather clips, and Schiap’s version of an Anzac hat in brown crochet work adorned by a spike of cock pheasant feathers’,

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<sup>198</sup> ‘Being-for-Others’: Sartre, 1966, 252-302.

<sup>199</sup> Carole Angier’s review of Moorehead’s biography is titled ‘She Wore a Yellow Nightie’ and features a photo captioned ‘Glamorous Gellhorn’. ‘Not only did Martha work hard at keeping herself glamorous,’ writes Angier, ‘everyone around her (it seems) had to be as well’ (Angier, 6). Hemingway, on hearing that Clare Boothe Luce was going to Burma as well as Gellhorn, named the phenomenon ‘the race of glamour girls to the war’ (Gellhorn, letter to Averill Harriman, ‘Saturday’ ?1941, f. 3<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>200</sup> ‘Martha Gellhorn Denies Plan to Wed Hemingway at Once’, 6 November 1940, 13A.

<sup>201</sup> ‘News Makers and News Breakers’, March 1944b, 43.

<sup>202</sup> Martyn, 1934.

<sup>203</sup> ‘Glamor Girl’, 18 March 1940, 92.

<sup>204</sup> Martyn, 3 October 1936, 2C.

<sup>205</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Gladys Tilden, 15 December 1936, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

her face ‘painted [...] like Parisian ladies, lots of eyeshadow, mascara and lipstick’.<sup>206</sup> According to Richard Collier, she ‘walked with a movie star’s sway’.<sup>207</sup> ‘She was Lauren Bacall,’ said Bill Buford, ‘but smarter and sexier’.<sup>208</sup> A *Collier’s* editorial remarked:

She stands out among gal correspondents not only for her writing but for her good looks. Blond, tall, dashing, and with a manner – she comes pretty close to living up to Hollywood’s idea of what a big-league woman reporter should be.<sup>209</sup>

Finally, in a 2003 work, *Seductress: Women Who Ravished the World and Their Lost Art of Love*, Betsy Prioleau lists Gellhorn (alongside Ninon de Lenclos, Lou Andreas-Salomé and Madame de Staël) as a ‘Scholar-Siren’. Gellhorn, according to Prioleau, had ‘burn-your-boats bravado’, ‘a killer siren who wowed men [and] notched up the choice honeys on her garter belt’.<sup>210</sup> Her nine-year romance with Hemingway ‘was one long erotic arm wrestle’ but she ‘suffered no shit’.<sup>211</sup>

Yet, impressive as this seems, it was not the whole story. Photographs of Gellhorn in the Second World War frequently show her in the company of soldiers: there is Martha in Finland in December 1939, Martha on a base in the UK in 1943, Martha with the Carpathian Lancers (*Fig. 2*).<sup>212</sup> In each case, Gellhorn is the only woman in the group – yet what is striking is how assimilated she seems. Where the UK pilots wear boiler suits, Gellhorn is in casual shirt and slacks. In Finland she wears a long coat like the others. With the Carpathian Lancers, she is actually sitting in their jeep, holding a rifle.

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<sup>206</sup> *VfG*, 69. This outfit apparently owed more to having to dress in *soldes* (bargain off-casts) than a predilection for designer labels. According to Vicki Woods, Elsa Schiaparelli, inventor of shocking-pink, is remembered as ‘a snazzy name with faint celebrity echoes’ (Woods, 29). In another story, Gellhorn refers to ‘the smart new war-models of Molyneux and Schiaparelli which made everyone look so trim and military’ (*HoA*, 171). It is worth noting that Charis Day, in *What Mad Pursuit*, refuses to buy a dress on the grounds that ‘a striker’s family could live for two months on the price of that rag’ (*WMP*, 79).

<sup>207</sup> Collier, 16.

<sup>208</sup> Ferrari, 35.

<sup>209</sup> Porter, 4 March 1944. In the same piece, some two-handed remarks from Hemingway somewhat undermine the effect: ‘She hates cold and it really hurts her. But she was the first journalist, man or woman, to get to the front in the Finnish War and she wrote fine dispatches from there, with the cold never above twenty below zero. She gets to the place, gets the story, writes it and comes home. That last is the best part’ (Porter, 4 March 1944).

<sup>210</sup> Prioleau, 141.

<sup>211</sup> Prioleau, 141, 142.

<sup>212</sup> These are all reproduced in Caroline Moorehead, 2003.



*Fig. 2*

This, then, is a glamorous woman who is also very much ‘one of the boys’. Significantly, Graham Greene, reviewing *The Trouble I’ve Seen*, called Gellhorn’s writing ‘amazingly unfeminine’.<sup>213</sup> Gellhorn herself, questioning why she tended to write about men, told Eleanor Roosevelt:

Perhaps it’s because I’ve never lived in a proper woman’s world, nor had a proper woman’s life, and so – feeling myself personally to be floating uncertainly somewhere between the sexes – I opt for what seems to me the more interesting of the two. [...] Or is that right? Women are just as interesting as men, often more so: but their lives seem to me either too hard, with an unendurable daily drab hardness, or too soft and whipped cream.<sup>214</sup>

In the same letter, she recorded her pleasure that Max Perkins had said of *The Wine of Astonishment*, ‘I wouldn’t have thought a woman had written it’.<sup>215</sup> Elsewhere, she explained,

<sup>213</sup> Greene, 22 May 1937, 950.

<sup>214</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 16 May 1948, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>215</sup> Gellhorn, letter of 16 May 1948, f. 2<sup>r</sup>.

'I wrote a war novel, only men really; and as if I were a man, being a man all the time in my mind.'<sup>216</sup>

It is not that the glamour-factor and the 'one-of-the-boys'-factor are anti-feminist. Rather, they signify the anxiegenic complex of tensions surrounding female presence at war. It is this which is now discussed in relation to two key works of Gellhorn's fiction.

Gellhorn wrote 'A Sense of Direction' at the end of the Spanish Civil War<sup>217</sup> and it was published in *The Heart of Another*. The story concerns an unnamed woman war reporter who is invited to go out to the Loyalist front and have dinner with Giorgio, an Italian commandante in the International Brigades who has obviously 'been saying successful things to women all his life'.<sup>218</sup> The reporter agrees to go 'because there had been nothing to write about for weeks since no one was interested in another shelling of Madrid':<sup>219</sup> her instincts, therefore, are purely professional. That the Commandante's instincts are not purely professional is hinted at when the woman's chauffeur and soldier chaperone leave him with her and go off laughing.<sup>220</sup> After visiting the trenches, the Commandante takes the reporter for a nocturnal ramble: known for his poor sense of direction, he refuses to be accompanied. The woman thinks, 'three is a nice number at a war where there is an outstanding scarcity of women.'<sup>221</sup> There is a tense atmosphere, ostensibly created by the fact that the pair might wander into enemy territory at any time but less overtly based on the threat of sexual predation on the part of the Commandante. He is taking the woman where she does not want to go: 'how bored or how lonely is he, how serious can this get? [...] Where are we anyhow?'<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Bernard Berenson, 17 August 1953, f. 2'.

<sup>217</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 163.

<sup>218</sup> *HoA*, 121. Caroline Moorehead identifies 'Giorgio' as Randolfo Pacciardi, first commander of the Garibaldi Battalion in Spain, who tried to get Gellhorn to put her hand on the front of his trousers during a car trip (163). Jacqueline Orsagh suggests he is one General Modesto, who made three passes at Gellhorn in front of Hemingway (85).

<sup>219</sup> *HoA*, 122.

<sup>220</sup> *HoA*, 126.

<sup>221</sup> *HoA*, 126.

<sup>222</sup> *HoA*, 137.

Yet 'A Sense of Direction' is more nuanced than a simple account of male predation. It is notable that the presence of the woman reporter is inescapably one of *difference*: she is too tall for the trenches, the soldiers regard her as talismanic.<sup>223</sup> When the Commandante lies down next to her, she asks him, "'haven't you a wife?'"<sup>224</sup> but quickly reflects:

I thought rapidly all the old sentimental things: he might be killed tomorrow, that kind of thing. Only here, wherever we were, it was not so sentimental. He might be killed tomorrow at that.<sup>225</sup>

As the object of the Commandante's contemplation, the woman journalist has ceased to be the observing / reporting subject in relation to war. In Sartre's terms 'looked at', she now feels 'ashamed'.<sup>226</sup> (Sartre writes: 'shame [...] is shame of *self*; it is the *recognition* of the fact that I am indeed that object which the Other is looking at and judging.)<sup>227</sup> What 'A Sense of Direction' evokes, therefore, is a lack of a sense of direction: what should a woman committed to the cause do in such transformed circumstances?

'Portrait of a Lady', written in the spring of 1940 at the same time as 'Goodwill to Men' and published in *The Heart of Another*,<sup>228</sup> takes the issue even further, investigating the possibility that female presence does not just 'interrupt' the course of conflict but actually, through the sexual consequences, causes harm. Iris Carpenter commented:

Always they [the Army's Public Relations' Division] came back to the conclusion that, no matter how good or necessary the [women's] reportage, it would still never make up for the embarrassment of having women in the front lines. They might get hurt. And nobody wanted that in his command. Apart from getting hurt, there was still what the British War Office persisted with nice reticence in referring to as 'the cloakroom question' and the Americans bluntly described as 'the latrine business'.<sup>229</sup>

Carpenter relates that Dixie Tighe of the International News Service asked for 'a little girl's room and a sentry'. Then, with a 'dazzling smile' at the Colonel, she said, "'Guess you'd do'". Another anecdote mentions a woman correspondent leaping out of a car in the desert

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<sup>223</sup> *HoA*, 129, 130.

<sup>224</sup> *HoA*, 138.

<sup>225</sup> *HoA*, 138-9.

<sup>226</sup> *HoA*, 138.

<sup>227</sup> Sartre, 1966, 261.

<sup>228</sup> Caroline Moorehead, 201.

<sup>229</sup> Carpenter, 34.

‘to give a soldier, fundamentally occupied with unaffectedness common to men secure in the belief that they are habitating a purely masculine world, a bigger shock than he ever got from the enemy.’<sup>230</sup> This, then, is distraction, potentially even hindrance. In ‘Portrait of a Lady’, distraction becomes lethal.

The story features another American woman war reporter, Ann Maynard, sent, like Gellhorn and Cowles, to report on the Russo-Finnish War. Her initial engagement in the conflict is professional, the seeking of facts or (the word is important, given its sexual connotations) *knowledge*. Early in the story, Mrs. Maynard is waiting in the forest with the Finnish soldiers, anticipating an attack:

I am here, she thought. I am here where no one has been. I know them, I have seen it and heard it and I am the only one.<sup>231</sup>

The ‘knowledge’ in which she here exults is the scoop of the investigative journalist. Yet meeting Lahti, an ace Finnish pilot, stirs other feelings in Mrs. Maynard. He, she continually senses, regards her as a non-participant, an outsider: ‘as a woman and a foreigner besides, she would have no right to speak of the war.’<sup>232</sup> This sense, and her growing attraction to Lahti, affect Mrs. Maynard’s perception of journalistic usefulness and hence her own participatory potential. Telling him defensively, ‘it makes good propaganda, you know, the writing, and that helps your country’, she broods to herself, ‘I’ve [...] helped them [...] I put the blame squarely on the Russians [...] my God, they couldn’t buy such propaganda.’<sup>233</sup> Even so, fearing that this is inadequate, she resolves to be of service ‘not just with the writing’ but in going to London, Paris and Washington, to ‘speak to the right people’ in order to get the Finns more planes. But that, too, seems insufficient, so she will ‘stand for six hours on the roofs [...] to watch for planes and sound the air-raid signals.’<sup>234</sup>

Question-marks, therefore, hover over Mrs. Maynard’s presence and usefulness. ‘It is not safe for a woman,’ one of the Finns remarks; another tells her, ‘it is ridiculous for you to

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<sup>230</sup> Carpenter, 35.

<sup>231</sup> *HoA*, 65.

<sup>232</sup> *HoA*, 70.

<sup>233</sup> *HoA*, 61, 74.

<sup>234</sup> *HoA*, 74.

be here at all.’<sup>235</sup> Lahti thinks ‘furiously’: ‘she came, almost naked [...] to disturb them, to make their work harder.’<sup>236</sup> Mrs. Maynard constantly complains of the cold<sup>237</sup> yet wears a silk shirt for dinner, she takes scarce servants away from their duties to build a fire for her, she always wants to sleep and fails to realise that if she does not hurry out of the way of the bombs, she is endangering others’ lives too.<sup>238</sup> Above all, she is glamorous:

She was used to looking beautiful and she liked it and needed it: and she hated looking this way [red with cold] [...] even if only that fool of a Benno and that nice ox Carl were there to see her.<sup>239</sup>

Dressing for dinner with the officers, she ponders, ‘would it be better to leave off the mascara and go down with my eyes looking shiny and crinkled up?’; looking at her clothes, she thinks almost comically, ‘how can I combine?’, eventually deciding on a silk shirt with her ski-pants, ‘feminine to the waist’ (a significant androgyny reminiscent of Iris Carpenter’s tin hat and curls and Lee Carson’s ‘lovely legs’ in combat pants).<sup>240</sup> Her perception of the Russo-Finnish conflict is: ‘I’ll never get over this trip; my skin is practically ruined’.<sup>241</sup>

This is the seductive, predatory face of glamour. It is not lost on Lahti, who hates her ‘for the way she entered a room, demanding everyone’s attention, forcing herself and her body on them all.’ The crucial point is the deleterious effect it will have on the men: her being there ‘will make it harder for his pilots, to make them want what they can’t have’.<sup>242</sup> The men sitting in the same mess watch, listen to and smell her. At the front, they ‘sit up straight and stare’.<sup>243</sup> Here glamour confers egregiousness, the quality of standing out, which in turn disrupts and distracts from the smooth operation of war. In Lahti’s view, Mrs. Maynard is ‘a spoiled mean lap-dog’ – ‘this war is not run for visiting women’<sup>244</sup> – and the

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<sup>235</sup> *HoA*, 52, 65.

<sup>236</sup> *HoA*, 81.

<sup>237</sup> Gellhorn herself wrote of Finland, ‘snow is very pretty if you like it but I do not like it, and I feel one hundred years old and frozen into my marrow and dead with weariness and almost sick to get back’ (Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, 20 December 1940, f. 1’).

<sup>238</sup> *HoA*, 78.

<sup>239</sup> *HoA*, 51.

<sup>240</sup> *HoA*, 78.

<sup>241</sup> *HoA*, 73-4.

<sup>242</sup> *HoA*, 81.

<sup>243</sup> *HoA*, 62.

<sup>244</sup> *HoA*, p. 72.

reader is inclined to agree. When he finally kisses her, she is 'sick-ashamed that he should have seen what she wanted and given it to her so casually'.<sup>245</sup>

Intercourse with Lahti represents Mrs. Maynard's fullest 'engagement' in the Russo-Finnish conflict, an engagement from which she withdraws the following morning on receiving news of his air-crash. Far from furthering his cause, she has actually helped to kill him by depriving him of the sleep he needed before the morning's mission; moreover, she has set back the Finns' cause by removing their leading pilot. Seductive, glamorous female sexuality has indeed proved fatal. The participation she sought has finally, ironically, assailed her:

You write about it. It is terrible. But it is not someone of yours [...] [but] it could happen to you. The torn-up rags on the street could be you too, now. The torn-up rags could have a name.<sup>246</sup>

In her shock, she disengages, 'do not be a part of it, do not belong in it, do not understand it.'<sup>247</sup>

What, then, is the significance of these spoiled women at war, who interfere with, impede, even endanger armies, and who, as they do so, call attention to 'feminine' qualities such as flightiness, vanity and preciousness? Why do such figures feature so predominantly in Gellhorn's fiction? Again, it is tempting to turn to feminist theory to account for the phenomenon. A Kristevan point could be made: the woman writer as a rogue element in the male space of war, the semiotic as opposed to the symbolic, the phenotext in the genotext.<sup>248</sup> Or the phenomenon could be cast as post-feminist: an exploitation of a range of guises available to women that embraces both *machismo* and a fondness for lipstick. Or perhaps it is just plain peer competitiveness or even anti-feminism.

These theories, though, are the artificial and anachronistic imposition of hindsight. Glamour, for most women, during the Second World War years, was not a feminist or even anti-feminist issue. Women dressed as well as they could because it was part of the war effort

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<sup>245</sup> *HoA*, 62.

<sup>246</sup> *HoA*, 104. 'It could be you' is also the refrain in 'Goodwill to Men' (see above).

<sup>247</sup> *HoA*, 106.

<sup>248</sup> Kristeva, 28.

to maintain morale:<sup>249</sup> Gellhorn's characters are not being set up either as feminist targets or as post-feminist role models. Nonetheless, the negativity of their portraits does connote significant unease about the presence of women in the war zone (in Sartrean terms, the perception of self produced by being the centre of attention causes shame). The most plausible explanation for these unflattering depictions (and for the shame) both proceeds from, and contributes to, the very scarcity of such women. In *Women in Khaki: The American Enlisted Woman*, the sociologist Michael L. Rustad suggests that the reasons the United States Army has accepted a few 'token' women include an anxiety to create the impression of being an equal opportunities employer. But 'tokenism' brings its own problems: social isolation, loss of individuality, mistaken identity, aloneness, and, in particular, pressure to adopt stereotyped roles.<sup>250</sup>

Rustad is specifically discussing women serving in the military, but his conclusions also illuminate the situation of the minority of war reporters who happen to be women. The stereotypical (one might almost say 'mythical') roles which the token woman soldier assumes, in Rustad's analysis, fall into two categories: the 'Hyper-Female' and the 'Super-Soldier'. Each of these comprises further sub-categories, all personae adopted in order to ease life within the dominant male culture. The 'Hyper-Female' includes 'Daddy's Little Girl', a persona apt to incite acts of paternalistic assistance from men soldiers anxious 'not to feel outdone';<sup>251</sup> the 'Sex-Pot', who exploits her sexuality in order to be accepted; and 'Mama', who functions as a comforting mother-figure for the men. The 'Super-Soldier' includes the woman who acts as 'One of the Guys' and 'the Lone Ranger of Women's Liberation'.<sup>252</sup> There is no reason why, in order to survive in the male zone of war, a woman might not shift between all these roles: if Daphne Rutherford is the classic 'Daddy's Little Girl', Jane Mason, Annabelle Jones and Ann Maynard are, at various junctures, both 'Hyper-Females' and 'Super-Soldiers'. Their flightiness and feistiness can therefore be seen as both

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<sup>249</sup> Interview with Victoria Glendinning, 13 February 2004.

<sup>250</sup> Rustad, 57, 140.

<sup>251</sup> Rustad, 159.

<sup>252</sup> Rustad, 158-69.

cause and symptom of their basic status: women outnumbered in their profession. In the negative elements of her women war journalists, Gellhorn is expressing the troubled tenure of the 'outstanding' few.

In Gellhorn's work, movement beyond 'mere' presence produces at best frustration and at worst disaster. If the range of alignments she proposes were plotted on a graph, the line that joined them would now begin to turn downwards, towards a self-protective withdrawal. 'The first thing to do is not to go on talking,' Gellhorn wrote of occupied France.<sup>253</sup> As George Steiner noted, the parabola ends in silence.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Gellhorn, 10 August 1942, 175.

<sup>254</sup> Steiner, 69.

## AFTERWORD

‘My *NO* is this book,’ Martha Gellhorn wrote in her 1959 Introduction to *The Face of War*.<sup>1</sup> She had reached a limit with regard to nuclear arms proliferation and would no longer stay silent: the collection was a ‘stand’.<sup>2</sup> Gellhorn used another term for such a moment as the original title for her novel about another personal ‘watershed’,<sup>3</sup> Dachau. ‘The point of no return’ is, as she defined it, ‘a specific time limit, stated in hours and minutes. When reached, the pilot must head the plane back or it would have insufficient fuel to stay airborne and land.’<sup>4</sup> The instant is therefore definitive in several respects. It plots the way of the narrative: continue or turn? It forms a milestone in psychological development: Jacob Levy cannot go back to being the young man he was before. It forms the *ich kann nicht anders* of personal morality: beyond this, is unacceptable.

Standpoints have both subject and methodology of this thesis. The aim has been to illuminate an aspect of war recording that is always inherent in descriptions of it but rarely acknowledged. Stance (physical involvement, emotional engagement, political inclination) affects standing (knowledge and hence authenticity and authoritativeness) – as such, they are, and have always been, essential to the poesis of conflict, and as the economic and political crises of the twentieth century mounted, they became increasingly articulated in thought about representing them. That these standpoints are gendered is too important to overlook, but it is equally important to remember that there are other factors in play.

To ‘stand’ has the nautical meaning of ‘to hold a specified course’: to stand in relation to war is as much about mobile trajectories as it is about entrenched positions. How the reporter moves to, in, around and out of the battle-ground, physically and textually, is another key aspect of polemical aesthetics. Reporters have to stand their ground, and it is arguable whether they should stand out. Status, in conflict, affects how the recorder can

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<sup>1</sup> *FoW*, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Bernard Berenson, 17 August 1958, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Hortense Flexner, early 1970s, ff. 6<sup>r</sup>, 7<sup>r</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *PNR*, 327.

represent war, and also how involvement in war is written about: not only a matter of poetics, then, but also of historiography. Women's role in battle has been polarised: either regarded as so ancillary as to be invisible, or so exceptional – the 'Joan-of-Arc-syndrome' – as to be inimitable.

This thesis has tried to plot the graph of Martha Gellhorn's positionings. As stated at the outset, planes of alignment in relation to wars fall through various dimensions: time, space, politics, ethics, personal feeling, to name but few. The Introduction questioned whether the generic and practical differences between fiction and journalism affected her standing, finding that, though in ontological terms the two constitute a continuum, the differing spaces for reflection offered by both did have an appreciable effect – a case of temporal distance having textual consequences. When Gellhorn had little time in which to file her pieces, her writing was hard and true. The longer she pondered, the more sentimental and moralising her voice became.

In another plane of alignment, Chapter One re-constructed the two axes of influence – the New Reportage and previous American war writing – whose intersection provided the coordinates for the start of Gellhorn's career as a war recorder. New Reportage practitioners considered intently the ethics and aesthetics of the reporter-subject relationship: her experiences as a FERA reporter and in writing *The Trouble I've Seen* taught Gellhorn the lessons in direct observation, Lukácsian narration and activism which she would carry into the war zone. The work of the earlier American war writers discussed contributed further strands: the ur-poetics of the reportorial figure; parapolemics and the gendering of access to war; detachment through such devices as humour and self-sabotage; the tricks and tropes of transatlantic persuasion. Chapter Two traced these influences in Gellhorn's apprenticeship in Depression America and in the Spanish Civil War.

Chapter Three investigated the objectivity / subjectivity plane, considering Martha Gellhorn in her guise of mechanistic, dispassionate transmitter. It found that this was, above all, a crafted, controlled style and that, at junctures of extreme trauma, such as in the death

camps, the unflinching gaze wavered and 'blinked', revealing the emotional presence of an intensely empathetic reporter.

'Presence' then became the focal heart of this thesis. In Chapter Four, the setting was 'the field': a physical, and highly gendered space, and, crucially, a military, ideological and psychological construct. The differing fortunes in men and women's attempts to access this space were discussed, culminating in an analysis of the Gellhorn / Hemingway rivalry over D-Day which showed that Gellhorn's difficulties in engaging with the field were exactly replicated in her textual exclusion. In Chapter Five, the setting was the text: the nuanced positions that Gellhorn took up in terms of voice, tone and the use of such devices as comforting myth and self-deprecating humour.

The final chapter considered whether the war reporter can make a difference in field and in text. The first section found that Gellhorn did attempt, through her journalism, to 'put things right', whether in individual cases, such as that of Gustav Regler, or in greater causes, such as that of the Sudetendeutsch. The second and third sections looked at her treatment of this issue in her fiction. *A Stricken Field*, 'Goodwill to Men' and *Point of No Return* record both the necessity and the limited efficacy of practical intervention. 'A Sense of Direction' and 'Portrait of a Lady', discussed in the last section, strike a more negative and sinister note: the fatal distraction caused by the woman in the war zone. It was argued that Gellhorn assumed a range of guises in field and in text: the final impression is of a figure errant and disruptive, to adopt *Vogue*'s terminology, the 'news-breaker' become 'news-maker'.

These things took their toll. In a letter of 3 April 1940 to Charles Colebaugh at Collier's, Gellhorn reflected:

As a writer, I am pretty much getting branded as a disaster-girl. This has certainly not been my fault, because nobody lurking around Europe these last years could have arrived at any very happy conclusions [...] But if you see only disaster, and write only disaster, there is the danger of being regarded as one who is blind to everything else, or even an inventor of catastrophe [...] And finally, from being an accurate reporter of actual tragedy (through there being too many tragedies) one can just slip

into the class of a sob-sister, and before people read you, they know what you are going to say.<sup>5</sup>

Disillusionment set in fast. As the war progressed, Gellhorn spoke less of wanting to write ‘happily about happy people’.<sup>6</sup> Dachau made the point irrefutable. Her profession, journalism, was ‘a Federation of Cassandras’:<sup>7</sup> doomed to prophesy and not be listened to.

Did Gellhorn, then, continue to ‘stand’? Not at first. Declaring ‘a separate private peace’,<sup>8</sup> she sat out the Korean War in Mexico, ‘[giving] up reading newspapers as a matter of principle, [listening] to music instead of news bulletins’.<sup>9</sup> But, in the 1960s, she did report on the Six Day War and on Vietnam. Of the latter, she said, as ever alert to the ‘voice’ of war representation: ‘all the war reports I could find sounded inhuman, like describing a deadly football game between a team of heroes and a team of devils and chalking up the score by ‘body counts’ and ‘kill ratio’.’<sup>10</sup> Despite her reluctance, she went to Vietnam ‘because I had to learn for myself, since I could not learn from anyone else, what was happening to the voiceless Vietnamese people’:<sup>11</sup> her six articles led the South Vietnamese government to refuse her a visa to return. In the 1980s, over 80 herself, she reported on Reagan’s wars in Central America – El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama – her voice retaining the characteristic outrage of her earliest days in Spain. She particularly admired stands such as those taken at Greenham Common and the demonstration protesting the Kent State murders: this latter was a ‘Beautiful Day of Dissent’.<sup>12</sup>

So, though it was easy to keep silent or withdraw completely in disillusionment, Gellhorn retained the belief that ‘if you can do nothing else you must scream’:

If you can’t change it you must at least record it, so that it cannot just be ignored or forgotten. It is some place on the record and it seemed to me personally that it was

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<sup>5</sup> f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Gellhorn, letter to Charles Colebaugh of 3 April 1940, f. 1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *FoW*, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *FoW 1998*, 246.

<sup>9</sup> *FoW 1998*, 246.

<sup>10</sup> *FoW 1998*, 248.

<sup>11</sup> *FoW 1998*, 248.

<sup>12</sup> *VfG*, 301-9.

my job to get things on the record in the hopes that at some point or other, somebody couldn't absolutely lie about it.<sup>13</sup>

Gellhorn's course in and around war was dazzling: hitching rides, stowing away, travelling on dynamite-laden ships through mined waters, flying in ancient planes and deadly fighter jets, driving from battle-field to battle-field, mucking in, standing out. Her trajectory within her prose is equally versatile: impassive recorder, human presence, concerned witness, advocate and polemicist. Her itineraries might be called virtuosic were they not so indispensable. War is too huge and important an issue to 'get wrong', however much its very massiveness and complexity resist representation. How it is represented matters vitally to all of us. Gellhorn went where she did to get it right.

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<sup>13</sup> Freedom Forum European Centre, 7.

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## 1. PRIMARY – MARTHA GELLHORN

### A. LETTERS FROM MARTHA GELLHORN

*Letters are arranged in alphabetical order of recipient, and then in chronological order. Gellhorn did not date all her letters but as much information about dates as possible is given.*

Berenson, Bernard (all held at the Bernard Berenson Archive, Villa I Tatti, Fiesole, Italy)

- 1 undated
- 10 March 195?
- 8 August 195?
- 13 May 1950
- 31 May 1950
- 18 July 1950
- 17 July 1953
- 10 August 1953
- 11 September 1953
- 17 September 1953
- 27 December 1953
- 15 March 1954
- 30 March 1954
- 14 April 1954
- 26 April 1954
- 14 December 1955
- 14 March 1956
- 23 March 1956
- 6 September 1956
- 4 October 1957
- 17 August 1958
- 8 January 1959
- 18 February 1959
- 14 November ?1959
- 12 December ?1959

Capa, Cornell

- 12 November 1975 (collection of Caroline Moorehead)

Colebaugh, Charles

- 22 October 1938 (Crowell-Collier Publishing Company Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library: Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations)
- 3 April 1940 (Crowell-Collier Publishing Company Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library: Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations)

Flexner, Hortense

- 'Saturday' (no month or year given) (Boston University Library)
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- 20 December 1940 (Boston University Library)
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- 14 November 1944 (Boston University Library)

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Paoloczi-Horvath, George

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Perkins, Max

- 17 October 1941 (Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University)
- 11 January 1948 (collection of Caroline Moorehead)

Roosevelt, Eleanor

- 2 December 1936 (collection of Caroline Moorehead)
- 16 January 1937 16 January 1937 (Folder: Fr-Gi; Papers of Eleanor Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York)
- 24/25 April 1938 (Boston University Library)
- 19 October 1938 (Folder: Fr-Gi; Papers of Eleanor Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York)
- December 1938 (Boston University Library)
- 3 December 1938 (Boston University Library)
- 16 May 1948 (Folder: Fr-Gi; Papers of Eleanor Roosevelt; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York)
- 1/2 November 1941 (collection of Caroline Moorehead)

Scribner, Charles

- 31 December 1946 (Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University)

Tilden, Gladys

- 15 December 1936 (BANC MSS 89/229 box 5:11 Gladys Tilden Papers, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley)

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'Diary', (typewritten ms., unfoliated) kept in Spain 1937 (collection of Caroline Moorehead)

'Memoirs' (typewritten ms.), undated (Boston University Library)

'Notes for TV Interview in Defence of Robert Capa', (typewritten ms.) 1975 (Boston University Library)

'Saturday at Creve Coeur', (typewritten ms.) undated (collection of Caroline Moorehead)

## C. BOOK-LENGTH WORKS

*What Mad Pursuit* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1934)

*A Stricken Field* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940)

*The Heart of Another* (London: Home & Van Thal, 1946)

*The Wine of Astonishment* (New York: Scribner, 1948)

*The Honeyed Peace* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1954)

*The Face of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959)

*His Own Man* (New York: Macfadden, 1962)

*The Lowest Trees Have Tops* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1969)

*Travels with Myself and Another* (London: Allen Lane, 1979)

*A Stricken Field* (London: Virago, 1986)

*Liana* (Harmondsworth and London: Penguin / Virago, 1987)

*The View from the Ground* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1988)

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## B. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

- <<http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/wcf/wcf005.html>> 19 December 2003 16:36p.m.
- <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts>> 19 December 2003 16:39p.m.
- <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hop01.htm>> 19 December 2003 16:39p.m.
- <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hop08.htm>> 19 December 2003 16:39p.m.
- <<http://newdeal.feri.org/texts/hop22.htm>> 19 December 2003 16:39p.m.
- <<http://www.academic.reed.edu>> 11 March 2004 18:12p.m.
- <<http://www.civilwarhome.com/dixbio.htm>> 20 January 2004 16:16p.m.
- <<http://www.globalissuesgroup.com/geneva/history.html>> 18 October 2003 10:36p.m.
- <<http://www.spanamwar.com>> 11 March 2004 18:18p.m.
- <<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAcolliers.htm>> 14 November 2002 10:15a.m.
- <<http://www.usc.edu>> 11 March 2004 22:53p.m.
- <<http://www.warandgender.com>> 27 January 2004 10:03a.m.
- <<http://www.wcml.org.uk/lbcbooks.html>> 4 February 2004 15:32p.m.
- <<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/lawofwar/lawwar.htm>> 18 October 2003 10:53p.m.
- <<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s>> 24 November 2003, 16:35p.m.

### C. LECTURES AND CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Brake, Laurel, 'Roguery and Woe: Print calendars in the early nineteenth century', The Donald McKenzie Lecture 2003, given at the English Faculty, Oxford, 12 May 2003

Cunningham, Valentine, 'Aestheticizing Responses to the Spanish Civil War', lecture given at 'Taking Sides: Writers, Artists and the Spanish Civil War', a conference held at Rewley House, Oxford, 25 January 2003

Simpson, John, 'War Reporting: the New Vulnerability', The Reuters' Memorial Lecture 2003, given at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, 27 June 2003

### D. BROADCASTS

Pilger, John (dir. and interviewer), 'The Outsiders', Carlton, 1983

Shakespeare, Nicholas (dir. and interviewer), 'Omnibus', BBC1, 1991

### E. INTERVIEWS

Victoria Glendinning, 13 February 2004 (London)

Sandy Matthews, 17-18 September 2002, 5-6 March 2004 (Salcombe)

Caroline Moorehead, 4 December 2003 (Oxford); 18 December 2003 (London); 14 February 2004 (London)

Elise Becket Smith, 23 January 2002 (London)

Graham and Dorothy Watson, 11 October 2002 (Rye)

### F. OTHER MEDIA

Caulfield, Patrick, *Hemingway Never Ate Here*, 1998-9, acrylic on canvas, 190.5 x 182.9 cm, Tate Gallery, London

*Women and War*, exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, London (13 October 2003 to 18 April 2004)

### G. OTHER SOURCES

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