

GRAPHIC SENSATIONS:
VOGUE AND THE POLITICS OF THE BODY, 1930-1945

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the visual program and material body of American *Vogue* magazine, a publication dedicated to the modern woman, during two tumultuous decades before the mid-century. In the 1930s, images of the female body, as well as the composition of the page, radically changed, as snapshots, streamlined design, and modern dress reform energized the look and experience of reading *Vogue*. As the next decade brought war, *Vogue* documented men and women in the American Armed Forces stationed in Europe and transmitted images of burned, mutilated, and broken bodies back to readers at home. Cover photographs of active, healthy women in the 1930s would shift to highly stylized, fractured images of the female form in the 1940s.

The visual modifications to *Vogue* in the 1930s and 1940s were not merely aesthetic, but heavily inflected by shifting cultural, social, and economic norms during the Great Depression and the Second World War. Analyzing images by key *Vogue* photographers such as Toni Frissell, Lee Miller, and Erwin Blumenfeld in relation to page layouts, typography, clothing design, and popular culture, this project uncovers how photography and design promoted new strategies to connect with white female communities and articulate evolving definitions of the body and subjectivity. I argue the photographers and art directors under consideration here enhanced the concept of the magazine as a haptic medium by creating visual forms that privileged sensorial connections. Whereas fashion magazines have traditionally been undervalued in academic scholarship, this dissertation draws on feminist theory and studies of materiality to situate *Vogue* as a crucial object for understanding how the politics of the body shaped mass media, as the magazine fashioned new perceptual experiences for engaging with, and translating, modern women and forms of femininity.

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Introduction Shaping *Vogue*

“One of the most fascinating things about the world of fashion is that practically no one knows who inhabits it or why it exists. There are a few people who know how it works, but they won’t tell. So it just goes on, getting in deeper and deeper, until something like a war or depression slows it up from time to time. But once the war or the depression lets up, off again goes fashion on its mad way.”¹

— Elizabeth Hawes, *Fashion is Spinach*, 1938

In 1938, fashion designer Elizabeth Hawes wrote a scathing review of the ways in which the fashion industry—its designers, manufactures, magazines, and department stores—dictated changes in fashion to drive business. As the epigraph attests, no checks and balances existed for the fashion industry except a cataclysmic economic shift — such as war or depression — that could gum up or recalibrate production. In what ways could these economic and social shifts have bearing on the visual record of fashion? This dissertation investigates *Vogue* magazine (mostly its American edition) during two tumultuous decades of the 1930s and 1940s, when both an international depression and world war impacted the fashion magazine. But this dissertation is not about fashion, per se; rather, it is about a way of seeing fashion through the body as staged by photography and design. As economic swings and global war altered the social body of the United States, how did *Vogue*, whose central concern is the female form, reflect those tensions and through what visual strategies and media?

The three chapters of this dissertation compose the first book-length study of *Vogue* in the interwar and wartime period. Each chapter centers on the work of a photographer—Toni Frissell, Lee Miller, and Erwin Blumenfeld—in tandem with Art Directors Mehemed Agha and Alexander Liberman. While these photographers worked within different visual modes, such as

¹ Elizabeth Hawes, *Fashion Is Spinach* (New York: Random House, 1938), 7.

outdoor action photography, photojournalism, and experimental studio photography, each staged the photograph as an experience, one dependent on producing responses in the viewer. In this way, their photographs particularly referenced its context within a haptic medium. By foregrounding the work of these photographers in the 1930s and 1940s, *Vogue* formulated a definition of photography in its pages predicated not only on reflecting fashion, but on engaging with, and communicating with, bodies. This is key, I argue, to interpreting the visual program of *Vogue* in this period. The magazine drew from the physical, phenomenological, and psychological languages of the body precisely at the moment in which it became more fully mechanical, which is to say, when photography began to replace handmade illustration in the magazine.

My project begins in 1929, when the magazine underwent a paradigm shift in the ways in which it conceived of and displayed its visual material. That year, publisher Condé Nast hired as American *Vogue*'s art director Mehemed Agha, who previously worked in Europe at German *Vogue*. Agha redesigned *Vogue*'s material body in a number of ways: he removed borders around pictures, reorganized page compositions, and adopted a variation of the geometric sanserif typeface Futura, designed in 1927. Most crucially, Agha phased out illustration in favor of photography. The magazine's covers most visibly articulated this shift. In 1930, each month featured a color illustration; by the end of the decade, only half of the covers were illustrated. In 1943, the year Agha left *Vogue*, the magazine illustrated only one cover. In effect, Agha and Nast changed the medium in which women had been represented in the magazine for forty years. To locate how transformative this shift in media was to *Vogue*, I will briefly trace the use of illustration in the magazine and the move towards a photographic way of seeing.

From Illustration to Photography

American fashion magazines trace their roots to the aristocracy, as they derive from illustrations depicting fashion trends from European court culture.² Before ready-to-wear clothing and the department store emerged in the nineteenth century, clothing was custom made. Handmade fashion circulated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe through the form of hand-colored, expensive fashion plates. A printmaker would incise a design into a metal plate, giving the medium its name.³ The prints featured full-length portraits of women and men conventionally displayed in a rectangular border accompanied by information about fabric, hair, and accessories at the bottom of the frame (fig. 1). Figures were most often pictured frontally, but also in three quarter view (as in figure 1), or to the side as the subject engaged in an activity to allow narrative interest. Backgrounds were often the unmarked page or sometimes minimal in composition, with a patch of grass, decorative floor pattern, or a sketch of an interior. Fidelity to fashion was key in the translation from plate to dressmaker or tailor.

Fashion plates could be acquired through subscription or in lavish publication. The first journal to publish fashion plates was the French *Mercure Galant* in 1678, which April Calahan described as “the structural template for the modern magazine” for its inclusion of current events and culture along with fashion.⁴ The conventions of the fashion plate integrated with the visual culture of consumer mass-market publications in the nineteenth century as leisure time and the middle class expanded.

² Even before the engraving of fashion plates for commerce, prints of fashions from cultures across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the New World circulated in the sixteenth century as an anthropological endeavor during the age of colonialism.

³ Today, a fashion plate describes a very fashionable person and no longer refers to its means of production.

⁴ April Calahan, *Fashion Plates: 150 Years of Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 3.

Like fashion plates, *Vogue* evolved out from, and was meant for, a certain reader: ethnically white from an affluent background.⁵ Publisher Arthur Baldwin Turnure founded *Vogue* as a weekly journal for the exclusive members of New York society in December 1892. Josephine Redding served as its editor-in-chief and christened the magazine *Vogue*, having liked its definition in the *Century Dictionary* as “the mode or fashion prevalent at any particular time.”⁶ Then, as now, the magazine included a variety of articles on a spectrum of culture: fashion, art, literature, and the stage, as well as etiquette, social events, and parties. The magazine catered to both men and women in the early years with sections, for example, called “On Her Dressing Table” alongside “The Well-Dressed Man.” *Vogue* featured photographs of the homes and fashion of many of New York’s families whose wealth emerged from industrialization, including the Vanderbilts and the Whitneys. True to its European genealogy, *Vogue* also disseminated fashion from Paris and London.

The magazine’s first issue in December 1892 acknowledges its provenance from the fashion plate (fig. 2). In the center of a rectangular frame, a woman bursts from a cream-colored background. Washes of tonal color surround her to give visual interest. The effect, too, is as if she is materializing out from the center of the page, blossoming like the flowers she holds. The caption—“*Vogue*, A Debutante”—makes plain the magazine saw itself as a youthful girl making her first introduction into New York society. In a developed convention of magazine design, a masthead appears at the top of the page spelling out *Vogue* in an unraveling scroll. Two other women, like modern allegories, punctuate each end: the woman on the left holds a mirror, symbolizing the focus on appearance and self-fashioning within the text, as well as its translation into a flat image, while the figure on the right holds a magazine—replicating the female reader at

⁵ The first woman of color would not appear on *Vogue*’s cover until 1974.

⁶ Norberto Angeletti and Alberto Oliva, *In Vogue: The Illustrated History of the World’s Most Famous Fashion Magazine* (New York: Rizzoli, 2012), 9.

home. The magazine is the mirror, and *Vogue* will be her guide to fit within the expectations of the modern society of which she is now part and should reflect. This guide is not to be mistaken for helpful advice on cooking, cleaning, or child rearing; in *Vogue*, women were directed how to shape and conform the body.

The magazine considered women as impressionable and reliant on *Vogue*'s authority. As editor-in-chief Edna Woolman Chase would later write to her readers in 1927:

Almost every woman has some handicap, large or small—weight, or bad proportions, or irregularity of feature, or lack of color—and it is her individual problem to overcome or minimize it in her appearance. If *Vogue* were to fill its pages with sketches of these peculiarities, the effect would be grotesque and the opposite of helpful...*Vogue* continues to feel that its problem is to be as perfect a model of chic as possible, while the problem of *Vogue* readers is to reproduce that model as closely as their individual characteristics will permit.⁷

Vogue wielded a type of power that Michel Foucault might regard as capillary—“where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourse, learning processes and everyday lives.”⁸ Power moves through the social body and into the individual's literal body, which will then regulate itself according to heteronormative codes and social conventions. This directive on femininity evolved textually and visually in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in conduct books and magazines. Beverly Skeggs found this type of Victorian femininity “had an affinity with the habitus of the upper classes, of ease, restraint, calm and luxurious decoration. It was produced as a sign of difference from other women.”⁹ When women from other economic and social classes “do try on femininity,” wrote Skeggs, “they often feel it is the wrong size.”¹⁰

⁷ *Vogue* March 15, 1927, 73.

⁸ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-77* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 39.

⁹ Beverly Skeggs, “Ambivalent Femininities,” *The Body: A Reader*, edited by Mariam Fraser and Monica Greco (New York: Routledge, 2005), 129.

¹⁰ Skeggs, “Ambivalent Femininities,” 130.

Attorney-turned-publishing magnet Condé Montrose Nast, who bought *Vogue* in 1909, cultivated this sign of difference. He had formerly worked as the advertising manager at the publication *Collier's Weekly* and was vice president of the Home Pattern Company, which made and sold dressmaking patterns. Purchasing *Vogue* extended his investment in the commerce of fashion, which he expanded internationally to Europe and Latin America.¹¹ When he arrived at *Vogue*, Nast increased the price of the magazine from 10 to 15 cents, changed its publication schedule from a weekly to a biweekly, and increased the page count from 30 to 100, adding more space for advertising. He also exclusively catered to women and women as consumers. Despite the fact that *Vogue* had the lowest circulation rate of other major magazines—30,000 monthly subscribers compared to *Ladies' Home Journal's* 1,305,000 in 1910—it accumulated more revenue due to this increased advertising.¹² *Vogue* featured 44 percent more advertising pages than *Ladies' Home Journal* and charged the highest market rates.¹³ Advertisers were willing to pay handsomely because of Nast's promise of a class publication that focused on a population united by an interest in fashion and purchasing power. To market to a general public, Nast surmised, would water down the efficacy of a publication's advertising revenue. As Nast wrote in *Merchants' and Manufacturers' Journal* in 1913,

In a single crowded city block you might easily collect, say, an automobile dealer, a stamp collector, an expert fisherman, a kindergarten teacher, an art student, a chicken fancier, a baseball fan, a clergyman, a soubrette and a suffragette. Suppose, then, you were asked as an experiment, to edit a publication that would appeal to this

¹¹ Nast established *Vogue* internationally in multiple European and Latin American cities, including British *Vogue* (1916-present); Spanish *Vogue* (1918-23); French *Vogue* (1920-present); Argentinean *Vogue* (1924-1926); and German *Vogue* (1928-1929; relaunched 1979).

¹² Even today, while *Vogue* has name recognition, it's never been in the top twenty most read magazines in the United States. According to the Condé Nast, *Vogue's* print readership going into 2019 is 10.8 million readers. For comparison of the types of audience reach of other publications, *People* reaches 40 million readers and *Better Homes and Gardens* 37 million. For readership statistics for *Vogue*, see <https://www.Condénast.com/brands/vogue/>; for *People*, see http://static.people.com/media-kit/assets/peop2018_ratecard.pdf; for *Better Homes and Gardens*, see <http://bhgmarketing.com/research>.

¹³ For a history of *Vogue's* publishing formula and statistics, see Norberto Angeletti and Alberto Oliva, *In Vogue*, 2-20.

heterogeneous group! Your life would be one incessant hunt for stories, pictures, humor, verse, of the simplest, broadest, and most general appeal—and, even then, one or two of your ten readers would probably cancel because they were not particularly interested.¹⁴

Nast then applied this theory to the ways in which he approached the editorial content of *Vogue*, pruning his readers for a particular interest. He did not deviate from the formula, even when certain additions could enrich the publication. As he wrote,

Time and again the question of putting fiction in *Vogue* has been brought up: those who advocated it urged with a good show of reason that the addition of stories and verse would make it easy to gain a much larger circulation. That it would increase the quantity of our circulation we granted; but we were fearful of its effect on the class value. That those who became readers of *Vogue* because of its news of the so-called smart world would be equally interested in the fashions and in all the rest of *Vogue's* contents, we were fairly certain; but that all those who might be attracted to *Vogue* through fiction would be seriously interested in the rest of its contents or in its advertisements, we had every reason to doubt. So, rather than risk it, *Vogue* still does without fiction.¹⁵

As part of this cultivation of class value, Nast invested significantly in expensive color reproductions. Almost every cover of the magazine from Nast's arrival in 1909 to the Second World War featured a full-color illustration. Inspired by the Lucien Vogel's French fashion magazine *Gazette du Bon Ton* (1912-1925), Nast employed many of the illustrators that worked for that publication, including Georges Lepape and Pierre Mourgue. *Vogue* also supported American illustrators such as Helen Dryden and George Wolf Plank, support that helped mark the 1920s and 1930s as the Golden Age of illustration. These illustrators created designs that harkened back to the vibrant chromatics of hand-colored fashion plates (see fig. 3). This use of color was strategic, psychological, and gendered. As women were stereotypically coded as emotional, advertisers and manufacturers in the early twentieth century believed that color could

¹⁴ Quoted in Norberto Angeletti and Alberto Oliva, *In Vogue*, 19-20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

be used to stoke consumer desire. This “feminization of color,” wrote Regina Lee Blaszczyk, “became the great curative for ailments of the consumer economy.”¹⁶

While illustrations in the magazine appeared in full color, photographs were not published in *Vogue* until 1932. Nast hired Anton Bruehl and Fernand Bourges to develop a color separation process for producing color photographs across his magazines—a technique he would also sell to advertisers.¹⁷ This delay in color photography was one determinate for why it took so long for photography to gain a foothold in the magazine and be featured more prominently on the covers before the 1930s. Moreover, Nast struggled with the aesthetics of photography and what photography could do for his vision of the fashion magazine with its emphasis on mood and style. As early as the 1880s, photography had been integrated into print media with the development of the halftone printing process and photomechanical technology. The first photograph would not premier on a *Vogue* cover until 1909, the same year that Nast joined the magazine (fig. 4). The image illustrates a throng of spectators at a horse race in France. However, the Arts and Crafts style vegetative illustration nearly overwhelms the small black and white photograph, emphasizing its secondary position. To develop the status of photography, Nast would need to professionalize commercial fashion photography and employ artists who considered the medium a form of art.

Nast hired French-born Baron Adolphe de Meyer (1868-1946) in 1913 as its first full-time photographer. De Meyer worked in a Pictorialist style, an aesthetic movement that sought to

¹⁶ Regina Lee Blaszczyk, “The Colors of Modernism: Georgia O’Keeffe, Cheney Brothers, and the Relationship between Art and Industry in the 1920s,” *Seeing High and Low: Representing Social Conflict in American Visual Culture*, Edited by Patricia Johnston (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 232. See also her book, Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *The Color Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012). On the ways in which color defined advertising, emerging from a color-wave of commercial products in the 1920s, while black-and-white became associated with Depression-era documentary photography, see Sally Stein, “The Rhetoric of the *Colorful* and the *Colorless*: American Photography and Material Culture Between the Wars” (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1991).

¹⁷ Nast would publish on, and sell, this technical process to advertisers in the Condé Nast-published *Color Sells* (New York: Condé Nast, 1935).

link photography and painting, and which bridged the end of the nineteenth century into the early twentieth.¹⁸ Pictorialist photographers positioned the photograph not as a document—as the first photographic cover in *Vogue* suggests—but as a means of expression and subjective vision. De Meyer strategically incorporated backlighting to give his work a diffuse, romantic effect, and used a Pinkerton-Smith lens that would give his pictures soft-focus edges. De Meyer also layered materials, such as gauze, over his lenses to give his photographs a softer, more painterly look and deemphasize the realism of the camera.

He also staged his models not in realistic settings or with casual clothing but as constructed fantasies. In one image published in *Vogue*, a woman dons a wedding dress inspired by Marie Antoinette in a confection of abundance with wig, roses, feathers, a veil, silk, and appliqué, much like an 18th century fashion plate (fig. 5). Femininity as worn exists within the realm of excess and artifice; de Meyer's pictures emphasized that one performs gender.¹⁹ But this is not to say that the objects of luxury were lost in the atmospheric light; as Elspeth Brown notes, "De Meyer's brilliance in animating the material goods of luxury commodity culture made his work indispensable to Nast, whose growing magazine empire depended upon the support of luxury retailers such as Cartier."²⁰ To this end, Nast found in black and white photography an additional ability to tap into psychology, desire, and consumption outside of color and commercial illustration. As Brown found,

¹⁸ On the foundations of pictorialism and its application in American visual culture, specifically through Alfred Stieglitz and his circle (of which De Meyer took part), see Jonathan Green, editor, *Camera Work: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Aperture, 1973).

¹⁹ Elspeth Brown reads his work as a performance of camp and an early application of queering *Vogue*. See Elspeth H. Brown, "De Meyer at *Vogue*: Commercializing Queer Affect in First World War-era Fashion Photography," *Photography & Culture* 2, no. 3 (November 2009): 253–274. On the development of a queer aesthetics of fashion photography, see Brown's "Queering Glamour in Interwar Fashion Photography: The 'Amorous Regard' of George Platt Lynes," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 23 no. 3 (2017), 289–326. For another voice on camp and subversive pleasures in *Vogue* in interwar period Britain, see Christopher Reed, "A *Vogue* That Dare not Speak its Name: Sexual Subculture during the Editorship of Dorothy Todd, 1922–26," *Fashion Theory* 10 (1/2), 2006, 39–72.

²⁰ Brown, "De Meyer at *Vogue*," 263.

It was pictorialism, as an aesthetic approach, that convinced art directors, account executives, and magazine editors that photography could compete with lush pen-and-ink illustrations...Pictorialism's emphasis on connoting feeling, its ability to stir the emotions, dovetailed perfectly with advertisers' increasing recognition that...the most effective sales appeals directed towards an emotional, rather than rational, consumer.²¹

After de Meyer left *Vogue* for its rival *Harper's Bazaar*, Nast replaced him with Edward Steichen (1879-1973) as the new Photography Editor-in-Chief in 1923. A former Pictorialist, Steichen had since embraced Modernist photography and its attention to formal geometry, high contrast between light and dark tones, and razor-sharp focus. His application of Modernism to *Vogue* was gradual, however, as his early work exhibits the Pictorialist style still popular in the magazine as the preferred photographic form.

In the year after Steichen was named editor, his work was featured in the spread "Fashion Borrows Charm from a Fragonard Painting." He photographed a model in the center of the composition under soft light that gives ethereal body to the tulle fabric falling behind her (fig. 6). She is posed with her head tilted, her eyes closed, toe pointed gracefully, and her hands cupped together near her face; her body language conveys modesty and passivity rather than de Meyer's more aggressive camp. The cascading branches in the background and fallen head of flowers in the right foreground hint at a forest setting. The headline announces that "Fashion Borrows Charm from a Fragonard painting." Fragonard was an eighteenth century French Rococo painter associated with romanticism. The historical painter gave Steichen inspiration for photographing the appropriated silhouette of her gown: she could be, as the caption states, a "shepherdess from Old Versailles" and the folds of taffeta fabric deliver a painterly sheen (much like the voluminous taffeta in Fragonard's most famous painting, *The Swing*, 1767) (fig. 7).

²¹ Brown, "De Meyer at *Vogue*," 269. On commercial photography and consumption from Brown's perspective, see also "Rationalizing Consumption: Photography and Commercial Illustration, 1913– 1919," *Enterprise and Society* 1(4) (December 2000): 715–738 and *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture, 1884–1929* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

Over the next decade, Steichen shifted the visual form of fashion photography from Pictorialism into Modernism. “Black,” from 1935, reveals how much the magazine had changed—both photographically and typographically—over the course of Steichen’s tenure. A bold, blocky geometric headline compliments Steichen’s exploration of darkness (fig. 8). Adding to the image’s graphic impact, Mehemed Agha sutured two of Steichen’s images together in the center of the page to create a continuous double-page spread. The light and composition gives sculptural form to the color black. The bodies of the women wearing coal-black satin and black silk jersey correspond to the angular or curved lines of their particular side of the black piano—which, in itself, acts almost like an abstract artwork of floating planes in the center of the composition. The studio props such as the African sculpture on the left and the black cat on the right symbolize exoticism and sexual availability, emphasizing racial and art historical codes to express cultural assumptions in the early twentieth century.²²

During his tenure at *Vogue*, Steichen endeavored to change the conception of fashion and advertising photography. Simultaneous to his work for the magazine, Steichen worked freelance creating advertising photographs.²³ As Michele Bogart argues, Steichen increased the formal and technical artistry of advertising photography, ultimately raising its estimation in the eyes of his clients as well as its monetary value.²⁴ As advertising became more photographic, so too did *Vogue*—itself a material object of advertisements images, both strictly so and editorial. Moreover,

²² In the early twentieth century, modern European artists from the Cubists to the Surrealists collected and incorporated arts from Africa into their works. They gravitated to these works for their formal characteristics and misread their use and intent. These objects were believed to be more primitive and primal. Not coincidentally, the interest for African objects coincided with aggressive European colonization of African countries. In “Black,” Steichen set up a racial binary for a feature titled “White” that would appear months later in the January 1936 issue of *Vogue*, where women, in white, were associated with Greco-Roman culture. As for the cat, the domestic animal has served in art history as a sign for sexual availability, with Manet’s portrait of *Olympia* (1863), a French prostitute, a modern example.

²³ For an in-depth study of this work, see Patricia Johnston, *Real Fantasies: Edward Steichen’s Advertising Photography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

²⁴ See Michele Bogart, *Artists, Advertising and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 178-186.

Vogue's editors had been complaining that illustrators did not properly represent the fashion for which it positioned itself to sell. These reasons began to signify the death knell for illustration in the magazine in the 1930s. After statistical research showed photographic covers outstripped illustrations in sales in 1939, alluding to the consumer taste for photographic images, *Vogue* officially moved to the photographic.²⁵

With this new chapter, how did *Vogue* define fashion photography? It was not necessarily through art historical categories as Pictorialism and Modernism. As fashion photography evolved over the first quarter of the 20th century, an intangible definition coalesced beyond the representation of fashion. For a photograph to be a fashion photograph, according to Steichen in 1929, it required “distinction, elegance, and chic.”²⁶ Those abstract qualities required a construction of a reality. In an article titled “A Fashion Photograph,” Steichen relayed in fine detail all that was involved in creating such a picture: the work of the editorial staff, models, importers, jewelers, electricians, assistants and messengers; the fabrics, boxes, bundles, props, cables, lights, and camera; and the directing, shifting, and reordering. As opposed to the instantaneous and the natural, the fashion photograph was defined by Steichen as “the picture of an instant made to order.”²⁷

In the 1930s, this definition of the fashion photograph took a different course. The artists under consideration here—Frissell, Miller, and Blumenfeld—opened up the border of fashion photography by disrupting the conditions of the studio model. Frissell moved fashion outdoors; Miller introduced documentary photography; and Blumenfeld dematerialized the studio, using collage tactics or the darkroom as the new site for experimentation. This is not to say that these

²⁵ A December 14, 1939 memo from Agha to Nast, for example, details the percentages of cover sales in favor of photographs. Condé Nast Archives, New York, New York.

²⁶ Edward Steichen, “A Fashion Photograph,” *Vogue* 74, no. 8 (October 12, 1929): 99.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

photographs were not constructions or equally as artificial as their studio counterparts, particularly given the history of photographic retouching. Rather, as the sites of the fashion photograph changed, so did its opportunities for interpreting the body and the ways in which it could speak on American female identities. New landscapes outside of, or critiquing, the studio offered these photographers expanded means for using the body to respond to its physical, social, and psychological environment. No longer simply defined by “distinction, elegance, and chic,” the fashion photograph in the magazine became fundamentally relational. The works by Frissell, Miller, and Blumenfeld became alternatively thrilling, hard-to-see, disruptive, painful, pleasurable, and disorienting, where the photographs and the design foregrounded the sensorial aspect of looking. By theorizing the photograph not only to be looked at, but as an experience and means of communication within a haptic medium, photography offered new potentialities for the magazine to shape its readers.

Chapter Organization

Chapter One, “Vision in Motion: Toni Frissell, Mehemed Agha, and the Somatic Snapshot” looks at how, for the first time, *Vogue* featured snapshot photographs of bodies in motion in outdoor settings. Also, for the first time, a woman—Toni Frissell—took these images that expressed these new freedoms for women and the female form. I argue Frissell’s pioneering action photographs staged new forms of femininity in the magazine defined by movement, expression, and agility. Frissell captured the changing cultural values on fitness, health, and the visibility of the body in her photographs of women in motion on the beach. Her models wore American-made bathing suits incorporating more flexible, comfortable fabrics that engendered the body to move. This physicality was emphasized in the magazine by Agha’s new graphic

design, which featured angular compositions and sequential photographs to convey motion and create perceptual pathways to direct the eye across the page. Dynamic design coupled with active bodies aligned with the aesthetic and discourse of streamlining in the period, consolidating cultural ideas about speed and efficiency. While the snapshot pictured—and conveyed a feeling of—freedom in this period, such liberties were only accessible to white, middle and upper class bodies in the pages of *Vogue*.

Chapter Two, “Lee Miller’s Body Language,” follows the snapshot to the Second World War through the documentary photography of American expatriate Lee Miller. Since the 1920s and 1930s when she became a *Vogue* model and photographer in Paris, Miller served as a transatlantic medium for *Vogue*. She transmitted fashion and, while later living in London, representations of the war to American readers naïve of living under invasion or occupation. This chapter particularly attends to the ways in which Miller conveyed information, via articles and photographs, from Britain and the European continent to the United States from 1940-1945. Under the auspices of the magazine, Miller’s experiences became part of the collective knowledge of how American readers came to know the war abroad. Her published images were imprinted with traces of her embedded reporting, from out-of-focus blurs on the surface of her prints made by her physical response to a hospital patient in France, to reproductions of her contact sheets of photographs taken at liberated concentration camps in Germany that allude to the materiality of her film. Under the new art director Alexander Liberman, I argue Miller’s images presented a new way of seeing the war as marked by the sensorial experience of the empathetic body, a perspective that rewrites the discourse of action photography as defined by male photographers and direct action in the theatre of war. Moreover, Miller framed her photographs in such a way to highlight her marginal position and critique her inaccessibility to

certain sites and spaces. By the end of the war, when *Vogue* published her images from the concentration camps, she claimed the space of difference as a female correspondent as the space of a witness.

While Miller was away at war, German emigre Erwin Blumenfeld photographed *Vogue*'s covers on the Homefront. The third chapter, "*Vogue*'s Gothic Body: Erwin Blumenfeld, Alexander Liberman, and the Aesthetics of Noir," analyzes the affect of the war on the body at home. Blumenfeld distorted *Vogue*'s cover models using glass, mirrors, and shadows. We never see his models clearly, but always through the framework of another form. I argue his work speaks to the ways in which new social identities were being created for women during the war—sometimes with pleasure and other times with fear—as workers and as keepers of domestic stability. As lovers, friends, and family went to war, *Vogue* editors wrote articles on women's insecurities about their position in public and private life, as well as the experience of living through a war fought abroad. Blumenfeld's cover models became a screen to project these wartime anxieties, fears, and changes to female cultural identities. More than a surface effect, Blumenfeld's layered images also instigated sensorial responses for the magazine's readers to physically experience the conflict or disorientation detailed within the magazines pages. These tactics, I argue, inform a Gothic tradition, a form of critique of the body by way of engaging readers in often harrowing (and, yet, thrilling) experiences.

State of the Field and Methodology

Vogue is a crucial object of study, yet it has been devalued in academic scholarship. The critical examination of its production, circulation, and reception has been scant. In 2006, the journal *Fashion Theory* dedicated a single issue to *Vogue*, arguing, "It has not attracted the kind

of scholarly attention it deserves.”²⁸ Over a decade later, this is largely still the case.²⁹ While monographs on fashion photographers exist, publications on the magazine are often finely produced compilations of original photographs that do not locate the photographs in the context of the magazine page and its interrelationships with textuality, materiality, or compositional layouts.³⁰

This omission comes in part from the historic perception of the fashion photograph and fashion magazine as a superficial source of inquiry—what Paul Jobling characterized as seemingly “ephemeral and exiguous forms of cultural production.”³¹ In many critical writings until the turn of the twenty-first century, the fashion magazine was seen as a space where avant-garde strategies and concepts lose their revolutionary force and degenerate into style. Not only apolitical but anti-political, the pages of the magazine were somehow inhospitable to politics. More recently there have been publications that look at fashion photography and fashion magazines in more nuanced ways.³²

²⁸ Becky Conekin and Amy de la Haye, “Introduction,” *Fashion Theory* 10, no. ½ (2006), 7. *Fashion Theory* emerged in 1997 as a critical space for study on fashion, culture, and the body.

²⁹ An exception is the in-depth history found in Norberto Angeletti and Alberto Oliva, *In Vogue: The Illustrated History of the World’s Most Famous Fashion Magazine* (New York: Rizzoli, 2012).

³⁰ See, for example, the publications created by *Vogue*’s former staff, including Creative Director Robin Derrick and photography editor Robin Muir’s *Unseen Vogue: The Secret History of Fashion Photography* (New York: Little, Brown, 2004) and *Vogue Covers: On Fashion’s Front Page* (New York: Little, Brown, 2010), as well as editor Dodie Kazanjian’s *Vogue: The Covers* (Abrams: New York, 2011).

³¹ Paul Jobling, *Fashion Spreads: Word and Image in Fashion Photography since 1980* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 1.

³² See, for example, Rebecca Arnold, *Fashion, Desire, and Anxiety: Image and Morality in the 20th century* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers U Press, 2001); Rebecca Arnold, *The American Look: Fashion, Sportswear and the Image of Women in 1930s and 1940s New York* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009); Elspeth Brown, “Queering Glamour in Interwar Fashion Photography: The ‘Amorous Regard’ of George Platt Lynes,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 23 no. 3 (2017), 289-326; Becky E. Conekin, “‘Magazines are Essentially About the Here and Now. And This Was Wartime’: British *Vogue*’s Responses to the Second World War,” *Gender, Labour, War and Empire: Essays on Modern Britain*. Edited by Phillippa Levine and Susan R. Grayzel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 116-38; Hannah Crawforth, “Surrealism and the Fashion Magazine” *American Periodicals* 14, No. 2 (2004); Bettina Friedl, “The Hybrid Art of Fashion Photography: American Photographers in Post-World War II Europe.” *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 52, No. 1, Transatlantic Perspectives on American Visual Culture (2007), 47-62; Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in the American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2001); Aurelea Mahood, “Fashioning Readers: The Avant Garde and British *Vogue* 1920-29.” *Women: A Cultural Review* 13, no. 1 (2002); Eugenie Shinkle, ed. *Fashion as Photograph: Viewing and Reviewing Images of Fashion* (London: IB Tauris, 2008); Margaret Sundell, *From Fine*

Rather than offer a value judgment on *Vogue*'s commercialism, or position it outside of fine art and cultural discourse, or create a binary between high art and low, throw-away culture, this dissertation takes fashion photography and fashion magazines as a fertile point of inquiry. I explore and analyze how and when a wide range of photographic and design practices were staged in a material object, and how these interventions could offer meaning into larger social positions being defined and refined. This work adds to a critical genealogy of fashion photography that began with Nancy Hall-Duncan's landmark *The History of Fashion Photography* in 1979 and most recently enriched by Eugenie Shinkle's *Fashion Photography: The Story in 180 Pictures* from 2017.³³ Both of these studies, however, chronicle the evolution of fashion photography in the context of a photographic history without wading into how the photographs worked within their published material bodies. My dissertation restores photographs by Frissell, Miller, and Blumenfeld to their sites of publication and addresses not only their visual rhetoric, but how photographs worked with and against the text, graphic design, and materiality of the page. *Vogue* can open new avenues of understanding the histories of photography, design, and the illustrated press, as I reconsider how not only mass media shapes, but how mass media could be shaped by, physical, psychological, and social changes to the female body.

In addition to the form of the magazine, I also attend to the rhetoric of primary source archival letters, particularly within the Condé Nast Archives in New York City. The correspondence within these archives has been crucial for tracing how *Vogue*'s editorial staff, its

Art to Fashion: Man Ray's Ambivalent Avant-garde (PhD Diss. Columbia University, 2009); and Jennifer A. Greenhill, "Flip, Linger, Glide: Coles Phillips and the Movements of Magazine Pictures," *Art History* 40, no. 3 (2017), 582-611.

³³ Nancy Hall-Duncan, *The History of Fashion Photography* (New York: Alpine, 1979) and Eugenie Shinkle, *Fashion Photography: The Story in 180 Pictures* (New York: Aperture, 2017). Another canonical early work to theorize fashion photography is Martin Harrison, *Appearances, Fashion Photography since 1945* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991).

art directors, its photographers, and its publisher responded to the politics of the period. The magazine's archives also feature cross-cultural dialogue and networks forged between the United States and Europe, as *Vogue* employed art directors and photographers from countries outside of the U.S. The magazine became a multicultural and influential material object that opens up a wider view into *Vogue*'s engagement in global flux and conflict.

Looking at *Vogue* and its archives creates sites for investigating how gender, class, and race were inscribed or recoded through a medium dedicated to translating the body. But my analysis attends to haptic codes as well as visual ones. Women did not only engage with *Vogue* with their eyes but also with their hands. I consider the sensory element of touching print, but also the ways in which the visual form could replicate, or instigate, bodily responses.³⁴ Condé Nast understood the potential of tactility and of the immersive, perceptual experience of reading his magazines. He invested in high-quality paper and production values by purchasing his own printing company. In the 1930s and 1940s, *Vogue* defined itself both as an aesthetic object as much as a perceptual one. In the three chapters of the dissertation, I have developed a framework of analysis of the magazine in which these two concepts operated in concert. By looking at images in tandem with design, I argued Mehemed Agha's page design reinforced movement of the eye within Toni Frissell's images of active bodies; Alexander Liberman selected and enlarged Lee Miller's photographs that stressed the body to forge deeper connections between

³⁴ *Vogue* is still considered a "glossy" today — a term that describes that lustrous sheen on the physical surface of women's magazines, as much as its bright editorial tone. *Vogue*'s ad-heavy September issue, which peaks in page count for the year in announcing the season's fall trends, is also marked by its physicality—for the thud it makes when dropped on the table, according to its editors. But analyzing *Vogue* as a material object is particularly significant now as the magazine's pages have been declining in recent years due to the shifting ways in which readers physically interact with the magazine. In light of declining advertising revenue, other women's magazines as part of the Condé Nast publishing umbrella have shed their physical skins, choosing to publish only digitally in an effort to cut costs, increase responsiveness, and focus on the platform in which viewers most interface with, and share, the content. In January 2019, Condé Nast ceased the print publication of *Glamour* magazine, which was established in 1939. *Glamour* followed other Condé Nast titles *Teen Vogue* and *Self* that made the transition in the last year to a digital-only format.

reader and subject; and Liberman maximized Erwin Blumenfeld's photographs on covers that illustrated fractured, twisted, and shadowed bodies that forced the reader to experience visual distortion and re-experience some of the feelings brought by the war. In these three chapters, changing ways of representing, shaping, defining, and communicating with women were wrapped up into the very body of the page.

This dissertation situates the body as central to providing insight into the relationship between women and mass media during the 1930s and 1940s. By thinking about female bodies and somatic responses, this is not to say that women are more biologically linked to emotion or related more closely to their bodies than men. Rather, this project is grounded in the ways in which those linkages have been constructed over time. Susan Bordo's scholarship offers a window into thinking about the ideological construction of knowledge as it relates to gender. In "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," Bordo analyzes the legacy of Rene Descartes's empirical model of knowledge forged in the seventeenth-century.³⁵ A system based on rationality and detachment, this model separates the self from what is to be known in the world and was deemed masculine, while a feminine model would explore sense experience and intuition. This model shaped the types of knowledge for which women supposedly had access and how gender developed as a cultural, rather than biological, phenomenon. By choosing to look at the body, emotion, and touch, I do not mean to reify sexual difference, gender, and its relationship to knowledge, but to say that *Vogue* emerges out of this very construct.

Using the body as an analytic, I also draw on models of feminist theory and phenomenology for which the body is ruptured from its secondary place in the Cartesian model of knowledge. To position the body as a site for understanding individual and collective experience harkens back to Second Wave Feminism, for which the mantra "the personal is

³⁵ Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," *Signs* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1986): 439-456.

political” encapsulated the ways in which personal experiences were part of shared experiences of a constructed social hierarchy. When I speak of politics, it is this inflection of social structures on individual experience as it is the regulation of the individual in the social world. When I speak on the body, it is not about biological essentialism as it is the body as experience.

Radical ways of thinking about how meaning is made and how we understand the world through the experience of the body were coming into formation in the 1940s. Philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) and Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) looked to the body and its sensory experience as a way in which we make meaning—a radical departure from traditional philosophy in which knowledge production was situated in the mind. De Beauvoir describes the body as fundamentally relational: “if the body is not a *thing*, it is a situation: it is our grasp on the world and the outline for our projects.”³⁶

Recent studies have offered insight into reading print media that is informed by holding the material object in the hands and experiencing, rather than simply looking. Using phenomenology as a framework, Brita Ytre-Arne analyzed how women describe holding magazines, touching them, sitting with them, leafing through them, and saving them—privileging the material aspect of the experience as part of their connection to the content.³⁷ Ytre-Arne offers an alternative for thinking of women’s magazines not only as part of media consumption but rather as media experiences, centralizing the perceptual encounter and contact between reader and object.³⁸

A part of lived experience is the perception of images. What is the effect of images on how we see and fashion ourselves? As a magazine directed towards women, the magazine

³⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2011): 46.

³⁷ Brita Ytre-Arne, “‘I Want to Hold it in my Hands’: Readers’ Experiences of the Phenomenological Differences between Women’s Magazines Online and in Print,” *Media Culture Society* 33, no. 3 (2011): 467–477.

³⁸ *ibid*, 468.

pictured women and thereby ways of *interpreting* women. Using Beauvoir's famous phrase that "one is not born, but, rather, *becomes* a woman" as a platform, Judith Butler has argued that the female sex is "a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have *become* a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project."³⁹ This *becoming* requires a subject to perform "woman" with their bodies, to perform gender through what Butler chronicles as stylizations, gestures, movements, and enactments.⁴⁰ For Butler, "Gender is what is put on, invariably, under constraint, daily and incessantly, with anxiety and pleasure."⁴¹

This project looks at the constructions, performances, and critiques of gender, as well as investigations into what it means to see and experience through a body. Where the 1930s and 1940s becomes distinctive in a magazine that offers its readers to try on femininity is that it throws off seventeenth and eighteenth century visual models of communicating fashion: the fashion plate and fashion illustration. Moreover, it jettisons in the pictures under consideration here its eighteenth and nineteenth century upper class affinities with ease, restraint, calm, and luxury for new class associations: tension, freedom, frenzy, and low-brow. Edna Woolman Chase once wrote that to fill the magazine's pages with sketches of how women were aberrant from a prescribed norm of chic would be unhelpful and even grotesque. As *Vogue* redefined its identity through photography, it allowed new visual strategies and spaces to test boundaries and engage with those grotesqueries. If the disciplinary power of the magazine is capillary, could it also be disruptive? Affirming? I attend to these anxieties of picturing and performing gender, as

³⁹ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 522.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 519.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 531.

well as its pleasures.

Chapter 1
Vision in Motion:
Toni Frissell, Mehemed Agha, and the Somatic Snapshot

In the 1934 article, “American Summer,” a sequential series of photographs flicker across the top of the page in a film strip (fig. 9). Starting at the left side of the page, the images depict a woman in white, sitting on a Newport, Rhode Island, beach with two male companions, as she adjusts her posture and gradually turns toward the viewer. At the break in the gutter of the page, a different woman is featured in a set of three more photographs at Bailey’s Beach (an exclusive beach in Newport), where she and her husband squint in the sun as they look upward toward the photographer. The film strip reappears twice at the bottom right of the page. A bride is caught engaged in conversation at her outdoor wedding reception in Newport and another illustrates a woman in a black bathing suit, wading along the shoreline of Long Island, New York, sea-foam swirling around her.

These are uneventful pictures, but pictures of well-known figures in New York white society, who are named in the captions. The wealthy were the models of class and chic for *Vogue*’s readers in this period before professional models came into fashion. They could afford and wore the latest designer clothes featured in the magazine, and the pictures of their vacations and weddings offered voyeurs a glimpse into their private worlds, which coincided with details of their lives written within the articles. The photographer, Toni Frissell (1907-1988), started taking informal pictures like these in the early 1930s of society figures on the beaches along the Northeast coast (Newport, Long Island, and Southampton, New York, for example, feature in “American Summer”). These pictures began as simple snapshots of her friends, as these were the social circles in which Frissell herself moved.

Frissell's pictures appeared unposed and natural, as she seemingly caught her subject spontaneously, quickly "snapping" the shot. The immediacy of the moment was valued over framing or formal composition. Her somewhat blurry, haphazard photographs contrasted with the technical precision and formal clarity of modernist photography as practiced in the studio by such photographers as Edward Steichen and George Hoyningen-Huene in the same period. But the informality and immediacy of snapshots, captured outdoors by Frissell—the magazine's first regularly-featured female photographer—began to define an alternative aesthetic in the magazine in the 1930s.

The first section of this chapter examines why the snapshot aesthetic became popularized in the magazine and how it evolved over the course of the decade. I look at how *Vogue* first conceptualized the snapshot as a way to document the wealthy at leisure, as seen in "American Summer," and later trace its reworking as the preferred photographic means to articulate women's active bodies. By the end of the 1930s, Frissell's small black-and-white snapshots would be featured in large-scale, dynamic color images of women in motion. Her cover photographs for the August 1937, December 1937, and December 1938 issues of *Vogue*, for example, emblemize this type of physicality with women skiing, surfing, and simply expressing themselves in movement (fig. 10-12). Across the span of the 1930s, I argue the magazine redefined femininity through the effects of the snapshot, positioning women as active, empowered, and expressive with their bodies. This definition of female identity would overtake more staged and stilted studio photographs in the magazine created by male photographers, fundamentally changing the ways in which fashion photography pictured the body.

In the second section, I attend to the ways in which the magazine page began to change to support the feeling of movement captured within Frissell's snapshots. When placing her

photographs on the page for “American Summer,” art director Mehemed Agha sutured still photographs together in a diagonal filmstrip that would set the eye into motion as it scanned the images of moving bodies. His page designs in the 1930s feature new dynamic systems of organizing visual information in *Vogue* to harmonize with Frissell’s photographs of active women.

In the final section of the chapter, I analyze how Frissell and Agha used the snapshot aesthetic and animated design to highlight new forms of American sportswear and swimwear. I pay close attention to the fabric development within swimsuit design—the fashion Frissell often photographed in the 1930s. Indeed, the reader engages with various types, and ways of modeling, the swimsuit in “American Summer.” The very first line of the article exclaims, “EVERYWHERE: Mad success of rubber bathing suits on the Atlantic coast stopping just short of Bar Harbor. (Too cold there).” Unlike the swimsuits of previous decades, which were marked by heavy and excessive fabrics, swimsuits in the 1930s foregrounded sleekness and dynamism with fabrics such as rubber and Lastex. The ways in which these fabrics were described and marketed tapped into popular cultural discourses around health and fitness, as well as streamlining. A term originally describing hydrodynamics and aerodynamics, streamlining became an aesthetic style in the United States in the 1930s, promoting qualities of speed and efficiency. When applied to the bathing body, streamlined fabrics offered “fit, comfort, and control” as it smoothed and slimmed the body, removing any excess. In triangulating a study of the snapshot, graphic design, and fabric development, I argue *Vogue*’s pages foregrounded sleek dynamism in its photographs, design, and fashion to highlight health and vigor, encouraging movement and expression as much as it continued to control.⁴²

⁴² I am not the first to link the snapshot trend in fashion photography with dynamic visual promotions of American sportswear. See, for example, Rebecca Arnold, “Movement and Modernity: New York Sportswear, Dance, and

High Society and the Snapshot

Although Toni Frissell is well known now as one of the first photographers to take fashion outdoors, she did not begin her career at the magazine in the photography department. Her first position at *Vogue* was in February 1930 writing the captions for photographs in the editorial department. After working in advertising at Stern Brothers in New York, she had a knack for writing succinct, compelling descriptions that impressed Editor-in-chief Edna Woolman Chase. She also wrote at least one article for the magazine, including “Prospective Mothers-in-Law: How to Impress Them,” a witty send-up to the acceptance women never seem to achieve within their adoptive marital families. To win over the mother-in-law, wrote Frissell, is “a prospect that may turn out to be as difficult to warm as your frigidaire.”⁴³

In her free time, Frissell photographed her friends at Bailey’s Beach in Newport, Rhode Island, an exclusive destination spot for the American upper class in the summers.⁴⁴ She showed them to Carmel Snow, fashion editor at the time, who encouraged her to continue to photograph. This is not to say that Frissell introduced the snapshot aesthetic into *Vogue*. Snapshots appeared along with the introduction of photography into the magazine at the turn of the century. But they were overshadowed as Condé Nast professionalized photography with the hiring of Baron de Meyer in 1913, followed by Edward Steichen in 1923. These men took photographs with heavy,

Exercise in the 1930s and 1940s,” *Fashion Theory* 12, no. 3 (Sept 2008): 341-357 and her book, *The American Look: Fashion, Sportswear and the Image of Women in 1930s and 1940s* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009). Where Arnold’s primary interest lies in fashion and embodiment, and how this plays out visually in magazines like *Vogue* and Harper’s *Bazaar*, I look at the evolution of the snapshot and how it becomes the dominate framework for representing bodies in motion. My work is the first extended study linking the snapshot and graphic design in *Vogue*, as I specifically trace how Frissell’s photographs and Agha’s graphic design worked in tandem to alter the magazine’s visual language in the 1930s, foregrounding movement within representation and perception as part of evolving trends in visual communication and product design. I also uncover how the use of Frissell in editorial and advertising images of American-made Lastex swimsuits and American-made Kodak cameras spurred women to express themselves while supporting native economies.

⁴³ Toni Frissell, “Prospective Mothers-in-Law: How to Impress Them,” *Vogue* 78, no. 6, (Sep 15, 1931), 84.

⁴⁴ Frissell shared an interest in the camera with her brother, Varick, a documentary filmmaker. He was killed in 1929 while on location off the coast of Labrador.

large-format cameras that accommodated larger film negatives to create high-quality images. In the studio, photographers could also control factors such as lighting, composition, and background. These technical conditions developed by Pictorialist and Modernist photographers had cemented fashion photography as an art form in the 1910s and 1920s.⁴⁵

For a new decade, Snow recognized within Frissell a fresh perspective on the society portrait. Although Frissell was dismissed from her caption writing position after less than a year in 1930, this potential of her pictures landed her a position at *Vogue* as a photographer, where she would regularly publish until the early 1940s and intermittently thereafter until her retirement in 1967. Frissell's first photographs appeared in 1931 in an article detailing the vacations of the wealthy in "Newport versus Long Island" (fig. 13).⁴⁶ One image depicts Cornelia "Gelia" Széchenyi, granddaughter of Cornelius Vanderbilt II, on a rocky beach (the top picture on the right page of the layout). She holds a long pole with a net for crabbing and looks down at her male companion. He presumably busies himself catching the crabs, though an overlapping separate image disguises his action. The attention is rather on the relaxed mood of the scene, the just-captured effect, with Gelia bringing a hand to her face as the wind courses through her sundress. Frissell's photograph holds within it an approachability, a stripped down artifice that was a part of its charm. It is only within the narrative of the article that the reader comes in contact with the extreme wealth of Széchenyi; the author shares with the reader that Széchenyi and friends "returned triumphantly...mud-stained, windblown, but happy with their day's catch of thirty crabs. One suspects that, later, the crabs crawled around the Vanderbilt's big kitchens, upsetting the liveried footman."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ On the rise of photography over illustration in *Vogue*, see my summary in the Introduction of this dissertation.

⁴⁶ "Newport versus Long Island," *Vogue* 78, no. 6 (Sep 15, 1931), 74, 75, 128.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 75.

Frissell's snapshots appeared alive and unposed, capturing a sense of intimacy and ease in her subjects that was perhaps aided by the fact they were friends or acquaintances, rather than simply clients. These casual snapshots contrasted with the formal studio portraits of society women that *Vogue* typically featured. Moreover, if a scene required a beach look and featured summer fashions, the studio photographer would conceive of an artificial scene. Other times, photographers would employ tricks-of-the-eye. George Hoyningen-Huene's photograph in *Vogue* of two bathers looking out towards the horizon line of the ocean from 1930 was actually shot on the roof of the Condé Nast photography studio in Paris (fig. 14).

Frissell likened her pictures, in contrast to those created in the studio, with those taken by news reporters. As she recalled, "Up to this time pictures of this type were always taken by News Men standing at the gates of Bailey's Beach — but I took my subjects more informally — sitting on the beach, playing tennis, crabbing, etc. This idea was new, although my photographic technique was appalling."⁴⁸ Why would *Vogue* then publish these pictures from a photographer without advanced training, when technique and finish were of such importance to the publication as it began to prioritize photography over illustration? Moreover, what was the appeal of the snapshot as a mode of representation? Geoffrey Batchen has described snapshots as "boring pictures," wherein "the vast majority of snapshots are not rare or particularly creative; they're mostly banal, repetitive in pictorial form, and conformist in social aspiration."⁴⁹ This is not to say that Batchen finds them void of incredible aesthetic, social, and historical complexity; quite the contrary. But his description helps to define a baseline for comparing the snapshot and fine art photography, to pinpoint why *Vogue*'s editors found boring pictures worthwhile in the 1930s.

⁴⁸ Letter from Toni Frissell to Iva "Pat" Patcevitch, the President of Condé Nast Publications. Dated October 26, 1944. Box 12. Toni Frissell Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁹ See Geoffrey Batchen, "Snapshots: Art History and the Ethnographic Turn," *Photographies* 1, no. 2 (2008), 132.

There were a set of reasons that speak to voyeuristic pleasures, perceptual changes in visual culture, and new ways of conceptualizing the modern female form that I shall outline.

Firstly, the snapshot, with its associations with the private and the intimate, offered extended and enhanced access to the types of femininity articulated by white, upper-class culture. Frissell was initially able to offer this causeway to *Vogue*'s editors. She was born into a prominent family in New York City and her status was such that her marriage to Francis McNeil Bacon in 1932 was announced in *Vogue* with a portrait by German photographer Horst P. Horst (fig. 15). Horst captured her demure, with her head turned to the side under a sheer tulle veil and in a wedding dress by American designer Elizabeth Hawes.⁵⁰ She stands in three-quarter view in a studio, a half-column behind her as an element of classicism. The soft, static femininity of this image grates against the types of pictures she would make for *Vogue*. *Vogue* editors framed Frissell as part of the elite class by both publicly publishing her wedding photograph as well as in private company conversations. Looking through the archives of Condé Nast, it was Frissell's access to exalted circles that partly appealed to her editors. Agha believed that editor-in-chief Edna Woolman Chase found Frissell "very useful because she has entrée."⁵¹

In the beginning of her career at the magazine, *Vogue* assigned Frissell traditional society portraits and on-location photographs of exclusive destinations, presumably because she could also help broker social connections. But Frissell's photographs did not restage portrait conventions. Her style played with formal, indoor portraits by moving them outdoors and using snapshot effects, such as in "Debutante Vanguard" (fig. 16). In the bottom right of the page, one

⁵⁰ The choice of Hawes was a progressive one; Hawes was a critic of the fashion system. She was also one of the first American designers to create ready-to-wear fashion to receive acclaim and was promoted as part of the "American Look." In 1938, she wrote scathingly about the fashion industry in *Fashion Is Spinach* (New York: Random House, 1938).

⁵¹ Mehemed Agha to Edna Woolman Chase, Internal *Vogue* memo, September 6, 1934, Edna Woolman Chase Papers, Condé Nast Archive, New York, New York.

young debutante is caught with her mouth open, as if caught in mid-sentence talking with Frissell. Frissell also shot her subjects from below to emphasize the open expanse of sky, giving the black-and-white pictures a light, airy quality.

I argue that *Vogue* found this aesthetic appealing because it seemed to strip away the exclusivity of wealth. In one way, the snapshot made the subject more “real.” Frissell points to news photography as a reference point for her pictures. Photojournalism incorporated a snapshot approach to inform the believability of photographs meant to convey reality. As photography historian Michael Carlebach observed, “Spontaneity increasingly came to be seen as a prerequisite of authenticity.”⁵² By moving her subjects outdoors and letting the natural world affect the image (messy hair blowing across the face, capturing a woman mid-speech), Frissell stripped away the artificiality of the studio.

The snapshot also served as a type of leveling mechanism, which could speak to class insecurities. The casualness of the snapshot made the lives of the wealthy relatable and made accessible the very inaccessibility of the spaces she photographed. Bailey’s Beach in Newport, Rhode Island, was, and is, a club with exclusive membership.⁵³ The gates that Frissell refers to in her recollection of when she starting taking snapshots — “Up to this time pictures of this type were always taken by News Men standing at the gates of Bailey’s Beach” — were gates that kept others always on the outside. *Vogue*’s publisher, Condé Nast, believed that his readers were ones that were familiar with the upper class but remained just outside the gates:

⁵² Carlebach, *American Photojournalism*, 22.

⁵³ Bailey’s Beach has retained its entrenched exclusivity. As Guy Trebay of *The New York Times* wrote in 2003: “The names drift through the air like fragments from a Social Register Genesis... At a certain level of a certain segment of society, the one Gore Vidal calls America’s ruling class, any conversation is destined at some point to become a narrative of tribal history. This is rarely more clear than on the buffet line for dinner here at Bailey’s Beach on a summer Sunday night... ‘People kill to belong to the beach,’ said Beth Pyle, whose twin sister, she added, has never quite made it into the club. ‘It has really driven some people crazy when they don’t get in.’” See “Summer Places; At Bailey’s Beach, The Ruling Class Keeps Its Guard Up,” *The New York Times*, July 20, 2003. <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/20/style/summer-places-at-bailey-s-beach-the-ruling-class-keeps-its-guard-up.html>

It has always been my contention that 90% of *Vogue*'s readers must come from "the cousins of the rich" – those who move in so-called exalted circles but who are forced "to make the grade" through the taste and judgment applied in the purchase of inexpensive clothes. *Vogue* was a great help to these women and in turn, according to my theory, they have been the foundation of *Vogue*'s success.⁵⁴

Space and place within Frissell's photographs were always classed by the very means that only few could have access to them. As the writer explains in "Newport vs. Long Island," guests to Newport arrive "by air, by yacht, or by the venerable steamer Commonwealth."⁵⁵ By picturing the lives of the wealthy, *Vogue* enacted a form of what Guy Debord would define as a spectacle culture, a particular culture born out of capitalism in which "everything that was directly lived has receded into representation."⁵⁶ Celebrities and the wealthy are the "stars" in this world defined by images—images which take the place of reality and physical relationships. Debord writes,

As specialists of *apparent life*, stars serve as superficial objects that people can identify with in order to compensate for the fragmented productive specializations that they actually live. The function of these celebrities is to act out various lifestyles or sociopolitical viewpoints in a *full, totally free manner*. They embody the inaccessible results of social *labor* by dramatizing the by-products of that labor which are magically projected above it as its ultimate goals: *power* and *vacations* — the decision-making and consumption that are at the beginning and the end of a process that is never questioned.⁵⁷

The power and vacations within *Vogue*'s spectacular culture is never queried or critiqued but presented as the model in which its readers could identify. Frissell's pictures allowed readers to vicariously live through the experiences of the wealthy and their travels, and her photographic documentation expanded in the 1930s from the beaches of the American Northeast to the Caribbean to the dramatic mountainous vistas of Switzerland.⁵⁸ Through the ways in which she

⁵⁴ Condé Nast, internal *Vogue* memo, July 8, 1940, Condé Nast Papers, Condé Nast Archive, New York, New York.

⁵⁵ "Newport vs. Long Island," 75.

⁵⁶ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone, 1994), section 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵⁸ For Frissell's travel reportage during the first half of the 1930s, see "Tyrolian Skiing Song," *Vogue*, 81, no. 1 (Jan 1, 1933), 44, 45, 70 and "West Indian Flight," *Vogue* 83, no. 6 (March 15, 1934), 52, 53.

composed her images, Frissell's readers formed intimate relationships to the images that did not exist in the physical world, mirroring the media landscape and celebrity culture of today.

The beaches of Newport and Long Island captured by Frissell were particularly exclusive destinations for readers to experience through pictures, far removed from the beaches populated by the masses, such as the famed Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York. Photographs from this period picture throngs of beachgoers during their leisure time, such as Weegee's *Yesterday at Coney Island...* (1940) published in *PM*, in which Weegee chronicled the thousands upon thousands of bathers corralled into the frame from his vantage point at Steeplechase Pier (fig. 17). Weegee was a member of the social documentary collective, the New York Photo League, which had been founded in 1936 with more radical, political leanings. Other Photo League photographers Sid Grossman, Morris Engel, and Lisette Model also looked to Coney Island to capture the lives of the working class at leisure.⁵⁹ It was Lisette Model who photographed the plump and grinning "Coney Island bather" for *Vogue's* competitor *Harper's Bazaar* in 1941, a send-up of sorts to Frissell's lithe bather modeling in a black bathing suit in "American Summer" (fig. 18). The image clashed against the fashion magazine's idealized body, and Model has said, "My photographs were such a contradiction to the elegance of the magazine that [Alexey] Brodovitch, the extravagant art director, put them in for that reason alone."⁶⁰

However, within *Harper's Bazaar*, the fun of Coney is also had at the bather's expense with humor directed at her corporality. The photograph was published with the tongue-in-check caption, "Coney Island Today, the Bathing Paradise of Billions—where fun is still on a gigantic

⁵⁹ For more on the Photo League, see Mason Klein and Catherine Evans, *The Radical Camera: New York's Photo League 1936-1951*, Jewish Museum, New York, Exhibition Catalogue (New Haven: Yale UP, 2011). For a major study on the visual culture of Coney Island, see Robin Jaffee Frank, *Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland, 1861-2008* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2015).

⁶⁰ Lisette Model quoted in Jain Kelly, *Darkroom II* (New York: Lustrum Press, 1978), 68.

scale.”⁶¹ Mirroring the bather on the opposite page is the Elephant Hotel that had once survived as an attraction on the island. Model’s image in *Harper’s Bazaar* holds both the derogatory humor and the bold, self-confident subversion in the same space.

The article which illustrated Model’s bather, titled “How Coney Island Got that Way,” also details the decline and decay of Coney Island from an upper class retreat to one that is “taken over by the proletariat.”⁶² The magazine littered the page with language that connotes the aural and visual cacophony of the island, calling out its “shrieks” and “freaks” in the text, providing another type of mediated experience for middle and upper class readers who might never step a toe on the Coney Island beach.⁶³ Similarly, *Vogue* distanced the upper class beaches it featured from Coney Island and other popular spaces for the public. In “H20” from 1935, the author, Marya Mannes, wrote on the attraction of water, “Water life brings out the most beautiful members of the human race (we will refrain from describing the organisms that swarm on some public beaches; they may improve with time).”⁶⁴ Here, the magazine dehumanized those that frequented the public beaches, referring to people as swarming organisms. The full-page image accompanying the article is a lone woman running along the beach in an action photograph—though not by Frissell—that contrasts with Weegee’s multitudes (fig. 19). The woman is in silhouette, referencing not a particular society member in which to emulate, but a representation of the perfected woman—slim, graceful, and agile.

Vogue’s references to the “beautiful members of the human race” as opposed to the “organisms that swarm on some public beaches” recall the language of the eugenics movement that gained cultural popularity in the Teens, Twenties, and into the Thirties. Advocates of

⁶¹ Oliver Pilat and Jo Ranson, “How Coney Island Got that Way,” *Harper’s Bazaar* 75 (July 1941), 52-53, 86, 92.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 53

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁶⁴ Marya Mannes, “H20,” *Vogue* 86, no. 2 (July 15, 1935), 21.

eugenics believed that a superior society could be possible by removing “undesirable” genes within a population. One of their tactics was sterilizations, in which they targeted poor communities, immigrants, people of color, incarcerated individuals, and individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities. The most legal eugenic sterilizations in the history of the United States occurred in the 1930s.⁶⁵ *Vogue* participated in the rhetoric of eugenic culture, where articles and photographs detailed a perfected well-born, well-bred, beautiful class of society by its focus on individual pedigree and genealogy. Toni Frissell’s portraits of young debutantes, for example, would be accompanied by a description of the young woman’s parents and their social position. The debutante would eventually graduate to *Vogue* model in the magazine and her progeny would become the next young debutante, continuing the cycle.

Vogue was not only amplifying a white, elite social ideal in its narrow focus on the members of high society, it was marketing it. *Vogue* commodified the lifestyle (what this woman wears, where she summers, etc.) as much as it packaged the voyeuristic experience of reading about the lifestyle. Other companies took note. Frissell’s snapshots of the wealthy became so popular that she was featured in advertisements to sell Kodak cameras in *Vogue* (fig. 20). In 1934, Kodak marketed the accessibility of smaller cameras and the snapshot aesthetic using Frissell in a series of four, full-page advertisements published in June, July, August, and December of that year.⁶⁶ These advertisements, which looked and read like *Vogue* layouts, highlighted well-known socialites and celebrities using small, portable Kodak cameras. The photographs that appeared included their snapshots, as well as Frissell’s snapshots of them taking, holding, and operating the cameras.

⁶⁵ Susan Currell, in Currell and Christina Cogdell, eds. *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 2.

⁶⁶ See “Snapping the Snappers,” *Vogue* 83, no. 12 (June 15, 1934), 81; “The Snapshooters have it...and how,” *Vogue* 84, no. 2 (July 15, 1934), 71; “Caught while they click...” *Vogue* 84, no. 3 (August 1, 1934), 71; and “Camera Anglings,” *Vogue* 84, no. 12 (December 15, 1934), 75.

The copy within the advertisements spoke of the new trend for taking pictures in the 1930s, echoing the ubiquitous, even obsessive, posting in social media platforms today. In the ad titled “Snapping the Snappers,” the copy describes the din of camera clicks sweeping the nation:

The warm June days find the open season for snap shooters in full swing. Everywhere you go you hear the click of the camera. You will be surprised to find that the friends you least suspect have become ardent picture takers. Most enthusiastic, and successful to boot, is Toni Frissell, known in private life as Mrs. Francis McNeil Bacon, III, who snaps fascinating places and people brightening the pages of our smart magazines. She now catches other fans taking snapshots themselves.⁶⁷

As the text illustrates, the public Frissell is a successful photographer, while in private life she maintains her social standing with her husband’s name.

In “Snapping the Snappers,” Frissell shot most of the pictures in the advertisement that scatter across the page. Her images feature famous women, including Gloria Vanderbilt, who is photographed looking down at her “pet Kodak in hand, snapped the day before she boarded the boat for England, where she will be a brilliant figure in the gayest season London has had in years.”⁶⁸ Frissell also photographed editor and author Clare Booth Brokaw (later Clare Booth Luce), looking up at an angle outside of the frame with a camera in her hand. This image is featured next to a photograph of Brokaw’s own making—a friend “taking a smash at the ping pong table.”⁶⁹ The images, less immediate than Frissell’s typical snapshots in *Vogue*, give visual character and social value to white American upper-class leisure—playing table-tennis, boating, riding horses, and sitting in dappled sunlight in a garden. All women are outdoors, in natural light, living their private lives for public consumption. These images align with Catherine Zuromskis’s argument that snapshots, though seemingly spontaneous, adhere to social norms and conventions in the ways in which they continually reflect certain ideals, what she calls

⁶⁷ “Snapping the Snappers,” *Vogue* 83, no. 12 (June 15, 1934), 81.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 81.

“aspirational fictions.”⁷⁰ Moreover, the snapshots glorify and indulge leisure in photographs that soften, counter, and elide the massive unemployment and impoverishment affecting the nation during the Great Depression.

More expanded stories of American social conditions, and the differing ways of photographing and conceptualizing the “free time” wrought by the Depression, were beginning to gain traction in magazines and newspapers in the mid-1930s through the government’s Resettlement Administration (RA) and later Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographic program from 1935-1942. Pictures of migrant farming families by Dorothea Lange, for example, appeared in newspapers like the *San Francisco News* on March 10, 1936 with the headline “Ragged, Hungry, Broke, Harvest Workers Live in Squallor [sic]” (fig. 21).⁷¹ Spare time in Lange’s photographs are of the agony of waiting for the arrival of food assistance from the Federal government, as stated in the article.⁷² Images like these were used to support President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal program initiatives for economic reform and to aid struggling communities, in particular rural farms due to the compounding environmental effects of drought and soil erosion. *Vogue* created an alternative, yet synchronous, history to the RA/FSA visual initiative that throws into relief the stark divisions of class and how it was pictured during the Great Depression. Kodak’s ads in *Vogue* urge readers to document their lives, but so that it can

⁷⁰ Catherine Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 33.

⁷¹ Rather than Lange’s now iconic cropped portrait of a mother and her three children squeezed inside of a frame, called *Migrant Mother*, the two images in the *San Francisco News* are taken at a distance to give more context to their living situation.

⁷² For an extended study of Lange’s series in various contexts, see Sarah Meister, *Dorothea Lange: Migrant Mother* (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 2019. For an analysis of FSA photography as it appeared in different types of consumer magazines, see Cara A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington: Smithsonian, 2003).

be turned into an object of possession. “Today, no event of importance is complete,” the advertising copy reads in *Vogue*, “without the amateur’s own record of it.”⁷³

These advertisements featuring women in, and taking, snapshots are a variant of the company’s Kodak Girl campaign, which targeted female consumers from 1892 until the 1970s. These advertisements typically featured a carefree young woman using or carrying a camera to capture her life, from sight-seeing to intimate family moments. Young, fashionable, and intrepid, the Kodak Girl developed as an advertising icon alongside the New Woman. Indeed, Nancy West has argued, “alone, adventurous, and unencumbered by heavy equipment and a male companion, the Kodak Girl is the New Woman.”⁷⁴ As a marketing tool, the Kodak Girl emphasized the simplicity—and significance—of taking snapshots in the early twentieth century that resonate with the ads it featured in the 1930s.

In one ad from 1907, a woman steadies her Kodak with its long bellows with her hands (fig. 22). She stares off into the distance with a smile on her face, presumably with joy at the subject in front of her. She sits on a grassy hill and the wind whips at the tendrils that have been pulled out of her bun. She wears a striped dress, which would become the signature of the Kodak girl, and her stylish hat is cast off to the side. The copy reads,

To every out-door hobby, to every delight of nature, to the very Spirit of Spring itself, there is an added charm for those who Kodak. Not merely for the sake of the moment’s pleasure, but even more for the pleasure in the years that follow, the Kodak is worth while. And it’s all so simple now that anybody can make good pictures. Kodak, you know, means photography with the bother left out.

The ad emphasizes the importance of ephemeral pleasures, as well as the memory that could be arrested with a camera. The copy also stresses the simplicity of the camera so that “anybody can make good pictures.” In another Kodak Girl photographic ad from 1914, a woman stands on a

⁷³ “The Snapshooters Have It...and How,” *Vogue* 84, no. 2 (Jul 15, 1934), 71.

⁷⁴ Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 54.

patio in front of a balustrade with the ocean behind her (fig. 23). She is presumably on vacation and looks down at the camera she holds at her midline. A camera case is slung over her shoulder. The copy reads: “Every trip that is worth taking, is worth a Kodak Story. The city girl’s trip to the country, the country girl’s trip to the city, any girl’s trip to the sea-shore or the mountains—in all of these are picture stories of the interesting places and still more interesting people. And picture taking with a Kodak or Brownie is very simple—and less expensive than you think.”

Kodak had cultivated this technical accessibility in its advertisements for half a century. As early as the 1880s, the development of more inexpensive cameras that could be held in the hands allowed both professional and amateur photographers to take more candid pictures than the larger, heavier cameras allowed due to size and weight.⁷⁵ The process of taking a photograph and having it developed was also simplified for consumers, making photography less about photographic technique and darkroom expertise. Eastman’s Kodak #1, with its preloaded roll film, debuted in 1889 with the advertisement: “You press the button, we do the rest.” In 1900, Kodak introduced the Brownie for the price of one dollar, which would be equivalent to around \$28 today.⁷⁶ Although the snapshot was marketed to, and typically defined by, amateur photographers, it became a style in its own right. As professional studio photographer Gotthelf Pach would recall, “It was the snapshot camera that showed us what ought to be done. People began to discard artificial photographs for snapshots. We found our best likenesses were those taken when we were off guard.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Although the Leica with its 35 mm roll film would revolutionize the way in which photographers could photograph action, earlier innovations did allow for more candid photographs. On the development of smaller, hand-held cameras and its effect on the field of photography and photojournalism, see Michael L. Carlebach, *American Photojournalism Comes Of Age* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).

⁷⁶ Nancy Hendricks, *Popular Fads and Craze Through American History* (ABC-CLIO, 2018), 54.

⁷⁷ Gotthelf Pach, “You Cannot Bluff the Camera,” *American Magazine* 89 (March 1920): 43. Quoted in Carlebach, *American Photojournalism*, 22.

In addition to its ads, Kodak taught photographers how to capture natural snapshots in manuals such as *At Home with Kodak* from 1910 or its monthly magazine, *Kodakery: A Magazine for Amateur Photographers*, which debuted in 1913.⁷⁸ “Nine hundred and ninety-nine children out of every thousand are naturally graceful and will pose themselves far better than you can,” affirmed the authors of *At Home With Kodak*. “The tactful Kodaker can coax his little subjects into the proper place for the exposure, and then wait until the proper moment arrives.”⁷⁹ Kodak found that women comprised a large part of its market share for its cameras and its publications and created Kodak Girl covers for *Kodakery* to appeal to this demographic.⁸⁰ A *Kodakery* cover from February 1931 shows how the Kodak Girl endured through the decades. The image illustrates a woman poised on a snow-covered slope in front of an expansive blue sky, her Kodak in one hand and her other hand holding her ski pole (fig. 24). *Kodakery*, like the Kodak Girl advertisements, stressed that the camera was the accessory for the modern woman—easy to use and pivotal for capturing experiences. This was how Frissell, too, articulated her perspective on the camera. She was not interested in the technical aspects of photography but in how it could translate the vitality of her subjects: “I was never mechanically minded with lights and exposures, so I decided to go outside on location to photograph models with their hair blowing in the wind.”⁸¹ She downplayed certain skills of photography (lights, exposures) to emphasize others—the ways in which she sought out locations or moved her body to seek out

⁷⁸ For a study on how Kodak taught the aesthetics of the snapshot, see Rachel Snow, “Correspondence Here: Real Photo Postcards and the Snapshot Aesthetic,” *Postcards: Ephemeral Histories of Modernity*, Edited by David Prochaska and Jordana Mendelson (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2010). See also Nancy West’s text, where she discusses the ways in which Kodak stressed the importance to women of taking photographs as sites of memorialization.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Snow, “Correspondence Here,” n.p.

⁸⁰ Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*, 52.

⁸¹ Quoted in George Plimpton, *Toni Frissell Photographs: 1933-1967* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 3.

natural moments or use the backgrounds to her advantage. This was the advice, too, that Kodak would give to its readers in its publications.

In the *Vogue* advertisement “Snapping the Snappers,” as well as others, Kodak frames the celebrities as the new generation of fashionable Kodak girls, who document their travels and their friends with the camera. Kodak positions Frissell, rather, in a liminal space between the Kodak Girl and professional photographer. She is the only woman posed in the advertisement in the studio, as if the studio is a sign for the professional, rather than amateur photographer—even the one who gained a reputation for photographing outdoors with a hand-held camera. And yet the advertising text draws on its characterization of the traveling Kodak girl to describe Frissell, camera in hand, where her “snaps of fascinating places and people brighten the pages of our smart magazines.” Frissell is featured holding a Kodak Recomar camera to her eye—a small, accordion-style model reminiscent of the ones held by the Kodak girls in 1909 and 1913.⁸² Frissell’s camera also bears similarity to the one held by the cover girl on the *Kodakery* cover from 1931. The parallels in the cameras across the decades suggest that is not necessarily the smallest of cameras that create the snapshot, it is the intrepidity of the photographer.

Moreover, the smallest of cameras—the miniature 35 mm camera—were cost-prohibitive to most families during the Great Depression. The German Leica, which debuted in 1925 and began to be marketed to American consumers in the 1930s, cost around \$200.⁸³ This was a

⁸² It is unclear what exact type of camera Frissell used in the 1930s for her fashion photographs or if Frissell, in fact, regularly used the Kodak Recomar. In 1941, *Vogue* would publish an article by Frissell in which she advised women to use a miniature camera to take successful snapshots. She does not verify what camera she used but offered up the advice: “The most satisfactory equipment I know for photographing children is a small speed camera, an exposure meter, and a battery of filters. The miniature camera lets you get away from the frozen attitudes, which were actually required by the large-view studio camera. There is a great variety of filters, but the K2 filter is absolutely vital if any sky—even a patch—is to show in the photograph.” See Toni Frissell, “To Photograph Children,” *Vogue* 97, no. 12 (June 15, 1941): 58. As a photographer during the Second World War, Frissell used a Rolleiflex.

⁸³ On the history of the 35 mm camera and its incorporation into the American market, see Kalton C. Lahue and Joseph A. Bailey, *Glass, Brass, and Chrome: The American 35mm Miniature Camera* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 196.

period when the minimum wage was 25 cents an hour.⁸⁴ Kodak would make a more affordable version of the 35 mm camera, the Retina, at \$52 (a price point comparable to other cameras in the *Vogue* ad, which start at \$14 and go up to \$55), but the Retina would not drop on the market until December 1934, six months after Kodak first featured Frissell in its ads.

Kodak assumed a viable market in *Vogue's* readers for expanding consumption of its products. Unlike other companies during the Depression, Eastman Kodak Company grew during this period. The company earned over 20 million dollars in 1931, its strongest year after 1929.⁸⁵ That Kodak featured Frissell in its ads in *Vogue* signifies her identification in the minds of readers with the snapshot style by 1934.⁸⁶ In this way, Kodak seemed to offer a bridge from amateur to professional in its Kodak Girl ads, where Frissell modeled for *Vogue* readers that photography could hold a potential career path as much as it could be a form of memory and expression.

Vogue also published articles on female photographers and women in the history of photography in this period. Mehemed Agha penned an essay, "Woman's Place Is In the Dark Room," which featured photographs by Frissell as well as amateur photographers.⁸⁷ By 1940,

⁸⁴ Twenty five cents was the federal minimum wage rate in 1938 under the Fair Labor Standards Act of the U.S. Department of Labor.

⁸⁵ Lauren Warren Hill and Julia Rabig, editors, *Black Power: Community Development, Capitalism, and Corporate Responsibility in Postwar America* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 48.

⁸⁶ Interestingly, while Kodak associates Frissell with the snapshot, *Vogue* struggled with Frissell's place in the magazine in 1934. According to internal memos between Mehemed Agha and Edna Woolman Chase, Frissell asked for a salary increase, as well as an increase of the number of pictures in the magazine. She also asked for full-page images, as well as fashion assignments in addition to society portraits. Agha was unwilling at the time to satisfy her demands and feature more of her work in the magazine. Nor did he want to accept her work for *Vanity Fair*, for her photographs were not art photography. For Chase's part, she feared that Frissell might leave *Vogue* for *Harper's Bazaar*. See Mehemed Agha to Edna Woolman Chase, Internal *Vogue* memo, September 6, 1934, Edna Woolman Chase Papers, Condé Nast Archive, New York, New York. In the end, Frissell would stay on at *Vogue* for the rest of the decade, and her profile would increase in the second half of the 1930s, but the magazine and the photographer repeatedly argued over the conditions of her contract, including her salary, types of assignments, and number of pages in which her photographs were featured. Letters between Frissell and *Vogue* staff in the archives of *Vogue*, as well as her archives at the Library of Congress, detail her grievances over the years from the 1930s and 1940s.

⁸⁷ Mehemed Agha, "Woman's Place Is In the Dark Room," *Vogue* 92, no. 8, (Oct 15, 1938): 82, 83, 104, 109. It should also be noted that Agha actively wrote about contemporary photographers after his move to the United

Vogue was cultivating college students in photography contests advertised in the magazine to generate fresh talent and serve as mentorship programs for emergent photographers, where Frissell was also noted.⁸⁸

Despite connecting the snapshot style with Frissell, the snapshot was not exclusive to *Vogue* in this period. Its competitor, *Harper's Bazaar*, was simultaneously experimenting with the snapshot as a visual form in the fashion magazine. Carmel Snow, who originally supported Frissell's work in 1930, had left *Vogue* for *Harper's Bazaar* in 1932 and become editor-in-chief in 1934. Snow made several hires to the magazine's art department that rapidly modernized the look of *Bazaar*. In 1933, she hired Hungarian news and sports photographer Martin Munkacsi. His picture of socialite Lucile Brokaw running along a Long Island beach in the winter of 1933 in *Harper's Bazaar* (fig. 25) is considered in scholarship as the first fashion snapshot.⁸⁹ Evolving out of news and sports photography, the novelty of his image is its literal motion: the wind picks up Brokaw's cape in a billowing angle; her muscles are emphasized as she is mid-stride; her hands are caught in the act of swinging back and forth; and the picture is blurred. The image is

States. His critical writing on photographers such as Margaret Bourke-White, Walker Evans, Ralph Steiner, and Paul Outerbridge were featured in exhibition catalogues and niche publications. See the introduction for the exhibition catalogue "Photography" in *Photographs by Three Americans: Margaret Bourke-White, Ralph Steiner, Walker Evans* (New York: John Becker Gallery, 18 April to 8 May 1931); "Paul Outerbridge, Jr." in *Advertising Arts* (May 1931): 44 and "Ralph Steiner," *Creative Art* 10 (January 1932): 34-39. Aside from more critical writings on photography, Agha joked of its pretensions and conventions. On a tongue-in-check critique of modernist photography, see "A Word on European Photography," *Pictorial Photography in America* 5 (1929): n.p.

⁸⁸ For example, in a January 1940 advertisement, *Vogue* advertised a photography contest for college women (and men), where the winning contestant would be offered an apprenticeship and potential permanent position at the magazine. Toni Frissell, along with other thirteen other photographers (all male), were recalled as part of the legacy of photographers in *Vogue*. "Take the first step towards a career with *Vogue*," the advertisement wrote. See *Vogue* 95, no. 1 (Jan 1, 1940), 8f, 8g. Winners of these contests included Frances McLaughlin-Gill, who started her apprenticeship working under Frissell and flourished at *Vogue* in the mid-forties and fifties.

⁸⁹ In the first comprehensive study of fashion photography, Nancy Hall-Duncan wrote that Munkacsi "effected a shocking and revolutionary change in the way fashion photographs were taken" and profoundly altered the genre. Duncan does concede that Frissell stated in conversation with the author in September 1976 that she (Frissell) "independently conceived a snapshot-like fashion style," but Armstrong still gives Munkacsi credit as the first and the influencer of Frissell. See Nancy Hall-Duncan, *The History of Fashion Photography*, 77. From *Vogue*'s perspective in 1944, the magazine wrote in its pages that Frissell "all but invented *al fresco* fashion photographs." See "Three Generations of Bacons," *Vogue* 104, no. 9 (Nov. 15, 1944): 64, 65.

also cropped; Brokaw's body takes up all of the space of the photograph. Her head touches the top of the frame, her cape extends to the edge of the page, and the photograph cuts at her left calf. Snow later recounted the photo shoot:

The day was cold, unpleasant and dull—not at all auspicious for a ‘glamorous resort’ picture. Munkacsi hadn’t a word of English, and his friend seemed to take forever to interpret for us. Munkacsi began making wild gestures. ‘*What does Munkacsi want us to do?*’ Though her bathing suit was far more extensive than today’s bikinis, and she wore a cape over it, she was blue with cold. It seemed that what Munkacsi wanted was for the model to *run toward him*. Such a ‘pose’ had never been attempted before for fashion (even ‘sailing’ features were posed in a studio on a fake boat), but Lucile was certainly game, and so was I. The resulting picture, of a typical American girl *in action*, with her cape billowing out behind her, made photographic history.⁹⁰

The following year, Snow hired Alexey Brodovitch in 1934 as art director, who quickly began to rework the magazine’s format. He experimented with layout design and type, infusing more white space into the page and toying with typography and text (see, for example, fig. 26). The radical photographic and graphic changes to *Harper’s Bazaar* concerned *Vogue* editors and staff, as eligible female readers began to take notice and *Vogue* feared for its subscription base.

Advertising department member ACM Azoy wrote in an internal *Vogue* memo in August 1935,

Obviously, HB [Harper’s Bazaar] cannot compare with us in editorial content as regards timeliness, interest and authenticity of fashion news. On the other hand, I feel that HB gets a bit more interest and drama into their visual appeal, i.e. illustrations—both photos and art work—and their layouts...some of our pictures seem more static than HB, both in the lack of action of the figures and the background...Many of the HB pictures are of the ‘candid camera’ school which is so popular just now and which I know we can do better than they can. In short I think our problem is merely that of not being able to improve the product, but improving the container.⁹¹

For Azoy, *Vogue* needed to recalibrate its “container”—its physical, material, and spatial qualities. His reference to the “candid camera” school was an allusion to the snapshot, where the subject was caught seemingly unaware, and his comment, “I know we can do better than they

⁹⁰ Carmel Snow with Mary Aswell, *The World of Carmel Snow* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 88. Quoted in Nancy Hall-Duncan, *The History of Fashion Photography* (New York: Alpine, 1979), 72.

⁹¹ ACM Azoy to advertising manager Van Tassel, August 30, 1935, Internal *Vogue* memo, Edna Woolman Chase Papers, Condé Nast Archive, New York, New York.

can,” was presumably a reference to Frissell’s body of work. But he suggests that the magazine needed to expand its use of action photography. As *Harper’s Bazaar* illustrated with the Munkacsi photograph, the snapshot offered a way forward in activating the page through its particular qualities, such as cropped bodies and spontaneous movement.

In a second memo written three days later, Azoy shared informal surveys he gathered from readers about the differences in looking at *Harper’s Bazaar* and looking at *Vogue*. He recalled of the varying reactions:

While down on the Cape over the week end holiday I did some questionnairing among the younger married and unmarried women in re *Vogue* vs. HB. As was to be expected they all gave *Vogue* credit for being the one reliable weathervane of fashion but several said they liked HB too, because it was “so bright” in appearance, and “nice to look at” being so much larger than *Vogue*. I pinned them down on that...It seems to me this bears out the feeling evident at the meeting with Mrs. Chase last week – that through clever manipulation of white space and bleed pages, and more action pictures, HB gives the optical illusion of a much larger paper, and camouflages HB’s inferiority to *Vogue* in actual editorial content.⁹²

In this anecdotal encounter, *Bazaar* readers described the magazine as bright and large, where the magazine did not actually differ in size or quality of paper from *Vogue*. Azoy pinpoints the graphic design—the manipulation of white space and bleed pages—as well as action photography as energizing the optics of reading.

Art director Mehemed Agha was already incorporating dynamic forms, bleed pages, and white space into *Vogue* before Azoy wrote his memo in 1935, though Agha never would reach the radicality of Brodovitch’s layouts in the rest of his career at the magazine (nor, perhaps, did he aspire to).⁹³ But Azoy’s comments regarding *Bazaar* help to situate where fashion magazines formerly were—as static pages—to where they were moving in the mid-1930s—to experiential encounters. In the following section, I discuss the evolution of *Vogue* layouts in the 1930s.

⁹² ACM Azoy to Van Tassel, September 3, 1935, Internal *Vogue* memo, Edna Woolman Chase Papers, Condé Nast Archives, New York, New York.

⁹³ Agha would leave *Vogue* in 1943.

Although I trace how Agha looked to European modernism and graphic design for inspiration, I argue Frissell's snapshots—and the ways in which she could capture the immediacy and motion of the body—helped instigate a new way of seeing—and experiencing—the magazine page.

Vision in Motion

The first conversations about changing *Vogue's* graphic design began in the mid-1920s when Condé Nast solicited Eduardo Garcia Benito, a Spanish illustrator and painter, to draft a new look for the magazine. Before, *Vogue's* page design had been modeled after the photographic album, with photographs fixed into decorative rectangular and oval frames. Images were treated as precious material objects tucked into a personal book. In a layout for an article from March 15, 1927, for example, three images of female socialites modeling apparel for golf are surrounded by frames: two beveled frames for the lower left and right hand pictures and an oval frame for the largest central image (fig. 27). The stylized border punctuates the effect that *Vogue* is the personal album of the wealthy (though, unlike Frissell's pictures, these photographs are posed. Frissell's informal snapshots amplified the effect of the photo album not through literal frames but rather the style's qualities of the personal, the familial, and the private).

When Benito approached the redesign, he started by taking apart extraneous visual enhancements, what he called “18th century style[:] types, passepartouts, frames of pictures, vignettes, etc.”⁹⁴ He stripped it all away and looked to the codification of the modern that became known as Art Deco from the Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in 1925. This style emphasized geometric designs in fashion, decorative arts, and architecture, and even shaped the look of print on the page. Benito advocated for a

⁹⁴ Quoted in Caroline Seebom, *The Man Who Was Vogue* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 226.

typeface without serifs and placed them in a sparser white space. This functional aesthetic spoke of the precision of the machine. As he articulated, “Modern aesthetics can be explained in one word: machinery. Machinery is geometry in action.”⁹⁵ Benito also looked to the figure of the architect as the modernist visionary for the future of this application of design, specifically referencing Le Corbusier as inspiration. “The setting up of a magazine page is a form of architecture,” Benito wrote. “It must be simple, pure, clear, legible like a modern architect’s plan. As we do a modern magazine we must do it like modern architecture.”⁹⁶

Condé Nast paid Benito for the draft of his proof and offered him the position of art director at the magazine. Benito, however, turned him down, preferring to stay in Europe. In his place, Nast looked to the another European—an art director from German *Vogue*, Mehemed Agha. Agha was born in Russian Ukraine and had previously worked in an advertising agency in Paris before moving to German *Vogue* in 1928. Nast planned to discontinue the national publication (and did in 1929), but wanted to retain Agha. Nast visited Berlin and spoke with Agha on all matters of visual design, including type, engraving, illustration, and layout to confirm Agha’s aesthetic matched the new direction for American *Vogue*.⁹⁷ Nast then appointed Agha as art director of *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *House and Garden* magazines under the Condé Nast corporate umbrella.

When Agha arrived in New York in 1929, he implemented many of the visual changes suggested by Benito in *Vogue*’s first major redesign. He also looked to European modernist designers and artists as guides as he reconfigured the page. Among the changes he made in the first year at the helm was the adoption of a new typeface for headlines and captions: a version of

⁹⁵ Ibid, 227.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 227.

⁹⁷ Nast recalled these experiences in an issue of the graphic arts journal *PM* devoted to Agha in 1939. See “Agha’s American Decade,” *PM Magazine* 5, no. 2 (August-September 1939), 228. Note that *PM* is not to be confused with Ralph Ingersoll’s *PM* launched in 1940. *PM*, in this instance, stands for Production Manager.

the sanserif typeface Futura, designed by German Paul Renner in 1927. Renner remade historic letters found in Roman text to correspond with elemental geometrical forms such as the triangle, the square, and the circle. Futura's simple shapes allowed it to be scalable and incorporated as both headline and as body text.⁹⁸ Renner directed the typography department at the Frankfurter Kunstschule but had been trained as an architect, which informed the precision look of his design and moved it away from calligraphic writing and the human hand. In this way, Futura as a typeface embodied that union of the machine and the architect as advocated by Benito.

The German foundry, Bauer, commercially produced Futura, and it was also embraced by the avant-garde.⁹⁹ But Agha did not implement the original Futura in *Vogue*. Instead, he commissioned a Futura-like type from the Intertype company in 1930, which was christened Intertype *Vogue*. According to Douglas Thomas, commissioning a custom typeface was a way to confirm the type was compatible with the Condé Nast-owned printing company, as well as to avoid expensive licensing fees.¹⁰⁰ An example of Intertype *Vogue* in various weights and sizes can be seen in Toni Frissell's "Tyrolian Skiing Song," a travel article she both wrote and photographed (fig. 28). Intertype *Vogue* is present in the header at the top right of the page; the headline for the article; the author byline; and the photograph captions. The typographical expression adds spare form to the visual language of the article, its shapes echoing the straight lines of the skis and poles, as well as the rounded mounds of snow.¹⁰¹

Some readers initially balked at this austere typeface taking over the publication. Agha argued in an internal *Vogue* memo, "It is a good thing to try to show everybody that we are still

⁹⁸ Patrick Cramsie, *The Story of Graphic Design: From the Invention of Writing to the Birth of Digital Design* (New York: Abrams, 2010), 203.

⁹⁹ Artist Kurt Schwitters advocated for Futura as the official typeface of Hanover. See Stephen Eskilson, *Graphic Design: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 244.

¹⁰⁰ Douglas Thomas, *Never Use Futura* (Hudson, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2017), 52-53.

¹⁰¹ Intertype *Vogue* was not applied to the body text copy, which remained the elegant 18th-century Italian typeface Bodoni Book.

alive and leaders in the field of the typographic mode. We have been the first on market to produce this kind of Germanic type for the machine setting, and all the others are following us.”¹⁰² Indeed, Futura came to represent the modern type of the 1930s and 1940s in mass communication. After *Vogue* introduced Intertype *Vogue*, its advertisers followed suit. In 1930, the year the magazine debuted Intertype *Vogue*, Futura was used in 18 percent of *Vogue* advertisements. In 1933, Futura was found in 23 percent of the magazine’s ads, and that number continued to rise.¹⁰³ As Douglas Thomas argued, “Futura was completely integrated into a vernacular typography across the country and accepted as an American typeface—even during World War II, in spite of its German roots.”¹⁰⁴

Agha’s reference to “Germanic type” in his memo nodded to Futura, but could also reference the German revolution in typographic design called the New Typography. It is possible that Agha looked to the New Typography after he left German *Vogue* in 1929 and began to rework *Vogue*’s page design. Agha certainly gleaned from European modernism ways of organizing visual information, where pages could be read spatially and message and medium could cohere. The term, “New Typography,” was first used at the Bauhaus, the influential German art school active between 1919 and 1933, by Hungarian artist László Moholy-Nagy. Moholy-Nagy described the New Typography as “a simultaneous experience of vision and communication” in a catalogue essay for the Bauhaus exhibition in Weimar, Germany in 1923.¹⁰⁵ Moholy-Nagy considered type as much aesthetic art object as communicative language. He experimented with uniting visual forms and type in his designs for the Bauhaus books, such as *Painting, Photography, Film* (1925), where he directed the viewer’s eye on a page through

¹⁰² Quoted in Seebohm, *The Man Who Was Vogue*, 231.

¹⁰³ Thomas, *Never Use Futura*, 44.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 44-45.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Henry Hongmin Kim, *Graphic Design Discourse: Evolving Theories, Ideologies, and Processes of Visual Communication* (Hudson, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2018), 122.

bold rules, arrows, photographic compositions, changes in size and scale, diagonally-placed text and sanserif type. His work articulated that visual language could guide perception and cognition as reading would—and, in fact, must—in this new age of image-based stimuli.¹⁰⁶

Jan Tschichold, a young German graphic designer, saw the 1923 Bauhaus exhibition and went on to canonize this new graphic thinking of the machine age in *The New Typography* in 1928. In addition to a treatise on type, *The New Typography* offered practical applications for bringing the visual aesthetics of Central European and Russian avant-gardes from the Bauhaus, Dutch De Stijl, and Russian Constructivism into graphic design principles.¹⁰⁷ Tschichold featured sanserif letters, bold color, asymmetrical forms, dynamic compositions, and ample negative space. For Agha, born in Russian Ukraine and later working in Berlin alongside Russian emigres in the aftermath of its revolution and civil war, Constructivism formed a touchstone of design. “The temple of Constructivism,” Agha wrote, “is full of treasures and is therefore recommended to the commercial designer for new inspirations.”¹⁰⁸

In the 1930s, Agha introduced new means of organizing black-and-white images, as the eye of the reader and the body of the model moved across the page. Agha’s page design for “American Summer” in 1934, for example, brings together Frissell’s snapshots in bold, angular, geometric rows. The reader is given a sense of forward momentum by placing the rows on a diagonal, extending it across the gutter and to the edges of the margin. Compositions like these encourage the eye to stream across the page through the use of angular forms and then flit around

¹⁰⁶ *Painting, Photography, Film* would inform Moholy-Nagy’s later work, where the relationship between modern vision and design was cemented in the very titles of the text: *The New Vision: Fundamentals of Design, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture* (1938) and *Vision in Motion* (1947). The latter’s language inspired this chapter title.

¹⁰⁷ For a critical analysis and visual tutorial on the typography, spatial organization, and applications of avant-garde graphic design, see Ellen Lupton, *Thinking with Type: A Critical Guide For Designers, Writers, Editors, and Students* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁸ R. Roger Remington and Barbara J. Hodick, *Nine Pioneers in American Graphic Design* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 12.

to take in the asymmetrical arrangements and the movement within the snapshot. By animating the page in this way, the eye darts around much like the pictured body, foregrounding movement of both the reader and the model. Moreover, Agha heightened this sense of movement by sequencing Frissell's photographs together to read as a film strip in a long row. Drawing on other forms of media consumption like newsreels and film, Agha animates the still body through the film strip and shifts the temporal order of the page.

In the context of *Vogue*, the political action encouraged by the energetic forms of Constructivism took on associations of the modern rather than revolution. On one hand, divorcing politicized typography and graphic form (or any politicized art) from its context removes its agency and charge. Agha's stress on using Constructivism for inspiration in commercial design only reiterates this defusing of politics for commerce. Rather, Agha believed that he was teaching the American reader to see the machine age through the adoption of modern graphic principles and forms. In 1932, Agha wrote in an issue of *Vanity Fair*, "The painful process of training the public eye for the new vision has to be completed first by modern architecture, decoration and typography — only then can advertising afford to use the new visual language."¹⁰⁹ Agha's comment suggests a hierarchy of visual forms that filter down to popular culture from architecture to the magazine page to the proliferation of ads, echoing Benito's original nod to architecture as the model for *Vogue*'s redesign. Agha believed that his position in *Vogue* was to "train" the public to see in the modern world through his design. He describes the process as "painful," which, judging from his letters in the Condé Nast archive, was an experience affected by reader feedback. He received a letter, for instance, likening the visual

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in R. Roger Remington, *American Modernism: Graphic Design, 1920 to 1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 56.

look and art included in *Vogue* to a “wave of horrid, ugly modernism that is rolling over this whole darn country.”¹¹⁰

While Agha looked to new perceptual means of relating to, and engaging, readers through the forms of architecture, typography, and Constructivism, I argue his pages were also responding to the body. In “Freedom of the Seas,” a layout of Toni Frissell images in 1935, Agha explored motion in concert with the ways in which Frissell articulated the body. From the top left to middle right of the left page, three images cascade in a diagonal movement, reinforcing the bodily thrust of the woman on the top left, who bends and shakes out her long hair. Each woman is caught in motion and placed in a forward-moving sequence. Agha’s dynamic means of forming content complimented new ways of photographing and thinking about the female form. Frissell’s photographs in “Freedom of the Seas” represent women on the beach climbing, crouching, and flexing their muscles while wearing beach clothing (fig. 29). These women are not named as figures of society in the article but model fashions to be found in department stores across the U.S. The copy describes the figures as “acrobatic” and “energetic” wearing “beach clothes cut with an exhilarating freedom.”¹¹¹ These are active women wearing clothes that engender this freedom, and there are no directives to maintain a certain modesty or gendered expectation of how women should behave or move. The kinetic bodily experience within Frissell’s snapshots worked in tandem with Agha’s graphic emphasis on motion.

In layouts where women are not necessarily moving, Agha prioritized Frissell photographs that could create exhilarating experiences for the reader. In “What about Pants? Where? When?” from 1936, Agha incorporated bleed pages, extending Toni Frissell’s two

¹¹⁰ Recounted in Mehemed Agha to Edna Woolman Chase, November 6, 1929, Internal *Vogue* Memo, Edna Woolman Chase papers, Condé Nast Archive, New York, New York.

¹¹¹ “Freedom of the Seas,” *Vogue* 85, no. 10 (May 15, 1935): 78-79.

images of women fishing at the ocean to the very edges of the page (fig. 30).¹¹² In the image on the left, which almost takes up the entirety of the page, Frissell shot the model from below, so that the reader is positioned as if looking up towards the woman to see a wide, open sky. The rest of the page is left blank to continue the airy effect of being transported to the beach, which is also reflected in the wind that catches the model's hair, as well as the white fabric of her culottes rippling in the wind. Her pants are "so cleverly cut that you can't tell them from a skirt"—giving women the freedom of movement in their gait and to participate in "almost every sport: 'golf, tennis, fishing, bicycling, boating, et al.'"¹¹³

In the 1930s, *Vogue* debuted a new dynamic visual landscape that could, in turn, physically energize a reader. Agha's changes to *Vogue* through angular lines, sequencing, and proportion amplified Frissell's photographic expression of an active body. As Agha liberated the design from its reliance on the visual prototype of the photographic album, Frissell photographed a liberated body—one either moving across the page or wearing clothing that allowed more range of motion. The next section of this chapter discusses in detail the ways in which the fashion worn by Frissell's models incorporated more flexible, comfortable fabrics that engendered the body to move. In the process, Frissell also broke away from her stereotypical characterization by the magazine as a society photographer, as the snapshot defined a viable mode of fashion photography.

¹¹² Agha argued he was the first to incorporate a bleed-edged photograph in "any magazine on this continent" in 1930. Agha quoted in *American Printer*, reproduced in R. Roger Remington and Barbara J. Hodick, *Nine Pioneers in American Graphic Design*, 16.

¹¹³ "What about Pants? Where? When?" *Vogue* 87, no. 12 (Jun 15, 1936), 39.

Moving Bodies

As seen over the course of “American Summer” in 1934, “Freedom of the Seas” in 1935, and “What about Pants” in 1936, Frissell’s snapshots evolved in the mid-1930s. Her images grew from thumbnails to full-scale black-and-white images and expanded beyond society portraiture to fashion assignments, where concern was less on the exclusivity of the sitter than on the fashion and the way it interacted with the body. Even with a shift in scale, Frissell’s photographs retained their verve and immediacy. Frissell became the pioneering photographer of active women, and most every cover that contained a woman in motion—skiing, surfing, stretching—was shot by her.

Frissell continued to take her photographs outdoors, in natural light, and from unusual angles that spoke of Frissell actively moving around her subjects to take a shot. She would crouch low, such as in “What about Pants,” or tower above the scene, such as for a cover photograph of a woman catching a Pacific Ocean wave in 1938. Frissell shot the model as she rides a surf board (fig. 11). Her knees and palms remain on the board to give her stability, but her torso thrusts forward so that her body is at an angle. She balances herself on the slim piece of wood as waves crest in white spray around her board and body. A male figure kneels behind her—perhaps an instructor or a friend coaching her along as she readies herself to stand. The model looks out ahead of her, preparing to pull up and ride the wave.

In the photograph, the female figure is illustrated in the act of an experience. Frissell links the body with adventure, agility, and sport. Equally dexterous in this photograph is the woman behind the camera. In the Table of Contents, Frissell is pictured in an inset photo at the very top of scaffolding that has been affixed to a canoe (fig. 31). The rig was built for Frissell. As fearless as her model, Frissell perches herself at the top of the rig to make the shot. The effect

of this cover, from the model's body in motion, to Frissell's perspective, to the alternating diagonals of the surfboards across the picture plane, is of dynamism and energy, where movement is central to imagining and experiencing modern femininity.

The way Frissell conceptualized the body was part of new ways of thinking about the female form amid changing cultural ideas on health, fitness, and fashion. These discourses were forged in the late 19th century with the emergence of the New Woman. These women altered their dress—throwing of the yoke of the corset towards more androgynous, loose silhouettes.¹¹⁴ They found channels for their voice in political life that would lead to voting rights with the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920 and pressure for the constitutional protection against discrimination based on sex through legislative support of the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1920s and 1930s. They positioned themselves in the work force, where a quarter of women would work by the 1930s. However, it was not until the 1920s and the 1930s that attention more publicly focused on the physical health of the body. Rebecca Arnold has argued that exercise “was a part of a cultural shift towards viewing movement as a quintessentially modern aspect of (feminine) identity.”¹¹⁵ Rather than shape the body through a corset, women exercised to shape their form. This movement offered additional healthful, social, and emotional benefits rather than simply squeezing the body through strings to conform to a certain silhouette.

The models that *Vogue* featured in the 1930s included athletes whose figures were shaped through a commitment to movement, bodily exercise, and discipline.¹¹⁶ On the cover of the

¹¹⁴ On the different readings of the corset, which shifts interpretation from oppression to how it could locate women's understanding of their sexuality, see Leigh Summers, *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset* (New York: Berg, 2001).

¹¹⁵ For a detailed account of the way that movement intersected with evolving ideas about the body in the 1930s, see Rebecca Arnold, “Movement and Modernity: New York Sportswear, Dance, and Exercise in the 1930s and 1940s,” *Fashion Theory* 12, no. 3 (Sept 2008), 341-357 and Annemarie Strassel. “Designing Women: Feminist Methodologies in American Fashion,” *Women's Studies Quarterly* 41, No. 1-2 (Spring/Summer 2013), 35-59.

¹¹⁶ For looking at the ways in which women's magazines negotiated athleticism and femininity, particularly through

December 1937 issue of *Vogue*, Frissell shot champion skier Hilda Strum from below, so that her body towers above the viewer and encompasses most of the frame (fig. 10). The image is a snapshot writ large. Strum emerges from the left side of the page to stride forward, so her body forms a diagonal line. Her ski pole forms another diagonal line moving from her left hand to the snow-covered ground. The triangular shape of her body and her ski equipment replicates the form of the mountains in the distance, suggesting strength and endurance. By cutting off half of her leg—a quality of the snapshot aesthetic—she is still a figure in motion. The caption links together her body and the ways in which her clothing, even layered to protect her from the cold, can engender movement: “A slender athletic figure, strength and speed against the blue and white of mountains and winter sky...Miss Sturm wears a brave red sweater shirt with grey-beige ‘Springer Hosen,’ narrow, straight, and meticulously created. The matching top is sleeveless, providing warmth, but leaving room for action.”¹¹⁷

The attention to color in this caption with the blue sky, white mountains, and brave red sweater shirt speak to vibrating color that further animated Frissell’s cover figures. *Vogue*’s first color photograph appeared in 1932 to great fanfare after Condé Nast developed a process with Anton Bruehl and Fernand Bourges on producing color photographs across his magazines. Nast advertised his technique to other companies in his self-published text, *Color Sells*.¹¹⁸ Certainly color covers would perceptually entice a reader from a newsstand with its chromatic fashion and

the cultural icon Amelia Earhart in the 1930s, see Kristen Lubben, “A New American Ideal: Photography and Amelia Earhart,” in Elizabeth Otto and Vanessa Rocco, editors, *The New Woman International: Representations in Photography and Film from the 1870s through the 1960s* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 291-308.

¹¹⁷ *Vogue* 90, no. 12 (Dec 15, 1937).

¹¹⁸ The photograph, by Steichen, featured a woman in a swimsuit with a beach ball, but was shot in the studio. On Nast’s color process, see *Color Sells* (New York: Condé Nast, 1935). Also in 1935, Eastman Kodak introduced its successful color film on the market, Kodachrome. Fifteen years later, the Condé Nast company would write about color photography again, but from the perspective of its influence on the art of fashion photography. See Alexander Liberman, *The Art and Technique of Color Photography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), n.p. This new way of thinking about color in art photography was highlighted in The Museum of Modern Art’s first survey of the medium, *Color Photography*, in 1950 by Edward Steichen.

landscapes. Here, color is also associated with health and naturalism, rather than the artificial and the cosmetic. Color emphasizes the flush of Sturm's skin and the benefits of exercise. Moreover, color and its associations with realism allowed the viewer entry into the space of the picture. This was also part of Frissell's visual strategy in shooting her subjects from above or below, allowing a wide expanse of sky to enhance the airy effect of the experience. "It is important to capture the flavor of the event," Frissell wrote. "I try hard to capture atmosphere in the hope that the viewer can smell the flowers on a hillside or feel the joy of a windless alpine day when the only sound is the hiss of skis running through the light untouched powder."¹¹⁹ Frissell creates a platform for the reader's vicarious experience, even if it only occurs in the mind through the stimulation of the image. She writes of her photographs as a method of transport—her description unearths the smell, the emotional feeling, and the sound of being part of the landscape. By linking the visual description of physical health within a photograph to the restorative affect on her readers, Frissell proposes a relational rather than passive engagement with the viewer.

In addition to athletic skiers, *Vogue* frequently featured dancers and other women engaged in exercise in its pages.¹²⁰ Movements from dance, gymnastics, and yoga guided tutorials on physical activity that emphasized liveness and flexibility. These types of articles began and evolved from the 1920s. In "The Riviera Adopts the Strenuous Life," from 1928, *Vogue* quotes a French instructor, who argues movement can help change "the elasticity of the body...the firmness of the muscles, the sureness of gestures, balance, and general grace and

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Marjorie Kaufman, "Photographer 'Plucked From Oblivion,'" *The New York Times*, August 28, 1994, page LI13.

¹²⁰ Of note, Gloria Braggiotti, the model coming out of the waves in Frissell's "American Summer," studied modern dance and performed as a dancer.

lightness.”¹²¹ Pictured in the article are members of high society—who only look like ballerinas from the Ballet Russe, the article tells us—demonstrating headstands, shoulder stands, and backbends in the outdoors (fig. 32). These exercises could return one to “spontaneous movement, of gaiety without apparent cause, of the airy joy of living.”¹²² These exercises are, of course, another way to discipline the body. But the article also points to the pleasure of movement on women’s emotional health in its references to “gaiety” and “airy joy.” These descriptions articulating the feeling brought by exercise will become important for Frissell in the next decade to create an affect on her readers in the process of looking at pictures of active women.

Dance and movement form a foundational part of a woman’s day in the 1933 article shot by Frissell, “How a New Yorker spends a day about Town.”¹²³ The images illustrate a model thrusting out her left arm, her legs spread wide and barefoot on the wood-plank floor (fig. 33). Her legs are bare, too, up to the tops of her thighs. She wears a one-piece, belted leotard that skims the body and allows for her free expression. Clothing like this for female exercise and sport that allowed the body to move did not exist a century before. As Patricia Warner uncovered in her study of sportswear, exercise clothing evolved slowly as functionality and comfortability had to play against social mores that kept women’s bodies covered and restricted their

¹²¹ “The Riviera Adopts the Strenuous Life,” *Vogue* 72, no. 11 (Nov. 24, 1928), 56.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 56.

¹²³ “How a New Yorker Spends a Day About Town,” *Vogue* 81, no. 4 (February 15, 1933), 38, 39.

movement.¹²⁴ Moreover, in the late nineteenth century, as Leigh Summers found, exercise like gymnastics was seen as a threat to the female maternal body.¹²⁵

Material changes in sportswear over the course of the late 19th and early 20th centuries are significant facets in interpreting the mechanics of Frissell's photographs. Illustrating fabrics for swimming, in particular, was one of her primary concerns as a fashion photographer. Sustained attention on the development of the swimsuit—its aesthetic, material, fit, and physical description—sheds light on the body politics of the early to mid-twentieth century and its intersection with industrial and aesthetic movements like streamlining.

When women first entered the ocean in the nineteenth century, water activity exclusively featured bathing and simple paddling, as women were clothed in heavy, canvas, cloak-like gowns. These gowns covered their bodies, protecting them from cold water, hot sun, and prying eyes. Women would change into these clothes in so-called bathing machines next to the water. Attendants would help them move out of these small, portable changing rooms into the water and assist them as they tried to paddle, for, as Patricia Warner recounts, “the clothing they had to wear would have pulled them to the bottom like a stone.”¹²⁶

Fashion later evolved from cloaks to layered dresses over pants. Pants were a boon for the reform movement in women's clothing and were popularized by figures such as Amelia Bloomer in the mid-nineteenth century. Linking fashion and embodiment was key to the evolution of feminism. As Annemarie Strassel has stressed, “experimentation with the form and

¹²⁴ Clothing for private exercise in the mid-to-late nineteenth century developed sooner than public sportswear because of single-sex college education. What finally inched the evolution of public sportswear, beginning with croquet and evolving to the more active sports of tennis and swimming, was the development of heterosexual courting through such spaces as country clubs. See Patricia Campbell Warner, *When the Girls Came Out to Play: The Birth Of American Sportswear* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006). French haute couture designers such as Coco Chanel and Jean Patou created sportswear lines in the nineteen-teens. Patou created the tennis dress in 1919 and Chanel transferred the knit materials and simple, clean lines associated with sport apparel to her own collections.

¹²⁵ Leigh Summers, *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset* (New York: Berg, 2001), 155.

¹²⁶ Warner, *When the Girls Came Out to Play*, 62.

fit of women's dress represents one part of women's historical effort to politicize the body and rethink the physical and spatial dimensions of everyday life."¹²⁷ Altering bathing garments from cloaks to pants offered gains in movement while also providing protection for the body when wet. The trousers protected a woman's modesty if the skirt floated upward towards the surface of the water. A photograph circa 1900 illustrates this style with two women wearing a V-neck sailor-style dress featuring a blouse top with balloon sleeves and a full skirt worn over wool tights (fig. 34). A light-colored belt wraps around the waist and is echoed along the trim. Although the feet are sunken in the sand, the women presumably wear bathing shoes. A 1895 *Vogue* illustrated cover features a woman wearing such a style of bathing suit, yet she is romanticized and sexualized in the hands of the illustrator (fig. 35). The bodice of her dress hugs her mid-section, her small waist is accentuated, the wind blows her skirts so that they skim the mid-thighs, and her hair flows in waves through the air.

Over the next two decades, the flapper style of the 1920s changed the proportions of clothes. The dropped-waist dresses popular in this period transformed the body into columns and minimized curves. Elements of this more androgynous look impacted bathing suit design, which featured long tunics over short trousers. In a *Vogue* illustration from 1920, balloon sleeves have been replaced with cap sleeves and sleeveless styles (fig. 36). Tunic skirts are less full and fewer fabric inches are used to create these suits than previous generations. But women still wear both skirts and trousers to conceal parts of their bodies.

At this time, fabrics generally worn by bathers were made of wool. These suits could weigh down the wearer when wet and irritated sensitive skin. Cotton knit was used as an alternative, and, for the upper classes, silk. *Vogue* exclusively details these silk bathing suits in

¹²⁷ Strassell, "Designing Women," 39.

the varying ways silk could be woven—Crêpe De Chine, satin, and taffeta—in fig 36. However, these fabrics were more suited to sunbathing than romping in the ocean. They looked crisp and luxurious when dry, but would cling too much for modesty’s sake when wet. As the *Vogue* copy details, one outfit is for “a girl who sun-bathes better than she swims.”¹²⁸

Photographs of women in these suits also feature them in social gatherings—not bathing, much less swimming. In images by Edward Steichen in 1926 (fig. 37), women primarily sit on the sand, their legs kicked out to the side. These are women of a certain class at leisure; they become fashionable objects that wear fashionable bathing suits, coats, hats, and parasols, but do not expose what those clothes can do. Missing is the kind of physicality Toni Frissell captures in the bathers of the mid-to-late 1930s.

Frissell’s women move with their clothes, which was also spurred by radical changes in textile design in the 1930s and cultural redefinitions of how to picture the female body. In Frissell’s photographs from 1934’s “Freedom of the Seas,” one woman, wearing a sleeveless bathing suit that ends at the tops of her thighs, bends over to grab a rope along the sand that extends into the water. Ropes like these were installed at beaches so that swimmers could hold the rope as they made their way into the water. An artifact of early generations, the rope was an object to steady swimmers, many of them women, and keep the fabric of their clothing from getting pulled into a current. In Frissell’s photograph, the rope is now a prop for the woman to pull against, to show her body arching into a bow, her bare back open to the sun. The model to her right in the largest vertical photograph wears a halter-style rubber bathing suit with a fabric fit to cling to her torso to the tops of her thighs. The cut of the garment leaves her arms and legs completely bare. More of the body is exposed than ever before, and even the copy detailing the

¹²⁸ “Whether Bathing is a Matter of Surf or Sun Depends upon the Bathing-Suit,” *Vogue* 55, no.11 (June 1, 1920), 83.

suit emphasizes the feeling of being nude. “Tiny perforations all over its brief expanse give you that incomparable feeling of no suit at all when you’re in the water,” says *Vogue*.¹²⁹ And yet, the effect is not of sexualizing women as more skin became visible or fabric skimmed the body. Rather, Frissell’s subjects—from the woman flexing her arms to the snapshot of the woman bending over to grasp and pull the thick rope—connate ease, lack of self-consciousness, and health. The varying sizes of the photographs, their asymmetrical placement, and the bleed image of the woman wearing the rubber suit make the page look and feel more vibrant, expansive, and airy than Steichen’s photo album of bathers stacked centrally in the composition in fig. 37.

The use of rubber for the suit worn by the model in “Freedom of the Seas” was an innovative fabric that allowed women to feel as if they were wearing no suit at all—a breakthrough change from a century ago when women would have been pulled under the waves wearing heavy canvas, or even the previous decade when women wore wool skirts over trousers. Competitive swimmers instigated many of the foundational alterations in bathing suit manufacture and design, calling for more practical fibers and silhouettes for physical activity and gender equity. Female competitive swimmers argued the wool clothing worn to cover the arms and legs soaked up water and dragged, affecting speed and safety. Modesty restrictions also kept athletes from swimming in the Olympic Games. American female swimmers were not allowed to compete until 1920 in Antwerp, Belgium, where they could finally wear a sleeveless, one-piece wool suit that was cut high on the thigh. American women broke records and won gold medals in those Games by determining their own clothing and their ability to train and test their bodies alongside men.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 78-79.

The fabric of the swimsuits Frissell's models begin to wear in the 1930s were meant to move with the wearer and were woven with water in mind. In a *Vogue* 1937 cover by Frissell—her first for the magazine—a model in a maillot (a one-piece) suit with a deep cut in the neckline walks across a jagged, rocky shoreline (fig. 38). A wave dramatically crashes against the rocks and sends a curtain of salt spray behind her. The fabric of her suit, described as “sleek as a tarpon’s side” by *Vogue*, is a new invention called Lastex.¹³⁰ Lastex fiber is made by wrapping a rubber elastic core with cotton, rayon, silk, nylon, or other fabric. The U.S. Rubber Company trademarked Lastex in 1931 and looked for applications which could highlight its light weight, durability, and ability to stretch with the wearer. As social codes relaxed around the visibility of female skin and the body in the 1930s, clothing manufactures found potential in Lastex. Moreover, designers looked to satisfy the wants of consumers to move and be active. Clothing manufacturers began to incorporate Lastex in bathing suits in the 1930s. Fashion began to work with, rather than against, the moving body. *Vogue* often highlighted Lastex in its pages for the fit and comfort of the wearer, where the fabric was described in Frissell photographs as “eel-like” and “clings like second skin” — a marked difference from earlier textiles that would bunch and hold water, like wool.¹³¹ The popularity was so great for women that sales peaked despite the Depression.¹³²

To leverage its technological innovation, the U.S. Rubber Company exhibited Lastex yarn at the New York World’s Fair Hall of Fashion in 1939. The company created an illustrated logo for the Fair’s theme, “World of Tomorrow,” which it featured in its advertisements. One such ad was published in *Vogue* with the logo depicted on the bottom left of the page (fig. 39). In

¹³⁰ *Vogue* 89, no. 11 (Jun 1, 1937), 39.

¹³¹ On “eel-like,” see “Waves of White,” *Vogue* 91, no. 11 (Jun 1, 1938), 52, 53. For “second skin,” see “Escape,” *Vogue* 88, no. 11 (Dec 1, 1936), 74, 75. Each of these articles feature Frissell action photographs.

¹³² Jane Farrell-Beck, *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion, Volume 2: Fads to Nylon*. Edited by Valerie Steele (New York: Scribners, 2005), 138-39.

the design, the Fair's iconic 200-foot Perisphere globe becomes a ball of yarn out of which Lastex springs forth. The yarn wraps its way around a woman whose erect body reaches upward— as slim as the Fair's second iconic structure, the 600-foot tower, the Trylon. In addition to the logo, the advertisement features a nearly full-page photograph of a woman wearing a form-fitting suit jumping from a wooden wall along the beach. Her hands are spread out in a V-shape, as she springs into the air with an exuberant expression on her face. It's a picture Frissell could have taken, and no doubt was inspired by her legacy of action snapshots in the magazine.

The advertising copy proclaims, "More form-fitting suits will be worn this year than all other types combined, thanks to the fit, comfort and control that go with that famous stretch." The form-fitting language of Lastex, as well as the descriptors "sleek as a tarpon's side" and "eel-like" used by *Vogue* to describe the material, speak of the language of streamlining. Streamlining was a concept promoted by American industrial designers during the 1930s, including Norman Bel Geddes, Raymond Loewy, and Walter Dorwin Teague. And it was a major design element of the World's Fair.¹³³ Originally conceived to increase the speed and efficiency of airplanes, streamlined design adopted a tear-drop shape made for an object in motion. This shape eliminates excessive and extraneous "protuberances," so that air flows around the contour of an object.¹³⁴ Any air resistance and drag is reduced by creating "clean continuous lines," where air streams along the surface.¹³⁵

¹³³ Bel Geddes, for instance, designed the Futurama exhibit for the car company General Motors. As part of the Fair, *Vogue* asked Raymond Loewy and Walter Dorwin Teague, among other industrial designers, to design clothes for the "woman of the future" in 1939. The clothes they designed were not streamlined, however, but imaginative, extravagant, and decorative, as if influenced by science fiction. See "Vogue Presents Fashions of the Future," *Vogue* 93, no. 3 (February 1, 1939), 70-81.

¹³⁴ Norman Bel Geddes, "Streamlining," *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1934, 553–568. See also Bel Geddes, *Horizons* (New York: Little, Brown, 1932).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

The word, streamline, originally evolved out of hydrodynamics. Oceanic creatures, like dolphins, were of inspiration in defining streamlining with their smooth skin and rounded body shapes.¹³⁶ *Vogue*'s descriptions referring to tarpons and eels reflect these ideals of sleekness and speed in swimsuit design and for women in the water—though this style became an aesthetic in its own right. Separated from its practical applications, streamlining informed the design of products, such as kitchen appliances, in the 1930s. The aesthetics of streamlining also adds another interpretive layer to the element of speed Agha tried to create in his visual redesign of the magazine, as well as the feeling of moving through space.

In the language of streamlining, the beautiful, modern body is defined as smooth, sleek, and clean. Christina Cogdell has argued that the discourses of streamlining echoed the rhetoric of contemporary eugenicists “in their choice to foreground efficiency, hygiene, and the pursuit of the utopian ‘ideal type’ as the preeminent goal for product design.”¹³⁷ In this way, the streamlined style connects with *Vogue*'s eugenic language and its focus on healthy bodies and the upper classes of the social register. We can connect streamlined, bathing suit fabric stretching over the toned, leaping body, for example, in the article “H20” from 1935, referenced earlier, where the author wrote, “Water life brings out the most beautiful members of the human race.”¹³⁸

As Frissell became associated with this body type, she also became commercially linked with Lastex and the streamlined fabrics of its swimsuits. In 1938, Ocean Bathing Suit Company

¹³⁶ On the biological constructions of streamlining, see Christina Cogdell, “Products or Bodies? Streamline Design and Eugenics as applied Biology,” *Design Issues* 19, no. 1 (Winter, 2003), 44.

¹³⁷ Cogdell, “Products or Bodies?,” 45. See also her book *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

¹³⁸ Marya Mannes, “H20,” *Vogue* 86, no. 2 (July 15, 1935): 21.

commissioned Frissell for its Lastex marketing campaigns.¹³⁹ In one Ocean advertisement, the copy reads:

From Toni Frissell's Photo Album of new Palm Beach fashions, we pick three of the season's most distinguished young society women. And, sure indication of the way the Fashion wind blows, each is wearing a new Ocean contoured swim suit. Slim, sleek and personal...these new suits are all made with Lastex yarns, with special *contour* features at bust, waist, thigh, crotch and under arm...insuring fit-perfection plus comfort at every point. The tide is toward Ocean...get in the swim with a new *contoured* suit.¹⁴⁰

The emphasis on the word "contour" alludes to the language of streamlining, where air would efficiently pass over the sleek surface of the form. In the advertisement, other identifying features of Frissell's practice are emphasized, such as the snapshot style. Frissell caught each woman in a different activity to show the ways in which the suit looked at rest and at play. No woman looks directly at the camera, true to the convention of the casual snapshot. One woman stands in the surf and flings water from her pointed toe; one sits on her heels to play with her dog; the last lies on a beach, letting sand slip through her fingers (fig. 40). The advertisement's graphic illustrations further emphasize their snapshot effect: each photograph is fixed to a black paper support with torn edges. Paperclips bind these ripped squares to the background of the ad. The graphic concept indicates to the reader that these photographs are intimate snapshots ripped from the personal scrapbooks of the wealthy. Although Frissell's subjects may have broadened from society figures to unnamed models in the editorial pages of *Vogue*, advertisements still associated her with the photographer of the upper class by 1938.

The women also illustrate an emerging American type in the magazine. Where Kodak marketed Frissell and the snapshot, the Ocean advertisement binds Frissell's snapshots with active women wearing American-made, streamlined fabrics. The models promote ideals of

¹³⁹ For a sampling of other Frissell photographs featuring Lastex, see "West Coast Players," *Vogue* 90, no. 12, (Dec 15, 1937), 82, 83. "Sea Ways," *Vogue* 91, no. 11, (Jun 1, 1938), 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51; and "Waves of White," *Vogue* 91, no. 11, (Jun 1, 1938), 52, 53.

¹⁴⁰ Ocean Bathing Suit Co. advertisement, *Vogue* 91, no. 10 (May 15, 1938), 12. The italics are original to the copy.

health and fitness wearing functional, easy clothing. Frissell's photographs defined the American woman as natural and athletic as corporations marketed fibers to these women that allowed them to move. As social restrictions on the body relaxed, visual imagery and product design worked in tandem to create this new female type of physical, strong, and fit women. And it is no coincidence that Frissell regularly photographed *Vogue's* college issue, featuring young women expressing their bodies in animated movement, such as the cover issue for August 1937 (fig. 12). The dress the college model wears carries a feminist provenance, as the caption states that the original Grossman jersey dress that inspired its design was "adopted by the emancipated women of 1918."¹⁴¹ Linking the New Woman of 1918 to the college woman of 1937, feminism is expressed by, and on, the body.

Frissell's photographic work can be seen as part of a groundswell of interest by American female fashion designers, editors, and corporate heads in the 1930s to support a homegrown movement centered on simple, ready-to-wear fashion. Dorothy Shaver, the vice-president of Lord and Taylor department store, conceived of the phrase "American Look" to describe this casual sportswear. She promoted American designers who created clothes for the ready-to-wear market. This American Look has been seen by other scholars as part dress reform, part nationalism embedded in American mass-manufacturing. By focusing on American designers, the American fashion industry moved the conversation away from expensive Parisian couture so historically lauded in magazines like *Vogue*.¹⁴² A part of this trend were refining modern ideas about simplicity and creating comfortable, flexible, and unfussy clothes for bodies that moved.

¹⁴¹ *Vogue* 90, no. 4 (Aug 15, 1937), 67.

¹⁴² For an analysis of the cross-connections between American-manufactured sportswear, feminine identity, and the American Look, see Caroline Rennolds Milbank, *New York Fashion: The Evolution of American Style* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1989); Richard Martin, *American Ingenuity: Sportswear 1930s–1970s* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998); Rebecca Arnold, "Looking American: Louise Dahl-Wolfe's Fashion Photographs of the 1930s and 1940s," *Fashion Theory* 6, no. 1 (March 2002): 45-60; Rebecca Arnold, *The American Look: Fashion,*

By specifically evaluating the evolution of the bathing suit, I also track how fabric innovation, corporate promotion, and women's advocacy for gender equity in swimsuit fashion combined with the snapshot style to frame new ways of thinking about and picturing the modern female body in mass culture. My research uncovers how Toni Frissell is situated at the center of marketing campaigns and American branding for both cameras and fabrics that articulated a new consumerist identity for women based around self-expression. Frissell's public identity in *Vogue* became intertwined with the genre of the snapshot and the Kodak cameras that could take them; the subject of female bathers and the spaces in which they were caught at play; and the manufacturer of the fabrics that clothed these active women. As *Vogue* gave cultural visibility to changing silhouettes, her photographs defined fashion as much as it defined female behavior, physicality, and consumption.

By featuring and picturing Frissell in American-made brands, *Vogue* worked to aid the U.S. economy. In an era of declining national economic health and mass unemployment, *Vogue* also propagated images of healthy women enjoying the outdoors as one way in which to strengthen physical and emotional well-being.¹⁴³ These ideals were also wrapped up in the fears of eugenicists, for whom, as Susan Currell has written, the Depression was linked with the idea that "the country was not just economically depressed but also 'diseased' in some way."¹⁴⁴

At the turn of the decade, Frissell offered to support her country in ways outside of economics or the health of the national body. She approached the United States military for work

Sportswear and the Image of Women in 1930s and 1940s (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), and Annemarie Strassel, *Redressing Women: Feminism in Fashion and the Creation of American Style, 1930-1960*. PhD Diss (New Haven: Yale University, 2008).

¹⁴³ This is not to say that the marriage of health, sport, and national identity was exclusive to the United States in the 1930s; the Third Reich's intertwining of German nationalism, the body, and racist eugenic rhetoric is an extreme example.

¹⁴⁴ Susan Currell, in Currell and Christina Cogdell, eds. *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 3.

as a war reporter and became the official photographer for the Women's Army Corps of the U.S. Office of War Information and for the American Red Cross. The aesthetic she cultivated at *Vogue* for adding energy and physicality to fashion assignments would be a tremendous boon to the war effort and shaping public perception. Her images on assignment covering the war were translated back to *Vogue*, as well as other publications, to generate military support.

Even before the U.S. entered the war, the country, and its magazines, began to mobilize. For an issue devoted to "Women in Defense" in July 1941, Frissell's cover photograph featured a woman training to be a pilot at Roosevelt's Field in Long Island, New York (fig. 41). The model's long, lean form is posed at a diagonal as she lunges her right leg to rest on the wing of the Waco Trainer Biplane, presumably to climb into the cockpit. She is dressed in a white jumpsuit crisscrossed with equipment straps, and flying goggles sit atop her forehead as she looks off to the left of the frame with a slight smile on her face. "Women with wings," the caption reads. "Thousands of them training this way for defense...thousands more training in other ways."¹⁴⁵

Frissell began to advocate for her work in the 1940s to be used in publications such as *Life* magazine, which primarily featured a photojournalistic format, more war reportage, and a broader readership. She was "keen to do more reporting work in proportion to – or if possible – over and above fashion work," Frissell wrote to Mehemed Agha in 1942. "I would accept a lower total guarantee on the understanding that I have the right to do reporting jobs for other publications except for the Bazaar or Mademoiselle."¹⁴⁶ In a 1942 letter to Condé Nast, in which she thanked him for allowing her to publish a war story in *Life*, Frissell wrote, "As you know,

¹⁴⁵ *Vogue* 98, no. 1 (Jul 1, 1941), 17.

¹⁴⁶ Toni Frissell to Mehemed Agha, May 7, 1942, Condé Nast Papers, Condé Nast Archive, New York, New York.

I'm most terribly anxious to get into reporting photography as much as possible as I think it will also help my fashion work and give me a new eye."¹⁴⁷

Frissell continued to publish in American *Vogue* as she photographed for the government and relief efforts in the 1940s. But *Vogue* concurrently began to cultivate a war photographer of its own in Europe: American-born Lee Miller. Miller lived in London under the German bombing raids from the early fall of 1940 to the late spring of 1941, otherwise known as the “Blitz.” Judging from internal company memos and letters circulating between *Vogue* and Miller, her photographic work struggled until she incorporated the snapshot aesthetic and found what Frissell referred to as a “new eye.” Condé Nast wrote to Miller in 1942:

[Your] photographs are much more alive, the backgrounds more interesting, the lighting and posing more dramatic and real. You've managed to handle some of the deadliest studio situations in the manner of a spontaneous outdoor snapshot; and your outdoor work brings a fresh and very much needed note to the magazine.¹⁴⁸

Nast's adjectives for Miller's work—alive, interesting, dramatic, real, spontaneous—were words that were forged in cultivating the snapshot aesthetic of Frissell's photographs. Frissell's style easily transferred to war photography to capture experiences in a still photograph that could physically move a reader.

Frissell's body of work opened the door for *Vogue* to begin to feature war photojournalism in the magazine.¹⁴⁹ But as I uncover in the next chapter, the freedom of movement that Frissell articulated in the body unraveled when women's mobility in the social sphere was tested during the war. Frissell's pictures of liberatory fashion could be seen in one way as what Annemarie Strassel has described as a “false emancipatory consciousness,” wherein

¹⁴⁷ Toni Frissell to Condé Nast, Jan. 27, 1942, Condé Nast Papers, Condé Nast Archive, New York, New York.

¹⁴⁸ Letter from Condé Nast to Lee Miller, August 17, 1942, Lee Miller Archives, Chiddingly, East Sussex, United Kingdom.

¹⁴⁹ In addition to photojournalism, the aesthetic of the snapshot would receive institutional recognition in an exhibition of amateur photography at the Museum of Modern Art in 1944: *The American Snapshot: An Exhibition of the Folk Art of the Camera*.

the politics of clothing grates against the freedom women actually attained in their public identities.¹⁵⁰ The next chapter looks at how Lee Miller parlayed the action photograph to interrogate and critique women's place and perspectives in the war.

¹⁵⁰ Annemarie Strassel, "Designing Women," 37.

Chapter 2 Lee Miller's Body Language

After touring the Blitzkrieg devastation in Britain in October 1940, Ralph Ingersoll, editor of the American leftist picture magazine *PM*, returned home to the United States and leisurely thumbed through a copy of *Vogue* magazine. The experience gave him the “strangest sensation,” for “in its smooth, white-coated pages was the written and pictured record of...hundreds of thousands of lives obviously enormously concerned with matters so trivial as to seem to me utterly and literally fantastic,” he later wrote in an editorial. “It was as if I had arrived on Mars to find a nation of grown-up men and women whose lives were wholly dedicated to the cultivation and worship of the petunia.”¹⁵¹ Ingersoll predicted that *Vogue* would not survive the war, its aestheticism and isolationism a liability for the new social consciousness the war would bring.

Vogue's Editor-in-chief, Edna Woolman Chase, responded to her critic by defending beauty, the content of the magazine, and the industry of fashion. “Our role...is to report and reflect the activities of women—in peacetime or wartime,” she wrote in a *Vogue's Eye View* column on January 1, 1941. She articulated *Vogue*'s position as a

Spokesman for the great fashion industry—the second largest industry in our country. It gives employment to many millions of people, who design, manufacture, distribute, advertise, and sell fashion merchandise. The healthy continuance of that industry means not only their employment, but that cleanliness, decency, order, and beauty—the pleasant things of life—shall not vanish from the earth.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Ingersoll, “Total War, Total Defense, Total Crisis,” *PM* (November 1940). The war on women in the press concerning fashion and its assumed frivolity continued. *The New Yorker*, where Ingersoll had formally served as editor, updated his divination in 1943: “A year or so ago, Ralph Ingersoll predicted in the columns of his public diary that the magazine *Vogue* would not long survive the last gun of this great war which is being fought to make Man's and Woman's way of life simpler & more serious. We suspect the future of women and of *Vogue* has been considerably over-prophesied. The ladies would appear to still be holding on to their familiar symbols and embellishments, oblivious of the doom...” See James Thurber, “Comment,” *The New Yorker* (February 20, 1943), 7.

¹⁵² “*Vogue's*-Eye View of *Vogue* 1941,” 27. Lee Miller would later do a send-up to cleanliness, and its relation to ethnic cleaning, when she and her traveling companion, *Life* photographer Dave Scherman, took photographs of

Rather than a publication removed from society as described by Ingersoll, Chase described how *Vogue* functioned as part of a larger economic ecosystem sustained by fashion. This industry was part of the turning tide during the war that would bring the U.S. out of the Depression. Moreover, flipping through the same pages as did Ingersoll in 1940 reveals how much of the “pictured record” of war Ingersoll neglected to see, and how politicized those white-coated pages had become for the magazine’s editors.

I argue *Vogue* operated as an agent of war between 1939 and 1945, becoming a platform for the voices of British *Vogue* editors and photographers that was part of a broader U.K government effort to draw America into the Second World War. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor and American entry into the war, American *Vogue*’s editors also used the magazine as a conduit to channel news from the Front to the United States, soliciting war bonds, Homefront sacrifices, labor, and volunteerism. But Ingersoll does not just function as a straw man in my discussion of *Vogue* as a politicized document. His description of *Vogue* as a material object, his conflation of the body of the magazine with the bodies in, and holding, its pages, points to how *Vogue* simultaneously played to and against the sensuality encoded in its paper body. In other words, Ingersoll’s recollection of what it was like to touch *Vogue*, those “smooth” and “white-coated pages” analogous to the skin of the white bourgeois women that read them, reveals how “female-ness” registered in the magazine’s content and in its very materiality.

To illuminate this tension, this chapter centers on the work of photographer Lee Miller, a figure imbricated in the war. A *Vogue* fashion model in the 1920s and *Vogue* photographer in the 1930s and 1940s, Miller was living in London when World War II was declared in 1939. She became a transatlantic medium between British and American *Vogue*, transmitting British

each other in Hitler’s bathtub after visiting the Dachau concentration camp. These were published in British, but not American, *Vogue* under the title “Hiteraiana” in July 1945.

fashion, along with the experience of living under the Blitzkrieg, to readers in the United States. Later, after being accredited as a U.S. Forces War Correspondent, Miller traveled to France, Germany, and Belgium, among other countries, and reported on her experiences in field hospitals, in combat zones, and in concentration camps. Her work is compelling not only for its divergent variety—from fashion photography to documentary reportage—but for her astute understanding of the ways in which the culture at large, and mass media in particular, framed women's bodies to be looked *at*. Rather than collapse the correlation between women and the body as reductive or an essence, I argue Miller harnessed the sensorial properties of the body as a record of experience, knowledge, and form of communication. Her photographs tap into the generative power of eye contact, touch, and affect to awaken a female community of readers and to alter their position from passive readers to active witnesses.

My reading of Miller's work is deeply connected to the body of the magazine in which her photographs appeared, as I attempt to bridge the gap between vision and touch by considering the ways in which her readers engaged with the page with their bodies. Although Miller as an artist and figure has undergone a scholarly renaissance in recent years, many interpretations remove her photographs from the pages women touched and handled, disarming them of their original charge and context within the body of the text. As the magazine began to define what it meant to be an embedded female reporter, I argue *Vogue* editors chose particular photographs by Miller that empowered the female body—not necessarily of showing images of strong women (which it also did), but foregrounding images that assert connection, intimacy and vulnerability could constitute an effective alternative to highly masculinized war photography. By connecting Miller's photographs to broader British and American government strategies in the

media, this chapter enhances our understanding of the gender politics of the body, as well as its effect on the body of print culture during the Second World War.

War on Paper

By the time Miller began photographing fashion at the London outpost of *Vogue* in 1940, she had already worked at various national entities of the magazine for nearly fifteen years. A native of Poughkeepsie, New York, she first met Condé Nast in the winter of 1926 on the streets of New York City at age 19.¹⁵³ Taken by her striking appearance, he asked her to model for *Vogue*. On March 15, 1927, she appeared—as an illustration—on the cover of the magazine’s American edition. French artist George Lepape pictured Miller as rising out of the metropolis like the many skyscrapers behind her (fig. 42). His rendering of her long, oval face, stylized features, and elongated neck denaturalize her body. With angular cheekbones and a blue cloche hat pulled low over her ears, nearly concealing her cropped blonde hair, Miller signifies a type—the fashionable, androgynous flapper. Miller also appeared in the interior pages of the magazine through photographs by such artists as Edward Steichen. She would move to Paris in 1929 and continued to be photographed by photographers such as George Hoyningen-Huene, director of French *Vogue*’s photographic studio.¹⁵⁴ Her pictures from France featured in the American edition, as all three of *Vogue*’s outposts in the U.S., Britain, and France shared photographs and editorial copy.

A shape-shifter, Miller transformed in each image according to the fashion of the day.

More often than not, photographers captured Miller in profile view, disengaged from the viewer

¹⁵³ Miller recalled that she stepped off of a sidewalk into the street and was nearly struck by a passing car. Nast pulled her back from oncoming traffic. This sensational origin story is often repeated by Miller’s biographers, but, for this project, it seems a fitting entry for Miller into the media and the beginning of a dramatic story.

¹⁵⁴ This was not Miller’s first trip to Paris. Miller traveled to Europe in 1925 at 18 and studied costume, theater, and design in Paris at the L’École Medgyes pour la Technique du Théâtre.

and posed to be looked at (see, for example, fig. 43). When Miller began to photograph, this would be one of the conventions she would rewrite to cultivate a connection between viewer and pictured subject. In Paris, Miller moved from image to maker, introducing herself to, and training with, Man Ray. She facilitated their meeting by offering a letter of introduction from Edward Steichen. She became Man Ray's studio assistant, model, collaborator, and lover over the next three years in Paris, and a significant amount of scholarship exists on this period in Miller's life.¹⁵⁵ She and Man Ray collaborated on projects that fed into their personal Surrealist practice as well as commercial ventures, and it was Miller who discovered the technique of solarization, where light is added in the dark room to photographic paper, reversing the tones of some of the areas of the image. She also opened her own studio in Paris, creating work on contract for *Vogue* that was channeled back to the U.S. and published in the American version of the magazine.

In 1932, Miller left Man Ray and moved back to New York, establishing a studio with her brother, Erik.¹⁵⁶ She worked freelance for companies such as Jay Thorpe, Elizabeth Arden, and *Vogue*, photographing socialites, actors of the stage and screen, filmmakers, set and costume designers, novelists, journalists, and notable cultural figures. Her photographic work was also featured in one solo exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York from the end of 1932 to 1933.

In 1933, Miller married Egyptian businessman Aziz Eloui Bey and left Manhattan for Cairo, where she began privately documenting her life and her adoptive culture through her

¹⁵⁵ A fertile body of work from this period exists between them, and such has been the subject of several publications and exhibitions. See, for example, Phillip Prodger, *Man Ray/Lee Miller: Partners in Surrealism* Exh Cat. (New York: Merrell, 2011) and the accompanying symposium at the Legion of Honor; Whitney Chadwick, "Lee Miller's Two Bodies," in *The Modern Woman Revisited: Paris Between the Wars*, eds. Whitney Chadwick and Tirza True Latimer (New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 2003), 199-221; and Amy J. Lyford, "Lee Miller's Photographic Impersonations, 1930-45: Conversing with Surrealism." *History of Photography* 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1994), 230-41.

¹⁵⁶ For a lengthier examination of Miller's advertising and editorial work in the early 1930s, see Becky Conekin, *Lee Miller in Fashion* (New York: Montacelli, 2013).

camera lens. Miller met the British Surrealist artist and writer Roland Penrose on a trip to Paris in 1937, ended her relationship with Bey, and began a new relationship with Penrose. She moved with him to London in 1939. There, she joined *Vogue* in Britain, where much of its staff was conscripted to the war, and reengaged with the world of fashion photography.

Miller's excursions back and forth across the Atlantic, coupled with her relationships with artists Man Ray and Roland Penrose, have fascinated biographers and interpreters of her work. She embodied the bohemia and glamour of the 1920s and 1930s, and her development of solarization and its play with boundary crossings and defamiliarization affected the ways in which we can understand the technical, formal, and conceptual strategies of Surrealism. For this project, however, Miller fascinates because she became a transatlantic figure for a transatlantic empire. Miller's peripatetic lifestyle from the late 1920s onward allowed her to work with the three major arms of *Vogue* in New York, Paris, and London. She came to embody the interconnectivity that functioned between the magazines, which shared images and textual material. During the war, Miller was the subject of many transatlantic memos between American and British *Vogue*—a linchpin in an intense international dialogue that would influence the visual form of the magazine.

Historically, the relationship between the American and British editions of the magazine had been tense, with the ultimate authority resting in New York under Chase, who was Editor-in-Chief of all three publications. As Audrey Withers, editor of British *Vogue*, recalled, "Before the war the relationship between British *Vogue* and the New York office resembled that of parent and adolescent child. The Americans didn't really believe that we could be trusted to do anything important without supervision."¹⁵⁷ The war altered the dynamic, as travel restrictions prevented Chase and Condé Nast from visiting the London office. Additionally, the German Occupation of

¹⁵⁷ Audrey Withers, *LifeSpan: An Autobiography* (Peter Owen: London and Chester Springs, PA, 1994), 42.

France disconnected the famed French couture industry from its international markets and from the *Vogue* network. In this absence, the American magazine took the opportunity to shift its Francophile coverage towards designers in Britain using Miller's photographs.

In "London Collections...Undimmed" from September 1940, American *Vogue* reported on the state of the British fashion industry during the war. "Bombardment hasn't halted the needles of Britain," its author reassured readers, and then continued:

In the teeth of the scathing Blitzkrieg, the London couturiers go calmly on working, producing winter Collections. For the needle is one weapon of defense. To make clothes, to export them to America, means setting up a bank credit in this country with which Britain can buy her desperately needed war supplies. And on America's part—here is one way a woman can help support democracy's fight. Buying a new British suit is as much a contribution to British defense as a sum of money. A new sweater puts another nail in a plane for Britain.¹⁵⁸

Lee Miller took two photographs for this feature article. On the photograph on the left, a model sits in the center of the frame, her body in a three-quarter profile view and her head turned away from the viewer. She sits on an L-shaped structure, which gives the austere space architectural interest. Miller was probably photographing in the basement of British *Vogue*'s building—underground like so many bunkers where Londoners would retreat during the Blitz.¹⁵⁹ The model's hand wraps around one of a dozen oversize theatre tassels dangling above her (fig. 44). The image recalls elements of a production: stage sets, theater tassels, and an actor in costume. In the small photograph on the opposite page, another model stands against a bare background. Her hands positioned on her hips—arms akimbo—echo the elliptical beaded forms of her dress.

¹⁵⁸ "Fashion: London Collections...Undimmed," *Vogue* 96.6 (Sep 15, 1940): 72, 73, 74, 75, 128, 129.

¹⁵⁹ In the November 1940 issue of British *Vogue*, editors detailed life at the magazine during the Blitz, including photographing in the basement and completing work on the issue in shelters: "We work on when our roof-watcher sends us down. Our editorial staff plan, lay-out, write. Our studio photograph in their wine-cellar-basement. Our fashion staff continue to comb the shops. Congestedly, unceremoniously but cheerfully, *Vogue*, like its fellow Londoners, is put to bed in a shelter. See "Here is *Vogue* in spite of it all," British *Vogue* (November 1940): 19. Quoted in Becky E. Conekin, "'Magazines are Essentially About the Here and Now. And This was Wartime': British *Vogue*'s Responses to the Second World War," in *Gender, Labour, War and Empire: Essays on Modern Britain*. Edited by Phillippa Levine and Susan R. Grayzel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009):124.

The subheading text reads, as if embroidered into the page in a cursive script, “Despite bombardment, British needles work valiantly on.”¹⁶⁰ The allusions to stage sets seem to say that fashion would have been relegated off of the world stage in light of the German occupation of Paris, but Miller composed the British industry as if waiting in the wings, poised to reopen the curtain.

The context of the article was more than simply supporting British businesses, however. Specific lines in the text, such as “Buying a new British suit is as much a contribution to British defense as a sum of money. A new sweater puts another nail in a plane for Britain,” alludes to the ways in which American women could help support the British cause through consumption when the United States refused to intervene politically or financially. In the mid-to-late 1930s, the United States authorized a series of laws to maintain its neutrality in advance of the developing war in Europe. These Neutrality Acts included military, financial, and transportation restrictions, including barring the U.S. from exporting arms or providing loans to warring nations. The Acts also forbid U.S. citizens from traveling to belligerent countries, which directly affected British *Vogue*’s editor, Betty Penrose (no familial connection to Roland Penrose). Penrose, an American citizen, had traveled to the US in 1940, but her passport was revoked when she tried to return.¹⁶¹

President Roosevelt ran his 1940 reelection campaign on the promise of American neutrality, while newspaper editorials and popular culture debated isolationism versus intervention in the press.¹⁶² While the United States remained neutral, Condé Nast needed to

¹⁶⁰ Fashion: London Collections...Undimmed. *Vogue* 96.6 (Sep 15, 1940): 72.

¹⁶¹ Audrey Withers would take her place as editor.

¹⁶² In March of 1941, the United States passed the Lend-Lease Act, which allowed the lending of war supplies to Britain. But the Neutrality Act still put restrictions on American intervention, which supporters of militarization believed was critical to winning the war. As Ralph Ingersoll would write, “Are we lenders or fighters? To be an American abroad where others are fighting fascism is to feel cheap...Lease and lend are the meanest words I have ever heard...After having visited every front in the World War against Fascism, there’s only one question that seems

protect his commercial interests in London with British *Vogue*. In a letter to British *Vogue* fashion editor, Lady Stanley of Alderley, Nast wrote, “I am even now searching around for some way that American *Vogue* might be able to give some sort of constructive and consistent support to English businesses in its pages.”¹⁶³ In “London Collections”—published the same month Ralph Ingersoll returned home from Britain and criticized *Vogue*’s disconnection from the war—American *Vogue* offered British editors a platform to spotlight its makers. By transforming the needle into a weapon and a sweater into a nail in the plane, *Vogue* pointed to the economic ways in which the fashion industry could provide support—if indirect—to the British military cause.

Aside from Ingersoll’s statement on *Vogue*, the American edition of the magazine did cover wartime issues in 1939 and 1940—on refugees, privations, military advancement, relief workers, and fundraising.¹⁶⁴ In July 1940 *Vogue* proclaimed, “Americans like action. It is hard to read the papers, to listen to the brave and desperate speeches of foreign statesmen—and to feel, with hopeless and frustrated compassion, that there is nothing to do.”¹⁶⁵ Itemized in the article “If You Want to Help” from 1940 included a list of possible options for donating goods,

important to me now. The question is, When are we going to get into this war?” Ralph Ingersoll, *PM* (November 11, 1941), 1-2 quoted in Paul Milkman, *PM: A New Deal in Journalism 1940-1948* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1997), 67.

¹⁶³ Condé Nast to British *Vogue* fashion editor Lady Stanley of Alderley. Dated October 31, 1940, Condé Nast Archives, New York.

¹⁶⁴ For articles on the war from the end of 1939 through 1940, see, for example, “*Vogue*’s Eye View: War-Time Fashion 1939-1941,” 37-39; 102-103; Lesley Blanch, “London life—under arms,” 62, 110-111 and Bettina Wilson, “Paris life—under arms,” 63, 111 in *Vogue* 94, no. 8 (October 15, 1939); “Features: In Spite of War Paris Couturiers will present as usual their 1940 Spring Collections beginning January 22” *Vogue* 95, no. 1 (January 1, 1940): 25; “A French Decoration for America,” *Vogue* 95, no. 10 (May 15, 1940): 52; Margaret Case, “Diary of an American in France,” *Vogue* 95, no. 12 (June 15, 1940), 44-45; 83-84; “People and Ideas: If You Want to Help” *Vogue* 96, no. 1 (July 1, 1940): 27; Carl Erickson, “People and Ideas: Exodus: War Refugees, En Route from Senlis to Paris,” *Vogue* 96, no.1 (July 1, 1940): 28-29; “*Vogue*’s Eye View: College...This Year,” *Vogue* 96, no. 4 (August 15, 1940): 59; Elsa Schiaparelli, “Needles and Guns” *Vogue* 96, no. 5 (September 1, 1940): 57, 104-105; “Fashion: London Sends us These” *Vogue* 96, no. 8 (October 15, 1940): 66-67; Genevieve Tabouis, “...And now, France, What?” *Vogue* 96, no. 8 (October 15, 1940): 60, 112; Jan Spiess, “Taking the Political Pulse,” *Vogue* 96.9 (November 1, 1940): 70, 116, 119; “Paris Now...” *Vogue* 96, no. 10 (November 15, 1940): 62-65; Audrey Withers, “People and Ideas: British *Vogue* Weathers the Storm,” *Vogue* 96, no. 11 (December 1, 1940) 80-81; 138-141. This last article, *Vogue* noted, was written by Managing Editor Audrey Withers in an air raid shelter, where she detailed that staff had both been injured and killed during the war.

¹⁶⁵ “People and Ideas: If You Want to Help” *Vogue* 96, no. 1 (July 1, 1940): 27

money, and labor, all within the parameters of state rules. “If you want to start a workroom, to raise money for the Allies by giving benefits or raffling off a radio,” editors reminded readers, “remember that the State Department ruling is strict: you must be licensed by the State Department to solicit or receive money or goods to be sent to the warring nations.”¹⁶⁶

In addition to covering the war, Condé Nast also worried about appearing tone-deaf during the European conflict. His memos to his staff during this period illustrate his process of thinking through how a fashion magazine operates during wartime. In a 1941 memo to his editors, Nast wrote:

We must not allow people to think of VOGUE as a really frivolous periodical, unaware of the serious changes that have been going on in the life, interests and psychology of American women...Moreover, the editors should be watchful not only as to the amount of space that we give to war activities, but VOGUE’s attack on its fashion subjects must be changed a bit. The editors of VOGUE can not be quite as much thrilled and ecstatic as formerly over the announcement that pink instead of blue is to be the coming season’s color.¹⁶⁷

This self-conscious clipping of fashion’s upbeat tone and its manufactured obsolescence could be seen as evolving out of the changes to the fashion system in Britain. The British government began to ration clothing in 1941 in response to shipping shortages in waterways engaged in the war. This was followed by a reduction of fashion-orientated labor in British industry, where restrictions on types of fabrics, fabric length, and decorative trim, such as embroidery and buttons, were made in order to redirect manufacturing towards the war effort.¹⁶⁸ British *Vogue* editor Audrey Withers wrote to Edna Chase in August of 1941:

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 27.

¹⁶⁷ Condé Nast Memo, April 14, 1941, pages 1-2. Condé Nast Archives, New York.

¹⁶⁸ On British rationing and shortages, see Peter McNeil, “‘Put Your Best Face Forward’: Impact of the Second World War on British Dress,” *Journal of Design History* 6, no. 4 (1993), 284. On rationing’s effect on British *Vogue*, see Becky E. Conekin, “‘Magazines are Essentially About the Here and Now. And This was Wartime’: British *Vogue*’s Responses to the Second World War,” in *Gender, Labour, War and Empire: Essays on Modern Britain*. Edited by Phillippa Levine and Susan R. Grayzel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2009): 116-38. The U.S. would later enact clothing restrictions after joining the war under the order L-85 in 1943.

We have just used up the last of what I might call “timeless” covers, which we have had in hand from you and now I am a little nervous as I realize that we have no shells in hand that seem really right to stop-gap in emergencies... Your series of Summer covers was of course specially unsuitable for Brogue [British *Vogue*] in wartime, and therefore it was not until your September 1st issue that we could get a cover that looked right for us. All kinds of small points are apt to make your covers unsuitable for our eyes; for instance, your charming August 15th one which we should have loved to have, had to be ruled out on account of that full dirndl skirt which looks quite impossible to people who now must think in the skimpy terms of coupons. Again, sometimes coiffure or accessories are over elaborate for England’s present life, and we feel we must be most careful to avoid striking false notes.¹⁶⁹

Withers terminology employing the language of vision—the use of covers “unsuitable for our eyes”—speaks of a separate visual experience for British readers. Living in the United Kingdom during the Blitz offered a fundamentally different collective lens from which to view the world.

A series of pictures by Miller made in London for American *Vogue*, published one month before Withers’s letter to Chase, demonstrates this concept of a separate vision and experience.

Headlined in bold, sans serif letterforms moving diagonally across the page, the title reads:

“British Women Under Fire” (fig. 45).¹⁷⁰ The text does not mince words about the role of women during the Blitz. “Britain’s deadliest enemy, on the land, is Fire. And Fire has no more ruthless adversaries than the women of Britain.”¹⁷¹ The text explains that women employed in the

Auxiliary Fire Services drive the fire-engines, wield pickaxes and shovels, and search for bombs.

These bombs are “not the simple magnesium flares used earlier in the war, but incendiaries

¹⁶⁹ Memo from Audrey Withers to Edna Chase dated August 19, 1941. Edna Woolman Chase Archives, New York. Several months earlier, in a memo to Chase from February 20, 1941, Withers wrote, “I expect your newspapers give a sufficient report of our Government pronouncements for you to realize that the whole trend at the moment is towards a greater simplicity of living and dressing and you can understand how very sensitive women feel who are wealthy or socially eminent.” In Edna Woolman Chase Archives, New York.

¹⁷⁰ The origin of the project had begun a few months earlier within a memo from Withers to Chase on April 24th 1941. “I have asked Lee Miller to produce some snapshots which might help you to illustrate a feature. These M.T.C. [Mechanised Transport Corps] girls want to emphasize the extraordinary normality of London even after the heaviest blitzes – a thing which we realize you can barely imagine; as we ourselves, if out of town during one of them, always expect to see the City in ruins. I therefore hope to send you one or two snapshots on this theme, as well as others illustrating wartime scenes.” See Edna Woolman Chase Archives, New York. Withers herself was a driver with the Auxiliary Fire Service, but Miller, as an American, could not join the auxiliary services. For Withers experience, see *Lifespan*, 47.

¹⁷¹ “British Women under Fire” *Vogue* 98, no. 2 (July 15, 1941): 61.

barbed with a delayed-action charge of high explosive.”¹⁷² Miller’s images depict new bedside necessities for life under fire, including a gas mask, matches, thick shoes, and socks in a parodic transgression of *Vogue*’s typical archiving of beauty products. The article shares the new fashion on the British Homefront—a “siren suit”—a term for clothes to wear to the shelter after an airstrike alert sounds. Siren, indeed, puns on the shift in *Vogue*’s sartorial coverage from the mythic effect of femininity to wartime pragmatism, illustrated by Miller’s deadpan photographs of women in masks and suits.

Art Director Mehemed Agha, who played a significant role in animating Toni Frissell’s images of active women in Chapter 1, chose eight of Miller’s images for this article to evoke a mood of both confinement and resistance. Miller’s pictures depict the spaces and objects sought for safety, such as a subterranean bomb shelter and a corner of a room lined with sand and water buckets, hoses, and shovels. Women pose against brick walls and barren floors in active postures, their legs positioned into a triangular stance of stability. Notably, all women are masked. Each of the four women within this layout wears a mask for gas, chemical, and fire protection. The largest image illustrates two women sitting on the precipice of a bomb shelter, their legs inside the shelter and hidden from view, their torsos turned to face the camera with eyes shielded by different types of masks for incendiary bombs.¹⁷³ One of the women shows the camera an air raid warden’s whistle held in her hand. In this photograph, Miller articulates the experience of living through the war as always through the apparatus of the mask. As Jean Gallagher argues, these women also “ask us to consider how women were looked at during World War II and how they in turn looked through a set of technological contrivances, the literal

¹⁷² Ibid, 61.

¹⁷³ This was actually Miller’s own bomb shelter she shared with Roland Penrose at 21 Downshire Hill in Hampstead, North London.

and figurative, physical and rhetorical technologies of vision that constrained and constituted how they saw and were seen.”¹⁷⁴

None of the women in “British Women Under Fire” were “seen” by American readers in the conventional ways of illustrating bodies in the magazine. Every face—and two of the bodies—are covered, as if refusing to be objectified for their beauty or their figure. Moreover, they wear masks that directly address the reader, an effect that is startling. The gas mask, in particular, is an object linked with the trauma of the machine age, as gas was first used as a chemical weapon during World War I. As a visual strategy, the image both recalls and reworks the conventions of Surrealism. The mask affronts the normalized body: it shocks and defamiliarizes. These surrealist qualities even led the photograph to be removed from its context within *Vogue* and discussed solely as a free-floating Surrealist image in most secondary scholarship.

I argue that this image can only be understood as part of the printed page, positioned in *Vogue* as part of a forged relationship between British women and American readers. Other images Miller took that day include a photograph of the two women from the bomb shelter conversing on the steps of an unidentified building (fig. 46).¹⁷⁵ The unpublished image seeks to show how the mask has become part of everyday life for British women, who continue to have conversation in spite of the strange facial coverage they wear. The image Agha published in *Vogue* rather uses the mask and the direct address to confront the American reader and to generate engagement in the issues of the war, which could help shift public opinion towards

¹⁷⁴ See Jean Gallagher, *The World Wars through the Female Gaze* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2000), 2. Gallagher uses this image in the introduction to her book as a visual paradigm for her study of wartime female experience. In her specific chapter on Miller, Gallagher does not elaborate on this image but instead examines other photographs that evoke and transgress surrealist, wartime, and fashion photographic conventions to explore the gendered body and subjectivity. See “Vision, Violence, and *Vogue*: War and Correspondence in Lee Miller’s Photography,” *The World Wars Through the Female Gaze*, 68-96.

¹⁷⁵ This image was published in Conekin, *Lee Miller in Fashion* (New York: Montacelli, 2013), 91.

intervention. The direct engagement with the women to the reader is a connection that can be part of what Ariella Azoulay defines as the “civil contract of photography”—a relationship not defined by geo-political borders and citizenship granted by the State, but one forged between people through photography. The contract is a “framework of partnership and solidarity.”¹⁷⁶ By staring out at the viewer, showing us the air raid whistle in her hand, the *Vogue* model addresses us and seeks a response. The response hoped for is not only the visual shock of their bodies, but what Azoulay calls a “demand for participation in a sphere of political relations within which [her] claims can be heard and acknowledged.”¹⁷⁷

Miller’s picture is part of this contract, which was written not only into the photograph, but in the illustrated press, in which her images moved across space. Miller specifically references print, included a scrap of *The Evening Standard*, a British paper, under the two women, touching them. Though not mentioned in existing scholarship, I believe such moments are important to understanding Miller’s war images because they contextualize the space and the social conditions of the photograph. Although Miller evokes Surrealism, the newspaper demystifies any notion that this is an abstract Surrealist space of suspended time, but an actual bomb shelter in London in the time and place of now.¹⁷⁸ Print media served as an everyday lifeline for British women to its news, as well as a bridge across distance to the outer world. As Nicholas Cull would argue, the British government brought the United States on as an ally in the road to war—“a road based not on secret telegrams and grand policy but on the open flow of information from Europe to the great centers of American opinion-making: New York and

¹⁷⁶ Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zone, 2008), 23.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁷⁸ Miller repeatedly utilized this strategy of including props to contextualize her photographs during the war. For example, when she photographed a family in Leipzig who had killed themselves in a government building, she placed a portrait of Hitler in the frame to mark the dead as Nazis. When she took pictures in Hitler’s apartment in Munich in the spring of 1945, she also placed within them portraits she had found of Hitler. Patricia Allmer argues that these photographs destabilize the visual conventions of the Third Reich. See “Lee Miller’s Revenge on Fascist Culture.” *History of Photography* 36:4 (September 2012), 397-413.

Hollywood. Its principal characters are not statesmen or diplomats, but journalists and propagandists who attempted to mold public opinion and thereby reset the parameters of high policy.”¹⁷⁹

“British Women Under Fire” joins other articles from British editors to American readers that foreground print culture as a means of transatlantic communication, such as “London Sends Us These.” Models in clothing by British designers read newspapers and stand in front of British war posters, the largest exclaiming “Back Up the Fighting Forces” (fig. 47).¹⁸⁰ These photographs were not made by Miller but illustrate other photographic situations conceived by the London editors of *Vogue* that were aimed at American readers. These images demonstrate the extent to which newspapers functioned as a signifier of British speech and address.

Other *Vogue* articles in this period paint clearly the consequences of the war, like Genevieve Tabouis’s 1940 American *Vogue* piece, “...And now, France, What?” Tabouis writes that Europe would crumble should Hitler gain absolute power.¹⁸¹ These types of articles were not the lightning rods that Ralph Ingersoll published in *PM*, such as images of Nazi atrocities in Poland in February 1941, but they were slow fuses that crept into the minds of readers.¹⁸² These images depict women across the Atlantic staking claims against the growing cloud of fascism.

Miller’s photographic work for British *Vogue* distributed by the American press can be seen as part of a broader British government strategy to alter American public opinion. In fact, while photographing for *Vogue*, Miller also created work explicitly deemed propaganda. In 1940 and 1941, Miller took and edited photographs for *Bloody but Unbowed: Pictures of Britain Under Fire*, an extended essay that transported American readers to London under the Blitzkrieg,

¹⁷⁹ Nicholas J. Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American “Neutrality” in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4.

¹⁸⁰ “London Sends Us These,” *Vogue* 96, no. 8 (Oct 15, 1940): 66, 67.

¹⁸¹ Genevieve Tabouis, “...And now, France, What?” *Vogue* 96, no. 8 (October 15, 1940): 60, 112.

¹⁸² On *PM*’s visual record, see “Poland: Smuggled Pictures Show Nazi Persecution” *PM*, February 5, 1941.

which had been raging nightly since September 1940.¹⁸³ Miller worked on the project with American expatriate, Ernestine Carter, a former curator at the Museum of Modern Art.¹⁸⁴ The Ministry of Information (MoI)—the arm of the British government in charge of shaping and distributing domestic and international press during the war—distributed *Bloody But Unbowed* under an American publisher, Charles Scribner’s Sons.¹⁸⁵ Ernestine Carter recalled that her British husband, who worked for the London office of Scribner’s and the press censorship division of the MoI, first had the idea that Carter and Miller work together on a book. Carter proclaimed it had been “conceived (and given a paper allocation) as a propaganda effort aimed at the U.S.A.”¹⁸⁶

American Edward R. Murrow delivered the preface to the publication. Murrow routinely transported his experience in London back to American listeners on the CBS Radio night broadcast. In *Bloody But Unbowed*, he emphasized how the book served as a kind of surrogate eyewitness.¹⁸⁷ He cajoled his readers that the images were “honest pictures —routine scenes to those of us who have reported Britain’s ordeal by fire and high explosive... This little book offers you a glimpse of their battle.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ Carter is named as an editor and Miller the photographer-in-chief. See Ernestine Carter, ed. *Bloody but Unbowed: Pictures of Britain Under Fire* (New York: Scribner’s, 1941), Unpaginated.

¹⁸⁴ This text was concurrently published with Lund Humphries in Britain with a variant title: *Grim Glory: Pictures of Britain Under Fire*. Smaller publishing firms outside of London, such as Lund Humphries, were utilized during wartime when larger printers and labor were redirected towards the war effort. For a source on the publishing industry during the Second World War, see John B. Hench, *Books as Weapons: Propaganda, Publishing, and the Battle for Global Markets in the Era of World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

¹⁸⁵ For more on how the MoI cloaked their propaganda efforts, moving through channels such as newsreels, movies, and novels that would not alarm Americans, see Nicholas J. Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American “Neutrality” in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁸⁶ Carter was married to John (Jake) Waynflete Carter. See Ernestine Carter, *With Tongue in Chic* (London: Joseph, 1974), 56-57.

¹⁸⁷ Most famous of Murrow’s coverage includes outdoor broadcasts such as “London After Dark,” recorded live from Trafalgar Square on August 24, 1940 and “Rooftop Air Raid,” live on the London rooftops on September 20, 1940.

¹⁸⁸ Edward Murrow, Preface, *Bloody but Unbowed*, Unpaginated.

The pictured battle was not a bloody one, however. *Bloody but Unbowed* adhered to strict conventions not to show casualties during that period. Murrow noted in his preface:

The pictures were selected with great discrimination. I would have shown you the open graves at Coventry—broken bodies covered with brown dust, looking like rag dolls cast away by some petulant child, being lifted in the tender hands from the basements of homes. This book spares you the more gruesome sights of living and dying in Britain today.¹⁸⁹

Miller, who contributed roughly one-fifth of the images in the text, featured her photograph of a classical nude lying on a bed of rubble, a piece of metal across its neck like a cut throat (fig. 48).¹⁹⁰ She captioned the image, “Revenge on Culture.” Rather than picture the 43,000 British civilians that died during the Blitz, Miller photographed the cut throat of a female sculpture as a sign both of the body and of culture to embody the collective terrible trauma and loss.

With their images and text, Americans Carter, Miller, and Murrow targeted what they perceived as the readers’ ancestral connections to, and fantasies of, Britain. Miller would write of this American mythic vision in a British *Vogue* article: “Every American has some cherished dream spot in these Isles: Lorna Doone’s valley, Sherwood Forest, Banbury Cross, or a remote grandmother’s birthplace to which a pilgrimage must be made.”¹⁹¹ Of course, not all ancestry in the United States traced to Britain; this was *Bloody but Unbowed*’s constructed myth that omitted the ways in which other nationalities—both indigenous and immigrant—constructed the diverse national body of the United States. Miller, Carter, Murrow, and their publishers hoped that the text would gain support for what would be called the “Special Relationship” between the two

¹⁸⁹ Murrow, Preface, *Bloody But Unbowed*, Unpaginated. The sparing of carnage was not simply altruistic; pictures of casualties were censored in the United States before 1943.

¹⁹⁰ Miller was not the only photographer featured in *Bloody but Unbowed*, but she was the only one to receive name recognition. Her work comprises 22 pictures; the nearly 90 other photographs in the text were taken from a range of government entities, private agencies, and news outlets. For scholarship on Miller’s Blitz pictures, see Sharon Sliwinski, “Air War and Dream: Photographing the London Blitz,” *American Imago* 68, no.3 (Fall 2011): 489-516 and Lorraine Sim, “A Different War Landscape: Lee Miller’s War Photography and the Ethics of Seeing,” *Modernist Cultures* 4 (2009): 46-66.

¹⁹¹ Lee Miller, “American Army Nurses,” *British Vogue* (May 1943), 88.

countries. This relationship, born out of the former identity of the United States as a British colony, detailed joint military and political support.

After *Bloody but Unbowed*, Carter worked with the Ministry of Information in the Exhibitions division. She organized a show on British wartime posters at the Museum of Modern Art, as well as other exhibitions with images like those in *Bloody but Unbowed* that toured around the United States to drum up support for the British cause and move the tide from isolation to intervention.¹⁹² Edward Murrow also took a prominent role in supporting the British government initiatives to influence American public opinion. He networked with British Officials and the BBC, for example, to ease restrictions on his broadcasts in the United States to increasingly advocate for American intervention into the war.¹⁹³ Contextualizing Lee Miller's photographs in American *Vogue* in 1940 and 1941 alongside her work for the Ministry of Information allows us to see how fashion magazines were also part of the media machinery that helped to bring the United States into the war.

Fashion magazines were seen as important conduits of state objectives. British *Vogue* editor Audrey Withers explained of the ways in which the British government used the press:

Women's magazines had a special place in government thinking during the war because, with men in the forces, women carried the whole responsibility of family life; and the way to catch women's attention was through the pages of magazines which, in total, were read by almost every woman in the country. So a group of editors were frequently invited to briefings by ministries that wanted to get across information and advice on health,

¹⁹² MoMA featured a series of exhibitions regarding British, and later American, wartime graphic arts from 1941-1945. Preceding Carter's poster show (*New Posters from England*, Exhibition 193, September 4-October 18, 1942), the museum also hosted *Britain at War* (Exhibition 130, May 22-September 2, 1941), a national traveling exhibition of which Carter had a hand and Miller exhibited several photographs. The exhibition also featured paintings, watercolors, drawings, cartoons, posters, and camouflage models that visited other U.S. cities and Canada. Publicity was a transatlantic affair; John Hay Whitney, the president of MoMA, and Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador to the US, spoke with Harold Nicholson, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Information, and Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery in London, over radio broadcast to promote the show on its opening night, May 23, 1941.

¹⁹³ On Murrow and propaganda, see Cull, *Selling War*, 25-26; 45; 101-104 and David H. Culbert, "This is London: Edward R. Murrow, Radio News, and American Aid to Britain," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 10. No. 1 (June 1976): 28-37.

food, clothing and so on. And they sought advice from us too—telling us what they wanted to achieve and asking how best to achieve it. We were even appealed to on fashion grounds.¹⁹⁴

Withers recalled one such incident regarding hair length and the safety hazards that occurred when women took up jobs in the industrial sector. “The current vogue was for shoulder-length hair,” she explained. “Girls working in factories refused to wear the ugly caps provided, with the result that their hair caught in machines and there were horrible scalping accidents. Could we persuade girls that short hair was chic? We thought we could, and featured the trim heads of the actresses Deborah Kerr and Coral Browne to prove it.”¹⁹⁵

Similar wartime policies would later be deployed in the U.S., such as when the War Production Board partnered with film actress Veronica Lake to discourage American women from long hair in 1943. In the pages of *Life* magazine, Lake was photographed with her signature hair caught in a drill, her face a mixture of surprise and mock pain (fig. 49). “[Lake] has given up her famous long-hair, over-one-eye trademark. The War Manpower Commission through the War Production Board urged her to make this sacrifice because more than 20,000 would-be Veronica Lakes working half-blind in munitions plants were in constant danger of having their ‘unfettered manes’ caught in machinery.”¹⁹⁶ Said Lake from the magazine’s pages, “Any woman who wears their hair over one eye is silly... This request from the Government isn’t only a pleasure, it’s a relief.”¹⁹⁷

Veronica Lake in *Life* points to the power that the government could wield in the illustrated press. Once the U.S. entered the war, the Office of War Information in the United States created its own Magazine Bureau in June 1942 to serve as a link between the government

¹⁹⁴ Withers, *Lifespan*, 51.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁹⁶ *Life Magazine* (March 8, 1943): 39-40.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

and the media. The Bureau met with magazine editors in New York and also distributed the Magazine War Guide every other month to shape wartime content. Various *Vogue* issues in the United States were devoted to how to cook and dress on the ration when it came to the U.S., where to volunteer, and what positions needed to be filled within the civilian workforce. Seven million women who had not previously entered the labor force in the U.S. did so during the war, and 350,000 women volunteered for service, in part because of the government influence on advertising and in editorial content in magazines.¹⁹⁸

The circulation of government policy through fashion magazines explains how and why the British government might keep the presses of British *Vogue* running and refuse materials for other publications when it imposed severe austerity measures. In February of 1940, Britain issued its Control of Paper Order, which forced publishers to use a little more than half—60 percent—of what it had consumed from August 1938 to August 1939. Withers recalled in Britain that a member of parliament complained that a paper quota had been declined for one periodical while it had been freely given to that “pernicious magazine, *Vogue*.”¹⁹⁹

Paper quality, too, was downgraded during austerity, which lasted during and beyond the war. Ernestine Carter, who also worked for British *Harper's Bazaar* after the war, remembered that postwar coated paper shortages became so acute that it forced magazines to be “eked out with butcher paper.”²⁰⁰ This type of low quality paper is in marked contrast to Condé Nast's fanaticism with thick, coated stock for his magazines and Ingersoll's characterization of *Vogue's* smooth, white pages. In the United States, Nast had created his own printing firm, purchasing an

¹⁹⁸ On the influence of government agencies on magazines and visual culture, see Melissa McEuen, *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984) and Nancy A. Walker, *Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Palgrave, 1998).

¹⁹⁹ Withers is quoting Eleanor Rathbone in *Lifespan*, 53.

²⁰⁰ Carter, *With Tongue in Chic*, 82. Rationing did not end in Britain until 1949.

interest in a small printing press in Greenwich, Connecticut in 1921 to set the type, print, and assemble publications such as *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *House & Garden*.²⁰¹ He developed the site into an expansive manicured campus with expensive presses that emphasized finish. This fantasy of elegance dissipated for Nast's British *Vogue*, as its material body was fundamentally altered by austerity.²⁰² British *Vogue* transitioned from a bi-weekly to a monthly issue in September 1939. The magazine had to lop an inch off the top and off of the side margin of its material body in 1942 when publishers were tasked to further slash consumption from half to a third of 1938-39 levels.²⁰³ Audrey Withers lamented that these alterations were a type of bodily violence. She wrote in a letter to Lee Miller about the physical changes to the magazine: "I am sorry [*Vogue*] should be so mutilated."²⁰⁴

In light of shortages and restrictions, the magazine became a more treasured object in Britain. Because of paper restrictions, no new subscribers could be added to the roster. As Withers exclaimed, "Until [a reader] died (it was inconceivable that anyone would give it up), no new subscriber could be taken on."²⁰⁵ Thus women would, in lieu of having their own subscription, receive copies from friends.²⁰⁶ An editor of *Woman*, a popular weekly magazine in

²⁰¹ Caroline Seebohm outlines this process in her chapter "Parks and Picture Palaces," in *The Man who was Vogue: The Life and Times of Condé Nast* (Viking Press: New York, 1982).

²⁰² British *Vogue* was printed by a family firm outside of London in Euston, according to Audrey Withers, which tried to maintain the quality of the magazine at a cheaper rate than could be found in the city. See Withers, *Lifespan*, 59.

²⁰³ Regarding the size of the material object, British *Vogue* measured at 9.5 x 12 inches in 1938; in 1942, it measured 8.5 x 11 inches.

²⁰⁴ Letter from Audrey Withers to Lee Miller, October 12, 1944. Lee Miller Archives, Chiddingly, East Sussex, United Kingdom. Withers also had to significantly edit portions of the texts that Lee Miller would later write for British *Vogue* because of the reduced space. "She sent us articles of several thousand words, and I had the problem of cutting them, because paper was strictly rationed." See Withers, *Lifespan*, 53. Also of note, Withers used both sides of the paper when sending memos to New York, as seen in the archives of Edna Woolman Chase in New York. Chase's memos, in contrast, only use one side.

²⁰⁵ Withers, *Lifespan*, 57.

²⁰⁶ Even before the war, *Vogue* marketed its American circulation to advertisers as a half greater than its actual 210,000 subscribers and newsstand buyers, believing women to pass along their copies to their daughters. In a memo by Condé Nast to advertisers dated May 23, 1940, Nast wrote: "In a word, VOGUE is today giving its advertisers 300,000 circulation comprising of 200,000 of the key "mothers" of the United States ranging in age from 25 and up, and 100,000 of the key daughters of the United States from 25 down. This 100,000 of "daughter"

Britain, recalled that wartime magazines were “passed around three or four households with a readership of half a dozen per copy. Finally, the tattered remains were bundled off to a Service camp or hospital.”²⁰⁷

American magazines would also be forced to adhere to publication rationing in 1943 due to reduced labor in the forest industry and use in the war effort.²⁰⁸ In May 1944, *Vogue* made paper’s importance to the economy plain and implored readers to:

Help Save a Million Tons of Paper. Paper protects blood plasma. Paper wraps ammunition, weapons, and foods bound for the fighting forces, does an essential war job, doubling for scarcer materials. Therefore, help by saving it. Hoard every smitch. Establish a definite place for paper salvage. Make paper your pet economy. Remember the overwhelming importance of every scrap.²⁰⁹

This notice and the wartime relationships between reader and magazine reworks the notion of the ephemerality of the fashion press. *Vogue*’s white-coated pages—whether in British or American hands—were destined to lose their luster, rubbed soft with oily fingertips and torn with use from its passage from hand to hand. Within this tactile history, one can see the vital role played by *Vogue* editors in the international war effort at a time when paper was severely restricted.

These gestures can also be read in light of the ways in which print culture was purged by the Nazis. Throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s, the Nazis confiscated and destroyed home, university, and state libraries of Jewish people and political opponents in Germany and occupied nations. In an infamous example from April 1933, the National Socialist German Student Association declared a nation-wide demonstration against “Un-German” authors, in which the German language would be purified of Jewish intellectualism, Leftist ideology, foreign

circulation although not a single copy of it is credited to VOGUE in ABC figures, actually exists as value to the advertiser just as though these 100,000 young women had gone to the newsstands to purchase VOGUE.” Condé Nast Archive, New York.

²⁰⁷ Mary Grieve, *Millions Made My Story* (Gollancz: London, 1964), 134; quoted in Lucy Noakes, *War and the British: Gender and National Identity, 1939-91* (London, 1998), 61.

²⁰⁸ David Sumner, *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 97.

²⁰⁹ Notice to readers, *Vogue* 103, no. 10 (May 1944), 114.

influence, and dissent in a symbolic act of cleansing. On May 10, across the country in 34 university towns, demonstrators heaved tens of thousands of books into the pyre. In Berlin, Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, bellowed throughout the Opera Square, on radio networks, and in the press “entrust to the flames the intellectual garbage of the past.” This assault on print disseminated throughout the rest of the world and to the United States through sources such as *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *The Literary Digest*, *The New Yorker*, *The Nation* and *Time Magazine*, among others. Counter protests took place in major cities, including New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. *Newsweek* called the incident a holocaust of books, gruesomely foreshadowing how the Nazis would later condemn people to the same fate. As Leonidas E. Hill found of the conflation of people and culture, “The Nazis viewed their ideological and racial enemies and their books as ineluctably one, the living and printed embodiment of the ‘un-German spirit’ and the contemporary civilization they despised.”²¹⁰

In this context, Lee Miller’s fire mask image and its inclusion of the newspaper from “British Women Under Fire” can be read as a defense of the freedom of the press and a defiance of censorship. Her photographs in London in the early 1940s, along with American *Vogue*’s wartime coverage, created an open channel of information between Britain and the U.S. By 1941, the national favor towards interventionism was at a high through the power of paper, and the Japanese military bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 solidified the United States’s entry into the war. Although Miller would leave London to become a war correspondent following the Front in 1944, she continued to draw on visual strategies of direct address and the symbolism of paper, as well as cultivating new tactics that I will address, to sustain the connection between photographer and reader.

²¹⁰ Leonidas E. Hill, “The Nazi Attack on Un-German Literature, 1933-1945,” *The Holocaust and the Book: Destruction and Preservation*. Edited by Jonathan Rose. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 33.

War Correspondence

“He doesn’t laugh very much and he doesn’t interrupt people with wise cracks, but I’ve watched him smile. It starts in the back of his neck and creeps up over his scalp until first his eyes smile, and then his mouth.”²¹¹ These were Lee Miller’s words, printed in *Vogue* in 1944 about friend and colleague, Edward Murrow. In the intervening years between “British Women Under Fire,” Miller had become officially accredited as an U.S. Forces war correspondent with the Army in 1942.²¹² Her reports from Britain, and, later, from mainland Europe, were dispersed to both British and American *Vogue*.²¹³ Unlike *Vogue*’s Pacific female correspondent, Mary Jean Kemper, Miller both wrote of her experiences and took photographs.²¹⁴ Her profile on Murrow was her first foray into journalism, and Miller struggled. “This was all a big mistake—after all, I’ve spent some fifteen or so years of my life learning how to take a picture—you know, the thing is worth ten thousand words and here I am cutting my own throat and imitating these people, writers, who I’ve been pretending are *démodé*,” she wrote.²¹⁵ Reading her essay, Miller gains her footing when writing on the body, such as in the warm intimacy within her description of Murrow’s smile creeping across his scalp.²¹⁶ She humanizes a figure that readers recognized as a

²¹¹ Lee Miller, “This is London...Ed Murrow Ready.” *Vogue* (August 1, 1944), 96-97, 126, 129.

²¹² One of Miller’s first features in her capacity as war correspondent was photographing photographers already engaged in documenting the war in Europe and the Soviet Union: Margaret Bourke-White and Therese Bonney. See Lesley Blanch, “People and Ideas: History in the Taking: Margaret Bourke-White, Therese Bonney.” *Vogue* 102, no. 1 (January 1943): 50, 51, 52, 53, 64. A variant version appeared in Britain as “At the Other End of the Lens” *British Vogue* (January 1943): 43, 70, 74. Bourke-White was the first American female correspondent accredited with the US Air Force. Several years later, Miller and Bourke-White would be covering the same sites when both were in Europe following the Allied advance. On a comparison of Bourke-White and Miller’s photographs, including a family who killed themselves in a town hall in Leipzig, Germany and of the concentration camps in Buchenwald in April 1945, see Patricia Allmer, “Revenge,” 174. Margaret Bourke-White’s photographs and experiences were detailed in her book, *Dear Fatherland, Rest Quietly*.

²¹³ Miller was publishing simultaneously in American and British *Vogue*. This chapter primarily focuses on how her articles were arranged and edited for an American audience, in much the same vein that *Bloody* was directed towards an American readership. However, I do also compare the two to bring particular arguments in relief.

²¹⁴ Other photographers that published war coverage in *Vogue* were also former and current employees of the magazine, such as Edward Steichen and Cecil Beaton.

²¹⁵ Quoted in Mark Haworth-Booth, *The Art of Lee Miller* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007), 170.

²¹⁶ Lee Miller, “This is London...Ed Murrow Ready.” *Vogue* (August 1, 1944), 96-97, 126, 129.

disembodied voice, and the two actually have an exchange on the virtues of the aural and the material. As Miller recalled in her essay:

Ed came in sort of tired. He was also a bit let-down, as his Marauder trip over Europe for the next day had been scrubbed. He unfolded himself into a chair, looked at the pictures I had taken the day before and said, ‘You’re a very lucky woman. When you finish a job you’ve got something on a piece of paper to show for it.’ Come to think of it, it must be haunting to have words and thoughts disappear as fast as you can make them.²¹⁷

On this comparison of the visual and the immaterial, Miller’s images of Murrow for the article foreground materiality. The main photograph features Murrow at a desk typing a broadcast from his London apartment (fig. 50). A striped tapestry hangs above him, echoing the lines of black and white type on the paper emerging from his typewriter. A small inset photo of Murrow features the reporter with a newspaper stretched out in his hands, and his wife, Janet, with a paper folded into her lap.

These images serve as mirror images of *Vogue* readers at home, pages open, fingers steadying the paper. The reader is not positioned as if reading the text that the Murrows read; rather, what is paramount is the picturing of touching and holding—the physicality of paper. Like the scrap of newsprint in “British Women Under Fire,” the printed newspaper is a sign of how we connect, even across distance.

By the time this profile on Murrow was published in August 1944, Miller had left London for France. Her first assignment on the Continent was covering American evacuation and field hospitals outside of Normandy, which had just witnessed an invasion of Allied soldiers on June 6.²¹⁸ In terms of her subjects, Miller, and, more broadly, the 127 women given accreditation as war correspondents, could only advance in the war as far as other women in the

²¹⁷ Ibid, 129.

²¹⁸ Miller would follow the Allied Front from that point until 1946, traveling to France, Luxembourg, Germany, Denmark, Hungary, and Romania.

armed services. They were forbidden from combat zones.²¹⁹ Therefore, dispatches from female correspondents were often circumscribed to army hospitals that employed nurses or the Women's Army Corps. Miller's prospects were limited to reports on the after-effects of the war, a belatedness that she would use to her advantage.

Miller began her first article, "U.S.A. Tent Hospital in France," situating American readers flying over a foreign country. She relayed her spatial experience above Normandy:

The sea and sky joined in a colourless watercolour wash...below, two convoys speckled the fragile smooth surface of the Channel. Cherbourg was a misty bend far to the right, and ahead, three planes were returning from dropping the bombs which made towering columns of smoke. That was the Front. Acres of scarred, red brown soil, pocked with confetti-sized rings, was the result of navy shelling. Three-cornered tears and dots and dashes were the foxholes and slit-trenches where the landing had been fought for and held. A green valley up from a wide, busy beach had been a battleground—at the top, a new cemetery was being dug for six thousand of our dead.²²⁰

Miller evokes the genre of travel writing here in *Vogue* only to defile it with scarred earth and freshly dug graves.²²¹ As her narrative moves from the air to her transport on the ground, her distorted travelogue continues: "The highways were no longer placid, tree-bordered and grass-edged. New roads had been gouged and bulldozed out, from here to there, in a few days, and the traffic—monstrous dinosaurs and endless conveyers moved swiftly—unsnarled, in both directions."²²² Several paragraphs of text transpire in which Miller details the denaturalization of the landscape—the human harnessing of the terrain for battlegrounds and for roads—before she arrives at the American Evacuation Hospital and begins her intended story.

²¹⁹ Women approximated one-fifth of the military press corps, as the U.S. War Department accredited 558 male correspondents. On female correspondents, see Lilya Wagner, *Women War Correspondents of World War II* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989) and Nancy Caldwell Sorel, *The Women Who Wrote the War* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1999).

²²⁰ Lee Miller "U.S.A. Tent Hospital in France," *Vogue* 104, no. 5 (September 15, 1944), 139.

²²¹ Miller would parody the travel narrative even further when documenting the battle at St. Malo, a seaside resort town.

²²² *Ibid*, 139.

At this point in *Vogue*'s operations, the art department was now helmed by Russian-born Alexander Liberman, who had been working at *Vogue* as art editor since 1941 and replaced Agha in 1943. Liberman had previously served as the art director for Lucien Vogel's *Vu* from 1932-1936, a weekly illustrated news magazine published in Paris. He understood the ways in which the illustrated press could shape perception and engagement.²²³ For Miller's first article, he did not choose one of Miller's landscape pictures to open the text. Instead, readers first see a full-page image of a body.²²⁴ The photograph is blurry and depicts a recumbent figure against the edge of a tent, three fourths of the upper torso, including face and hands, covered in gauze (fig. 51). Only part of the nose and upper arm betray that the figure is, indeed, made of flesh. The photograph crosses the gutter and bleeds onto the opposing page, connecting with Miller's text, and therein yoking the image of the wounded body and Miller's description of scarred earth. Her language is marked by violent descriptions – “scarred,” “pocketed,” “tears,” “gouged,” and “bulldozed.” These are lyrical descriptions of marks we cannot see on the body of the man but exist under the cottony surface of bandages. He has been badly burned, as Miller explains in the caption. The soft, white, flexible fabric covering his face reverses the dark masks worn to protect the faces of British women from burning and other bodily violence in Miller's “British Women Under Fire” photograph of 1941. Yet both directly address the viewer.

Miller details her specific bodily response in regards to her engagement with the man, a response that affected a significant visual feature of the image—its lack of sharp detail and slight

²²³ Liberman would serve as art director for the next two decades before being promoted to the editorial director of Condé Nast in 1962. Liberman will be a major feature of Chapter 3.

²²⁴ Liberman prioritized Miller's image of the burn victim on the opening page, although her description of the bleakest situations of her experience occurred at the end of her nearly 15-page article. These latter pages were cut away from the images and placed in sections in the final portion of the magazine—an established convention to keep readers moving through the body of the magazine to the concluding pages, where many of the ads resided. On the structure of editorial and advertising copy in women's magazines, see Sally Stein, “The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernization of a Middle-Class Women's Magazine, 1919-1939,” *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography*. Edited by Richard Bolton (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 145-162.

blurred effect. The caption for the image, from Miller's notation, reads: "A bad burn case asked me to take his picture, as he wanted to see how funny he looked. It was pretty grim, and I didn't focus well."²²⁵ Here, the man asked for Miller to look at him, to take his picture, to see for him. But Miller's physical response to the scene—either her shaking hand, her inability, or her unwillingness to properly sharpen the image manually—manifested itself on her film as a gauze-like haze. Annalisa Zox Weaver has written of this embodied blur as an identification with the wounded body, wherein "Miller theorizes her own body as a medium for integrating and introjecting the physiological experiences of war's victims... whose suffering may otherwise be detachedly received as *de rigueur* subject matter of wartime documentation."²²⁶

But where I situate Miller's work is not within the framework of detached documentarian, but as part of the rhetoric of the embedded war photographer. Just weeks before Miller took this picture, Hungarian-born photographer Robert Capa had been chosen as one of four photographers to accompany the military on D-Day, the invasion of Normandy, France. Documenting the infantry's advance from water to beach, Capa took 72 images from two rolls of 35 mm film for *Life* magazine. He then returned to Britain. In the rush to develop these highly anticipated negatives, pass censorship, and transport them to New York, the London studio office of *Life* accidentally melted the emulsion on Capa's film by turning the heat on high in a drying cabinet. Eleven images were printable, but blurred. *Life* published them in the June 19, 1944 issue, one with the deceptive caption: "Immense excitement of moment made Photographer Capa move his camera and blur picture" (fig. 52).²²⁷ Capa's biographer, Richard Whelan, said that the

²²⁵ This text comes from the captions to Miller's photographs and not within the article itself. It should also be noted that Miller did not develop and process her own film while in Europe, except for the images she would shoot for her essay on St. Malo, where she found a darkroom nearby. She would not have seen this image in its current form.

²²⁶ Annalisa Zox Weaver, "When the War was in *Vogue*: Lee Miller's War Reports," *Women's Studies* 32, no. 2 (March 2003), 133.

²²⁷ "Beachheads of Normandy," *Life* (June 19, 1944), 27.

material disfigurement of his film actually captured Capa's philosophy on photojournalism, which incorporated some deception and simulation of the energy of the moment. "Capa had always said anyway that to convey the excitement of fighting, you should shake your camera a little."²²⁸

Capa's movement is attributed to the adrenalin of the action of battle, whereas Miller (and Liberman) characterize her as an observing figure moved not by excitement but from the affective connection between photographer and subject.²²⁹ We can read these two deployments of the index in *Life* and *Vogue* as evidence of how looking, and interpreting, was gendered during the war. Moreover, Miller's work asks, how is war visualized? Is war indicative of the battle or is it the aftermath? As a female photographer, who only had access to hospitals and other spaces outside of the battlegrounds, Miller defines a different conceptualization of world conflict.

Miller's photograph also explicitly points to the limitations of vision or a purely visual framework for understanding her pictures. During the 1940s, philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) revised earlier constructions of knowledge as solely empirical or intellectual but as ascertained through body experience. "All knowledge takes its place within the horizons opened up by perception," wrote Merleau-Ponty.²³⁰ Miller is unable to fully articulate her reaction to the hospital patient beyond its description as grim and the causal response that she did not focus the camera well. But the blur

²²⁸ Richard Whelan, *Robert Capa: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 214.

²²⁹ It is interesting to note that Liberman would also work with Capa at *Vu*. He would leave *Vu* the same year as Capa's famed "Falling Soldier" images were published, photographs believed now to be faked, which blurred the boundary of truth and fiction in the illustrated press.

²³⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Translated by Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 2002), 241.

illuminates the emotive possibilities of horror, revulsion, and of fear encircling the verbal description of grimness that marked the film with her bodily movement.

At the same time, the blur gives tactility to the photograph that could convey a desire to touch. Touch is illusive for the burn victim; his hands are covered in gauze, limiting his sensory experience. He is a spectral, sorrowful presence that haunts the article. Where Zox-Weaver writes that Miller could be translating the subject's pain, the photograph could also convey his desire and the desire on behalf of the reader to touch. Miller's blurred photograph can be seen as part of what Laura Marks conceptualizes as "haptic visuality," a way of seeing defined by sensorial properties. Marks analyzed works of video art that maximize surface texture and tactility, which "express a longing for a multi-sensory experience that pushes beyond the audiovisual properties of the medium."²³¹ Miller's photograph, too, exhibits what Marks describes as a "desire to squeeze the sense of touch" from a visual medium.²³² The desire aches for an experience that pushes beyond the limits of vision.

The anonymity of the burned figure gives him even more resonance for the viewer. He is not given a name in the article; he is an everyman. Or, more pointedly, he could be any man. When these photographs were published in the September 15 issue of *American Vogue*, Miller received a letter from Mrs. P. L. Swafford from Madison, Wisconsin asking if one of the accompanying images in her article might be her son killed in action on July 26. Miller wrote back that it was not, but that she was "very sorry indeed as I know that pictures can mean a great deal."²³³ What Miller gestures to is that photographs contain within them an ability to fix absent bodies into their space. In touching the page of the magazine, there exists what Elspeth H. Brown

²³¹ Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 3.

²³² Marks, *Touch*, 4.

²³³ Letter dated September 27th in the Lee Miller Archives, Chiddingly, England.

and Thy Phu have described as “the sensation that the subjects pictured on the surface can somehow touch back.”²³⁴ The magazine therein becomes a material proxy for the absent body, in which “the material trace of the beloved body’s imprinted on the image is often retraced creatively and obsessively.”²³⁵ The photograph and the magazine page are physical things. Touching, and retouching—this ritualistic habit formation—can constitute presence and connection (even weakly) from absence.

Liberman’s foregrounding of the haptic exhibits the way in which the magazine grappled with how to picture and convey the very vulnerability of bodies, specifically male bodies. Miller’s images that follow in the article depict bandaged GIs, their blood soaking through the fabric meant to bind the wounds, in a farmhouse-turned-collecting station. “The wounded were not ‘Knights in Shining Armour,’” Miller wrote, “but dirty, disheveled stricken figures...uncomprehending ...” (fig. 53). Her use of ellipses signals an inability to truly verbalize the experience, and, indeed, there is no text on these two pages, save two captions. Ellipses and blurs symbolize the frustrating absences and disorienting presences that mark Miller’s first report from the Front—her first attempt to communicate both verbally and visually what she has seen.

Her visualization of the wounded male body was a relatively recent development in the illustrated press.²³⁶ The United States severely restricted the publication of wounded or deceased soldiers until September 1943. While couched in offering Americans greater access to the war, George H. Roeder, Jr. argued the move to depict the dead was also to counter complacency

²³⁴ Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu, eds. *Feeling Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 14.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

²³⁶ For a source on the changing discourse around masculinity, see Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity During WWII* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004).

brought on by recent Allied successes.²³⁷ The first uncensored photographs included those taken in Buna, New Guinea by photographer George Strock published in *Life Magazine* (fig. 54). The picture shows three deceased soldiers cast along a beach, parts of their bodies sinking into the unstable sand. The editorial facing the pictures read:

Why print this picture, anyway, of three American boys dead upon an alien shore? Is it to hurt people? To be morbid? Those are not the reasons. The reason is that words are never enough. The eye sees. The mind knows. The heart feels. But the words do not exist to make us see, or know, or feel what it is like, what actually happens. The words are never right.²³⁸

This text underscores how looking, namely through the medium of photography, instigates cognitive and emotional changes. The eye sees, the mind knows, and the heart feels. As a female photographer, Miller did not have access to these types of battlefield scenes. Yet, using her position in the field hospital, she too explored the broken body and the abject. Her photographic testimony moved beyond vision to record her own body as part of the experience through the blur.

Miller's marginal position as a female war correspondent proved generative in other feature articles she published in American *Vogue*. After leaving Normandy, Miller traveled to the seaside resort town of St. Malo in northwest France, where it had been reported that fighting between Allied and Axis forces had concluded. She had been tasked to write a report on the work of the Civil Affairs unit aiding the civilians still living in the town—another assignment that would have pulled her away from the action. The report of the battle's end, however, was erroneous. Miller arrived in the middle of the crossfire between the American 83rd Division and the German forces occupying the city citadel. Through the window of the Hotel Victoria, Miller

²³⁷ See Roeder, "Censoring Disorder: American Visual Imagery of World War II," *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch, editors. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 46-70.

²³⁸ "Three Americans," *Life Magazine* Vol. 15, No. 12 (September 20, 1943), 34. *Life* reported on the deceased soldiers in its February 22 issue, but could not publish the picture of the bodies until September.

captured the Allied forces dropping napalm on the old fort—the first usage of the chemical in battle.²³⁹ White flags soon erupted over the citadel after the chemical was deployed. Later, Miller found a darkroom nearby and decided to develop her own film—the first, and only, occasion in which she did this as a correspondent.

Miller was also the only female correspondent at the siege of St. Malo. This distinction was highlighted in the author caption that appeared in her article, “France Free Again,” published on October 15, 1944. Eleven pages of text and images were featured in *American Vogue*, delayed slightly by censors because of Miller’s capture of the secretive napalm bomb. Other details were also redacted by censors. Withers wrote to Miller: “I fear you will be disappointed to know that the division and regiment you were with at St Malo are still on the secret list and can’t be published by name. I’ve tried several times but no good. If it’s any consolation to you—the chemical warfare boys are very interested in your pix of the St. Malo bombardment—the stopped ones.”²⁴⁰

The main image of “France Free Again” in *American Vogue* captured Miller’s point of view of the Citadel bombing from inside the hotel (fig. 55). “I had brought my bed, I begged my board, and I was given a grandstand view of fortress warfare reminiscent of Crusader times,” she recalled in the published text.²⁴¹ She stood in the darkened room far enough back for the sides of the wall framing the balcony to be seen in the frame. What looks to be tattered curtains decorate the top of the windows and a metal railing cuts through the bottom of the picture. From the dark, the viewer’s eye focuses on the daylight streaming through the window and towards the explosion in the center of the composition.

²³⁹ Napalm is thickened petroleum used as an incendiary device.

²⁴⁰ Letter dated September 8, 1944. Lee Miller Archives, Chiddingly, England.

²⁴¹ Lee Miller, “France Free Again.” *Vogue* 104, no. 7 (October 15, 1944), 92.

The central component of the photograph captures the battlefield proximity, drama, and destruction normally outside of the experience of a female correspondent. And yet, Miller, did not move closer to the railing to crop out the room. Although other photographs from her contact sheets in her archives reveal she did take shots closer to the rail, here, the domestic space purposely frames the image, where the railing marks the spatial division between safety and violence, private and public, and female and male. To make my point, the art director of *British Vogue*, Alex Kroll, used a variant image of Miller's closer to the rail. In the British edition, the darkened walls and frayed curtains are removed to emphasize the explosion rather than the location (fig. 56). Only a portion of the railing remains to give the photograph some spatial context—but the railing is, too, altered. Where the railing had been parallel with the window frame in the American version, in the British picture it has been tilted at an angle.²⁴² The diagonal gives the image a more haphazard feel—a more eyewitness effect. Concentrating on the explosion as well as the presumed peril of the photographer was part of the rhetorical language of action photography. And, as I have discussed in Capa's Normandy pictures in *Life*, this language was gendered as masculine. The American *Vogue* edition does something different.

Comparing the two editions together, the featured, full-page image chosen by Alexander Liberman remarkably did not engage in the strategies of action photography and war photojournalism. In one way, Miller's photograph articulates the gendering of space and the boundary lines of what she could see as a female correspondent.²⁴³ Miller and Liberman left the framing of the room to assert her liminal position as a correspondent—to expose, spatially, her

²⁴² The reason for the stark contrast in this image is due to the reproduction of the image of the magazine; it was not part of the original look.

²⁴³ My thinking on the potentialities of reading the construction of sexual difference spatially is enriched by Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism, and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 50-90.

restrictions even as she manages to capture the shot.²⁴⁴ Simultaneously, the frame of the room might also be read as a sign of resistance to war photography as understood from the male point of view. Miller once responded to a soldier who asked why *Vogue* wanted to cover the war: “girls don't read men's papers...and we thought maybe what a women wrote and saw would be different.”²⁴⁵

Miller took aim at the universal point of view of the war as male and the ways in which newspapers, and, by extension, mass media, was already gendered male. The “papers” in her quote are “men's papers” and they exclude by whatever means—editorially, administratively, visually—women. Here my thinking is informed by Shoshana Felman, who wrote that to be a feminist reader one must first come to terms with the universal as defined as male within culture. The feminist work then is “to seek to trace within each text its own resistance to itself, its own specific literary, inadvertent textual transgression of its male assumptions and prescriptions.”²⁴⁶ Miller's war photograph resists those gendered assumptions and prescriptions of war photography. Given the opportunity to be on the front lines of war, neither she, nor Liberman, chose to replicate its conventions. Miller articulates what Griselda Pollock has written that “the art made by women may not in effect be about Woman but about that space of difference, dissidence, diversity, and rupture.”²⁴⁷ This difference is not natural but ideological, and a space that could be mined.

²⁴⁴ Miller was also drawn to liminal spaces, such as in her *Portrait of Space* from 1937.

²⁴⁵ In an undated letter from Miller to Withers, Lee Miller Archives, Chiddingly, England.

²⁴⁶ Shoshana Felman, *What Does a Woman Want?: Reading and Sexual Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 5-6.

²⁴⁷ Griselda Pollock, “Inscriptions in the Feminine,” in Catherine de Zegher, editor, *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art In, Of, and From the Feminine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 82.

Through Miller's experiences in the late summer and fall of 1944, *Vogue* is defining visually what it means to be a female journalist embedded in the war.²⁴⁸ The tactic that emerges is to tap into the language of the body and the spaces of difference. In her first two published articles as a war correspondent on the European continent, *Vogue's* central image for the text either depicts Miller's bodily movement, as in the burn victim in the hospital, or her bodily position, as in the St. Malo siege through the hotel window. To be embedded in film or as a witness caught between the spaces of war gives bodily form to Miller and Murrow's conversation before she left for Normandy. As Miller recalled of Murrow's position in radio, "it must be haunting to have words and thoughts disappear as fast as you can make them."

"Millions of Witnesses"

Vogue's emphasis on embodiment gains more urgency as this moment, as photography came under attack in the press and in public opinion. We can read Liberman's tactics of prioritizing the photographer as part of the medium in the context of the fraught relationship between readers and photographs in wartime. Of course, the need for the illustrated press to verify the content from its reporters has a long history, including when the editors of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* supplied its artist-reporters during the Civil War with sketch pads stamped with the newspaper's copyright and the message "an actual sketch made on the spot."²⁴⁹ And as Jason Hill and Vanessa Schwartz observed, "the news pictures's evidentiary instability [is] a given condition; it is, as they say, not a bug but a feature."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ I am using the phrase "embedded" outside of the traditional distinction defined by the government as attaching journalists to military units that began in the Iraq War.

²⁴⁹ See Joshua Brown, *Beyond the Lines: Pictorial Reporting, Everyday Life, and the Crisis of the Gilded Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 55.

²⁵⁰ Jason E. Hill and Vanessa Schwartz, *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 5.

But editorials and cartoons in the period exhibit the extreme American public paranoia about being brought into a foreign war by European propagandists, particularly the British (which, as we have seen, the MoI did participate in). During the 1930s and 1940s, organizations even formed to educate the youth against the deceptive power of images. For instance, a group of social science scholars formed the Institute of Propaganda Analysis (IPA) in New York in 1937. The organization dedicated itself to instructing the public, including children, on how to identify propaganda. The IPA created classroom lessons plans and dispersed them to one million children in public and private schools across the country in 1941. The course work was designed for students to be “more critical-minded, more inquisitive and less likely to accept the written or spoken word as ‘gospel truth.’”²⁵¹ From a study in *The New York Times*, “Reports, statements and logs or diaries of 2,000 teachers cooperating with the institute show that the pupils are able to think more critically in such daily practices as reading newspapers or magazines, appraising radio news comment and listening to classroom or out-of-school discussion.”²⁵²

In the previous war, World War I propaganda regarding heinous crimes committed by the Germans was found to be fabricated, and this was the framework into which some Americans saw reports of German atrocities during the Second World War. As *Life* magazine wrote when the concentration camps were liberated by American soldiers, “since the Nazis seized power, Americans have heard charges of German brutality. Made skeptical by World War I ‘atrocious propaganda,’ many people refused to put much faith in stories about the inhuman Nazi treatment of prisoners.”²⁵³ And, as we have seen with Capa, *Life* stretched the truth.

²⁵¹ Benjamin Fine, “Propaganda Study Instills Skepticism in 1,000,000 Pupils,” *The New York Times* (February 21, 1941), 1.

²⁵² Benjamin Fine, “Propaganda Study,” 2.

²⁵³ *Life* 18, no. 19 (May 7, 1945). 33.

While Americans were skeptical of news from the Homefront and abroad, they were also conscious of the Third Reich's propaganda machine. In a *New York Times Magazine* article from June 22, 1941, the headline exclaims, "The Art of Propaganda—By Adolph Hitler." Illustrated under the headline was an image of the dictator speaking at a podium, and behind him, in gothic letterforms, ran the German text from a page from his *Mein Kampf* (fig. 57). The type arranged in rows functions as a sign of endlessly reproducible German print media and the damage of its proliferation.²⁵⁴ By Hitler's own words featured in the caption, "By propaganda even heaven can be palmed off on a people as hell and the most wretched life as Paradise."²⁵⁵ I bring up these various coverages of propaganda to describe a culture in which the news was suspect, destabilized by the government global propaganda, whether from Britain or Germany.

Many Americans, and the American mainstream press, were skeptical of news specifically about the depths of hell in Germany and its targeting of Jewish people, as the above *Life* magazine quote addresses. As Deborah Lipstadt discovered, the major daily newspapers in the United States judged the information gathered about Germany's concentrated annihilation of the Jewish people as exaggerated. The press then undermined the information it received by placing coverage of the concentration camps in the interior pages of the papers and letting atrocity stories fizzle after publication rather than articulating a larger, calculated pattern of genocide.²⁵⁶ Reciprocally, portions of the American public disbelieved reports when they were made public. A mixture of dubious reporting regarding atrocities committed by the Germans

²⁵⁴ While a visual sign for German culture, the Nazis had actually banned gothic script in January of 1941 as a letterform associated with Jewish identity and publishing. Christopher Burke has explained that the Jewish association was naturally only a pretext; the Nazis foresaw the need to incorporate a more legible and comprehensive roman typeface in a new world order. See his chapter "Typography in a Dictatorship 1933-1945" in his text, *Paul Renner: The Art of Typography*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998, particularly pages 165-67.

²⁵⁵ "The Art of Propaganda – By Adolph Hitler," *The New York Times Magazine*, June 22, 1941, 3.

²⁵⁶ Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust 1933-1945* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).

during World War I, acknowledgement of current wartime propaganda committed by both sides, and a psychological resistance to the validity of reports on Nazi atrocities aggregated to such an extent to create a skeptical American public.²⁵⁷ One reader wrote to *The New York Times* in 1942:

When speaking of my ten months' experience in Nazi-occupied Poland I often hear from my American listeners the exclamation: 'Then it's true what we are reading about German atrocities—and I thought it was all just propaganda!'... To me it is obvious that this fear of propaganda has been purposely created by the only successful propaganda to which the good-natured and unprejudiced American public has been subjected for a long-time—that of German agents.²⁵⁸

This sort of double bind of American propaganda about German atrocities planted by Germans created a culture in which all press was subject to suspicion.

It is in this culture where print was destabilized in which Miller was working. In fact, preceding Miller's *USA Tent Hospital* essay in August 1944, the magazine printed a "People are Talking About" column of current pop culture and contemporary topics, which included a nod to the "New Skeptics, an extremist cult devoted to believing nothing that appears in the newspapers, thereby getting their information by osmosis from dust motes."²⁵⁹ Miller's position stationed in Europe gave her access to hear, and later, to see, the evidence first-hand.

Vogue was among the publications that did report on atrocities committed by the Nazis on the Jewish people, in part through Miller's reporting. These stories gained visibility originally from fashion assignments Miller was tasked to provide. She took the platform meant to convey trends in clothing and transformed it into a space of conscious raising. After finalizing her articles in Normandy and St. Malo, Miller traveled to Paris, which was liberated on August 25,

²⁵⁷ On war propaganda, see David Welch, "Atrocity Photography," in Nicholas John Cull, David Holbrook Culbert, and David Welch, *Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2003).

²⁵⁸ Maria Zawadzka, "Letter to the Editor," Dated Dec. 5, 1942 in New York and published in *The New York Times* December 10, 1942.

²⁵⁹ *Vogue* 104, no. 5 (September 15, 1944).

1944. Miller's pictures and texts about the liberation of Paris and Parisian fashion were published in the fall and winter of 1944 in American *Vogue*. What she found were stories of transgression during Paris's years of occupation. Despite clothing restrictions imposed by the German government, French women found a way to wear full skirts and dresses. "If three meters of material were specified for a dress, the French found fifteen for a skirt alone...saving material and labour meant help to the Germans...it was patriotic to waste instead of to save," she wrote.²⁶⁰ Liberman included her pictures of the French excesses of fashion in "Paris: Sidelights on what Paris Reads, Wears, Does," published in December 1944. Although a simple silhouette, the model in Miller's main image wears a Balenciaga grey wool coat with three enormous wool pockets across the front (fig. 58). In a smaller photo to the right, Miller pictured German actress Marlene Dietrich in an evening dress by Paris-based designer Elsa Schiaparelli with layers of gathered folds and printed with images of the British lion.

While Dietrich posed in a studio, Miller captured the Balenciaga model outdoors beside a news-kiosk gripping a newspaper. Like in her other published pictures, Miller features her subject touching print and close to news headlines as a way in which to gesture to the circuit created between the reader and her subject across distance. (The man behind the model looking at Miller, and, in turn, the reader, also establishes a direct connection through sight.) The Balenciaga model's physical proximity to the news kiosk is significant because it affects how the article's content—both text and image—interact. The graphic newspaper headlines beside her on

²⁶⁰ Lee Miller Paris, "Liberation of Paris." *Vogue* (American), October 15, 1944, 96-97.

This flouting of fabric restrictions irritated the British, who saw the availability of fabric as possible colluding with the Germans. In a letter dated October 4, 1944 from Withers to Miller, Withers explained: "It occurred to me (as I cabled you yesterday) that the Paris designers might not be fully aware of the American and British dress restrictions...In England there is great agitation—brought to a boiling point, as you may imagine, by the sight of Paris clothes...we are publishing an Eye View in November devoted to the theme that it is unfair and unwise to leave the British designers at such a disadvantage in relation to their potential competitors in Paris and New York...The fashion houses in the various countries shall be on the same basis as regards restrictions..." Lee Miller Archives, Chiddingfold, England.

display draws the eye: *Nouvelle Jeunesse*, *Le Peuple*, *Action*, *La Marseillaise*, *Les Lettres Francaises*. The article text details that these papers had come out of the French underground press—now made official, visible, and material again on Paris newsstands. As the French underground press operated as an alternate site of knowledge and resistance, channeled to the model, who holds the paper in her hands, so American *Vogue* uses its platform to share a shocking declaration to its readers. Through the account of its unnamed “Paris correspondent,” the text of the article recounts a story of the correspondent’s friends, who happen to be Jewish and wore the star of David. As the author details:

Always, they wore their star sewed on the left breast pocket, all six points stitched down so securely that an SS man would be unable to poke a pencil between the stitches. When a star-wearer would try to take a short cut across the Champs Elysees (which was forbidden to Jews), they would hold an umbrella or handbag over the star. The Gestapo and SS, on the pretext of looking for the star, often seized anything that was held in front of one’s chest. If the person were a Jew, he or she went straight to Drancy...end of story...because from there he went to an extermination camp and was probably included in the lists of people burned alive with petrol, of the starved, of the gas chamber victims.²⁶¹

The author details here the marginalization, fear-mongering, and danger that existed for Jewish people living in Paris, as well as the very real threat of murder. It is unclear who wrote the text, as the author does not have a byline. As Miller took the photographs, the text could have been from her hand. Moreover, in a memo dated September 28, 1944, two months before this article was published, Audrey Withers wrote to Edna Woolman Chase, “I have told Lee I think the article on French children interesting, also something on her Jewish story, but not the torture chambers.”²⁶² Could this have been Lee’s story? And when and how was it decided to print on the torture chambers? In spite of Withers’s protestations on torture, this story ran. And so did a

²⁶¹ “Paris: Sidelights on What Paris Reads, Wears, Does,” *Vogue* (December 1, 1944), 94-95, 140.

²⁶² Edna Woolman Chase Archives, Condé Nast, New York, New York.

subversion of the ways in which fashion magazines work. In another excerpt from the article, the author writes on the materiality of the yellow star:

Incidentally, the star is six pointed, made of yellow satinette, overprinted in black ink, It had to be worn at all times, and coupons had to be given for it. If anyone wanted to change a costume, there was a good hour's work ripping it off and sewing it on again, regulation fashion. A surgeon obstetrician of the Rothschild hospital was issued a yellow celluloid star (for sanitary reasons) to wear on his surgeon's white blouse.²⁶³

The author morbidly details the transit of the yellow satinette star—saved for, attached, ripped off, and reattached to new articles of clothing—that would always mark the wear. This fashion would always marginalize its owner, signifying otherness. “What Paris Wears” is not only the excesses of fashion; Parisians also wear the yellow star, ritually ripping it off and sewing it back on. Identity is marked by the signifier of fashion, and this accessory leads one to their death.

Miller would follow the morbid thread to this site of death less than six months later when she was part of a wave of reporters from the daily press and illustrated magazines that descended on Germany after the liberation of the concentration camps in April 1945. Miller visited the Buchenwald camp at Weimar in early April and the Dachau camp near Munich on April 30, 1945, a day after its liberation by the U.S. Army. She took pictures of the gruesome scenes she encountered. The magazine struggled with the graphic images that Miller sent back. Edna Woolman Chase would later write, “We hesitated a long time and held many conferences deciding whether or not to publish them. In the end we did and it seemed right. In the world we were trying to reflect in our pages, the wealthy, the gently bred, the sophisticated were quite as dead and quite as bereft as the rest of humankind.”²⁶⁴

Miller's photographs would be an indictment of Chase's tone-deaf remark about reflecting good breeding—the core of eugenics that informed the Third Reich's ideology. *Vogue*

²⁶³ “Paris,” *Vogue*, 140.

²⁶⁴ Chase, *Always in Vogue*, 354.

published her photographs a month after she took them and placed them in the front of the contents of the June issue in a set of three sequential articles: “Germans Are Like This: I See Germany,” “Believe It,” and “Nazi Harvest.”²⁶⁵ The first Miller images readers would have encountered are two discordant pairings in “Germans Are Like This:” a group of four children walking hand-in-hand in dappled sunlight on a street next to a line of four prisoners beside a pile of white burned bones (fig. 59). In the second set of images below the first, Liberman paired Miller’s photograph of the German landscape with its crematorium and the caption “Orderly villages, patterned, quiet...orderly furnaces to burn bodies.”²⁶⁶

Turning the page, the reader then came eye to eye with these bodies. In “Believe It” (fig. 60), the larger of the two images in the layout spans the entire left page, illustrating a mound of white, skeletal limbs of starved and murdered victims that reach far back into the depths of the visual field. One man in the very center of the composition stars back at the viewer, directly addressing the reader. “This is Buchenwald Concentration Camp at Weimar,” reads the first line of text in the article, which has been set off with quotation marks to demarcate Miller’s voice. To make no mistake in the translation, *Vogue* used the marks again on the page to describe what Miller had witnessed over the past few weeks: “[Miller] cabled: ‘No question that German civilians knew what went on. Railway siding into Dachau camp runs past villas, with trains of dead and semi-dead deportees. I usually don’t take pictures of horrors. But don’t think that every town and every area isn’t rich with them. I hope *Vogue* will feel that it can publish these pictures...’”²⁶⁷ *Vogue* replied to Miller in the text with their answer, “Here they are.”

²⁶⁵ Lee Miller, “Germans Are Like This: I See Germany” *Vogue* (June 1945), 102-103; “Believe It’: Lee Miller Cables from Germany,” 104-105; “Nazi Harvest” on pages 106-107.

²⁶⁶ “Germans are Like This,” 103.

²⁶⁷ Miller, “Believe it,” 105.

Next to the anonymous pile of bodies is an image of a singular figure. His tongue bulges out from an engorged cheek, trickles of blood smeared on his shirt front. If his eyes had not been swollen shut from a presumed beating, he would have looked directly at the dead. The text below the figure describes the image as a “prisoner hanged on an iron hook, his face clubbed.”²⁶⁸ However, the caption is misleading—a slip for *Vogue*, which took great care to translate testimony. The prisoner is, in fact, a German guard who had dressed in civilian clothes during the liberation to avoid capture. Miller referenced guards like this in the third article of the series, “Nazi Harvest,” where her picture of two S.S. guards situates the former masters as prisoners on their knees in civilian clothes (fig. 61). Their faces, too, are swollen in the lips, cheeks, and jaw. Blood trickles down the chin. The caption relays they have been beaten by their former captors, giving context to the previous image of the prisoner hanged on a hook. In “Nazi Harvest,” the former guards look directly into the eyes of *Vogue* readers. In “Believe It,” the guard-turned-prisoner looks away towards the murdered subjects; he is made an eternal witness to his crime.

These images, then, as now, are incredibly disturbing, and have been frequently discussed in Miller scholarship.²⁶⁹ Where I want to draw attention is to the frame surrounding each image in “Believe it”—those black and white horizontal and vertical bands—that are a detail, to my knowledge, that has been left out of the secondary literature. On the right side of the image of the concentration camp victims are faint letters, of which the word “vogue” is barely legible. It is as if these images were a part of a unit, a longer piece of film, on which notations were made, but

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 105.

²⁶⁹ See, for example, Zox-Weaver, “When the War was in *Vogue*,” 131-163; Sharon Sliwinski, “Visual Testimony: Lee Miller’s Dachau,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 9: 3 (2010): 389-408 and her chapter “Rolleiflex Witness” in *Human Rights in Camera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Laurie Monahan, “Waste Management: Hitler’s Bath tub,” *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, 5:1-2 (2011), 98-119; Carol Zemel, “Emblems of Atrocity: Holocaust Liberation Photographs,” *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*. Edited by S. Horstein & F. Jacobowitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, 201-219); and Lorraine Sim, “A different war landscape: Lee Miller’s war photography and the ethics of seeing,” *Modernist Cultures* Vol. 4 (2009): 46-66.

then the image was cut away. This evidence, as it were, was then enclosed in a thicker black frame and fixed onto the page, as on display, as if a fragment of testimony.

It appears that *Vogue* tried to replicate the effect of Miller's contact sheet made from her roll film from the 35-mm Leica or Rolleiflex that she carried.²⁷⁰ A contact sheet is a positive print on paper made by exposing rows of film negatives. Its name—contact—refers to placing the film negatives on a sheet of paper, wherein exposing the paper to light, each positive print image corresponds to the size of the original negative. This process is used so that a photographer or art director can see the total visual record captured on film and then decide which frame to print. The proportion of the black bands around the image in *Vogue* are similar to Miller's actual contact sheet from Buchenwald in her archives (fig. 62 and 63).²⁷¹ Like using quotation marks around her words in the layout, the reproduction of these contact sheets was a visual strategy to reiterate what Miller saw and wanted us to see. With the frame as a visual quotation, *Vogue* communicated to its readers that these were the images Miller glimpsed from her viewfinder—they were not cropped, they were not retouched, they were not manipulated at the hands of an editor. The contact sheet effect of the layout emphasizes the evidentiary function of the photograph.

This visual strategy was directed only towards an American audience. As a comparison, British *Vogue*, who also published Miller's pictures from Buchenwald and Dachau, did not highlight the image of the murdered bodies in a full-page image like its American counterpart. British *Vogue* featured a variant image in small size along with seven other images (fig. 64). The

²⁷⁰ Her Rolleiflex camera only contained 12 shots, so she supplemented with her 35-mm Leica camera.

²⁷¹ Miller's text in "Germans are Like This" also contains a black border around its four images and spacing between each of the two pairs of photographs that is in the same relationship to sequential frames in a contact sheet. However, the effect there is more like a decorative element than it is in "Believe It." "Believe It" contains notations that would have been written or printed on an actual contact sheet. My thanks to Jared Ragland of the University of Alabama at Birmingham for his insights into the visual forms of these pictures.

largest of the images in the British version are not of bodies, but of ruined architecture. Some scholars have postulated that American *Vogue* published Miller's horrific images to urge women to continue to support the war as it waged in the Pacific, wherein British women needed relief from six years of violence.²⁷² Indeed, the copy in the American Table of Contents makes plain that the war marches on, money still needed to be raised through war bonds, and any sense of an end was tenuous: "The ten million Americans with dog tags under their shirts haven't stopped. They still grasp their bayonets...and there are no flowers twined on them, yet, in the Pacific."²⁷³

But in reading Miller's texts in the British edition, the magazine indeed details the depravity of torture, the six hundred stacked bodies outside of a crematorium that had run out of coal, and even half-buried, putrefied flesh Miller slipped in while taking a photograph. British readers were certainly not spared gruesome recountings in favor of celebration.²⁷⁴ The visual record does differ between British and American *Vogue*, and this difference, I believe, reveals how Liberman sought to frame Miller's image as a direct address to readers—that is, to have readers feel as if they too had witnessed with their own eyes in the same space these atrocities. As Barbie Zelizer suggests, atrocity witnessing requires that the reader "assume responsibility" for what they have seen.²⁷⁵ To passively disengage is in itself a form of complicity.

The distance from battlegrounds gave Americans protection from some of the fear, danger, and violence of the war—different conditions from the experiences of the British, which British *Vogue* editors and Miller frequently refer to in their letters and layouts for their American counterparts in the first half of the 1940s. Miller's images work to collapse this distance, to

²⁷² See, for example, Laurie Monahan, "Waste Management: Hitler's Bathtub," *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, 5:1–2 (2011), 98–119.

²⁷³ *Vogue* (June 1945), 102a.

²⁷⁴ Lee Miller, "Germany—The War that is Won," *British Vogue* (June 1945): 40–42; 84, 86, 89.

²⁷⁵ Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 10.

confront, as she did, what was done, and what can never happen again. Within the civil contract of photography between photographed and spectator, “the point of departure for our mutual relations cannot be empathy or mercy,” writes Azoulay. “It must be a covenant for the rehabilitation of [the photographed person’s] citizenship,” which, in the context of the Holocaust, has been ripped away by the German state.²⁷⁶

Viewing within the civil contract asks us to restore citizenship, not simply to feel, turn away, and stop looking. Miller’s photographs certainly instigate feeling, whether it may be nausea, shock, sadness, anger, or revulsion. American soldiers who liberated the camps were said to have wept and vomited upon looking.²⁷⁷ Miller’s photographs invite bodily sensations, and, indeed, as I have argued, such is part of their intense charge, but the images, too, continue to seek out our sight, like the dead figure in “Believe It,” who engages his eyes with ours. Miller takes particular aim at those that were complicit and looked away. “[The Germans] were repugnant in their servility, amiability, hypocrisy,” she wrote.²⁷⁸ What drew her rancor most was their denial of having seen, having known, and thus not resisting the State. As Miller recalled, the individuals she met “hid very neatly behind the excuse that we invented for the Germans: that Dr. Goebbels has kept them from knowing the real state of their nation.”²⁷⁹ Rather, Miller found, “There need be no committee to investigate atrocities after this war. There are millions of witnesses.”²⁸⁰

The violent impact of Miller’s German camp images on Miller herself was perhaps not fully realized until after the war, when anger faded and memory formed around them. Pam

²⁷⁶ Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 17.

²⁷⁷ Sharon Sliwinski, *Visual Testimony*, 395.

²⁷⁸ Miller, “Germans Are Like This: I See Germany.” June 1945, 193.

²⁷⁹ Miller, “Germans Are Like This,” 193.

²⁸⁰ Miller, “Germans Are Like This,” 102j.

Gosling Makin, who filed negatives and printed the contact sheets at the *Vogue* studio in London, recalled a meeting with Miller around 1946:

I spent an afternoon with her, she was in an emotional state...She had her old canvas bag with her, and insisted on checking all the negatives of various German Prison camps, plus other events. She grabbed my special scissors and started slicing down the reels - and I had to take them away from her in the end, pointing out they were *Vogue's Copy Right*.²⁸¹

Where the ephemerality of radio had haunted Miller in her first article as a photojournalist, here, the very materiality of film haunted her from one of her last articles before the Second World War came to a close. Outside of the material space of the magazine, Miller's photographs were no longer testimonial images to address, convince, persuade, shock, or simply show a public. These negatives were traumatic records embedded with memory of a physical experience, ones that cannot be unseen. Taking up scissors, Miller tried to sever a contract she had forged. But through the proliferation of the magazine, in archival and now digital form, the contract within her pictures endures.

²⁸¹ Email to the author on March 4, 2014. I speculate whether these destroyed images could be the ones taken by Miller inside a train near the concentration camp at Dachau, where Miller visited after Buchenwald. Sharon Sliwinski has researched these particular images and lamented that after finding an image Miller took inside the car of one of the "death trains" filled with corpses destined for Dachau, the pictorial story ends: "Vexingly, the next five photographs that Miller took are missing from the archive. It is not clear whether these pictures, sent by military airmail to *Vogue's* British offices, were deliberately censored by the government or whether they were simply lost in the intervening years. But after entering the train and exposing a single frame, there is a cut in the pictorial record, a blind spot in the visual field." See Sliwinski, "Visual Testimony," 401.

Chapter 3
Vogue's Gothic Body:
Erwin Blumenfeld, Alexander Liberman, and the Aesthetics of Noir

On the July 1, 1945 cover of *Vogue* magazine, readers looked through a peculiar lens (fig. 65). Rather than a clear view of the cover model, readers peered through what appeared to be a broken window, with the window's frame--a thick metal bar--reaching across the middle of the page and cutting the female figure in two. She is further obfuscated from the viewer by the fissures fanning the top and bottom portions of the window, as well as by the glass's most curious feature: a series of painted geometric shapes, structures, and silhouettes in the bottom half of the frame.

Vogue readers were not looking through any broken window, but a specific one: Marcel Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915-23), otherwise known as *The Large Glass*. The sculpture had been on loan to the Museum of Modern Art, the subject of the magazine's July issue.²⁸² *Vogue* enlisted the museum as its studio location for its summer fashion features, while also giving readers its take on the foremost modernist institution. The magazine's editors proclaimed in its "Eye-View" column: "*Vogue's* eye-view of the Museum of Modern Art is through Marcel Duchamp's famed 'Window'...regarded as the ideal marriage of painting and sculpture."²⁸³ The magazine described the work as "shattered glass--'the Accidental' arrested

²⁸² Included within the magazine's pages were articles devoted to the museum's institutional history (originally galvanized by women); an illustrated guide to its layout; its alfresco dining experience; and its collection and collecting practices, from a long exegesis on the French Modernists as the cornerstone of the collection to new additions in film and photography. See *Vogue* 106.1 (July 1, 1945).

²⁸³ "*Vogue's* Eye View" is a regular column in the magazine featuring the editor's read on current events and culture. Art director Alexander Liberman, who most likely chose this particular Blumenfeld image for the cover, understood the punning on the words Eye View.

for permanent beauty,” which romanticizes the chance mishap that originally shattered Duchamp’s sculpture.²⁸⁴

Ostensibly, this photograph by German émigré Erwin Blumenfeld (1897-1966) of Duchamp’s window demonstrates the formal confluence of fashion and art. The shirring on the model’s bodice rhymes with Duchamp’s fissured pane, and the gold belt cinching the waist of her powder blue dress mimics the dividing metal bar between Duchamp’s upper and lower registers of glass. Other photographs in the issue by photographers Kay Bell and John Rawlings similarly pair design and object for aesthetic comparison: for example, the recesses within the molded fabric of a Hattie Carnegie Breton hat harmonize with the dark cavities of Georges Vantongerloo’s “Construction within a Sphere” in the Bell photograph (fig. 66). In an image by Rawlings, the softness of a cocooning Valentina sealskin coat smooths the edges of Frank Lloyd Wright’s precise cantilevered ledges of “Falling Water” (shown as a photograph) (fig. 67).²⁸⁵ But by layering one artist over another, and of interjecting a fractured window over the body, Blumenfeld, and the editors of *Vogue*, invoke a more generative reading than these formal analogies or the fashion copy implies.

Most strikingly, Duchamp’s window interrupts the reader looking. This problematization of sight on the cover of *Vogue* appears just weeks after Lee Miller’s concentration camp photographs were published in the magazine’s June issue, and discussed in chapter 2. Her photograph of murdered bodies appeared across a full page under the headline “Believe it,” demanding readers to look—and to bear witness to—the horrific visual evidence it published. What, then, can we say about the process of looking in the aftermath of these pictures? How did

²⁸⁴ In 1923, Duchamp left the sculpture “definitely unfinished.” It would later shatter in transit after an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in 1926, and Duchamp spent a decade repairing the fragments. He ultimately left the sculpture broken. On the caption, see *Vogue* 106.1 (July 1, 1945): 55.

²⁸⁵ The exhibition for which these works were part, *Tomorrow’s Small House: Models and Plans*, was on view at the museum from May 29-September 30, 1945. These photographs, then, were most likely taken in May 1945.

studio photography on the Homefront respond to the war? While *Vogue* continued to publish on fashion, beauty, and culture after Miller's intervention, here Blumenfeld captured both a desire to look—to continue to be a voyeur and reap its inherent pleasure as part of traditional magazine culture—as well as a disavowal of looking at and picturing the normalized body.

This chapter investigates the ways *Vogue* sought to trouble vision and the body through the photographs by Blumenfeld. He defined the somber and strange visual language of wartime *Vogue* fashion photography. From his arrival at the American outpost of the magazine in 1944 to the end of the war in 1945, Blumenfeld photographed nearly half of the magazine's covers.²⁸⁶ Alexander Liberman, himself an émigré from the Soviet Union, allowed Blumenfeld's point-of-view to read as shorthand for the larger brand.²⁸⁷ The cover can be seen as the collaborative product of the photographer and art director, making the definite statement, as well as setting the tone, for the issue.

In this chapter, I shall address four of Blumenfeld's covers and the ways in which he built up the surface of his images through layers of glass and other textural mediations. As a fashion photographer, Blumenfeld would film his subjects with a large format camera through materials such as glass, mirrors, screens, cellophane, and fabric.²⁸⁸ He also experimented in the darkroom, throwing graphic shadows across faces, overlapping negatives together in the enlarger, freezing the film while wet, or twisting it to attain inventive effects.²⁸⁹ Blumenfeld's images are

²⁸⁶ Blumenfeld's first American *Vogue* cover was August 15, 1944. In 1945, he shot 8 of the 22 covers that year.

²⁸⁷ Liberman's biography synced in many ways with Blumenfeld's own: both were of Jewish heritage; both arrived in the U.S. in 1941 after living as ex-pats in Paris and fleeing the war; and both worked for Parisian magazines in the 1930s (Liberman at *Vu* from 1932-1936 and Blumenfeld at *Paris Vogue* in 1938-1939) before working in American cultural production. In the States, Liberman became part of the *Vogue* art department in 1941 and art director in 1943, and Blumenfeld joined the *Vogue* photography staff in 1944.

²⁸⁸ According to *Life* magazine, Blumenfeld used a Linhof 9 x 12 large format camera. See "The Tops," *Life* 7, no: 1 (July 3, 1939): 6.

²⁸⁹ Blumenfeld liked to process his own black and white photographs in the darkroom, enabling his own experiments outside of the art department. His color photographs, however, were processed by specialized labs. See Michel Metayer, *Erwin Blumenfeld* (London: Phaidon, 2004), unpaginated.

acclaimed, then and now, for this inventiveness, and *Vogue* lauded him in its pages in 1947 as an “iconoclast and an inveterate experimenter.”²⁹⁰ Rather than focus on Blumenfeld as an innovator, however, I am interested in how his process created images that disfigured the female body. I argue Blumenfeld used his photographic process of layering to make visible the social and psychological changes women were experiencing during the war. Within the magazine’s internal text, *Vogue*’ editors featured articles about women’s new roles in the wartime economy, often discussing them in terms of a disjuncture—a split self. Moreover, *Vogue*’s pages became a platform to work out many of the fears and anxieties women felt with lovers and loved ones abroad. Blumenfeld’s cover models became a screen to project these feelings and tensions with the advent of new identities and experiences.

And yet Blumenfeld’s photographs not only pictured the tension of the lived experience of a war. By looking at his photographs, the viewer would be arrested in the process of seeing, and experience, too, changes in vision. I argue his aesthetic of making the body strange, and having his readers experience shifts in perception, form a part of a Gothic tradition. Originally an 18th century literary genre, the Gothic often reemerges in different eras in textual and visual form as a way in which to work out the fears and anxieties of social transformation. Its tactics are extreme—disguises, excess, and horror— that provide a framework for contextualizing and interpreting Blumenfeld’s images. Moreover, Blumenfeld’s practice intersects with other dark cultural forms in this period—not only of graphic images of the war from newspapers—but the ways in which American culture began to aestheticize violence, such as in Film Noir. I situate Blumenfeld’s fashion magazine images in this cultural climate, which mined the psychological

²⁹⁰ “People and Ideas: Compositions Around Four American Beauties: Mrs. Cushing Mortimer,” *Vogue* 109.3 (Feb 1, 1947): 163.

subject and critiqued notions of the ideal body, but also created works that evoked sensations that could be horrifying as they could be pleasurable—a hallmark of the Gothic.

Towards A Gothic Framework

Although Blumenfeld is relatively unknown today in photographic discourse in comparison to his fashion magazine contemporaries, such as Cecil Beaton or Irving Penn, he was one of the highest paid photographers in American fashion by the mid-20th century.²⁹¹ This milestone is particularly extraordinary considering Blumenfeld did not arrive in the U.S. until 1941, after he and his family fled French internment camps. That war, and the one before, would have a profound bearing on his personal artistic practice, forging visual strategies that would come into play in his fashion work.

Born in Berlin, Blumenfeld had been conscripted to the First World War in 1916 at age 19 and later appointed as an ambulance driver on the Front. His brother, Heinz, was killed in action in France near Verdun. Blumenfeld's reflections on this experience were tragicomic anecdotes of surreal absurdity and bitterness, predominately towards the ineptitudes and ideology of the German state.²⁹² In his grief and disillusionment with his country's engagement in the war, Blumenfeld turned to collage as a form of creative expression and political dissidence. Much like the Dadaists he had met in Berlin, including George Grosz and John Heartfield, Blumenfeld cut

²⁹¹ Blumenfeld shot hundreds of covers and photographs not only *Vogue*, but *Harper's Bazaar*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Life*, and the *Picture Post*. He fell out of photographic discourse after ending his career at *Vogue* in 1955 to focus on advertising work. On Blumenfeld scholarship, see William Ewing, *Erwin Blumenfeld 1897-1969: A Fetish for Beauty*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996); Yorick Blumenfeld, *The Naked and the Veiled: The Photographic Nudes of Erwin Blumenfeld* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999); Michel Metayer, *Erwin Blumenfeld* (London: Phaidon, 2004); and Helen Adkins, *Erwin Blumenfeld: I Was Nothing But a Berliner. Dada Montages 1916-1933* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008). Blumenfeld's profile has soared recently with exhibitions in 2013 at the Jeu de Palme in Paris and the Somerset House in London. Both featured new catalogues, including Ute Eskildsen, *Erwin Blumenfeld: Photographs, Drawing, Photomontages* (Paris: Editions Hazan, 2014) and Nadia Blumenfeld Charbit, *Erwin Blumenfeld: Blumenfeld Studio, Color, New York 1941 – 1960* (Gottingen: Steidl, 2013).

²⁹² See Erwin Blumenfeld, *Eye to I: The Autobiography of a Photographer* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999).

and pasted from photographs, magazines, advertisements, postcards, and other ephemera, skewering German political figures and icons of German heritage. In *Humans with Brains* (1921) (fig. 68), Blumenfeld attached the upper half of a German officer, who is decorated with the Iron Cross and cradling a dog, with the crossed legs of a woman, her underskirt a rainbow of ruffles across her thighs. Another female figure with a torqued nude body and a skull for a head blasts the German officer with a triangular trumpet of Hebrew text, perhaps a grim reaction to the anti-Semitism Blumenfeld often felt while living in Germany.

Rancorously critical of the German Iron Cross, Blumenfeld recalled that he also received the award for giving French lessons to his supervisor. He would write, “To my shame I thought that the black and white ribbon that nearly every soldier sported jauntily in his buttonhole was a desirable fashion accessory. If you are going to despise a cross, you have to get one first.”²⁹³ His retaliation against the hyper-masculinity of the German state, and its qualities of bravery, honor and loyalty, was to feminize it within the workings of the collage and describing it as a mere accessory of fashion.

Blumenfeld circulated these collages privately to friends and his girlfriend Lena Citroen, whom Blumenfeld had met through his longtime friend and artist Paul Citroen.²⁹⁴ After the war, Blumenfeld moved to Amsterdam and there, along with Paul Citroen, Blumenfeld inaugurated the Dutch outpost of the Dadaists. In a collage sent on April 3, 1921 to Tristan Tzara, one of the founders of the movement in Zurich, Blumenfeld proclaims himself President of Holland Dada (fig. 69). The work was solicited by Tzara as part of *Dadaglobe*, a massive (and ultimately) unfinished project to create an anthology of Dada practices around the world. According to

²⁹³ Blumenfeld, *Eye to I*, 177. He also recalled his dubious experience of being awarded the cross in a story titled “How I won the Iron Cross” published in *Lilliput* 5, no. 6 (December 1939).

²⁹⁴ Though Dutch, the Citroen family was living in Berlin, where Paul Citroen and Erwin were classmates in 1903 and maintained a lifelong friendship.

Tzara's specifications, the work was to be a self-portrait.²⁹⁵ A photograph of Blumenfeld's face tops a nude female body draped in a transparent veil. He wears a turban with an opening at the crown that erupts in dark waves. His hands coquettishly frame his chin in a triangulated V-shape. This V points to his neck, where a tie hangs, further leading the eye to a cut-out of an abstracted female torso and thighs, on which the words stand out: BLOOMFIELD PRESIDENT DADA CHARLOTIN. Written on the female genitalia, his punning on charlotin/charlatan poke fun at his presumptions of presidential authority. His own masculinity, aside from the German state, could also be skewered.

Above the female torso, Blumenfeld wrote similar proclamations—BLOOMFIELD PRESIDENT – DADA – CHAPLINIST, pledging his allegiance to Charlie Chaplin, the British-born actor who achieved international fame for his silent Hollywood movies. Blumenfeld idolized Chaplin, the indomitable tramp with his expressive pantomime and constructed persona.²⁹⁶ As the tramp became Chaplin's alter ego, so Blumenfeld fashioned his own Dada pseudonym, "Bloomfield," which he included four times in the collage. Anglicizing his name could have had many reasons, including severing connections from his German roots in a manner similar to friend John Heartfield's name change from Helmut Herzfeld, or, his own unconscious distancing from his Jewish ethnicity, as Blumenfeld would later theorize.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ Fifty artists in ten countries were asked to send artworks according to Tzara's specifications, including a photographic self-portrait. The exhibition, *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*, was on view at The Museum of Modern Art from June 12-September 18, 2016 and included this collage.

²⁹⁶ Blumenfeld (though credited as Bloomfield) is mentioned in an article advocating for Chaplin films in Germany in the Dada magazine edited by Raoul Haussmann, John Heartfield, and George Grosz, *Der Dada* no. 3 (April 1920), 4. Blumenfeld created other collages including Chaplin and hung a photograph of the actor from the cover of French *Vu* in his living room in Zandvoort, Holland. The photo appeared on the April 1, 1931 issue. Alexander Liberman would join *Vu* the following year at the end of 1932.

²⁹⁷ Helen Adkins notes that Blumenfeld would use this pseudonym Erwine Bloomfield or Jan Bloomfield from 1921 to 1933. On Blumenfeld's later reflection that Bloomfield was "unconscious German anti-Semitism," see Helen Adkins in *Nothing but a Berliner*, 61.

Littered with puns and pseudonyms, Blumenfeld additionally exhibits his formal play with language, wherein his name and address—Bloomfield Holland—is split along the O's and L's of the two words (BLO OMFIELD HOL LAND) to form a vertical stack of circles. Language, like identity, is malleable in Dada. These magazine scraps, postcards, and other pieces of mass media were the conduits of Blumenfeld's performances of gender. By cutting and reworking these bits of paper representations, Blumenfeld deconstructed the formal and material qualities of an emergent photographically-based illustrated press.²⁹⁸

The wittiness and iconoclastic spirit of his collages is also manifest in the autobiography Blumenfeld began in 1955, the year he left *Vogue*, and continued until his untimely death in 1969.²⁹⁹ Published under various titles, but known in English mostly as *Eye to I*, his autobiography unfolds as a coming of age story.³⁰⁰ Michel Metayer described the text as “primarily a novel about freeing oneself from all confinements: those of society, rules, indoctrination and, as ultimately happened to Blumenfeld, the concentration camp. It is a novel not of ‘education’ but of ‘dis-education.’”³⁰¹ The text—bawdy, irreverent, cynical, crude, and urbane all at once—overflows with references to masturbation and fellatio to German and French literature, critical commentary on religion and of class structure, and lewd puns and songs (some, perhaps, of his own making). Stringent, poignant, and outlandishly unreliable, the reader is left to

²⁹⁸ In this way, Blumenfeld's work recalls fellow Berliner Hannah Höch. For an excellent source on Höch's collages and the ways in which her work intersected with gender debates of the period, see Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

²⁹⁹ Blumenfeld died of a self-induced heart attack in Italy in 1969. His son Yorick explained that Blumenfeld believed he was dying of prostate cancer and ended his life on his own terms; he purposefully did not take his heart medication and ran up and down the Spanish steps to prompt a heart attack. For this explanation, see Tamsin Blanchard, “The Extraordinary Story of Erwin Blumenfeld,” *The London Telegraph*, 18 May 2013.

³⁰⁰ The autobiography was first published in French as *Jadis et Daguerre* by publisher Robert Laffont in 1975 and later *Einbildungsroman* in German by publisher Eichborn in 1998. Of the term, Bildungsroman, Michel Metayer has explained, “The German-speaking audience would have understood both ‘novel of imagination’ (Einbildung) and ‘novel of education’ (Bildungsroman) in the tradition of Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*.” See Metayer, *Erwin Blumenfeld*, unpaginated. This chapter will use the English edition published as *Eye to I* by Thames and Hudson in 1999.

³⁰¹ Michel Metayer, *Erwin Blumenfeld*, unpaginated.

wonder whether his recollections actually occurred or are the product of Blumenfeld's exuberant imagination. His autobiography can also be read as an extension of his Dadaist visual practice, recalling Tristan Tzara's Dada Manifesto:

Every product of disgust capable of becoming a negation of the family is Dada; a protest with its whole being engaged in destructive action: Dada; knowledge of all the means rejected up until now by the shame faced sex of comfortable compromise and good manners: Dada...Dada, Dada Dada, a roaring of tense colours, and interlacing of opposites and of all contradictions, grotesques, inconsistencies: LIFE.³⁰²

Composed of fragments of life and song sliced and pasted into the text, his autobiography continues the contemptuous, playful, tragic, and self-deprecating spirit of the collages.

In the early 1930s, Blumenfeld began to experiment with, and later achieved commercial success in, photography.³⁰³ The tone of his work shifted when he switched media, however. His witty collages were replaced by more overtly sexual images of the body, though he continued from his Dada practice the formal process of layering and superimposing one image over the other. In *Nude Under Wet Silk*, a variant which published in *Life Magazine* in 1939, features the nude torso of a female form under a layer of moistened fabric, which clings to the skin around her lips, nipples, and abdomen (fig. 70).³⁰⁴ The majority of the face is covered, and over the pubic area are rippled striations that allude to, but do not show, pubic hair. Here, Blumenfeld

³⁰² Tristan Tzara, "Dada Manifesto 1918," *Dada*, 20. Quoted in David Batchelor, "'This Liberty and This Order': Art in France after the First World War," *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art Between the Wars*. Briony Fer, David Batchelor, Paul Wood, editors. (New Haven: Yale University Press), 30.

³⁰³ Blumenfeld opened a leather goods store and to enliven store displays, he photographed customers and hung them in his shop windows. For more on Blumenfeld's portraiture in Amsterdam, see Helen Adkins, *Erwin Blumenfeld: His Dutch Years* (The Hague: Fotomuseum Den Haag, 2006). During this period, Blumenfeld exhibited his work professionally for the first time at Amsterdam's Kunstzaal van Lier art gallery. He was also featured in a group show organized by Paul Citroen at the New Art School in 1935, which included artists such as Man Ray, Moholy Nagy, George Grosz, and Kurt Schwitters. Several of his photographs were published that year in the photography supplement of the French magazine, *Arts et Metiers Graphiques*. After moving to Paris in 1936, he found venues for his work at Galerie Billiet and published his first cover on *Votre Beauté* in February 1937, followed by photographs in *Verve* and *Arts et Metres Graphiques*. Blumenfeld also began commercial photographic work for clients such as Dop Shampoo and Pathe Marconi.

³⁰⁴ Blumenfeld had met the editors of *Life* through a letter of introduction by Lucien Vogel in 1939. *Nude Under Wet Silk* and other Blumenfeld images were published in "The Tops," *Life* 7, no: 1 (July 3, 1939): 4, 5, 6. Other images included portraits of Henri Matisse, Cecil Beaton, and a swastika made out of legs. No mention is made of the inflammatory political content of this image, only that it is fantastical.

exposes his fascination with the body eroticized by translucent covers and overlays. Through light and material, the body's raw surfaces become more heightened as a soft textural landscape. This revealing and concealing is the coy language of fashion photography. And, yet, the image also exudes a strangeness and a violence to the body; we cannot clearly see the head disguised with fabric and the left arm seems to be cut off, as if it were a broken statue.

Blumenfeld's sensual exploration of the body as published in French art magazines caught the attention of fashion photographer, Cecil Beaton. Beaton introduced Blumenfeld to the editors of French *Vogue*, where he would work on contract in 1938 and 1939.³⁰⁵ When his contract was not renewed, he quickly established connections with the magazine's competitor, *Harper's Bazaar*, to work for the American publication in Paris.³⁰⁶ But just as his career at the fashion magazine began, Germany invaded France. Blumenfeld was ordered to Montbard-Marmagne, a French internment camp, as a German foreigner. He would be shuffled to other internment camps over the next year, including Le Vernet and Catus. While prisoners set up in camps managed by the Vichy government were not murdered by poison gas, many of the occupants died from disease and starvation.³⁰⁷ Blumenfeld's descriptions of Le Vernet detailed the visual claustrophobic enclosure and aromatics of horrid decay: "Behind tangled thickets of barbed wire, with electrified fences and trenches stood wretched, windowless shacks, overcrowded with rotting corpses on shit-colored mud with sharp stones. Everything stank of diarrhea."³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ One of Blumenfeld's major projects was the portfolio dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the Eiffel Tower for *Vogue* in 1939. In one famous image, model Lisa Fonssagrives holds one attenuated arm to the Tower and flourishes her right arm high into the air above Paris, grasping the end of her dress so that it flutters in a billowing arc of fabric.

³⁰⁶ Blumenfeld sailed to New York in 1939 and met editor-in-chief, Carmel Snow. This was the same visit he was introduced to the editors of *Life*. She sent Blumenfeld back to Paris to cover fashion, so his fashion work continued although his publishing allegiances changed.

³⁰⁷ Vichy was the French collaborationist government set up as part of the German-French armistice in the unoccupied south and southeastern portion of France.

³⁰⁸ See *Eye to I*, 307.

Somehow, miraculously, by using his Hearst American press pass, Blumenfeld was released and reunited with his family in 1941, who had been interned in other camps. They secured visas and fled for New York. How surreal, then, for Blumenfeld to immediately resume his work in fashion photography promoting American consumer desires, first for *Bazaar* and then returning to *Vogue*, after the deprivation within the French camps.³⁰⁹ Contemporary, and current, scholarly interpretation treat Blumenfeld's tenure at American *Vogue* as a new chapter in artistic experimentation, moving away from the social critique of Dada and the lived experience during two World Wars towards a beginning of a lucrative career.³¹⁰ I argue, however, a dark continuity flows from the First World War into the Second, where his artistic experimentations with cutting up and reworking the body to critique identity, gender, social structures, and nationalism forms a connection to his work in fashion. As a photographer at *Vogue*, Blumenfeld would disguise the body with shadows, twist them in mirrors, or distort them with broken windows. I argue these strategies form a typology of the transhistoric genre of the Gothic.

The Gothic originated as literary mode during the European Enlightenment in the 18th century. Where the Enlightenment engaged rationality and scientific inquiry, the Gothic probed the unknown and the irrational. The first Gothic text was Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), where the genre would flower in the Victorian period in such novels as Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). Gothic plots revolve around duplicitous characters with ties to the monstrous or the supernatural. Settings feature cloisters and castles defined by their sense of

³⁰⁹ Blumenfeld first shared the studio of fellow *Bazaar* photographer, Martin Munkacsy, upon his arrival in New York. In 1943, he moved to 222 Central Park South, where he would photograph until his death.

³¹⁰ Helen Adkins's study of Blumenfeld's Dada photomontages, for instance, refers to his fashion work as devoid of any "political insinuation." See "*Nothing But a Berliner*," 185. And Michel Metayer wrote that his fashion photographs "all intended to promote commercial products: clothes, lipstick, make-up. Their strategy was indirect: they create atmospheres, nuances, and textures that crystallize attitudes and tend to draw out traits of character." See Metayer, *Erwin Blumenfeld*, unpaginated.

isolation and enclosure. These texts evoke moods of anxiety, horror, or dread in the reader.³¹¹ In the 20th century, these tenets returned in the Southern Gothic of writers such as William Faulkner to modern alienation and monstrous transformation in German Gothic stories such as Franz Kafka's novella, *The Metamorphosis* (1915).

While settings, characters, plots, and symbols reoccur, the Gothic is fundamentally a strategy—a form of fantastical exaggeration in which to work out changes in social and cultural identities. While I define the Gothic broadly over the proceeding sections—drawing out some of its reoccurring forms that appear in Blumenfeld's work—I find the Gothic as a viable mode of inquiry that offers insight into Blumenfeld's particular brand of anti-realism. His stylized fashion photography disguises, fractures, and twists the female body, just as the body of the magazine text transmitted bleak war news and women's fears in its interior pages. As an interpretative framework, the Gothic expands Blumenfeld's work out from only Dada or other avant-garde associations into a genre that worked through many different nodes of mass culture, such as literature and film. The Gothic as a method to try to understand the human subject in crisis, as well as offer critique through manipulating the body, helps to place Blumenfeld in a broader wartime visual culture that engaged in a Gothic tradition.

Shadows and Body Doubles

Gothic fiction is obsessed with surfaces. Shadows, masks, veils, disguises, mirrors, and other means of visual subterfuge proliferate the Gothic narrative. As Catherine Spooner has written, these elements serve as plot devices that drive narrative suspense, but they also reoccur

³¹¹ On a typology of Gothic characteristics, see Ruth D. Weston, *Gothic Traditions and Narrative Techniques in the Fiction of Eudora Welty* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1994), 2. Welty's Gothic was the original impetus for this chapter, as a series of her spectral photographs were published in *Vogue* in 1944. See Welty, "Literature and the Lens," *Vogue* 104, no. 2 (August 1, 1944): 102, 103. I then began to see Blumenfeld in this Gothic light.

as symbols that suggest a thematic concern for bodily boundaries.³¹² When Blumenfeld rejoined *Vogue* in 1944, surfaces—and the mystery and duplicity contained therein—became his signature.

In the November 1944 issue, Blumenfeld's photographs of shadowed surfaces appeared three times in the publication. Firstly, a closely cropped female face stares out at viewers on the cover (fig. 71). A dark eyebrow curves in a high arch over a green eye. Blood-red lips and a glittering blue earring finish her look. But she is not in complete full view. A shadow cuts across her face—a shadow of a figure in profile. This shadow is grafted on the image in the midline of her face suggesting the lips are touching hers. The caption to the photograph in the Table of Contents reads: "Across the face of beauty is the shadow of a man...even a man across the sea. His influence keeps her heart warm...her eyes bright. Against The Day of his return, she is her beauty's guardian."³¹³ The most literal injunction in the *Vogue* caption is that the shadowed figure in profile is the proxy of her loved one fighting in the war. It is a mark of someone not there, a trace of someone who used to be and will be again. His shadow also functions as a controlling presence, even from across the ocean. The woman—unnamed, taking on the position of the universalized American woman—keeps up her beauty routine like the devoted mythological figure of Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey*, weaving and unweaving a shroud each night waiting for Odysseus.

This continuing of women's (beauty) work is equated with the steely keeping of the Homefront flame. Keeping up one's appearance and fashion routine was a mechanism of patriotism. As one editor wrote when the war began, "What is our standard of beauty now, in 1942? It can be summed up in one simple, three-syllable word: aliveness. It means looking as

³¹² See Catherine Spooner, *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (Manchester University Press, 2004).

³¹³ *Vogue* 104.8 (Nov 1, 1944): 103.

though you were really living, not just existing. It means looking as though you'd land on your feet, whatever happened."³¹⁴ But the male shadow also operates as a type of haunting against this "aliveness." The inky black spreads across her face like a *memento mori*, a reminder of the shadow of death. While the tone of *Vogue's* copy accompanying Blumenfeld's portrait/silhouette veers toward the sentimental, drawing on sacrificial tropes of the waiting female at home, the void over her face transmits a bleak visual cue that "The Day of his return" might never materialize.³¹⁵

This visual symbol of the shadow continued in the interior pages of the magazine. In addition to the cover of the issue, Blumenfeld photographed for the article "New Clothes Need a Figure" (fig. 72).³¹⁶ The model wears a full-sleeved, black dress covering the body to the knee and stands against a bare white background. Mysteriously, half of the figure is engulfed in shadow. The primary source of light hits the model from the right portion of the studio space, leaving the right side of her body in direct illumination and the left side completely darkened. This effect gives the impression that there are two faces in the photograph, much like the photograph on the cover, with one face looking out towards the viewer's space and another figure in profile. The shadow cast by her leg on the wall also gives the photograph the sensation that there are two figures in the frame. Much like the issue's cover, the shadow haunts. The ink black of the woman's dress also elicits connections to mourning fashion. The shadow, like the war, creeps over the white pages of the magazine, continually casting a pall over the figure, and by proxy, the reader. The war refuses to be suppressed.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ "Vogue's Eye View of Beauty," *Vogue* 99, no. 10 (May 15, 1942): 25.

³¹⁵ More than 400,000 American servicemen were killed during the Second World War and 670,000 injured.

³¹⁶ "New Clothes Need a Figure." *Vogue* 104.8 (Nov. 1, 1944): 104, 105, 106.

³¹⁷ Turning the page, this issue included a third shadowed face by Blumenfeld, emphasizing a pattern of continuity. See *Vogue* 104.8 (Nov. 1, 1944): 110.

And what would the shadowed male figure be like if he returned? *Vogue* editors allowed these anxieties to manifest in its pages. In a column in the August 1944 issue, *Vogue* offered a “Beau Quiz,” similar to advice columns featured in women’s magazines today where a reader would answer questions offered up by the magazine to work through particular situations. This quiz focused its attention on the concerns of women marrying men on leave or establishing long term relations with soldiers deployed abroad. The questions asked include: “Are you wondering, if basically, it isn’t just war tension that’s hurtling him altarward?” “Are you afraid that absence has made him glamourize you out of all reality, and that he’s in for a nasty jolt when he gets his first look at you with the lipstick off and the sleeves rolled up?”

As the quiz continues, the questions start to peek from the dark recesses of fear and guilt—those unspeakable questions. “Has he confessed to you that he’s scared stiff at the thought of his first taste of gunfire and do you think the less of him for it?” “Are you secretly fearful that he may come back a cripple, and that you won’t be able to stick the course?” The last question gets to the internal changes that no one can see: “Do you feel terrified that, when he does return from that foxhole, the war may have changed him into exactly the sort of personality you don’t want around the house?”³¹⁸

These anxieties about the future also appeared in other forms of cultural production during this period. As Helen Hanson has written, the unease surrounding “marrying a stranger” made its way into Gothic films in the 1940s, as “the shadowy underside to the whirlwind romance.”³¹⁹ *Vogue*’s questions illustrate this fear of the man who might return psychologically changed. Also present within the questions is a fear of the self—the one who might judge

³¹⁸ Barbara Heggie, “Beau Quiz,” *Vogue* 104.3 (August 15, 1944): 133.

³¹⁹ Helen Hanson, “From Suspicion (1941) to Deceived (1991): Gothic Continuities, Feminism and Postfeminism in the Neo-Gothic Film,” *Gothic Studies* 9/2 2007, 20-32.

another's fear of battle or the one who cannot stick the course if a loved one returned with a life-altering injury.

A popular song of this era, "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree (with Anyone Else but Me)" from 1942, performed by the Glenn Miller Orchestra, spoke to the male anxiety of women finding other partners in their wartime absence. The distrust of women also became a fundamental fear dramatized within the Gothic sub-genre of Film Noir. Coined by two French critics, Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton, Film Noir defined dark American films made in the 1940s, such as *The Maltese Falcon*, *Laura*, and *Double Indemnity*. These films brought together violence, eroticism, and anxiety to the screen, often with sensorial affect.³²⁰ As Borde and Chaumeton wrote, "A sense of dread persists until the final images."³²¹ This dread was often instigated by the figure of the Femme Fatale—the fatal female. In *Double Indemnity* (1944), an affable insurance salesman, Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray), meets the beautiful wife of a client, Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck), on a house call. Neff is unable to resist her, and the two become romantically involved. She then steers his life off-course, leading Neff to cheat the insurance company and to murder her husband. In the end, her punishment is her death.

The Femme Fatale embodied the characteristics of sex, ambivalence, and cruelty Borde and Chaumeton found in Noir films.³²² As they describe her:

Frustrated and deviant, half predator, half prey, detached yet ensnared, she falls victim to her own traps...this new type of woman, manipulative and evasive, as hard bitten as her environment, ready to shake down or to trade shots with anyone—and probably frigid—

³²⁰ Rooted in crime novels from the 1930s, these films, made during the war years, only began appearing in postwar French theaters in the summer of 1946. Borde and Chaumeton would write "Panorama de Film Noir Americain" in 1955. See Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton, "Towards a Definition of Film Noir," *Film Noir Reader*, Alain Silver and James Ursini, eds. (Limelight: Pompton Plains, New Jersey, 1996). These were not the only critics writing about the violent inflections in Hollywood cultural production. See, for example, Siegfried Kracauer, "Hollywood's Terror Films: Do They Reflect an American State of Mind," *Commentary* 2 (1946): 132-136.

³²¹ Borde and Chaumeton, "Definition of Film Noir," 25.

³²² Of course, the fatal female is an archetype that reoccurs in different periods and cultures. On the 19th century precursors of the Femme Fatale, see Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-De-Siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

has put her mark on 'noir' eroticism, which may be at times nothing more than violence eroticized. We are a long way from the chaste heroines of the traditional Western or historical drama.³²³

Borde and Chameton characterize the Femme Fatale as a contradiction: both predator and prey, detached yet ensnared, erotic yet frigid. She is a victim and symptom of her circumstance, yet attempts to transcend those boundaries. A product of her culture, she is the diabolical dark woman born out of patriarchy, who inverts social mores by conspiring to kill her husband for imprisoning her in the home or in marriage. And she uses her sexuality as a weapon. The Gothic as a genre allows both the sexism and the transgression of the period to exist in the same space, as the Gothic both reinforces and critiques gendered stereotypes.

To translate the duplicitous character of the Femme Fatale visually, Film Noir relied on the symbolism of shadow. Lighting in these films can be either very dim or in high contrast, which throws shadows against the cinematic space. These characteristics convey a sense of ambiguity or an unknowable aspect of its characters.³²⁴ In *Double Indemnity*, the final climatic scene is shot in the darkened interior of Phyllis's home, the site of the couple's first meeting. The shadows heighten the tension in the scene, as well as the gulfs between the Walter and Phyllis. Her face is half-hidden in shadow. Only the slatted light seeping through venetian blinds illuminates the figures, when the viewer finally learns of the depths of Phyllis's deception and she turns her gun at Walter (fig. 73).

³²³ Borde and Chaumeton, "Definition of Film Noir," 22.

³²⁴ Sheri Chinen Biesen has argued Film Noir visual style was also a product of circumstantial issues surrounding filming during the war years, including restrictions on electricity and equipment, labor shortages, and blackouts. See Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Blackout: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2005), 1-6.

Blumenfeld's shadows across the pages of *Vogue* find kinship with the graphic visuals of Film Noir.³²⁵ This is not to say that Blumenfeld is reproducing the Femme Fatale here in *Vogue* (though I find the description of the Femme Fatale as "violence eroticized" circulating in other works of his), but rather both film and magazine explore shadows to articulate ambiguity and the unknown. Moreover, both representations explore a woman crossing boundaries in the 1940s rooted in the changes wrought by the war. Some scholars have argued that Film Noir's hard bitten, transgressive female characters evolve out of changing gender roles and the entrance of millions of women into the work force in the 1940s.³²⁶

Vogue was part of this work wave and urged women to break out of traditional conceptions of their place in society and previous identities. For example, in an article from September 1943, *Vogue* bluntly asked its readers, "Why aren't you Working" in a headline. Within the text, the editors dispelled excuses that women may give: "Because I've never worked before and I'm afraid I'm not strong enough," or "Because I'm too old," or "Because I've been told that only skilled workers are needed." *Vogue* shamed them: "Any real job you take will help the war effort. This is no time to quibble; the straight facts are that, by the end of 1943, *one-third* of all the workers in the United States will have to be women."³²⁷ As discussed in Chapter 2, these articles were part of a broader U.S. government effort to generate support of war-time work and volunteerism through the conduit of mass-market magazines.

³²⁵ Blumenfeld may have been influenced by post-World War I German Expressionism, where the shadow served as a visual horror convention. Two of the genre's most emblematic films, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and *Nosferatu* (1922), feature shadows that embody the abject, the Other, fear itself, or the horror within the self.

³²⁶ On the cultural construction of the Femme Fatale and its anxiety related to changing gender roles of the period, see, for example, Julie Grossman, *Rethinking the Femme Fatale in Film Noir: Ready for her Close Up* (Palgrave: New York, 2009) and Elizabeth Cowie, "Film Noir and Women," *Shades of Noir: A Reader*. Joan Copjec, editor. (New York: Verso, 1993), 121-198. On the ways in which war work empowered female sexuality and identity, see Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

³²⁷ "People and Ideas: Why aren't you Working?" *Vogue* 102.5 (Sep 1, 1943): 96.

Visual culture struggled with representing this new working woman; it conflated tropes of masculinity and femininity inscribed on gendered work. Two popular illustrations of women in this period include J. Howard Miller's "We Can Do It" poster for Westinghouse Electric in February 1943 and Norman Rockwell's "Rosie the Riveter," which appeared on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* in May 1943 (fig. 74 and fig. 75). Both illustrations use the cultural coding within workwear to express strength and masculinity. Miller's working woman pulls up the blue sleeve of her work shirt as she flexes her bicep. Her hair does not cascade down her shoulders but is wrapped in a polka-dot kerchief, a safety precaution for factory work as much as style.³²⁸ Rockwell's Rosie also wears a blue uniform of work shirt and pants, which are too long and have been cuffed at the ankle. Her exaggerated musculature in her biceps and forearms, as well as the wide spread of her legs, do not proportionally align with her more diminutive head. Rockwell takes the gender crossing in Rosie to grotesque proportions, illustrating the disjuncture in grafting a female form onto the male body.³²⁹

"New Clothes Need a Figure" does not explicitly reference the working woman or war work, but the war is embroidered into the fashion the model wears. The sobriety of the outfit—its lack of details and its simple cut—describes an emerging silhouette that will dominate the magazine over the next several years. Under the order L-85 issued by the War Production Board in 1942, decorative details and the amounts of fabric incorporated into skirts, jackets, cuff, and hem lengths were regulated to save materials and production time as civilian manufacturing shifted to defense.³³⁰ Female clothing began to mimic military uniforms in a utilitarian reaction

³²⁸ See also my discussion of factory accidents in Chapter 2 as caused by long hair.

³²⁹ For an in-depth discussion of Rosie the Riveter, see, for example, Melissa Dabakis, "Gendered Labor: Norman Rockwell's Rosie the Riveter and the Discourses of Wartime Womanhood," in Barbara Melosh, ed., *Gender and American History Since 1890* (London: Routledge, 1993) and Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

³³⁰ Chapter 2 discussed these measures made in Britain.

to new sartorial restrictions.³³¹ Moreover, the model does not wear hosiery. The article in “New Clothes Need a Figure” advises readers to turn to leg make-up because of nylon stocking shortages. Nylon, developed in the 1930s as a durable synthetic alternative to silk hosiery, was used during the war for parachutes.

The shadow as a formal strategy contains many resonances as I have so far pressed on—absence, fear, war, death, and ambiguity. The shadow, as it runs down the middle of the female body in both Blumenfeld’s cover and interior photograph, might also be seen as suggesting the boundary lines erected by war. Women became emblematic of a type of borderland, poised between traditional realms of male and female space, labor, and fashion. An oft refrain in *Vogue* over the past three years was the notion of the “double duty life.” This adage held that women lived in a constant state of the split self—their attention both on the Homefront and the warfront, as well as their work in civic and domestic space. As the editors explained,

This is our new life. This is what we have to do. In this war, far more than in the first World War, the women are the stanchions, the very ganglia of a whole substratum of war work, a stratum that the women of the last war only rarely pierced. To do this, we are preparing—as the women of Britain have done—to split our lives.³³²

The first illustration of this new paradigm was a photograph by John Rawlings, which appeared in the January 1942 issue (fig. 76). A woman in an evening dress looks pensively into an ornate full-length mirror. Reflected back are two figures: the original woman in the evening gown and a second woman uniformed in a military dress and hat. The woman in uniform looks directly at her domestic self with a sense of steely determination. The caption to the photograph reads: “From our mirrors these days, two women look out. One is still concerned with the ways of her home. The other is, actually or spiritually, in uniform, concerned with the deep and stirring needs of her

³³¹ On austerity fashion, see Daniel Delis Hill, *As Seen in Vogue: A Century of American Fashion in Advertising* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), 70-72.

³³² “People and Ideas: Our Double-Duty Lives.” *Vogue* 99.2 (January 15, 1942): 34. 35. 96.

country. One face, one country, two duties.”³³³ Blumenfeld filters this duality through a Gothic lens by splitting the figure into two with shadow. In this way, the male shadow crossing over the female face on the cover image could also symbolize the collapse of male and female identity during the war onto women—a restaging of Blumenfeld’s Dada collages and critical play with gender.

Reading the shadow as a double figure can also open up avenues of interpretation that tap into the ways in which Americans were beginning to understand the mind and its relationship to the self during the war. The idea of the split self informs a psychoanalytic construction of subjectivity. In this framework, the double can be interpreted as the unconscious, the part of the self that contains our socially repressed instincts, desires, and experiences.³³⁴ Psychoanalysis built scientific legitimacy around the Gothic double figure and the split self, with Sigmund Freud looking back to 19th century literary texts.³³⁵

It is in this period of Gothic revival in the 1940s that we can contextualize Film Noir and Blumenfeld’s photography in *Vogue*, wherein psychoanalysis gained particular cultural currency.³³⁶ *Vogue*’s editors publicized psychoanalysis as one way in which to help heal returning soldiers. Psychoanalysis is suggested as a remedy for “wartime maladies” in 1945.³³⁷ The magazine’s Pacific correspondent, Mary Jean Kempner, also explicitly mentions psychoanalysis as an aid to serviceman in her postwar reports in 1947.³³⁸ The U.S. government

³³³ “Double-Duty Lives.” *Vogue* 99.2 (January 15, 1942): 35.

³³⁴ On the formation of the double in psychoanalysis, see Otto Rank, *Der Doppelgänger*, 1914 and Sigmund Freud’s essay on “The Uncanny” in 1919.

³³⁵ See, for example, Andrew Smith, *Gothic Radicalism: Literature, Philosophy, and Psychoanalysis in the Nineteen Century* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

³³⁶ Freudian methodology provides a strong undercurrent of Film Noir criticism. As Mary Ann Doane qualified, “A theory of the unconscious was perceived as absolutely crucial to the comprehension of the cinema as the film of fantasy and desire and the activator of mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism.” See Doane, *Femme Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 7.

³³⁷ G.B. Stern, “Unrationed Cures for Wartime Maladies,” *Vogue* 106.2 (August 1, 1945), 94.

³³⁸ Mary Jean Kempner, “A Report on the War Wounded,” *Vogue* 109.11 (June 1, 1947): 127.

began to rely on the psychoanalytic method during the war, particularly to confront the wave of traumatized servicemen admitted to hospitals. As Nicholas Hale explains:

For those illnesses which seriously impeded the war effort, the traditional hospital psychiatrist was ill prepared. The psychoanalysts seized this unique opportunity to apply their theory and therapy. Many of them rapidly rose to positions of leadership in the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force and taught the green young physicians who filled the ranks of service psychiatry. Wartime experience, partly by chance, seemed to demonstrate the success of psychiatry and especially of psychotherapy, with which psychoanalysis became identified.³³⁹

Mass media picked up this trend in wartime psychology with articles on psychoanalysis published in such magazines as *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and even *Better Homes and Gardens*. In the immediate postwar years, psychoanalysis became part of popular discourse on well-being, and *Vogue* featured a primer on psychoanalysis for women. Written by analyst Dr. Eric Berne, the article articulates the shift from using psychoanalysis to diagnose acute trauma during wartime to its popularization for improving mental health and physical wellness. As he explains, “Going to a psychoanalyst can help people become happier, more efficient, better able to cope with themselves and with the people and things around them.”³⁴⁰ In the culmination of the article, Berne universalizes base instincts and impulses: “Everyone has ungratified tensions stored up from infancy, whether these tensions express themselves in opening neurotic ways or not, and it is always a help to have one’s unsatisfied Id energies reorganized and partly relieved through analysis.”³⁴¹

This discourse influenced cultural production in the period, becoming a component in the content and interpretation of Film Noir. “The tide in Hollywood had turned toward sick souls and fancy psychiatrists,” wrote Siegfried Kracauer in 1946. “[These] films deal less with social

³³⁹Nathan G. Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 187.

³⁴⁰Eric Berne, “Psychoanalysis: 5 Questions Answered,” *Vogue* 110.2 (July 15, 1947): 38.

³⁴¹Ibid, 77.

abuses than with psychological aberrations.”³⁴² Michael Leja examined the influence of psychology on the visual language of Abstract Expressionism and artists such as Jackson Pollock and Adolph Gottlieb. Their use of Freudian and Jungian symbols evoked a particular method of understanding subjectivity at this particular moment. As Leja found,

[D]eepth psychology was doing important ideological work in wartime United States culture: shoring up middle-class ideology with new, plausible accounts of human violence and evil; rationalizing and interjecting the sensation of powerlessness and victimization experienced by those so immediately affected by world historical events. Anomie, disorientation, and destructive or violent behavior were, in a variety of cultural materials, being attributed to the workings of the unconscious, as was the appearance of Fascism, war, and mass brutality on the international stage.³⁴³

Blumenfeld, too, looked to psychology and psychoanalysis when constructing his work. His autobiography lists numerous references to psychoanalytic concepts, including sublimation and fetishism, which he uses to describe his work. He also published on the potential ways in which psychoanalysis could be aided by photography. He wrote in *L'Amour de L'Art* magazine in 1938: “One can also envisage applying photography...to psychoanalysis, by demonstrating to the patient his physical or psychological qualities in a joint study of his self-portraits.”³⁴⁴ The mirrored double portrait as a form could be Blumenfeld’s response to the ways in which photography could articulate psychoanalytic concepts of a shadow self, a second self, a darker self, a fragmented self. Blumenfeld explored this dichotomy in his own self-portraits in the 1940s, which are reminiscent of the 1944 cover for *Vogue* (see, for example, fig. 77).

Through his writings, we can trace Blumenfeld’s intentionality in working in a Freudian framework. His psychoanalytic allusions point to their significance in his own practice, but what does it mean that these references were visualized in *Vogue*? His Gothic shadows and double

³⁴² Kracauer, “Hollywood’s Terror Films,” in *Siegfried Kracauer’s American Writings*, 43.

³⁴³ Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 195.

³⁴⁴ Erwin Blumenfeld, “Science et Art: Le mystère de la réalité redécouvert par la photographie,” on *L'Amour de L'Art* 5 (June 1938), p. 214, translated by Helen Adkins. Quoted in Adkins, “Nothing but a Berliner,” 172.

figures were visual strategies applied to the female body, which, as we have seen, was being conceptualized as a subject divided in the pages of *Vogue*. Blumenfeld gave visual form to this idea of a split self, articulating the dualism of physical/psychological, alive/dead, domestic/public, Homefront/Warfront, and feminine/masculine that was being worked out, visually and textually, through the magazine.

Painting/Glass/Mirror

A shift occurred in the visual program of *Vogue* with the advent of Lee Miller's pictures from Buchenwald and Dachau published in June 1945, a shift that is particularly evident in Blumenfeld's portraits. Previously marked by shadow, his models became shattered, warped, and distorted. This tactic literally intersects with what Andrew Smith has called the Gothic's "shattered versions of subjectivity."³⁴⁵ In the Gothic novel, "moral and intellectual understandings of the world are broken down and troublingly reconfigured."³⁴⁶ The photography and editorial content of *Vogue*'s July 1945 issue, cited at the beginning of this chapter with Blumenfeld's photograph through Duchamp's *Large Glass*, evidences this wrestling with ways of processing the self and the world.

Within the issue as a whole, fashion photographs on location at the Museum of Modern Art were placed cheek to cheek with lengthy essays on foreign policy. For example, Senator James William Fulbright argued the country should master its prejudices and xenophobia, as well as avoid isolationism after the fall of Germany. He offered his vision for international cooperation and collective security, an alliance that would become the United Nations. "It is the only possible foreign policy which is consistent with our political and moral standards of

³⁴⁵ Andrew Smith, "Modernism," *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, Edited by William Hughes, David Punter, and Andrew Smith (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 450.

³⁴⁶ Smith, "Modernism," 453.

conduct. The principle question that remains to be answered is whether this nation is willing to make the necessary economic and psychological adjustments inherently involved in a system of mutual security.”³⁴⁷

Owen Lattimore, director of the Walter Hines Page School of International Relations at John Hopkins, penned a four page essay on the need to strategically cultivate democracy in China, still under Japan’s yoke.³⁴⁸ “All over China today ‘democracy’ is a word that captures men’s minds; but it is behind enemy lines that democracy is most severely tested in passing from idea to action.”³⁴⁹ These editorials evidence the tenuous relationship between the United States and its allies, including Communist Russia and the growing Communist movement in China. To keep the open circuits of civility, informational intelligence, and capital between the United States, Europe, and Asia, Fulbright pleaded to *Vogue*’s moneyed readers for the power that they wield in economy and politics. “It is most urgent that the people of this nation give sustained and serious thought to our long-term relations with the other peoples of this world.”³⁵⁰

Underpinning this appeal for peace and cooperation lurked a period anxiety for the structure of the new world order, where the possibility of a Holocaust and global war could reoccur. An article by Jean-Paul Sartre in the same issue attempted to explain to *Vogue* readers why French literature during the war bent so dark. Writing of Albert Camus and the bleakness of Existentialism, Sartre assessed:

³⁴⁷ James William Fulbright, “The Price of Peace is the Loss of Prejudices,” *Vogue* 106.1 (Jul 1, 1945): 80, 81.

³⁴⁸ Owen Lattimore, “China is Changing.” *Vogue* 106.1 (Jul 1, 1945): 90, 91, 92, 93, 127.

³⁴⁹ Lattimore, “China,” 127.

³⁵⁰ This is not to say Fulbright is not critical of capitalism. “As I read history, the Russian experiment in socialism is scarcely more radical, under modern conditions, than the Declaration of Independence was in the days of George III...I believe firmly in the superiority of our democratic capitalistic system, and I desire to reserve it. But we should remember that capitalism is not divine and inviolable. It was not handed down to us by the Almighty; and to question it, or to test it, is neither sacrilegious nor treasonable. We have capitalism, and we can defend it, because it has by all standards of decency provided better conditions for more people than any other system on earth. It is of value to us, and is defensible, only so long as it maintains that record.” Fulbright, “Price of Peace,” 81.

The stupefaction, the indignation that Americans feel before the tortured corpses of Buchenwald we have felt for a long time. For four years the young of France and even the children of France have known what man is capable of...And so the books of Camus are profoundly somber...the world is 'absurd' and that man is abandoned there, without help, without hope, without God.³⁵¹

Sartre talked directly to *Vogue* readers, who witnessed those corpses in Lee Miller's photographs of the Buchenwald and Dachau camps the previous month. "Literature is no fancy activity independent of politics," the sub-headlined proclaimed.³⁵²

Shocked from the visual narrative emanating from Germany, the war with Japan and its strain persisted. For women with partners or family members fighting in Asia, dismemberment and death still loomed. Pages away from Sartre's article on French existentialism featured a full page image of Marine burial grounds at Iwo Jima by former *Vogue* photographer turned Navy Captain and MoMA curator Edward Steichen (fig. 78). Thousands of thin white sticks fashioned into crosses are meticulously placed in neat rows, beginning in the foreground and reaching back to a large mound in the distance. The mound is sulphur rock, and Iwo means sulphur in Japanese. "Sulfurous mists ooze up here and there from its mud-coloured surface. The beaches are black, and the black beaches with the ribbons of white surf run a mourning border around the island," wrote Steichen, reflecting on this picture.³⁵³ Mary Jean Kempner, *Vogue's* Pacific war correspondent, described the sight with more abject affect: "Iwo Jima hits you in the pit of the stomach like the sight of a leper. Its pock-marked face has an eerie fascination...We breathed deeply and I coughed as my lungs filled with the rotted smell."³⁵⁴ While Steichen's photograph jettisons images of fallen soldiers on the island for uniform burial markers, the sensorial

³⁵¹Jean-Paul Sartre, "New Writing in France," *Vogue* 106.1 (July 1, 1945): 84, 85. Sartre, along with other French authors and journalists, had been invited by the Office of War Information to the U.S. in the spring of 1945. This article stemmed from a lecture Sartre gave at Columbia University. For more on this lecture and visits to the U.S., see George Cotkin, *Existential America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

³⁵² Sartre, "New Writing," 84.

³⁵³ Steichen's text and photograph appeared in Mary Jean Kempner, "Iwo Jima—Lifesaving Station," *Vogue* 106, no. 1 (Jul 1, 1945), 88.

³⁵⁴ Mary Jean Kempner, "Iwo Jima—Lifesaving Station," 87.

properties featured in the text of these pages overwhelm the reader with the olfactory smell of death.

In this landscape of the magazine, other seemingly unrelated articles connect with the mood of deathliness circulating in this issue. Frank Crowninshield's story on the French modernists and the Armory Show in 1913 is noted for its full-page color reproduction of a still life painted by Georges Braque, which, among other items, features a skull resting on a table. (fig. 79).³⁵⁵ Read out of the context of the issue, the skull would seem a familiar still life convention. Sandwiched between images of graves and war news, however, the skull takes on a sinister cast. Braque drew a line straight down the middle of the skull as if it demarcated a shadow, or two sides to a whole. The skull is Blumenfeld's shadow in painted form—the memento mori that repeatedly returns within *Vogue's* pages.

The cover of this issue featured the work of Marcel Duchamp—the artist that caused such a ruckus at the Armory Show with his *Nude Descending a Staircase*.³⁵⁶ Blumenfeld's photograph of a body glimpsed through Duchamp's sculpture, splintered into shards and only held together by a thin frame, should pointedly adorn its cover. The world described—both visually and textually—within the pages of *Vogue* with articles by Fulbright, Lattimore, Sartre, Steichen, and Kempner, is a shattered world—a world that continued to rotate but in precarious balance. The

³⁵⁵ Frank Crowninshield, "The French Modernists," *Vogue* 106.1 (July 1, 1945), 62-65; 125-126. Crowninshield was an original trustee of MoMA and arts editor of *Vogue*.

³⁵⁶ Critical interpretation of Duchamp changed over the years in *Vogue*. The artist was mentioned in an article dating back to Guy Pene du Bois, who wrote that *Nude Descending a Staircase* at the Armory Show "was not even interesting as a picture puzzle." See du Bois, "Art: From One Extremist to the Other," *Vogue* 41.7 (April 1, 1913): 122. Over thirty years later, in the spring of 1945, *Nude Descending the Staircase* is featured in an article on the Arensbergs collection. "To the Arensbergs, Duchamp is the most intelligent and germinal genius of twentieth century art," wrote *Vogue*. "The Great Arensberg Collection," *Vogue* 105.3 (Feb. 1, 1945): 132.

fear of the disintegration of diplomacy, and, more acutely, a fear of “what man is capable of” structured Blumenfeld’s fashion photograph through Marcel Duchamp’s window.³⁵⁷

The effect of destruction in using Duchamp’s *Large Glass* also literalizes a comment made by Alexander Liberman, who once said of the magazine during the Second World War, “No more visions of loveliness. The war...destroy[ed] the fantasy.”³⁵⁸ And yet Blumenfeld’s cover does more than puncture the surfaces of the fashion magazine by disfiguring loveliness; he disfigures the usual process of vision. This experiential affect is another Gothic trope, wherein the sensations felt by the reader scanning the pages of the Gothic novel interconnect with the character, who could be mired in any number of confusing situations. As Julian Wofreys explains,

The Gothic novel relies upon the dissolution of order and control, through a narrative journey or adventure into places where logic and rationality give way to disorder, fear, and anxieties...when we read a Gothic novel, we are kept in a state of suspense, in a figurative darkness commensurate or parallel with the literal darkness in which the protagonist finds himself or herself for much of the novel.³⁵⁹

Blumenfeld’s cover enacts this dissolution of order by fracturing the perfect body on the magazine cover. The reader is unable to see in an ordinary way, and it is this inability to see—to come to terms with the present or know the future—that Blumenfeld’s cover recreates here.

Other Blumenfeld photographs of 1945 twist together the eye and the body, the visual and the experiential. On the cover of the August 15, 1945 issue of *Vogue*, Blumenfeld

³⁵⁷ This coupling of the war and Duchamp recalls Duchamp’s postwar World War I *Fresh Widow* (1920), which depicts French window panes blocked out with black leather. Punning on the concept of the French window, but with a much darker interpretation, *Fresh Widow* alludes to the social malaise and mourning in France after the First World War. Blumenfeld’s use of Duchamp’s broken window at this moment resuscitates this wartime elegy.

³⁵⁸ As told to Dodie Kazanjian in *Vogue: The Covers* (New York: Abrams, 2011), 7. Liberman used the phrase “visions of loveliness” to encapsulate fashion autonomy, branding it in other interviews: “The thing that I hate most is something I call visions of loveliness. This used to be the dream world where fashionable ladies wore hats at work. A big change occurred in *Vogue* with the war...*Vogue* was always thought of as trivial, an old-fashioned magazine. I couldn’t have been involved in a trivial magazine. To this day I feel *Vogue* has a mission of bettering human life.” Liberman as told to Marshall Blonsky, *Bomb* 16 (Summer 1986): 20.

³⁵⁹ Julian Wofreys, “Poststructuralism and the Gothic,” *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, 519.

photographed a model wearing a tweed jacket and a citrine and black plaid skirt (fig. 80). Yet the photograph has been stretched vertically, making the figure seem attenuated, like a distortion in a fun house mirror. The caption for the article emphasizes this altered state: “Cover by Blumenfeld, famous photographer who continues to experiment in his medium; here he uses his camera in a new way, to represent the young in a tenuous, wistful unreality.”³⁶⁰ While this kind of editorial copy speaks to the ephemerality and fantasy of fashion—a tenuous, wistful unreality—this picture is deeply tied to its historical moment. Blumenfeld renders the body vulnerable, stretched and pulled apart by external forces. This reading not only reflects on the mindset of the potential reader, but can also give meaning to the timing when the issue hit newsstands. Atomic bombs had been dropped on two separate cities in Japan, annihilating the peoples of Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9.

Forcing the reader to participate in the distorted act of seeing is a tactic that also harkens back to a Surrealistic practice of augmented perception. The Surrealists toyed with vision to exhibit how distortion could reveal other truths. Moreover, we might read Blumenfeld’s shadowed portraits and interest in doubles in concert with the Surrealists, who explored the double and incorporated shadows to articulate the interior, divided subject.³⁶¹ Blumenfeld was not an official Surrealist (as he claimed to be a Dadaist), but exhibited Surrealist affinities, including his interest in visualizing the procedures and experiences of psychoanalysis; probing the duality of the self; upending bourgeois sensibility; and mining sexuality using the female

³⁶⁰ *Vogue* 106.3 (August 15, 1945): 107.

³⁶¹ Shadows are also conceptually important in Surrealist practice in the 1920s through the 1940s. Many photographers and painters associated with the Surrealists experimented with shadows, including de Chirico, Dali, and Duchamp. Duchamp designed the front of Andre Breton’s art gallery, *Gradiva*, in the form of a shadow of a couple, as if entering the gallery. Reading shadows through a structuralist lens, Dennis Hollier has called these shadows “orphans shadows, shadows detached from their indexical origins, shadows cut off from their cause, shadows thrown by an invisible object, shadows of objects repressed outside the frame.” See Denis Hollier, “Surrealist Precipitates: Shadows Don’t Cast Shadows.” trans. Rosalind E. Krauss, *October* 69 (Summer 1994): 120. For another reading of shadows, as well as doubles and anamorphosis in Surrealist practice, see Katharine Conley, *Surrealist Ghostliness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 2013.

body as a site.³⁶² He counted the Surrealist magazine *Minotaure* (1933-1939) as one of his aesthetic and conceptual inspirations and met with its editors to feature his photographs.³⁶³

And it was Surrealism that would bring Duchamp to the attention of Liberman. Liberman had tried to feature a work of art by Marcel Duchamp on the cover of *Vogue* before. He had been impressed with the artist's work at the *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition held in the Whitelaw Reid Mansion on Madison Avenue in New York in October of 1942. It had been organized by Duchamp and Andre Breton and funded by fashion designer and Surrealist collaborator Elsa Schiaparelli. The exhibition's admission, catalogue, and works for sale was to benefit war-torn France through the Coordinating Council of French Relief Societies. Its exhibitors were mostly émigrés fleeing Europe (Duchamp himself arrived in the United States in June of that year). The title nodded to their new citizenship in the U.S. with reference to those first immigration application papers. After a decade of exhibiting around the world, *First Papers* consecrated the relocation of the heart of Surrealism to New York.

Duchamp was not a rank-and-file or even a self-proclaimed surrealist, but often worked as a collaborator. He designed the shadowed door for the Surrealist gallery Gravidia in Paris in May 1937; was on the editorial board of *Minotaure* in 1937; and organized and participated in the Surrealist *Exposition Internationale* in Paris in 1938. As he said, "I had been borrowed from the ordinary world by the Surrealists. They liked me a lot; Breton liked me a lot; we were very good

³⁶² One area of connection that I do not dwell on here is the readymade female fashion mannequin as a double that delighted the Surrealists as well as Blumenfeld. These stylized modern mannequins gained attention at the Paris Art Deco exposition (Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes) in 1925. Man Ray featured a mannequin for the cover of *La Revolution Surrealiste* (July 1925) and later in *Minotaure* at the same time he was photographing them for Harper's Bazaar and *Vogue*. Later, Hans Bellmer took on a sadistic twist on the mannequin in his pupes, which were published in *Minotaure* in December 1934. Four years later, the Surrealists decorated an avenue of mannequins for the 1938 Exposition Internationale in Paris. Blumenfeld featured mannequins on the cover of *Vogue* in November 1945. To the mannequin, these men could displace desire as well as violence.

³⁶³ Blumenfeld wrote, "Three many-sided fine-art magazines (*Variétés* from Brussels, the Berlin *Querschnitt* and the Paris magazine *Minotaure*) kept alive my connection to the world of creativity." See *Eye to I*, 250. On his meeting with *Minotaure*, see Alexander Liberman, editor, *The Art and Technique of Color Photography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1951), 170.

together. They had a lot of confidence in the ideas I could bring to them...³⁶⁴ Duchamp's contribution to *First Papers* included a work called *Miles of String*, in which he and other artists crisscrossed hundreds of feet of twine around the space of the gallery (fig. 81). More than activating the negative space of the gallery, the installation interrupted viewers from seeing the works on the wall clearly.³⁶⁵ T.J. Demos has argued that *Miles of String* forces the viewer to experience the disorientation and dislocation of the exile of the avant-garde.³⁶⁶ For him, the work fits into Duchamp's broader practice of an anti-nationalistic aesthetic of estrangement and homelessness. Jean-Paul Sartre's writing in the July issue of *Vogue* reiterates this point, "The war has dispersed the *surrealistes* and, though their influence on poetry remains profound, properly speaking there is no longer, at the moment, a *surrealiste* movement in France."³⁶⁷ Perhaps it was this concept of displacement that attracted Liberman, an émigré twice over—first from the Soviet Union in the 1920s and then from Paris during the Second World War.³⁶⁸

After seeing *Miles of String*, Liberman commissioned Duchamp for the cover of *Vogue*'s Americana issue for February 1943—a fascinating choice given Duchamp's proclivities for irony and surely a distaste for the type of hyper-nationalism that wrought his exile. Moreover, previous Americana issues engaged with nationalist symbols of the American bald eagle and patriotic red, white, and blue. Duchamp created a prototype true to sardonic form—a profile of George Washington made out of batting and surgical gauze, pierced with gold stars, and streaked with

³⁶⁴ See Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous*, 93 n. 134. Originally quoted in Cabanne, *Dialogues*, 81.

³⁶⁵ This tendency to obfuscate the viewer from the art was also a part of his contribution to the Exposition Universale du Surréalisme in Paris (1938), where he covered the space's glass ceiling with coal bags, causing visitors to have to rely on a flashlight to navigate the grounds. They also choked on the dust floating downward. Blumenfeld and Liberman were both living in Paris at this moment and could have seen this exhibition.

³⁶⁶ T. J. Demos also argues the work challenges Surrealism, refusing its "search for a habitable space [and state]" and its institutionalization. See Demos, "Duchamp's Labyrinth: 'First Papers of Surrealism,' 1942," *October* 97 (Summer 2001), 91-119.

³⁶⁷ Sartre, "New Writing," 84.

³⁶⁸ Liberman was born in Russia. His father, Semyon, was very well-regarded in the lumber industry and, although not a Bolshevik, worked with the Soviet government advising Lenin. After Lenin's death, however, Liberman's father fled to Paris and the family settled there, where Liberman had already attended boarding school. The family became notable figures in the Parisian art world and Russian emigre culture.

iodine stripes reminiscent of the brownish-red hue of dried blood (fig. 82). When turned counter-clockwise, the face transformed into a tufted map of the United States. The design was rejected by *Vogue*'s editorial staff, and Duchamp sold the work to Andre Breton, who published it in his New York Surrealist magazine, *VVV* (1942-1944), in March 1943.³⁶⁹

Curator Michael Taylor wrote that *Vogue*'s rejection of the sculpture exhibited the "narrow-mindedness of *Vogue*'s censorious editorial board," but that assertion is too simplistic.³⁷⁰ Of course, Duchamp's overt send-up to American iconography would have been rejected in *Vogue*, and perhaps this was Duchamp's intent. But Liberman was patient; two years later, Duchamp graced the cover in Blumenfeld's 1945 photograph. The fissured panes of *Large Glass* blocking access to the fashion worn by the *Vogue* model recall the webs of Duchamp's *Miles of String*. More than just visual echoes, it is this Gothic experience of obstruction and dissonance that is concretized by the broken glass.³⁷¹ *Vogue* transmits social turbulence into perceptual acts of disorientation in the space of the fashion magazine.

Both *Vogue* and the avant-garde press were giving Duchamp and Surrealism a new platform and visibility at this moment.³⁷² In addition to Breton's Surrealist magazine *VVV*, Charles Henri Ford's *View* (1940-1947) became another material conduit of Surrealism in exile. Ford used the press to propagate the movement and serve as a virtual exhibition space at a

³⁶⁹ Dodie Kazanjian and Calvin Tomkins, *Alex: The Life of Alexander Liberman* (New York, 1993), 160. Liberman returned the sculpture to Duchamp, along with \$50.

³⁷⁰ Michael Taylor, quoted in "Modern Art Notes" <http://blogs.artinfo.com/modernartnotes/2008/10/the-flag-michael-taylor-picks/>. Taylor was the Curator of Modern and Contemporary art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art at the time he guest-authored for Tyler Green's Modern Art Notes blog. Duchamp's "Genre Allegory" now resides in the collection of the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

³⁷¹ This vocabulary of a web also fits within the period interest in the psychological subject. As Michael Leja wrote of Pollock, his webs and labyrinths reflect the psychoanalytic space "of entrapment and ensnarement; the space of disorientation; the space of the interior, mental landscape." See Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*, 323.

³⁷² This moment was a type of resurrection of Surrealism, as *Vogue* had been covering the movement, and hiring affiliated photographers like Many Ray, since the 1920s.

moment of a moribund art market affected by the war.³⁷³ In March 1945, two months before *Vogue*'s issue with Duchamp on the cover, Ford and Breton collaborated on a special issue of *View* on Duchamp, in which the artist was proclaimed to be the “at the spearhead of all ‘modern’ movements”³⁷⁴ Andre Breton wrote the first extended analysis on *Large Glass* (fig. 83), deciphering its arcane intricacies for readers through Duchamp’s notes catalogued in *The Green Box* (1934).

It is worth briefly detailing the visual mechanics of the sculpture here and its interpretation, as all will offer additional points of access for contextualizing its place in *Vogue*. The work depicts nine uniforms—sleeveless shirts, pants, and triangular skirts—hung on wires in the lower left half of the glass. These uniforms stand for the Bachelors. The wires on which the bachelors hang are connected to a crossbar, where seven cones are also affixed. The crossbar is held in place by a vertical bar attached to three ridged drums, an apparatus Duchamp called the Chocolate Grinder. The upper register of the divided glass depicts a grouping of abstracted shapes in varying curved and hard edges, which Duchamp called the Bride. To the right of the Bride is her halo in a cloud-like form, punctuated in the middle by three unpainted squares. To interpret these cryptic symbols, nine bachelors—longing to consummate with the bride—are thwarted by the fact that though visible she is inaccessible and on a separate glass panel. Structurally unable to fulfill their desires, the bachelors are left to loop, churning a complicated apparatus, in an endless state of wantingness. Filled with divided spheres and allusions to factory

³⁷³ For more on Surrealism in the U.S. in the 1940s, see Martica Sawain, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1995); Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and American Avant-garde, 1920-1950* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995); and Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).

³⁷⁴ Breton, “Lighthouse of the Bride,” *View* 5:1 (March 1945), 6. Quoted in Stamatina Dimakopoulou, “Europe in America: Remapping Broken Cultural Lines,” *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, Vol II, Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, Editors, (Oxford University Press, 2009), 754.

mechanization, Duchamp's sculpture captures the essence of dissatisfaction. "A mechanical, cynical interpretation of the phenomenon of love," Breton wrote in *View*.³⁷⁵

Other voices in *View* weighed in on the interpretation of *Large Glass* as well. Surrealist dealer Julien Levy wrote, speaking about the work's placement in MoMA, "I was fascinated, not merely by the work itself, but by the numerous transformations which were lent to the composition by its accidental background, by the spectators who passed through the museum behind the glass I was regarding."³⁷⁶ This intervention of the spatial and the phenomenological was commensurate with meaning found by Katherine S. Dreier, who owned and loaned the work to MoMA, where it was photographed by Blumenfeld. She and Surrealist painter Roberto Matta Echaurren had written a text on *Large Glass*, advertised in this issue of *View*, in which they argued,

The image is not a thing. It is an act which must be completed by the spectator. In order to be fully conscious of the phenomenon which the image describes, we ourselves must first of all fulfill the act of dynamic perception...Painting-glass-mirror-these are the three substances in dynamic interactions to the final image of the 'Glass.' While we gaze upon the bride—there appears through the glass the image of the room wherein we stand and on the radiation of the mirror design lives the image of our own body.³⁷⁷

This framework of the painting/glass/mirror and of the experiential contract between object and viewer illuminates the relational aspects of *Large Glass*. The image is not a thing, but a mirror both reflecting on viewer subjectivity and simultaneously engendering perceptual disjuncture. These are the ways in which I read *Large Glass* operating in *Vogue*.

But when *Large Glass* was published in *Vogue* after *View*, Dreier wrote to James Sweeney, the director of MoMA, "One cannot blame *Vogue* for they run true to form, but one

³⁷⁵ Andre Breton, "Lighthouse of the Bride," 6-10, 13; the text was originally published the decade before in *Minotaure* 6 (Winter 1935), 45-49.

³⁷⁶ Julian Levy, "Duchampiana," in *View* 5:1 (March 1945), 33-34.

³⁷⁷ Katherine S. Dreier and Roberto Matta Echaurren, *Duchamp's Glass, La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même: An Analytical Reflection* (New York: Museum of Modern Art/Société Anonyme, Inc, 1944).

can only be amazed and shocked that you should advise your Trustees to so flippant and devastating a presentation of important works of art in the collection and loans of the Museum for commercial purposes.”³⁷⁸ Drier was outraged that *Large Glass* was used to market fashion. Where she and Breton were part of the movement to raise awareness of Duchamp for an American audience, this publicity was unacceptable in more overtly commercial spaces like *Vogue*.³⁷⁹ But by looking through the lens of Duchamp on the cover of the fashion magazine, I argue Alexander Liberman and Blumenfeld rewrite loveliness and fantasy in ways that suggest brokenness and disillusionment.³⁸⁰

The Tabloid Aesthetic

Another effect that emerges through *The Large Glass* and Blumenfeld’s images of 1944 and 1945 is a type of violence. Violence was part of Surrealist—and Gothic—strategies to evoke shock and transgression, but by displacing it on the female body, these artists also participated in what could be seen as sadist and misogynistic acts. As I have argued, Blumenfeld’s cover models reflect the tumult of wartime experiences and the conflicting constructions of women’s social

³⁷⁸ Katherine S. Dreier to James Johnson Sweeney (Aug. 13, 1945). James Johnson Sweeney Papers, folder 12, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

³⁷⁹ As Lewis Kachur observed, it was Breton’s attention on the *Large Glass* that helped spur scholarly interest and preservation of Duchamp’s readymades. See Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous*, 92.

On a scholarly work that treats more generatively the relationship between Surrealism and the Fashion press, see Hannah Crawforth, “Surrealism and the Fashion Magazine,” *American Periodicals* 14, No. 2 (2004). Crawforth argues that Surrealist magazines such as the sumptuous *Minotaure* adopted fashion magazine conventions, courted similar advertisers, and found like-minded temporality with the ephemerality of the fashion press.

³⁸⁰ Choosing to focus on Duchamp on the cover was a different strain of Surrealism from *Vogue*’s previous coverage of the movement under Mehemed Agha, which had been marked by the spectacular antics of Salvatore Dali throughout much of the late 1930s. Dali became entrenched in American culture in this period, from the opening of the popular Museum of Modern Art’s 1936 historicizing exhibition, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* to his design of a pavilion at the 1939 World’s Fair in New York. This is not to say that Agha wasn’t critical of the antics of Dali and Late Surrealism, but rather was resigned to feature it in the magazine. He wrote frankly of Surrealism’s commercialization in “Surrealism, or the Purple Cow,” *Vogue* 88.9 (Nov. 1, 1936), 61, 131.

body, but there are also darker undercurrents in distorting the female form, collapsing desire and death.³⁸¹

Where the body is fractured in Blumenfeld's July cover, the body bleeds in his cover in the March 15, 1945 issue of the magazine (fig. 84). The image depicts a hazy rendering of a woman in a green hat, her hands in an odd cupping gesture in front of her so that they mirror each other. Red cellophane in the shape of a cross is laid over her body. The top of the red cross hits at her palms, as if the flesh had been cut. The opening of her gloves slit vertically down her wrists resembles flayed skin. The cover advertises: "Do your part for the Red Cross." While the issue urges women to support war relief—perhaps through the giving of blood—the effect of Blumenfeld's graphic cover is a stylized, yet ghastly image of bloodletting and self or imposed harm.³⁸²

That *Vogue* published such a cover recalls an internal Condé Nast debate on whether violent images were appropriate for women to see in the fashion magazine. Between 1941 and mid-1942, *Vogue* exhaustively studied the correlation between its wartime coverage and its sales. Finding that covers advertising war news did not sell well, *Vogue* eliminated any mention of it on its covers but kept war news on its inside pages. With this policy, Condé Nast amended his statements from 1941 (discussed in Chapter 2), which had urged for more attention to the war. He wrote it was a "mistake" to feature the war "at the expense of fashion." Nast explained his desire to cover the war had been "caused by my panic at the thought that, during the stress and

³⁸¹ On this trend in fashion, see, for example, Rebecca Arnold, "The Brutalized Body," *Fashion Theory* 3, no. 4 (1999), 487–502 and her book, *Fashion, Desire, and Anxiety: Image and Morality in the 20th Century* (New Brunswick, N.J. Rutgers University Press, 2001).

³⁸² Blumenfeld gave a small explanation of how he created the cover photograph: "The model is standing behind a big piece of ground glass, on which a red cross of Cellophane is taped. An attempt to create a bold poster effect for a cover." See Liberman, ed. *The Art and Technique of Color Photography*, 219.

privations of a horrible war, VOGUE was a periodical given over to fashions and the less important things in life.”³⁸³

Then Art director Mehemed Agha criticized Nast for what he called a bait and switch of featuring the war in the inside body of *Vogue* but not on its cover:

The time has come...for us to look the situation straight in the face, and decide whether we shouldn't abandon the compromise solution which we seem to have accepted, and whether it isn't bad business and a bad service to the reader to take war labels off the covers but leave the contents of the package the same as it was previously. Apparently the readers leaf through the book before buying it, and if they get the general impression that this is an interesting magazine—full of pretty fashions, glamorous photographs, and happy and well-dressed people—they buy it. However, if they find an issue full of people crawling under automobiles, and girls at the Red Cross counting artificial legs; pages full of staring children and pathetic refugee women—they won't buy such an issue, when they are in the mood for evening dresses and night clubs. There is nothing unpatriotic or bad about it. A magazine which deals with the pleasanter side of life has a very important role in upholding civilian morale, and if the readers prefer evening dresses to artificial legs, it is the magazine's duty to give them what they want.³⁸⁴

Agha found giving the reader glamour was not unpatriotic, but another facet of wartime work, like keeping one's beauty routine — the lifting of morale. For him, fashion and grim realities could not coexist for the magazine to be commercially successful. Furthermore, Agha further criticized the magazine's editors for their lack of commitment to fashion: “in several instances, there is evidence of the editors being somewhat ashamed of talking about dresses when immeasurably more important issues are at stake.”³⁸⁵

³⁸³ Memo from Nast to editors, July 17, 1942, Condé Nast Archives, New York.

³⁸⁴ Memo from Dr. Agha to Nast, August 11, 1942. Condé Nast Archives, New York, New York.

³⁸⁵ Memo from Dr. Agha to Nast, August 11, 1942. Condé Nast Archives, New York, New York. In response to Nast's memos on the war, copy editor Marcelle McGuane wrote, “I wonder if we are not entering on times that are pretty much unblazed trails. Not only must we profit by the experience your record shows, but perhaps we ought to do more bold experimenting...Medicine is one of these. With so many young women becoming Nurses' Aides (right in this office, there are several), Medicine would seem to be a new subject we should try. Finance is another field I think we could do more about it. And it wouldn't have to be dull either. An article on Inflation would certainly be interesting to women...” Memo dated August 10, 1942.

Disagreements between Agha, Condé Nast, and other staff members—as well as Nast’s death in September 1942—would cause Agha to leave *Vogue* months after writing this memo.³⁸⁶ Although Alexander Liberman had only been employed at the magazine since 1941, he was promoted to art director.³⁸⁷ The Red Cross image was emblematic of Liberman’s approach to covers: explicit reference to the war-time content along with an artistic, mediated image reflecting the magazine’s interior pages. As the art director for Lucien Vogel’s Paris-based, news photographic magazine *Vu*, Liberman married photojournalism interior content with photomontage covers, ones he often designed under the name d’Alexandre. For example, one of his photomontage covers critically comments on the rise and militarization of the Nazis, with the barrel of a gun pointing at the reader’s space, implicating the viewer with its great threat (fig. 85).

Liberman featured more war coverage and images in *Vogue*, particularly through Lee Miller’s photojournalistic work as discussed in Chapter 2, as well as work by Mary Jean Kempner, Edward Steichen, and Cecil Beaton dispatched around the world.³⁸⁸ For the covers, Liberman often turned to Blumenfeld, whose layered experimentations worked like the photomontage. Blumenfeld’s covers interpreted the magazine’s interior, war-time content, echoing its violence with stylistic excess.

³⁸⁶ A letter from Condé Nast to Edna Woolman Chase dated April 24, 1941 alludes to a falling out between Agha and Nast. Also, editor Jessica Daves outlined Agha’s negative features in a memo to Nast on April 29, 1941: “Lack of understanding of the whole American scene, failure to develop new artists and lack of authoritative direction of photographers, apparent present inability to turn his unquestioned talents toward making a magazine which the changing conditions of our world demand.” See Condé Nast Archives, New York.

³⁸⁷ Edna Woolman Chase wrote of her concern about whether he should be given the title of head after such a short tenure at the magazine: “There certainly is no one else at the moment in the art department who has any capacity beyond the mere laying out of material, unless it is this new man Liberman, whom I don’t know at all and I don’t think that you have much evidence in his ability. If he is the man you think should succeed Agha it seems to me we should have a chance to watch his work under Agha for six months or a year before coming to such a drastic conclusion.” Letter dated April 28, 1941. Condé Nast Archives, New York. This would coordinate with the timeline of which Agha would eventually leave and Liberman assume his post in 1943.

³⁸⁸ After a brief stint studying architecture at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, Liberman became a part-time assistant for Russian graphic artist Adolphe Cassandre in 1931 before joining *Vu* in 1932. On his work across the fine arts, see Barbara Rose, *Alexander Liberman* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1981).

Vogue's covers coincide with the most violent era of photojournalism, as the U.S. Government lifted its ban on atrocity photographs in 1943. Liberman and Blumenfeld's violent imagery, I believe, complements other modes of visual culture in this period that responded to this violence. Hollywood, for instance, became bleaker in the wake of wartime content invading the culture.³⁸⁹ Films responded to wartime imagery, as censorship became less strict of Hollywood films. As Sheri Chinen Biesen writes, "The sex, violence, sensational crime topics, and tabloid-style cinematic realism of wartime noir films benefited from changing patterns of censorship....newsreels and other propaganda openly depicted combat violence, war crimes, and atrocities, undermining Hollywood's moral patrol of the screen."³⁹⁰

The tabloids Biesen references—a journalistic category encompassing various types of newspapers that included sensational stories of crime and celebrity—are significant to explore along with *Vogue*, as they were hybrid news and voyeuristic media. These publications embraced a dark, brutal, and often cynical effect. Weegee was the tabloid's most infamous photographer-reporter in the 1930s and 1940s. The pseudonym of Arthur Felling, Weegee became well-known for his grisly freelance news photographs of crime scenes, car crashes, and sordid violence in New York. Using a police radio, Weegee often arrived at the scene of the crime before the law enforcement, inspiring the nickname from the Ouija board game, where he must have been mysteriously foretold of the crime. Weegee was noted for his haphazard, snapshot style and use of a flash that imparted a stark coldness and lack of empathy onto his pictures, such as in his photograph of a murdered sailor strewn on the street surrounded by bystanders in the political

³⁸⁹ Sheri Benson argues the increasing graphic nature of newsreels and newspapers helped contribute to the loosening of 1930s industry censorship of certain violent and sexual content and the development of Film Noir. See Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Blackout*, 5-10. Violence in Film Noir was also the legacy of Surrealism. To articulate this new genre, Borde and Chaumeton even incorporated a line from a beloved Surrealist poet, Lautreamont, as an epigraph for their study: "The bloody channels through which one pushes logic to the breaking point." See James Naremore, *More than Night: Film Noir and its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 19.

³⁹⁰ Biesen, *Blackout*, 7.

tabloid *PM* (fig. 86). Weegee's notoriety was so strong at this moment (both in his self-aggrandizement and the popularity of his pictures) that he published a book on his work, *Naked City*, in 1945.³⁹¹ His photographs also received aesthetic recognition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1944.³⁹²

The experience of reading and consuming the tabloids affected Blumenfeld and the ways in which he approached situations of violence. During his first visit to New York in 1939, when disoriented from losing his way in the city, he recalled:

I saw a sight which made my photographer's heart race: lying face down on the steps leading up a brownstone was a man in a tuxedo but with no trousers, blood dripping from his naked backside. Above this floated a kind of halo. Passers-by were passing him by without a glance. It was just like in the pink *Police Gazette*. As always happens at crucial moments I didn't have my camera. I'm not a photojournalist. Forgetting how tired I was, I sprinted into the hotel and within fifteen minutes I was back there with my camera, just in time to see an ambulance drive away. Only a pool of blood was left of this vanished splendour.³⁹³

Blumenfeld initially saw the scene as an image—something out of a police tabloid he associated with American cultural production. He disconnected it from its horror to objectify its spectacle. We might then read his images in light of how violence and splendor worked together, both repulsive and yet pleasurable. These alternating sensations are the affect of the Gothic mode, where criticality and consumption live in the same space.

Liberman also recalled looking to the tabloid press as inspiration for his graphic design. He later recalled of his compositions, “At *Vogue*, I wanted to break the design obsession, so I defended a more journalistic approach—rougher lettering, no white space, crowded pages,

³⁹¹ V. Penelope Pelizzon and Nancy M. West write about the uptick in hyper-masculine, “hard-boiled” autobiographies in this period, and there are clear overlaps in hyperbole, language, masculinity, and tone between *Naked City* and Blumenfeld's *Eye to I*. See Chapter 5 “‘Crime is My Oyster’: Weegee's Narrative Mobility,” in *Tabloid, Inc: Crimes, Newspapers, Narratives* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 2010), 145-178.

³⁹² MoMA featured images such as “Brooklyn School Children See Gambler Murdered in Street. Oct. 8, 1941,” “Tenement Fire, Brooklyn. Dec. 14, 1939,” and “Woman Shot from Canon, N.Y.C. 1943” in its *Art in Progress: 15th Anniversary Exhibitions*.

³⁹³ Blumenfeld, *Eye to I*, 268.

messier layouts... I also thought it would be provocative and exciting to use practically the same type as a tabloid newspaper in this very different context.”³⁹⁴ These tabloid allusions can be seen in Lee Miller’s gritty, lucid reportage, which enabled Liberman to alter *Vogue*’s graphic identity. The way in which Liberman composed Miller’s “Nazi Harvest” in June 1945 (discussed in Chapter two), filled with a bold, hard-boiled headline, captions, and pictures of both death and the everyday, recalls the gridded compositional structure and visual content of *PM*, where Weegee photographed (see, for example, fig. 87).

In the *Vogue* layout, a small figure of justice in the top left of the page, holding a scale and sword, lords over the German people depicted below her. Organized around brash titles such as “Homeless,” “Humiliation,” “Shame,” “Punishment,” and “Suicide,” the images suggest a sort of photographic justice against the Germans after the end of the war in Europe.³⁹⁵ In one image, Miller captured a German nurse laying back against the side of a bullet-punctured leather chair, her arms wrapped around her stomach, her face waxen and skeletal in the light. The caption relays that she is the “pretty daughter” of a Nazi official, “a victim of Nazi philosophy,” who has killed herself rather than surrender.³⁹⁶ Diagonal to this image is Miller’s representation of beaten, kneeling German soldiers (discussed in Chapter 2), frozen in place by a flash. Miller’s image here corresponds with the unsentimental photographs captured by Weegee in *PM*, such as

³⁹⁴ As quoted in Norberto Angeletti and Alberto Oliva, *In Vogue: The Illustrated History of the World’s Most Famous Fashion Magazine* (New York: Rizzoli, 2012), 134.

³⁹⁵ The captions read: “Homeless: like women of the German-invaded countries, German women now cook in the ruins.” “Humiliation: While Allied soldiers use bridge, German officers, boots pulled off, wade river.” “Shame: Pilloried Nazi labeled as food-thief.” “Destruction: The Nazi shrine city, Nuremberg, smashed, like Rotterdam.”

³⁹⁶ *Vogue* chose to mold her into a double figure of the *Vogue* model—a warning on the dangers of ideology. Miller’s contact sheets in her archives reveal other images of the dead woman and relay the larger spatial context of this death, in which the woman was surrounded by other members of her family who killed themselves in a town hall in Leipzig, Germany. On these images taken in April 1945, see Patricia Allmer, “Lee Miller’s Revenge on Fascist Culture.” *History of Photography* 36:4 (September 2012), 397-413. *Life* magazine also featured a similar story of collective self-inflicted death, detailing the decision and fate of a garrison soldier who killed his wife, daughter, infant son, and himself rather than await the American occupation of Frankfurt. The magazine quoted Martin Niemöller, who presided over their funerals, “There you have four real victims of propaganda.” See *Life* vol. 18, no. 19. (May 7, 1945), 69.

“Gunman Doesn’t Want his Picture Taken” (fig. 88). In Weegee’s photograph, police detectives force a bloody and evasive Anthony Esposito, indicted for murder of a businessman and police officer, to pose for Weegee’s camera.

How interesting, then, to find that Liberman featured Weegee’s photographs in 1945 in *Vogue*. Liberman published a full-page photograph by Weegee to celebrate V-J (Victory in Japan) day in its September 1, 1945 issue (fig. 89). In the image, a crowd of children set fire to sawdust in the shape of a V for Victory. Their arms shoot into the air displaying Victory Vs in miniature. Yet the fire licks up into the air in a disconcerting manner. Two friends hold the central boy, dressed in a white shirt, back from the engulfing flames. One cannot help but connect the flames with the mass incineration wrought by the Atomic bombs dropped on the peoples of Hiroshima and Nagasaki the month prior. Readers experienced mixed feelings of relief, horror, and panic as one war ended and another, more terrifying, potentially lurked in the distance. The text for the article adjacent to the picture pleads, “For one moment, let the Atomic Age wait, with its inexpressible terrors and unexpressed gains. It has waited for two billion years, it can wait sixty seconds more before its fearful cosmic outlines take shape before our eyes.”³⁹⁷ *Vogue* wrote what it perceived to be the crossing of the threshold into the Nuclear Age. The children in Weegee’s photograph do not know how close they are to the fire.

Weegee’s image captures the anxiety and dread within the shift to the Atomic Age in the summer of 1945. While scholars have made the associations between Weegee and Film Noir, no one has yet looked at the ways in which tabloid aesthetics became part of *Vogue*, infiltrating its

³⁹⁷ “In New York - Victory Vs,” *Vogue* 106.4 (Sep 1, 1945): 116, 117.

visual language and its tone with a focus on criminals, hard-boiled headlines, blunt type, and violent photographic pages.³⁹⁸

By reproducing tabloid style, nodding to publications like *PM* and its features by Weegee, Liberman adds a coda to the criticisms *PM*'s publisher, Ralph Ingersoll, leveled at *Vogue* in 1940, as discussed in Chapter 2. Liberman roughed up what Ingersoll complained was *Vogue*'s anti-political "smooth, white coated pages," as if he needed a new skin to tell these wartime stories. Sampling the tabloids joins Liberman's decision to feature Marcel Duchamp through the lens of Erwin Blumenfeld on its July 1945 cover, and, ultimately, it informs how fashion photography altered its body to coexist with the images by Lee Miller and others sent from Europe and Asia in 1944 and 1945.

Vogue's visual culture in the mid-1940s informs a Gothic network circulating in American cultural production. Blumenfeld and Liberman suited the violent taste of this moment, while also providing a Gothic mirror onto its social body. As Ann B. Tracy summarized, the Gothic is "characterized by a chronic sense of apprehension and the premonition of impending but unidentified disaster...Nobody is entirely safe; nothing is secure. The Gothic world is quintessentially the fallen world, the vision of fallen man, living in fear and alienation."³⁹⁹

In describing Blumenfeld's work, Alexander Liberman does not talk about the ways in which the photographer captured the mood of wartime, simply calling him the "most graphic of all the photographers."⁴⁰⁰ No doubt Liberman described Blumenfeld's photographs as graphic given his penchant for the language of modernist graphic design: the visual punch of high

³⁹⁸ See, for example, Blu Tirohl, "Forensic Photography, Film Noir, and Fellig: Scenes Excavated by the Night Prowler." *Photography and Culture* Vol. 5, no. 2 (July 2012), p. 135-148.

³⁹⁹ Ann B. Tracy, *The Gothic Novel 1790--1830: Plot Summaries and Index to Motifs* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1981), 3.

⁴⁰⁰ Liberman, Quoted in Norberto Angeletti and Alberto Oliva, eds. *In Vogue: The Illustrated History of the World's Most Famous Fashion Magazine* (New York: Rizzoli, 2006,) 160.

contrast, bold color, and simple backgrounds evident in many of his images discussed here. Moreover, his photographs were more like photomontages in the ways in which he layered surfaces together. But the violence embedded in the word graphic could perhaps better describe the ways in which Blumenfeld turned inside-out anxiety and fear, as well as his disturbing critique of the healthy, stable body. The distortions he applied to the female form could not be completely disconnected from the images of the war wounded, the concentration camp photographs, or the infinite crosses of the Japanese burial grounds of which his work shared space. Blumenfeld's fashion work in 1944 and 1945 is ultimately one of critical protest of stability and wholeness, rooted in the European Avant-Garde through processes such as collage and photomontage. But within mass culture, we can interpret Blumenfeld's work in *Vogue* as part of a larger Gothic revival, where traditional horror visual conventions such as shadows and distortions can also speak of exploring boundaries of social identity and psychology. His aesthetic experiments speak to hauntings, border crossings, and fear of the unknown—themes that would have held meaning for millions of *Vogue* readers in the last years of the Second World War.

Blumenfeld's images lived in a space where Liberman sampled the visual vocabulary of the tabloids, becoming "rougher," "crowded," and "messier." Where wartime documentary shared space with fashion, so reality blurred with fantasy. *Vogue* delved into this dark terrain of graphic visual culture. Violence began to inform the language of fashion photography, which in later decades would lose its social context to form an aesthetic in its own right.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰¹ I am referring to fashion photography that would emerge in the 1970s and beyond by such photographers as Helmut Newton and Guy Bourdin.

Figures



Fig. 1: Claude-Louis Desrais, Jeune Dame Coeffée au Hérisson, Fashion Plate from *Galerie des Modes et Costumes Français, Dessinés D'Après Nature*, 1778-1787

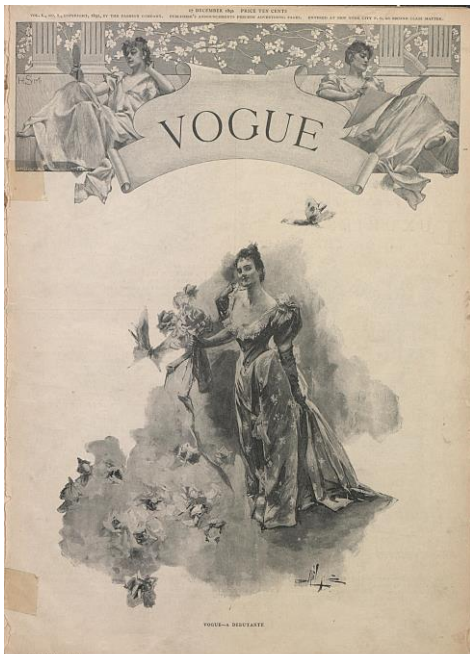


Fig. 2: A. B. Wenzel, *Vogue*, December 17, 1892



Fig. 3: Helen Dryden, *Vogue*, October 1922

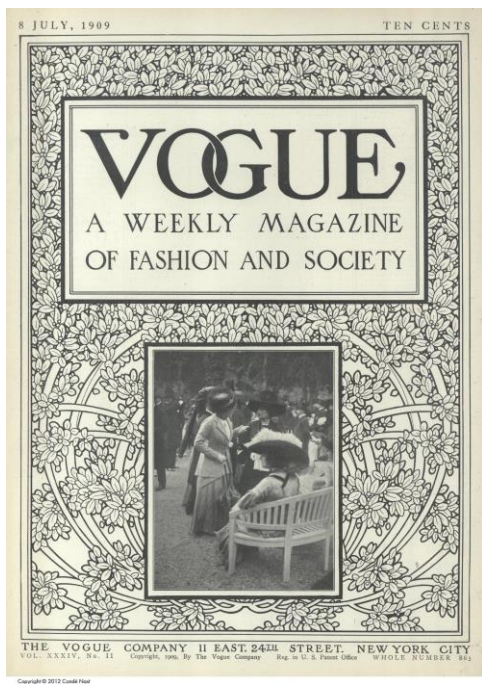


Fig. 4: *Vogue*, July 8, 1909



Fig. 5: Adolph de Meyer, *Vogue*, September 1920



Fig. 6: Edward Steichen, *Vogue*, June 1, 1924



Fig. 7: Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Swing*, 1767

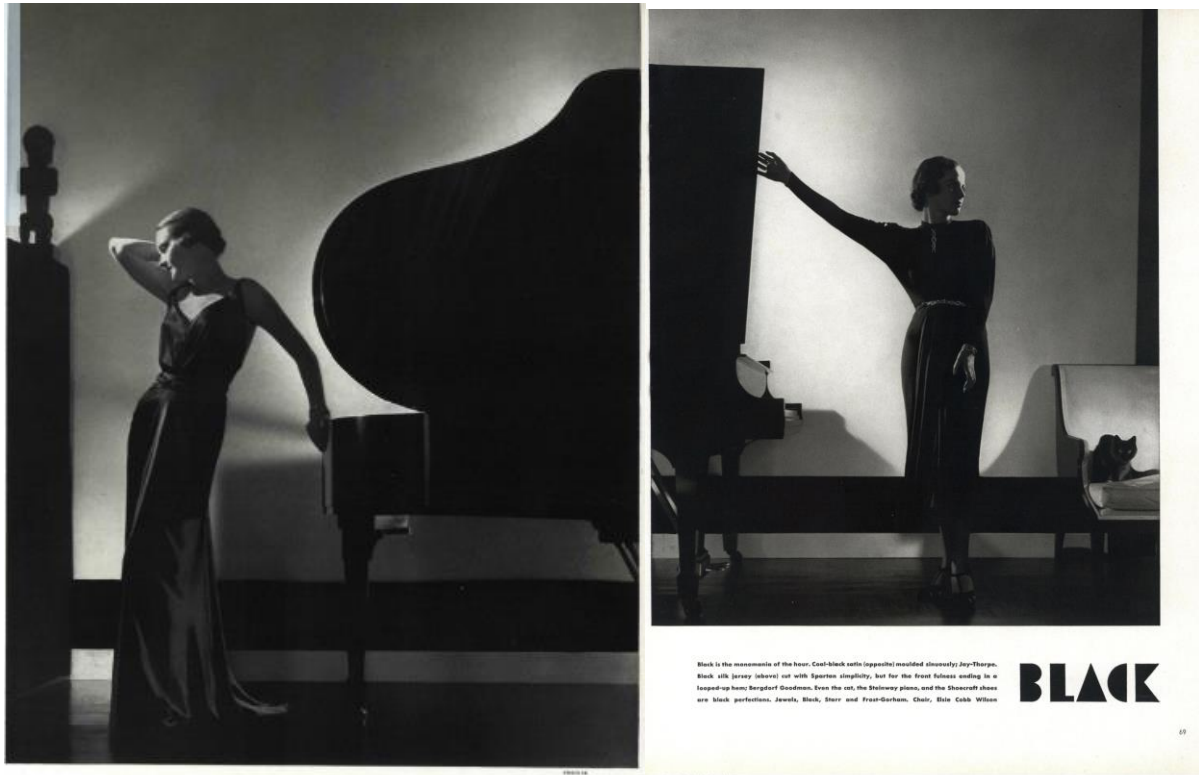


Fig. 8: Edward Steichen, *Vogue*, November 1, 1935



Fig. 9: Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, August 15, 1934



Fig. 10: Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, December 15, 1937



Fig. 11: Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, December 15, 1938

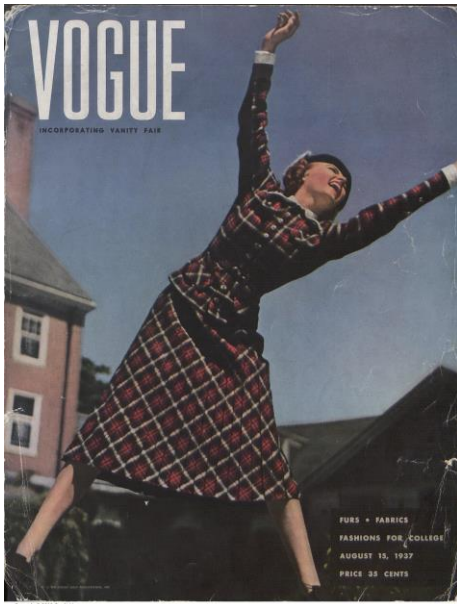


Fig. 12: Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, August 15, 1937

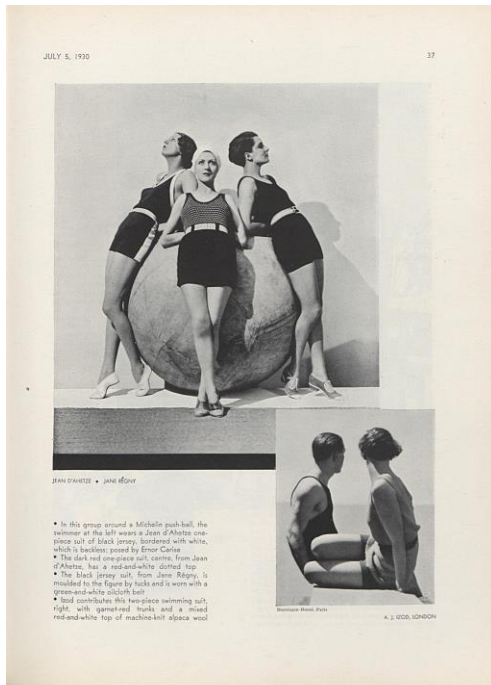


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Fig. 13: Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, September 15, 1931



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Fig. 14: George Hoyningen-Huene, *Vogue*, July 5, 1930



Fig. 17: Weegee, *PM*, July 22, 1940

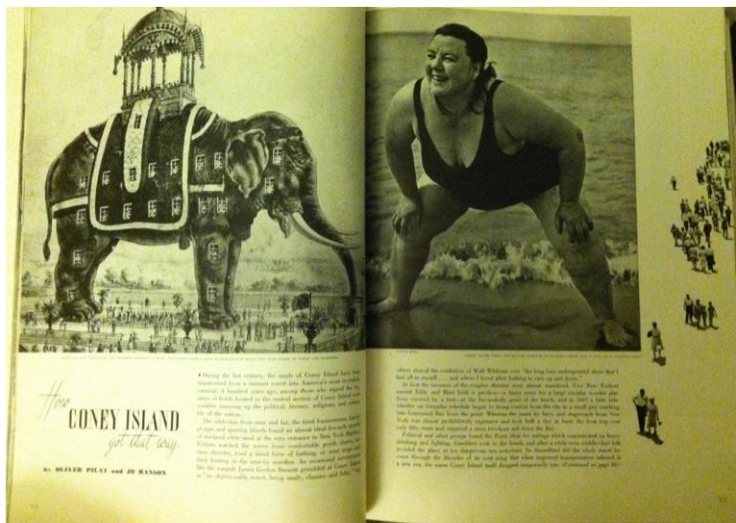


Fig. 18: Lisette Model, *Harper's Bazaar*, July 1941



Fig. 21 Dorothea Lange, *San Francisco News*, March 10, 1936

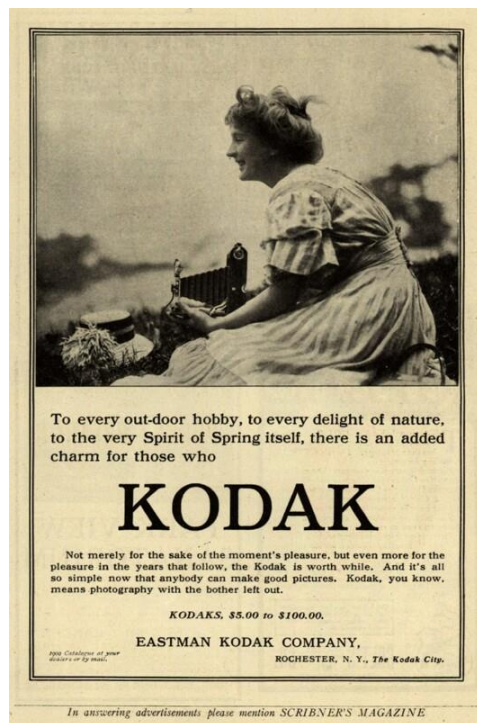
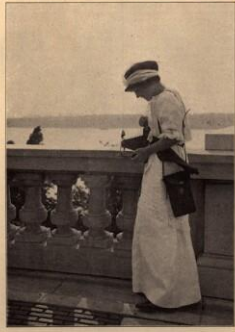


Fig. 22. Kodak Advertisement, 1909

If it isn't an Eastman, it isn't a Kodak.



The Kodak Girl

Every trip that is worth taking, is worth a Kodak story. The city girl's trip to the country, the country girl's trip to the city, any girl's trip to the sea-shore or the mountains—in all of these are picture stories of the interesting places and the still more interesting people.

And picture taking with a Kodak or Brownie is very simple—and less expensive than you think.

Catalogue free at your dealer's or by mail.

EASTMAN KODAK COMPANY,
ROCHESTER, N. Y., *The Kodak City.*

Fig. 23: Kodak Advertisement, 1914

KODAKERY



A MAGAZINE
FOR AMATEUR
PICTURE MAKERS

FEBRUARY 1931 FIVE CENTS

Fig. 24. *Kodakery*, February 1931



Fig. 27: *Vogue*, March 15, 1927



Fig. 28: Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, January 1, 1933



Fig. 29: Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, May 15, 1935



Fig. 30. Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, June 15, 1936



Fig. 31: *Vogue*, December 15, 1938

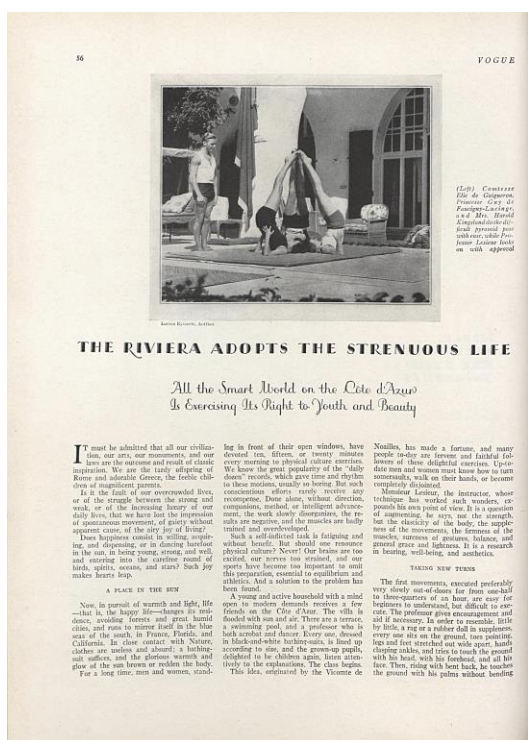


Fig. 32: *Vogue*, November 24, 1928

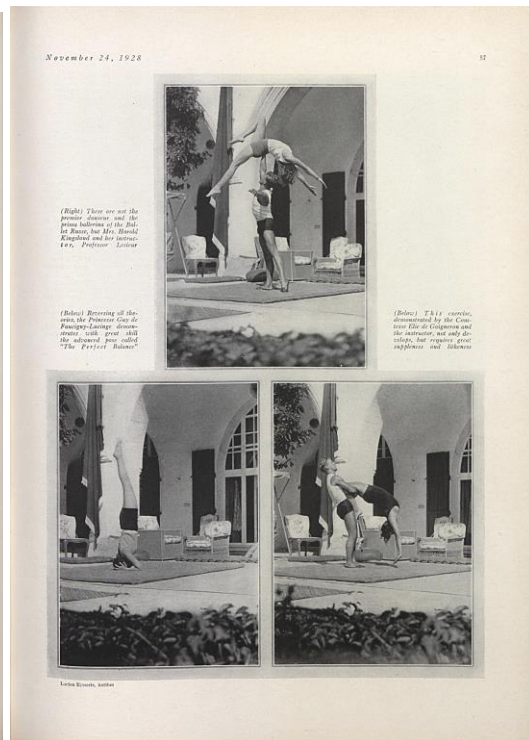
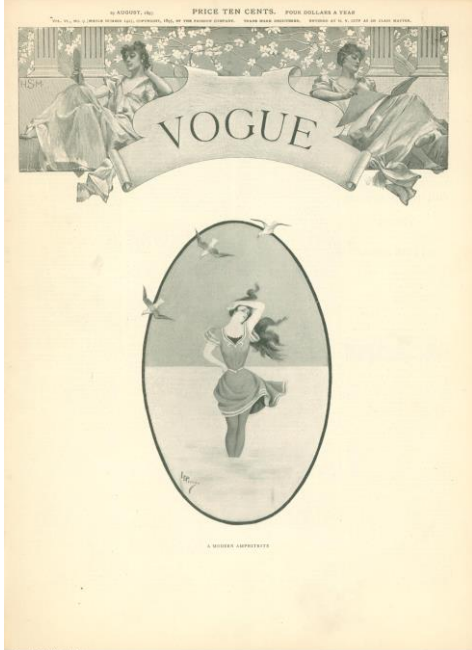




Fig. 33: Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, February 15, 1933



Fig. 34: Dorothea and Maryal Knox at Rye Beach, NY, ca.1900.



Copyright © 2012 Corbis Inc.
 Fig. 35: *Vogue*, August 29, 1895



Copyright © 2012 Corbis Inc.
 Fig. 36: *Vogue*, June 1, 1920



Fig. 37: Edward Steichen, *Vogue*, January 15, 1926

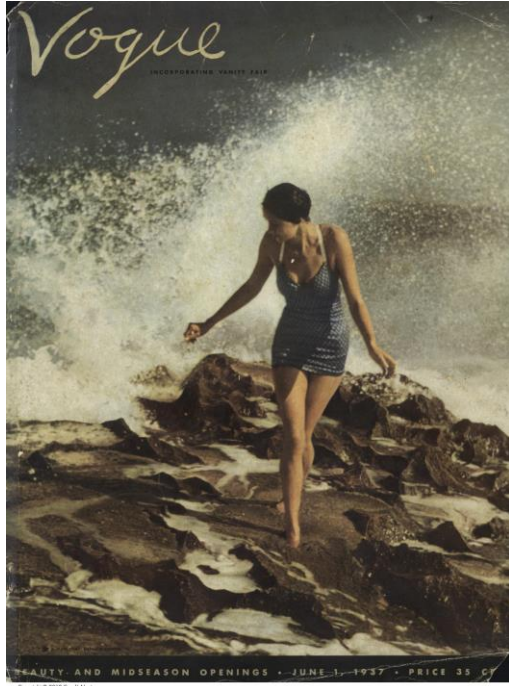


Fig. 38: Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, June 1, 1937

18 VOGUE

Glamour begins with the yarn

THE fashion of the beach hour and the function of "Lastex" yarn are one and the same thing. Most form-fitting suits will be worn this year than all other types combined, thanks to the fit, comfort and control that go with that famous stretch. The mullet is in business suits, a mixture of cotton, rayon and "Lastex" yarns, with three-color dog-wood print. Blouses will go overboard for it in royal blue, ochre and black. Brasieres will simply love it in coral, green and brown. Adjustable shoulder straps and the important night line. The beach clops are made with "Lastex" yarn, too. You will find this and other styles by all of America's leading suit makers, made with "Lastex" yarn, at better stores everywhere. Just remember that the stretch technique of "Lastex" yarn functions equally well in all types of woven or knitted fabrics, whether silk, cotton, wool or rayon. When you choose swimwear make sure of that figure by making sure of that "Lastex" yarn label. A word to the wise!

Lastex
 THE MIRACLE YARN THAT MAKES THINGS FIT...
 An elastic yarn manufactured exclusively by United States Rubber Company
 1790 Broadway New York City

Copyright © 2012 Conde Nast

Fig. 39: United States Rubber Company Advertisement, *Vogue*, May 1, 1939

12 VOGUE

Socialites Three set out to Sea ... in Ocean Contoured Swim Suits

MISS CORINA WAICHT
 one of the new arrivals
 and another one in New
 York, Miss Corina Waicht
 is shown in a new design
 of Ocean Contoured Swim
 Suits. Miss Waicht is the
 author of the new design
 and is shown in the new
 design.

MISS MARGUERITE VOLK
 one of the new arrivals
 and another one in New
 York, Miss Marguerite Volk
 is shown in a new design
 of Ocean Contoured Swim
 Suits. Miss Volk is the
 author of the new design
 and is shown in the new
 design.

MISS T. DENNY
 BURKHAN is
 one of the new arrivals
 and another one in New
 York, Miss T. Denny
 is shown in a new design
 of Ocean Contoured Swim
 Suits. Miss Denny is the
 author of the new design
 and is shown in the new
 design.

★ From Toni Frisell's Photo Album of new Pacific Beach fashions, we pick three of the season's most distinguished young society women. And, sure indication of the way the Fashion wind blows, each is wearing a new Ocean contoured swim suit. Slim, sleek and perfect — these new suits are all made with Lastex yarns, with special contour features at bust, waist, thigh, crotch and under arm... insuring its perfection this comfort at every point. The tide is toward Ocean... get in the swim with a new contoured suit.

Ocean
 CONTOURED SWIM SUITS

All the best suits at your favorite store or write to us for the name of your nearest dealer.
 Ocean Bathing Suit Company, Inc., 1428 Broadway, New York

Fig. 40: Ocean Bathing Suit Co. Advertisement, *Vogue*, May 15, 1938



Fig. 41: Toni Frissell, *Vogue*, Jul 1, 1941

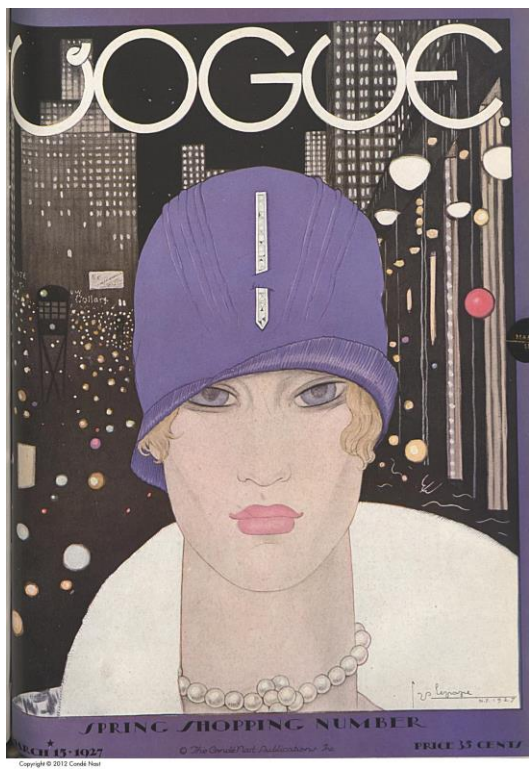


Fig. 42 Georges Lepape, *Vogue*, March 15, 1927



Fig. 43 Edward Steichen, *Vogue*, September 1, 1928



Fig. 44 Lee Miller, *Vogue*, September 15, 1940



Fig. 45 Lee Miller, *Vogue*, July 15, 1941

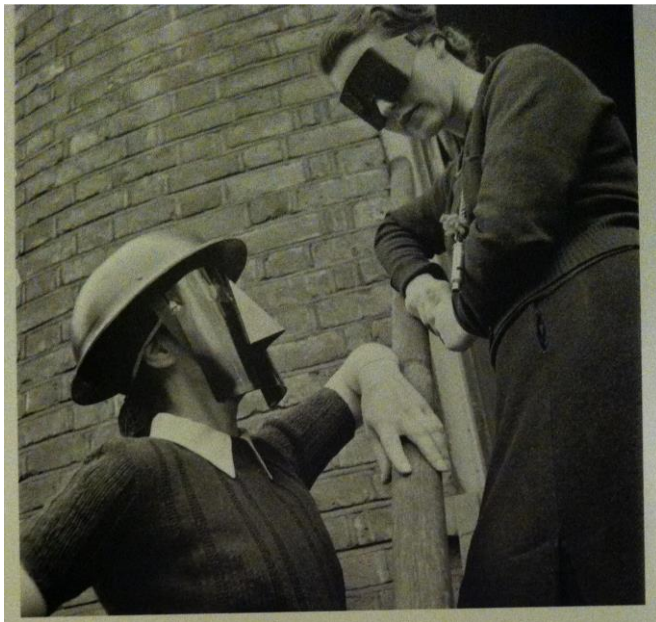


Fig. 46 Lee Miller, Fire Mask and Eye Shield Variant Photograph, 1941



Fig. 47 *Vogue*, October 15, 1940



Fig. 48 Lee Miller, *Revenge on Culture*, 1941

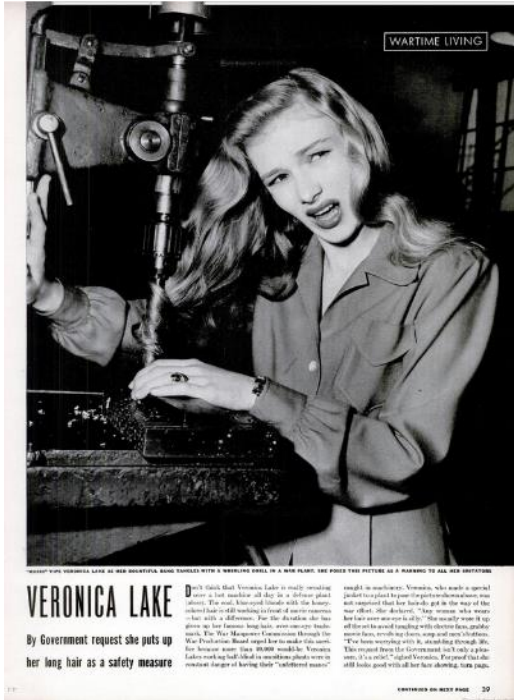


Fig. 49 *Life*, March 1943



Fig. 50 Lee Miller, *Vogue*, August 1, 1944

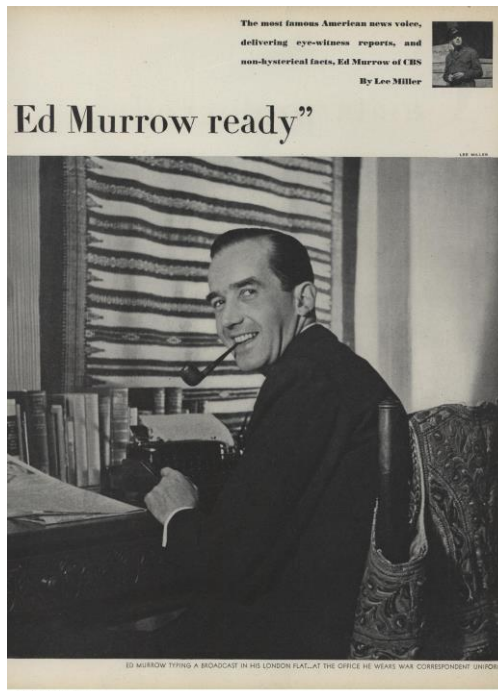




Fig. 51 Lee Miller, *Vogue*, September 15, 1944



Fig. 52 Robert Capa, *Life*, June 19, 1944

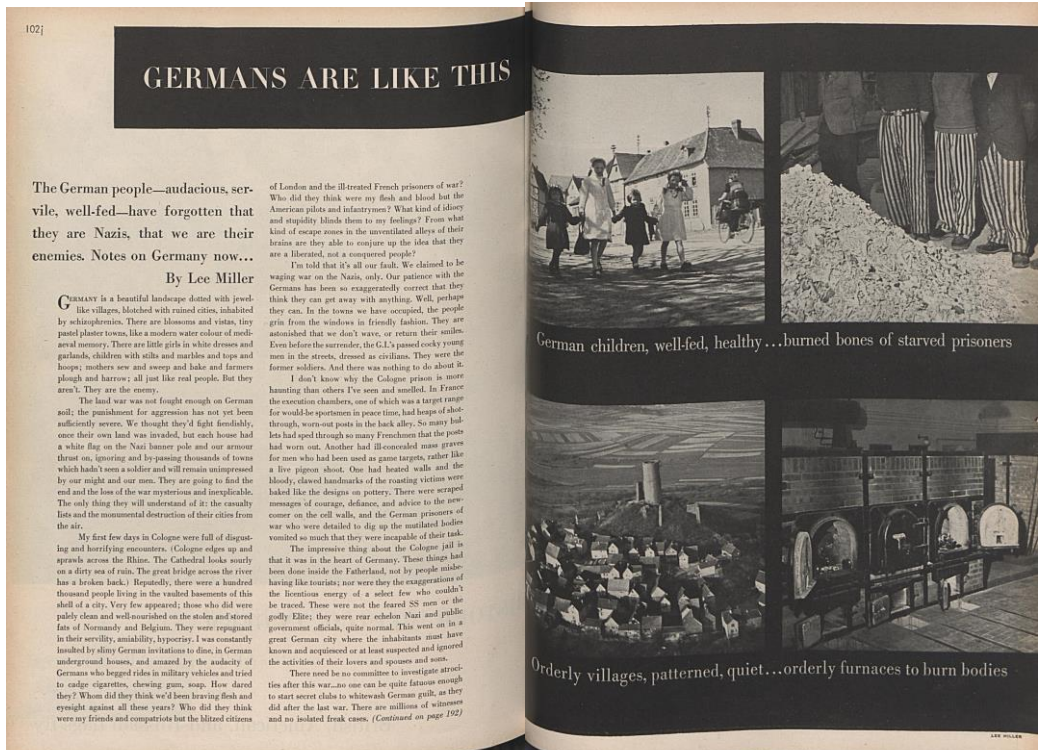


Fig. 59 Lee Miller, *Vogue*, June 1945



Fig. 60 Lee Miller, *Vogue*, June 1945



Fig. 61 Lee Miller, *Vogue*, June 1945



Fig. 62 Lee Miller, Selection of Contact Sheet from Buchenwald, Germany, 1945



Fig. 63 Lee Miller, Selection of Contact Sheet from Buchenwald, Germany, 1945

—the war that is won

of, but which housed and buried so many thousands of people, within easy walking distance of home for such hardy rucksack bearers. Much had already been cleared up by that time: that is, there were no warm bodies lying around, and all those likely to drop dead were in hospital. Everyone had already had a meal or two and were being sick in consequence—because of shrank stomachs and emotion. There is a diet arranged for them now, very similar to what they have been receiving, in texture, although the soup now contains vegetables and meat extracts. I had seen what they had, that emergency day, and you'd hesitate to put it in your pig bucket.

The six hundred bodies stacked in the courtyard of the crematorium because they had run out of coal the last five days had been carried away until only a hundred were left; and the splashes of death from a wooden potato masher had been washed, because the place had to be disinfected; and the bodies on the whipping stalls were diminished instead of almost dead men who could feel but not react. The subterranean hospital was empty and seriously working, but the one hundred and fifty who died every day were still being shored into a room off the ward.

Among the official camp papers strewn and slobbered around were the prison accounts . . . not in marks or labour-hours but in the number of deaths. Each month, since the first of the year, was in the five thousands, mostly washing six. For April the sheet only included two weeks; it scabbled in the six hundreds, and that figure was balamable in very peculiar ways. It was evident that the trial balance would be a vulgar flip by the fact that there were more bodies stacked in the yard than claimed in the invoices.

For many years we listened to tales of shortage of fuel. We quoted engineers' and ministers' speeches about the Luftwaffe grinding itself to a scrap because there wasn't enough fuel . . . that women baked or cooked twice a week because there wasn't enough fuel . . . that they froze and had chilblains and went to the forests to chop because there wasn't enough fuel. But we never thought that they'd be unable to conceal the physical evidence of their misdeeds because of that lack. God knows, they tried hard enough in some places; but here they were prevented from incinerating the French, the Belgians, the Russians, the Poles, the British, the Americans, and twenty-two more countries who contributed their most innocent or their most cynical, their most talented, most industrious and unlucky to the long cord of bodies—because of lack of fuel.

The first few days in Cologne were full of disgusting and horrifying encounters. There were a reputed hundred thousand people living in the walled basements of the shell of a city. Very few appeared at a time and then they were repugnant in their servility, hypocrisy and amiability. The underground network of tabbed cellars vomited out once women, palely done and well nourished on the stored and stolen fats of Normandy and Belgium. I was constantly irritated and insulted by slimy invitations to dine in German underground homes and animals by the amulicity of Germans to beg a ride in a military vehicle, try to smoke cigarettes, chewing gum or soap like the kids we spoiled in France.

How dumb they? Who did they think we'd been leaving flesh and eyesight against, all these years in England? Who did they think were my friends and compatriots but the blitzed citizens of London and the ill-treated French prisoners of war? Who did they think were my flesh and blood but the (Continued on page 89)

- 1ST: HORRORS OF A CONCENTRATION CAMP, UNFORGETTABLE, UNFORGIVABLE
- 2ND: LUDWIGSHAVEN: NICHIPHANE OF CHEMICAL WATS TOSSED BY BOMBING
- 3RD: AACHEN, BLOODING CATHEDRAL AND MELTED TOWERS OF THE KATHMUS

LEE MILLER WAS AT THE LINKLUP—PHOTOGRAPHED THE HANGING, HEFTY RUSSIAN WOMEN SOLDIERS, THE FLAGGED DEERMAN, THE BRATON; THE CAPTURED GERMAN OFFICERS WHO HAD TO CROSS BARFOOT BY A FORD IN THE RIVER



A BROKEN BRIDGE BETWEEN MANZ AND LUDWIGSHAVEN

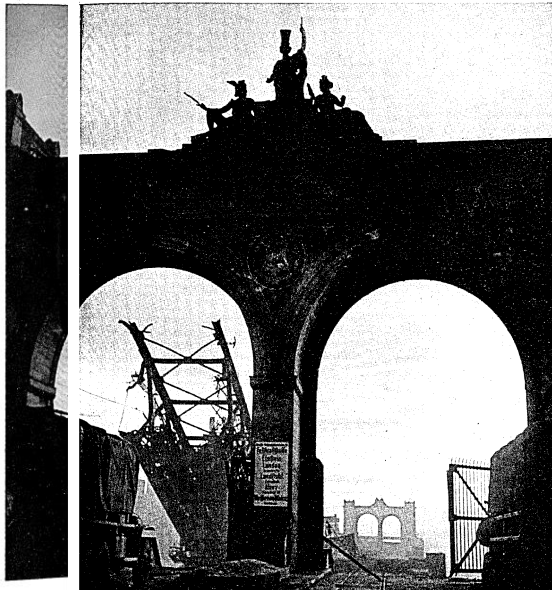


Fig. 64: Lee Miller, British Vogue, June 1945



Fig. 65 Erwin Blumenfeld, *Vogue*, July 1945

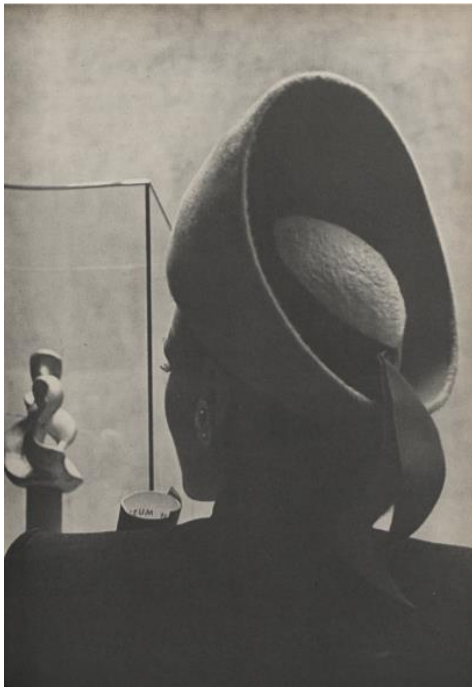


Fig. 66 Kay Bell, *Vogue*, July 1945



Fig. 67 John Rawlings, *Vogue*, July 1945



Fig. 68 Erwin Blumenfeld, *Humans with Brains*, 1921



Fig. 69 Erwin Blumenfeld, *Bloomfield President Dada Chaplinist*, 1921



Fig. 70 Erwin Blumenfeld, *Nude Under Wet Silk*, 1937



Fig. 71 Erwin Blumenfeld, *Vogue*, November 1, 1944



Fig. 72 Erwin Blumenfeld, *Vogue*, November 1944



Fig. 73 *Double Indemnity*, 1944



Fig. 74 J. Howard Miller, *We Can Do It*, 1943

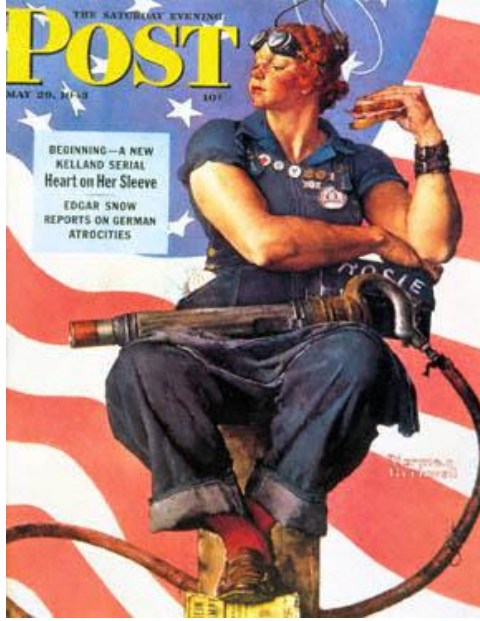


Fig. 75 Norman Rockwell, "Rosie the Riveter," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 1943



Fig. 76 John Rawlings, *Vogue*, January 1942

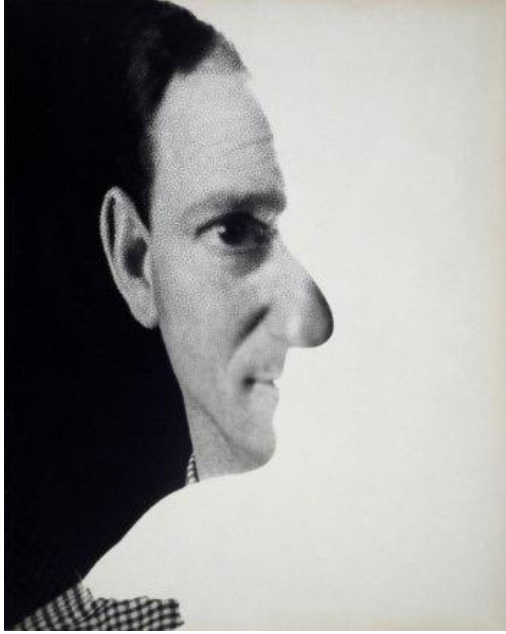


Fig. 77 Erwin Blumenfeld, *Self-Portrait*, 1945

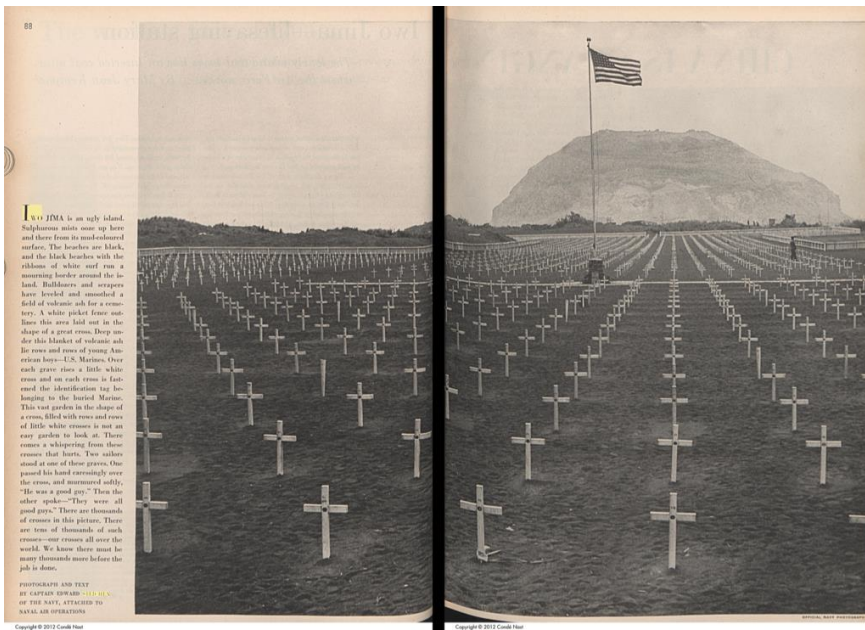


Fig. 78 Edward Steichen, *Vogue*, July 1945



Fig. 79 Georges Braque, "Vase, Palette, and Skull," *Vogue*, July 1945

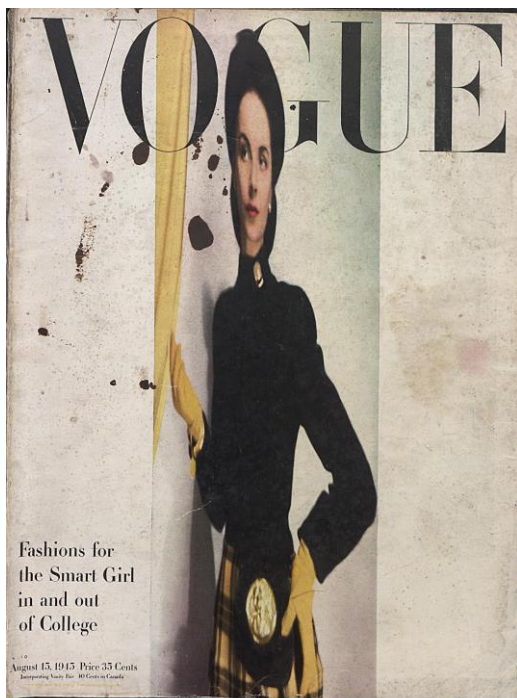


Fig. 80 Erwin Blumenfeld, *Vogue*, August 15, 1945

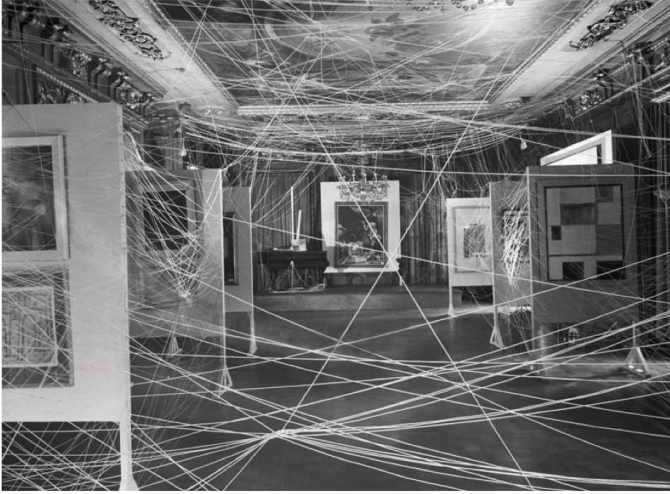


Fig. 81 Marcel Duchamp, *Miles of String*, 1942

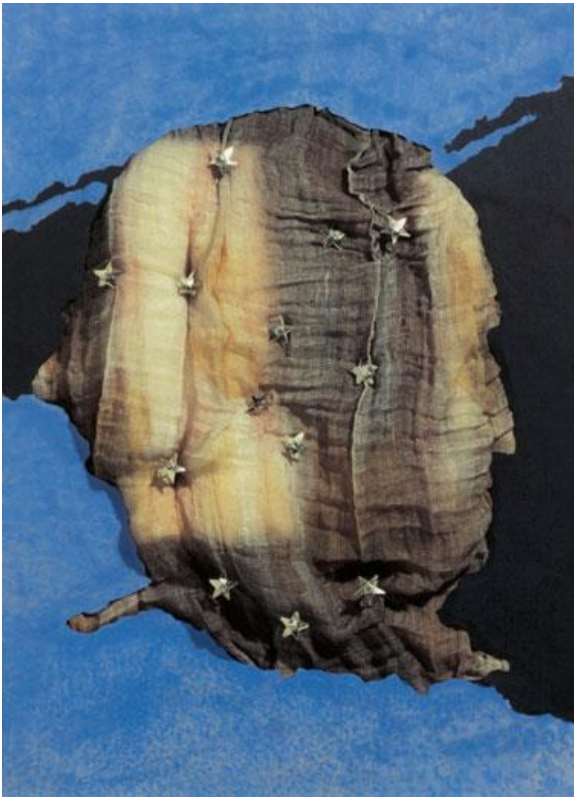


Fig. 82 Marcel Duchamp, *Americana* cover maquette for *Vogue*, 1943

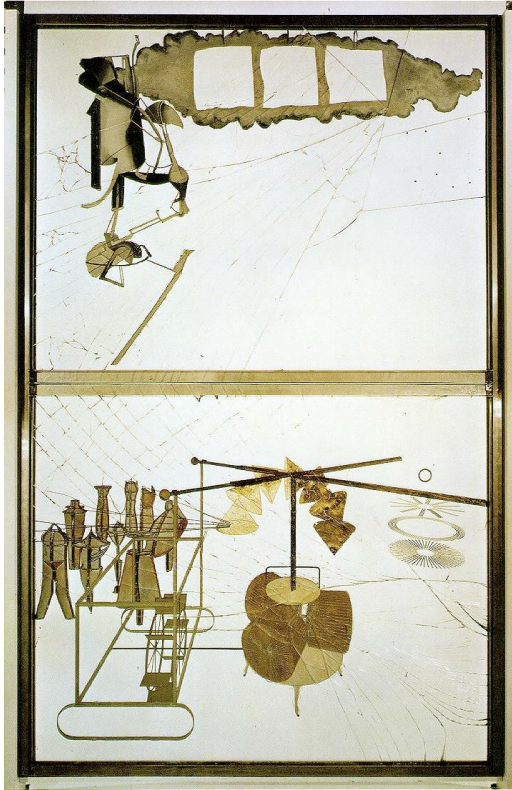


Fig. 83 Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*, 1915-23



Fig. 84 Erwin Blumenfeld, *Vogue*, March 1945

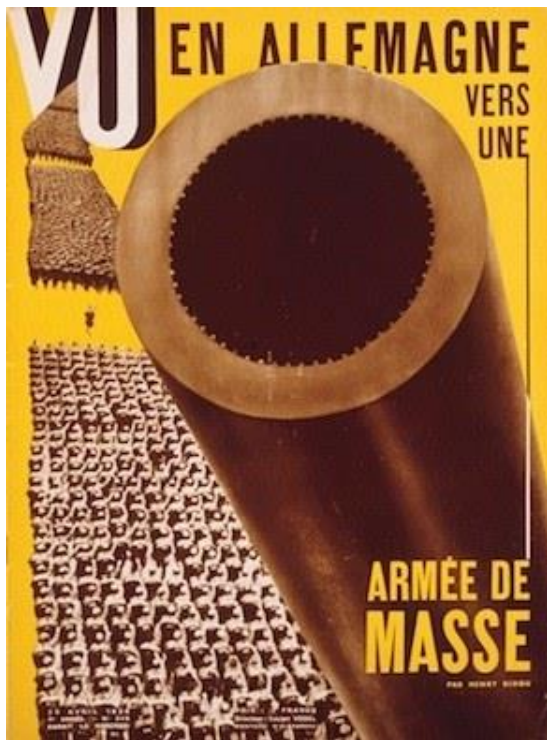


Fig. 85 Alexander Liberman, *VU*, April 25, 1934

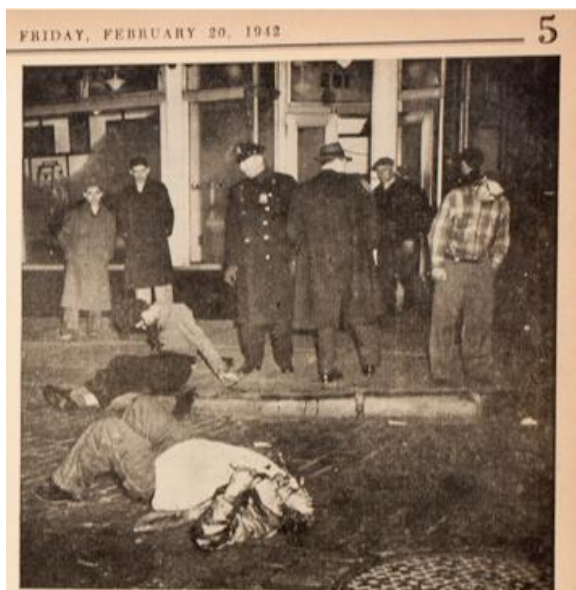


Fig. 86: Weegee, *PM Daily*, February 20, 1942



Fig. 87 Weegee, *PM's Weekly*, June 15, 1941



Fig. 88 Weegee, *PM Daily*, January 16, 1941

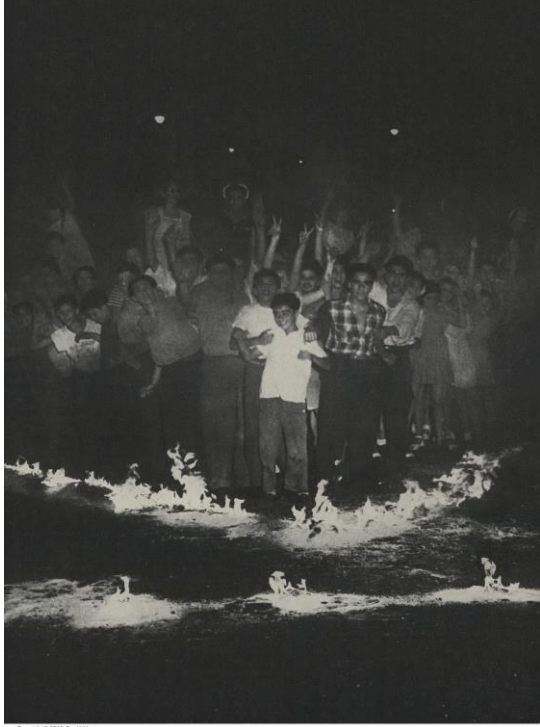


Fig. 89 Weegee, *Vogue*, September 1, 1945

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