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Pippa Oldfield

PhD, 2016

Calling the Shots: Women's Photographic Engagement with War in Hemispheric America, 1910–1990

ABSTRACT

War photography is conventionally understood to be a hypermasculine practice, undertaken by risk-taking photojournalists in the combat zone. Despite growing scholarship on the fields of photography, war, and gender, there remains little that considers war's photographic dimension as a charged arena for gender relations. This intellectual limitation impedes understanding of women's agency and substantial participation at the nexus of war and photography.

Rather than single out exceptional female exponents, or offer an essentialist view of 'feminine' traits, I show how the discursive construction of war photography is hostile to the participation of women, rendering their activities invalid. A twofold theoretical and methodological innovation redefines the conception of war photography to make it adequate to women's activities, and offers the model of 'engagement' to account for a wider range of interactions with photography beyond professional photojournalism.

A series of case studies, drawn from hemispheric America between 1910 and 1990, reveals the ways in which women have negotiated gendered constraints to photographically engage with war. The conflicts considered (the Mexican Revolution, US participation in the Second World War, the Sandinista Revolution and Contra War, and Argentina's 'Dirty War') enable analysis of distinct modes of warfare undertaken in diverse localities and historical moments. The artefacts examined – photographic postcards of firing squad victims, placards used in protests, propaganda pamphlets and fashion magazines amongst others – demonstrate the importance of conceiving photography a material and social practice. While women rarely operate in the 'Capa mode' of hypermasculine war photographer, they persistently find photographic means to forcefully assert their status as central and active participants in war and politics, rather than bystanders of history.

**Calling the Shots: Women's Photographic Engagement
with War in Hemispheric America, 1910–1990**

Pippa Oldfield

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Durham University
2016**

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Chapter 7 incorporates a revised version of 'Exploded Albums: Re-working the Family Photo Album in Women's Protests against State Terrorism in Argentina', first published in Jonathan Carson, Rosie Miller and Theresa Wilkie (eds) (2013) *The Photograph and the Album: Histories, Practices, Futures* (Edinburgh and Boston: Museums Etc).

Illustrations have been removed from this electronic thesis for copyright reasons.

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Abbreviations

AFDD	Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (Group of Families of the Detained and Disappeared), Chile
AMNLAE	Asociación de Mujeres Nicaraguenses Luisa Amanda Espinoza (Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women)
ASTC	Asociación Sandinista de Trabajadoras Culturales (Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers)
FSLN	Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista Front of National Liberation)
S/LPD	State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean, US Government
UFN	Unión de Fotógrafos Nicaragüenses (Union of Nicaraguan Photographers)
WASP	Women Airforce Service Pilot, US Air Force

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I. RECONNOITRING THE TERRITORY

1. Introduction: Frameworks, Foundations, Directions

The multi-layered expression 'calling the shots' alludes to the contested territory surveyed in this thesis: women's photographic engagement with war in hemispheric America. The expression has military connotations: to 'call the shots' denotes indication of the target before firing, as well as control over the timing and firing of shots.¹ Idiomatically, to 'call the shots' means to take charge, direct and lead; to express one's power, often in a public way; and to have authority to make important decisions or determine a course of action. The idiom is therefore expressive of power and agency; of control and even domination. Of course, 'shot' may indicate not only the firing of a gun, but also an exposure made by a camera. To 'call the shots' in this sense suggests a parallel authority to direct what a camera is shooting, how, when, and by what means. To 'call the shots', in this sense, suggests the capacity to shape and control photographic images. Given that men have conventionally been assumed the ones to 'call the shots' in the fields of war and of war photography, as will be argued in the next chapter, what is at stake when women do so? Through a series of case studies drawn from hemispheric America between 1910 and 1990, this thesis investigates how women have photographically 'called the shots' in the context of conflict, why, and to what effect.

The nexus of war, photography, and gender is a fertile but under-addressed area of scholarly enquiry. The 'cultural turn' in war studies (Evans 2008: 47) has transformed an original focus on military history and strategy, to conceive of war as fought in and through cultural frameworks, tools and weapons.² The emergence of journals such as *Media, War and Conflict* and *Journal of War and Culture Studies* (both established 2008) evidences new enthusiasm for discussion of war's cultural (including visual) dimensions. War's gendered aspect is also the subject of increasing investigation. As Lorentzen and Turpin (1998), Gullace (2003), and Matthew Brown (2005) have noted, there is a growing appetite to understand how gender dynamics play out in the sphere of

¹ The term is also thought to derive from sporting contexts such as billiards and hunting which, although not directly relevant to the present topic, similarly signify a conventionally masculine sphere.

² For a historiography of the cultural turn in war studies since the 1960s, see Evans (2008).

war.³ Scholarship shows that warfare is not, as popularly assumed, an exclusively male endeavour, but that women have historically undertaken fundamental roles in conflict beyond those of booty, victims or followers. Furthermore, as Patricia Hayes argues in the special issue of *Gender and History* devoted to the visual, there is 'a new readiness to bring gender history within the scope of the recent interdisciplinary field of visual studies' (Hayes 2005: 520). This shift is symptomatic of the visual or 'pictorial turn' in the humanities more broadly (Mitchell 1994: 12). Still going strong after two decades, the visual turn continues to address the historical imbalance between attention to texts and to images, seeking to better understand images and the work they do.

In tandem, developments in photography theory since the 1980s have prompted increasingly nuanced scrutiny of the politics of photography, and of the ideological aspect of photographs (Welch and Long 2009). Scholarship on the relationship between photography and war is flourishing, with a number of lines of enquiry. These include, but are not limited to, issues of veracity, censorship, propaganda and public opinion (cf. Taylor, J. 1991; Roeder 1995; Brothers 1997a). Another principal concern is the role of the iconic photograph in shaping national identities or collective memories (cf. Hariman and Lucaites 2007; Noble 2010a). The interdisciplinary field of memory studies has elicited prominent studies on trauma and the Holocaust (cf. Hirsch, M. 2001; Zelizer 1998). Meanwhile, work on the moral responsibilities of the viewer of conflict imagery proliferates (cf. Sontag 2003; Reinhardt et al. 2007; Batchen et al. 2012; Azoulay 2012; Campbell 2014; Kennedy and Patrick 2014). Despite this wealth of scholarly activity, there is relatively little that addresses the issue of gender as it converges with photography and war. Attention to this nexus, I will argue, offers insight into how issues of gender shape, and are shaped by, conflict's visual dimension.

This is not to say that there is no work on the relationship between photography, war and gender, which, for example, has been explored via photographic representations of women in situations of conflict (cf. Salas 1990; Poniatowska 2006). Such images are seen to have the potential to contribute to an ongoing

³ For an overview of the main debates in the field of war and gender, see Turpin (1998). Nash and Tavera (2003) offer an edited volume of Hispanophone critiques.

feminist project that has, since the 1970s, 'been driven by the desire to redefine culture from the perspective of women through the retrieval and inclusion of women's work, stories, and artefacts' (Hirsch and Smith 2002: 3). This desire is closely linked with the retrieval of female agency. 'Agency', a core concept in gender theory, and one that underpins this thesis, denotes activity rather than passivity. The attribution of agency is particularly pertinent to marginalised or disempowered groups such as women. Whilst not implying an unfettered free will, 'agency' conveys how people negotiate the structures in which they are enmeshed in order to express their volition (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 349; Moser and Clark 2001: 4–5). To possess agency is to be an actor in history, rather than a mute and passive victim, or an object to which things are done. In this regard, photographic images of women in situations of conflict have great potential to serve as evidence of women's agency in war. Gender historian Elizabeth Salas's (1990) account of female soldiers in the Mexican Revolution, for instance, presents photographic images as illustrative proof of female participation that contests women's absence from official histories.

The limitation of the photos-as-proof approach, however, is that photographic images are often treated as factual documents or neutral 'windows on the world'. A more nuanced approach problematises the mediated nature of photographs, acknowledging the conditions of visibility under which images of women arise. Gender historian Patricia Hayes (2005) calls for attention to mediation via the camera, photographer, and context of reproduction or viewing. She draws a distinction between visibility as something empirical, and visibility as a condition of being mediated through sight (Hayes 2005: 533). Depictions of women, Hayes cautions, do not automatically denote agency, but may in fact replicate women's compromised and constrained positions in patriarchal structures, even making women visible against their wishes, their existence filtered through an external (usually masculine) gaze. According to the 'conditions of visibility' model, photographs are assumed to be highly mediated documents that must be carefully decoded in order for women's agency to emerge. This approach is an important advance on the photos-as-proof model, and has much to offer in revealing patriarchal structures at work in the context of war photography, ably exemplified by Caroline Brothers's study of press images of women in the Spanish Civil War (1997b); and Andrea Noble's discussions of photographic images of women in the Mexican Revolution (2003; 2010b).

These approaches to photographic images of women have been invaluable in revealing and re-assessing women's historical participation in war, yet have limitations. Seen through the lens of others, women are configured as objects of what film theorist Laura Mulvey (1975) influentially established as the 'male gaze': objects to be looked at rather than subjects who look. Photographic images depicting women do show what women themselves wish to gaze upon, which might in turn reflect their viewpoints and desires, concerns and experiences. The capacity of depictions of women to convey their *visual* agency is therefore limited. Women's visual agency, as defined by Kristie S. Fleckenstein in her study of turn-of-the-century US photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston, signifies 'the right to look and act upon that looking as a means of exposing and resisting cultural conventions oppressive to women' (Fleckenstein 2015: 4). The identification of women's visual agency provided the impetus for this thesis, which sets out to consider what happens when women are active photographic agents in the context of war: when they 'call the shots', so to speak.

This, however, has been no straightforward undertaking. As discussed in the next chapter, entrenched gendered assumptions dominate popular understandings of war and photography. The generally held view of war photography is that it is a masculine practice, undertaken on the battlefield by brave and daring photojournalists – strongly identified with male combatants – whose images reveal the 'truth' of war to a civilian populace. In this popular conception, the female war photographer is an aberration, even an oxymoron. Such a view purports that women's participation in war photography is negligible or irrelevant, a view opposed in this thesis.

Aims and approach of thesis

Rather than attempt to unearth anomalous female war photographers who conform to the conventional masculinist mode, this thesis takes a different approach. Women's apparently negligible activity in the field of war photography is not, I argue, a natural state of affairs resulting from their innate characteristics. Such a view would be grounded in gender essentialism, which seeks to find in women's endeavours an innately feminine approach (characterised, for example, as empathic and pacifistic) that is intrinsically different from that of

their male counterparts. Feminist gender theory rejects essentialism as a means of accounting for difference between men and women. As gender theorist Judith Butler (1988: 519) has influentially argued, gender is neither a static nor innate quality; rather it is a shifting identity that is continually reconstructed, negotiated, and performed within cultural structures.

Accordingly, my thesis goes beyond retrieval of women's histories to challenge more fundamental conceptual frameworks for understanding the relationship between women, war and photography. Through the case studies examined, I consider a number of research questions. How might war photography be considered a gendered practice? In what ways do women participate, and what factors shape their participation? How, if at all, may 'women's war photography' be characterised? What motivates women to engage photographically with war, and what do their activities achieve? What does attention to women's photographic interactions with war – however those might be conceived – reveal that is elided in masculinist conceptions and histories?

In addressing these questions, I respond to recent work in visual studies that has shifted beyond images themselves to a closer scrutiny of visibility. The notion of visibility opens up a much broader terrain of investigation, encompassing not just images but the very structures and regimes of vision in which they are embedded. Such regimes, visual studies scholar Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011) argues, are heavily invested with power and, as such, demand close and critical inspection. War, this thesis demonstrates, is a particularly charged context for an examination of visibility and gender. War creates social and political upheaval, throwing gender tensions into relief, and creating spaces for women's agency and action in the spheres of both conflict and photography. As photo-historian Sandy Callister (2008: 332) has eloquently asserted, 'wartime vision fractures along highly-coded faultlines', a theme expanded upon in the next chapter. War's photographic dimension is therefore a rich site from which to investigate gender relations.

The arguments advanced in this thesis uphold Lorentzen and Turpin's (1998: xii) assertion that '[w]ar is gendered, although not naturally'. As an alternative to gender essentialism to explain women's interactions with war and photography, I examine historicised structures and constraints of gender that have shaped women's participation. The notion of constraints of gender, as Sara Mills (1991:

5–11) has asserted in her study of women’s travel writing, develops from Michel Foucault’s work on discourse theory, but via a feminist perspective. Discursive constraints of gender, Mills argues, are the rules and systems of representation and meaning negotiated by individuals in order to create and communicate, and these rules and systems are not the same for men and women (1991: 5). Examination of gendered constraints shows that women are not inherently incapable, unqualified, or uninterested *vis-à-vis* photography in the context of war. Neither may women’s endeavours be characterised as uniformly feminine in the conventional sense, for instance by displaying empathic or pacifistic tendencies that denote a so-called female gaze. Instead, I show how the discursive construction of war photography as a genre is hostile to the participation of women, rendering their activities invalid or peripheral. My approach echoes that of cultural theorist Meaghan Morris who, turning the terms of reference around in her study of popular culture, asks not how the cultural production of women has failed to measure up to modernism, but ‘how do classical theories of modernism fall short of women’s modernity?’ (Morris 1998: 74). In a similar manner, I ask not why women fall short of the genre of war photography, but why the genre falls short of women.

In a methodological and theoretical innovation to approaching the nexus of women, war and photography, I call for a move away from frontline photojournalism as the hallmark of authentic war photography; after all, it is a mode that excludes most women. As discussed in the next chapter, persistent restrictions to the sphere of war, and societal norms of accepted feminine behaviours, have limited the potential for women to reproduce the orthodox (male) view on war as photojournalist or soldier-by-proxy. As a result, women have produced alternative viewpoints in a range of civilian or non-professional personae: as portraitists, snapshotters, activists, and mothers, among others. I propose an expanded definition of war photography that encompasses these viewpoints, arguing that war photography should be understood as a radically plural set of interactions and practices at the intersection of war and photography.

In this sense, it is more useful to think about an inclusive, sprawling ‘war photography complex’ (Allbeson and Oldfield 2016), rather than a narrow photographic genre or canon of images. A growing body of scholarship is beginning to address this expanded territory, casting light upon topics such as

soldiers' snapshots (Eisenman, 2007; Struk, 2011), family and ID photographs (Richard, 2000; Longoni, A., 2010), and aerial reconnaissance images (Saint-Amour, 2003; Shell, 2012). Concurrently, there is an increasing willingness among artists, photographers, and curators to embrace approaches and material that depart from the photojournalistic norm. It is to this collective endeavour that the thesis aims to contribute.⁴

In a further methodological and theoretical innovation, I construct a model for the analysis of feminine modes of interaction with photography that I term 'engagement'. Engagement is a term commonly used in my own professional field: the visual art museum and gallery sector. Engagement is an audience-centred concept, signaling a move away from traditional concerns of the producer (artist/photographer) and cultural product (art object/photographic work). Instead, emphasis is placed on the encounter between viewer and cultural product, as it takes place in a material-spatial context, an encounter that is held to entail active participation on the part of the viewer (Bitgood 2010: 10). By theorising women's photographic engagement with war as an active process, I explore the ways in which women have not only taken pictures, but have instigated, mobilised, viewed, collected, and shared photography. These activities, I argue, demonstrate women's intrinsic involvement even though they may not literally press the shutter on the camera. This expanded conception of women's participation at the nexus of war and photography embraces a much greater range of activities.

As I show in the case studies explored in the central section, 'Conflict Zones', women have repeatedly sought out photography for diverse reasons: to communicate their experiences of war and to record their viewpoints; to support their nation's prosecution of warfare or to protest their government's actions; to affirm their agency and claim to citizenship; or to contribute to public and political debate. It is through the conception of engagement, I propose, that women's agency in the sphere of war photography forcefully emerges.

In this regard, it is instructive to consider a further meaning of the expression 'calling the shots'. On the battlefield, the soldier who 'calls the shots' shouts a

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the 'war photography complex' and growing interest in an expanded conception of war photography, see Allbeson and Oldfield (2016).

warning to his comrades of the dangers of incoming enemy fire. This connotation points to the contested territory of women's visual agency in the sphere of war. As argued in the next chapter, women's desire to gaze upon and to engage photographically with war leads to struggles over accepted gendered modes and behaviours. The fact that men have historically dominated both the gaze (Fleckenstein 2015: 5–6) and warfare (Keegan 2004: 76) means that women's photographic engagement with war represents a challenge to male-structured culture and society. The ways in which women stretch and test the boundaries of normative femininity through their photographic engagement, and the implications of doing so, are a recurrent theme in the discussions that follow.

It is important to emphasise that the term 'war' is used throughout this thesis to indicate a range of modes of armed conflict. 'War' conventionally describes warfare between nations, undertaken by professional militias operating under certain codes of conduct, exemplified by US participation in the Second World War. Given, however, that armed conflict in the hemisphere has frequently been manifest in other modes and circumstances, 'war' in the context of this study also indicates states of revolution, guerrilla warfare, civil war, Cold War proxy conflict, and state terrorism. I have used the term 'war' as an umbrella for all these modes of conflict, not only for consistency and brevity, but for its intrinsic associations with the genre termed 'war photography', connoting a specific mode of (masculinist) photographic practice against which the case studies are positioned.

War is popularly understood via the binaries of military/civilian; public/private; and masculine/feminine. The case studies of this thesis, however, resist such simple categories. Revolution, total war, and state terrorism blur notions of homefront and conflict zone. Expansions of roles and jobs in wartime enable women to view and photograph war in unanticipated ways; coded-feminine practices such as family photography are co-opted into wartime modes. Fashion, family and home combine with conflict, resistance, and politics, whilst traditionally feminine photographic artefacts – the portrait; the family album – surge into the domain of war. Far from women's viewpoints being peripheral, this study shows them to be central to stories of conflict and its impact, interwoven with official (coded-masculine) photographic practices. Such an approach offers a more nuanced understanding of war as embedded in society, and warfare as an undertaking in which all citizens are implicated. In turn, the

more inclusive and enriched conception of war photography offered in the thesis has the potential to more adequately reflect war's impact upon all those who experience it.

To be clear, my emphasis on the identification of women's visual agency is not unquestioningly celebratory. I do not suggest that women's shift from photographic object to subject constitutes an unproblematic reversal of power, or that women's practices are more enlightened or well-intentioned than those of men. As the case studies reveal, women are not necessarily reluctant to gaze on suffering; nor are they opposed to warfare conducted on their behalf. Furthermore, while attention to photographic activities reveals women's agency in the context of war, women remain enmeshed in (often repressive) structures of gender, which are negotiated, rather than dismantled.⁵ Despite these caveats, however, much is at stake if we ignore women in the context of war and photography. By eliding women's historical photographic engagement with war, a distorted picture is created of women as apolitical and passive, a view that denies women their citizenship, influence, and responsibility in the field of conflict.

The hemispheric approach

The thesis examines four hotspots in the American hemisphere in the twentieth century: Mexico during the Revolution (1910–1920); the US homefront in the Second World War (1941–45); Argentina during the so-called 'Dirty War' (1976–83); and Nicaragua from the Sandinista Revolution to the Contra War (1978–1990). The region is a compelling site for investigation into the intersection of gender, war and photography, offering a range of modes of conflict – revolution, total war, Cold War proxy conflict, and state terrorism – which furnish diverse instances of photographic interactions and encounters. Furthermore, in Latin America in particular, women have been notably active in the sphere of war. While the culture of *machismo* is pervasive in the region, women's political activism nevertheless stands out. The Mexican Revolution, for example, was the

⁵ Clearly, women must also negotiate within other limiting structures, such as race, sexuality and class. In the nineteenth century, for instance, African American women faced greater barriers to participating in professional photography than white US women (Fleckenstein 2015: 25). The issues of race, sexuality and class, however, lie beyond the focus of this study.

first large scale conflict with mass female participation (Tuñón Pablos 1999: 90–92); a third of soldiers in the final assault of the Sandinista Revolution were female (Randall 1981: iv); and mothers' organisations in Argentina have become paradigmatic in the field of global human rights and struggles against state terrorism. These notable instances of mass female participation have prompted striking cases of women's photographic engagement in this region of the American hemisphere.

In its geographical scope, the thesis connects with and contributes to the interdisciplinary field of hemispheric studies.⁶ A diverse scholarly project growing since the 1990s, the hemispheric approach challenges the assumption that the US and Latin America have distinct histories and cultures that can be examined via the separate academic disciplines of American studies and Latin American studies. Instead, the hemispheric approach invites thinking about the American continent as an integrated – though certainly not harmonised – whole. To be sure, the hemispheric approach is not welcomed with equal enthusiasm throughout the region. Shukla and Tinsman (2007: 9) claim the approach is more popular in the US academy, whereas Latin American scholars have favoured national approaches to explore independence and state formation. In the Latin American academy, Paolo Herkenhoff (1995: 19) is sceptical of the possibility of linking North and South in the hemisphere and developing a dialogue in a 'void' or gulf caused by two centuries of repression, intervention and paternalism. While I shall certainly not be arguing for pan-American solidarity in this thesis, the case studies attest to the persistent inter-connectedness of histories, politics and cultural practices – not least photography – in the region. In this regard, a hemispheric approach is useful both as a tool of analysis and as a terrain upon which to consider gendered issues of photography.

A core concept of hemispheric thinking is US imperialism and the impact of long-standing US intervention – economic, political, military, and cultural – in the region (cf. Coerver and Biesele Hall 1999; Menjívar and Rodríguez 2005; Livingstone 2009). Though not the focus of this thesis, US involvement in the affairs of its southern neighbours can be felt throughout. In Argentina's 'Dirty

⁶ Hemispheric scholars debate the precise nature of hemispheric studies, and whether it is a field, an approach, or both. For historiographies of hemispheric studies, see Gillman (2005); Fox (2006); and Shukla and Tinsman (2007).

War', the subject of Chapter 7, government agents were trained in interrogation and torture techniques by the CIA in support of the US drive to eradicate the threat of communist 'subversives'. The counter-revolutionaries of the Contra War, as discussed in Chapter 6, were supported overtly and covertly by the Reagan administration, giving rise to a prominent US-Nicaragua solidarity movement. These are but two instances that demonstrate the interconnectedness of politics and conflict in the hemisphere, which forms an undercurrent to the thesis.

The hemispheric approach is also fundamentally concerned with the migration of peoples and cultures, which has given rise to substantial research into hybridity, diaspora, and border cultures (cf. Fox 1999; Canclini 2005). A number of case studies in the thesis demonstrate the movement of people, photographic objects, and photographic practices across international borders within the hemisphere. Kate Leach, the subject of Chapter 3, moved from the US to Mexico due to her husband's job managing a lumber business in Chihuahua. Leach's photo-albums function both as family travelogues of crossing the US-Mexico border, as well as visual histories of the Mexican Revolution that demonstrate the interest taken by US citizens in the affairs of its southern neighbour. The proliferation of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo groups' photo-protest tactics beyond the immediate context of Argentina, to cite another example, demonstrates that national frameworks may be of limited help in assessing the impact of women's photographic engagement.

Moreover, the hemispheric, multi-conflict nature of the study, as opposed to a single national focus, offers greater potential for theorising a fundamental relationship between women, war, and photography. In developing such a theory, I aim to make a more robust case for the value of the 'engagement' model, and the expanded conception of war photography. Although my focus is on the American hemisphere, I hope that this broader approach will have wider relevance for a range of scholars examining gender, war, photography, and visual culture in other geographical regions.

A further benefit of the hemispheric approach is its potential to address the asymmetry between attention to US and Latin American photographs. Postcolonial historians Sandhya Shukla and Heidi Tinsman (2007) call for studies that address other places than the dominant nations of the Global North,

and which present marginalised persons, 'not just as spectres or victimised objects, but as actors, producers, and sources within transnational circuitry' (11–12). By offering case studies centred on Mexico, Argentina and Nicaragua as well as the US, I aim to augment Anglophone scholarship on Latin American photographic practices, an area which is (unsurprisingly) less well-developed than scholarship on US photography. The Mexican and Argentine case studies provide strong evidence for the vigour of Latin American women's photographic engagement with war, while the case study of Nicaragua emphasises exchange and interaction between Latin American and US women. My approach reflects the ethos of the thesis as a whole, which aims to check imbalances between the central and the marginal, the mainstream and the overlooked.

In acknowledgment of the complexity and sensitivity of hemispheric power relations, I have attempted to be judicious in my use of terms to describe the region and its inhabitants. As Eldon Kenworthy has ably shown in *America/Américas: Myth in the Making of US Policy toward Latin America* (1997), the nomenclature commonly used is rife with ambiguity and loaded with connotations of power and imperialism. The terminology I have adopted in his thesis is indebted to his guidance (xv). The term 'hemisphere' or 'hemispheric America' is used to indicate the geographic continuity that stretches from northernmost Canada to Tierra del Fuego, and encompasses the Caribbean. 'Latin America', a problematic term given the many indigenous and non-Romance peoples and cultures in the region, is used in the absence of a suitable alternative, and refers to all countries in the hemisphere with the exception of the US and Canada. The term 'United States' [of America] or 'US' has been used rather than simply 'America', which would be understood by some to indicate the entire continent. For the same reason, people living in or hailing from the US are termed 'US citizens' rather than 'Americans' (whether or not they have formal citizenship); nor is the term 'North Americans' used, unless it is to indicate Mexican or Canadian citizens as well as those from the US.

Primary research in the hemisphere was essential to underpin the thesis. As well as substantial periods of travel and language training in Latin America to develop skills in interpreting Hispanophone sources, I made research trips to Mexico City and Pachuca in Mexico; to El Paso, Austin, and New York in the US; and to Buenos Aires and La Plata in Argentina. I consulted archives, museum collections, art galleries and libraries, speculatively viewing a wide

range of material that might yield striking and diverse instances of women's photographic engagement with war. In addition, in Guatemala I took part in an international conference on photography and conflict; in Mexico I taught seminars at photography institutions; and in my professional capacity as a photography curator I undertook research trips to Cuba and Colombia. Together, these activities were invaluable in gaining cultural, social and political context, and in meeting photographers, curators, archivists and scholars who generously shared their time and insights with me. Although not all of these activities and encounters are directly reflected in the thesis, they collectively helped shape my understanding of the hemispheric context.

Nonetheless, I acknowledge the limitations of my position as a white scholar in the Anglophone academy. Indeed, the risk of the hemispheric approach is that it 'often evolves from one side of the border, to reach into an Other space without a sustained mastery of multiple locales' (Shukla and Tinsman 2007: 7). My research has been constrained by finite resources of time and money to conduct field trips; by my linguistic limitations (Spanish sources have been consulted, but none in Lusophone or indigenous languages); and by my ingrained cultural background. As cultural historian David E. Whisnant has observed in his study of Nicaragua, the position of outsider is inevitably prone to instances of cultural misunderstanding or ignorance (1995: 9). While problematic, however, the outsider's stance may also offer insights by revealing connections or implications overlooked by those intimately involved in the context studied. While I would not claim, as Whisnant does, that different stories emerge because the outsider is 'less invested in how those stories turn out' (9) – there is always investment in any interpretation and outsiders are far from neutral observers – the status of the outsider-as-researcher is a valid one, with potential to contribute to the international scholarly project that is concerned to advance a greater understanding of photographic practices in the Global South.

The corpus

Throughout the thesis, photographs are treated as material objects in social relations, embedded in historical contexts. Although 'reading' images for their visual content and connotations remains a valuable interpretative tool, such an approach has its limitations. The conventions of art history (which emphasise

the creative intentions of the producer) and photographic theory informed by semiotics (which emphasises what Barthes terms the 'code' and connotations of the image), prove inadequate to assess women's photographic engagement. Instead, I draw on photo-theory that emerges from the disciplines of cultural studies, social sciences, and anthropology. Scholars, including John Tagg ([1988] 1993) and Deborah Poole (1997), have persuasively argued for photographic artefacts and processes to be understood in terms of economies, networks, and systems in which power is invested and shifting. Elizabeth Edwards (2001), W.J.T. Mitchell (2005), and Gillian Rose (2010), among others, have emphasised the materiality of photographs as objects that figure in haptic encounters and social practices. Collectively, these approaches emphasise 'doing' photography, seeking to understand what is at stake in the specific ways people use photographs in real situations. Accordingly, my focus throughout has been on women's doing – their viewing, producing, staging, publishing, collecting, and mobilising photography in the context of war – which is often revealed by attention to specific photographic artefacts. It is through this framework, I argue, that women's agency emerges, not as an abstract conception belatedly felt by the present-day viewer, but in identifiable historical instances.

The embryonic nature of the research area has entailed assembling a corpus, rather than accessing a pre-determined one. Given that women's photographic engagement with war is an activity that has been historically marginalised, there is no obviously identifiable collection held in mainstream institutional archives. The identification of case studies has therefore been an exploratory process, inseparable from the development of the thesis's theoretical framework. Befitting the thesis's expanded conception of war photography and its focus on 'engagement', few of the women under consideration could be considered a war photographer in the classic sense. Instead, I have selected unconventional case studies: a portrait studio, a fashion magazine, a pair of photo albums, an advertising campaign, a selection of political books and pamphlets, and placards used in protests. The sources for the case study material were diverse in scale, nature, and prestige. Research in the photography archive of the Harry Ransom Center in Texas furnished the neglected Mexican Revolution-era albums of Mrs Leach. A placard protesting the disappearance of Graciela Mellibovsky was encountered in the headquarters of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Línea Fundadora) in Buenos Aires. Other photographic artefacts were sourced from

library stores or second-hand bookshops: a wartime issue of US *Vogue*; a battered stapled booklet emanating from post-revolutionary Nicaragua; and magazine advertisements for Kodak reproduced in the pages of *Life* magazine. That the majority of the material examined is vernacular in origin, and largely outside the canon of photography history, is telling of the ways in which women's photographic engagement with war has historically been marginalised.⁷

The case studies of the thesis span an eighty-year time frame from 1910 to 1990. This time period has been chosen to be broad enough to offer a varied range of compelling instances of women's photographic engagement, while enabling comparisons to be drawn and continuities to be charted. The opening date reflects the convergence of three factors: the international emergence of the women's movement; the start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, in which women participated on a mass scale; and the popularisation of cheap photographic technologies. The closing date of 1990, marking the defeat of the first Sandinista government in Nicaragua, signals the conventional end of the Cold War, the waning of second-wave feminism, and the imminent demise of analogue photography. Arranged chronologically, the case studies reflect women's advances and the trajectory of their involvement in politics and the public sphere. The chronology also reflects the evolution of modes of warfare, and the development and spread of photographic technologies. Hence, while each chapter may be read as a discrete study, each contributes to a larger mosaic, composed of what hemispheric scholar Ifeoma Nwankwo describes as 'overlapping yet distinctive American stories' (cited in Fox 2006: 640–1). The polycentric and multi-temporal character of the thesis thus exploits the potential to identify insistences and divergences in women's engagement across time as well as space.

In order to retain depth and cohesion in an already wide-ranging study, digital photography has been excluded. The essential characteristic of traditional analogue photography – defined by Barthes ([1981] 2000) as an index or direct physical trace of its referent – has a particular resonance in the context of war. The qualities of 'truth', proof or evidence, and the intimate relation between the

⁷ By vernacular, I refer to utilitarian photographs that have not been adopted into the canons of art history or photo-history. For discussion of the recent swell in attention to vernacular photography, and its opacity as a category, see Batchen (2000).

photograph and the subject represented, have shaped the way in which photographic images have been interpreted and mobilised in contexts of conflict, which each of the case studies demonstrates in varying ways. However imperfect this aura of ‘truth’ may be in reality, digital photography is still commonly held to be more vulnerable to manipulation or fakery than its analogue counterpart, which changes the ways in which digital photography is used and understood.⁸ Moreover, though closely related to analogue practices, the platforms for viewing and sharing digital photographic images are largely screen-based and characterised by distinct languages and etiquettes.

Cinema (and related moving-image technology) is also excluded from this study. Perhaps even more so than digital photography, cinema demands assessment via a particular set of theoretical and analytical frameworks. Cinema is accessed via screens and through particular viewing codes; moreover the experience of cinema is temporal, meaning that cinematic engagement is distinct from that of static photographic images, which have historically been encountered via material artefacts that can be easily and inexpensively transported, printed, privately consulted, or informally shared. Until very recently, moreover, most women have had limited means to produce their own moving-image films.⁹ While this clearly does not preclude women’s cinematic engagement as viewers, in comparison to photography, cinema and moving-image offers lesser scope for evidence of women’s active participation as producers. These limitations aside, the model of women’s photographic engagement with war, proposed in this thesis, may provide cues for future investigation into women’s interactions with moving-image and digital photographic technologies in the context of conflict.

⁸ For a recent discussion of continuing popular debates, see the comments of war photographer Don McCullin in *The Guardian* (Brown 2015).

⁹ There have, of course, been mass-marketed products such as Super 8 cine film and video recorders. Nonetheless, these have been a much smaller area of image-production than domestic photography technologies such as the snapshot camera. A case in point is the Madres de Plaza de Mayo groups and their use of photographic artefacts and moving image outputs. While the Madres members were able print and carry photos by themselves, they were reliant on professional film-makers and television news crews for their moving image representation (Gamarnik 2010).

Thesis structure

The study is divided into three parts: 'Reconnoitring the Territory', 'Conflict Zones', and 'Aftermath'. The first part sets out the scope, contextualises the thesis within the critical literature, and develops the theoretical framework. The second part – the core of the study – constitutes five chapters that consider contrasting case studies in four locales and conflicts. The concluding part, comprising the final chapter of the thesis, draws together the case studies to identify convergences and dissonances, establish the findings that have emerged from the research, and consider the broader implications of the thesis. The hemispheric, multi-conflict scope of the thesis means that the historical and political contexts of each case study are necessarily brief. It is not the object of the thesis to analyse historical conflicts, as this has already been amply achieved by others, with the relevant scholarship signalled in each chapter.

Each chapter explores a different research question. Chapter 2, 'The Rules of Engagement: War Photography as Gendered Practice', begins with an assessment of scholarship at the intersection of war, photography and gender. From this foundation, the discussion adopts a critical and questioning stance in order to build a theoretical framework for approaching the research questions. Instead of assuming war photography to be an inherently masculine practice, exemplified by the celebrated Magnum photojournalist Robert Capa, the discussion draws on a range of primary sources to offer a historicised account of the masculinisation of the genre and its default *modus operandi* that might be termed 'the Capa mode'. The discussion draws upon work by feminist art historians Nochlin ([1971] 1989), Parker and Pollock (1981), and by war and literature scholar Jean Gallagher (1998), in order to assess the viability of inserting exceptional women into the male-defined canon of war photography. I argue that to do so would merely uphold the pre-existing masculinist frameworks that exclude the activities of most women. Instead, I develop an innovative theoretical model of 'photographic engagement' that encompasses the ways in which women have not only produced photographs, but have mobilised, viewed, shared, and commented upon photographic images in the context of war. It is only by radically redefining the genre of war photography to make it adequate to women's participation, I argue, that women's contributions may come to the

fore, offering more diverse and nuanced viewpoints, and greater insight into the experience and prosecution of war.

The next five chapters, constituting the section 'Conflict Zones', examine specific case studies in distinct contexts of struggle and conflict. Chapters 3 and 4 consider parallel instances of women's photographic practice against the backdrop of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920). 'From Flowers to Firing Squads: Sara Castrejón Portrait Studio and the Business of War Photography' assesses the evolution of a female-owned photography business in South-western Mexico throughout the course of the conflict. By way of contrast, 'Mrs Leach's Revolutionary Albums: A US Observer in Mexico' investigates the little-known US hobbyist photographer and album-compiler Kate Leach, resident in North-western Mexico. Together, the two chapters offer insight into middle-class provincial women's engagement with photography and war at the turn of the century. My discussions reveal how Castrejón and Leach engaged photographically with war, and why their photographic artefacts took shape as they did. While both women practised in photographic genres traditionally configured feminine and apolitical – the studio portrait and the family album respectively – Castrejón's and Leach's photographic activities were inflected by war. Although the personal circumstances of the two women diverged, both reacted to the contingent opportunity presented by war, actively seeking means through which to engage with, comment upon, and record their experience of the revolution through photography. Rather than being the patients of the historical process, Castrejón and Leach demonstrate the ways in which women participated in and chronicled the Revolution, 'making history' both as actors and as photo-historians.

From the solo efforts of individual women, Chapter 5 moves to the participation of female communities. 'Dame Photographers and Kodak Moms: Mass Engagement on the US Homefront in the Second World War' considers two home-front modes of engagement that were offered to US women on a mass scale. The first case study takes as its focus a 1945 photo-essay on the liberation of Nazi concentration camps by female US war correspondent Lee Miller, published in US fashion magazine *Vogue*. My discussion offers an alternative interpretation to that offered by existing Miller scholarship. Rather than contemplating Miller's own artistic intentions or measuring affect in present-day viewers of her images, I switch focus to the agency of the historical readers

of US *Vogue*, demonstrating their appetite for war photography and their desire to have issues of war debated within their own female-centric forum. The second case study considers a concurrent magazine corpus: two Kodak advertising campaigns which urged civilian women to make and send 'cheerful, happy pictures' to servicemen stationed away from home. By close attention to the advertisements and their context in both the wartime media in which they appeared, and within Kodak's larger marketing strategy to women, I reveal the nature and motivations of Kodak's prescription for women's appropriate modes of wartime photography, and examine what was at stake in women following this prescription. By engaging with audience theory and business history, my discussion pays close attention to the historicised audiences for both case studies. The resulting analyses reveal how women's photographic engagement was not solely the preserve of exceptional figures such as Lee Miller, but was entered into on a mass scale by 'ordinary' US women.

Chapters 6 and 7 investigate conflicts against the backdrop of the ideological struggles of the Cold War, illuminating ways in which women mobilised photography in resistance to right-wing governments. 'Compañeras with Cameras: Gendered Solidarity in the Sandinista Revolution and Contra War, 1979–1990' reconstructs and analyses the vibrant – but now largely forgotten – women's photography scene in Nicaragua in the late 1970s and early 1980s, during a popular uprising and subsequent Cold War proxy conflict. My discussion first considers the work of US photojournalist Susan Meiselas, before turning to a range of less well-known photographic activities by international women. Through the examination of photobooks, government-sponsored propaganda booklets, and a conceptual photo-text, I reveal the diversity and extent of women's politicised photography that thrived in progressive left-wing Nicaragua, fuelled by the ethos of transnational feminism and the US-Nicaraguan solidarity movement. This historical moment, which coincided with debates on documentary and feminist photography, enabled a range of viable alternatives to photojournalism to emerge. By placing women's photographic projects centrally, I argue that women's photography was not only fundamental to representing conflict and its impact in Nicaragua, but played a key role in garnering opposition to Reagan's right-wing policy of intervention.

The final case study of 'Conflict Zones', 'Pictures of Graciela: Domestic Photography and Photographic Agency in Argentina's 'Dirty War'', considers

women's photographic engagement in the wake of state terrorism. The Argentine military dictatorship was characterised by the removal of alleged 'subversives' via clandestine operations of abduction, torture, and killing. The phenomenon of euphemistically termed 'disappearances' created a particularly charged context for photography, with its facility to provide indexical proof of absent referents and to make visible those who had been disappeared. Whilst there is strong scholarship on female-led protest groups and the performative dimension of their demonstrations, there is relatively little work that closely considers the particularities of photographic artefacts in these struggles. Instead of making general claims for photography in women's protest work, I delineate the specific photo-tactics and artefacts used by various incarnations of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo groups, focusing on the disappeared government statistician Graciela Mellibovsky. By drawing on anthropological approaches and theories of the materiality of photographs, as well as notions of the agency of objects, I shift emphasis from the abstract to the concrete in order to better understand the potency of photography to contribute to demands for truth and justice. Assisted by theories of family photography, the exploration of the case study of Mellibovsky reveals how feminine and domestic photographic practices – such as the shared language of the family album – were radicalised by women to perform political work in the public sphere, tactics which remain potent in the international sphere of human rights activism.

Finally, 'Aftermath' presents a conclusion that synthesises and assesses the themes that have resonated throughout the case studies. Alluding once more to the thesis title, I consider a further meaning of the multi-layered expression 'calling the shots': the assessment of how successfully shots have reached their target. In response to the initial research questions established earlier in this chapter, I set out the findings of the study. Links are made across the chapters to evidence and reprise a number of core assertions: the role of gendered constraints in shaping engagement; the impact of war's upheaval on gender roles in the sphere of photography; the inadequacy of conventional gendered binaries of war and photography; and the limitations of the masculinist 'Capa mode'. I argue that the study affirms women's agency, their claims to political influence, and their responsibility in the sphere of war. Finally, the methodological and theoretical contributions of this thesis – its model of photographic engagement and redefinition of war photography – are considered

in terms of their potential to illuminate future research beyond the parameters of this study.

2. The Rules of Engagement: War Photography as Gendered Practice

In our assessment of war photography, introducing the most distinguished practitioners of the art, hardly a single female name has been mentioned. War, a man's game, seemed destined at the start to be recorded by men alone. The first [female] professional photographer to record a war was Margaret Bourke-White [in the Second World War...] However the work of this remarkable and exceptionally brave woman does not place her in the ranks of the outstanding photographers of war.

Jorge Lewinski, *The Camera At War*¹

If your pictures aren't good enough, you aren't close enough.

Robert Capa²

Warfare is conventionally understood to be 'an entirely masculine activity', one from which women, 'with the most insignificant exceptions, have always and everywhere stood apart' (Keegan 2004: 76). Belligerence, political commitment, reasoning and toughness are conventionally considered masculine attributes essential to warfare. By contrast, women have historically been considered pacifistic, emotional, apolitical, and physically weak. In Western culture, women have historically been positioned as passive bystanders to war (Elshtain 1995). They have been allotted certain tasks – mourning, waiting, and memorialising – that occur far from the battlefield and are adjuncts to the deeds of men. Women provide the impetus or justification for war, functioning as assets to be protected or the warrior's reward.³

As gender historians have shown, however, women have frequently played active roles in wartime, such as transposing the feminine-coded tasks of nursing and cooking to the battlefield, or temporarily taking over traditionally masculine jobs as men depart for war, for example the production of arms. Yet women's participation in war is invariably considered auxiliary to men's roles as combatants (Higonnet and Higonnet 1987). On the rare occasions that women have operated as soldiers or military commanders, they have done so by

¹ Lewinski (1986: 26)

² Cited in Scherman (1981: 6).

³ Greek mythology is paradigmatic of cultural tropes of women's marginal roles in war. Jean Gallagher (1998: 1–2) highlights Euripides' Chorus of the Women of Chalkis, in which women comment upon the distant events of battle. Lindsay Smith (1998: 69) cites Penelope weaving chastely as she awaits the return of her husband Odysseus from the Trojan War. Carla Peñaloza (2001) draws attention to the memorial work of Antigone, who sought to mourn and bury her disgraced brother.

adopting masculine characteristics, dressing or behaving as men, or have acted during the extraordinary conditions of wartime, particularly during civil war or revolution when popular militias replace regular armies.⁴

If the practice of warfare is considered 'a man's game', as photo-historian Jorge Lewinski argues (1986: 26), so too is the photographic gaze on war conventionally gendered masculine. The pre-eminent mode espoused in the genre of war photography is that of the risk-taking (assumed male) photojournalist at the frontline, producing dramatic images of action despatched to a civilian populace safely at home. As Susan Carruthers (2011: 1) has asserted, 'few books about war and the media lack a dustjacket image that shows men with guns being shot by men with cameras'. This androcentric mode of war photography is constructed and perpetuated by the photographic culture of conflict and its sites and artefacts: periodicals, histories and visual anthologies, biographies and memoirs, films and documentaries, exhibitions and museum displays, and archives and institutional collections. In these contexts, women are negligible or even absent as producers of photographic images.

Lewinski's classic account of war photography *The Camera at War: A History of War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day*, first published in 1978 and subsequently reprinted three times, is one of the few texts to explicitly address the dimension of gender. In his introduction to the 1986 edition, Lewinski offers 'a special postscript' that considers the apparently belated emergence of women operators in the field of war photography during the Vietnam War (1986: 26–29). Rather than singling out Lewinski's text as especially chauvinistic, this discussion draws on his account due to its articulation of assumptions that are implicit, through their very lack of acknowledgement of women contributors, in other conventional histories of war photography. *The Camera at War* therefore provides a useful benchmark for war photography as a distinctly 'male preserve' (Lewinski 1986: 26).

The Camera at War features an asymmetric gender balance of photographers, with images from six women compared to 83 men. A comparable publication is *Life at War* (1981), a substantial and popular anthology of images from the

⁴ For an overview of the history of women in warfare, see Grant de Pauw (1998). For accounts of women's military roles in the hemisphere see Leonard, E. (1999) and Salas (1990).

mass-market magazine *Life*, in which only two of the 69 photographers represented are female. More recent histories of war photography have struggled to offer a more equal gender balance. The huge scholarly publication *War / Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and its Aftermath* (Tucker and Michels 2012) offers 40 images by female photographers compared to 345 by men, representing only ten per cent of the total.⁵ In short, as photography curator Val Williams has asserted in *Warworks: Women, Photography and the Iconography of War* (1994), women's participation in both war and its photographic culture is configured as an adjunct to the dominant conception of an overwhelmingly masculine activity and gaze (Williams 1994: 14).

What might account for this gender gulf, this apparent paucity of women war photographers, and, more to the point, why should it matter? Are women innately uninterested in the subject of war, 'a man's game', as Lewinski contends? Are women, as some have speculated (Mitchell, K. 2009; Sattari and Mousavi 2013; McVeigh 2014), naturally too empathic or emotional to achieve the objectivity deemed a pre-requisite of the true war photographer? Are women lacking in courage, unable to cope with the demands, physical and psychological, of depicting conflict in the combat zone, of being, as war photographer Robert Capa urges, 'close enough'? The following discussion interrogates assumptions of innately gendered tendencies in the practice of war photography. I argue that Lewinski's teleological conception of the genre imposes essentialist criteria to assert a particular set of value-judgements and valorise a set of institutional practices. Rather than attempting to vindicate women war photographers that might be admitted to Lewinski's 'ranks of outstanding photographers of war' (1986: 26), a problematic endeavour as I shall discuss shortly, I show how war photography is constructed as a masculine practice unsuited to women.

As a consequence, a number of more pertinent questions emerge. If war photography is constructed as a masculine practice, how is this perpetuated and enforced? What are the 'rules of engagement' for men's and for women's war photography and their gaze on war, and what happens when these rules are breached? Are these rules static, or do they shift according to era and cultural

⁵ *War / Photography* (Tucker and Michels 2012) features a further 122 images by unidentified photographers. The images without attribution have not been included in calculating this percentage.

context? How useful, moreover, is the genre of 'war photography' as a concept for considering women's participation? Addressing these questions enables valuable insights into gender politics, for the intersection of photography and war is a crucial site in which gender roles and relations are laid bare, contested, destroyed and re-made.

As Paul Virilio (1989) has persuasively argued in his influential *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, war cannot be fully understood without taking into account its visual dimension. The visual is a fundamental means through which state and military domination, power and control are exercised and maintained. Photographic technologies and practices are particularly proficient conduits for the prosecution of warfare, performing vital and diverse functions of reconnaissance, surveillance, and propaganda, as well as reportage, documentation, and memorialisation. Furthermore, as Lorentzen and Turpin (1998) have asserted, war may not be adequately assessed without attention to gender. Notions of masculinity and femininity are fundamental in defining roles in the military and in wartime behaviours. Women as well as men play a vital part in cultures of militarism; influence outcomes of victory or defeat; and lead changes to society and politics occasioned by war. Attention to the photographic and gendered dimensions of war is therefore essential to reveal how gender struggles are waged just as intensely at cultural and discursive levels as they are at the military and political, enabling enhanced comprehension of how wars are fought and their far-reaching impact on both women and men.

Scholarly contexts for photography, war and gender

This study connects with numerous fields of scholarly work. Firstly, it contributes to growing scholarship on women and photography. Since the 1980s, enquiry in the US has uncovered and re-evaluated women's historical contributions to the medium (cf. Moutoussamy-Ashe 1986; Fisher, A. 1987; Palmquist 1989; Rosenblum 2010). In Latin America, where many national histories of photography are still to be written, dedicated histories of women's photography are fewer, with the best-developed scholarship emanating from Mexico (Poniatowska 1989; Monroy Nasr 2000; Rodríguez, J.A. 2012; García Krinsky 2012), alongside more isolated studies in Venezuela (Boulton 2003) and

Argentina (Niedermaier 2008). Some of these studies touch upon women's photographic activities in wartime. Naomi Rosenblum (2010: 182–185) offers an account of female war correspondents in the Second World War within her definitive *A History of Women Photographers*. Andrea Fisher (1987) considers women working for the Office of War Information as part of her wider study of US state agencies in the 1930s and 40s.

Additionally, a number of biographies and critical studies consider the work of individual female photographers during wartime. US war correspondent and former fashion model Lee Miller has attracted a veritable constellation of critical studies in this regard (Penrose 1992; Zox-Weaver 2003; Conekin 2006; Salvio 2009; Sim 2010; Sliwinski 2010), which I discuss further in Chapter 5. In Hispanophone critical literature, the most developed area of the monographic approach concerns photographers of the Spanish Civil War, with studies on Gerda Taro (Olmeda 2007; Arroyo Jiménez and Doménach Fabregat 2014) and Kati Horna (Ciria 1998; Berthier et al 2012). Scholarship on Latin American conflicts or female photographers of conflict is negligible. A notable exception is the recent monograph on Mexican Revolution-era photographer Sara Castrejón (Villela 2011), whose work will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

While undoubtedly valuable in charting and illuminating women's photographic practices both generally and particularly, the aforementioned studies are nonetheless limited by their piecemeal approach to considering the additional dimension of war. By examining isolated or sporadic cases, the studies are unable to offer significant theoretical insights into the relationship between women and photography in the context of conflict. This is to miss an enormous opportunity, for, as photo-historian Sandy Callister has perceptively observed, 'wartime vision fractures along highly coded fault lines' (2008: 332). As I hope to demonstrate, the exceptional circumstances of war offer fertile ground for a critical analysis of photography and gender more widely, given that women's photographic behaviours and practices are thrown into sharp relief by the heightened gender tensions and transgressions of peacetime roles that war frequently brings.

This thesis also connects with scholarship on photography and war, a broad and expanding field. In Latin America, a wealth of studies has emerged to coincide with the recent centenary of the Mexican Revolution. The pioneering and

meticulous research of Berumen (2003), González Flores (2010), and Mraz (2010), among others, has laid invaluable groundwork by recovering data on scattered photographic practices. However, the emphasis of these scholars on an empirical-historical approach often limits the potential for insight into the wider implications of war's intersection with photography and gender that a more theoretically-engaged approach may bring.

A particular strength of Latin American scholarship is work on the relationship between photography, disappearance and state terrorism, of great pertinence in a region where so-called 'dirty war' has been a prevalent mode of conflict. Contributions include work by Chile-based art theorist Nelly Richard (2000); curators, writers and scholars in the Southern Cone (Durán 2006; Menajovsky 2006; Soto Castillo 2009; Longoni, A. 2010; Gamarnik 2012); as well as in Peru (Poole and Rojas Pérez 2010), Colombia (Rodríguez Sánchez 2012), and Guatemala (Maldonado 2010). Richard in particular has powerfully theorised photography's significance as an indexical trace of an absent referent in relation to war and forced disappearance, addressing photography's potent role in protests, post-conflict truth and reconciliation processes, and the memory of war. Yet, with the exception of hemispheric scholar Diana Taylor (1997), who has written influentially about the performative dimension of photo-protests by mothers' organisations in Argentina, studies on photography and disappearance rarely address the issue of gender explicitly, thereby missing an opportunity to consider women's directional roles in photographic activism. I build on the foundations provided by Taylor's work in Chapter 7, with an examination of the materiality of photographic objects in protest work.

The Anglophone academy on war and photography is a vast and expanding field. As already discussed in Chapter 1, major trends include the ethics of photographically viewing war and suffering (Sontag 2003; Reinhardt et al. 2007; Butler 2009; Batchen et al. 2012; Campbell 2014); assumptions of photography's veracity and its role as propaganda (Taylor, J. 1991; Roeder 1995; Brothers 1997a); iconicity and photography's role in reflecting or constructing national memory and identity (Moeller 1989; Hariman and Lucaites 2007; Noble 2010a); and photography's relationship to memory and trauma,

especially in the context of the Holocaust (Zelizer 1998; Hirsch, M. 1999; Baer 2002; Struk 2004, Guerin 2012).⁶

Yet most scholarly works on photography and war – in both Anglophone and Latin American academies – do not explicitly address the issue of gender, and thereby risk conflating women’s and men’s photographic practices, experiences and viewpoints. An important exception is *Shooting From the Hip: Photography, Masculinity and Postwar America* (2005) by art theorist Patricia Vettel-Becker, who offers a valuable discussion of the gendering of photographic practices and the masculinisation of combat photography during and after the Second World War (and which will be considered shortly). However, other than a few brief references to photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White, feminine modes of participation are beyond the scope of Vettel-Becker’s study, which by default seems to uphold Lewinski’s conception of war photography as ‘a man’s preserve’ (Lewinski 1986: 26). Collectively, these consistent omissions of attention to women’s participation risk reproducing hegemonic gender order and patriarchal structures, perpetuating assumptions of war photography and war experiences as exclusively masculine.

A further field to which this thesis contributes is the significant and growing scholarship on the relationship between war and gender in both Anglophone and Hispanophone academies, which goes beyond photography studies to encompass the broader humanities and social sciences.⁷ While wide-ranging in scope, this scholarship may be broadly divided into two categories. In the first, monographs and collected volumes take ambitious cross-cultural and cross-historical perspectives to comment upon the over-arching philosophical, theoretical or political implications of the ways in which gender intersects with armed conflict, and how women have been positioned in certain ways within the field of war (Higonnet *et al.* 1987; Macdonald, Holden and Ardener 1987; Elshtain and Tobias 1990; Elshtain 1995; Lorenzten and Turpin 1998; Moser and Clark 2001; Nash and Tavera 2003). The second category attends to specific contexts, reassessing women’s often overlooked roles in particular conflicts. With regard to the American hemisphere and the case studies in this

⁶ For a recent collected volume of writings on war photography representing some of the approaches outlined here, see Kennedy and Patrick (2014).

⁷ Recent review articles surveying the scholarly literature on women and war attest to the ‘large and expanding’ field (Brown 2005: 173) and the ‘explosion’ since the 1980s (Gullace 2003: 140).

thesis, salient areas of investigation include women's participation in the Mexican Revolution (Macias 1980; Salas 1990; Reséndez Fuentes 1995; Tabea Linhard 2005); gendered roles and war work in the US during the Second World War (Honey 1985; Summerfield 1984; Caldwell Sorel 1999; McEuen 2011); the political protest and activism of mothers' associations in Argentina's so-called Dirty War (Navarro 1989; Guzman Bouvard 1994); and women's contributions to the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua and their roles during the subsequent Contra War period (Borge 1982; Montoya 2012).

While clearly diverse in content, approach, and viewpoint, these studies cohere in asserting that attention to gender is essential to understanding the conduct and impact of war, and, in turn, that war is a crucial site from which to attend to gender, given that underlying gender anxieties and tensions are frequently exposed by the exceptional conditions of wartime. Although women's experiences of conflict are by no means always enabling, a consistent trope is the way in which war's dislocation correlates with expansions in women's roles and rights, though gains may be hard-won or temporary.

Attention to photography in these studies is often minimal. Some reproduce photographic images of women but, a minority of scholars notwithstanding, only do so in an illustrative or evidentiary capacity. As Patricia Hayes (2005) contends, such an approach fails to consider the conditions under which women are made visible and the structures of power through which women are depicted. This intellectual limitation risks underestimating the mediated and often compromised nature of women's photographic representation by others. Staged, propagandist or erroneously captioned images may be upheld as truthful, even celebratory, representations of the women depicted.⁸ More perniciously, images of women made without their participation or consent may unintentionally reproduce codes of patriarchal repression.⁹

⁸ By way of example, a photographic image purporting to show a 'Yaqui Indian Belle Sharpshooter' (Givens 1918: 91) has become an iconic image of women's armed participation in the Mexican Revolution. In fact, the image depicts an El Paso resident, Chinese-Mexican waitress Herlinda Chew (also known as Herlinda Perry and Herlinda Wong), who is posing for either a commercial postcard manufacturer (Arroyo 2013: 140) or 'an imaginative reporter' (Peterson and Cox 1977: 30–31). Chew's Chinese origins were suppressed in order to present her as a North-western indigenous Mexican.

⁹ Hayes offers the case of men's colonialist photography of African women in nineteenth century and early twentieth century, whereby women were 'pushed into visibility' by a camera that 'was invasive and immediate, effecting a gendered extraction' (2005: 522–23).

Mindful of the 'conditions of visibility', a number of studies explicitly address the relationship between women, war and photography through perceptive critiques of photographic representations of women in times of war, assessing how and why these images have been mobilised and interpreted as they have. Scholars have collectively offered invaluable insights into the gender problematics of images of women in conflicts including the Mexican Revolution (Noble 2003, 2010b), the Spanish Civil War (Brothers 2007b), the Vietnam War (Hariman and Lucaites 2003), and Afghanistan (Edwards, H. 2007), amongst others. However, their focus is on photographs of women who had little or no control over their means of representation or the subsequent use of their image, and their accounts rely on reading images 'against the grain' in order to tease out the agency of those depicted. This approach has limited scope to detect women's visual agency, restricting the potential to identify compelling evidence for women's persistent activity at the intersection of war and photography. To address this deficit, I propose a shift away from representations of women made by others, to women's own endeavours as producers, viewers and users of photography, whereby greater (though by no means always total) agency may be exercised. This approach, I argue, allows women to be considered actors who shape and are shaped by armed conflict.

Few studies focus specifically on women's activity as producers, viewers and users of photography in the context of war. Surveys of women's war art by Kathleen Palmer (2011) and Calvin and Deacon (2011) demonstrate that women have consistently used craft and fine art practices to connect with and comment upon war. Both studies offer a broad framework for a definition of 'war art' that goes beyond frontline practice, but neither attends to questions of photography *per se* in depth. Photo-historian Sandy Callister (2008) offers a stimulating account of New Zealand wives and mothers who sent lantern slides to soldiers in the First World War. Callister is atypical in looking beyond the act of taking photographs to consider other photographic practices, in this case the dissemination of photographs. She calls for attention to vernacular and overlooked photographic practices that might enable women to be placed more centrally in national histories of war (Callister 2008: 332). Jean Gallagher (1998) and Margaret Higonnet (2010), both scholars of literature and gender, investigate women's war writing and photo-texts in the two World Wars. As I discuss later in this chapter, Gallagher and Higonnet offer insightful

contributions to theorising the gender problematics of women viewing war. Sited within the discipline of literature studies, however, Gallagher and Higonnet are only able to offer limited consideration of women's activities in an emphatically photographic capacity.

The most extensive study to focus on the interrelationship between gender, photography and conflict is Val Williams' *Warworks: Women, Photography and the Iconography of War* (1994). Williams' conception of war photography is broad, encompassing images by postmodern international female photo-artists, as well as historical photographic practices both professional and vernacular. Williams rejects the conventional insistence upon masculine frontline photojournalism. She argues that 'the photography of war need not be connected with photoreportage. [... To] photograph war one does not have to be in a battle zone; nor does the appellation of witness always belong to the contemporary observer' (15). *Warworks* is undoubtedly pioneering in aiming to reconfigure the genre of war photography into a more inclusive, expansive terrain, in which women photographers might be 'directive' rather than tokenistic (Williams 1994: 14). Yet, as Williams herself attests, her study aims to provoke questions rather than provides answers. While her text highlights pertinent issues – the assumption of war photography as a masculine practice, the insistence on photojournalism as pre-eminent mode, and the question of what might constitute 'female gaze' upon war – such issues are largely left unexplored and untheorised.

These valuable contributions notwithstanding, scholarship that considers women's activity as producers, viewers and users of photography in contexts of war is still embryonic, constituting an excellent opportunity for this thesis to contribute to the field. In the discussion that follows, I build on the scholarly foundations outlined above to offer a more sustained and developed consideration of the nexus of women, war and photography. Attention to modes of photography excluded from the canon of war photography offers a greater understanding of women's attitudes to, experiences of, and participation in, the sphere of war. To enable this, I propose a methodological approach that I theorise as 'women's engagement with war and photography', the subject of this chapter. In the following discussion, I analyse the gendered conventions of war photography – what might be termed the 'rules' of engagement – and advance a

new theoretical model that allows for the three-way interrelationship of women, war, and photography to be considered in terms that go beyond existing debate.

The virile combatant: war photography in the 'Capa mode'

For a war correspondent to miss an invasion is like refusing a date with Lana Turner after completing a five-year stretch in Sing Sing.

Robert Capa¹⁰

The normative account of war photography presents a highly gendered and conventionalised concept of a genre that becomes naturalised through teleological narratives. Conventional histories such as *The Camera at War: A History of War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day* (Lewinski 1986), *Life at War* (1981), and *Shots of War: 150 Years of Dramatic Photography From the Battlefield* (Brewer 2010) rehearse a narrative that proceeds towards maximum realism and immediacy, facilitated by ever-progressing technology. These histories invariably trace a chronological and linear trajectory via successive conflicts and outstanding photography professionals: Roger Fenton in the Crimean War (1853–56), Mathew Brady in the US Civil War (1861–65); Jimmy Hare in the Spanish–American War (1898); Robert Capa in the Spanish Civil War (1937–1939); and Tim Page in the Vietnam War (1955–1975), amongst others.¹¹ Integral to this dominant narrative is the parallel advancement of photographic technology, progressing from the cumbersome plate cameras of the 1850s to faster film emulsions and handheld cameras that emerged in the early twentieth century. These intertwined histories plot a seemingly inevitable and desirable progress that leads from immobility and distance to action and proximity, journeying from the static and staged images of the Crimean War to the long-awaited capture of dramatic moments of battle and death in the first three decades of the twentieth century.¹² The bookjacket précis of *Shots of War* (Brewer 2010) epitomises this standard narrative: 'Here, captured in some of the

¹⁰ Cited in Scherman (1981: 8).

¹¹ Some historians, including Lewinski, recognise that Fenton was preceded by other photographers making images in the context of war, but Fenton is generally held to be the first war photographer of significance (Lewinski 1986: 37). The earliest extant photographic images made in the context of war are portraits of soldiers in Saltillo, Mexico during the Mexican-American War of 1846–8, taken by itinerant North American daguerreotypists (Debroise 2001: 174).

¹² For a concise and comprehensive introduction to war photography and its technological developments, see Lenman (2005).

most dramatic photos ever taken, is the story of modern warfare, the photographers who risked their lives to tell it, and the ever-improving photographic technology that made their achievements possible'. The effect of these repeated histories is to suggest a naturalness of progress towards proximity and action, as though war photography could not have developed any other way. The hallmark of war photography is held to be first-hand depiction of the combat zone, as the book covers of conventional histories serve to illustrate (figure 1).

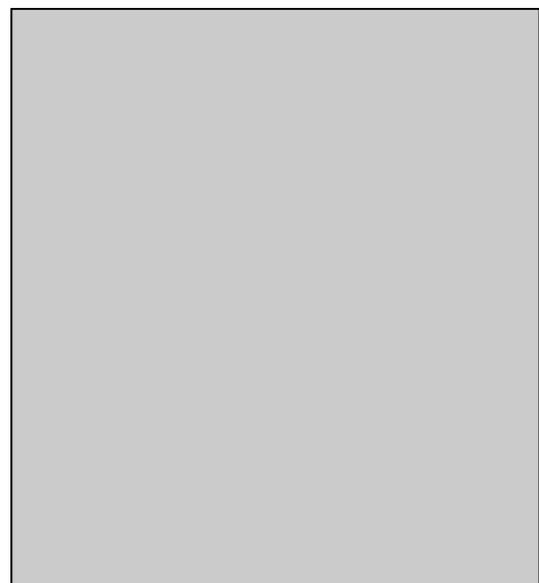


**Figure 1. Action in the combat zone:
book covers of histories of war
photography**

Top left: Jorge Lewinski (1978) *The Camera at War: A History of War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day* London: W. H. Allen

Bottom left: *Life at War* (1981) New York: Time-Life Books

Below: Paul Brewer (2010) *Shots of War: 150 years of Dramatic Photography From the Battlefield* London: Carlton Books



Lewinski's (1986: 26) claim that 'war, a man's game, seemed destined at the start to be recorded by men alone' summarises the conventional view that the genre is essentially masculine. And yet, there is nothing inherently gendered in the practice of war photography nor anything that makes one particular branch of photography more suited to men or women than another. As a number of scholars have attested, including Jay (1982), Williams (1986), Vettel-Becker (2005), Rosenblum (2010), and J.A. Rodríguez (2012) among others, claims of gendered practices of photography must be historicised. Photography (and its various genres and fields) have merely been more or less 'hospitable' to women in some times and places than others, for institutional, ideological, and practical reasons (Vettel-Becker 2005: 1).

The process by which war photography became gendered masculine has received little critical attention. In virtually the only account, Vettel-Becker claims that the post-war period in the US was a watershed for the genre. The social upheaval of the Second World War, she argues, was followed by a sharp re-drawing of gender roles in society generally and in photography specifically. As a result, a number of photographic fields, including combat photography, photojournalism and street photography, became perceived as the exclusive preserves of the heterosexual male. While Vettel-Becker's account is invaluable in aiming to historicise the gendering of war photography, the watershed she suggests is overstated. The hallmarks of hypermasculine war photography were already coalescing at the end of the nineteenth century, as can be seen in the figure of pioneering combat photographer Jimmy Hare. Claimed by Lewinski (1986: 53–54) to be the first *bona fide* combat photographer, Hare attained celebrity photographing the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the Mexican Revolution.¹³ Hare's persona as a roving photographer seeking out danger became as much a part of the story as the events he photographed, with the *El Paso Daily Herald's* declaring that 'No war is official until it has been covered by Jimmy Hare's camera' (Mraz 2012: 57). His daredevil exploits were rebuked by his editor at *Collier's* as who warned that 'you will be of no use to either your

¹³ Bob Zeller asserts that first 'combat photographer' was US daguerreotypist George S. Cook, whose studio in Charleston, Georgia, was under bombardment during the US Civil War in September 1863 (Zeller 2005: 2). While Cook captured the first image of combat operations while under fire, he does not fit the profile of the hypermasculine adventuring war photographer who actively seeks out war that I consider here. While Hare may not be the definitively first photographer to operate in this fashion, he is certainly a well-known early exponent.

family or *Collier's* if dead or wounded.' Hare reportedly replied: 'have evidently misunderstood my assignment. Will send you El Paso skyline and some pretty pictures of flowers in the park' (cited in Mraz 2012: 57). Hare's *modus operandi* heralds the genesis of the archetypal risk-taking, virile war photographer. Untrammelled by concerns for personal safety or by domestic or romantic entanglements, he above all prizes proximity to the combat zone.

This archetype found its greatest exponent during the Spanish Civil War in the 'swashbuckling' persona (Scherman 1981: 8) of Robert Capa.¹⁴ The pseudonym of Hungarian émigré Endre Friedmann, Capa astutely cultivated his hypermasculine daredevil image to make his photographs more marketable.¹⁵ Capa's rise was facilitated by a conflict that 'provided photographers with a rare opportunity – a war fought in an accessible, photogenic country which gripped the imagination of editors around the world' (Vinen 2002: 261). His startling 1936 image, purporting to depict a Loyalist soldier in the instant of death by a bullet, was published in French magazine *VU* and subsequently in *Life* (figure 2) amongst other mass-market periodicals. The image earned Capa the sobriquet 'The Greatest War Photographer in the World' in the British illustrated magazine *Picture Post* (3 December 1938).¹⁶

Capa's maxim 'If your pictures aren't good enough, you aren't close enough' has achieved almost mythic status in its espousal of bodily proximity to action and danger. Capa's death in 1954 while covering the Indochina War only served to immortalise him as the apogee of the risk-taking war photographer. Hailed two decades after his death as 'the greatest of them all, in whose tradition the best contemporary war photographers follow' (Leventhal 1973: 252), Capa continues to frame discourses of the genre into the twenty-first century, being described as

¹⁴ For biographies of Capa, see Whelan (1994) and Kershaw (2002).

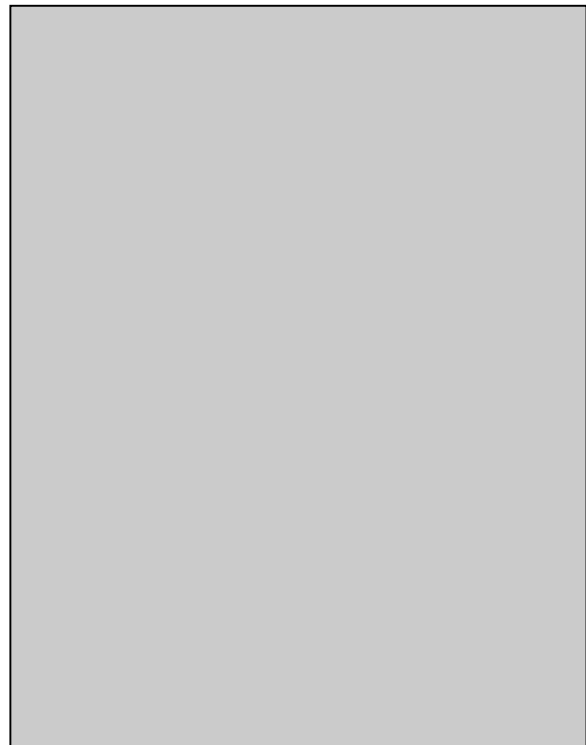
¹⁵ 'Robert Capa' was the joint invention of Friedmann and fellow photographer Gerda Taro; Friedmann later took on the role full-time. See Whelan (1994: 80–83).

¹⁶ The fact that the image may have been staged does not diminish its power as an icon of war photography, nor the myth of Capa as heroic photographer in the frontline. For a discussion of the image and its veracity see Brothers (1997: 178–185). The authorship of the image has also been challenged. Given the collaborative nature of the work of Gerda Taro and Robert Capa/Endre Friedmann and lack of attribution of authorship during this period, it is theoretically possible that *Falling Soldier* image was in fact made by Taro, as Kotaro Sawaki provocatively posits in his television documentary aired on Japan's NHK on 3 February 2013 (cited in Susperregui 2013). The implied irony is that Capa's icon of masculine war photography may in fact have been made by a woman. See Rogoyska (2013) for an argument that some photographs taken by Taro have been erroneously attributed to Capa.

recently as 2010 as a 'legend in war photography' (Brewer 2010: 7). His sensationalised memoir, *Slightly Out of Focus: Reminiscences of a War Photographer*, first published in 1947, has been translated into seven languages and reprinted numerous times (most recently in 2007), demonstrating the enduring appeal of its author. War photographers subsequent to Capa have been framed in comparable terms: Tim Page, to cite one example, is described as 'insanely reckless' and emblematic of 'a particular "cool", buccaneering attitude to the [Vietnam] war' (Shawcross 1983: 7, bookjacket text). Capa's so-called *Falling Soldier* image of 1936 has become iconic, and is repeatedly cited as a watershed of the genre in conventional histories of war photography to ultimately become, as Michael Shapiro has asserted, an icon not just of the Spanish Civil War, but also of photojournalism itself.¹⁷ In short, Capa forms the foundational template for war photographers from the Second World War onwards. Throughout this discussion, I use the term 'Capa mode' as shorthand to denote this dominant brand of war photography conducted by the daredevil male photojournalist at the frontline.

Figure 2. 'Robert Capa's camera catches a Spanish soldier the instant he is dropped by a bullet through the head'

Caption to photograph by Robert Capa, *Life* magazine 12 July 1937



¹⁷ In illustration of this claim, Shapiro notes that 'in testimony to the photo's continuing influence, the two photojournalists in Oliver Stones's film *Salvador* (1986) [...] while in pursuit of iconic images of the death-squad murders, identify Capa's Spanish Civil War photo as the epitome of photojournalistic success' (Shapiro 2008: 372).

In the face of this template, how might women war photographers be considered? Is the female war photographer, in fact, an oxymoron? To shed light on these questions, it is worth returning to some apparently outmoded arguments proposed by feminist art historians. Linda Nochlin (1989) and Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock (1981) addressed the conundrum 'why have there been no great women artists?' to cite the title of Nochlin's seminal 1971 essay. Three principle arguments were proposed in response. The first is that the structure of patriarchy has impeded women from even competing to be great. Excluded by male-privileged systems of education and apprenticeship, and stymied by societal expectations of motherhood, child-care and domestic duties, women have been unable to fully develop and participate as artists. The second argument is that despite these barriers, a small number of great women artists have prevailed, but they have nonetheless been excluded from the canon by chauvinist art historians pre-disposed to detect perceived feminine weaknesses in the artists' style and subject matter. In the third and most far-reaching argument, feminist art historians reject the very question 'why have there been no great women artists?', instead denouncing art history as male-defined and predicated on the masculinity of the artist, and call for a reconfiguration of the parameters of what constitutes 'great' art, so that women artists may be fully appreciated.

I suggest that war photography is similarly predicated upon masculinist criteria and frameworks, albeit in ways that differ from the discipline of fine art. Before considering how the parameters might be changed, however, it is worth demonstrating why that might be necessary, and why war photography should be considered a special case that warrants a return to Nochlin *et al.* To begin with, barriers to education and employment have long prevented women participating in war photography on the same terms as men. As Fleckenstein (2015: 8) has asserted, women's early professional participation gave rise to anxiety among established male photographers and society more largely. As a result, articles in the photographic and popular press, from the 1850s to final decades of the century, encouraged women's participation in only menial roles (Fleckenstein 2015: 8). Societal expectations of women's responsibility for childcare and domestic duties further limited women to fields of photographic work that could be undertaken within a narrow radius of home. While formal photographic education for women was offered in Mexico in the 1870s (García Krinsky 2012: 13; Rodríguez, J.A. 2012: 25) and the US (Niedermaier 2008: 84),

instruction was directed towards professional branches considered 'appropriate to gender', such as social and family portraiture (García Krinsky 2012: 13).¹⁸

In the early twentieth century, the developing field of photojournalism was perceived as a masculine undertaking, and there were limited opportunities for women to train.¹⁹ Those women who did pursue a career in photojournalism found that state and public agencies (such as the US Farm Securities Administration's photographic unit in the 1930s) were reluctant to commission them for lone or long-distance documentary assignments, restricting the scope of their activities or opportunities for work or travel (Rosenblum 2010: 176–177). In the mid-twentieth century, female photojournalists at illustrated US magazines *Life* and *Look* were encouraged to develop gender-appropriate specialisms such as fashion, children, animals, schools and social functions (Vettel-Becker 2005:13). The cumulative effect of these structural and logistical constraints is that women have faced greater difficulties than men to train and secure assignments as vocational war photographers.

To be sure, the arguments of Nochlin, Pollock and Parker are no longer radical, and to engage with their theories some forty years hence appears more than a little anachronistic. And yet, their criticisms of imbalance and sexism still linger within the field of war photography, which remains a special case with distinct gender rules. As recently as 2014, a newspaper feature on international female women war photographers alleged that 'women in war photography are a relatively new development' and that '[w]omen are coming to the fore in a profession long dominated by men' (McVeigh 2014). The very fact that a feature on women war photographers was considered newsworthy in 2014 attests to the continuing perception of women's frontline photojournalism as a remarkable undertaking.

¹⁸ These establishments were, in Mexico, from 1871 the Escuela Nacional de Artes y Oficios para Señoritas (National School of Arts and Trades for Young Ladies), and in the US, from 1872, the Cooper Union in New York.

¹⁹ Clarence White's New York school, established in 1914, was exceptional in educating female photojournalists including Dorothea Lange and Margaret Bourke-White (Rosenblum 2010: 107).



Figure 3. 'The Photographer Under Fire', page spread from *Life at War* (1981)

Images clockwise from top left: Larry Burrows; Robert Capa; W. Eugene Smith; David Douglas Duncan. Source: Time-Life Books

This gender division mirrors assumptions about war and gender more widely, typified by John Keegan's claim that warfare is 'an entirely masculine activity' (2004: 76). As discussed earlier, while women have acted as combatants, they have done so only in exceptional circumstances. In fact, one of the most contentious present-day issues *vis-à-vis* war and gender concerns the exclusion of women from combat roles in the majority of the world's armed forces. It has recently been estimated that only 12 to 17 nations worldwide formally allow women in frontline combat roles (Keating 2012; Fisher, M. 2013), with women combatants excluded from the US military until December 2015.²⁰ It is hard to overstate the impact that the tendency to exclude women from frontline combat roles has had on their participation in the field of war photography, both practically and perceptually. Of crucial importance is the assumption that the credentials of the war photographer are founded upon being there in the heat of the action, just like a soldier. A double page spread entitled 'The Photographer Under Fire' from *Life at War* (1981) succinctly articulates this assumption (figure

²⁰ In 2013 the US formally allowed women in certain major military roles, such as fighter pilots or artillery officers, but not in frontline military roles (Fisher, M. 2013).

3). Black and white images depict the ubiquitous Capa alongside three other prominent war photographers who worked for US periodicals in the mid to late-twentieth century: Larry Burrows, David Douglas Duncan and W. Eugene Smith. Although the photographers' expressions, body language and contexts in which they are depicted vary, the images are united in presenting male figures in battered fatigues and combat gear, posed in outdoor scenarios that suggest war zones or military aircraft, vehicles or ships. Only the bespectacled Larry Burrows, wearing a pensive expression and wedding ring, contradicts the overriding impression of the war photographer as a tough, virile adventurer. Yet lest we should be in any doubt of Burrow's credentials, the accompanying text informs us that he is a nine-year veteran of Vietnam, who 'once jumped from the relative haven of his helicopter to help a serviceman under fire' (Scherman 1981: 7). The visual and textual rhetoric of this page-spread is that to be 'under fire' is a pre-requisite of the authentic war photographer.

Capa exemplifies the war photographer's physical commitment and willingness to share the dangers – and the viewpoint – of the serving soldier, as testified to by his iconic photographic images made wading to shore on D-Day (figure 4). While the blurred quality of the images was due to an error in film processing, it was presented by *Life* magazine as a physical result of Capa being under fire as he accompanied troops ashore. Unlike Douglas Duncan, Burrows, Edward Steichen and numerous other war photographers, Capa did not actually serve within the Allied armed forces. Nonetheless, he was perceived as being equal to – indeed surpassing – the soldier in bravery, given that as an independent photographer he persistently risked his life without being ordered to do so (Vettel-Becker 2005: 39). The melding of Capa-photographer with Capa-combatant was formalised by his posthumous award in 1954 of one of France's highest orders, the Croix de Guerre with Palm, Order of the Army, and a funeral eulogy by General Cogne that claimed Capa 'fell as a soldier amongst soldiers' (Mecklin 1954: 33). This interchangeability of war photographer and soldier has continued in subsequent conflicts. As Robert Hamilton argues in his account of the cultural figure of the photographer in the Vietnam War, 'the [photo]journalist and the "grunt" [soldier] are collapsed into one another so as to be almost indivisible: their situation *vis-à-vis* the war is identical' (Hamilton 1986: 51).²¹

²¹ The photojournalist in question is Tim Page. Hamilton makes his assertion within a larger argument centred not on gender, but on notions of subculture and representations

This conflation of civilian photographer with military combatant is crucial to understanding the construction of the *bona fide* war photographer.

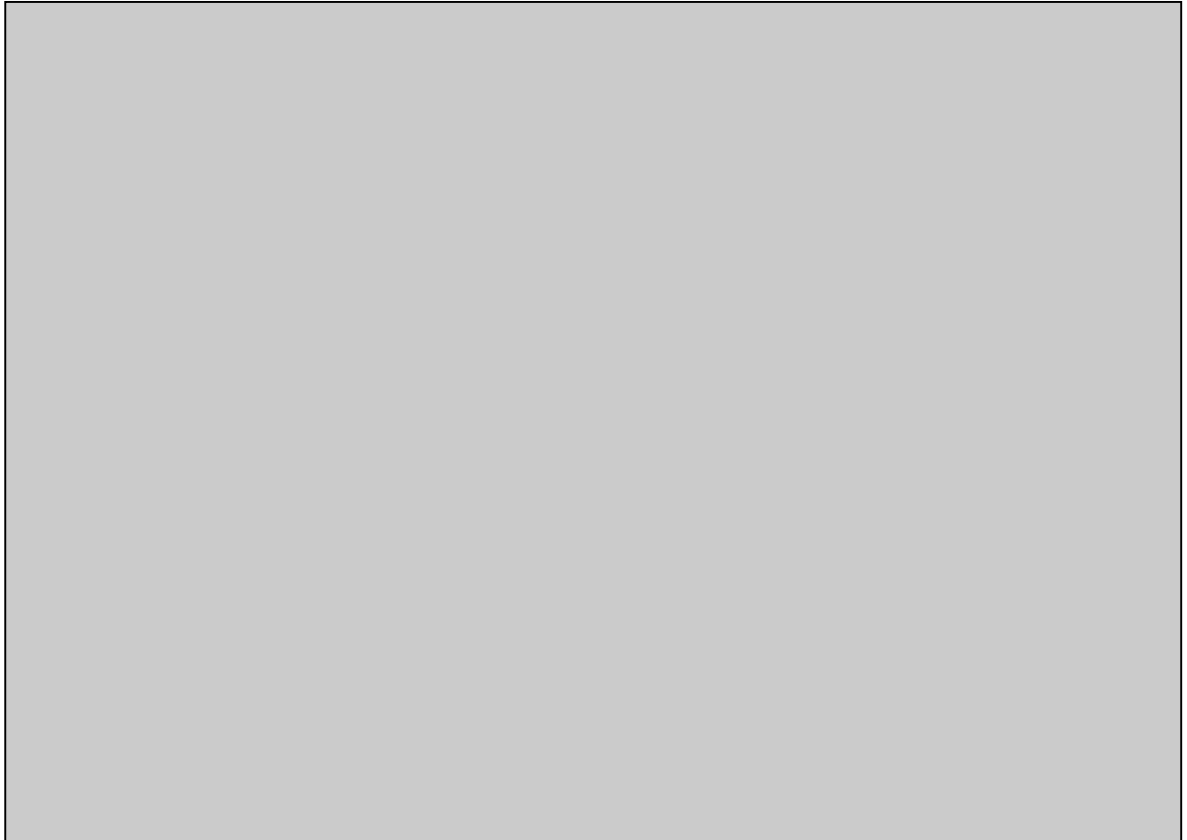


Figure 4. Page spread from Robert Capa's *Slightly Out of Focus: Reminiscences of a War Photographer* (1947)

On the left-hand page, two images made in the water by Robert Capa as he accompanies troops during the D-Day landings. Source: Henry Holt

The construction of combatant-photographer clearly poses problems for women wishing to operate in the 'Capa mode', as due to their gender they are almost always considered ineligible as combatants at a state, military and legislative level in most Western societies. While millions of women have been in situations of mortal danger or literally 'under fire' in conflicts in the twentieth century American hemisphere (Turpin 1998: 4), only a tiny minority of women have been officially recognised as combatants. Women have been almost invariably

of resistance to authority, which effectively absolve photographers (and soldiers) from the responsibility of US imperialism and domination in Vietnam. However, it is clear that Hamilton assumes the photographer to be male, through textual references such as 'the cultural representations of *him*' [added emphasis] (Hamilton 1986: 52).

restricted to auxiliary roles in official armed forces, while the handful of known female combatants have operated in chaotic situations of revolution or civil war, rather than being formally incorporated into recognised state or national armies. Even when women take on men's military roles vacated by men during wartime, these roles are re-coded civilian and feminine, and therefore of less significance to the combat participation of men.²² Women who have officially served in frontline roles (whether as combatants or not) have found their military status re-defined as civilian once peace has been restored, something that veterans have contested in a number of contexts.²³

The reluctance to admit women to the frontline as combatants is paralleled in the arena of war photography. The British professional photographer Olive Edis, commissioned by the Women's Work Subcommittee in the First World War, was subject to the military's repeated obstructions to her travelling to the Western Front, only reaching her destination in March 1919, four months after peace had been declared.²⁴ In the Second World War, Peter Palmquist (1994: 247) claims, women photographers 'had far more difficulty in gaining access to the "hot spots" than men'. US female war correspondents faced greater obstacles than men in gaining accreditation, with safety concerns and lack of facilities (such as latrines for women) cited as reasons.²⁵ The photographers that were successful in obtaining permissions were officially prohibited from frontline photography. As a result, they were forced to cover activities away from the combat zone, resulting in less dramatic (and therefore lower prestige) images. Only a small number of women contravened military regulations to photograph battle action. US correspondents Lee Miller and Dickey Chapelle were disciplined for violating

²² Cynthia Enloe contends that '[t]he military has to constantly redefine 'the front' and 'combat' as wherever 'women' are not' (cited in Schweik 1987: 541). See also Higonnet and Higonnet's notion of the 'double helix' on the shifting and re-calibration of women's roles in the transition between peace and war (1987). For accounts of women soldiers, see Salas (1990) for the Mexican Revolution, and Tabea Linhard (2005) for the Spanish Civil War.

²³ See, for example, women's claims to veteran's pensions following the Mexican Revolution (Salas 1990: 80) and the Second World War (Dougherty Strother 1990: 14).

²⁴ Access for all photographers was tightly controlled, but as a woman Edis experienced particular resistance. Correspondence between members of the Women's Work Subcommittee and Edis details the frustrations occasioned by the various delays to her commencing her journey. An unpublished account by IWM staff (n.d) outlines the intricacies of the commission. Olive Edis Papers, Box: Misc. O Edis 89/19/1, Imperial War Museum, London.

²⁵ Opposition did not come solely from men. The female head of the Department of Immigration and Naturalisation, a Mrs. Shipley, had 'a deeply held belief that women should not be exposed to the dangers of a war zone'. See 'No Job For a Woman' (2015).

the terms of their accreditation after entering combat zones (in St Malo, France, and Okinawa, Japan respectively); Chapelle was arrested and had her status revoked.²⁶ Such institutional barriers to physically accessing the combat zone have served to materially limit women's potential to be war photographers in the 'Capa mode', for patently they cannot compete to be 'good enough' if they cannot get 'close enough'.

The most insuperable obstacle faced by women who would be war photographers is the canon's insistence on manliness and virility. The genuine war photographer, it is professed, displays voracious appetites – for drink, gambling, and sex – and he must be willing (indeed eager) to reject domesticity, marriage and children. As Vettel-Becker has argued, Capa presents himself in *Slightly Out of Focus* as a hard-drinking, poker-playing, freewheeling maverick who evades the romantic trappings of his on-off sweetheart 'Pinky' (Vettel-Becker 2005: 38).²⁷ In a later account, Capa cautions that the war photographer must not have 'a tender soul' or run the risk of turning 'soppy' (Capa, R. 1964: 62). His reward will be 'more drinks, more girls, better pay and greater freedom than the soldier' (105). In one particularly striking instance of hypermasculine rhetoric, Capa declares that '[for] a war correspondent to miss an invasion is like refusing a date with [wartime pin-up] Lana Turner after completing a five-year stretch in Sing Sing' (cited in Scherman 1981:8). His assertion conceptualises war photography as an addictive and dangerous sexual conquest in which images are coded feminine, while the job of the war photographer is to conquer and ravish them.²⁸

The ongoing currency of this hypermasculine and sexualised rhetoric is rehearsed in both photojournalism and popular culture. Vietnam War photographer Tim Page has conspicuously declared that trying to take the glamour out of war is 'like trying to take the glamour out of sex' (Herr 1978: 13,

²⁶ For Lee Miller, see Caldwell Sorel (1999: 253) and 'No Job For a Woman' (2015). For Dickey Chapelle, see Caldwell Sorel (1999: 379).

²⁷ The fact that the text is a partly-fictionalised account, as Capa openly acknowledged in the first edition, does not diminish its influence in portraying war photography as a hypermasculine practice.

²⁸ Later, Capa continues this sexualised metaphor, claiming that 'war was like an aging actress: more and more dangerous and less and less photogenic' (Capa, R. 1964: 72).

cited in Hamilton 1986: 54).²⁹ Mainstream cinema portrayals of war photographers present the occupation as a passport to travel, adventure, and sexual encounters. *Under Fire* (1983), set during the Sandinista Revolution, features actor Nick Nolte in the role of fictitious photojournalist Russell Price. Sexual encounters in Nicaragua are assured: we watch Price's camera record his best friend's girlfriend as she sleeps naked, and look through a 'viewfinder' formed by his hands to assess the rear form of an attractive Nicaraguan translator. A further, and particularly crude, example appears in Oliver Stone's 1986 film *Salvador*. James Woods' character (based on real-life journalist Richard Boyle), expresses his delight to be covering the conflict in El Salvador: 'Best pussy in the world. Where else can you get a virgin to sit on your face for seven bucks?' (*Salvador* 1986).³⁰ In response to such avowals of hypermasculinity, contemporary conflict artist Simon Norfolk, who actively disassociates himself from the 'Capa mode', has wryly contended 'if we were at a party and I wanted to get into your knickers, I'd tell you I was a war photographer'.³¹ Such emphatic demonstrations of virility as a pre-requisite of the war photographer clearly presents an innate obstacle for women wishing to operate in the same mode.

Women photographing war: tourists, voyeurs, babes and bad mothers

P.S. I send you, dear Alfred, a complete Photographic apparatus, which will amuse you doubtlessly in your moments of leisure, and if you could send me home, dear, a good view of a nice battle, I should feel extremely obliged.
P. S. No. 2. If you could take the view, dear, just in the moment of victory, I should like it all the better.

'A Lady's Postscript to a Crimean Letter', *Punch* (1855)³²

²⁹ Page was furthermore reputed to have a prodigious appetite for narcotics and was 'fascinated by [war's] "glamour", its machinery, its sex, drugs and rock-and-roll, its adventure' (Hamilton 1986: 54).

³⁰ While beyond the scope of this thesis, cinematic representations of the masculine, daredevil war photographer abound. Tim Page is reputed to have inspired the character 'Crazy Photojournalist' played by Dennis Hopper in the film *Apocalypse Now* (Hamilton 1986). More recently, *The Bang Bang Club* (dir. Steven Silver 2010) celebrated the exploits of four real-life male photographers including Kevin Carter in South Africa's apartheid conflicts, whose charisma, guts and talent nets them Pulitzers (and beautiful women) at the price of their lives and sanity.

³¹ Norfolk made this public remark at the symposium 'The Future of War Photography' at the Imperial War Museum North in 2010 (cited in Oldfield 2010).

³² Cited in Hodgson (1974: 11).

'A Lady's Postscript', published in the British magazine *Punch*, satirised the influx of photographic images from the Crimean War (1853–56) reaching civilian viewers.³³ While implying that more energy was being spent photographing than fighting, the anecdote also pokes fun at the lady correspondent who blithely imagines war as a kind of holiday that might furnish 'good views' of 'nice battles' in the soldier's leisure time. So curious and eager is this lady to see the action of battle – 'the moment of victory' – that she is willing to send a cumbersome and expensive camera apparatus to the combat zone so another might photograph the battle on her behalf.

While this prototype female war photographer was only a humorous invention of *Punch*, the lineage of women photographing war bears closer scrutiny. The paucity of contributions by women in classic histories of war photography serves to support Lewinski's (1986: 26) assumption that the practice is 'a man's preserve'. Lewinski claims that no woman photographed war until Margaret Bourke-White in the Second World War, and that she remained an exception until the emergence of the generation of women photographers of the late 1960s, who covered the Vietnam War (Lewinski 1986: 26).

In reality, numerous women professionals photographed in combat zones prior to the Vietnam generation. An early exponent is the Englishwoman Harriet Tytler, who lived through the Indian Mutiny (1857) and subsequently photographed its aftermath and sites with her military husband, Robert. Harriet Tytler has almost always been downgraded by historians to the role of helpmate rather than equal photographer in the partnership (Fitzpatrick 2008:1504).³⁴ During the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), numerous female press photographers, freelancers, and studio photographers from the US, including Eva Esther Strauss and Edith Lane, depicted the Battle of Juárez in 1911.³⁵ In

³³ At this time it was not yet possible to reproduce photographic images in the press. Roger Fenton's Crimea images reached viewers in the form of engravings based on his photographs, or as photographic prints exhibited in galleries. See Baldwin (2004: 22) and Bolloch (2004: 10).

³⁴ G. Thomas (1985) is typical in positioning Harriet Tytler as a secondary or assistant photographer. There are conflicting accounts of the photographic education of the Tytlers. Warner Marien (2010: 92) suggests that Harriet learned photography independently; Falconer (2008: 1412–3) claims that the couple learned together from John Murray and Felice Beato, the eminent photographer of war, following the Mutiny. For Harriet Tytler's memoirs, see Sattin (1986). For a brief biography, see Falconer (2008).

³⁵ See Berumen and Canales (2009: 388–89).

the First World War, a number of female US press photographers reported from the Western Front. These included Harriet Chalmers Adams, a correspondent and photographer for the periodical *Harpers* and *National Geographic*, who in 1916 became the first female correspondent granted access to the French front (Rothenberg 2015). Helen Johns Kirtland, a staff correspondent for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*, photographed the aftermath of the 1918 Battle of the Piave River in Italy; her pictures were published in an article entitled 'A Woman on the Battle Front' (Calvin and Deacon 2011: 91). In the Spanish Civil War (1937–1939), women professionals included the Hungarians Gerda Taro and Kati Horna, and the Austrian-Australian Margaret Michaelis-Sachs.³⁶

During the Second World War, contrary to Lewinski's (1986:26) assertion, Margaret Bourke-White was by no means the only – or even the first – woman photographer at work in combat zones. US photographer Therèse Bonney depicted the Finnish-Russian front from 1939 to 1940, US war correspondent Lee Miller (discussed in Chapter 5) reported from France and Germany, and the South African photographer Constance Larrabee depicted operations in Italy. These are only some of the numerous women professionals working in the Second World War, as Palmquist (1994) has shown.³⁷ Subsequently, women photojournalists have been a regular presence at conflicts in Korea, the Middle East, Central America, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, amongst many others. It is not my intention to present a comprehensive inventory of names, but even this cursory roll call demonstrates that professional women photographers have persistently photographed war in combat zones, despite their not being adequately represented in classic histories of war photography.

The conundrum of women's war photography, however, is not one of production alone. Even when women have contrived to photograph like men – that is, as frontline photojournalists – their work is received differently and framed in different terms from those used to portray the work of men. A common trope is to describe women photographers in diminutive terms, insinuating their frailty, naivety or ineptitude. *Life at War* terms Gerda Taro 'the little redhead' and 'sweetheart' of Capa (1981: 13), while an article in CNN as recently as 2014

³⁶ For further information on Michaelis-Sachs, see Ennis (2005). For a study of Taro, see Olmeda (2007). For Horna, see Berthier et al. (2012).

³⁷ For biographies and research resources for female Second World War photographers, including Soviet exponents, see Palmquist (1994).

described Taro as 'bubbly' (McKenzie 2014). The numerous women who photographed the Vietnam War have been similarly presented in reductive terms. Photojournalist Catherine Leroy is described in *Life at War* (1981: 213) as a 'petite French photographer'. Lewinski (1986: 29) reports that military personnel in Vietnam accused female photographers of being 'incompetent or unreliable'. Hoffman (2008: 9) maintains that male photojournalists dismissed the majority of their female peers as 'donut dollies'. A 1968 article for *Nova* magazine by Brigid Keenan demonstrates that women as well as men reproduced dominant gendered assumptions of the period. Keenan describes the female correspondent in Vietnam as being adrift in 'a lonely business', a single woman who 'longs, just once, to have someone to tell her what to do' (*Nova* May 1968, p.64, cited in Williams 1994: 49–50).³⁸ In his account of photojournalist Susan Meiselas and her work in the Sandinista Revolution, the critic Edmundo Desnoes ([1985] 2008: 222) draws attention to 'her blonde braided hair between her frail shoulder blades', an observation that seems unlikely to have been made of a male photographer. More recently, Deborah Copaken Kogan's 2000 memoir of her photojournalism in Afghanistan and other conflicts was titled, against her misgivings, *Shutterbabe*.³⁹ Such enfeebling constructions perpetuate assumptions about women's perceived incapacity to operate as war photographers.

Another tendency is to position female exponents of the 'Capa mode' as ambitious and aggressive, whose desire to behave like men marks them as unnatural. A 1941 issue of *US Camera* reports that Bourke-White does not behave in 'the feminine way', but instead 'steps on photo-male toes [and] gets into photo-male hair' (cited in Squiers 1998: 63). Brigid Keenan attributes the phenomenon of women photographing the Vietnam War to an abnormally 'large helping of ambition' (*Nova*, May 1968, p.64, cited in Williams 1994: 49–50). Lewinski speculates that war offers a proving ground in which, during the era of Women's Liberation, 'an exceptionally ambitious and enterprising woman can test herself, in the most difficult and exacting way, against men' (Lewinski 1986:

³⁸ Keenan's article discusses photojournalist Catherine Leroy within a wider examination of female war correspondents in general. For a recent account of female war reporters in Vietnam, including photojournalist Dicky Chapelle, see Hoffman (2008).

³⁹ For Kogan's account of the titling of her memoir, see Kogan (2013).

29). The desire to succeed professionally, as well as to pass war's test of manhood, marks women war photographers as acutely unfeminine.⁴⁰

While male war photographers are portrayed as romantically adventurous, female exponents are held to be sexually promiscuous, even unsavoury in their behaviours and appetites. Bourke-White's colleagues at *Life* labelled her 'the general's mattress' (Goldberg 1986: 263), implying her privileged access to combat zones was due to sexual favours for US Gen. George Patton rather than her photographic skills. The Vietnam generation of photographers, Lewinski hypothesizes, 'are excited by death and danger and [...] are drawn to men who live in such a charged environment' (1986: 29). According to correspondent Peter Arnett, women in Vietnam were often dismissed as 'husband hunters, war groupies, or thrill seekers' (cited in Hoffman 2008: 9).⁴¹ In short, displays of ambition and libidinousness – the very qualities celebrated in the 'Capa mode' – meet with disapproval when exhibited by women.

The male war photographer's refusal of family ties provokes condemnation when exercised by women. US war photographer Heidi Levine recounts objections to her covering the Lebanon War in 1982, being told by her commissioning superior at Associated Press, 'What am I going to tell your mother if something happens to you? You haven't even had children yet' (cited in Baldrige 2013). These assumptions persist, as Levine attests when recalling objections to her photographing the war in Libya in 2011:

One of the male Italian journalists saw me and started shouting at me, 'What are you doing here? You have three children!' To have him publicly shout that at me I thought was really unfair, because you don't hear people saying to a male photographer or correspondent, 'Hey, what are you doing covering a war? You're a father!' (Baldrige 2013).

Societal expectations that women should raise children have clearly played a part in female war photographers choosing between maternity and their profession. The trajectory of Kogan's memoir *Shutterbabe* (Kogan 2000) is described as 'the story of a tender-hearted woman who traded war's excitement

⁴⁰ For a brief discussion of war as a twentieth-century test of manhood, see Vettel-Becker (2005: 34).

⁴¹ In a further example of the perceived brazenness of female photographers in Vietnam, *Life at War* offers a titillating anecdote about Catherine Leroy smuggling camera films in her bra and asking a male companion to examine how her bust looks (1981: 213).

for that of family life' (*The New York Times Book Review* 11 March 2011). Magnum photographer Susan Meiselas states she did not have children as to do so would have prevented her taking the risks required to photograph in Central America conflicts (Davies and Meiselas 2014: 49). Of course, patriarchal structures have historically dictated that women's careers in general are frequently seen as incompatible with motherhood. Yet this dichotomy is even more pronounced in the field of war photography, for not only are women perceived to be compromising their femininity with her professional ambition, but they do so by trespassing, both figuratively and physically, on the masculine realm of war.

The propriety of women to view war has repeatedly been debated. While the scopophilic desire of Alfred's sweetheart in *Punch* was apocryphal, a naval officer who had served in the Crimean War wrote in the *Illustrated London News* that he was 'very much shocked to see an English lady riding about unconcerned' by 'the remains of the desperate struggle – torn red coats, muzzles of muskets, odd epaulets, ramrods, tailor's gear... to say nothing of the most awful of all – the dead' (cited in Hodgson 1974: 46–47). The officer's description recalls Fanny Duberly, an Englishwoman who enjoyed the opportunity to view battles in the Crimea while accompanying her husband there, and whose poorly-selling memoir was condemned as 'unfeminine' by Victorian society (Hodgson 1974: 42). The photographs that portrayed the scenes of the Crimea to British viewers were bloodless affairs, but images of corpses from other conflicts soon circulated.⁴² In 1861, at the commencement of the US Civil War, the writer Oliver Wendell Holmes told readers of *The Atlantic Monthly* that 'the young maiden and tender child' ought to 'look away' from stereographs of corpses from the Battle of Melegnano in the Franco-Austrian War of 1859 (Holmes 1861). Although couched in chivalrous terms, Holmes implies that men have a duty to control access to images in order to protect those who, in their childishness and femininity, do not have the capacity to gaze upon war.

Whether seeking to witness armed conflict first-hand, or viewing the ravages of war offered by photography's indexical traces, women have often been considered as trespassers. They are configured curious and unwelcome

⁴² The lack of violence depicted in Fenton's images was due to reasons 'technical as much as ideological': a combination of the limitations of photographic equipment and the propagandist nature of Fenton's commission (Bolloch 2004 8–9).

spectators who intrude upon matters that do not, or should not, concern them. In a territorial sense, women have often been positioned as having no business in the sphere of war. The title of Brigid Keenan's 1968 *Nova* article on female war correspondents in Vietnam, 'Where the Hell Do You Think You Are Lady, Fifth Avenue?', suggests that the woman addressed has blundered into a war zone from the more appropriate feminine realm of the department store. Such a woman, Keenan contends, is impelled by 'curiosity and restlessness' (*Nova* 1968, p.64, cited in Williams 1994: 49– 50), a belief shared by soldiers in Vietnam who treat a women photographer as 'a voyeur, or a sightseer who has no right to be where she is' (Lewinski 1986: 29).

These are charges, as Lewinski acknowledges, that would never be levied against a male colleague. On the contrary, male war photographers are conventionally perceived as selflessly and bravely conveying the realities of conflict to those safely at home. *Life at War* praises Larry Burrows' willingness to put himself in 'precarious positions' to photograph napalm strikes in Vietnam 'because that was the only way he could get the kind of photographs his professionalism demanded. At such times, fear was simply thrust aside' (*Life at War* 1981: 214). Yet Burrows' female peers in Vietnam, as Hoffman has contended, were dismissed as "do-gooders" who created difficulty for the "real" (male) journalists who had a job to do' (Hoffman 2008: 9). These assertions collectively configure women's desire to photograph war as meddling, undesirable, and even selfish.

In part this double standard may be attributed to age-old masculine anxieties – personified by mythic figures from Eve to Pandora to Bluebeard's wife – of woman's innate curiosity that endangers the apparent harmony of the existing gender order. In material terms, men have historically limited women's access to education and information in order to minimise challenges to patriarchal power/knowledge structures, a tactic that continues into the twenty-first century, most conspicuously in some Islamic societies. The role of photography in visually accruing knowledge, and gaining insight into the assumed masculine sphere of war, is frequently positioned in the same manner.

Collectively, these tendencies and tactics – the exclusion of women photographers from the combat zone, the assumption of women's ineligibility as combatants, and the condemnation of displays of ambition and curiosity – have

materially and discursively positioned women outside the masculine terrain of war photography. It follows that women's viewing perspectives on war tend to be construed as inauthentic. In her study of war poetry, literature scholar Susan Schweik identifies a clear difference between the masculine 'authoritative eyewitness' and feminine 'passive spectator' (1991: 149–150). This construction holds true even for male poets who have not experienced combat action: they are nonetheless "men as men," speaking for men, and therefore [have an] imaginative right to the voice of the soldier, the terrain of the "front", unlike civilian women (Schweik 1987: 540). In her study of female war writers, Gallagher develops Schweik's contentions, insightfully proposing that women in Western twentieth societies are positioned as onlookers who do not 'see battle', in both its literal and idiomatic sense: that is, as men who serve in the battle zone as combatants. Positioned outside politics and history, women are 'non-combatants *par excellence*', unable to claim authority as credible eyewitnesses in the way that soldiers might (Gallagher 1998: 3). It follows that the twentieth-century female war photographer, even if she is able to fulfil the incipient scopic desire to 'see battle' expressed by Alfred's sweetheart imagined by *Punch*, remains a tourist in an alien land who cannot be a legitimate witness to war.

To return to the epigraph that opened this chapter, this goes some way to explaining Lewinski's refusal to place Bourke-White within 'the ranks of the outstanding photographers of war' (1986: 26), despite her patently producing images of equal merit to those of her male peers. In fact, as an indication of Bourke-White's photographic prowess, early in her career she was 'so successful she was rumoured to be a front for a man' (Goldberg 1986: 263). Nonetheless, the double barrier of women's declared ineligibility to 'see battle', in both literal and figurative senses, bars female war photographers like Bourke-White from entering the canon.

Women have gone to some lengths to prove that, like men, they have been under fire and worthy as combatants in order to claim authenticity as eyewitnesses to war. Higonnet (2010, unpaginated) discusses the US Red Cross canteen worker Margaret Hall, who smuggled two cameras to France to document her experiences in the First World War. Hall and other women auxiliary workers, Higonnet argues, used photography in a non-professional capacity to photograph themselves and index their activities in the combat zone. The aim of the women's 'photo-texts' – snapshots and albums inscribed with

personal captions – is to metaphorically declare, ‘I was there – though a woman!’ In this context, Higonnet contends, the camera becomes ‘an instrument that enables the woman to claim the authority to speak as a witness in the “forbidden zone” of men’s combat’, and that the women’s photographs provided evidence that ‘like soldiers, they had been under fire, a fact which would confer authority upon them as witnesses’.

This authority, argues Higonnet, grants women the right to view war and even to photograph damaged male bodies and corpses. Women did so, she contends, ‘not as voyeurs but as witnesses to war and its ravages’, wishing to both make sense of the scale of carnage and to bypass military and media censorship to communicate wartime horrors to an ignorant public at home in order to elicit support for their work (all references Higonnet 2010, unpaginated). Yet, as Higonnet recognises, to photograph in the field of war and to gaze upon male bodies *in extremis* is doubly transgressive, for it both positions women as authoritative within a masculine sphere, and overturns the gender norm of women as recipients of what Laura Mulvey has theorised as the ‘male gaze’ (Mulvey 1976).

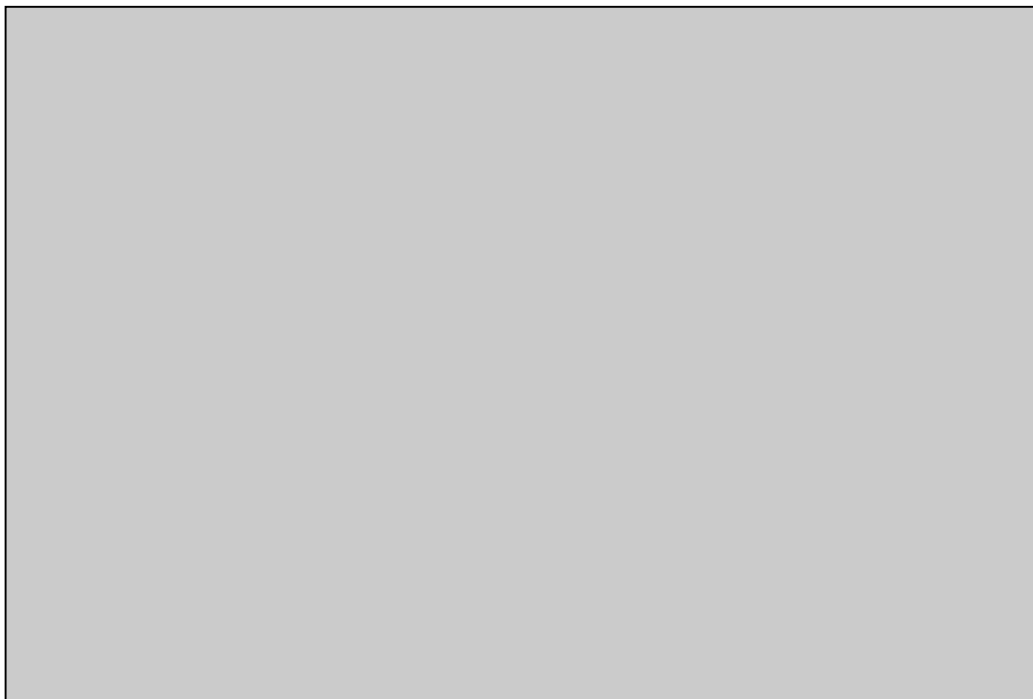


Figure 5. ‘USA Tent Hospital... In France’, Lee Miller

US war correspondent Lee Miller is depicted in helmet at bottom right
US *Vogue*, 15 September 1944

The tactic of indexing oneself photographically in the combat zone has not been restricted to Margaret Hall and her fellow women auxiliary workers of the First World War. During the Second World War, Lee Miller repeatedly recorded her frontline presence in a series of images often made in collaboration with compatriot David Scherman, a photographer for *Life*. Miller scholars interpret these self-images through semiotic, art historical, autobiographical or psychoanalytical frameworks, seeking to understand Miller's personal intentions and motivations (cf. Lyford 1994; Davis, M. 1997; Salvio 2009). If, however, we consider why these self-images were consistently reproduced in *Vogue* magazine (both US and British editions), another interpretation emerges. Miller regularly supplied the magazine with photographic documentation of her presence in the war zone: in uniform and battle helmet (figure 5); in combat-gear standing dishevelled amongst bomb rubble; or taking a bath in Hitler's abandoned apartment, her army boots prominently in the foreground.⁴³ Miller's photogenic appearance as a former model undoubtedly made her an attractive proposition for editors serving an audience of fashion magazine readers, which I discuss further in Chapter 5. Yet these visual reiterations also betray an urgency to prove the credentials of the female observer of war, positioning her as operating shoulder-to-shoulder with male combatants and, like them, under fire.⁴⁴ Miller's self-images in the magazine testified that that she had been, as Capa advocated, 'close enough', aiming to legitimate the authority of the female observer of war and to pre-empt accusations of her being guilty of voyeurism and tourism.⁴⁵

⁴³ These images were published in the following *Vogue* articles: 'USA Tent Hospital' (US *Vogue* September 1944) and 'Unarmed Warriors' (British *Vogue*, September 1944, p.35); 'France Free Again' (US *Vogue*, 15 October 1944, p.92); 'Hitleriana' (British *Vogue*, July/August 1945, p.73).

⁴⁴ By contrast, Gallagher's reading of Miller's wartime images interprets them as communicating a blocked, failed vision that actually calls into question Miller's authority as an eyewitness able to offer (as a man might) a Cartesian, coherent gaze on war (1998: 81). While this is an intriguing notion, Miller's wartime photographic styles and subjects are so diverse as to make possible multiple readings based on the images selected. I am interested here not in imagining Miller personal intentions as an artistic creator, but in how Miller was constructed as an authentic eyewitness for the readers of *Vogue*.

⁴⁵ A further striking instance in this regard is the now-iconic portrait of Margaret Bourke-White in aviator gear, reproduced to accompany the article '*Life's* Bourke-White Goes Bombing' (1943). See figure 20.

Women's modes of photographic engagement beyond the battlefield

While the vindication of denigrated female war photographers operating in the 'Capa mode' might highlight individuals worthy of attention, it is emphatically not the aim of this thesis. To seek out anomalous women would merely prove the rule that war photography is 'a man's preserve' at which only the 'exceptionally ambitious and enterprising' can succeed (Lewinski 1986: 29). The strategy of claiming legitimacy by being 'under fire' or 'close enough' leaves *most* women excluded, positioned as inauthentic observers of war. In an alternative move, I emulate feminist art historians Parker and Pollock who reject the masculinist frameworks of art history and call for a fundamental re-thinking of art history that might accommodate women's different circumstances. Such a tactic, they argue, allows women's creativity to emerge as central, rather than peripheral, to the discipline (Parker and Pollock: 1981: 47). In a similar approach, I propose that the very parameters and criteria of what constitutes war photography be reconfigured in order to be made adequate to women's production and participation.

What might a new framework consist of, and how might women's active participation be identified, if not in the 'Capa mode'? Gallagher (1998) offers insights in her study of female writers and correspondents in the two World Wars. Gallagher argues that, despite being non-combatants, these women display an active female wartime gaze that is both creative and critical. In this conception, Gallagher draws on Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* (1992), a study of modernity and the historical construction of vision, and in particular Crary's distinction between 'spectator' and 'observer'. For Crary, the term 'spectator' is loaded with connotations of 'a passive onlooker at a spectacle, as at an art gallery or theatre' or, for Gallagher, the spectacle of combat. Crary's alternative to the spectator, the figure of the 'observer', is by no means freely active, but rather someone who observes both in the sense of looking and of observing rules: 'one who sees within a prescribed set of possibilities, one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations' (Crary 1992: 5–6).

Enlightening as this conception is in understanding vision as constructed rather than natural, Crary's study conceives the observer as a generalised and

disembodied 'set of perceptual capabilities' rather than considering the circumstances and experiences of real people. As a result, he does not allow the possibility that people may observe differently in different circumstances, nor that distinct rules may apply to certain people.⁴⁶ Gallagher addresses this weakness by paying attention to the specific experiences and responses of particular women. I emulate Gallagher's approach, to consider how real women in concrete situations have observed war within certain rules. By grounding my analysis in empirical data, I hope to offer not a totalising theory of women's photographic engagement with war (which would clearly smack of essentialism) but to analyse the various ways in which gender articulates with war and photography, and its material effects on women's lived realities.

While Gallagher convincingly argues for an active female wartime gaze, her account is limited by its focus on a handful of highly educated and culturally prominent intellectuals. This restricted focus once again supports the 'exception that proves the rule' theory that *most* women are passive onlookers to contexts of conflict. Furthermore, Gallagher's choice of women rests on those who (with the exception of photo-correspondent Lee Miller), communicated their gaze on war through words rather than photography, and is additionally restricted to US perspectives in times of officially-declared international war. To build on Gallagher's study, I attend to a broad range of photographic modes of activity, and go beyond the dominant US hot-war perspective to consider what happens in other regions, historical periods, and modes of conflict in the American hemisphere. I seek evidence of active female gazes within a much broader, heterogeneous assembly of 'ordinary' women: housewives and mothers, fashion magazine readers, political protestors and snap-shooters. This methodological approach avoids the tendency to winnow out the 'exceptionally ambitious and enterprising woman' advocated by Lewinski (1986: 29), which suggests women war photographers are exceptional and isolated individuals. By contrast, attending to a broad range of groups of women reveals collectivities of practices that are deeply embedded in society rather than exceptions to the norm, opening up potential for women on a mass scale to contribute to an expanded conception of war photography.

⁴⁶ W.J.T. Mitchell's *Picture Theory* offers a fuller discussion of the limitations of Crary's study in this regard (1994: 19– 24), asserting that Crary 'shows no interest in the empirical history of spectatorship, in the study of visuality as a cultural practice of everyday life, or in the observer/spectator's body marked by gender, class, or ethnicity' (Mitchell, W.J.T. 1994: 20).

In the case studies that follow, I call for a move away from frontline photojournalism in the 'Capa mode' as the hallmark of authentic war photography. Instead, I shift to the notion of photographic 'engagement', which has far greater potential to assess women's participation. In my use of 'engagement' I have appropriated a concept from recent museum and gallery education theory, which denotes the capacity of the visitor-viewer to connect with and respond to visual material on display in a way that is meaningful to them (Bitgood 2010: 10). When viewers engage, they experience 'deep sensory-perceptual, mental and/or affective involvement', and exercise 'enquiry, critical thinking, and/or scientific reasoning'. Engagement, as a collection of processes, leads to outcomes such as learning, changes of attitude, emotional responses or a sense of immersion (Bitgood 2010: 10). My shift to engagement recognises that what might appear to be 'merely looking' has the potential to constitute an expression of agency, as opposed to one of passivity. This leads to a conception of active involvement that does not depend upon bodily presence in the combat zone, or even the taking of photographs, but might include viewing, handling and sharing them.

My turn to engagement also connects with recent scholarship that is attentive to the social, material and anthropological dimensions of photography. Work by scholars including W.J.T. Mitchell (2005), Geoffrey Batchen (2004), Elizabeth Edwards (2009), and Gillian Rose (2010), while diverse in scope, is collectively concerned with going 'beyond the dominant semiotic, linguistic and instrumental models to a more strongly phenomenological approach' (Edwards, E, 2009: 31). In this mode, reading images for their content alone is often secondary to an analysis of what people actually *do* with photographs and photography. Considerations of materiality, dissemination, and socio-cultural behaviour are therefore essential to illuminate what is at stake in interactions with the photographic. I situate my use of the notion 'engagement' within this methodological framework. Throughout this thesis, the term 'women's photographic engagement with war' is used to indicate this expansive mode of activity, rather than the more usual 'war photography' with its associations of a genre limited to the 'Capa mode'.

It is worth unpacking the multi-layered term 'engagement' to more fully articulate what it might encompass within the context of this thesis. Firstly, engagement

indicates attention held – a state of engrossment and absorption – and implies a dialogue between viewer and visual material. To be engaged connotes a liveliness of mind that connects and interacts with – even critiques – the subject matter at hand, and constitutes an active form of looking. Engagement also suggests participation, involvement and employment. To be engaged in something means to be involved in an activity, busily doing something. With etymological roots in the French [*s*]’engager (to pledge [oneself]), engagement also carries overtones of obligation and responsibility. To be *engagé(e)* is to be actively involved or committed, especially in a political sense, as many of the case studies discussed in this thesis demonstrate. Finally, engagement carries with it connotations of belligerence and is used in military contexts to denote entering into conflict: the clash of weapons being brought together or the hostile encounter between enemy armed forces. This provides a telling metaphor for, as shall be seen, women’s photographic engagement repeatedly brings them into conflict with political and cultural structure and systems. In the case studies that follow, I demonstrate how ‘engaged’ women, and their photographic engagement with war, might encompass all of these things, in varying ways.

It follows that, by breaching the limits of the genre of war photography, all manner of activities are explored in this thesis. The case studies consider sites other than the frontline (such as the homefront and studio interior), alternative modes of photography (snapshots, postcards, portraits), and different spaces of dissemination (fashion magazines, photo albums, protest marches). Rather than being preoccupied with single authorship – works produced by a lone (presumed male) creator – I look beyond the art historical insistence upon *oeuvres* by individual photographers. Instead, the case studies consider the practices and artefacts of untrained women, as well as professionals. I examine the ways in which women appropriate images made by others and use them for their own ends, and investigate instances when women have worked collaboratively, on a formal or informal basis, to achieve shared political ends. All of these practices are worthy of serious attention, incongruous or even trivial they might initially appear by conventional standards of war photography.

The emphasis on engagement means that conventional aesthetic criteria are irrelevant to an assessment of women’s contributions. In the chapters that follow, I have not sought out value judgements to identify images by women that – to return to this chapter’s epigraph – Capa would have considered ‘good

enough'. Rather, the women's photographic processes, practices, activities and artefacts are considered on their own merits. This means assessing them in terms of their usefulness and efficacy in communicating political views, expressing experiences, prompting action, and constructing history, both for the participating women themselves, and in terms of their potential to reveal to a wider audience something of the complexity and diversity of the experience of war. It is through this more expansive framework that women's agency and contributions forcefully emerge, showing women to be critical observers, political actors, and culpable beings in the sphere of war and its photographic manifestations.

Conclusions

It is worth briefly returning to Crary's notion of the observer: one who observes rules within a 'system of conventions and limitations' (Crary 1992: 6). Crary conceives a generalised observer who is 'lodged' (13) or 'embedded' (6), an entity who is seemingly immobile in the system. In her study of the female wartime gaze, Gallagher modifies Crary's position to consider the cases of specific women writers in order to detect 'how that observer might have resisted such conventions and limitations' within a belligerent culture (1998: 5). I build on Gallagher's approach to acknowledge women's specific bodily and circumstantial contexts, determining how women negotiated, moulded, flexed and squeezed those 'systems of conventions and limitations' in a range of ways. By expanding Gallagher's work into an exclusively photographic terrain, my study aims to reveal and analyse the conventions and limitations for women viewing, producing and mobilising photography in the context of war: the rules of their engagement, so to speak.

This is clearly a loaded phrase, signifying directives issued by a military authority that specify the circumstances and limitations under which forces will engage in combat with the enemy. While not wishing to suggest a literal confrontation between women and men positioned as opposing forces, it is clear that women's photographic engagement with war has repeatedly been a site fraught with power struggles in which gender roles are contested within a system of patriarchy. The degree to which women follow, negotiate, or flout

these 'rules of engagement' – or even impose their own alternatives – is revealed in the case studies in the following chapters.

As the following chapters reveal, women's photographic engagement with war cannot be characterised by consistent approaches or modes of engagement, or a single archetypal 'female gaze'. I certainly do not claim that women take inherently different kinds of photographs than men, or that female photographers possess special characteristics, such as enhanced empathy or sensitivity. Women's photographic engagement with war is a complex, multiple and diverse practice that cannot be crudely defined by any intrinsic characteristics. Indeed, it may display contradictory features and be prompted by, or pressed into service of, divergent motivations and ends, depending on the particular context of chronology, geography, and mode of conflict. The case studies demonstrate a diversity of engagement throughout hotspots of conflict in the American hemisphere during the twentieth century. Together, these case studies offer insights into how and why women's photographic engagement emerged as it did, and in what ways gender has articulated with the fields of war and photography, in specific contexts.

This diversity notwithstanding, the case studies collectively demonstrate that women's photographic engagement, while not *essentially* different from that of men, is subject to different rules, constraints and conditions, which shape the kinds of ways in which women engage. Certain recurrent limitations, tendencies and practices that rebound across the hemisphere may be discerned. Women's photographic engagement with war may arise from their particular experiences as non-combatants or express homefront viewpoints. It may record or document women's activism, protests, or political campaigning. Women's engagement may be everyday, even banal, in its subject matter, or reflective in approach rather than instantaneous or dramatic. It may demonstrate the aftermath and impact of war across time and space, rather than the moment of action. Women's engagement is often manifest in non-professional, untrained or low status formats, or arises from women's crafts and hobbies such as snapshots, album-making and personal or family photography. Where women are professionally trained, they might work within or emerge from identified feminine fields such as studio portraiture or fashion photography, rather than being primarily vocational combat photographers, professional photojournalists, or official photographers sanctioned by the military.

Furthermore, women's photographic engagement with war may often be shaped and disseminated by gendered viewing spaces and routes. These differ from those of the 'Capa mode', which is characterised by mainstream distribution of images via authorised sites of publication and viewing such as newspapers, periodicals and books, and public museums, galleries and archives. By contrast, women's contributions are often reproduced, viewed and mobilised in sites deemed low-status, such as women's magazines; in family, private or personal albums; as artefacts produced for women's protests and demonstrations; as images displayed and shared in female spaces of work or social circles (such as women's barracks, hospitals, boarding houses, veterans associations and mothers' associations) or at home in domestic environments; or be exchanged and circulated via private correspondence. As a result, women's photographic engagement with war is more likely to be ephemeral, discarded or disregarded, construed as peripheral, irrelevant, or an adjunct to the main war narrative. It often remains unpublished or held privately in an ad hoc manner, neglected or overlooked, and beyond scholarly analysis, public assessment, or national conservation: a situation that perpetuates the myth that women's activity is negligible.

A recurrent motif throughout the case studies that follow is the way in which women are prompted, propelled or enabled by the disruption and upheaval of war to move into new areas – physically, socially, geographically – to expand their limited roles and to assume modes of photographic engagement that differ from those of peacetime. Attention to women's participation in this expanded conception of war photography, as I have advocated throughout this discussion, enables women's agency to emerge more fully, configuring them capable and politicised, and affirming their rights and responsibilities as citizens on whose behalf governments and armies go to war. In this regard, women assert that they have played a part in war, even if they were not physically present at the frontline. Their photographic activity has often enabled them to place their experiences and those of other women centrally, contesting their marginalisation by masculinist histories; to insist upon their participation in a historical event and their credibility as historians; and to demonstrate the roles women have undertaken and contributions made in struggles for victory. The endgame of these endeavours is often to validate women's claims to the franchise, rights

and citizenship on a par with men, something which is repeatedly revealed in diverse contexts throughout the hemisphere.

As I have argued, the 'Capa mode' is but one way to engage photographically with war. Moreover, it is one that is hampered by numerous limiting assumptions and conventions. It is important to state, however, that the more expansive methodological framework of engagement advocated in this discussion does not promote unproblematic celebration of women's participation at the intersection of photography and war. Indeed, to acknowledge women to be active viewers, producers and users of photography in the context of war lays women open to the same charges faced by conventional war photographers: questions of ethics, and criticism of the ways in which they use and view photographs. Yet, the alternative – to deny that women on a mass scale have photographically engaged with war – is a far more problematic stance, for it denies the historical reality of women's agency, participation, political commitment, and responsibility in the context of conflict.

Just as importantly, the methodological innovation of 'engagement' as an alternative mode of war photography advocated in this thesis is applicable beyond the hemisphere, and beyond the dimension of gender. Attention to 'engagement' has enormous potential in reconfiguring war photography into something much more rich and inclusive, enabling a more comprehensive range of viewpoints and experiences to be considered, particularly those of other overlooked or excluded groups who have hitherto been marginalised due to ethnicity, sexuality or class. A consideration of engagement will help to equip future scholarship on photography and war with the means to more adequately reflect and communicate the human experience of war, in all its diversity.

II. CONFLICT ZONES

3. From Flowers to Firing Squads: Sara Castrejón's Portrait Studio and the Business of War Photography

... if there is an occupation suitable for women, it is photography. They have an extraordinary aptitude and manual dexterity, and above all, can serve – better than a man – the ladies whose portraits they make, arranging their appearance and pose with a confidence and attention to detail impossible for persons of the opposite sex.

'The Photographic Studio of the Torres Siblings'
El Mundo, Mexico, 2 June 1899¹

General Brigadier Fidel Pineda 10 minutes before his death,
August 10 1913.

Sara Castrejón, caption to photographic portrait²

A small photographic print is pasted onto a card mount decorated with scrolls and the careful handwriting of the photographer, Sara Castrejón. The image shows a composed young man wearing *campesino* (peasant) clothing and holding a sabre (figure 6). The photographic artefact conforms in some ways to the conventions of a personal portrait or keepsake. At the same time, the official inkstamp of the General Archive of Ministry of War and Navy propels the photograph into the realm of warfare, while the caption 'General Brigadier Fidel Pineda 10 minutes before his death' jolts the viewer with its terseness and finality. With its curious mix of aesthetics – the elegant European-style mount combined with the rough outdoor setting and attire of its subject – the portrait of Pineda collapses distinctions between the interiority of the studio and the exteriority of the revolution's combat zone. How did such an artefact come about? How was women's photography in Mexico transformed in a matter of years from arranging the coiffures of society ladies, as described above in *El Mundo's* review of the Mexico City studio headed by Victoria Torres, to depicting military leaders minutes before execution by firing squad?

¹ 'El Taller fotográfico de los hermanos Torres' en *El Mundo*, Mexico, 2 June 1899, p.7, cited and translated in Debrouse (2001:36).

² Cited in Villela (2010a: 104).

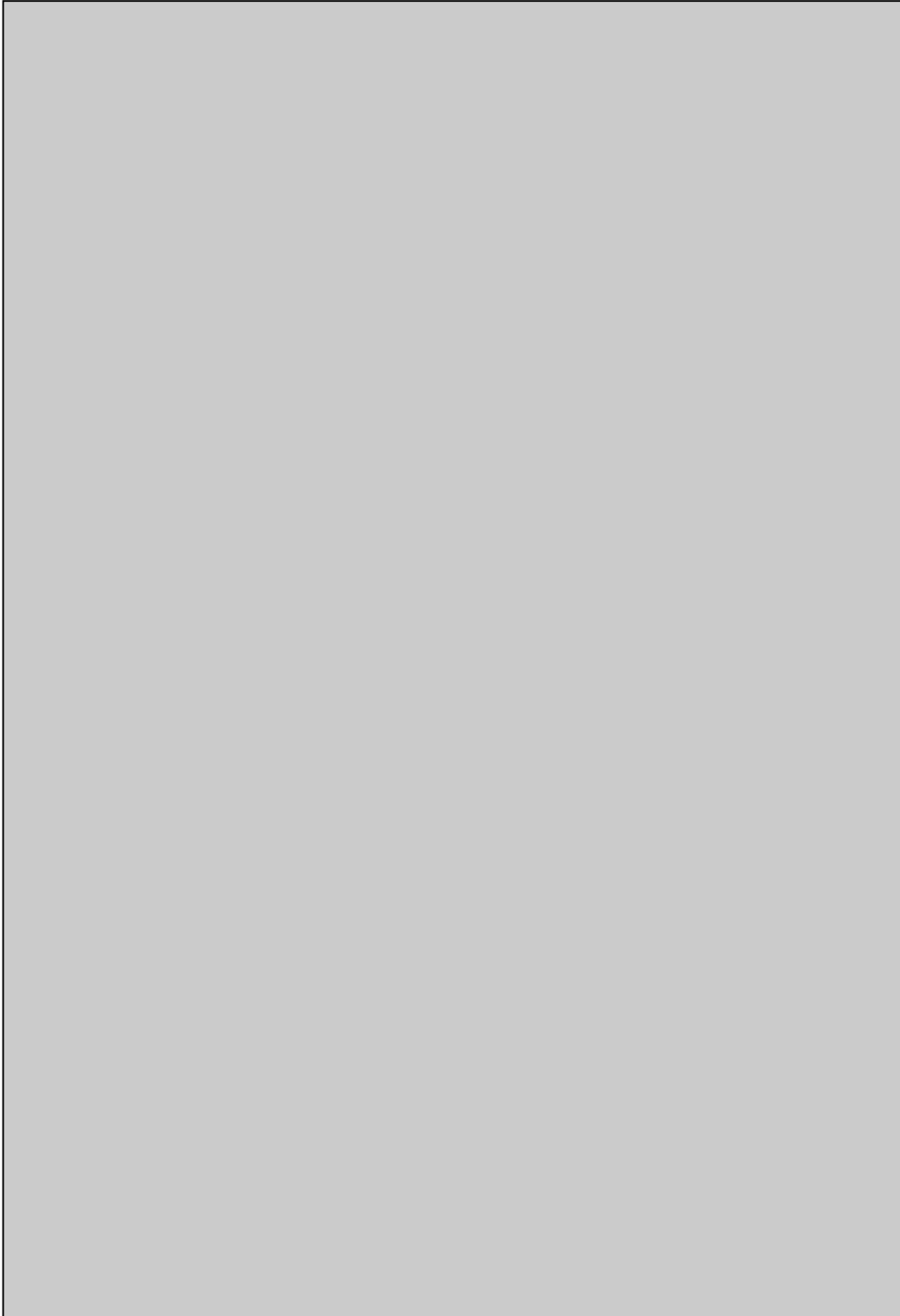


Figure 6. 'General Brigadier Fidel Pineda 10 minutes before his death, August 10 1913', Sara Castrejón

Source: Villela (2010a: 104)

The Pineda print is just one of some six hundred photographic artefacts by Sara Castrejón that have recently been brought to public notice by Mexican photo-

historian and anthropologist Samuel Villela. As revealed in his pioneering biography *Sara Castrejón: fotógrafa de la revolución* (2010a), Castrejón (1888–1962) worked as a professional photographer in the small provincial town of Teloloapan in the south-western Mexican state of Guerrero. The daughter of a lawyer, Castrejón undertook college training or a studio apprenticeship in Mexico City at the age of eighteen, soon returning to Teloloapan to establish what seems to have been the sole photographic business in the town. Castrejón's studio formed the ground floor of the family home, which she shared with her brother and sister, both of whom assisted her. The majority of the extant photographic material identified and collated by Villela, largely held in family or otherwise private local collections, depicts subjects that might be expected of a provincial studio operating in the first half of the twentieth century: family and society portraits, and records of weddings and confirmations.³ From 1911, however, Castrejón's output radically diversified to encompass numerous studio portraits of military personnel, as well as group and equestrian portraits made outside her studio or in military zones. She also documented encampments, troops staging preparedness for battle, military funerals, the signing of peace accords, and executions by firing squad. These last images not only portrayed condemned men like Fidel Pineda, but captured the moment of death.

The Pineda portrait sparks a succession of questions. How and why did Castrejón come to make this artefact, transposing the conventions of the portrait studio to a new (and presumably disturbing) setting? How can we interpret what appear to be unusual power relations between the subject depicted and the female photographer surveying the masculine terrain of war? How did Castrejón feel about photographing the death of men, and how did her gendered status as a woman shape her photographs? What follows is an attempt to trace, from the distance of a hundred years, the outlines of Castrejón's journey from the elegant interior of a provincial studio to the bullet-pocked walls of the municipal cemetery: from flowers to firing squads.

³ In an ongoing project, Villela has compiled a personal digital archive of the Castrejón corpus, which remains private. For further details on the private collections where the physical artefacts are held, see Villela (2010a: 16–17).

Women's photography in the Mexican Revolution

Histories of war photography by Global North scholars routinely omit the Mexican Revolution, claiming that the First World War is the first large-scale conflict that permitted photography on a mass scale (cf. Lewinski 1978; Lenman 2005).⁴ Yet Mexicanist historians persuasively argue the Mexican Revolution should be considered so (Debroise 2001: 177; Mraz 2004: 20; Villela 2010a: 19). The armed phase of the revolution, a multi-faceted uprising against the thirty-five year-long regime of President Porfirio Díaz, endured for at least a decade, officially beginning on 20 November 1910 with an uprising called for by political activist Francisco I. Madero, and ending in 1920 with a negotiated peace treaty between warring faction leaders Francisco 'Pancho' Villa and Venustiano Carranza.⁵ Although fighting in the revolution was internecine and not international, the conflict was both bloody and widespread, with the ultimate demographic cost to Mexico estimated to have been as high as two million (Knight 2013: 23).⁶ Rather than taking place at a distant military frontline, conflict was experienced by Mexicans in multiple locales on their own soil. Compared to the strict censorship exercised in the First World War, access was therefore relatively free (Mraz 2009: 59). Furthermore, photographic technology had rapidly developed in the new century. Photo-telegraphy speeded image transmission times, and by 1896 the halftone process and rotogravure press enabled reproduction of photographs in newspapers and illustrated periodicals in Mexico (Debroise 2001: 73). News agencies and freelance photo-journalists from both sides of the US-Mexico border thrived; the first Mexican press agency Agencia de Información Gráfica was established by Casasola in 1911 (Debroise

⁴ Throughout this discussion, I follow the distinction made by Joseph and Buchenau (2013: 2) between 'revolution' (lower case) as a process and mode of conflict, and 'Revolution' (capitalised) as the historic, even mythic, event that was constructed in the post-revolutionary period.

⁵ The literature on the Mexican Revolution is immense. For a succinct account of the Mexican Revolution, and a brief historiographical overview of the literature on the conflict, see Noble (2010a: 16–24). For a recent concise historical analysis of its causes, dynamics, consequences, and legacies, see Joseph and Buchenau (2013).

⁶ There is no consensus on the demographic impact of the Mexican Revolution. In his recent essay on war and violence in modern Mexico, Alan Knight draws upon research by Robert McCaa (2003), the conflict's key demographer. '[T]he demographic cost was about two million, of which some ten percent was due to emigration and 25 percent to lost births (that is, births that did not happen because of the revolutionary condition of the country). Two-thirds of the population loss was therefore caused by excess deaths and, somewhat surprisingly, deaths-by-violence (roughly, 'battlefield deaths') accounted for more than deaths from disease, numerous though these were' (Knight 2013: 23).

2001: 184); and outlets for commercial prints, postcards, and illustrated newspapers and magazines prospered (Leighton 1984).

In the nineteenth century, photographs of wars had been static affairs. Roger Fenton's photographs made in the Crimean War (1853–56), or those produced by Mathew Brady's roster of agency photographers working in the US Civil War (1861–65), were characterised by staged scenes, portraits, or the aftermath of battle, due to the limitations of cumbersome plate cameras and slow shutter speeds. By the time of the Mexican Revolution, lighter, cheaper, more portable cameras were available, supported by roll film or pre-prepared 5x7" dryplates and enhanced sensitivity of film emulsion enabling faster shutter speeds (González Flores 2010:45–46).⁷ While spontaneous images of combat action still proved exceptional, a cohort of opportunistic roving press photographers such as Jimmy Hare strove to follow conflict as it unfolded (Lewinski 1978: 53), and the ubiquity of coverage prompted *New York Herald* correspondent A.A. Willis to describe Mexico as 'lousy with freelance photographers' (cited in Leighton 1984: 295). Meanwhile, mass-produced cameras like the Kodak Brownie, owned by an estimated 1.2 million snapshooters in the US alone by 1905 (West 2000: 41), meant unskilled observers could record their own experience of conflict.⁸ US citizens came to the frontier to witness the revolution first-hand, and the Battle of Ciudad Juárez, famously viewable from the Hotel Paso del Norte (Dorado Romo 2005; Fox 1999: 81–85), attracted some 1500 'Kodak Fiends', as over-enthusiastic snapshooters were termed (Mraz 2009: 59). The result of this combination of factors is that photographic images of the Revolution proliferated over the decade 1910–1920.

Of particular significance to this discussion is the Mexican Revolution's additional status as the first large-scale conflict with mass female participation. As an all-pervasive conflict, in which boundaries between military and civilian were erased, the revolution swept Mexico's population of 15 million citizens into its tumult. The *ad hoc* nature of many warring civil factions, as well as the

⁷ Mraz makes the intriguing claim that the availability of strong sunlight, in comparison to conditions of the Northern Europe in the First World War, or the Russian Revolution, facilitated the making of photographs at a time when film performed better in well-lit situations (cited in Villela 2010: 19).

⁸ In Mexico, the Kodak Brownie remained in the hands of a smaller number of mainly upper class customers at the time of the revolution, and consequently snapshot photography by Mexicans was far less extensive than that of US citizens (González Flores 2010: 43).

Mexican army's tradition of women accompanying the troops, meant that women on a mass scale acted as *soldaderas* performing duties of unofficial supply corps and commissars (Salas 1990; Reséndez Fuentes 1995).⁹ Furthermore, advances in the availability and lightness of firearms made women more able to operate as fighting soldiers, with some women attaining military rank of colonel and commanding battalions (Lau Jaiven 2010: 186–187). While women in Mexico had participated in the War of Independence a century earlier and even in pre-Conquest conflicts (Salas 1990), their participation was significantly more inclusive and far-reaching during the revolution. Women's contributions extended beyond traditionally feminine roles of nurses, prostitutes and cooks, to encompass roles as political journalists, editors, campaigners, activists, munitions runners, couriers, soldiers and military leaders (Tuñón Pablos 1999: 90–92). As a result, women were depicted in far greater numbers than in previous large-scale conflicts in the hemisphere such as the US Civil War (1861–65), appearing in photographic postcards, prints and illustrated periodicals of the epoch that circulated both nationally and internationally. This convergence of circumstances makes the Revolution a rich and apposite site from which to explore the nexus of women, war and photography.

As early as 1911, the *New York Times* claimed that 'women have taken a spectacular part in the Revolution' and that women's potential to shape the Revolution's outcome was widely acknowledged.¹⁰ Leaders of rebel Mexican factions addressed women as politicised beings, promising gender advances in return for their support. Madero pledged increased equality for women (Lau Jaiven 2010: 181). Ricardo Flores Magón published the open letter 'A la mujer' ('To Women') in 1910, calling for women to join the struggle (Tuñón Pablos 1999: 82). In 1916, Emiliano Zapata proposed reforms of divorce and illegitimacy laws (Lau Jaiven 1995: 92). However, the validity of women's participation and anticipated emancipation was also contested. 'Pancho' Villa banned women from his flying columns and withheld positions of power (Tuñón Pablos 1999: 92). In fact, hypermasculinity was a key trope of Revolutionary leaders in a nation that remained 'a cultural context that valorised virility' (Noble 2004: 207).

⁹ Deriving from the Aragonese word for a servant who took the soldier's pay (the *sold* or *soldada*) and bought him food and other supplies, *soldadera* has become the default term for any woman who participated in the revolution, whether as soldier, cook, camp-follower or other role (Salas 1990: 11).

¹⁰ 'Declare Figueroa Has Arranged Peace' (1911: 2).

Despite mass participation and the vital contributions of women throughout the conflict, earlier promises of increased rights and freedoms were compromised in post-revolution settlements. Despite the first official demand for women's suffrage being made in 1911 to provisional Mexican president León de la Barra (Tuñón Pablos 1999: 86, 93), women were not granted the franchise until 1953 (Lau Jaiven 2010: 190). Government protocol and legislation retrospectively categorised women's contributions as essentially feminine and civilian, and therefore outside the valued sphere of authentic masculine soldiering, so that women were excluded from practical benefits such as veterans' pensions. Official and dominant histories of the Mexican Revolution collectively re-framed women's contributions as peripheral, with textual accounts in mainstream and academic histories overlooking women's political and practical contributions (Lau Jaiven 1995; Mitchell, S. 2006: 8), while state-sponsored projects of cultural memory, such as monuments and murals in public buildings, presented women in tokenistic or symbolic form.¹¹

The tendency to elide women finds its parallel in the photographic discourse of the Revolution.¹² Despite the multitudes of photographic images produced, women subjects appear as only a tiny minority in books, periodicals and other visual supports representing the conflict, which tend to focus, as Mraz (2009: 226–235) asserts, on the acts of 'Great Men'. Women are seldom the main focus of photographic images, but are depicted inadvertently: seen in the background of scenes, positioned at the edges of the photographic frame, or present as the adjunct to a man. An alternative tactic is to separate women's contributions from the main (male) narrative. Agustín Casasola's oft-republished *Historia gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana* (Illustrated History of the Mexican Revolution) is widely held to be the most influential visual history of the conflict (Mraz 2004). The 1992 edition features women as central subjects in only a handful of pages in its ten volumes, primarily in gender-specific sections. The

¹¹ A striking example of this tendency is Juan O'Gorman's 1968 mural commissioned for the Independence Room at the National Museum of History at Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City. O'Gorman's mural includes a representation of Zapatista Colonel Carmen Robles, clearly based on a photographic portrait now held in the Casasola Archive. In O'Gorman's version, Robles' pistol is absent and her masculine trousers are replaced by a long dress.

¹² By discourse, I draw on David Macey's definition of 'discourse' as 'a corpus of statements and utterances governed by rules and conventions of which the user is largely unconscious' (Macey 2001: 100). 'Utterances', in this case, are made visually.

section entitled 'La Soldadera' (Casasola 1992: 720), offers an admiring but generic eulogy to the archetype of dogged and emotionally-driven Mexican femininity following her 'Juan' to battle. In Berumen's and Canales' (2009) anthology of the fifty most reproduced images in the century following the outbreak of the Revolution, women as principal subjects do not make an appearance until number twenty-three, with an image of a woman holding a basket standing next to a soldier (371). These usages of photographic images of women have coalesced into a set of visual statements on the Mexican Revolution that relegate women to marginal positions in history and national memory.

Yet as Jaiven Lau's (1995) historiographical study has shown, since the 1920s, and increasingly from the 1960s onwards, gender historians began to offer alternative accounts that excavated women from long-obscured archival sources, and placed their participation and contributions centrally.¹³ As a supplement to their texts, many of these feminist studies reproduce photographic images of women in an evidentiary and illustrative capacity, as an additional means of 'making visible' and shedding light on forgotten lives and experiences. In certain instances, such as Elena Poniatowska's photo-history *Las Soldaderas* (2006), photographs take precedence over words. Images of women stand 'mute' in lieu of textual information that might reveal details of their subjects' specific lived history, the images functioning instead as celebratory but generic symbols of women's participation and valour.

The problem with these otherwise valuable projects is that photographic images of women invariably appear parallel to the accompanying text, without being explicitly discussed. Moreover, the photographic images are frequently presented as neutral 'windows on the world', as though their female subjects were objectively caught by a camera free of ideological or political prejudices. As a result, these studies fail to address women's 'conditions of visibility', to return to the conception proposed by Hayes (2005) to problematise the ways in which women are made visible through photography. Depiction alone, Hayes argues, does not necessarily denote agency, but may in fact replicate women's

¹³ Salient studies that consider women's participation in the Mexican Revolution include Mendieta de Alatorre (1961); Macias (1980); Salas (1990); Soto (1990); Reséndez Fuentes (1995); Cano (2000); Linhard (2005); Olcott et al. (2006); and Mitchell and Schell (2006).

compromised and constrained positions in patriarchal structures, their existence filtered through a masculine gaze. In her study of gender and the Casasola archive, Andrea Noble (2003) similarly criticises the well-intentioned mobilisation of images of *soldaderas* as illustrations in feminist histories of the Mexican Revolution. Such an act, Noble contends, merely acts as a simple trope of reversal that confirms those ideologies of gender it seeks to overturn (141).

In fact, women's conditions of visibility are substantially compromised in many photographic images of women in the Mexican Revolution. The state-owned Casasola Archive, the legacy of Agustín Casasola's picture agency and today considered the nation's most important repository of photographic images of the Revolution (Mraz 2000) is replete with images of women inadvertently caught at the margins of the frame, incidental to the historic event.

Elsewhere, women are presented as anomalous or unnatural objects of male curiosity. Casasola's *Historia gráfica* (1992: 263) presents four female soldiers displayed as a grid of visually similar photographic images (figure 7). Each portrays a single figure depicted frontally in portrait format; each woman wears military uniform and trousers, presenting herself for inspection to the photographer-viewer. The visual effect recalls nineteenth-century anthropological photography, in which consistent modes of composition were used to enable comparison of human subjects or 'types'. Indeed, one photograph is explicitly captioned 'tipo clásico de la mujer revolucionaria de 1910' (classic type of the revolutionary woman from 1910). The viewer is thus invited to make comparisons between the images and identify the essential characteristics that constitute 'the woman soldier'. That the 'types' are objects of scrutiny and curiosity is exemplified by the image of Valentina Ramírez, in which the subject stands to attention while a casually grouped male audience observe both her and the picture-making process.

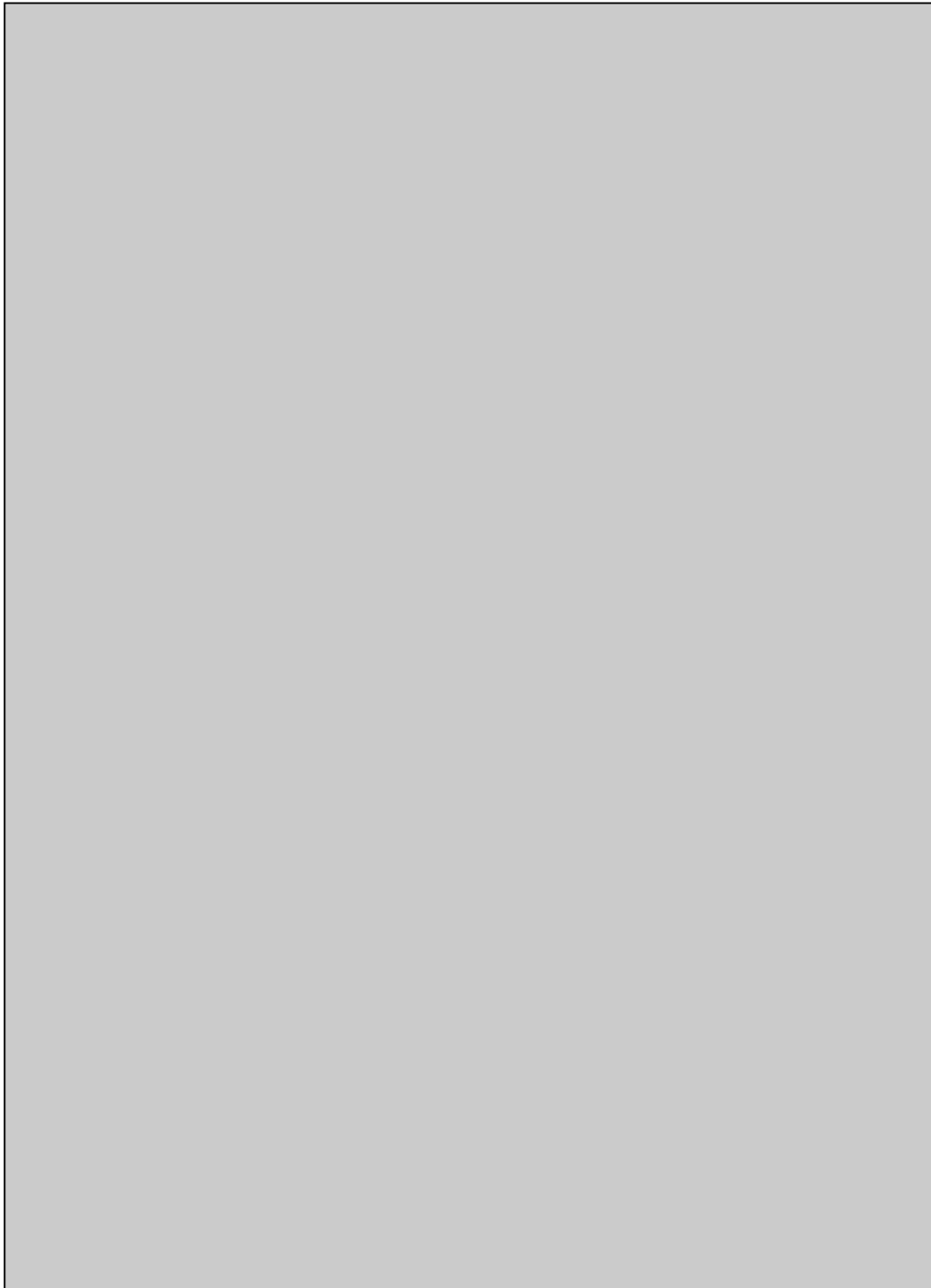


Figure 7. Soldadera ‘types’ from the 1992 edition of Casasola’s *Historia gráfica de la Revolución Mexicana*

Source: Casasola (1992: 263)

A handful of images, like the oft-reproduced image popularly known as 'Adelita' depicting a woman on board a military train, have become icons or symbols of femininity detached from their subjects' specific lived history (Noble 2004:196). In other cases, women are erroneously presented as soldiers in photographs staged for commercial or propaganda interests (Mraz 2010: 116). Regrettably, the tendency to omit or mis-credit photographer and subject in press reproductions of the epoch, and Casasola's own erasure of authorship of images disseminated by his agency (Mraz 2000), has resulted in a lack of reliable contextual information about many revolution-era images. The identity and lived history of 'Adelita', like many other women depicted in images of the Mexican Revolution, remains stubbornly enigmatic. Miguel Ángel Morales' (2006) elucidation has succeeded in clarifying the biography of 'Adelita's male creator, but not the life of the female subject or the circumstances of her depiction. In short, frequently too little is known about the identity of women in the images, the circumstances and degree of control they had over their own photographic representation, or their specific histories. This limits the efficacy of images to convey the women's agency claimed by feminist historians. In the discussion that follows, I propose an alternative approach, to consider what might emerge if focus were moved away from photographs *of* women, to photographs *by* women: if, that is, women were 'calling the shots'. While documented instances of women's direct photographic production are far fewer than images depicting women as subjects, this shift in emphasis prompts an enhanced consideration of women's agency and centrality to the Revolution.

Until recently there has been scant scholarship on women photographers in Mexico. However, the global project of tracing histories of women's photography, first begun in earnest in the Anglophone academy with Val Williams' *Women Photographers: The Other Observers 1900 to the Present* (1986) and brought up to date with a 2010 edition of Naomi Rosenblum's foundational *History of Women Photographers*, is now gathering pace in Mexico. A special issue of the photography history journal *Alquimia* edited by Rebeca Monroy Nasr and José Rodríguez (2000) was followed by two major surveys in 2012, by José Rodríguez and Emma Cecilia García Krinsky respectively. This burgeoning scholarship goes beyond the handful of well-known figures, such as Tina Modotti, who have been firmly established in the canon of fine art photographic history. Instead, new investigation seeks to unearth forgotten women photographers including those working in commercial or low-status

capacities. As this hitherto uncharted terrain begins to be mapped, a clearer picture of the history of women's practices, and of the social, economic, educational and cultural conditions for women's photography in Mexico is emerging.

This focus on women's photography in Mexico overlaps with the outpouring of studies on the photographic representation of the Revolution, occasioned by the 2010 centenary. A number of trained female photographers who photographed the revolution have been identified (Berumen 2004: 382–389; Mraz 2010: 112–115; 192–3; Berumen and Canales 2009: 382–9). These include, in the United States, a cohort of female independent photographers who converged at the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border to document the 1911 conflict, among them hobbyists Calla Eylar and Clara Goodman, *Harper's* reporter Edith Lane, and El Paso studio worker Eva Esther Strauss (Berumen and Canales 2009: 382–389). Other women recorded the events of the Revolution elsewhere in Mexico, such as semi-professional photographer Gertrude Fitzgerald, who was married to a Pearson Lumber Company employee and recorded rebel troops passing through Chihuahua around 1911 (Berumen and Canales 2009:382).

A number of Mexican women also photographed during the conflict. The most extensively researched female photographer is Sara Castrejón, whose photographic output is discussed in Villela's biography (2010a). Other exponents include the sisters Adriana and Dolores Ehlers, who are recorded as having made portraits of military personnel in their Veracruz studio (Mraz 2010: 80–81), although regrettably no photographs remain. Emilia Billings, a photographic postcard entrepreneur, co-edited a commercially available photographic album of the Revolution some time around 1911 (Villela 2010b: 51). In addition to those photographers whose names are known, at least thirty-four women professional photographers operated at the time of Mexico's 1900 census (Rodríguez 2012: 31). Given the profession's expanding popularity among women in the early twentieth-century, as well as the transfer of studio management to wives and female family members as men departed for military action (García Krinsky 2012: 278), it is probable that even more women professionals were working during the revolution. It is important to place Castrejón in this wider context of female activity, in order to recognise that she is not unique in her photographic engagement.

Villela's study of Castrejón is biographical and historical in approach, being first and foremost a descriptive account of Castrejón's life and of the people and events depicted in her photographs. He recognises, however, that his study leaves many questions unanswered, and that more work is needed to investigate how gender issues informed Castrejón's practice (2010: 140). In its empirical focus, Villela's approach is representative of the Mexican research context, for while burgeoning scholarship on women's photography in Mexico offers a wealth of hitherto unknown data, its findings are yet to be situated within theoretical frameworks that might offer greater analytical insight into how gender issues relate to women's photography in the Mexican Revolution. Photo-historian John Mraz (2010: 112–114), for instance, has presented valuable factual data on women photographers within the larger context of photography of the Revolution, yet declines to consider how women's gendered status shaped their work. Elsewhere, scholars only fleetingly touch upon gender problematics. The images of the 1911 Battle of Juárez by US freelance photographer Eva Esther Strauss have been judged by both Villela (2010b: 47) and Berumen (2004: 12) as exhibiting a warmer, more empathic 'female gaze' that is markedly different to that of her more mercenary male counterparts, but neither scholar elaborates on their assumption.

Castrejón's work has also been the subject of essentialist readings. Villela (2010a: 40, 55, 140) asserts that 'owing to her feminine condition', Castrejón introduced natural elements to decorate her studio environment and beautify the *mise-en-scène* of her images. He speculates that Castrejón's gender specially qualified her to capture the expressions of those about to die by firing squad, revealing their personal attitudes to impending death (2010a: 140). He also detects a feminine influence in images of military personnel depicted with their loved ones, revealing a 'kinder' aspect to their character. Furthermore, Villela's (2013) short story 'Las fotos del fusilamiento' ('The Photos of the Firing Squad') offers a fictional account of Fidel Pineda's execution, attributing to Castrejón ethical misgivings over the distasteful commission she was forced to undertake. In her preface to Villela's biography, the photo-historian Rebeca Monroy Nasr (2010: 12) similarly claims that Castrejón operated with 'a gendered gaze' and that her propensity to include still lives of flowers and foliage in her portraits marks her practice as 'gentle and delicate' and particularly feminine. Such readings might be plausible, but can they be substantiated?

The following discussion seeks to interrogate these assumptions. Some, I suggest, are not adequately historicised but based on present-day notions of appropriate gendered behaviour of the epoch. Others appear predicated on prior knowledge of the photographer's gender, producing subjective responses that affirm what is expected or desired. These readings seek to find in women's photography an innately feminine approach (governed by an affinity for nature, sentiment, and elegance, for example) that is intrinsically different from that of male counterparts. As I have argued in Chapter 2, women's photography is shaped not by essential qualities, but by gendered constraints that must be historicised. Consequently, the following discussion conceives Castrejón's photographic practice as emerging from the intersection of gendered subject positions and the structures and constraints of the epoch.

If 'a gendered gaze' exists in Castrejón's work, as asserted by Monroy Nasr (2010: 12) and Villela (2010a: 40), in what ways might it be detected, and where does it lie? While Monroy Nasr and Villela do not theorise or expand their speculations, the notion of a female gaze implies a parallel to the 'male gaze', a conception developed by feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in her seminal text 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975). Mulvey contends that in 'a world split by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female' (11). In this dichotomy, the gaze is a masculine prerogative, while women are defined by their condition of 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. Men drive the narrative forward and are 'makers of meaning'; women are passive, reduced to silent images, bearers of meaning (Mulvey 1975: 6). Mulvey's assertions were made at a particular moment of early second-wave feminism, and her reliance on masculinist psychoanalytical theory has since been criticised, not least by Mulvey herself (Mulvey 1987; Villarejo 1991). Nonetheless, her text remains paradigmatic of thinking on gender, agency, and visuality.

Scholars have hypothesised a reciprocal female gaze that might disturb patriarchal frameworks. In her study of visual desire, Mary Ann Doane (1987) points to the asymmetric power relations inherent in women viewing male powerful bodies, arguing that woman's marginal status allows only a passive look, rather than an active gaze. As discussed in Chapter 2, Jean Gallagher (1998) further considers the female gaze in the particular context of conflict. Gallagher contends that 'vision is one of the crucial elements that has

traditionally marked the gendered division of war experience: Men “see battle”; women, as non-combatants *par excellence*, do not (Gallagher 1998: 2). Historically, Gallagher argues, the spectator of war has been conventionally constructed as either a masculine authoritative eyewitness, or a feminine passive onlooker, yet these gendered viewing positions may be contested. While Gallagher’s main focus is the literary spectatorship of war, Castrejón’s photography has the capacity to reveal more about the operation of the so-called ‘female gaze’ over the masculine terrain of war during the Revolution, and of women’s ocular authority within patriarchal frameworks.

To do so, it is necessary to reject biographical or art-historical approaches that conceive the photographer as a creative individual driven primarily by aesthetic or personal motivations or, as Monroy Nasr terms Castrejón, a ‘photo-artist’ (2010: 12). To begin with, there are no extant sources from Castrejón (statements, diaries or notebooks) that offer empirical evidence of personal motivations or artistic intentions. Beyond this practical constraint, however, to consider Castrejón within the framework of art history is to misconstrue the nature of her work. Lasting half a century and resulting in hundreds of images, the scale and management of Castrejón’s operation was significant. The extant corpus of six hundred artefacts that Villela has identified, however, includes only a handful of images that could be considered aesthetically adventurous, such as an enigmatic tableau of women and children holding a series of curious objects in a garden (c.1910), or a photo-collage of a baby hatching from an egg under the watchful eye of two chicks, produced as a greetings card for New Year (1958).¹⁴ Instead, the core of Castrejón’s work constitutes solidly commercial studio portraiture, supplemented by occasional commissions such as promotional views of factories and stores made for local business-owners. Castrejón’s photography should therefore be seen as a pragmatic and lucrative undertaking, in which catering to her market and financial acumen was essential to success.

Castrejón’s activity is more fruitfully assessed via theoretical approaches that offer alternatives to art history. A small number of scholars, including Alan Trachtenberg (1985), Allan Sekula (1983) and Steve Edwards (2006), have proposed treating photography not as an artistic or personal endeavour, but as a

¹⁴ These two images are reproduced in Villela 2010a, pages 42 and 123 respectively.

business or industry governed by principles of capitalism and consumption. The conception of photography-as-business, particularly with regard to war, is not consistent or widespread, but interest in the approach is growing (Allbeson and Oldfield 2016). A prominent example is Trachtenberg's (1985) re-assessment of Mathew Brady's photographic production during the US Civil War. Trachtenberg conceives Brady not as an artist, but as an entrepreneur and picture agency owner who bought, sold, and commissioned images in their thousands in order to turn a profit. This reading enables a shift in emphasis from issues of aesthetics and biography to the structural and pragmatic factors of supply and demand that shape the production of photographs. In the following discussion, I adopt Trachtenberg's framework, treating Castrejón as a business-woman working in particular market circumstances, producing images for sale. By considering the commercial, social and cultural structures that shaped her photography, I conceive her as a female entrepreneur working in extraordinary times. To do so neither belittles Castrejón's achievements, nor categorises her as a mercenary. Rather, this approach places her activity within a more complex field so that we might judge to what degree she negotiated the discursive and material constraints upon her, and demonstrated agency in her photographic enterprise.

Flowers and foliage: a gendered gaze?

The portrait captioned 'Jésus H. Salgado, Doctor S. Herrera and Leovigildo Álvarez, Teloloapan, Guerrero in 1911' (figure 8) is a striking example of the way in which studio aesthetics and market forces shaped Castrejón's work during wartime, and one which has attracted commentary from Villela (2010a: 55–57) and Monroy Nasr (2010: 12) that reflects upon Castrejón's gendered practice. Made shortly after the taking of Teloloapan by Maderista forces, the portrait was probably commissioned by one of its subjects to commemorate the presentation of funds from Herrera to rebel leader Salgado and his general, Álvarez. The image rehearses some of the tropes of the Mexican portrait studio in the early twentieth century: the elegantly attired civilian in the shape of Dr. Herrera standing before a hand-painted backdrop evoking a Western European landscape with classical buildings, together with a *mise-en-scène* of props and furniture. Such refinements are disturbed, however, by the incongruous presence of the two flanking military figures draped in bandoliers, and by the

tower of bayoneted rifles erected in the foreground, crowned with and surrounded by foliage.

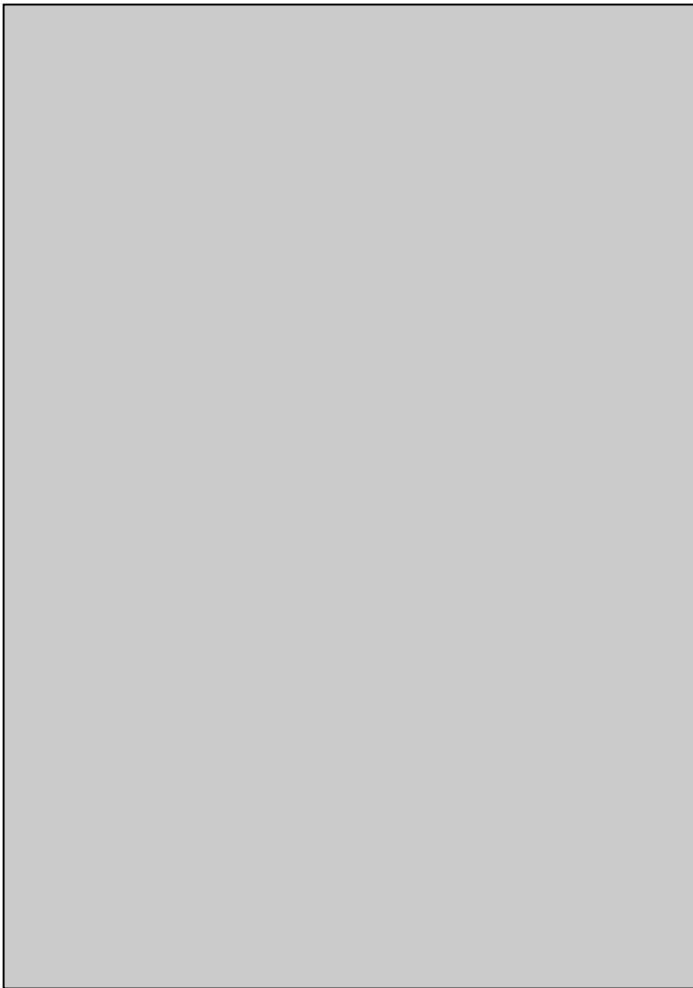


Figure 8. 'Jésus H. Salgado, Doctor S. Herrera and Leovigildo Álvarez, Teloloapan, Guerrero in 1911', Sara Castrejón, 1911

Source: Villela (2010a: 56)

In its entirety, the image appears a bizarre aestheticisation of instruments of killing: hardly one envisaged by *El Mundo's* editorial extolling the accomplishments of lady portrait photographers little more than a decade earlier. How are we to understand such an image within a framework of gender? Monroy Nasr detects in Castrejón's tendency to use decorative elements such as flowers and foliage 'a gentle and delicate manner, in which [...] she appropriated photographic discourse without losing herself in the masculine canons of the age, before their iron-tough, fierce and rousing archetypes' (2010: 12). To read the Salgado portrait through Monroy Nasr's filter would suggest

that the photographer attempted to feminise the masculine sphere of warfare by interiorising it within the elegant world of the studio, and beautifying it through the gentle art of flower arranging.

I propose an alternative reading, based on cultural norms for middle-class women and on market forces shaping Castrejón's work in the era. Firstly, women photographers' use of flowers and foliage should be historicised in a commercial context. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, increased competition among studio operators in Mexico prompted a trend to distinguish their services through novelties such as dramatic lighting and vignettes (Debroise 2001: 48). Rather than personal creative statements, such aesthetic devices were a means of establishing market exclusivity, and were sometimes fiercely contested in legal battles over intellectual property rights. Furthermore, while studio portrait photography was considered an appropriate profession for women to undertake (Debroise 2001: 36; Rodríguez 2012: 25; García Krinsky 2012: 13), women photographers remained a minority. Hence, as the *El Mundo* editorial of 1899 demonstrates, the 'felicitous innovation' of femininity in the studio offered clients 'a novel note': one which could be marketed and capitalised upon to economic advantage.¹⁵

These historical market circumstances coalesce in a striking legal case in Mexico City in 1898, when Natalia Baquedano, owner of studio *Fotografía Nacional*, successfully sued Lauro Ariscorreta for infringement of her photographic innovation of printing portraits onto flowers and leaves (Rodríguez, J.A. 2012: 30). Dominant gendered ideologies might code Baquedano's 'delicate' and 'natural' photo-artefacts as innately feminine: indeed, one Mexican national daily was at pains to report Baquedano's alleged disinclination to go to court due to her (coded feminine) 'natural modesty' (*La Patria* 1 June 1898, cited in Rodríguez, J.A. 2012: 30). However, Baquedano's decision to patent her invention as well as to press charges demonstrates that the use of natural forms in her work was primarily concerned with motivations of technological innovation, legal entitlement and commercial opportunity, which at the time would have been associated with masculinity.

¹⁵ 'El Taller fotográfico de los hermanos Torres' en *El Mundo*, Mexico, 2 June 1899, p.7, cited and translated in Debroise (2001:36)

Such a case calls for rethinking Castrejón's use of natural motifs throughout her practice. An earlier image from 1908 (reproduced in Villela 2010a: 40) depicts an elaborately arranged group portrait at a local beauty spot, Tecampana. The subjects hold impromptu bouquets plucked from their rocky surroundings, a scenario that was repeated by the photographer on numerous occasions. Villela asserts that,

in this attention to providing certain elements to those portrayed, beautifying the pose and image, we can perhaps detect a gendered look, an intention of the photographer that, owing to her feminine condition and provincial sphere, was motivated to include certain elements within the design of the *mise-en-scène* (Villela 2010a:40).

Yet the inclusion of natural motifs does not necessarily imply an innately feminine love of nature on Castrejón's part. Like Baquedano, I suggest that Castrejón was prompted by pragmatic motivations. In common with other middle class women of her epoch, she had been obliged to learn flower arranging along with other rural handicrafts (Villela 2010a: 31), and applied this skill, learned as part of a culturally accepted repertoire within the domestic sphere, to entrepreneurial ends. Whereas Baquedano invented photographic novelties to distinguish her studio from numerous competitors in Mexico City, it is likely that Castrejón, the sole professional photographer working in a small and remote rural town, strove to introduce new offers to maximise opportunities for her limited clientele. Drawing upon the resources available, her twist on the genre of the group portrait, enlivened with local natural embellishments, provided another means of eliciting sales and commissions to augment Castrejón's staple studio work. If there is 'a woman's touch' at work in the construction of such images, it is culturally constructed and commercially motivated.

Given this precedence, it is perhaps not so surprising that natural motifs should resurface in Castrejón's triple portrait of 1911. What is striking, however, is the manner in which nature is manifest: rather than seeming 'gentle and delicate' as Monroy Nasr (2010: 12) interprets, the leaves strewn abundantly on the floor and decorating the construction of rifles appear robust, hardy, and wild. Quite why the foliage appears in this manner, or whether the idea came from the photographer or her subjects, is a matter of conjecture. It is possible that the vigorous *mise-en-scène* may have been constructed for some allegorical purpose. Rifles with bayonets were generally stacked upright for safety and maintenance reasons, and had to be pulled by soldiers simultaneously, which

might allude to the united cause and mutual support of the triumvirate depicted. The rampant foliage might point to the anticipated victory of native rural *campesinos* over urban 'Frenchified' Porfiristas in the capital. While exact motivations remain unidentified, to attribute to this portrait a gentle love of nature that maintains the femininity of the photographer in the face of the brutality of warfare, is to misjudge both the image and its producer.

Shooting men: Castrejón's records of firing squads

While the Salgado portrait sees the exterior worlds of nature and warfare enter the photographer's elegant studio interior, the image of Fidel Pineda reverses the direction of travel, registering Castrejón's own foray to the municipal cemetery and site of firing squads. The image forms a sequence that records the triple execution of Pineda and two associates, including a record of the instant of fire itself (figure 9). It is not known on how many occasions Castrejón undertook this type of work, but there are surviving portraits of condemned men from at least one other execution. That a woman should photograph such a scene has elicited a number of commentaries that express expectation of certain gender-specific responses. In his short story based on the event, Villela (2013) imagines Castrejón's distaste for her task, in which 'she wished it could have been the last' and 'felt a light shiver on looking at the languid faces of the [those] that were on the point of dying'. Castrejón's nieces recall asking their aunt if she experienced fear in undertaking her work (Villela 2010a: 106). Such speculations conform to societal and cultural norms of appropriate gendered responses of fear and distaste in observing military executions. As Tilmann Altenberg has shown in his study of cinematic representation of firing squads in the Mexican Revolution, middle-class and elite women were shown to respond emotionally, displaying reactions of shock and horror consistent with gender stereotypes in popular culture (Altenberg 2013: 129). It is therefore unsurprising that readings of Castrejón's firing squad images should anticipate an apparently natural feminine revulsion.



Figure 9. 'Fusilamiento del Genl. Brig. Fidel Pineda del Ejercito Revolucionario y dos de sus soldados, Agosto 10 de 1913, Teloloapan Gro.', Sara Castrejón

('Shooting by firing squad of Brigadier General Fidel Pineda of the Revolutionary Army and two of his soldiers, 10 August 1913, Teloloapan, Guerrero')

Source: Villela (2010a: 104)

However, women in Mexico of the epoch should not be assumed unused or reluctant to witness firing squads, either in person or via photographic images. Military execution by firing squad in Mexico was a well-used practice dating to the 1810–21 War of Independence (Lomnitz 2005:383), and which was extended during the Mexican Revolution, with executions carried out in their thousands (Altenberg 2013: 125). Photographic representations of executions circulated widely in Mexican popular visual culture. One of the icons of Mexican photography, a photo-collage purporting to show the execution by firing squad of Emperor Maximilian in 1867, was reproduced as a popular *carte de visite* (Debroise 2001: 168). This mass dissemination, as Noble (2010a: 85) argues, demonstrates a market eager to view executions via photography even before camera technology could adequately capture the moment. During the revolution, firing squads were routinely photographed and reproduced in periodicals (Altenberg 2013: 137 n.13), as well as being sold as photographic postcards on a commercial scale (Underwood and Samponero 1988: 94–97). Visualisations of execution by firing squad, therefore, were not uncommon in the public domain.

There is no evidence that women did not form part of this collective spectatorship or market for such scenes either by proxy, buying or collecting photographic artefacts depicting firing squads, or indeed by personal attendance at executions. In an image reproduced as a photographic postcard entitled 'Triple Execution in Mexico', produced by US manufacturer Walter Horne (1916), at least one female spectator can be identified in the group witnessing the execution of Francisco Rojas in Ciudad Juárez on 15 January 1916.¹⁶ Although it is impossible to know Castrejón's personal feelings, it cannot be taken for granted that the activities of firing squads were wholly unfamiliar or shocking to her, or that she necessarily experienced a desire to look away from her task.

Whatever emotions Castrejón may have felt, certain pragmatic factors shaped the circumstances of her photographing executions by firing squad. It is likely that her work had a lucrative dimension and was prompted at least in part by market demands. The commercial value of firing squad images of the epoch is evidenced by instances of freelance photographers bribing military personnel for the best vantage points so they might sell their images to newspapers (Debroise 2001: 181; Noble 2010a: 91–92). None of Castrejón's firing squad images (or indeed, any from her Revolution-era corpus) has been identified in published form, so it is not known if their potential as saleable press images were a decisive factor. Notwithstanding press value however, portraits of firing squad victims were sometimes commissioned to commemorate the about-to-die subject (Villela 2010a). It is possible that the Pineda image commanded a fee as a privately commissioned portrait, either by Pineda himself or his relatives.

Castrejón's decision to produce the Pineda portrait in postcard format (Villela 2010a: 104), as well as the mounted version found in the General Archive of the Ministry of War and Navy, suggests that she intended to offer the image for general sale. The fact that the Pineda portrait was produced as a postcard does

¹⁶ To be sure, images for photographic postcards could be staged for commercial reasons. However, Horne sent a copy of the photograph to his sister, stating that he had taken the image that day and observed the dust caused by bullets passing through the victim (Underwood and Samponero (1988: 94), which might indicate the authenticity of the scene. The clarity of the image suggests that it has not been manipulated post-production. Even if the image were staged, the fact that a woman forms part of the group on onlookers indicates that female spectators (at least from among the lower classes), were not uncommon. The image is may be viewed online at <https://www.getty.edu/research/tools/guides_bibliographies/mexico/images/211.html> [accessed 21 June 2016].

not in itself necessarily imply public release, as during the early twentieth century studio portraits were frequently offered on pre-printed postcard stock as an economical option for clients to give or post multiple copies to family and friends.¹⁷ However, in the particular circumstances of a military execution, this mode of distribution would seem to be unusual. Furthermore, Castrejón's annotation on the mounted version, 'General Brigadier Fidel Pineda 10 minutes before his death, August 10 1913', appears at odds with the intimacy of an intended close family or friend recipient. The caption implies a wider circle of spectatorship that was not closely associated with the condemned man, and therefore required explanatory information. The inference that Castrejón intended to offer the image for a general viewership or market, and potentially for financial profit, disrupts assumptions of feminine sensibility and empathy with the victim.

A further motivation for photographing Pineda's execution is suggested by the inkstamp of the Ministry of War and Navy, applied to the mounted version of portrait (figure 6). While it is possible that Pineda's portrait was made at the request of the condemned man or his relatives and later found its way into the military archive, such images were also commissioned by federal officials to evidence their actions against the rebels (Villela 2010a: 106). Furthermore, the fact that Castrejón also photographed the burst of bullet fire at the moment of Pineda's death, makes it more likely that the image was a military commission rather than a family request. Camera ownership in Mexico in the period was still not extensive (González Flores 2010: 43), and it is feasible that Castrejón's reputation as a reliable and professional photographer, together with her monopoly in Teloloapan, made her sought-after by military personnel wishing to have photographic evidence of their feats to send to superiors. The oral testimony of Castrejón's niece supports this theory, claiming that the photographer was summoned by army officials to provide proof of orders carried out, and had little choice in the matter (cited in Villela 2010a: 105).

If Castrejón were ordered in this manner, she would have faced considerable pressure to comply. Assault, rape and murder of women was commonplace

¹⁷ The cost of postage for postcards was substantially lower than sending photographs inside envelopes, which contributed to their vast popularity in the epoch. For a history of the economy of photographic postcards in the Mexican Revolution, see Vanderwood and Samparano (1988).

throughout the armed phase of the revolution (Lau Jaiven 1995: 91), and the status of female civilian did not guarantee protection against violent reprisals from military factions. Castrejón's photographic act may have been motivated by means of survival, part of a precarious strategy that required careful negotiation and formation of tactical alliances during the continually shifting balance of power among the multiple factions operating during the revolution.

Even if Castrejón were in part prompted through fear of reprisals, the lucrative dimension of her work remains. Without business records, it is not known if she were paid for her work by the military, but the existence of the Pineda portrait in the form of a postcard, in addition to the print in the Ministry of War and Navy archive, attests to Castrejón's identification of a commercial opportunity and wider distribution. While we cannot know how Castrejón personally felt about her task, it is clear that a combination of pragmatic factors – military pressure and market demands – helped shape the production of the Pineda portrait, in both its forms. This pragmatism concurs with the testimony of Castrejón's niece. Upon asking her aunt if she were frightened or alarmed at being summoned to the site of execution, Castrejón reportedly replied that she was not afraid, and that she had been hired to do a job (cited in Villela 2010a: 106).

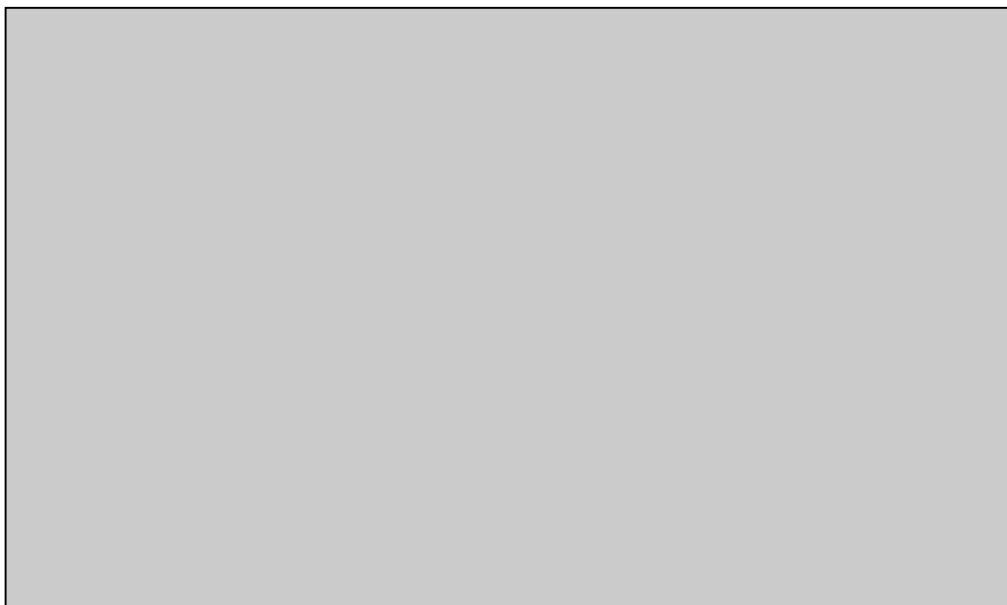


Figure 10. 'Lieutenant Octavio Martínez of the 28th Rural Corps, 30 May 1912', Sara Castrejón

Source: Villela (2010a: 93)

Castrejón was clearly an officially permitted, even invited, figure at other military events. Technical considerations necessitated both the 'pausing' of history and the collaboration of officials presiding over events, evidenced by Castrejón's photograph of a military funeral procession of Lieutenant Octavio Martínez of the 28th Rural Corps, on 30 May 1912 (figure 10). Villela judges that Castrejón used some kind of box camera with a shutter speed restricted at a sixtieth of a second (Villela 2010a: 51). At this relatively slow shutter speed, any movement in the subject photographed would register as blurred. The clear focus of the scene shows it was taken at a halt in proceedings, which were perhaps paused especially for the photographer to undertake her task. To avoid camera shake, moreover, a tripod would probably have been used. A number of onlookers gaze directly towards the camera, indicating that the photographer was a visible, indeed conspicuous, presence. This was not an isolated occasion. A further image shows a military group posed in the act of signing the treaty with Salgadista forces on 12 December 1911, arranging themselves for the benefit of Castrejón's camera (reproduced in Villela 2010a: 76). Made from an optimum viewpoint, the image provides evidence for Castrejón's physical location central to the scene.

These registers of the photographer's active role in historic events cast new light on the conception of women's photographic conditions of visibility, as proposed by Hayes (2005). Hayes cautions that mere visibility through the photographic registering of women at the historical scene is no guarantee of their empowerment or agency, if those women are made visible on the terms of others. The case of Castrejón, I suggest, demonstrates a potent alternative. Her empowerment and relatively high-ranking status as a trusted documenter of historic events is evidenced through the images she took, although Castrejón herself remains behind the camera and therefore invisible to subsequent viewers of the photographic record.

As a prominent visible presence at important events, Castrejón became a public figure in Teloloapan society – someone who might be termed a 'public woman', with all the freight that the term implies. As feminist scholars have noted, in Mexico the *hombre público* (public man) has historically denoted a civic-minded man of public affairs, while the equivalent appellation *mujer pública* signifies a

woman working in public space, that is to say, a prostitute (Gabara 2008: 145).¹⁸ The move of women into the public sphere in Mexico was particularly contested in the first decades of the twentieth century, when women entered the professions of law and medicine, and moved from the private realms of family and home into paid labour, politics, and activism (Mitchell, S. 2006: 9; Lau Jaiven 2010: 179–181). In 1907, the scientist and geographer Andrés Ortega voiced opposition to these spatial transgressions, declaring in 1907 that ‘modesty and shyness is [Mexican women’s] richest treasure’, and that daily contact with men in academic, scientific and professional matters ought to cause ‘blushing cheeks’ (cited in Lau Jaiven 1995: 88).¹⁹ The feminine ideal of the modest *mexicana* evoked by Ortega does not correlate with the image of Castrejón operating her camera with considerable technical skill, directing a male assistant (her brother, Joaquín) to load film, and occupying prominent positions at military events, to say nothing of her business persona conducting negotiations and financial transactions with military personnel. In this regard, Castrejón’s photographs reveal the ways in which her usefulness as a professional photographer enabled her to expand acceptable geographies for women, moving from the private sphere into the public and military realms.²⁰ Her activities resolutely overturn assumptions of a stereotypically feminine, ‘gentle and delicate’ manner, as claimed by Monroy Nasr (2010: 12).

Through her work, Castrejón morphed from what Gallagher (1998: 3) terms a ‘passive spectator’ to an ‘authoritative eyewitness’ of war. The quantity of photographs Castrejón made of military events and personnel, and the number

¹⁸ A striking visual example of this tendency is the ‘Register of Public Women’, a project commissioned by Emperor Maximilian in 1864 to create an archive of photographic ID records, listing not women who had contributed to civic affairs, but prostitutes working in Mexico City. See Mraz (2009: 21–22).

¹⁹ The speech was published as ‘Feminism: Speech Made by Sr. Lic. D. Andrés Ortega on the Act of Being Received as a Member of the Mexican Society of Geography and Statistics, Thursday 13 June 1907’ in *Boletín de la Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística* Vo. 5 No. 2, 1907 (cited in Lau Jaiven 1995: 88).

²⁰ It is not known if the access to the military that Castrejón enjoyed was aided by intimacy with any of the officers. By 1917, it is evident that there existed a rapport between Castrejón and Silvestre Castro, an officer in Guerrero’s Constitutional phase. Castrejón’s nieces claim that Castro used to visit her early in the morning so that he would not be seen by others, which might suggest romantic trysts between the two (Vilela 2010a: 116). Castro had his portrait made on more than a dozen occasions around 1917 (Vilela 2010a: 116), though whether due to personal vanity, or a liking for Castrejón is not known. At the very least, there was a degree of intimacy between Castro and the Castrejón family, indicated by Castrejón’s photograph of Castro’s wedding c.1919, in which her sister Dorothea can be seen standing behind the bride (reproduced in Vilela 2010a: 118).

of sitters who returned time and again to be photographed, indicates that she was sought out as an agent of representation and the creator of historically-important records. It is perhaps ironic that the profession of photographic portraiture – characterised by the 1899 editorial of *El Mundo* as peculiarly suited to the feminine disposition and undertaken in the elegant studio interior – enabled Castrejón to broker centrality and authority to move into the public-political sphere, albeit in a circumscribed manner. Rather than a bystander witnessing from the sidelines, Castrejón's images convey a woman at the centre of events, in possession of a commanding and valued gaze. While her power was undoubtedly negotiated within discursive constraints and the structures of patriarchy and commerce, Castrejón clearly achieved a considerable degree of importance in her hometown.

Conclusions

To return once more to the Pineda portrait, its subsequent absorption into the General Ministry of War and the Navy archive raises questions concerning photography's relationship to historical memory of the Mexican Revolution. That Castrejón considered her photographic work as historically relevant is revealed through an examination of her practice post-conflict. Despite her experience of photographing a period of national political upheaval, Castrejón did not, as might be expected, consolidate her professional career by moving into photojournalism, a profession expanding in conjunction with the rise of the illustrated periodical in the 1920s and 1930s. Instead, she continued to operate at a local-provincial level, returning to her core work of civilian portraiture, depicting weddings, family groups and local beauty queens, supplemented by occasional documentation of nearby events such as the archaeological discovery of the alleged remains of Aztec emperor Moctezuma in 1949 (Villela 2010a). Her images do not appear to have been represented by any picture agency, nor reproduced in subsequent official visual histories of the Mexican Revolution within her lifetime. With the exception of the Pineda portrait, none of her images has been identified in a national public archive or collection. These circumstances seem to confirm that Castrejón's work in the sphere of conflict was largely a short-lived, pragmatic response to transformed market conditions and military pressures, rather than an expression of a proto-photojournalistic drive to convey historic events for posterity.

And yet, there are signs that Castrejón did not willingly consign her Mexican Revolution work to the oblivion from which it has only recently been rescued. The very fact that six hundred photographic artefacts survived Castrejón's death and the demise of her studio is due to her maintenance of a substantial personal archive of prints. Many of these prints bear handwritten captions that identify the sitter, date and event, bestowing specificity that contributes greatly to their function as a historical record. The fact that Castrejón conserved and, with her sister, annotated her photographic prints does not necessarily indicate any *a priori* plan to create a historical archive. It is possible that, in common with studio practice, she retained the negatives together with captioned reference prints in order to fulfil clients' subsequent requests for further copies of their portraits. These extant prints may constitute that record system, hence constituting a commercial motive. However, the fact that numerous images were later annotated with military ranks – an example of which can be seen in the Salgado portrait in which the rank 'General' appears to have been subsequently appended above the original caption (figure 8) – indicates a preoccupation with factual precision and an ongoing interest in the histories of the subjects depicted. Castrejón's decision towards the end of her lifetime to bequeath portions of her archive not just to family members and friends, but also to the journalist Enrique de Rayo, whom she judged would appreciate the historical value her work, demonstrates her concern that her archive should be conserved for posterity (Villela 2010a: 139–140).²¹

A further instance suggests Castrejón's desire to have her Mexican Revolution work preserved in an official and national capacity. On 11 April 1937 President Lázaro Cárdenas visited Teloloapan as part of one of his many official tours to rural and provincial Mexico, and had his portrait made by Castrejón in her studio (Villela 2010a: 124–126). Even allowing for Cárdenas' legendary propensity to meet 'ordinary' Mexicans (Buchenau 2013), the fact that Castrejón photographed the nation's leader demonstrates the prestige she had attained as a professional photographer, and the status she held in Teloloapan as a public chronicler of important events. Following this encounter, Castrejón reportedly went twice to Mexico City to present two albums she had compiled of her

²¹ The remainder of her work was sold, dispersed, or destroyed after Castrejón's death (Villela 2010a: 20).

photographic prints from the Revolution, and, according to the testimony of family members, was on each occasion received personally by Cárdenas (Villela 2010a: 126). While Castrejón's portrait of the president survives, along with a photograph depicting Castrejón at the side of the nation's leader (the only extant picture depicting the photographer), lamentably the albums themselves have, to date, not been located.²² While this material lack prevents a reading of the artefacts themselves, the claim of the act is itself worthy of consideration. Castrejón's donation of the albums may have been motivated by a desire to enhance the prestige of her studio by having her work as a professional publicly endorsed at the highest level. Even if primarily motivated by commercial interests, this act indicates that Castrejón considered her photography to be of national importance, and that she believed she had operated as a chronicler of the Revolution worthy of official recognition.

Where, if at all, does Castrejón's gendered status figure in her claim as a maker of historical records? Her continued interest in her archive – the maintenance and updating of a print inventory; the bequest to friends, relatives and colleagues; and the reported donation of albums to the president – suggests that while Castrejón's Revolution corpus was begun without any explicit intention of forming a historical record, she subsequently developed a sense of 'historical consciousness'. As proposed by Peter Fritzsche (2010), this term implies the subject's awareness of participation in a national event that irrevocably breaks with the past, and a sense of communally sharing in that history and recounting it. Fritzsche (2010: 162) contends that historical consciousness emerged as a mass attitude in Europe during the French Revolution (1789–99) and in the hemisphere during the American Revolutionary War (1775–83).

To extend Fritzsche's conception to Mexico would attribute equivalent emergence of historical consciousness to the War of Independence (1810–21), and the continental overthrow of Spanish colonial rule. Yet, as Susan Marchland (2005: 655) argues in her discussion of Fritzsche's study, historical consciousness may have emerged at different periods for specific groups. She

²² Villela has so far made searches for the lost Cárdenas albums in the presidential archive and papers of the president's relatives, but without success. Conversation with the author, Mexico City, 29 July 2013.

speculates that, for example, the historical consciousness of African Americans emerged through the US Civil War. While beyond the scope of this discussion, it is possible that for women in Mexico, the 1910–20 Revolution was in fact the primary event in which they actively participated on a mass scale in all class sections, and through which their historical consciousness arose.

Women's self-recognition as active participants, rather than bystanders of the historical process, both catalysed and justified their increasing demands for rights and representation in the spheres of politics, society and labour. Questions of gender and women's roles in the Revolution were particularly pertinent at the time of Cárdenas' visit to Teloloapan in 1937 and Castrejón's subsequent donation of the albums. The promises of increased gender equality made by political factions during the Revolution were not upheld following the conclusion of armed struggle. From 1920 onwards, women made vociferous demands for suffrage and increased rights and freedoms, mobilising evidence for their active participation in the Revolution to demonstrate that women had contributed to the construction of the current state and merited full citizenship (Tuñón Pablos 1999: 94–100). To support this, a profusion of alternative accounts of the Revolution by female historians emerged in the 1920–1950 period that ran counter to mainstream versions (Lau Jaiven 1995: 94–6).

Castrejón's presentation of her albums to the president, I suggest, should be understood in this context. A supporter of reforms in favour of women, President Cárdenas came close to granting suffrage. In 1937, however, debates in Congress concluded that women had not sufficiently left the domestic and family sphere to have earned the vote (Lau Jaiven 1995: 93) and that, despite some notable exceptions, most women were not capable of participating in political and public life.²³ In the event, full suffrage for women was not granted until 1953. While it is not known if Castrejón supported the campaign for women's suffrage or identified herself as feminist, her economic independence as an unmarried business-owner suggests alignment with the feminist project of women's equality and freedom. Castrejón's meetings with President Cárdenas and donation of her albums concurs with the national move to demonstrate women's fundamental roles in the Revolution, to evidence their capacity of intelligent

²³ Pressure from religious groups – in which women were often prominent – was also of fundamental importance in blocking women's suffrage (Lau Jaiven 1995: 98).

reflection upon historical processes, and to demand their right to take part in political life.

Castrejón's archival activity post-revolution indicates the coalescence of this attitude. Belatedly, she became cognisant of the full import of the images she had amassed through her work, and of her unique position in Teloloapan as an observer and historian – a female one at that – who was briefly at the centre of momentous events. Castrejón's trajectory from flowers to firing squads is representative of the wider panorama of women's temporarily expanded roles in wartime. The turbulence of conflict presented challenges and opportunities – technical, aesthetic, financial, and professional – to which Castrejón responded, expanding women's acceptable modes of photography into the masculine arena of war.

4. Mrs Leach's Revolutionary Albums: A US Observer in Mexico

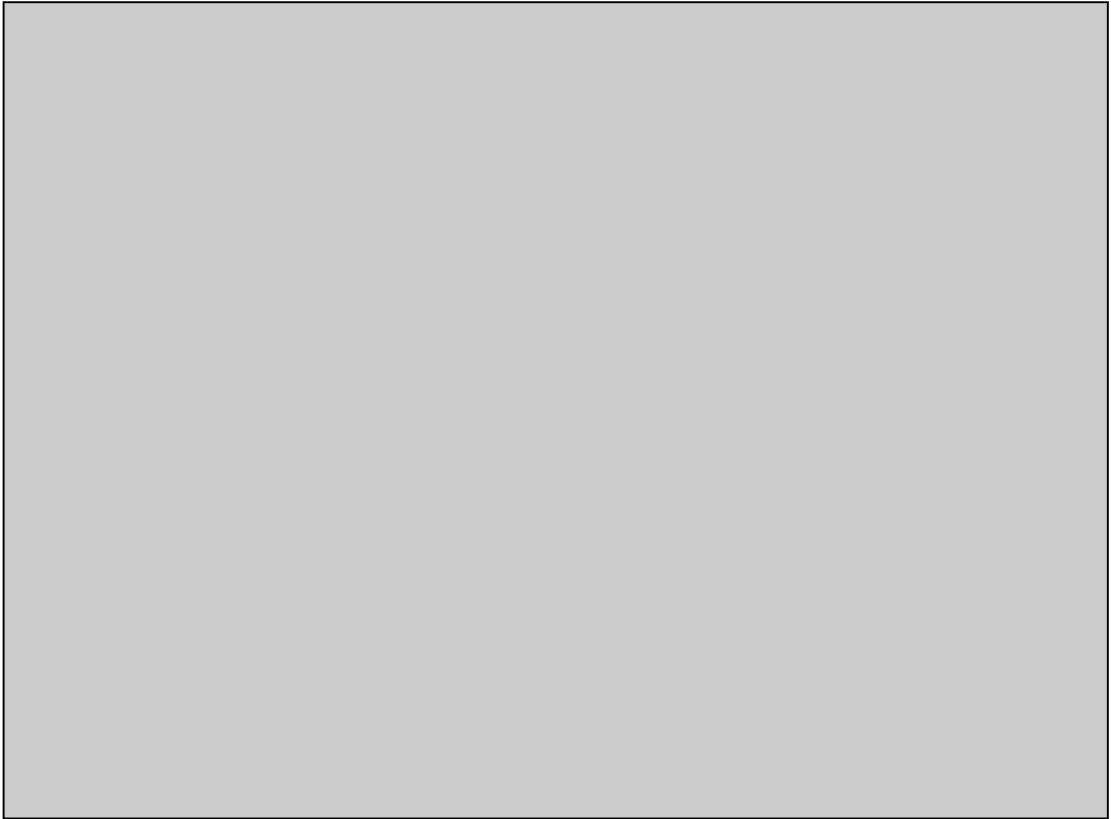


Figure 11. Photo-album belonging to Mrs M.A. Leach, undated (probably compiled c.1912–1916)

Album One: 975:0049 (HRRC)

A small mass-produced photo album with a crinkled black cover carries the gold-embossed motto 'Photographs' in decorative turn-of-the-century script (figure 11). Upon opening, the black inside cover has been inscribed in flowing white ink with the handwritten declaration: 'Property of Mrs. M.A. Leach / Photographs taken during the Madero Revolution of 1910–11 in Mexico'. Immediately, this modest object with its bold statement of possession prompts a number of questions. Who was Leach; how did she come to be interested in Mexican political and military events; and under what circumstances did she compile the album? Why did she consider the album, containing many photographic prints made by other people, to be her property? How are we to understand this album, and Leach's concerns in making it?

Leafing through the album – one of a pair made by Leach that is now conserved in the photographic archive of the Harry Ransom Research Center at the University of Texas in Austin – the range of subject matter and modes of photography presented is striking. Leach's title 'Photographs taken during the Madero Revolution' suggests that the album will present material depicting the well-known people and events usually associated with the Mexican Revolution. However, the albums' contents are wide-ranging and genre-crossing, encompassing not just material explicitly depicting the revolution (such as photographic postcards of military personnel) but also topographical vistas of Mexican landscapes, tourist views, records of travels, corporate images of industrial sites, and family and personal snapshots. While these disparate images might share an approximate chronology (1910–1912) and geographical provenance (Mexico and the US), their convergence into coherent narratives is unique to these albums, the products of one woman living through the early years of the Mexican Revolution. Clearly, Leach led an eventful life worthy of further attention. Yet while the following discussion partially reconstructs her forgotten biography, it aims to go beyond Leach's micro-history. Rather, this discussion historicises and examines those factors of gender that weighed upon Leach's act of compilation, and which shaped her albums' fabrication and mode of address. Beyond communicating a brief arc in the lived history of one woman, these albums can tell us much more about women's broader engagement with photography and the experience of conflict within the geography and period of the Mexican Revolution.

Aside from the existence of her two albums, Leach left little trace in the annals of history. The sole text to focus on her, the unpublished 'Finding Aid' (Brown McVey n.d.) in the Harry Ransom Center, summarises the little information that can be gleaned from the captions and images. Further facts about Leach's life, however, can be found in official state registers, with additional data offered via references in newspapers and business histories to her husband's work. Born in 1882, Kate B.M. Ribbel married Martin Andrew Leach on 10 December 1902 in Yuba, California, aged twenty. Five years later their son Martin 'Junior' Carter was born, followed within a few years by a daughter, Annette. Leach's husband,

a native Californian, was hired as a manager of the Madera Lumber Company, a subsidiary of the US-owned Pearson Company, around 1909.¹

According to the contents of her albums, on 5 April 1911 the Leach family relocated to Ciudad Madera ('Lumber City'), in Chihuahua, North-western Mexico. The Leaches travelled an arduous 500 kilometres by train, wagon-coach and horse from Ciudad Juárez on the Texas border to their new residence, a large timber house in the recently established town. There they lived until a difficult snow-bound return journey northwards on 12 February 1912. It is not known if the family then remained in the US, or returned to Mexico for a subsequent period. The latest photographs place Leach in Mexico on 20 November 1912, *en route* from Torreón to Durango, about halfway between Ciudad Madera and Mexico City. The 1912 photographs are followed by undated snapshots of Lake Tahoe, California, perhaps indicating the Leaches' return to the US in late 1912 or 1913. The family was most probably back on native soil for good by 1914, when Martin Leach was reportedly working in Michigan, before establishing the Leach Motor Car Company in Los Angeles in 1916.

The albums' trajectory, from their creation to eventual arrival at the archive of the Harry Ransom Center, is not clear. The albums were accessioned in 1975, three years after Leach's death, but may have been donated earlier, and no provenance is officially recorded.² The albums' claim to conservation in this internationally prestigious facility, as the emphasis of Brown McVey's 'Finding Aid' demonstrates, lies in their value as illustrative records of the Revolution and capacity to furnish data on 'Great Men', rather than any insight they might offer into women's histories, experiences and viewpoints.³

¹ Sources for biographical data on Mrs Leach: 'American Capital Develops Important Lumber Enterprise in Mexico', *The Timberman*, January 1912, p.43; McGroaty (1921: 928–929); Theobald (2004); 'California, County Marriages, 1850-1952'; 'California Death Index, 1940–1997'. For more on the Pearson business empire in the Sierra Madre region, see O'Connor (2012).

² I am grateful to Roy Flukinger and Linda Briscoe-Myers, Curators at the Harry Ransom Center for discussing the provenance of the albums with me.

³ The 'Finding Aid' appears to have been undertaken in connection with identifying suitable picture sources for publications on the Mexican Revolution, given Brown McVey's criticisms of exposure of images, and comparisons with alternative images of the same subjects by other photographers available elsewhere.

The two albums are identical in format, being mass-produced artefacts produced by the same manufacturer. Within their pages they share a handful of duplicate prints, although Leach's approach to each album differs somewhat in content, scope, and presentation. Album One (as designated by Brown McVey's 'Finding Aid') contains 87 prints pasted onto black paper pages, appended with Leach's handwritten captions in white ink, with stated dates ranging from 6 March 1911 to January 1912. As well as depicting generals, politicians and encampments of the Revolution, subjects include the battle and subsequent ruins of Ciudad Juárez in May 1911, Francisco I. Madero's victorious journey by train from Eagle Pass, Texas, en route to assume the presidency in Mexico City in June 1911, and Leach's own travels south to the capital and the city of Cuernavaca in Morelas, as well as to rural locales including the Tehuantepec isthmus, Chiapas, and a rubber plantation identified as Zacualpa. Although it is not known when Leach compiled the album, the consistency of her handwriting suggests the captions were written (and possibly, the prints pasted) in one continuous undertaking rather than piecemeal over a prolonged period.

Album Two contains a smaller proportion of explicitly Revolution-related images, with a greater number of images devoted to personal or domestic subjects. The captions to Album Two are written in red crayon with a looser, bolder hand than the first. Events depicted include the Leaches' journey from Ciudad Juárez to Ciudad Madera in April 1911, their home and life there including local horse-riding trips and entertainments, and the production sites of the Madera Lumber Company. Leach's two children, her husband, mother and mother-in-law are all depicted, and at least two prints feature Leach herself, identified as 'Kate Leach'. Representations of a 'Mrs Gardiner', probably a housekeeper or nanny, as well as a photograph of gifts piled under a well-decorated Christmas tree, indicate the Leaches' comfortable middle-class standard of living. The latest photograph in the album is stated to be 20 November 1912. Once more, it is not clear when exactly Leach compiled the album, but captions dated 1916, describing subjects of photographs made earlier, suggest 1916 as the earliest date for at least the captioning process, given the consistency of her handwriting throughout this album. The uneven visual qualities of both Album One and Album Two – a mix of photographic postcards, commercial photographic panoramic prints, and rudimentary snapshots made by Leach or those known to her – indicates that she was not a professional photographer or even a keen amateur with aesthetic aspirations, but someone who engaged with

photography primarily for its ability to keep records, tell stories, and chronicle lives.⁴

Approaching women's albums: theoretical perspectives

Beyond the recovery of this empirical data, many questions remain. Why did Leach construct her albums in the way she did? Was hers a decorative hobby or a more purposeful undertaking? How do her albums adhere to or breach circumscription for women's albums of her epoch? And what theoretical and methodological means are available to help answer these questions? Typical of those practices that have become collectively termed 'vernacular' photography – that is, the plethora of forms of photography outside the narrow canon of art historical discourse (Batchen 2000) – women's photo albums have until recently received little scholarly or critical attention. The first major attempt to theorise the terrain comes via the pioneering cohort of Anglophone feminist photo-theorists of the 1980s and 1990s that examined the practice of family photography. Among their studies, Julia Hirsch's *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning and Effect* (1981), Jo Spence and Patricia Holland's edited volume *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography* (1991), Annette Kuhn's *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (1995), and Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (1997) employed a hermeneutics of suspicion through which to view family photography, and by extension one of its key artefacts, the album.⁵

Often using psychoanalytical and semiotic approaches to interrogate an insistence on seemingly '*happy memories*' (Holland 2004, original emphasis), these scholars retrospectively uncovered the repressive patriarchal structures perpetuated by these photographic practices. Although symptoms of resistance

⁴ I make a distinction between unskilled, non-professional, personal photography, and the activity undertaken by the true 'amateur' in the sense of a non-professional making photography with aesthetic and technical ambitions. According to John P. Jacob, 'In hunting, the term "snapshot" had referred to a quick shot with a gun, made without aim, at a fast-moving target. After the introduction of the Brownie [in 1900], the term came more and more to be associated with photography' (Jacob 2011b: 10). This genealogy of the term suggests snapshooting as a spontaneous and not particularly skilled activity. For a historicised account of shifts in meaning of the term 'amateur' in relation to photography see West (2000:40-53).

⁵ 'Hermeneutics of suspicion' is a term that was coined by Paul Ricoeur (1970) to describe the practice of reading texts against the grain to expose their repressed or hidden meanings, and has since become a dominant critical practice (Felski 2011).

to patriarchy may be identified within the photograph, indicating some kind of subversive agency at work, the primary actor identified by these feminist texts is not the historical participant. Rather, it is the present-day viewer herself, whose retrospective readings of personal images uncover painful home truths, hidden under the repressive surface of the seemingly happy snapshot. Such approaches consign the historical maker to a position of subjugation within patriarchal society, and limit the potential for uncovering agency at the point of origin.

These conceptions pose problems for feminist historians, given that a fundamental concern in recent years has been the recovery of women's agency. As discussed in Chapter 1, 'agency' in the context of this thesis denotes the potential of individuals to act and exert influence, albeit within limiting structures (such as class, society and race). The weight given to structural analysis as opposed to voluntarism in human affairs has been a major concern of historiography more broadly for the past three decades or more (Berkhofer 1997: 120). With regard to women's histories, the structuralist versus voluntarist position is particularly charged. If volition is an essential characteristic that defines being human, clearly the recovery of women's agency from historical records, artefacts and practices is of prime concern in order to vindicate women's claims to rights to equality and freedom. In this light, the dominant mode of feminist criticism of family photography can be of limited help.

Furthermore, the approach of family photography theorists frequently relies upon their personal or autobiographical connection to the material examined, leaving a methodological gap with regard to albums by unknown makers. However, with the recent growth of interest in vernacular photography from within both the academy and the museum, alternative methodologies have been offered for approaching historical albums to which the viewer has no personal connection (Mifflin 2012). Studies by Martha Langford (2010) and Matthew Stadler (2006) confront the problem of what museum curators term 'orphan works': artefacts, like the Leach albums, that have been dislodged from their original context and maker to surface in archives and secondary markets devoid of provenance. Rather than seeking to recover empirical historical or biographical facts that may illuminate their inception and original purpose, Stadler and Langford advocate close attention to imagery and layout as a

means of subjectively engaging with the 'insoluble riddles' (Langford 2001:67) provoked by albums.

Stadler takes Proust's literary memory-work as inspiration, insisting that the album's anonymity offers the viewer freedom to respond to its aesthetic and affective qualities, prompting creative musings and reflections upon absence and decay, even suggesting the viewer act as a medium (in the supernatural sense) to resuscitate the past lives inhabited by the subjects of the photographs (2006:173). Langford, meanwhile, draws on the work of anthropologist Walter J. Ong and the oral dimension of the social act of describing the content of photo albums. She proposes reactivating the 'suspended conversation' between the album compiler and viewer, performing a fictitious dialogue that may 'break the codes' of the enigmatic album (Langford 2010:199). While the mystical-imaginative approaches of Stadler and Langford may result in emotional and creative responses that are valuable to the present day viewer herself, it is highly doubtful that such methodology can result in empirical insights into the original maker or function of the album that would be of wider relevance. The albums examined by Stadler and Langford remain intriguing but ultimately puzzling glimpses of an unknowable past. While distinct from the methodology proposed by feminist family photography theory, the approaches of Langford and Stadler similarly privilege the present day viewer at the expense of the historical maker operating within her own epoch and social-political structures. Collectively, these various approaches fall short of revealing how Leach may have exercised agency in the compilation of her albums.

More fruitful methodologies come from scholars beyond the topic of the photo-album, who advocate historicising the constraints imposed on individuals, against which cultural texts or material artefacts may be read. In her feminist critique of colonialism and women's travel writing, Mills draws on Michel Foucault's discourse theory to propose attention to 'discursive constraints', that is, the rules and systems of representation and meaning negotiated by individuals in order to create and communicate (Mills 1991:5). Discursive constraints shape the production of cultural texts such as women's travel narratives, which Mills asserts are not 'expressive of the truth of the author's life', but rather 'the result of a configuration of discursive structures with which

the author negotiates' (1991:9).⁶ Fisher and O'Hara's (2009) study of racial identity in Latin America draws on William Sewell's 'A Theory of Structure' (1992), to propose practice theory as a framework for understanding how 'mental structures' are materially practiced, producing cultural texts that are read and reproduced by historical actors (2009: 21–22). Fisher and O'Hara assert that '[b]ringing these moments and spaces into analytical focus helps to capture the lived experience of social categories and their historical contingency, without suggesting an unfettered agency on the part of subjects to negotiate or contest social categories' (22). Both Mills and Fisher and O'Hara offer judicious alternatives to the impasse of structuralist versus voluntarist debate. My discussion follows their lead, contesting the irrevocably asymmetric relationship between individual and structure claimed by feminist family photography theorists, while aiming not to over-ascribe agency retrospectively.

To engage with these frameworks in relation to photography promotes a more nuanced relationship between individual and structure, acknowledging the individual's negotiation (consciously or otherwise) of structures and constraints in which she creates her photographic artefact. By adopting this framework, I shift emphasis away from the impracticable task of recovering Leach's personal intentions via subjective musings, in favour of reconstructing the structures and constraints that determine how and why her album took shape as it did. By establishing what traditions and conventions existed for non-professional photography and album-making by US women at the turn of the century, it is possible to determine how Leach's activity was informed by these structures, and to assess the independence of her decision to incorporate themes of conflict within her albums. It is through attention to Leach's negotiation of historical gendered constraints, I argue, that her agency may be detected.

Women's album-making: gendered constraints

Leach operated within a tradition of album-making as a gendered practice. The activity in the US at the turn of the century was coded feminine and domestic, arising from pre-photographic antecedents in women's popular, low-status crafts such as quilt-making, the compilation of autograph albums and scrap-books,

⁶ I am grateful to Dr. Claire Lindsay for introducing me to the work of Mills and other studies of women's travel writing.

and the keeping of genealogical family bibles (Snyder 2006: 25; Langford 2001:18). In their assessments of women's album-making, scholars have been sceptical about the potential to go beyond these domestic origins, judging the activity as frequently trivial, inward-looking and severed from the public-political sphere. Rosenblum argues that albums of photomontages made by genteel nineteenth century 'lady amateurs' are ornamental, lacking the pointed political or social intent of Modernist artists' photocollages of the 1920s (Rosenblum 2010: 50). Holland conceives the nineteenth century fad of collecting commercially available *cartes de visite*, destined for mass-produced albums with pre-cut slots, as a decorative but ultimately useless hobby, advocated to keep middle-class women occupied within the restraints of the home (Holland 2007:128). In the twentieth century, according to Holland, the album looked increasingly inwards to domestic and family matters, and by the 1950s all but excluded 'the worlds of production, politics, economic activity and the institutional settings of modern life' (Holland 1991:7).

Certainly these criticisms are borne out in parts of Leach's albums. A double page spread in Album Two (figure 12) displays two unskilled snapshots, each marred by light leakages on the negatives. On the left-hand page a toddler (Leach's daughter), carries a toy basket and is captioned simply 'Annette'; the facing print depicts a pair of ladders propped up against a pine tree with a humorous caption 'Martin – Remember the cat?' (presumably addressed to Leach's husband or son, Martin Jr.). In its banality and lack of aesthetic and conceptual ambition, this spread illustrates why photo-historians and feminist theorists have often dismissed photo albums. The everyday subject matter – a daughter's tottering steps; a cat stuck up a tree – are inconsequential to all but to the compiler and her close family. The pages endorse the argument of women's album-making as a limited, inward-looking practice that remains disconnected from larger events beyond the domestic sphere.



Figure 12. 'Annette' / 'Martin, remember the cat?', album of Mrs M.A. Leach

Album Two: 975:0052:0002-0003 (HRRC)

This assumption, however, deserves interrogation. Leafing forward just a few pages, the viewer comes upon a sequence vividly communicating the Leach family's encounter with rebel forces in Mexico. The sequence recounts the journey made by the Leach family from Ciudad Juárez to Ciudad Madera between 5 and 7 April 1911, at a time when rebels had seized control of portions of Chihuahua. Leach's energetic, bold script in red crayon captures the tension – even exhilaration – of their journey, describing hour-by-hour events. One double-page spread shows a poorly-focussed snapshot, probably made by Leach, of a small group including two men, a woman and a child before a Mexico North-western train. Leach's caption reads '1:30 P.M. April 6, 1911 / Leach party made 53 miles in this box car caboose of a work trains [sic] – en route to Madero [sic], Mexico'. The facing page features a snapshot of a woodland clearing with men and horses, together with a family group including a woman holding a baby (figure 13). Leach writes, 'Four *insurrecto* [rebel] policemen met us here (at Kilometer 58) to guide us safely over the mountains. / 3.30 P.M. Apr 6, 1911 / Ready to mount for trip overland by horseback. Dr. Commons [?] lifting sack containing 60 thousand pesos – part of Madera [sic] pay roll money'. This last figure is identified on the print with a red cross.

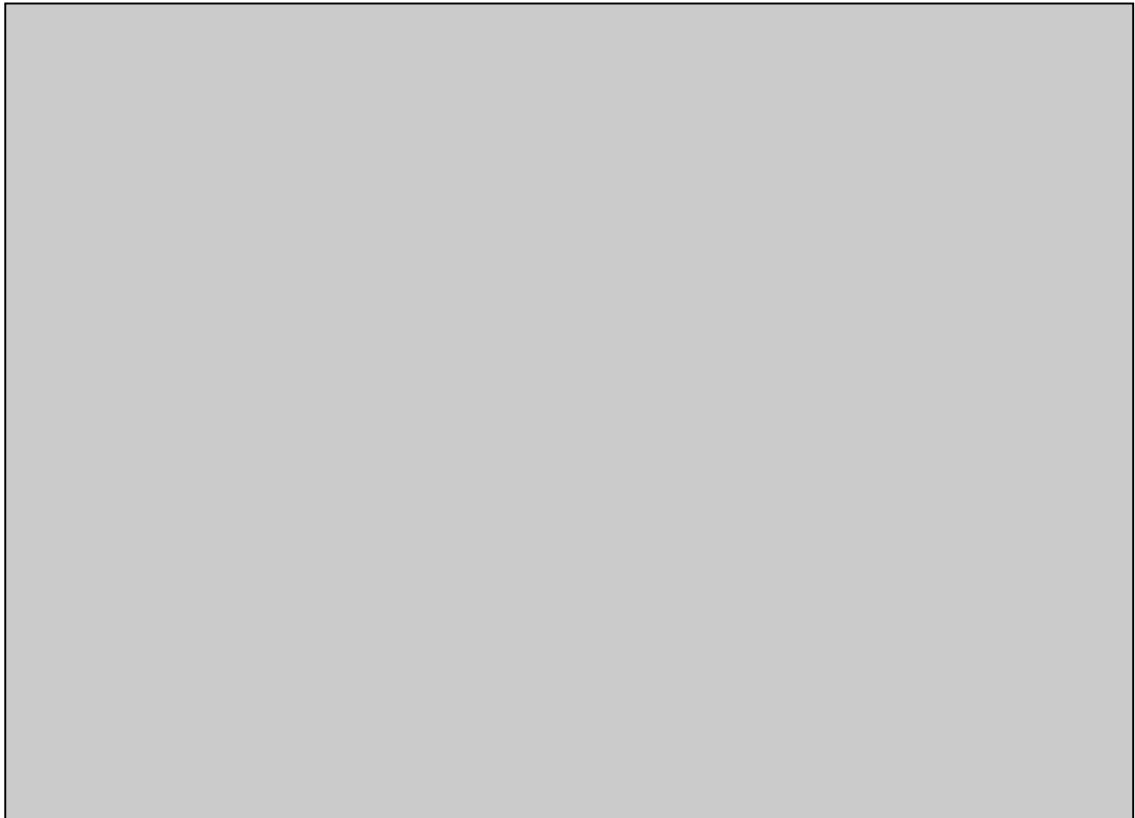


Figure 13. “Four insurrecto [rebel] policemen met us here (at Kilometer 58) to guide us safely over the mountains’, album of Mrs M.A. Leach

Album Two 975-0052-0018-19 (HRRRC)

The images themselves may be lacking technical and artistic skill in focus and composition, but through Leach’s sequencing and captioning, they become charged and meaningful. Leach emphasises the physical discomfort of travel, her proximity to the revolution (journeying with the rebel payload and *insurrecto* soldiers) and her cognisance of the political events unfolding around her family. The combination of personal snapshots made from her own viewpoint, together with her terse and subjective captions, index Leach’s bodily presence at the scene with all its attendant dangers, affirming that she was there as a direct participant. Leach’s account places her experience and viewpoint within a larger narrative, presenting her as a participant-observer and carrying her photographic activity beyond a record of a family trip into the terrain of conflict.

Leach’s albums expose the limitations of feminist family photo-theory. While clearly a fundamental and groundbreaking theoretical contribution to the field, its emphasis on a particular historical moment of family photography has eclipsed

the wider panorama of women's unskilled photography. This is perhaps due to the scholars' preoccupation with family photographs from their childhood and memories of the 1950s Cold War period, when the entrenchment of gendered roles went hand-in-hand with photographic marketing, advocating the myth of the happy nuclear family through acceptable modes of snapshot photography that focused relentlessly on domestic subjects (Greenough 2007:165).⁷ The resulting exclusion of the public, political, and martial world from the album in a particular historical moment has come to dominate thinking on women's album-making more generally, closing down alternative interpretations in different epochs. My own discussion, by contrast, is aligned with studies by Marilyn Motz (1989), Patricia Di Bello (2003), Elizabeth Siegel (2003) and Louise Dahlgren (2013). While wide-ranging in their focus, and reaching beyond the American hemisphere, these studies pay close attention to the historical, social, cultural and geographical contexts in which albums were made, and contest assumptions of album-making as a solely domestic affair.

In fact, there is evidence that women's album-making has historically been connected to public and political events, including armed conflict. The availability of cheap *cartes de visite* that coincided with the US Civil War (1861–1865) prompted a surge in the mass production of albums. At least one commercial manufacturer offered a special album to hold military records as well as family photographs so that it might later function as a legal document for war widows (Siegel 2003:242-5), a striking confluence of public history, law, and feminine domesticity.⁸ Some decades later, in Victorian England, *cartes de visite* of politicians, celebrities and military figures were bought by women and displayed alongside family images in albums. As Di Bello (2003) and Siegel (2010: 7, 230) have asserted, such albums were displayed as indicators of the compiler's social status and *savoir-faire*. The albums were intended to be shown beyond

⁷ J.J.Long (2006) makes a similar criticism of Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames* (1997) and the problematics of transposing her theory of postmemory without taking into account cultural specificity.

⁸ While photography was occasionally used during the Mexican-American War (1846–48), evidenced by daguerreotypes of soldiers departing for war (Lewinski 1978:37), it was not yet widely available in print form. Even in this pre-photographic phase of the album, however, women incorporated military letters and ephemera into their visual-textual scrapbooks (Buckler 2006). Trachtenberg (1985: 5–6) discusses Mathew Brady's commercial enterprise producing and selling *cartes de visite* and stereographs of US Civil War scenes to be purchased, collected and displayed in albums with pre-cut slots for this purpose, although he does not analyse this enterprise through the filter of gender or as a feminine practice.

the family to wider, more public circles, indicative of the ways in which an apparently decorative pastime in fact fulfilled functions of sociability. Concurrent to the Mexican Revolution, during the First World War, a handful of women, including US volunteer nurse Margaret Hall, took cameras with them to the Western and Eastern Fronts. The women's express purpose was to record their experiences serving in auxiliary roles, producing scrap-books that combined snapshots, texts and ephemera such as medals, identity cards and travel permits (Higonnet 2010). Leach's activity, I argue, should be considered within the context of this larger terrain of women's album-making that connects to conflict.

Leach made her album at a time of pivotal change. In the US, the turn of the century and Progressive Era saw transformations both in terms of women's social status and photographic technological advances (Rosenblum 2010: 55–59). Although full suffrage was not granted to US women until 1920, they increasingly entered the professions, travelled and lived independently, and were perceived to be evolving from 'receptacles into creators of politics and culture' (Schriber 1997: 7). Meanwhile, the recent innovation of snapshot photography was becoming increasingly popular. Eastman Kodak's cheap and simple-to-operate roll film camera launched in 1888 and supported by a commercial photographic processing service, meant that photography was no longer the exclusive preserve of the skilled professional with darkroom and studio (Mutz 1989: 64). By 1905, roughly one third of US population could access snapshot photography, with 1.2 million Brownies sold (West 2000:41); by 1915, an estimated 1.5 million photographs were being produced annually (Snyder 2006: 26).⁹

Snapshot photography was deemed a socially acceptable hobby for women, even a desirable marker of modern femininity. Explicit advice on the kinds of photographs snapshotters should take came from handbooks, exhibitions and competitions (Dahlgren 2013:93), as well as promotional material such as Kodak's circular *Kodakery*, which in 1913 suggested making an album recording every month of a baby's growth (Stadler 2006: 173). Women's magazines offered gendered guidance, with *Women Home Companion* featuring a 1909

⁹ For a history of snapshot photography in the US, see Toedtemeier (2006).

article 'Snapshots: How to Make Child Pictures Indoors' (Claudy: 1909). The most prominent prescription for women came from Kodak's long-running advertising campaign featuring the lively and cosmopolitan Kodak Girl, clearly based on the proto-feminist ideal of the so-called 'New Woman' (West 2000: 54). Launched in 1893, the Kodak Girl was pictured photographing friends and family in the open air, snap-shooting on leisure jaunts, motoring trips, and at turn-of-the-century World Fairs (Nordstrom 2011: 66). As Nancy West (2000: 56) contends in her study of Kodak marketing, the cumulative effect of these advertisements was to produce a positive image of a female observer roaming and recording the wider world. Even before the launch of the Kodak Girl, female snapshotters were recording their travels, evidenced by Septima M. Collis' *A Woman's Trip to Alaska* (1890), published with images 'kodaked by the author' (Rosenblum 2010: 110). Seen within this context, Leach, as a young middle-class US woman travelling abroad, operated within existing conventions and acceptable gendered modes of photography in choosing to record her experiences in Mexico via snapshots.

A radical shift prompted by snapshot photography was the potential for the camera user to create her own images, rather than being restricted to purchasing prints offered by commercial manufacturers or commissioned from studio professionals. While snapshots were often posed or considered, they captured unfolding moments or personal chronologies from women's own lived realities, rather than reproducing the static, timeless quality of the portrait made in the generic studio interior. The turn-of-the-century Kodak Girl campaign capitalised on this new freedom. An advertisement entitled 'The Kodak Story', which featured in the June 1907 edition of *The Outing* magazine, pictured an elegantly-dressed woman photographing her car being repaired while on a countryside jaunt (figure 14). The copy declared 'it's always interesting – it's personal – it tells of the places, the people and incidents *from your own point of view*' [original emphasis]. While women were thus invited to photograph for their own pleasure and from their own subjective viewpoint, the imagery of the Kodak Girl campaign nonetheless advocated a narrow range of suitable subjects for women to photograph – leisure pursuits, travel, family and friends – and depicted female snapshotters as chic and genteel.

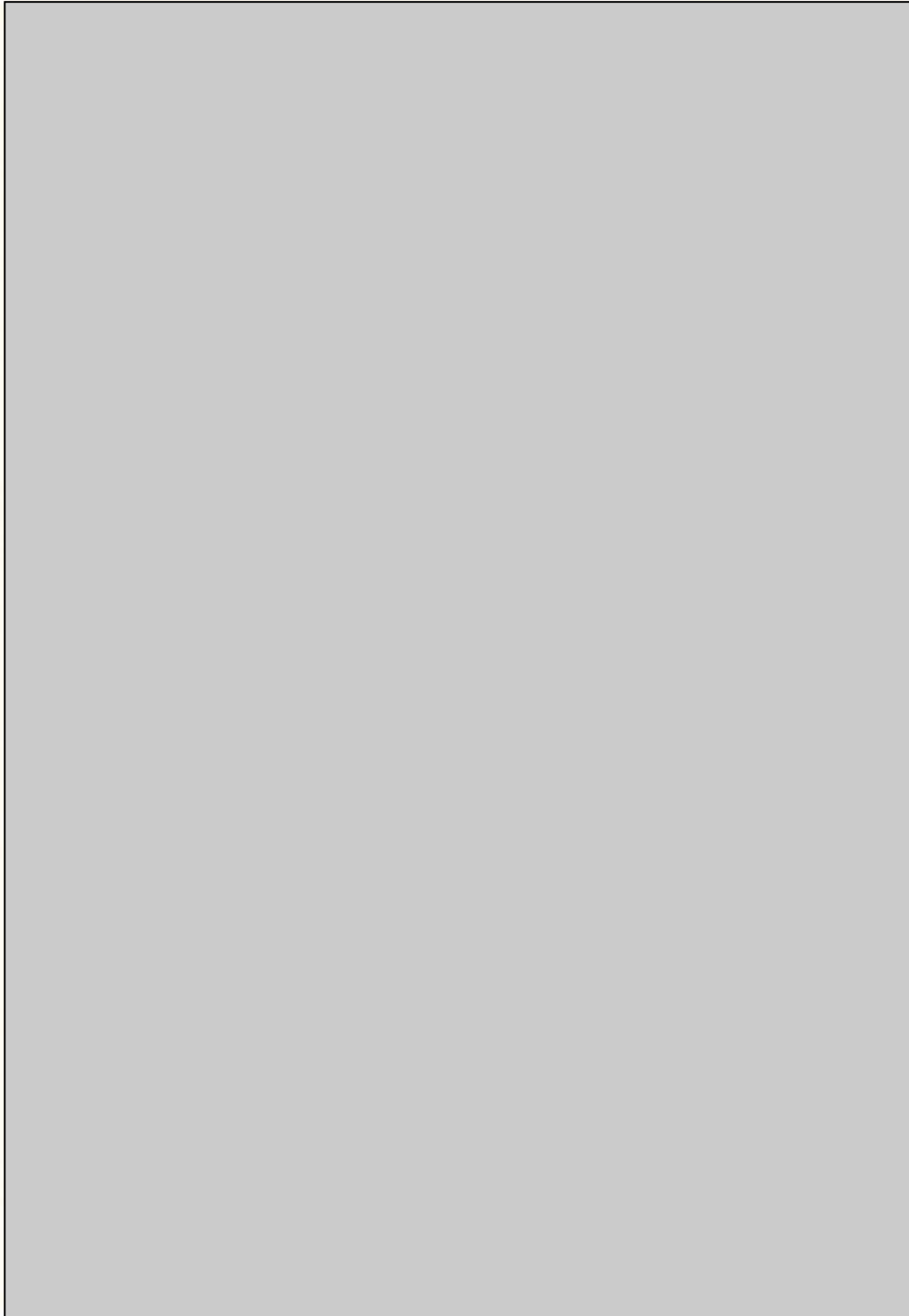


Figure 14. 'The Kodak Story', Advertisement in *The Outing*, June 1907

Source: Jacob (2011a: 160)

In practice, bands of boisterous young female 'camera fiends' caused commotion in public spaces, and cartoons of the period showed women photographers 'so obviously bent on getting a good picture as to ignore other

peoples' danger or embarrassment, a great departure from the traditional presentation of women as passive and compassionate' (Nordstrom 2011: 69). Furthermore, women departed from subjects deemed suitable, instead choosing to depict other themes that affected their lives. Consequently, as Stephanie Snyder asserts in her survey of US photo albums crafted primarily by women from 1880–1930, 'one encounters war, industrialisation [and] immigration' alongside more conventional images of family life and tourism (Snyder 2006: 25). Hence, Leach was part of a generation of women who went beyond the parameters of subjects and codes of behaviour deemed acceptable for feminine photography.

In response to the boom in snapshooting, modes of album-making were also transformed. Late nineteenth-century albums were relatively structured, typified by commercially available products that had pre-cut slots for displaying purchased posed portraits, often in *cartes de visite* format. While these products did not preclude individual experimentation, their popularity attests to the dominant practice of arranging standardised photographs as a catalogue of relatives, friends and celebrities in genealogical or social hierarchies (Motz 1989: 64, 66). From the 1920s onwards, after the first few decades of the snapshooting boom, aesthetic codes informed by Modernism began to be prescribed by photography manuals and magazines (Dahlgren 2013: 77). Albums became structured by the regular placement of photographs, generally in chronological order, and non-photographic material (such as souvenirs, locks of hair, or other collage material) was phased out. At the time that Leach made her album, however, album-making enjoyed a period of creative liberation, constituting a free-ranging practice with which industry and the media kept pace rather than regulated (Stadler 2006:173; Levine 2006:18).

The new market of snapshooters was served by mass-produced albums with blank pages onto which snapshots could be pasted however the compiler desired, such as those used by Leach. As Marilyn F. Motz asserts in her insightful study of women's albums in the US made between 1880 and 1920, rather than 'record the development and cohesiveness of families as corporate entities', turn-of-the-century albums could focus on the lives of their individual compilers, offering potential for single-author voices and the construction of individual lives, identities and narratives (1989: 63). Taken together, women's increased independence, the vogue for snapshot photography, and the

emergence of the blank album made possible the construction of freer narrative and non-narrative sequences. Albums made by women had the capacity to present fleeting events, personal moments, and autobiographical accounts in which women's experiences and viewpoints were central. Leach's photo-chronicle of the journey to Ciudad Madera should be understood as a product of the coalescence of these circumstances. While she presented herself as part of a family unit, Leach's snapshots and captions offer her own subjective viewpoint, attesting to the texture of her lived experience, and giving prominence to an event that held great significance for her.

Constructing photo-narratives of death and destruction

As well as her own snapshots, Leach incorporated into her albums photographic postcards and commercially available prints made by other photographers. Leach's inclusion of purchased material might be interpreted as an act of consumption, a more passive form of engagement than taking her own photographs. However, Leach demonstrates a considerable degree of interaction with her externally sourced material. This is evidenced by her handling of a commercially available panorama of a nondescript city taken from the top of a high-rise building, with an unfocused object obstructing the foreground (figure 15).¹⁰ In itself, this image tells us little about the ensuing conflict. Leach, however, has added the explanatory caption, 'View taken from American National Bank Building, El Paso, Texas during 'Battle of Juárez', Mexico. Exploding shells from Federal cannons plainly seen in foothills. Madero Revolution of 1910–1911'. Her caption deciphers for the viewer the shell-fire which cannot otherwise be 'plainly seen', explaining the scene and setting it in chronological context with the following image, which depicts the subsequent ruins of the city. Leach's decision to purchase, caption and sequence this otherwise inadequate image demonstrates her desire to represent and understand important events of the ongoing conflict, despite not always as a photographer herself.

¹⁰ While the out of focus object impeding the foreground indicates a lack of skill typical of snapshot photography, duplicate prints of the same image also appear in another album, 'Mexican Revolution photograph collection' (PH 015, CLS). This suggests that the photograph was in fact commercially available rather than made by Leach herself. This is consistent with practice during the Revolution, when press agencies and commercial printers sometimes bought and disseminated images made spontaneously by non-professionals, if they had news value (Leighton 1984: 295).

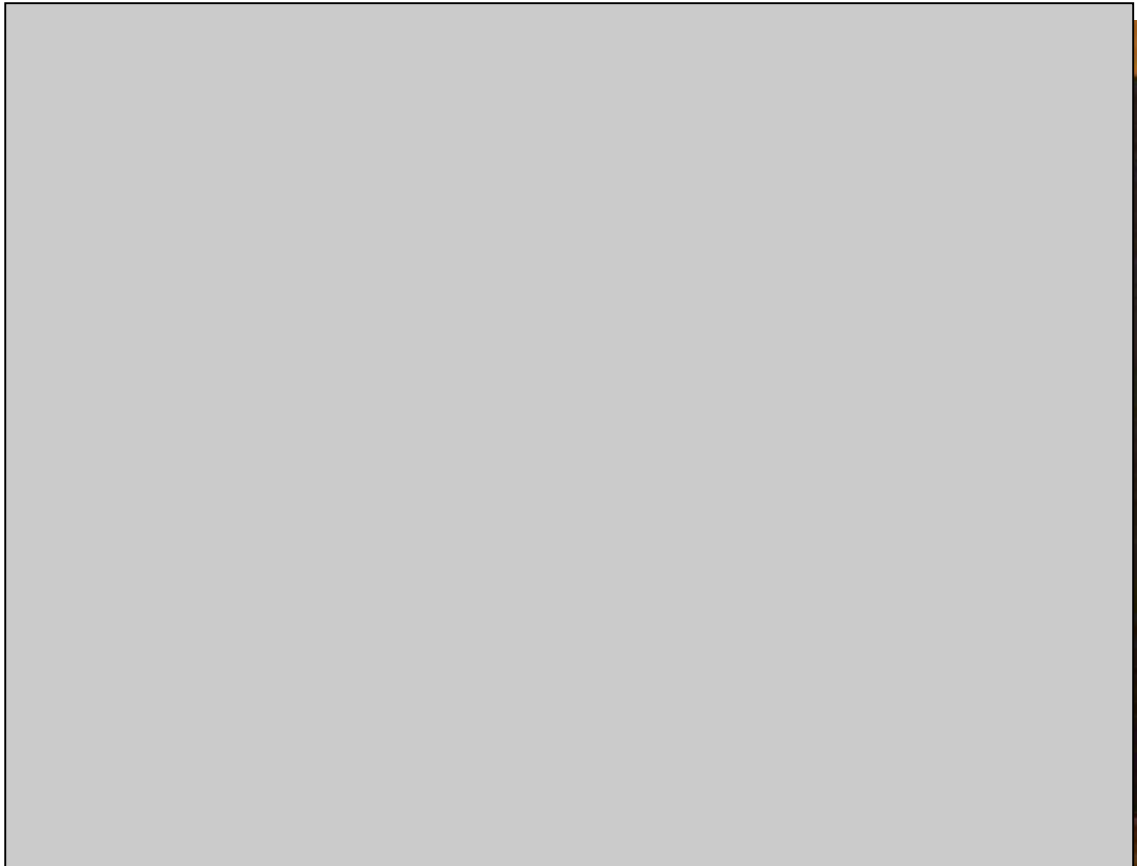


Figure 15. 'View taken from American National Bank Building', album of Mrs M.A. Leach

Album One 975-0052-0009 (HRRC)

It is possible that Leach herself had witnessed the shell-fire, as did many US tourists who gathered in El Paso to view the spectacle of unfolding conflict across the Rio Grande (Dorado Romo 2005). However, it is unlikely that Leach would have returned to Ciudad Juárez so soon after her arduous journey the month before. Furthermore, compared to the chronological specificity and physical subjectivity of Leach's captions to her own snapshots of that journey, her generalised dates ('1910–1911'), factual description, and use of the passive voice suggest she was reporting what she had heard or read about the incident. While neither an eyewitness nor author of the shell-fire photograph, or indeed of many other commercially available prints included in her albums, Leach's decision to interweave them with her own snapshots demonstrates her desire to contextualise her own experiences within larger story of the revolution. In this way, her engagement with commercially available material demonstrates a sense of purpose beyond merely passive purchase and consumption. As such,

Leach positions her own views and experiences alongside those of others closer to the action of conflict, to claim her place within historic events.

In contrast to the coded-feminine snapshot subjects of family, friends, travel and leisure advocated by the Kodak Girl campaign, Leach demonstrates considerable interest in images evoking the physical violence of conflict, more typical of coded-masculine news reportage. As well as the shellfire of Juárez, Leach includes images of bombed buildings, wrecked trains, and battle-wounded Mexican officials. As a US citizen, Leach shows particular attention for compatriots who meet their deaths during the conflict, such as Capt. R.F. Harrington and Capt. Oscar Creighton, soldiers of fortune who undertook posts in a Maderista dynamiting squad and were killed during battles in the spring of 1911.¹¹ A four-page sequence in Album One (figures 16 and 17) features a pair of snapshots of stationary trains, a distant shot of mounted troops in a scrubby landscape, and an image showing a group of men observing a sight off-frame, with a central figure aiming a rifle, and a Mexican boy cropped at the lower left corner.

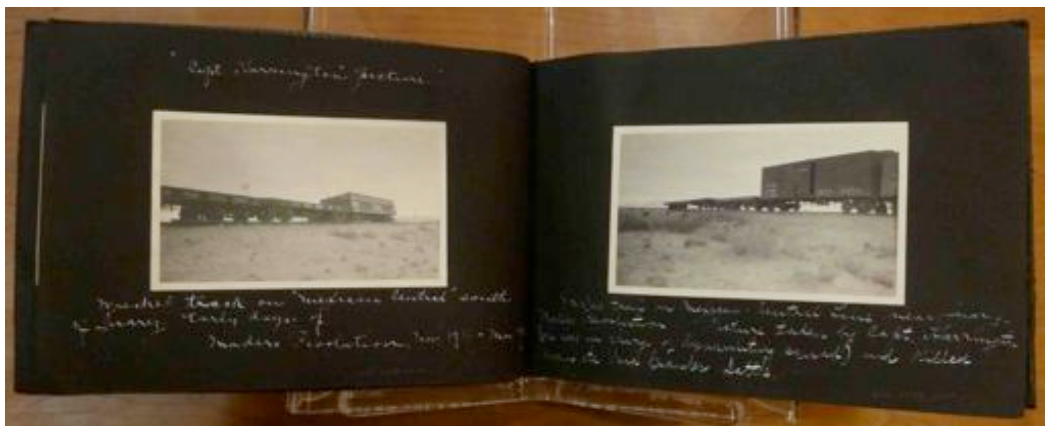


Figure 16. 'Capt. Harrington Picture: Wrecked track on Mexican Central', album of Mrs M.A. Leach

Album One 975-0052-0016-17 (HRRC)

¹¹ For information on Harrington, see 'Many Americans Slain With Rebels' *New York Times*, 12 March 1911; for Creighton, see Sullivan (2008). For further details on US soldiers of fortune in the Mexican Revolution see Hardman (n.d).



Figure 17. 'Capt. Harrington Picture: Madero's first address', album of Mrs M.A. Leach

Album One 975-0052-0018-19 (HRRRC)

In themselves, these unskilled images tell us little of the events to which they are connected. Leach's captions, however, fashion this unpromising and even banal material into a coherent narrative, asserting that the image of stationary wagons in fact depicts dynamited trains and tracks on the Mexican Central Line during the early days of the Revolution, and that the pictures were taken by Capt. Harrington himself, before being killed at Casas Grandes. The following images, Leach's captions state, depict 'Madero's first address to his troops in the field' and "'Capt.' Oscar Creighton in actual action at Bouche, near Juárez – about two months before he was killed – practically in the same place'. Leach's text transforms the inadequate images into more urgent and stirring documents of action that invite imaginative re-creation of the battlefield and resulting deaths that the photographs foreshadow.

Of particular importance to Leach is the photograph's status as an index. By index, I refer to a fundamental conception of photographic theory that has its roots in Charles Peirce's philosophical work on signs, but has subsequently been developed by others, most notably Barthes ([1981] 2000)¹² In this conception, the photograph is not only a likeness of its referent, but is also the product of a physical, indexical relationship with its referent, bearing the traces

¹² For an excellent discussion of the notion of the photograph as trace, and a historicised account of the conception of the index in photographic theory from Charles Peirce (1839-1914) onwards, see the chapter 'Tracing the Trace: Photography, the Index, and the Limits of Representation' in Hauser (2007: 57–104).

or imprint of that relationship. In this manner, as Barthes has proposed, the photograph registers ‘the luminous rays emitted or reflected by a variously-lit object’ (Barthes [1981] 2000: 80–82) – or, in the present case, a scene or person. In this manner, he continues, the photograph has a special potency to connect the viewer to the absent subject: ‘The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch [the viewer]’ (Barthes [1981] 2000: 80).



Figure 18. “Capt.” Oscar Harrington in actual action’, album of Mrs M.A. Leach
Album One 975-0052-0019 (HRRC)

In the context of conflict, the indexical quality of photography functions both to bring the impact of combat closer to the viewer through direct traces of the absent referent, and to perform as a kind of authentic relic carrying the residue of the battlefield. Leach’s choice of photographs and captions reflects these dual qualities. Her insistence on the subsequent deaths of Creighton and Harrington, which her captions reference three times, might initially be interpreted as betraying a morbid or sensationalist interest in violence in which Leach herself was not required to participate. I suggest, however, that Leach’s fixation on the deaths of the two men was prompted by her wish to stress the reality of violence

in the revolution. Her caption to the photograph of Creighton aiming a rifle (figure 18), which declares that he died only two months later in 'practically in the same place', highlights the hazards of war and the proximity to death experienced by those in Mexico during the conflict, including Leach herself.

The image of Creighton aiming a rifle may or may not be staged, but Leach's assertion that he is 'in actual action' emphasises the importance she placed on the authenticity of viewing events of battle via photography. It is striking that Leach captions a number of the snapshots 'Capt. Harrington Picture', suggesting that these images were made by Harrington himself. Given that this is the sole instance of Leach acknowledging the source of images in either of the albums, it is likely that she was motivated not by a desire to conscientiously credit the photographer as a creative author *per se*, but rather aimed to underscore the authenticity of the images made from negatives produced by the combatant himself.¹³ Leach emphasises her sense of connection to the dangers of the ongoing armed struggle, despite not being present herself, via her possession of photographic prints indexically linked to principal actors on the battlefield. Her act exceeds the limits of earlier feminine practices of album-making in wartime, such as the integration of military portraits into US Civil War era family albums. Instead of those ordered and sanctioned images, Leach seeks out and comments upon indexical records of 'actual action' to convey the physical violence and destructive force of conflict.

A double page spread in Album Two offers a further example of the proximity to violence felt by Leach. The spread features a sequence of snapshots recording a weekend rodeo at Nohuerachic, the ranch of US media mogul William Randolph Hearst, in September 1911 (figures 19 and 20). At first glance, Leach's whimsical arrangement of diagonally mounted prints suggests a light-hearted day out in the countryside in the Kodak Girl mode, far from the concerns of the Revolution. On closer inspection, a cross in red crayon added by Leach marks out one of the rodeo participants, Charles 'Chas' Pringle, a mining engineer who was one of a party of US citizens killed and mutilated in 1916 by a group identified by the *El Paso Herald* as 'Villa bandits' ('Brothers of Pringle

¹³ It is not clear how Harrington's photographs should come to be in Leach's album. It is possible that Harrington took the pictures and they were commercially distributed after his death. See n.12.

Urge Execution of Murderers' 1916). Leach's stark captioning "Branding" / X [marking the figure in question] – Charles Pringle who was later killed by Villa' transforms the sequence of snapshots from a souvenir of a pleasant society entertainment into a herald of violent death, the rodeo ground foreshadowing the combat zone.



Figure 19. 'Rodeo at Nohuerachic', album of Mrs. M.A. Leach

Album Two 975-0052-0059-60 (HRRC)

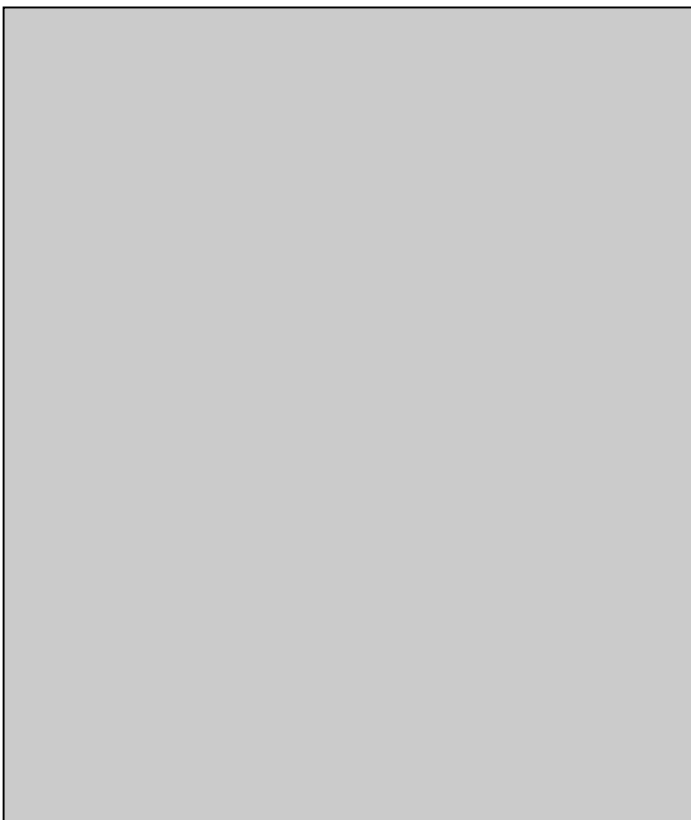


Figure 20. Detail of 'Rodeo at Nohuerachic'. Charles Pringle is indicated by the red cross on the central figure.

Album Two 975-0052-0060 (HRRC)

Leach's captions record Pringle and his fate three times, suggesting she found the event particularly striking or disturbing. Lest Leach's act be interpreted as a civilian woman's *frisson* in response to faraway tales of foreign banditry, it should be noted that Leach and her family faced genuine threats of violence during their time in Mexico. Anti-American feeling swept through Chihuahua by early 1911, and by April rebel forces took over foreign businesses (Hatcher 1975: 71–2). The Pearson Lumber Company, where Leach's husband was employed, was looted by General Antonio Rojas on 17 July 1912 ('American Robbed by Mexican Rebels' 1912). Ciudad Madera fell under rebel rule by the end of the year ('Orozco Defeats Mexican Federals' (1912), and most US citizens fled after further attacks in August 1913 (Hatcher 1975: 86). In a testimony to Secretary Bryan at Washington, D.C., that month, Leach's husband Martin claimed that he had been twice robbed by Villa, and that the capture of small towns by rebels prompted 'indescribable acts of brutality':

Women were roughly treated. Houses were burned. Non-combatants, whether foreign or native, were shot, and everything of value was taken (*New York Times*, 7 August 1913).

In this light, Leach's interest in Pringle's death is proportionate to the risks she had herself taken, and her perception of the fate that might have befallen her family had she stayed. Her captions, highlighting the proximity and randomness of violent death, serve to shrink the distance between the safe civilian sphere and the lawless territory of the revolution.

In her choice of images and detailed captions that explicitly reference the 'Madero Revolution' in both albums, Leach demonstrates her interest in political and military affairs. Occasionally her own opinion emerges, most strongly (and humorously) in her caption to a 'Capt. Harrington Picture' in Album One. The page features a snapshot of five men standing before an open doorway, its plasterwork crumbling, their unsmiling gazes directed towards the photographer who stands below them (figure 21). Although not uniformed, they either carry rifles or wear ammunition belts across their chests. Leach has carefully numbered two of the figures, identifying them as Col. Roque González Garza (a Maderista who fought at the battle of Casas Grandes in 1911 and who would briefly hold the provisional Mexican presidency from January to June 1915), and [Giuseppe] Garibaldi (grandson of the Italian general and politician),

respectively. Beyond these statements of fact, what stands out is Leach's own acerbic summation of Roque González Garza as 'Most important figure of entire revolution (in his own estimation)'. It is not clear whether Leach formed her critical opinion through an actual encounter, from news editorial she had read, or via hearsay. What is striking, however, is that despite the asymmetry of power relations between a civilian woman and a politically powerful military man, Leach confidently exercises her right to express disapproval – albeit within the private pages of her album.



Figure 21. 'Col. Roque González Garza', album of Mrs M.A. Leach

Album One, 975:0049:0015 (HRRC)

Conclusions

Leach's purposeful production, selection and sequencing of photographic material, together with her liveliness of commentary and clear interest in engaging with the politics and progression of the revolution, demonstrate her considerable agency in exceeding the limits for women's snapshotting and album-making prescribed by that dominant cultural model, the Kodak Girl. While this makes her an appealing figure to feminist historians and a worthy addition to the growing roster of rescued women's histories, it is not the claim of this

discussion that Leach's album-making was wholly unproblematic, or that women's cultural work is inherently superior to that of men's. Like their male peers of the epoch, women travellers and chroniclers reproduced cultural, racial and class stereotypes that reflected US imperialist and capitalist concerns (Schriber 1997:9).

Leach was no exception. Whereas she refers to compatriots and Mexican political and military figures by name, her captions generically characterise lower class Mexicans as types such as 'native', '*moza*' [sic] or 'worker', that is, as primitive labourers and providers of service.¹⁴ Commenting on a rubber plantation, she sympathises not with the plight of the workers, but with the 'Americans [who] lost their money in a swindle'; while elsewhere she complacently views Mexico as 'the land of *Zerapes* [sic] and *sombreros*' and 'the land of sunshine'. These captions express Leach's worldview as a middle-class mother-of-two, financially dependent upon a man employed by the US-owned Pearson Lumber Company, and by extension benefiting from the exploitation of Mexican natural resources including some 2.4 million acres of Sierra Madre forest.¹⁵ Given her position, it is to be expected that Leach's albums should reflect the larger structures and constraints of US capitalism and imperialism.

Yet Leach made choices regarding what to feature in her albums, and what to leave out. It is noteworthy that she chose not to represent the popular genre of explicitly racist photographic postcards produced by US companies and sold in border cities and garrison towns. As Claire Fox (1999: 69–96) shows in her study of border culture, these crudely humorous photographic postcards promoted national stereotypes of US leadership contrasted with Mexican docility. One typical example of the genre depicts a soldier straddling the frontier holding the reins of a mule, appended with the punch-line 'A US soldier with his ass in Mexico'. Furthermore, Fox asserts, although the Mexican Revolution was a constant news topic in the US, the majority of US citizens saw the conflict as an entertaining spectacle rather than a major historical-political event (1999: 82). By contrast, the range of material in Leach's albums, her extensive captions, addition of factual data, and construction of coherent narratives, display her

¹⁴ *Mozo* is Spanish for young lad or waiter; Leach's caption is erroneously written in the feminine form.

¹⁵ For further details of the formation and ownership of the Pearson Company, see O'Connor (2012).

deeper interest in and respect for the historical process of the conflict. Leach's more nuanced engagement may be ascribed to her prolonged travels and immersion in Mexico, contrasting with the peripheral experiences of military recruits who purchased propagandist border postcards to send home. While Leach's albums attest to their maker's pragmatic concerns of financial stability and personal security within the larger structures of US imperialism and capitalism, the albums also convey their maker's individual judgement in producing her own nuanced response.

Album Two ends with a series of undated snapshots, most probably made by Leach, depicting a boat trip on California's Lake Tahoe, deer at Golden Gate Park, and her son Martin Jr. posed on rocks with two young friends. Together, this closing sequence expresses Leach's return to the security of her native country, and her observance of more conventionally feminine photo-album subject matter of family, leisure and nature. Yet from her vantage point of safety and domesticity in the years following her family's return to the US, Leach most probably compiled one or both of her albums, constructing their narratives of upheaval, death and revolution. The inclusion in Album Two of a newspaper clipping of a poem commenting on the Tampico Affair of 1914 (in which the US Navy laid siege to the Mexican port of Veracruz during Victoriano Huerta's military coup), together with images captioned 1916 referencing the death of Charles 'Chas' Pringle, demonstrate Leach's sustained interest in the consequences of the revolution beyond the period of her family's residence in Mexico. Certainly the albums were made not much later than 1916, given that the Leaches divorced in 1917, with Leach subsequently resuming her maiden name of Ribbel.¹⁶ If her albums were indeed made at the time of the latest captions dated 1916, Leach would have been about 34. With her two children now school age, her husband busy setting up his first automobile business, and possibly her marriage floundering, Leach may have had more leisure time to reflect upon an intense period of both her life and of political history, and to arrange the disparate photographic material she had amassed into coherent narratives that brought together family and home, politics and revolution.

¹⁶ Following her divorce, Kate Ribbel moved to Hawai'i with her daughter Annette, where she is recorded as having worked as a salesperson. She subsequently married US Army Major Albert Hutchinson, and returned to California in 1932, shortly before Annette died. Kate Hutchinson née Ribbel died in 1972 and is buried in San Mateo military cemetery, California. I am grateful to Jan Canfield, great-niece of Martin Leach, for sharing her family history (email correspondence, 2014).

Leach's personal circumstances notwithstanding, she clearly staked her claim to authorship and demonstrated command over the disparate materials and subjects that together she legitimised as her 'property', as stated on the inside cover on Album One. Leach's specific intentions for the dissemination of her albums remain unknown. Beyond a pair of captions in Album Two that directly address 'Martin' (presumably either her husband, or son Martin Jr.), it is not known with whom Leach intended to share her albums. However, the fact that she took such care to caption her images with names, dates and place, and referenced herself in the third person as 'Mrs. M.A. Leach' or 'Kate Leach', suggests she hoped they would reach viewers other than her immediate family.¹⁷ Whatever her intentions, and while the albums' interim trajectory remains unknown, Leach's care in compiling them has meant they have accrued value as historical records worthy of conservation in an internationally reputed archive, enabling viewers a century later to gain insight into Revolution-era Chihuahua. Beyond this, Leach has bequeathed a further gift to posterity. By 'signing' her work 'The property of Mrs M.A. Leach', enabling the gender and identity of the maker to be determined, her albums have an additional value for feminist scholarship, and for the project of feminist history in which women's viewpoints and experiences are central.

While Leach led a striking and singular life, she should be judged as representative of women's photographic practices more widely, rather than as an exception. Further examples of a similar mode of photographic engagement may be found. Jacqueline Dalman, a newly-engaged woman from Arkansas, produced a photo-album of images made on holiday in El Paso, an event that coincided with the Battle of Ciudad Juárez in May 1911 (Mexican Revolution: 31 snapshots of Juárez Battle', 34-92-4, EPOCHS). Dalman captioned her snapshots to present a narrative of her honeymoon suffused with her impressions of the chaos and violence of conflict taking place just across the Rio Grande. Dalman subsequently cut out her photographs from the album in which they were

¹⁷ Album One, with its explicit title, smaller proportion of domestic or family snapshots, and neatly written captions, suggests that Leach intended this version for wider circulation than Album Two.

pasted, and donated them to the El Paso Historical Society, an act that parallels Leach's sense of posterity and historical consciousness.¹⁸

It is likely that other Revolution-era albums by unskilled photographers remain circulating in secondary markets or catalogued anonymously in archives, their female authorship yet to be identified. The methodology proposed in this discussion offers potential for further insight into such artefacts. My analysis of Leach's album has argued for the value of paying historicised attention to albums, recognising the structures and constraints specific to the cultural context, rather than relying on psychoanalytical frameworks or subjective responses. By engaging with this methodology along with the theoretical frameworks of gender and visibility advanced in my discussion, there is potential to obtain a more complete picture of women's photographic engagement with the Mexican Revolution: and by extension, the sphere of war.

¹⁸ I am grateful to Patricia Haesly Worthington, Curator of the El Paso County Historical Society, who introduced me to this item and shared her knowledge of Jacqueline Dalman's donation.

5. Dame Photographers and Kodak Moms: Mass Engagement on the US Homefront in the Second World War

... in horror and cold rage she gazed upon the tortured dead of Buchenwald and sent us home her photographs. 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.

Edna Woolman Chase, Editor of *US Vogue*, 1954¹

Home... a maple-bordered street... a girl's laughter... Mom in her kitchen, baking a blueberry pie – snapshots can bring it all back [...] Send cheerful, happy pictures of the family – his friends – his favourite places. Whenever you can, make your letters "snapshot visits from home".

Kodak advertisement, *Life* magazine, 1945²

The sweeping conflict of the Second World War generated a deluge of photographic images. In an era of fast, portable cameras, a pioneering generation of professional photojournalists supplied a new wave of widely disseminated, photographically illustrated periodicals, made possible by advances in photographic transmission and reproduction (Hopkinson and Lenman 2005: 490). Prominent war photographers, such as Robert Capa, were charismatic public figures, almost as important to magazine readers as the events on which they reported (Wilson 2016). War photography was portrayed as a professional, hypermasculine endeavour, typified by dramatic images of action made in the combat zone by risk-taking male photojournalists (Vettel-Becker 2005: 31–59). As discussed in Chapter 2, this conception of the genre has largely endured to the present day, leaving women's practices and engagement outside the canon of war photography and overlooked by histories of both conflict and its photographic representation. I contest this view, showing that women participated on a mass scale and in a range of ways that come into view if we expand our field of vision.

Women in wartime United States were implicated in a state of 'total war' whereby homefront and civilian activities were mobilised in the service of the nation's warfare strategy. As a consequence, women civilians became bound up in conditions of war, directly affected by conflict and involved in myriad ways.

¹ Woolman Chase (1954: 312).

² 'Home... a maple bordered street' (1945).

The gendered implications of this involvement were far-reaching and complex, as women found themselves urged by state directives and dominant media to perform diverse and sometimes conflicting roles in the worlds of work and society that transgressed pre-war conventions (McEuen 2011: 90–91). The complexity of women’s transforming roles and identities during wartime was played out within the photographic realm, as revealed by the two contrasting case studies offered in this chapter. While both cases present modes of engagement that were offered to women via popular magazines, they demonstrate divergent motivations and practices. One case takes as its cue orthodox masculine photojournalism from war’s frontline, while the other concerns snapshot photography made by non-professionals.³

The first half of the chapter considers a photo-essay by the US photojournalist Lee (Elizabeth) Miller, which appeared in the 1 June 1945 edition of US *Vogue*. Entitled ‘Believe It’, the photo-essay documented in photographs and text the liberation of Nazi concentration camps at Buchenwald and Dachau. Miller’s charismatic personality and unusual career – fashion model, Surrealist artist, and *Vogue* war correspondent – have made her a compelling subject for an ever-growing body of literature and exhibitions.⁴ In her capacity as roving US war correspondent reporting directly from European theatres of war, Miller conforms to the paradigm of hypermasculine combat photographer in the ‘Capa mode’. Instead of focusing on Miller and her *oeuvre* however, which would single her out as an exceptional and atypical woman, I shift emphasis to issues of audience and visual consumption, ascribing agency to the wider community of female readers of US *Vogue*. In this way, I assess how and why Miller’s photographs of ‘the tortured dead’ were permitted to appear within the apparently incongruous context of a women’s fashion magazine.

³ I make a distinction between snapshot and amateur photography. The latter is motivated by aspirations of consciously making images that others will admire for aesthetic reasons. Snapshot photography is primarily intended to record family, friends, places and events and is anticipated to be shared within a closed circle of relatives and acquaintances (Crawley 1989: 140).

⁴ Miller has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at major institutions (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1987; National Portrait Gallery, London, 2005; Jeu de Paume Site Concorde, Paris, 2008–9; Victoria and Albert Museum, London 2008), as well as monographs (Penrose 1985, 1992; Livingston 1989; Burke 2005; Roberts, H. 2015), and a film documentary *Lee Miller: Through the Mirror* (dir. Sylvain Roumette 1995). In 2016, it was reported that Academy Award-winning actress Kate Winslet would star as Miller in a forthcoming biopic feature film (Kroll 2015).

The second half of the chapter looks away from the editorial content of magazines to examine the parallel discourse of advertising. The corpus examined is a pair of advertising campaigns by Eastman Kodak that featured in mass-market weeklies, whereby civilian women were urged to make and send 'cheerful, happy pictures' to servicemen stationed away from home. By paying close attention to the advertisements and their context in both the wartime media in which they appeared, and within Kodak's larger marketing strategy, I reveal the nature and motivations of Kodak's prescription for women's appropriate modes of wartime photography, and determine what was at stake in women following this prescription. Although both 'Believe It' and the Kodak campaigns were presented in popular magazines and were addressed to female readerships, they offered highly distinct photographic visions of war and invitations to engage that were deemed suitable for women. Taken together, the two case studies reveal the diverse and contested terrain of women's wartime photography in the US, which encompassed both photojournalism and snapshot photography, homefront and frontline, and fashion and war.

'Believe It': readers of US Vogue and Lee Miller's war correspondence

In the course of researching Lee Miller's work for a show at The Photographers' Gallery in London in 2000, I encountered her haunting images of liberated concentration camps. I viewed Miller's images in the context of the art market, via reproductions in monographs on her work, and exhibition prints newly printed from original negatives held in the Lee Miller Archive.⁵ Yet this was not the original context of Miller's images. Some had originally been disseminated as a photo-essay entitled 'Believe It' (figure 22), part of Miller's eight-page report on Germany reproduced in the 1 June 1945 edition of *US Vogue*, an aspirational and luxurious fashion magazine that remains influential today. Such a material context for these disturbing images seemed, to me, baffling.

⁵ *Lee Miller: A Life Less Ordinary* was held at The Photographers' Gallery (Print Sales Gallery), London, 30 December 2000 to 27 January 2001. I am grateful to Antony Penrose and Carole Callow at the Lee Miller Archive for kindly allowing me access to research the exhibition.

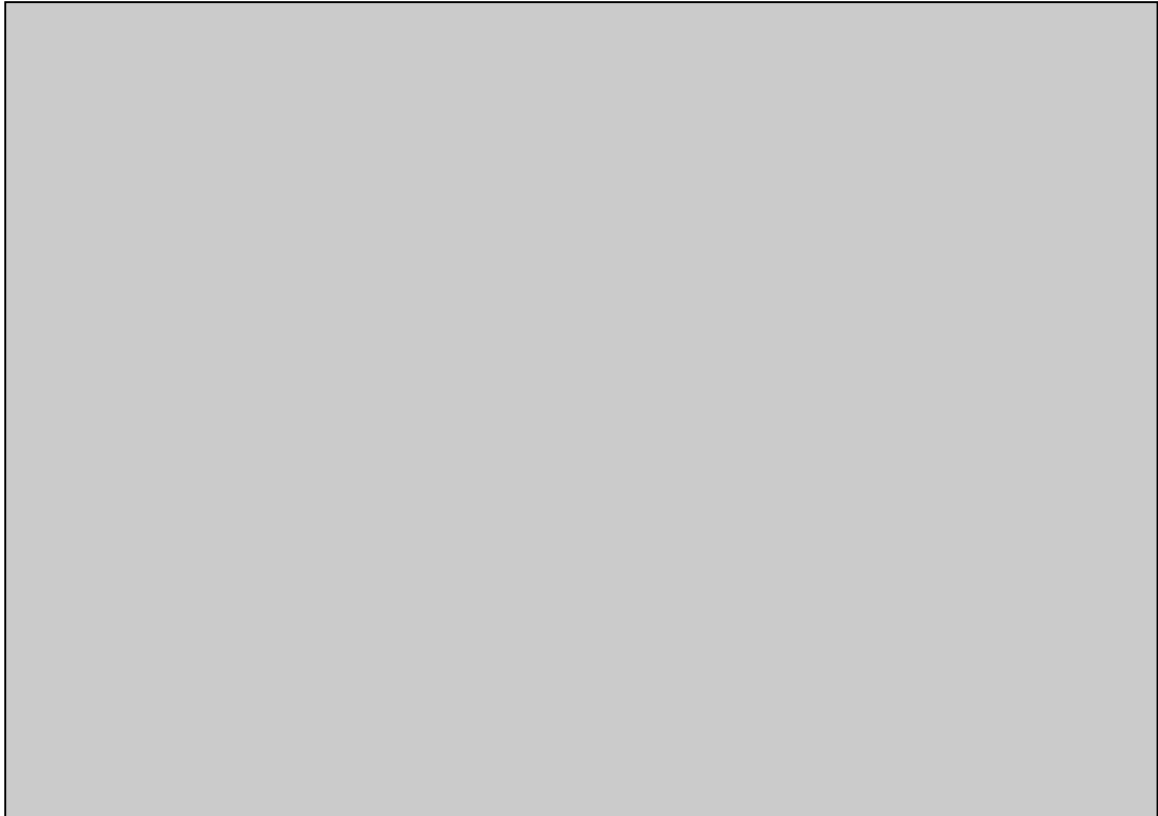


Figure 22. 'Believe It: Lee Miller Cables From Germany'

Facsimile of a magazine spread from US *Vogue*
1 June 1945, pp. 104–105

Studies on Miller have proliferated since her son Antony Penrose rediscovered her work in the mid 1980s and kick-started the rehabilitation of her reputation. Miller scholarship has employed a range of methodological approaches, including the biographical (Penrose 1985, 1992; Cunliffe 1992; Burke 2005; Conekin 2006); psychoanalytic (Davis, M. 1997; Salvio 2009); semiotic (Sim 2010); art historical (Livingston 1989; Mellor 2004) and feminist (Lyford 1994). While broad-ranging – and the authors noted here represent only a sample of the ever-growing literature – what these studies have in common is the tendency to privilege the by-now-legendary Miller as an artistic creator, and to largely discuss her images from a present-day perspective, as I myself had originally done.

A number of scholars (Gallagher 1998; Zox-Weaver 2003; Sim 2010) offer readings that focus specifically on Miller's war correspondence for *Vogue*. Valuable as these contributions are in considering the material context in which

Miller's war reports were first manifest, they have limitations. A common problem is the propensity to conflate the two distinct editions of *Vogue* (British and US) in which Miller's reports were published, overlooking the two editions' varied presentations of Miller's images for different audiences.⁶ A further tendency is the emphasis on Miller as creative innovator, and the positioning of her work as an artistic *oeuvre* that is more authentic and important than the edited versions that appeared in print (cf. Gallagher 1998: 168; Zox-Weaver 2003: 152–3; Sim 2010: 65). Consequently, the readings of Miller's war correspondence for *Vogue* are made in the context of her entire photographic and literary output, rather than being dedicated to what was actually published at the time. Gallagher (1998: 168) states that she is 'interested in Miller as an artist and in the audience her photographs imagined as well as actually addressed'. Zox-Weaver is critical of the historical magazine reports, claiming that 'in an effort to embellish', the editors 'made wholesale changes to Miller's original manuscripts' (146), and that *Vogue* 'sacrifices Miller's valuable commentary in favour of overdetermined arrangements [and] commonplace jokey formulations' (152–3). Hence, while these scholars take into account *Vogue* as the public outlet for Miller's war reports, they consider the magazine, its editors, and its historical readers to be secondary or even inadequate to Miller's vision.

Moreover, Miller scholarship consistently represents Miller's war correspondence as an extraordinary undertaking that formed an unprecedented incursion in the pages of *Vogue*. Zox-Weaver (2003) offers some of the sharpest criticism of *Vogue* as a 'masquerade of frivolous fashions' (148) catering for 'a passivity readership' of bourgeois women (152). Miller's images from the liberated camps, Zox Weaver contends, were an 'absolute incongruity' (159), and 'would have been a profound experience of cognitive dissonance' for *Vogue* readers. In her consideration of Miller's work for British *Vogue*, Becky Conekin (2006: 107) offers a more nuanced reading, acknowledging that war-related content had already appeared in the magazine, and that Miller was not unique in operating as a female war correspondent for a women's magazine. Nonetheless, Conekin persists in proposing Miller as 'a sort of conscience' (109)

⁶ Published by the Condé Nast group, *Vogue* (established 1892 and purchased by Nast in 1907) also existed in British and French versions. Miller's war correspondence for *Vogue* was published in various forms in both the US and British editions; the discussion here relates solely to her work as it appeared to readers of US *Vogue*.

who 'interpolates her female readers' (110) that might otherwise look away.

Lesley Cunliffe also upholds the Miller-as-incursion view:

When America entered the war, Miller got herself accredited by the American Army as a war correspondent, and *Vogue* found that they'd got more than they'd bargained for. The look of *Vogue* changed drastically, as a result. Were it not for Lee Miller, the magazine would certainly not have brought the battlefield straight into the lives of the *Vogue* reader. (Cunliffe 1992, unpaginated)

Did Miller really radicalise *Vogue* in this fashion? In the face of these readings, it is instructive to encounter first-hand the 1945 issue of US *Vogue* in which Miller's photo-essay 'Believe It' appeared. Contrary to the claims of Zox-Weaver and Cunliffe, the magazine is replete with content that refers, explicitly or implicitly, to the conflict. Nor is this issue an exception. During the wartime years, from 1941 to 1945, the conflict pervades the magazine's pages: in photographs, editorial, illustrations, and advertisements. To be sure, matters of dressing and style, society and the arts still predominate, and 'Believe It' represents the most disturbingly visceral photographic vision of war to feature in US *Vogue*. Nonetheless, the photo-essay cannot be accounted for as an anomaly caused by the force of Miller alone. This shift in interpretation provokes new questions. In what ways did the direction of US *Vogue* evolve during the war years, and how did the magazine position Miller and her photographs? Why did the photo-essay 'Believe It' take the published form it did, and why should US *Vogue* editor Edna Woolman Chase (1954: 312) state that to print Miller's images was 'right'? What is at stake in judging Miller 'the conscience' (Conekin 2006: 109) of the magazine, an unflinching photographer who forced images of war under the noses – literally – of ignorant or resistant *Vogue* readers?

To answer such questions, frameworks hitherto employed to assess Miller's work – art historical, biographical, semiotic *inter alia* – fall short. Such theories are largely concerned with matters of the artist's intentions and the viewer's interpretation: the intrinsic 'meaning' or constructed connotation of image or artwork. Instead, my discussion engages with theoretical and methodological frameworks from audience studies and reception theory. These fields emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s out of scholarship on spectatorship from the disciplines of film studies, media studies, and sociology (Brooker and Jermyn 2002: 2). Stuart Hall's ([1980] 1999) influential study on television viewers, as well as important feminist work on female cinema spectatorship by Judith Mayne

(1993) and Jackie Stacey (1994), among others, collectively probed the interplay between cultural product and viewer. Although these scholars debate the exact dynamics of such a relationship, they assert that viewers have potential for agency in interpreting in cultural products. In this conception, viewers have the capacity to make their own meanings, negotiating or even contesting the meaning intended by the producer.

Attention to issues of audience, reception and consumption has fostered a growth of scholarly interest in hitherto overlooked sites of cultural discourse. This has been particularly fruitful for investigation into the cultural engagement of excluded or marginalised groups such as women. Scholars have examined film fandom (Stacey 1994) romantic popular fiction (Radway [1984] 1991), and women's magazines (Walker 1998), to cite just three salient areas. With regards to photography, there has also been increased attention to questions of audience, reception and consumption over the last two decades (cf. Poole 1997; Batchen 2000 and 2004; Edwards, E. 2001; Mitchell, W.J.T. 2005; Rose 2010). A range of theoretical and methodological frameworks, informed by sociological and anthropological approaches, has advocated examination of the materiality, processes and uses of photography, rather image-value alone. Photography is conceived within what Deborah Poole (1997: 9–13) terms a 'visual economy': a fluctuating system of production, exchange and circulation of image-objects within a community of influencing parties. Such an approach does not seek to uncover what an image inherently 'is' or 'means', but how it functions and may be understood within specific economies or networks of producers, consumers, and disseminators. Miller's photo-essay 'Believe It', I suggest, should be understood in this way.

While audiences may not directly fabricate cultural products themselves, they have potential to play a role in shaping their content and format. This is particularly pertinent to collaborative, often commercially driven, cultural products like television programmes and women's magazines. These enterprises emerge from a nexus of contributors, financiers, and consumers, rather than being driven by individual artistic expression. Clearly, this role is limited. Michel De Certeau (1980: 109) acknowledges that 'the television viewer cannot write anything on the screen of his [sic] set. He has been dislodged from the product; he plays no role in its apparition.' Nevertheless, De Certeau claims, agency may be expressed through acts of consumption, or what he terms 'the

art of using' ([1980] 1999: 109). Stuart Hall ([1980] 1999) goes further in his account of agency, refuting that viewers play no part in the construction of the product they consume. Hall argues instead that the assumed desires and expectations of the market audience, and their purchasing power as consumers, helps shape the production, form and content of television programmes. The influence of audiences, he contends, demonstrates a degree of agency, albeit limited, on the part of that audience (Hall [1980] 1999: 509). A historicised understanding of US *Vogue*, as I shall argue shortly, reveals that the magazine should be understood on similar terms, with its readers having a vital and influential role in shaping content and format.

My discussion also draws on business history and its methodological and theoretical frameworks. Business historians Kenneth Lipartito (1995) and Patrick Fridenson (2008) conceive of consumption in ways that resonate strongly with the audience-centred approach of Hall, ascribing an active role to consumers. Lipartito (1995: 9) contends that 'firms and customers jointly construct meaning, each dependent upon the other', and that there exists a 'balance of power' between the two parties that is constantly shifting. Fridenson (2008: 23–25) points to the role of female consumers in particular, arguing that they 'play a distinctive role' in shaping industries. Rather than merely buying what is offered, Fridenson contends, women shape production and supply according to their own demands. Although business history has yet to be significantly brought to bear on the study of photography other than in an empirical capacity (Allbeson and Oldfield 2016), attention to business sources may elicit new insights into the nature of production, dissemination and consumption of photographic images. The following discussion draws on business history sources and frameworks to present a clearer picture of the economy of US *Vogue* and the influencing factors that together shaped its manifestation.

Attention to audiences, reception and consumption, I propose, has the potential to offer new insights into 'Believe It'. Instead of foregrounding Miller as an anomalous creative 'conscience' (Conekin 2006: 109) who radicalised *Vogue*, I position her within a mutually-dependent network of readers, contributors, editors, and other determining factors. By acknowledging the agency of readers in shaping the content of the magazine, US *Vogue* emerges as a dynamic site of female discourse on war and its photographic representation. This more

generous conception shows *Vogue* readers to be active and critical observers of war on a mass scale, who engaged with and influenced the photographic content presented. The readers, I shall show, not only made possible the publication of 'Believe It', but also (as Woolman Chase maintained) saw it as 'right'.

The economy of US Vogue in the 1940s

US *Vogue* and other American mass-market women's magazines in the 1940s were closely informed by their audiences. In her study of wartime magazines, Nancy Walker (2001) asserts that content and form were the result of a continual negotiation between the demands of contributors, editors, publishers, advertisers and readers. As businesses that depended on profit and circulation, magazines could not risk alienating large groups of readers (Walker 2001: ix). Hence, dialogue between readers and editors was 'remarkably interactive', with format and content at least in part expressed by readers' preferences (Walker 1998:4; 2001: xiii). Although US *Vogue* had no published letters page, readers nonetheless wrote to the editorship with their views (Woolman Chase 1954: 257), and circulation figures (both of one-off sales and regular subscriptions) were of paramount importance to the publishers and editorship, as well as the advertisers upon whose revenues the magazine also depended.⁷ Edna Woolman Chase, the long-standing editor of US *Vogue*, who dominated the magazine from 1909 to 1952, and served as editor-in-chief of the *Vogue* stable, highlighted the primacy of readers in an instructive letter to a recently-appointed editor of French *Vogue*:

There is no reason whatever for editing the magazine for the whims of the *couturiers*, the demands of the advertisers, the desires of the artists, the caprices of the photographers [...] I intend to edit this magazine for the best interest of the reader and when I do that, strange as it may seem, it will be for the best interest of the *couturier*, the advertiser, the artist, the photographer, the art department *et al.* When the reader is pleased the magazine is a success and it follows

⁷ The exact circulation figures of the *Vogue* stable in the first half of the twentieth century remain elusive; this is consistent with secrecy on the part of women's magazines in general (Reed 2006: 67 n.20). David Reed claims that in 1930, US *Vogue* had a circulation of just 134,000, but that advertising revenue was more than \$3 million, indicating both its influence and its commercial success (David Reed, *The Popular Magazine in Britain and the United States, 1880–1960* (London, 1997), 152–53. Cited in Cox and Mowatt 2009: 8).

quite logically that every one who is within its pages is also a success. (Woolman Chase 1954: 147)

Produced on a frequent basis – US *Vogue* in the 1940s was generally a bi-monthly publication, subject to wartime paper restrictions – the magazine was necessarily a dynamic, constantly evolving enterprise, whereby editors adjusted form and content according to readers' responses and anticipated desires.

The apparently trivial nature of US *Vogue*'s content demands scrutiny. Zox-Weaver (2003:148) perceives *Vogue* to have been irredeemably 'frivolous' and a 'masquerade' (148). Such perceptions seem to be based on present-day incarnations of the *Vogue* stable, which have little overt critical or political content. US *Vogue* in the 1940s should not be considered so. To be sure, at the outset of the Second World War the seriousness of the magazine and its adaptability to new conditions was called into question. In a 1940 editorial for afternoon news tabloid *PM*, Ralph Ingersoll denounced US *Vogue* as 'a temporary illusion' (cited in Chase 1954: 290). In December 1941, at the time the US entered the war, Miller herself wrote to the editor of British *Vogue* that '[i]t seems pretty silly to go on working on a frivolous paper like *Vogue*' during wartime (Burke 2005: 2008–9). Given US *Vogue*'s remit and market niche as a high society fashion magazine, it is hardly surprising that under normal circumstances war reportage was not a regular topic.

Yet although the content of US *Vogue* had been primarily concerned with luxurious consumer products and matters of style and dressing, informed opinions on the wider world were not excluded from its pages. Woolman Chase and her team at US *Vogue* had consistently addressed the magazine to educated women, commissioning high-calibre writers such as Dorothy Parker, Jean-Paul Sartre, Bertrand Russell and others prominent in literature, arts and science (Endres and Lueck 1996: 419). While the ever-pragmatic Woolman Chase ensured that US *Vogue* should not exclude potential subscribers by being overtly aligned with a single political bias or agenda, she nonetheless held that women should 'set the pattern of their political thinking themselves', indicating her view that women were entitled to and capable of holding their own political opinions (Woolman Chase 1954: 139).

Given the extent of the conflict and the circumstances of total war, it would be naïve to assume that women's magazines remained impervious to the new conditions of their readers' lives, or that war-related content would be wholly incongruous in the magazine's pages. In fact, women's magazines regularly featured war-related content (Walker 1998: 17), and the *Vogue* stable was no exception (Conekin 2006: 107). Articles that were featured – and these are a representative sample only – included 'Women of the RAF' (15 August 1941), 'The Honourable Scars of London by [renowned British photographer] Cecil Beaton' (1 October 1941), 'Life in Wartime – Women in the Morale and Service Corps' (1 February 1942), 'Notes on Nazis by Countess Waldeck' 15 April 1942), 'I Went To England for the American Red Cross' (1 February 1943), and 'Christmas Letters From the Fronts' (15 December 1943). Several special issues were devoted wholesale to wartime matter, including 'A Report to American Women' (1 February 1943) and 'Calling All Women' (1 July 1943).

This focus on the war may, in part, be attributed to pressure from government agencies and the business sector in a bid to influence homefront activities and attitudes via magazines, whose propagandistic impact in a largely pre-television society cannot be underestimated (Walker 1998: 1). Like other magazines, US *Vogue* liaised with the Office of War Information's Magazine Bureau (which published a monthly *Magazine War Guide* from July 1942 to April 1945); the Writers' War Board; and the War Advertising Council, voluntarily formed in November 1941 by advertisers and ad agencies. These state and business agencies sought the assistance of print media in demanding civilian compliance with war effort strategies considered essential to victory. It is possible, as Bush Jones (2009: 34–35) contends, that private notions of patriotism and democracy may have played a part in this alliance. On a pragmatic level, however, the organs of state and business had vested interests in the continuation of consumerism, liberalism and private enterprise that would enable current structures of politics and business to flourish (Walker 2001: xiv).

Like other mass-market women's magazines, the content of US *Vogue* followed these state and corporate directives to encourage women's support of US intervention in the war. This is evidenced, for example, by the magazine's consistently patriotic covers such as Toni Frissell's photograph of a model posed between two oversized American flags for the 1 July 1942 issue, and by the editorial's repeated urging to purchase war bonds. However, the inclusion of

war-related content may also be ascribed to readers' interest in reading about the new conditions that were shaping their lives. The magazine actively developed content that was directly relevant to its readers' concerns, often reflecting on women's roles and experiences in the conflict, as the list of features cited above demonstrates.

At times, the magazine actively exceeded or contested directives from state and business agencies. To cite one example, US *Vogue* consistently ignored the *Magazine War Guide's* request for articles on domestic matters such as coping with goods shortages and household efficiency, probably because such advice was considered irrelevant to US *Vogue's* wealthy and independent (or at least aspirational) target readership. Instead the magazine focussed on intellectual concerns, such the impact of war on cultural life, exemplified by Jean-Paul Sartre (1945) considering the effect of the French Resistance on national literature. In at least one instance, the editorship of the US edition flagrantly rebelled against state directives, rebuffing the War Production Board's attempts to censor their September 1944 edition featuring the first fashion collections from a newly-liberated Paris, which contravened cloth restrictions still in place in the US (Woolman Chase 1954: 204).⁸ The nature and balance of US *Vogue's* wartime content struck the right chord with readers, as circulation reportedly increased between 1941 and 1945, with some issues, including the controversial September 1944 edition, selling out (Woolman Chase 1954: 204).

Seen in this light, US *Vogue* cannot be assumed a wholly 'frivolous' (Zox-Weaver 2003: 148) enterprise, impervious to external concerns of conflict and politics. The magazine should rather be understood as a fluid enterprise where women's shifting viewpoints and concerns were consistently reflected, including those of wartime. This understanding casts a different light on Miller's status as *Vogue's* war correspondent. Certainly, Miller actively sought out accreditation in December 1942, rather than be directed to do so by *Vogue* (Burke 2005: 213). However, Cunliffe's (1992) charge that Miller forced or cajoled a fundamentally reluctant US *Vogue* into publishing her photo-essays is erroneous. Although Miller was assigned to the magazine, its editors were under no obligation to

⁸ This instance demonstrates a complex mingling of support of consumer industries, and the presentation of fashion as a democratic right, a view repeatedly expressed in US *Vogue* (see for example Kernan 1944). Parisian chic, in this case, was held to be a defiant expression of Allied values in the face of German conformity and deprivation.

either support Miller's application for accreditation or to print her material, and were at liberty to edit or reject her negatives and raw text as they saw fit.⁹ Far from overlooking her work, the magazine regularly featured Miller's work in major articles that foregrounded her status as *Vogue's* own war correspondent, supported by prominent by-lines and images of the photographer at work.

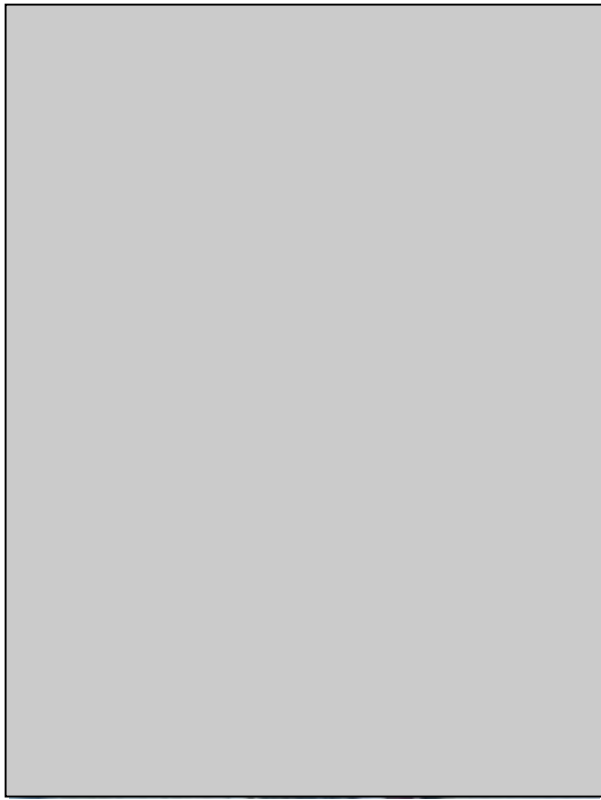


Figure 23. Facsimile of cover of US *Vogue*, 1 July 1942

Cover photograph by Toni Frissell

This support of Miller might be attributed to a visionary editorship willing to take the risk of alienating readers in order to expand the scope of the magazine. Yet taking this risk would be unlikely, given the magazine's economic dependence upon its readers' continuing patronage. The decision to back Miller is partly

⁹ Although Miller expressed preferences for the ways in which her material were shaped, her lengthy reports were necessarily edited to suit the format of a magazine. On at least one occasion, Miller sent her exposed rolls of film to the London office for developing, meaning that she had no sight of the images she produced (Penrose 1992: 159). Delays in transmission and lapses in communication meant Miller was unable to gauge how her work was presented. Indeed, Miller wrote to British *Vogue* editor Audrey Withers several times to express that 'I have no way of knowing [...] what you are using' (Penrose 1992: 92).

explained by *Vogue's* market position as a photographic innovator. The *Vogue* stable was renowned for its support of high quality and experimental photography, with US *Vogue* regularly commissioning images from luminaries such as George Hoyningen-Huene, Horst P. Horst, John Rawlings, and Toni Frissell (figure 23). The magazine even produced a special 'Camera Issue' (15 June 1941), which was devoted to all things photographic. Contributors including Edward Steichen, Cecil Beaton, and Alfred Stieglitz, while an article entitled 'Vogue – Pioneer of Modern Photography', by Frank Crowenshield, outlined the magazine's distinctive contribution to the field. US *Vogue* thus positioned itself as an arbiter of photographic taste and a patron of innovation that could meet the visual demands of its discerning readers.

Furthermore, Miller was not the only female war correspondent working for a women's magazine (Conekin 2006: 106–7; 120 n.11). *Vogue* supported a larger cohort that included Mary Jean Kempner and Sally Kirkland reporting from the Pacific theatre of war. Nor was Miller at the vanguard. As early as 1 July 1942, the cover of US *Vogue* had featured a photograph of an idealised female aviator by Toni Frissell (figure 23), a former fashion photographer for *Vogue*, who had since volunteered for the Red Cross and Women's Army Corps. In the 1 July 1943 issue, moreover, a five-page article 'History in the Taking' (Blanch 1943), emphatically proclaimed 'Margaret Bourke-White – War Photographer, Thérèse Bonney – War Photographer' (figure 24). The article featured profiles of two prominent female photojournalists (both contracted to rival publications or agencies) reporting direct from combat zones in Europe, over a year before Miller's reports appeared. Miller is not even mentioned in the article, other than a small credit to her for providing a portrait of Bourke-White in front of a plane.¹⁰

¹⁰ Bourke White was contracted to the *Time-Life-Fortune* group, while Bonney had established her own picture agency, Bonney Service (Rosenblum 2010:184).

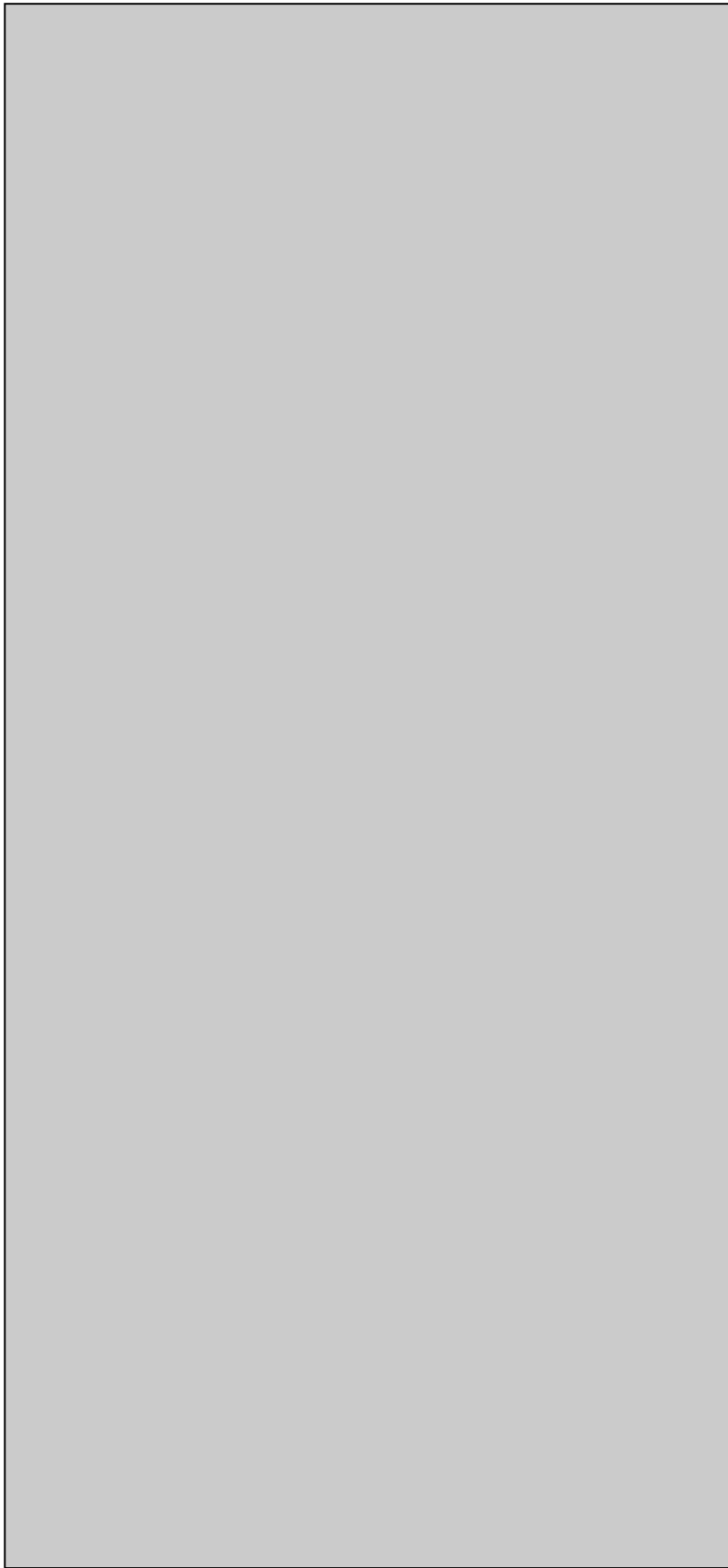


Figure 24. 'Thérèse Bonney – War Photographer'

Detail of page 52, *US Vogue*, 1 July 1943

The latter instance attests to the expanding cult of the war photographer as celebrity in wartime media in general (Vettel-Becker 2005: 33–34; Wilson 2016). As Beth Wilson (2016) has persuasively argued in her account of Margaret Bourke-White's role at *Life* magazine, celebrity photographers were often positioned as central to the story on which they reported, newsworthy in their own right. Charismatic figures like Bourke-White and Robert Capa helped sell copies, and their personalities were burnished by the illustrated periodicals in which they appeared – at the expense of the majority of unnamed staffers who provided the bulk of photographs elsewhere.

Wilson (2016) does not consider gender issues in her account of Bourke-White, and Vettel-Becker only briefly refers to Bourke-White as a female anomaly within the hypermasculine norm (2005: 13). The wider blindspot regarding female war photographers has helped support the notion that Miller was (like Bourke-White), an exceptional exponent. In fact, as Peter Palmquist (1994) has shown, numerous women worked as professional photographers during the Second World War. While 'dame photographers' (to use Lee Miller's term) remained a novel subgroup, they received growing visibility via aspirational representations in visual culture.¹¹ As Wilson (2016) asserts, Bourke-White's public image was cemented by her iconic aviatrix self-portrait that appeared in '*Life's* Margaret Bourke-White Goes Bombing' (1943), an article foregrounding the star status of the magazine's photographer (figure 25). Glamorous female photographers featured regularly in Hollywood movies (Burke 2005: 221), and Tallulah Bankhead's character in Alfred Hitchcock's 1944 film *Lifeboat* was reputedly based on Bourke-White (Wilson 2016). Comic characters included the fictitious US War Correspondent 'Linda Lens' (figure 26) in *Camera Comics* (first appearing in the 1 October 1944 issue) and the Therése Bonney-inspired 'Photo-Fighter' in *True Comics* (July 1944). These characters were presented as heroines who were helping to win the war for the Allies through their various photographic exploits, quite literally in the case of Linda Lens taking a swipe at a Nazi soldier with her camera.

¹¹ Miller's description of herself as a 'dame photographer' appears in her letter to British *Vogue* editor Audrey Withers, 26 August 1944 (Penrose 1992: 65).

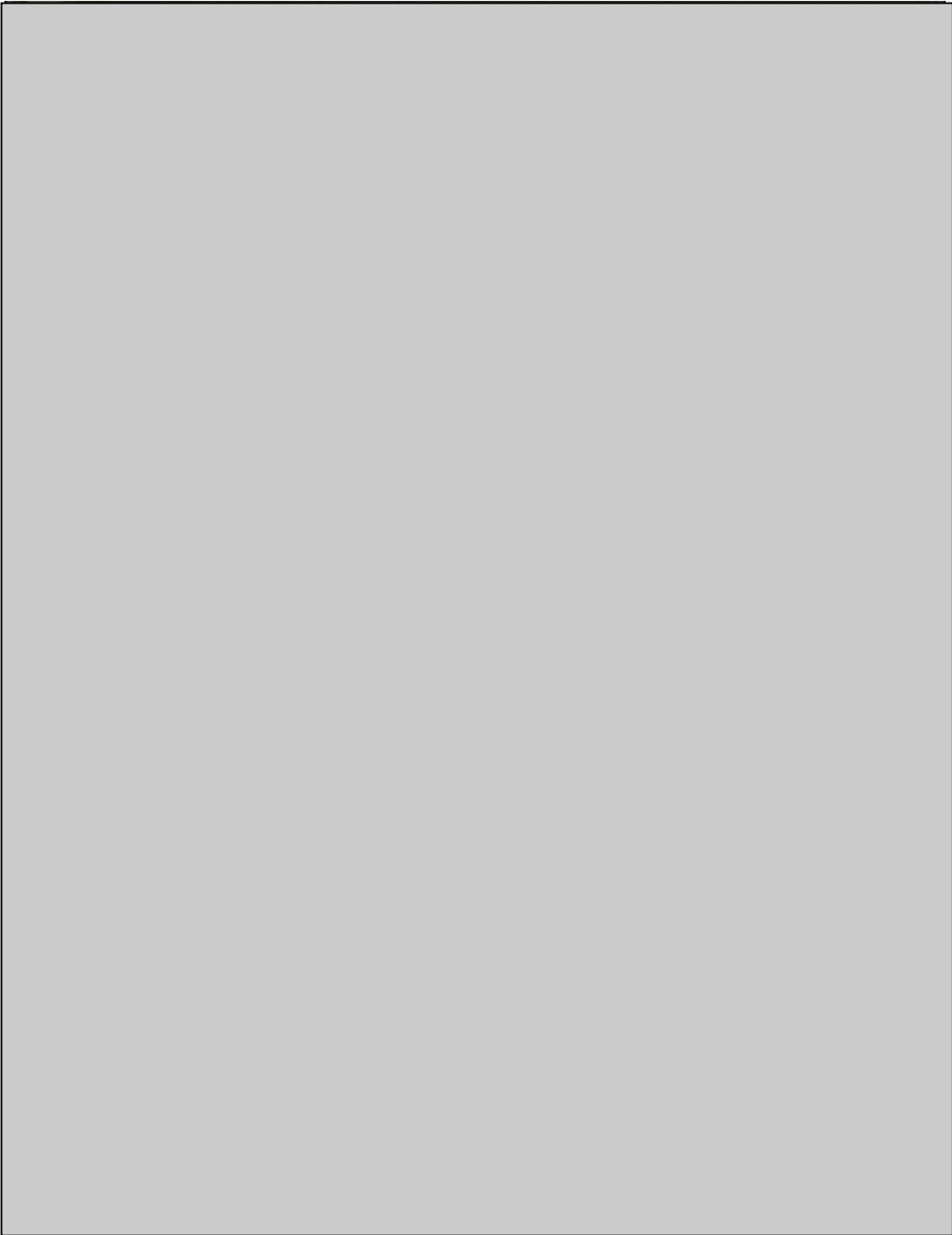


Figure 25. 'Life's Margaret Bourke-White Goes Bombing'

Facsimile of page 17 in *Life* magazine, 1 March 1943

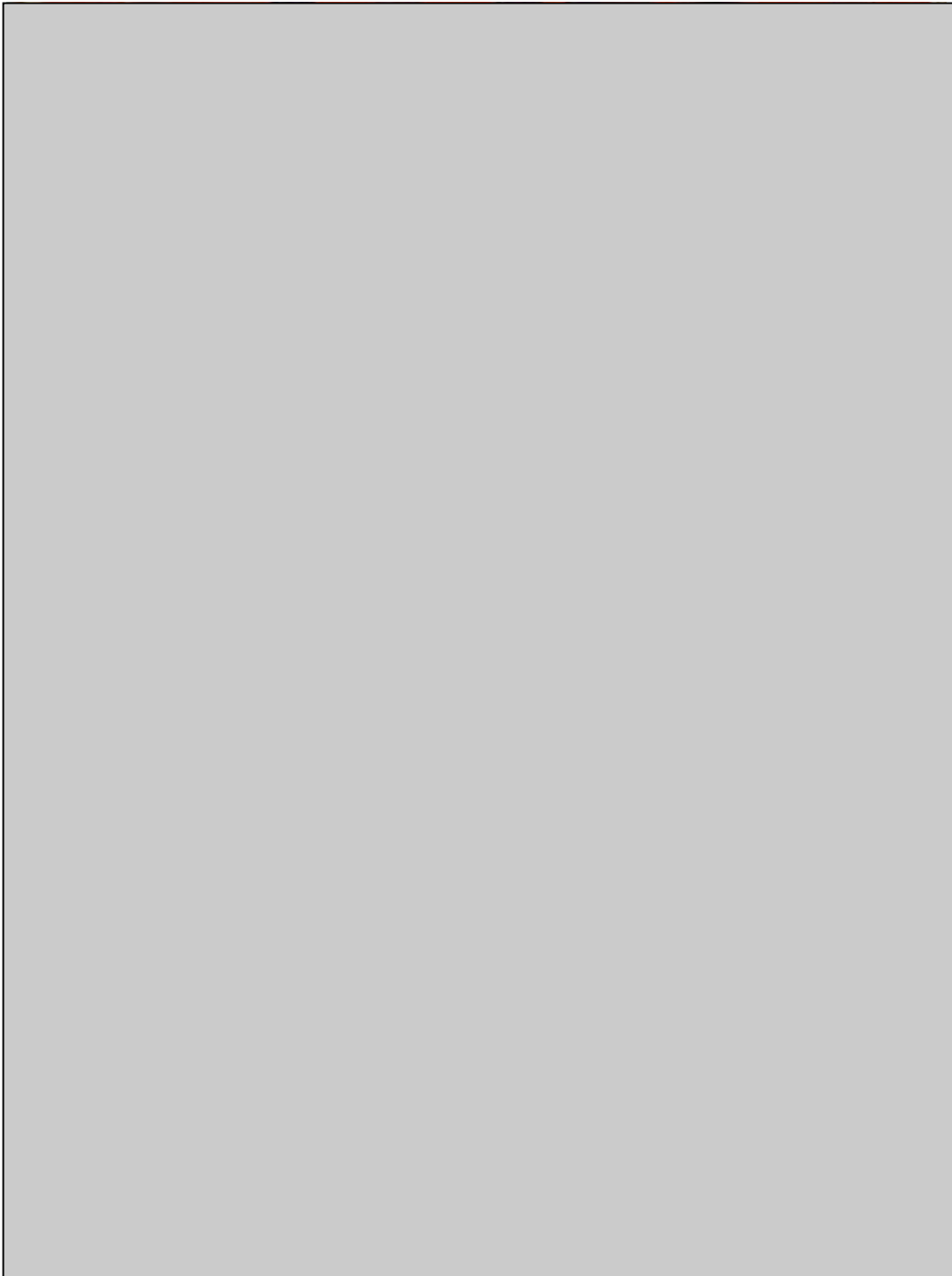


Figure 26. Facsimile of cover, *Camera Comics*, No.3, 1 October 1944

Given the public interest in 'dame photographers', it is not surprising that US *Vogue* should want to compete in the market by offering its exclusive accredited correspondent in the shape of Miller. This commercial motivation is demonstrated by the magazine's publicity campaign coinciding with Miller's inaugural feature 'US Tent Hospital in France' (15 September 1944). An

advertisement in the *New York Herald Tribune* (11 September 1944) featured a photographic portrait of Miller wearing an army-issue helmet modified to enable use of a camera (figure 27). The copy proclaimed ‘*Vogue* has its own reporter with the United States Army in France’. The advertisement suggests that US *Vogue*’s editorship saw Miller’s photographic contributions as a high profile attraction that would be enthusiastically received by readers. The advertisement, furthermore, positions Miller as an observer of war working on behalf of *Vogue*, functioning as the readers’ ‘own reporter’.

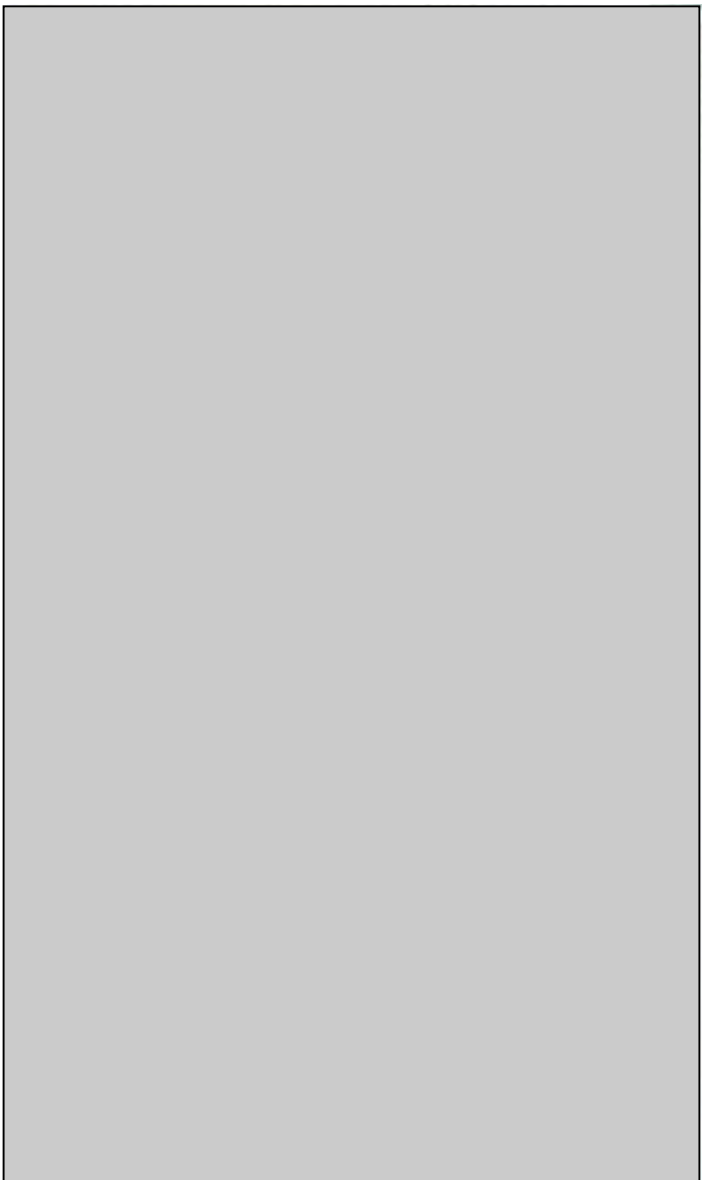


Figure 27. ‘Vogue reports The Epic of Normandy’

Advertisement in *New York Herald Tribune*, 11 September 1944
Reproduced by kind permission Lee Miller Archive

By the time of the publication of 'Believe It' in June 1945, the conflict had thoroughly pervaded the magazine's pages. The increasing profusion of war-related editorial and visual content demonstrates how readers' interest in the progress of the conflict, and of women's roles within it, had grown to make the magazine a hospitable environment for the publication of images of conflict. But if the presence of war photography within the pages of US *Vogue* was no longer surprising to readers by 1945, surely 'Believe It', with its visceral and disturbing images of tortured and abused corpses, remained startling. Certainly, Miller's previous war photographs had depicted war-damaged bodies, but they had done so obliquely. Her 1944 article 'US Tent Hospital' (figure 5), for instance, reported on a severely burned serviceman. Miller's image shows the victim entirely swathed in bandages, leaving the viewer to imagine the horrific burns rather than view them directly. When Miller sent her negatives of the dead bodies discovered at Dachau and Buchenwald to *Vogue's* London office, she enclosed them with a letter stating 'I know you won't use them' (cited in Burke 2005: 252). Miller's letter demonstrates her perception that her images breached the threshold of acceptability for publication in *Vogue*.

According to US *Vogue* editor Woolman Chase, as stated in the epigraph to this chapter, the decision to print Miller's images was long-debated. Though Woolman Chase does not elaborate (perhaps considering it self-evident), the discussion was most likely due to the fear of transgressing boundaries of taste and decency. The editorship's dilemma was consistent with accepted standards of journalism of the time, which generally precluded the publication of photographic images of Allied corpses in order to maintain national morale (Roeder 1995: 14). Although photographs of the dead bodies of US servicemen began to appear in American periodicals towards the end of the war, in part to galvanise the public in the face of extended privations (Gallagher 1998: 80), Miller's images of tortured and emaciated civilians were of a different order.

The catalyst for 'Believe It' has been customarily attributed to Miller's insistence (cf. Conekin 2006; Zox-Weaver 2003; Cunliffe 1992). Her role as the 'conscience' (Conekin 2006: 109) of the magazine is claimed to have exposed readers to the horrors of war of which they might otherwise remain ignorant. Yet it is unlikely that readers would not have already encountered photographic images of the death camps. Miller was only one of numerous Allied reporters to

enter the newly-liberated camps, and the collective outpouring of reports caused a huge sensation in the US print media. The *New York Times*, to cite one example, reported on the news as it unfolded with articles almost daily from 13 to 20 April 1945. *Life*, the most widely-read magazine in the US, with an estimated 22 million readers (Bush Jones 2009: 24), ran a six-page photo-essay entitled 'Atrocities' on 7 May 1945 (figure 28). The story included an image by Miller's more famous female competitor, Margaret Bourke-White. Even if US *Vogue* readers did not view photographic images of the camps in these and other periodicals, it would be remarkable if they had not been informed and shown them through work, family or social circles. Indeed, the very lack of extensive textual information accompanying Miller's images in 'Believe It' to explain what is being presented, suggests that US *Vogue* readers would instantly have understood their context.

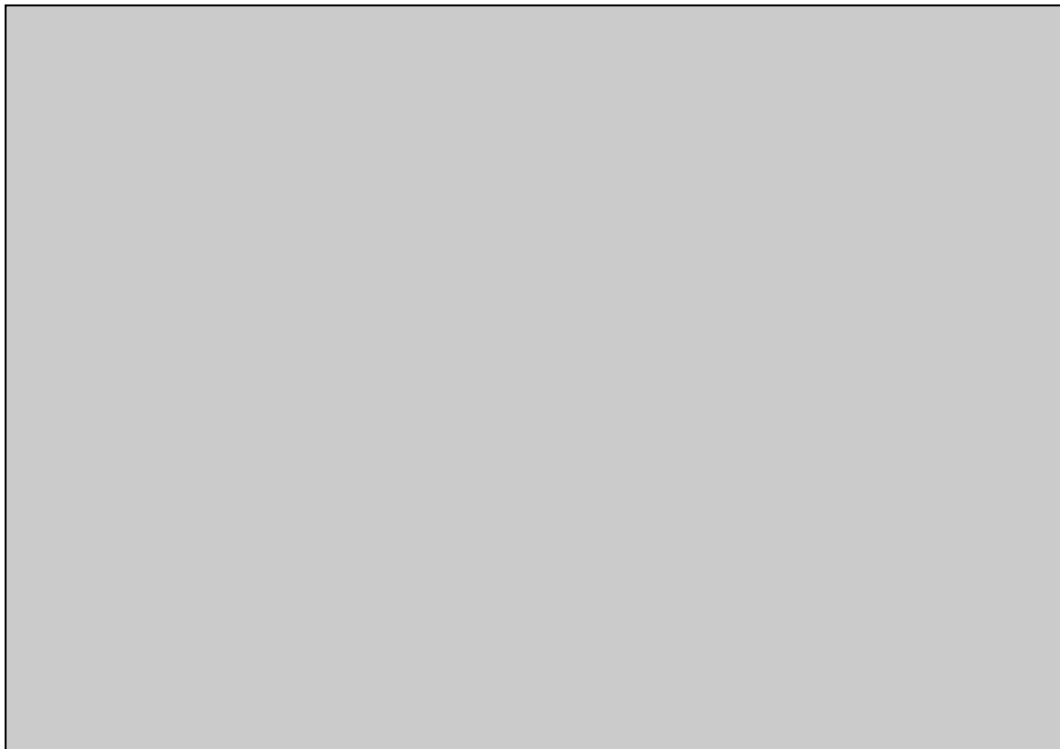


Figure 28. 'Atrocities: Capture of the German Concentration Camps Piles Up Evidence of Barbarism That Reaches the Low Point of Human Civilisation'

Facsimile of magazine spread from *Life* magazine, 7 May 1945

There was a considerable time lag between the first publication of photographs of the camps in the daily newspapers such as *New York Times* (13 April 1945), and their eventual appearance in US *Vogue* (1 June 1945). Even allowing for lead-times of design, printing and distribution, it is evident that Woolman Chase

and her team had time to gauge women's responses to the revelations before making a decision to publish. This would not have been taken lightly, as Walker (1998: 14) argues:

The pressure of advertising on editorial content [...] – coupled with the magazines' fierce competition with each other for subscribers – meant that the magazines remained reluctant to take on controversial subjects until those subjects had become fully accepted as part of a national conversation in which women readers might reasonably participate (Walker 1998: 14).

The 'many conferences' that the editorial team held allowed for ample discussion of women's responses within their own circles, as well as an assessment of the national *zeitgeist* regarding publication of photographs of the camps.¹² In this light, US *Vogue's* decision to publish Miller's images, though certainly exceeding the magazine's prior limits of acceptability, should not be considered, as Zox-Weaver (2003: 159) asserts, an 'obvious risk' to its 'bourgeois readers', but rather a carefully weighed decision to follow where other publications had led.

By the time Miller's images appeared in the 1 July 1945 edition of US *Vogue*, the revelations of the concentration camps were no longer breaking news. Given that the primary motivation for publishing Miller's atrocity photographs was not a duty to enlighten an otherwise ignorant readership, what prompted the editorship of US *Vogue* to publish? In what way was it, as Woolman Chase (1954: 312) claimed, 'right' to do so? I suggest that the mode of presentation of 'Believe It' – its choice of layout, images, and copy – is revealing. The presentation emphasises photography's status as an indexical, unmediated record, accentuating claims to veracity and 'evidence'. Miller's images are presented in a stark and bold manner, with black borders, raw, uncropped edges, and visible transmission blurs. The images appear to be reproduced as contact prints made hastily from negatives and telegraphed as unmediated documents direct from the combat zone. This question of authenticity was

¹² Evidence of the mood of the nation can be seen in the letters page of *Life* magazine (28 May 1945, pp. 2–4), which included two letters written by women in response to its 'Atrocities' article. Both vindicated *Life's* decision to publish the disturbing images, citing their value as evidence to be used in future judicial and peace processes, and as justification for the privations and sacrifices suffered by the nation. Although this particular issue of *Life* was not released soon enough to affect the editorial decision of US *Vogue*, the letters indicate the general arguments that were circulating nationally since the news of the camps had broken.

particularly pertinent given that the veracity of the camps had been widely questioned, with some commentators claiming they were propaganda stunts by Allied agencies to justify involvement in war (Sliwinski 2010: 402). US *Vogue's* mode of presentation invites women readers to weigh the photographs as evidence, inviting them to view critically and form their own judgements.

The text that accompanies the photographs corroborates the impression of authenticity by apparently quoting verbatim from Miller's cable:

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... (Miller 1945: 105).

The emphatic editorial reply, 'Here they are', serves to foreground the fact that the US *Vogue* team had to judge whether or not their female readers would wish to engage with these visual horrors, and ultimately elected to publish. This terse text, paired with the raw quality of the photographic images, presents the atrocities to women in their uncensored entirety, without any mediating barrier to soften their impact. The effect is to make readers cognisant of being addressed as competent and legitimate observers of war, no matter how distressing that role may be. Woolman Chase's assertion that the decision to publish was 'right' demonstrates the magazine's conviction that readers felt entitled not simply to knowledge of world events (which they no doubt already possessed through other means), but that they desired these events to be placed squarely in their own feminine arena for debate and reflection.

The positioning of US *Vogue* as a site for women's wartime discussion is reiterated throughout its wartime issues. The cover of the 1 November 1943 issue, to cite one example, features a John Rawlings photograph of a woman's face superimposed over an image of a world map, suggesting an outward-looking woman and global citizen active on a world stage. An article from the 1 June 1945 issue, 'What Next for Europe', is subtitled 'What may happen next to Germany, Russia, Britain, France, the smaller nations? Questions we are all asking'. The article is shown alongside an illustration depicting women conversing together under red, white and blue banners. Positioned next to the text, the reader infers that the women depicted are asking the very questions posed by the article, a metaphor for the magazine's assumption that its (stylishly dressed) readers were actively engaged in political debate on the war. In this

manner, US *Vogue* consistently represented women as critical and active observers and commentators of war, constructing the magazine as a platform for debate in which women's opinions were heard and exchanged.

Clearly, US *Vogue* remained enmeshed in the patriarchal and consumerist structures of the US in the 1940s that sustained the fashion and beauty industry: given the magazine's economic foundation and the prevailing historical conditions, how could it be otherwise? Yet the concerted efforts of readers, editors, and contributors made US *Vogue* a site that reflected their wartime world in all its complexity, encompassing matters of both fashion and politics, beauty products and war crimes. While Miller remains a striking and charismatic persona, I contend that she should be considered only one exponent of this wider community of women who photographically engaged with the war. The economy of US *Vogue* and the nexus of readers, contributors, and editors not only permitted, but also demanded that 'Believe It' should be published. This conception does not diminish Miller's outstanding achievements, but rather places them in context. Miller should be seen not as an individual aberration, but as part of a wider pattern of female interest in observing and engaging with world conflict through photography.

Kodak's wartime prescription for women's photography

Matters of commerce and consumption also figure prominently in a concurrent instance of women's wartime photographic engagement via magazines. The next case, however, moves from the editorial and photojournalistic content of magazines to the parallel but often overlooked discourse of advertisements. From 1942 to 1945, Eastman Kodak (hereafter referred to as Kodak) ran two campaigns, each consisting of a series of full-page magazine advertisements placed in the mass-market weekly magazines *Life*, *Collier's* and *Saturday Evening Post*. Both campaigns proposed a form of 'war correspondence' in which women on a mass scale were invited to participate, albeit not in a way that Lee Miller and her cohort of accredited photojournalists would have recognised. Rather than focus on documenting events on the frontline to be sent back and published in homeland periodicals, the two Kodak campaigns reversed the direction of travel, urging American women to take snapshots on the homefront and mail them in letters to servicemen serving in distant theatres of

war. The campaigns offered specific guidance in text and images on the kinds of snapshots that would be suitable to send. By following this prescription, the campaigns claimed, women could positively contribute to the war effort.

With the exception of a couple of brief references (Cooper 2011: 316; Bush Jones 2009: 160, 171), the two Kodak campaigns have received scant attention, either by historians of war photography, or by scholars more widely. This is consistent with the topic of the marketing of photography more generally, which has frequently been passed over in favour of accounts of technical and aesthetic developments, or the politics or affective qualities of photography. According to Edwards and Wilder (2010), co-convenors of the conference *Workers and Consumers: The Photographic Industry 1860 to 1950*, 'the missing component [in most accounts] is often a detailed and empirically informed understanding of the social and economic conditions of product development, labour forces, and marketing and consumer demand'.¹³ Scholarly activity is beginning to address this lacuna. As the largest and most influential Western photographic company, Kodak has been the subject of a number of critical studies (cf. West 2000; Oliver 2007; Jacob 2011b). Attention to the company's operations and marketing sheds new light on the role of commerce in the development of mass practices of photography.

Attention to the role of business and marketing with regards to war photography is embryonic, despite the close and fundamental interactions between photography and conflict (Allbeson and Oldfield 2016). A recent contribution is the special issue *Journal of War and Culture Studies: The Business of War Photography*, which includes Rachel Snow's (2016) illuminating account of Kodak's 'Serving Human Progress' advertising campaigns, and the company's corporate advertising strategy in wartime. Snow's methodological approach, which draws on business sources and considers commercial imperatives that drive photographic business, remains atypical in the field. My own discussion of Kodak's wartime marketing shares many of Snow's concerns but with a particular focus on gender. As such, my discussion in this chapter aims to contribute to the nascent scholarship investigating the intertwined endeavours of photography, commerce, and war.

¹³ The conference was held at De Montfort University, Leicester, England, June 2013.

The mode of women's wartime photographic engagement proposed by the Kodak campaigns was strikingly different to either the frontline photojournalism practiced by Miller and her cohort, or the homefront circuits of critical observation and reflection constructed by *US Vogue* and its readers. In the following examination of the Kodak advertisements and their textual and visual language, I consider a number of questions. In what ways were women asked to participate in wartime photography? What were Kodak's professed (and underlying) motivations for offering prescription to women? How did the Kodak campaigns collectively configure gendered wartime photographic engagement, and what was at stake in their demands for women to send 'snapshots from home'?

Although the two Kodak campaigns differed in appearance, both urged the viewer-consumer to buy Kodak products, and to make and send photographs to servicemen as frequently as possible. Both campaigns possessed strongly identified characteristics of colour, layout, typeface, copy, branding, and images, which were applied consistently to each advertisement. The first campaign, hereafter referred to as Snapshots, consists of at least 25 variants, each typified by a large black and white photographic image purporting to show servicemen in a theatre of war, viewing and sharing photographs that have arrived by mail (figure 29). The photographic prints being viewed are generally seen *verso*, with the advertisements' focus on the response of the recipients. The repeated slogan urges the viewer to 'visit your man in the service with snapshots' by enclosing photographs in letters. A counterpart campaign, hereafter referred to as Kodacolor, serves to show what the servicemen might be looking at. This series, of at least 12 variants, presents *trompe l'oeil* representations of colour photographic prints laid on a white background (figure 30). While the servicemen recipients occasionally appear, illustrated in a vignette, the focus of the Kodacolor campaign is on the vibrantly coloured snapshots that depict women civilians at home or engaged in leisure activities.¹⁴

¹⁴ The individual advertisements are referenced throughout this discussion by their opening copy.

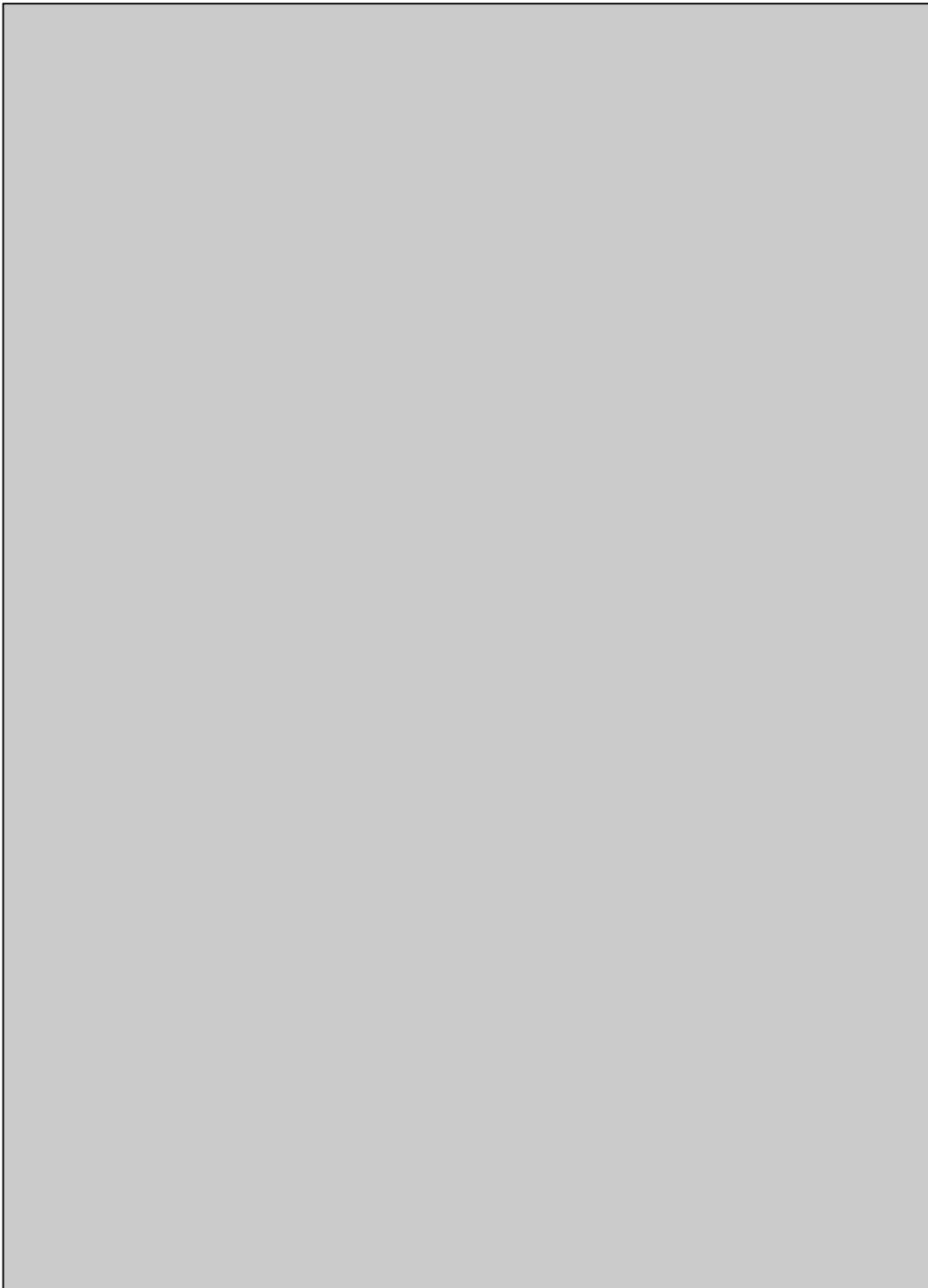


Figure 29. 'Home... a maple-bordered street', Kodak advertisement

Life magazine, 28 May 1945, p.77

The magazines in which the advertisements ran – *Life*, *Collier's Weekly* and *Saturday Evening Post* – were popular weeklies destined for mass readership. Each counted a circulation in the millions, from *Collier's Weekly* at an estimated 2.5 to 3 million, to *Life* reaching up to 22 million readers (Bush Jones 2009: 24).

Although all three magazines were not gender-specific, the consumer-viewer addressed by the two Kodak campaigns is female. This is signalled in the Snapshots campaign by the use of the possessive phrase 'your man in the service', and in the Kodacolor campaign by the predominance of women in the guise of sisters, mothers and sweethearts, who are depicted in the colour snapshots. Together, the two campaigns function to present two contrasting worlds: the masculine, public, military sphere of the serviceman recipient, represented via the photographic language of black and white photojournalism; and the feminine, private, domestic, familial sphere of the civilian sender, represented via the language of colour snapshot photography.

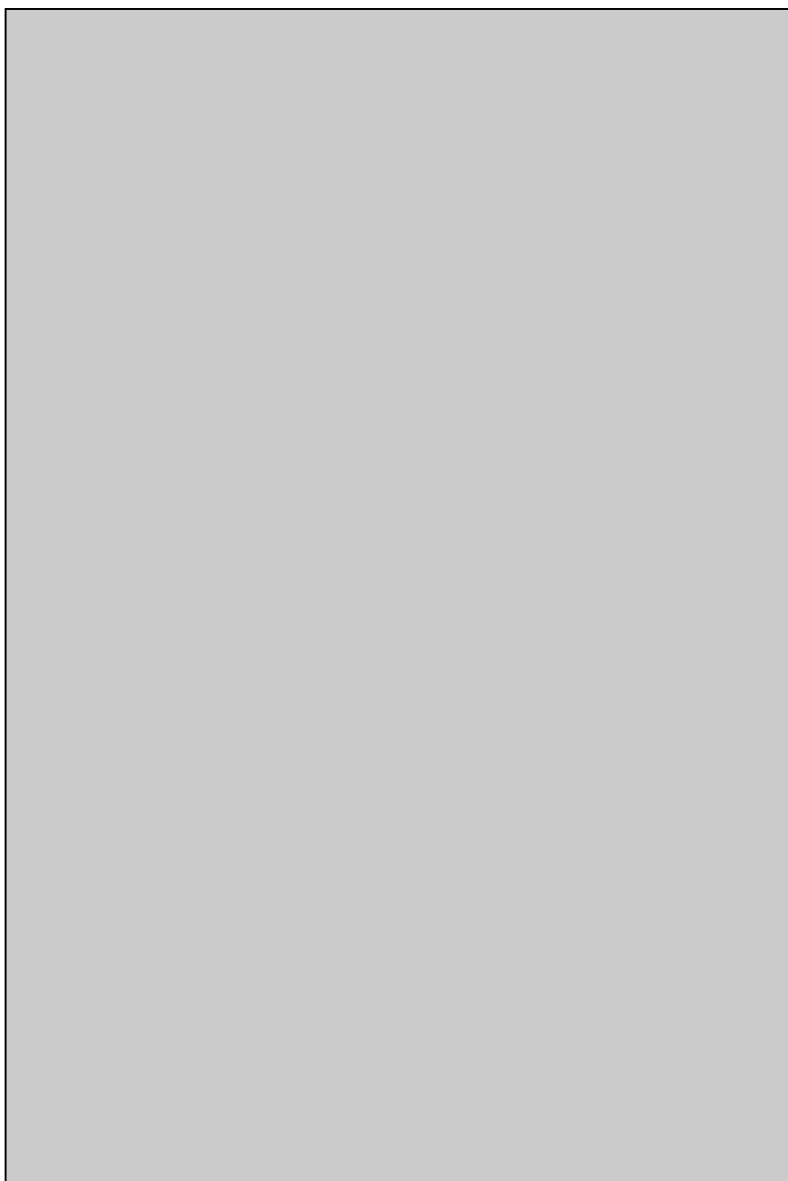


Figure 30. 'Beautiful Minicolor prints like this', Kodak advertisement
c.1942–1945

Through visual and textual prescription, the two campaigns make plain the kind of photographs that women should send. The ideal Kodacolor snapshots depict subjects such as a smiling baby girl in a pink and white bonnet and a woman wearing a yellow dress holding a basket of flowers and vegetables (figure 31). The scenarios shown elsewhere invariably present sunny days spent outdoors: gardening, skiing, or otherwise relaxing. These visual cues were reinforced by the textual directives of the Snapshots campaign. The photographs received by servicemen, the advertising copy instructs, should be 'cheerful, happy pictures' ('Home... A Maple-bordered Street', 1945) of 'home folks and home scenes' ('You at Home' 1944). Suitable subjects are 'a maple-bordered street... a girl's laughter... Mom in her kitchen, baking a blueberry pie' ('Home... A Maple-bordered Street', 1945). Together, the Snapshot and Kodacolor campaigns evoke idealised settings of domesticity, nature and leisure.

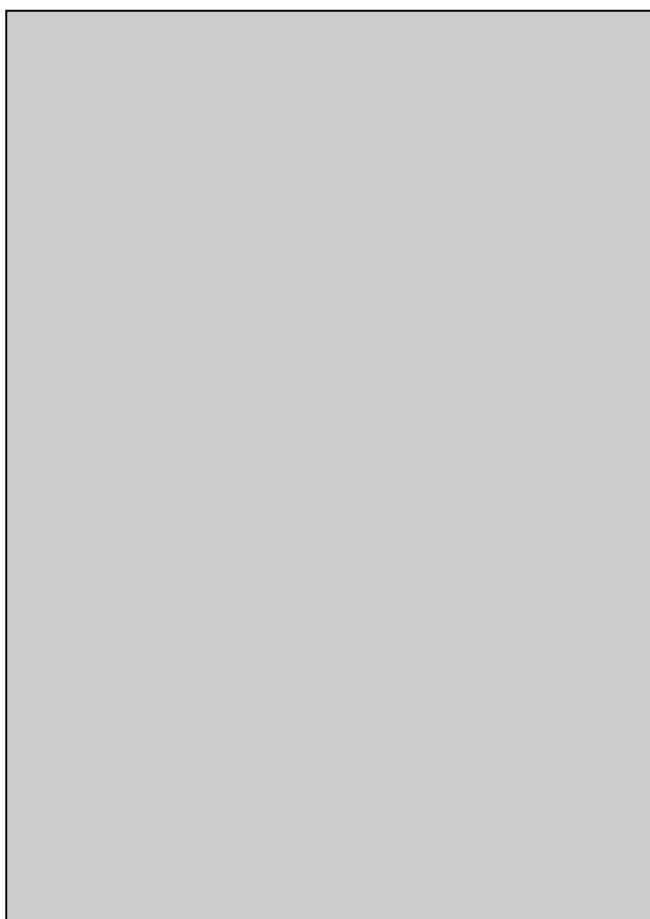


Figure 31. 'To make your service man the happiest in his outfit!', Kodak advertisement

c.1942–1945

The scenarios depicted in the two campaigns, and the attitudes towards women's motivations for making photographs, stand in marked contrast to Kodak's peacetime advertising to women. As discussed in Chapter 4, Kodak's marketing towards women consumers was embodied by the Kodak Girl. First appearing in 1910 and continuing until the 1970s, this modern and effervescent young woman was frequently depicted with her camera turned onto the wider world through activities of motoring, cycling and tourism. Rather than being depicted as a subject matter of photographs, the Kodak Girl was shown in the act of making photographs for herself, from her own point of view (as seen in figure 14). A 1911 advertisement in *Colliers* entitled 'All Out-doors Invites Your Kodak' depicts a young woman holding her Brownie camera (reproduced in Jacob 2011a: 176). The text affirms that

[t]here's a new pleasure in every phase of photography – pleasure in the taking, pleasure in the finishing, but most of all, pleasure in possessing pictures of the places and people that *you* are interested in (original emphasis, cited in Jacob 2011a: 176).

The cumulative effect of the Kodak Girl advertisements from this era, as West (2000: 56) has contended, is to produce an independent female observer who roams the world taking photographs for her own pleasure.

The First World War brought a more sober dimension to Kodak's marketing to women, and changes in prescription for the photographic roles women should undertake and the kind of photography they should practise. The earlier exuberance of the independent Kodak Girl is replaced by illustrations depicting women in maternal and spousal roles, recording scenes of servicemen's departures or furloughs. One advertisement entitled 'The Kodak Letter' (1917) closely prefigures the ethos of the 'Snapshots' and 'Kodacolor' campaigns, picturing a domestic scene in which a mother and child prepare to post 'simple Kodak pictures of their own taking that tell the home story', in order to lift the recipient serviceman's spirits (reproduced in Jacob 2011a: 314). Photographic communication, the advertisement avows, will bolster the emotional well-being of the serviceman in the distant theatre of war.

Other advertisements in the First World War campaign, however, present different motivations for women to make photographs. 'The Day of His Going' (1918) shows a woman engrossed in loading a roll of autographic film into her

camera, while her uniformed husband and young daughter look on (figure 32). The accompanying text claims that 'in a million homes, pictures are keeping the story of war as it touched those homes'. Female snapshotters are invited to create 'authentic history' by documenting important events, such as the departure of a husband to the front, with photographic film bearing the exact date. The advertisement presents women as active producers of photographs and as family historians, 'keeping the story of war', and recording for posterity the ways in which world events impact on their own lives and those of the men around them.

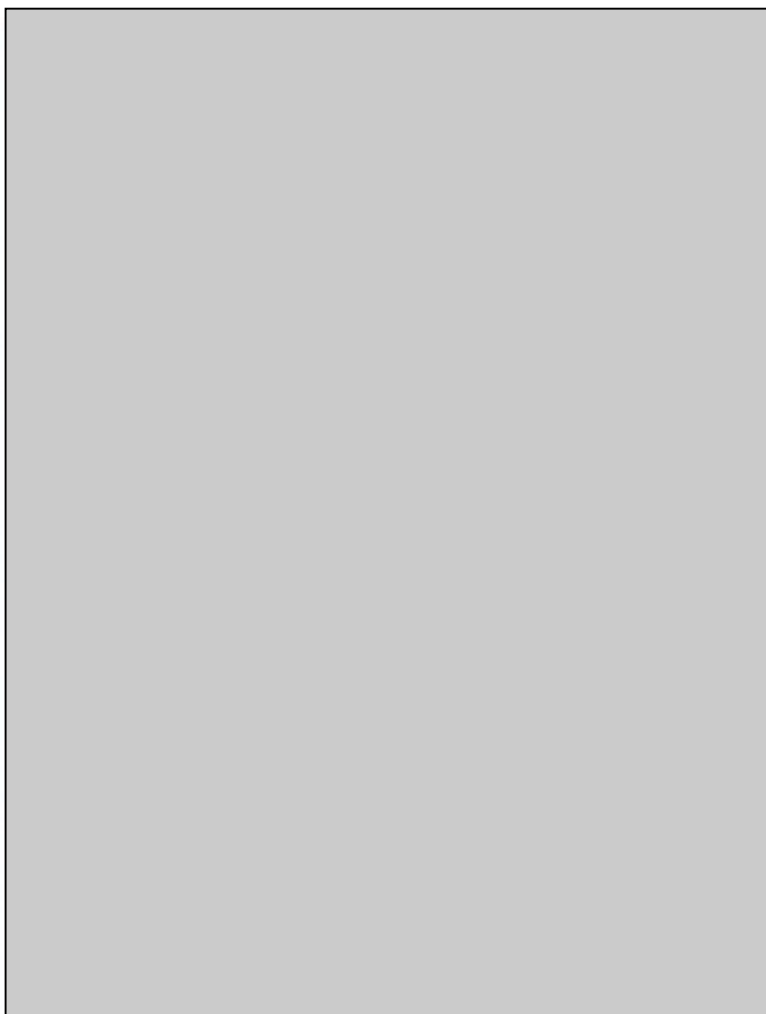


Figure 32. 'The Day of His Going', Kodak advertisement, 1918

Source: Jacob (2011a: 312)

West (2000) sees these advertisements as consistent with Kodak's broader shift from the presentation of photography as a spontaneous practice, to one of anticipated memory. Such a move had consequences for women, as the sybaritic pre-war Kodak Girl morphed into a figure more suited to contemplative photography. Yet despite the suppression of the Kodak Girl's freedom and spontaneity, the First World War campaign maintained the validity of women's desires to look outwards. The campaign encourages women to record their life experiences which, even if homefront or less prominent than the actions of men, represent 'authentic history'. The advertisements continue to place value on the taking of photographs for women's own viewing, possession, and satisfaction.



Figure 33. 'They're always first in our thoughts', Kodak advertisement

Saturday Evening Post, 3 July 1943, p.61

The Snapshots and Kodacolor campaigns of the Second World War represent a marked change in the depiction of women's photographic needs and desires,

and acceptable modes of snapshot photography in wartime. The Snapshots campaign transfers the roving, outward-looking ethos of the peacetime Kodak Girl campaign to men. They, not women, are the ones who are shown roaming the wider world meeting new people and visiting new places. One advertisement, 'They're Always First in Our Thoughts' (1943) shows a group of smiling sailors viewing snapshots on the sunny deck of a ship (figure 33). The caption reads, 'In port – "Mail!" – aboard a Navy patrol ship just in from the North Atlantic'. The breeziness of the caption, together with the photographic image, suggest that wartime service brings with it the adventure and freedom of a sea voyage. The Kodacolor campaign, by contrast, relentlessly depicts women within the insular sphere of home and family. Although the settings are almost always outdoors, I suggest that this is primarily a pre-requisite of the limited light sensitivity of colour film, which performed poorly indoors due to low light levels. Despite the outdoor environments, the women appear contained within domestic or civilian settings – houses, doorways, windows, parks and gardens – and are pictured with children and pets, flowers and vegetables.

These idealised depictions recall the cultural trope of the *hortus conclusus*, the walled garden associated with protection of the Virgin Mary. In a critique of gender and Second World War poetry, Susan Schweik (1987: 548) contends that the concept of the *hortus conclusus* was regularly invoked to present women as secluded and protected, while their menfolk fight distant wars. The Kodacolor campaign similarly presents women's experience of war as civilian and domestic. The advertisements construct a feminine world absent of the pressures of work, politics, or other anxieties: a world untouched by war. The roving Kodak Girl is no longer exposed to danger or adventure on the open road but has become, in effect, a Kodak Mom, baking blueberry pie in her kitchen.

Furthermore, in contrast to previous Kodak campaigns, women are no longer depicted in the act of making photographs. Nor are they encouraged to make photographs that will bring them pleasure, in the taking or possession. Instead, the Snapshots campaign repeatedly urges women not to waste the film on their own needs, but to become the subjects of photographs that will bring pleasure to male recipients. The copy of the advertisement 'When You Think What They Face Every Day' (1943) sternly admonishes 'with film so scarce, LET SNAPSHOTS FOR *HIM* COME FIRST' (original emphasis). A further advertisement in the campaign declares it to be essential that 'every roll of film

you get is used to take the kind of snapshots our boys need' ('As We See Them' 1943). The kind of snapshots 'our boys' needed, exemplified by the Kodacolor campaign, are images of women depicted in a desirably civilian sphere. The two campaigns thus cohere to form a double-layered directive. Women are required both to fabricate the 'right' kinds of photographs that can serve the needs of men – images in which women are depicted in specific ways – and to give up possession of those photographs by sending them off to distant theatres of war. In short, women are directed to subjugate their own photographic viewpoints and desires to those of men.

Why exactly were women asked to prioritise men's needs, and what effect would sending snapshots have on servicemen? The two campaigns' most cited reason is to boost men's morale. In the Kodak campaigns, low morale is attributed to certain factors that a serviceman might experience without compromising his masculinity. These factors include homesickness, missing the company of loved ones, boredom due to waiting for action, or physical or material privations (but never unmanly feelings of fear, doubt, desperation, depression or pain). Photographs from home, the advertisements suggest, are remedies for these malaises, providing company, distraction, and reassurance to the serviceman that he is missed and supported by those at home. By boosting morale, snapshots will re-invigorate the serviceman, enabling him to cheerfully discharge his duty to fight.

The intangible issue of morale – a term that in its wartime usage implied both emotional well-being and determinedness to fight – was considered a decisive factor in achieving victory (Bush Jones 2009: 150–184). State and business agencies agreed that a serviceman's morale could be affected by the degree to which he was remembered and supported by loved ones at home, and that the most effective means to convey this was by sending letters and care packages (Barrett Litoff and Smith 1992). State-sponsored letter writing campaigns were instigated to this effect. The importance given to servicemen's mail is exemplified by a government propaganda poster proclaiming 'mail from home is more than a fighting man's privilege. It is a military necessity' (cited in Barrett Litoff and Smith 1992: 120). Kodak positioned photography in the same way (Bush Jones 2009: 160), avowing that, along with letters, servicemen considered snapshots one of the most important gifts from home that could lift morale.

The correlation between the morale-boosting capacity of snapshots and the serviceman's military potency is succinctly expressed in the Snapshots advertisement 'When You Think What They Face Every Day' (1944). In an extraordinary image, US Navy Submariners are pictured in their bunkroom, cheerily passing snapshots across two massive torpedoes that project towards the viewer (figure 34). The advertisement proposes a direct association between the destructive might of weaponry, and the 'homey' snapshots that play a crucial part in motivating the servicemen to discharge their duty and fire the missiles. In essence, women's snapshots – that is, the right kind of snapshots – are reconfigured from women's pleasurable possessions into militarily strategic resources: commandeered as weapons of war that might directly contribute to victory.



Figure 34. 'When you think what they face every day', Kodak advertisement
Life magazine, 3 April 1944, p.63

The stakes of prescription and women's responses

Such is the ostensible message of the campaigns; yet a number of further questions are raised. Why did Kodak deem the campaigns necessary, and to what extent did they consider them successful? Why should women need such consistent prompting and prescription for suitable photographs to make and send? The duration of the campaigns indicates that Kodak considered them successful: Snapshots ran from June 1942 to December 1945 without any change in formula (Bush Jones 2009: 171). This longevity might suggest that the campaigns were popular with women consumers and resulted in increased sales of products.

However, these claims cannot be assumed. Like many other businesses during wartime, Kodak suffered from a scarcity of products to sell, due to the fact that the US Army and Navy had commandeered production for military purposes (Snow 2016). As a result, sales of film and processing of domestic photographs, and therefore the number of snapshots produced, fell drastically between 1941 and 1946, so as to be almost negligible (Greenough 2007: 153). Rather than attempting to increase product sales, the campaigns should in fact be seen as part of Kodak's larger strategy of corporate or institutional advertising. According to Snow (2016), Kodak's wartime advertising was aimed at building consumer loyalty and a positive corporate image. By aligning the company with the war effort, she argues, Kodak distanced itself from potential accusations of war profiteering (Snow 2016). Regular advertising, furthermore, kept the Kodak brand in the public eye, despite lack of product availability, readying the market for postwar consumption.¹⁵

There was, however, a further imperative to the Snapshots and Kodacolor campaigns. Despite their ostensible address to women, the advertisements were not, as might be expected, placed in women's magazines like *Ladies Home Journal* or indeed *US Vogue*, but in weeklies that also appealed to men. In fact, the magazine that most often featured the Snapshots advertisements, *Life* magazine, was the periodical most read by servicemen, reaching two thirds

¹⁵ In the transition to peacetime, Kodak signalled its readiness to offer consumer goods once more. 'Though the services still have first call on film, the tremendous facilities built up by Kodak for the war are being converted for peacetime picture-making as rapidly as possible' ('Like an Unexpected Hug' 1945).

of GIs (Bush Jones 2009: 24). We can, therefore, deduce that women were not the sole target of the campaigns' address, but that additional messages were offered to male recipients. These messages, I suggest, are threefold. Firstly, the advertisements repeatedly convey the scarcity of film that thwarts women's best attempts to send their menfolk snapshots from home, urging 'Film isn't easy to get [...] but keep on asking' ('These American flyers' 1944). If the serviceman has not received photographs in his mail, the advertisements suggest, this is due to material shortages, rather than lack of inclination on the part of his female correspondent to put his needs first (either by failing to make and send snapshots at all, or by using the precious film for herself). In this way, the advertisements reassure the serviceman that he is remembered by womenfolk at home.

Secondly, and lest the admission of material shortages cause alarm on the part of servicemen, the exemplar snapshots of Kodacolor serve to construct an idealised and abundant homeland. Images conjured include a woman picking roses trailing from the side of a house (figure 30), and a young mother holding a basket laden with freshly-picked fruit and vegetables (figure 31). These evocations of home are in marked contrast to the serviceman's constructed and communal monochrome world depicted in the Snapshots campaign. This is most pronounced in two advertisements released towards the end of the war, which show servicemen viewing snapshots in war-shattered buildings. 'You At Home' (1944) depicts a soldier seated on a pile of rubble, 'dirty, unshaved, everlastingly tired', whose face is lit up by the snapshots he has received (figure 35). Snapshots, the copy declares, remind men that 'somewhere on earth there's still a life worth living... to come back to'. The second of the two advertisements, 'If the Time Seems Long to You' (1945), claims that

Home is real, and pretty girls, and happy children. America is real.
And one day they'll be there ('If the Time Seems Long to You' 1945).

Collectively, the Snapshots and Kodacolor campaigns assure that, in contrast to the deprivation experienced in Europe and other theatres of war, the bricks of American homes are still standing and the US remains a land of plenty that shall be the victorious serviceman's reward.



Figure 35. 'You at home', Kodak advertisement

Life magazine, 26 Jun 1944, p.69

Thirdly, and most crucially, the two campaigns serve to visualise national femininity, offering proof that the homeland remains populated by a certain kind of woman. The *hortus conclusus* evoked by both the copy of Snapshots and the exemplar images of Kodacolor portrays women unsullied by war, faithfully awaiting the return of their menfolk. Cocooned in domestic settings of leisure and nature, the women fulfil traditionally feminine roles as mothers, wives and nurturers. The effect of this double-layered prescription is to present the ideal woman that servicemen should desire and female civilians should emulate.

Why should such over-determined prescription be necessary? In a stimulating examination of wartime popular visual culture, particularly pin-ups, Robert Westbrook (1993) argues that women were persistently presented as objects in need of protection from the enemy (often from sexual aggression), and as idealised objects worthy of men fighting for. In the liberal polity of the US, Westbrook contends, political and ethical motivations had limited capacity to motivate servicemen. Instead, the duty to fight was configured a private and moral undertaking (1993: 210). The conception of women as both justification

for war and warrior's reward was therefore essential to encourage men to discharge their obligation to fight.

War, however, had transformed and destabilised gendered roles and identities on a mass scale. With men mobilised to the front, civilian women were urged by state agencies and dominant media to join the labour force to support the war effort. Women had unprecedented access to previously male-dominated fields of work, from engineering and manufacturing, to bus-driving and military aviation. They were given leave to wear masculine workwear and military uniforms. They migrated for work and lived self-sufficiently in cities, experiencing a degree of sexual freedom, mobility and economic independence previously reserved for an elite group of wealthy upper-class women.

These seismic shifts threatened the continuity of patriarchal structures, and the implications and dangers of women's newly-expanded roles were publicly expressed. A story in *Good Housekeeping* in November 1942 imagines a group of servicemen anticipating their return home after the war, speculating that their womenfolk will greet them with the unwelcome notion that 'a man's place is in the home!' and that women will have permanently usurped the role of men (cited Walker 2001: 98). Such a patently unsettling vision of future society is assuaged by the two Kodak campaigns, with their deeply nostalgic mood and insistence on women as essentially defined by domestic and familial roles, depicted in settings that exclude any reference to their changing social, economic and working status.

Only one advertisement in the two Kodak campaigns shows women to have an experience of war that is not civilian. This advertisement from the Snapshots campaign, depicts servicewomen in the armed forces (figure 36). The scenario is markedly different from those used to portray servicemen. A group of women are pictured inside their barracks. A senior officer puts her hand reassuring on the shoulder of her junior colleague, whose wedding ring is clearly visible, and together they view snapshots that have arrived by mail. Behind them, two other women are seen quietly carrying out domestic tasks: hanging up a uniform and pegging out laundry on an indoor washing line. In contrast to the male protagonists of the Snapshots campaign, the women are presented as vulnerable and in need of reassurance in the form of 'an unexpected hug' and a 'steadying hand' ('Like an Unexpected Hug' 1945). While the advertisement

acknowledges that women serve in the armed forces, they remain fundamentally domestic and faithful: auxiliaries to the servicemen who experience the true dangers of war. It should be noted that the advertisement appeared in the 26 November 1945 issue of *Life*, two months after peace had been formally declared with the surrender of Japan. With peacetime underway and a return to normality imminent, the image of women in the armed forces had become more palatable. The domestic mood conjured by the Kodak image prefigures a return to the conventionally feminine sphere of home.

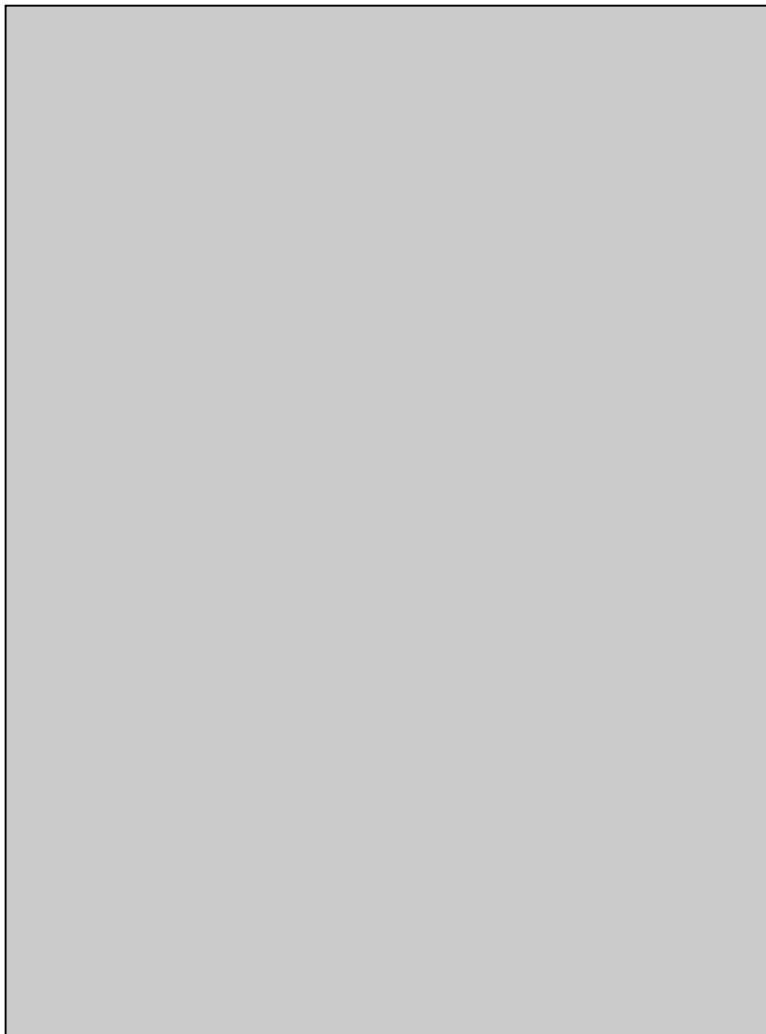


Figure 36. 'Like an unexpected hug', Kodak advertisement

Life magazine, 26 November 1945, p.49

Kodak's photographic prescription, of course, remained just that. To discover how women felt about it, and to assess what kinds of snapshots women were actually making and sending, presents a significant challenge. This is due to the

paucity of adequately documented material artefacts that may provide evidence of the ephemeral traces of consumption and reception. To begin with, women's wartime snapshots may not have survived loss, abandonment or destruction often entailed by conflict. Furthermore, snapshots form part of a vast and largely unmapped terrain of 'vernacular' (that is, non-art or low-status) photography that has only recently begun to receive attention (Batchen 2000). By its very nature, failing to function as either official document or art object, snapshot photography has often remained outside institutional collections and overlooked by the academy. Popular photography, in general, tends to languish in private albums or boxes consigned to the attic (Lewis and Harding 1992). Snapshots frequently become detached from their specific historical context of maker and viewer. Thrown out or given away, such photographs are left to circulate anonymously in secondary markets. Without records of the gender of the photographer, or circumstances of production, most wartime snapshots resist an informed assessment of the degree to which women followed Kodak's prescription.

Instances, however, can be found. I conclude this discussion by offering two divergent orders of women's snapshots. The first is drawn from textual references in letters sent from women to servicemen, drawn from Barrett Litoff and Smith's (1992) anthology. Scrutiny of the correspondence attests that 'the kind of snapshots our boys need' ('As We See Them' 1943) were indeed enclosed in women's letters. Women who sent snapshots include Alice Woods, who mails her brother-in-law the 'pictures we took on [sic] Christmas' (8). Isabel Kidder posts her husband 'the snapshot [...] taken on the tipty-top of Prospect Mountain' (97). Christine Cockerham encloses 'some snapshots of the kids' in a letter to her son (257). It is not known if these photographs were made by women with the express purpose of sending to servicemen, or (due to film shortages) were pre-existing ones. However, at least one sender, Catherine 'Renee' Pike avows her intention to actively fabricate suitable photographs, apologising to her husband that she had been hitherto unable to do so because 'it was a dull day', and stating 'I hope it is nice this weekend then we can take some' (83). The women's letters provide evidence for the kind of economy of snapshots circulating between home and front that was envisaged by Kodak. While we do not know what the photographs looked like, the correspondents' descriptions conform to the subject matter advocated by the two Kodak campaigns: images of 'homey scenes and homey faces' made in settings of

leisure and nature that affirm the sender's status as a female subject untouched by war.

The conformity of the women's snapshots holds true to John Tagg's (1993) critique of the limits of popular photography. Tagg contends that the mass availability of cameras, made possible by Kodak and other firms, did not lead to democratisation of the medium, but in fact led to 'the production of a new consumer body for photography' whose practices solidified the existing power relations of cultural practice (16–17). Tagg concludes that, even when people have had the means to produce their own images, they do not produce freely, but operate within certain parameters laid out by industry (such as Kodak) and dominant ideology, repeating its tropes (17–20). While Tagg is highly sceptical of the possibility of opposition to dominant photographic practice, I suggest that there is also room for dissent. One notable example of resistance to Kodak's prescription is offered by a corpus of snapshots made by and for women serving as WASPs (Women Airforce Service Pilots) at a military airbase in Sweetwater, Texas, between 1942 and 1944. The snapshots were compiled by former pilot Anne Noggle at subsequent reunions of the women, and some of the images are reproduced in her book *For God, Country, and the Thrill of It* (Noggle 1990).

The WASP corpus reveals how some women clearly diverged from Kodak's urge to produce 'the kind of snapshots our boys need'. Depicted in military and communal settings of barracks and airfields, the WASPs picture themselves engrossed in technical tasks, such as navigation classes, and undergoing playful initiation rites after passing flying tests. A zesty image captioned 'A hotshot in her winter flying clothes' (figure 37) shows a woman pilot dressed in heavy aviator gear. It is worth recalling other photographic images of female aviators that were circulating in the mass media at the time: Toni Frissell's elegant female pilot, which featured on the cover of US *Vogue's* 1 July 1942 issue (figure 23), and to Margaret Bourke-White's iconic self-portrait in a high-altitude flying suit, reproduced in *Life* magazine in 1943 (figure 24). The glamour of those images is absent from the WASP snapshot. Instead, the photograph's subject takes a humorous stance, posing with thumbs tucked into her braces and her legs apart in a mock-manly fashion. In its presentation of the lived reality of a military woman, the snapshot offers a huge contrast to the domestic and conventionally feminine Kodak Moms pictured in the Kodacolor exemplars. As uncompromising – perhaps unsettling – evidence of women's mastery and

enjoyment of masculine modes of work, behaviour, and attitudes, the WASP corpus clearly contravenes the subject matter deemed suitable by the Kodak campaigns to boost men's morale.



Figure 37. 'A hotshot in her winter flying clothes'

Unidentified photographer, black and white snapshot, c.1943–4
Source: Noggle (1990: 40)

Furthermore, by using precious photographic film to make images of their own experiences, and electing to keep them for themselves, rather than sending the snapshots to male recipients, Noggle and her colleagues ignored Kodak's instructions to subjugate their own visual desire to that of men. Instead, the images made by the female pilots follow Kodak's peacetime ethos of

pleasure in the taking, pleasure in the finishing, but most of all, pleasure in possessing pictures of the places and people that *you* are interested in ('All Outdoors Invites Your Kodak', 1911).

As evidenced by Noggle's book, it is clear that, in addition to making their own experiences central to their photography, the women retained the snapshots for their own pleasurable viewing. The WASPs kept, displayed, and shared their snapshots, not only during the conflict, but also in the following decades, conserving them as souvenirs of their shared wartime experience that could be revisited at reunions. Beyond the function of memory, the snapshots also served as tangible reminders of the WASPs's military contribution, contradicting the US Army's re-designation of the women's service as civilian and ineligible for veterans' benefits.¹⁶

While but one example, the WASP corpus demonstrates how women found ways to depart from Kodak's prescription, producing their own unruly wartime photography that spoke directly to their own experiences and desires. The WASP snapshots reveal lives transformed by war, and complicate the neatly divided polarities of feminine homefront and masculine war zone avowed by the Kodak campaigns. The snapshots made by and of the female pilots at the Sweetwater airbase present women as dynamic and active participants in conflict, contesting Kodak's vision of how US women should look and behave during wartime. These female aviators seem akin to the adventuring photographers Margaret Bourke-White and Lee Miller, both of whom were presented by magazines as active participants in war in the hypermasculine model. While the female aviators exude a similarly obvious manifestation of female agency in war, yet their photographic engagement was different. There is room, I suggest, for both these and many other forms of photography to be considered valid and authentic practices in the sphere of war. The WASP snapshots attest eloquently to alternative modes of production, viewing and dissemination of women's wartime photography that challenge the orthodoxy of the 'Capa mode'.

Conclusions

My account of US *Vogue* readers and Kodak's wartime advertising campaigns demonstrates the value of engaging with methodological and theoretical

¹⁶ WASP duty was finally recognised as active military service for the purpose of veterans' benefits by the US Air Force in 1979 (Dougherty Strother: 1990: 14).

frameworks drawn from the fields of audience studies and business history, as well as those from photography studies. Attention to issues of reception and consumption, I argue, has the potential to reveal more nuanced understandings of women's photographic engagement with war than through examination of image-content alone. The photo-essay 'Believe It', when understood in a commercial, rather than art historical or psychoanalytical framework, reveals the agency of viewer-consumers. As a result, a new reading of Lee Miller emerges that moderates her role and restores volition to the community of US *Vogue* readers who made their magazine a site hospitable for war photographs. The Kodak campaigns offer an overt case of the gendering of photographic practices, whereby explicit instruction was given in order to shape women's photography to suit the needs of state, military, and patriarchy, as well as commerce. Both 'Believe It' and the Kodak advertisements were clearly shaped by commercial imperatives. By situating these photographic artefacts within a historicised network of consumers and producers – what Poole (1997) conceives as a 'visual economy' – a wider panorama of women's photographic engagement emerges. This panorama is not sparsely-populated by a few anomalous figures like Lee Miller, but replete with women whose engagement has the potential to follow, shape, but also resist dominant codes of gendered ocular behaviour in wartime.

To return to the epigraphs that opened this chapter, it is edifying to consider that the Snapshots advertisement 'Home... a maple-bordered street' (figure 29) was published in *Life* magazine on 28 May 1945, only a few weeks after the photo-essay 'Atrocities' had appeared in its 7 May issue. Kodak's insistence on circulating 'cheerful, happy pictures' takes on a new freight in the wake of the photographic horrors of the Nazi death camps that were emerging in the mass media. To persist in configuring women as Kodak Moms, blithely making blueberry pie in their homey kitchens, indicates the gulf between the constructed illusion and lived reality of US women in wartime. As the pages of US *Vogue* and the WASP corpus of female aviators reveal in two contrasting ways, women were far from being secluded in their *hortus conclusus*; they were actively involved and engaged with the progress and prosecution of warfare.

Both *Vogue* and Kodak were commercial enterprises that, like others, supported the national war effort that could ultimately best serve the business interests of supply-and-demand capitalism and private enterprise (Bush Jones 2009: 34–5).

Like other businesses, *Vogue* and Kodak followed the orthodox transition into peacetime, supporting the return to traditional gender roles that Higounet and Higounet (1987) have characterised as ‘the double helix’. As an illustration of this, not long after Miller’s ‘Believe It’ was published, US *Vogue* ran a feature by John Rawlings (15 October 1945, 104–105). Entitled ‘Warrior’s Return’, the wordless photo-essay presents a sequence of images depicting a woman fetching slippers and newspaper for her demobilised husband, who reclines in an armchair. The photo-essay reflects the return of servicemen to the homeland following victory, and the assumption that women should relinquish the societal, professional and economic power and freedom that they had enjoyed during the wartime years. ‘Warrior’s Return’ was indicative of the debates taking place in women’s magazines and other mass media that, as McEuen (2011) and Walker (2001), have shown, considered the social acceptability of women’s behaviours in the transition to peace, and the reassertion of conventional gender roles.

By the 1950s and the onset of the Cold War, the ideology of the American happy nuclear family served to shape and perpetuate ever more sharply delineated and segregated roles and spheres for men and women. Vettel-Becker (2005: 3–8) contends that photography became ever more polarised in gender-appropriate practices. In contrast to both the peacetime and First World War Kodak Girl advertising campaigns, she argues, women were far less likely to be depicted in the act of making photographs, or operating cameras with technical prowess. Instead, photography was increasingly configured as a masculine activity beyond the technical capability of women (2005: 3). Professional black and white photojournalism became associated with high-status masculine photography, and unskilled colour domestic snapshots the hallmark of low-status feminine photography. These separate spheres, I suggest, are vividly prefigured by the Snapshots and Kodacolor campaigns respectively.

This photographic dichotomy has largely endured in US dominant culture and continues to influence present-day assumptions about gender and war photography. Alternative practices, however, took shape elsewhere in the hemisphere in the last decades of twentieth century, as the next two chapters show. Chapter 7 investigates state terrorism in Argentina and the innovative ways in which women deployed family photography as a tactic of political protest. Before that, however, my discussion turns to Nicaragua in the

Sandinista Revolution and Contra War, to reveal how a surge in international feminism challenged gendered conventions of war photography. As we will see, rather than uphold conventional femininity and support the national war effort, as Kodak had urged, women in Nicaragua used photography to a double purpose: to attack patriarchy, and to defy the US government's support of war.

6. Compañeras with Cameras: Gendered Solidarity in the Sandinista Revolution and Contra War

compañera —*n.*,

1. (in the US) a female companion; friend.

2. (in Latin America) a female worker, coworker, or comrade.¹

The late 1970s and 1980s were marked by uprisings and brutal Cold War proxy conflicts across the republics of Central America, including notably, for the present chapter, in Nicaragua. In 1979, the left-wing Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN; Sandinista National Liberation Front) ousted the 42 year-long, US-backed Somoza dictatorship. In response, the anti-communist Reagan administration supported the Contras, a Nicaraguan counter-revolutionary force that was aligned with US security interests, in a conflict that would last until 1990.² The Sandinistas, meanwhile, set about establishing a new society informed by socialism, Marxism, liberation theology and – of particular pertinence to this discussion – gender equality. Women had played active and prominent roles in the revolution, as nurses, spies, and political activists. An estimated thirty per cent of military units in the final assault were composed of female soldiers (Randall 1981: iv), a staggering amount by US standards. Upon the FSLN's victory, key political and military posts were allocated to women, and legislation was passed to increase women's rights. Concurrent with a global surge in the feminist movement, Nicaragua became an internationally important site for intense discussion about transnational feminism and the political agency of women.

The Sandinista Revolution was vividly depicted for US audiences in the Hollywood film *Under Fire* (1983), starring Nick Nolte as a libidinous risk-taking photojournalist in the 'Capa mode'. While mainstream US culture persisted in stereotypical views of masculinist war photography, in reality women were forging new paths in Nicaragua. A female photographer, Susan Meiselas, produced what became the preeminent photographic record of the conflict, the book *Nicaragua: June 1978–July 1979* (1981). Although this book represents a

¹ *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* (1997)

² 'Contras' is an abbreviation of *contra-revolucionarios* (counter-revolutionaries). For a recent introduction to the Sandinista Revolution and the Contra War, see Walker and Wade (2011).

key locus at the intersection of women, war and photography in Nicaragua, it does not tell the whole story and indeed has obscured as much as it has revealed. Notably, Meiselas recalls that '[w]hen I was in Latin America there was no other woman in the field doing photographic work' (Davies and Meiselas 2014: 45), yet there were in fact already a handful of female professional photographers from Latin America working in Nicaragua. Moreover, after the revolution and throughout the Contra War, an international 'photographic scene' flourished, in which women were central.³

There was a distinctly gendered dimension to this scene, which drew upon the related notions of *compañeras* and 'sisterhood' that were circulating in feminist communities across Latin America and in the US respectively. In support of the FSLN's aim of gender equality, and in alignment with the US-Nicaraguan solidarity movement, a number of the women's projects sought to influence US public opinion and curtail Reagan's aid to the Contras. In fact, although largely overlooked by solidarity scholarship (cf. Gosse 1988; 1995; Smith, C. 1996; Weber 2002), photography was repeatedly mobilised as a pertinent medium through which to solicit support for the FSLN. Photographic images and artefacts travelled from Nicaragua to the US as 'ambassadors' of the movement, despatched under the aegis of photography's assumed truth value and capacity to function as an 'eyewitness'. At the same time, women's solidarity activism coincided with the swell of international debates on the politics and problematics of documentary photography. The Nicaraguan conflict therefore represents a charged arena in which women tested photography's capacity to convey 'truth' and effect political change in the context of war.

The unorthodox circumstances of the women's photography scene in Nicaragua invite a number of questions: Why were so many women active in Nicaragua as photographic producers and in what ways did gender inform their approaches to photography? What part did women's photography projects play in US-Nicaragua solidarity networks? How did conventional war photography fare in the context of transnational feminism and the FSLN's espousal of gender equality? To address these questions, the impact of Meiselas's *Nicaragua* is first

³ Photographers working at the same time as Meiselas included Margarita Montealegre, staff photographer for Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa*, whom Meiselas met almost immediately upon her arrival in 1978 (Lubben 2008b: 115); and Elsa Medina Castro, staff photographer for the Mexican *La Jornada*.

assessed, by returning to historical accounts of its reception in the US that diverge from the subsequent acclaim the book received. The discussion then turns to the crucial role that photography played in ideological struggles between the Reagan administration and Sandinista sympathisers. Next, I offer a partial reconstruction of the photographic scene in Nicaragua, arguing that a combination of factors gave rise to a cluster of politically-inflected projects by women.

A series of close readings of photographic artefacts informs this discussion. As it seeks to analyse the use of photography to influence opinion and policy in the international arena of politics and conflict, I have sought out materials that were disseminated in the international public realm, particularly in the US, rather than projects intended for private consumption, or for Nicaraguan domestic publics. Three such artefacts are examined: *The Dawning of Nicaragua* (1983), a Sandinista booklet featuring a range of Nicaraguan and international female photographers; *C/Overt Ideology* (1984), a photo-text by US conceptual artist Esther Parada; and *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle* (1981), a paperback by the US feminist Margaret Randall. These three artefacts have strengths that have been underestimated by both solidarity scholars and photo-historians, as I show by attending to the historical circumstances of the publications' making and circulation. Prompted by the convergence of certain political, cultural and societal conditions, the efflorescence of photographic activity by women in Nicaragua offered resistance not only to Reagan, but also to the conventional masculinist mode of war photography.

Historical and scholarly contexts

The US-Nicaragua solidarity movement, and the wider international Central American peace movement of which it formed part, are beginning to receive critical attention. Solidarity scholars (many of whom have direct experience as former activists), have argued that the movements were a positive force in shaping US foreign policy and limiting intervention (Gosse 1988; 1995; Smith, C. 1996; Weber 2002; Hatzky and Stites Mor 2014). Others are more circumspect, critiquing the power dynamics of solidarity activism and problematics of Global North 'political tourism' (Hollander 1986; Babb 2004; McRoberts 2012; Stuelke

2014). In an important corrective to the emphasis on US activism at the expense of Latin American agency, Héctor Perla Jr. has shown how Nicaraguan and Central American organisations established their own initiatives and pro-actively worked with US agencies and individuals to instigate resistance to Reagan (Perla Jr. 2008; 2009; 2013).

Women were particularly prominent in the movements. A significant proportion of adherents were already gender activists, identifying with the women's movement, lesbian and gay rights, and the pro-choice campaign. Women outnumbered men in numerous major initiatives, such as Witness for Peace and the Sanctuary movement (Smith, C. 1996: 171–175). And yet, considering the high degree of female participation in solidarity activism, a relatively small number of studies have made gender their focus (cf. Lorentzen 1991; Scholz 2009; Ketron 2010; Hobson 2010). Even fewer consider women's cultural production in the realm of solidarity. Exceptions include Ana Patricia Rodríguez (2008), who offers a study of Chicana-Latina feminist literature, and Nick Witham (2014), who examines the influence of the Nicaraguan, Salvadorian and Guatemalan revolutions on US women film-makers. Despite the importance of photography in gendered solidarity activism, as I will argue, the topic has yet to be examined in depth.

My discussion aims to contribute to scholarship on the role played by photography, and visual culture more broadly, during the military stalemate and ideological struggle of the Cold War. An early contribution is Robin Andersen's (1989) critique of the purported objectivity of photojournalistic images of conflict circulating in the US media, taking El Salvador as her case study. A more recent cluster of studies considers the US activist art scene, in particular the initiatives Group Material and Artists Call, whose art exhibitions included photographic images (cf. Grace 2001, Lippard 2008, Diack 2015). A special issue of *Visual Studies: Cold War Visual Alliances* (2015) has persuasively argued for the centrality of visual practices (including photography) to Cold War proxy conflicts (Bassnett et al. 2015). Ileana Selejan, whose contribution to this special issue (2015), as well as her doctoral research (2014a), offers some of the most sustained commentary on the intersection of Nicaragua, photography and politics, examining photo-documentary aesthetics and ideological struggles over the role of photography in service of the Sandinista project. Nevertheless, although photographers Claudia Gordillo and Sandra Eleta are prominent in her

discussions, gender politics remain outside the scope of her work. In general, scholars have shown little attention to the ways in which gender and photography articulate with the Cold War and the Nicaraguan conflict.⁴

In part, this blindspot may be due to the challenges of researching women photographers who operated in Nicaragua during the Sandinista Revolution and Contra War. Selejan asserts that a 'comprehensive visual history of Nicaragua, [and] of the photographic documentation of the Sandinista revolution and the Contra war, remains to be written' (2014b: 10).⁵ She cites the inadequacy of archives, due to destruction of repositories by both war and natural disaster, coupled with a lack of consistent funding for institutions that might have conserved and studied photography, during both the Somoza regime and the Sandinista era (8–10). Aside from the constellation of studies focused on US photojournalist Susan Meiselas (who will be discussed shortly), attention to female photographers working in Nicaragua during the period is negligible. As a result, the role played by women's photographic projects in US-Nicaragua solidarity activism remains inadequately assessed.

While retrieval of data and excavation of forgotten women photographers is not the aim of this thesis, the lack of scholarship on the women's photography scene in Nicaragua has necessitated a degree of substantive investigation in a context in which information is fragmentary and dispersed. I have drawn on the sporadic and peripheral references to women photographers in scholarly accounts that focus on other aspects of culture in Nicaragua, which have served as leads to further investigation. Online sources, often the photographers' own websites, have helped furnish missing data. Bearing in mind that women often chose to disseminate their photography through small-scale, independently-published publications, primary sources of the period often proved elusive. The online market for secondary books frequently proved more fruitful than university

⁴ A handful of other studies consider some aspects at the intersection of Nicaragua, gender, politics and conflict. Morales Flores (2011) has investigated Mexican photojournalism and the representation of the Sandinista Revolution in the Mexican press, but without special attention to female photographers. Gender issues and Nicaraguan women's cultural production is considered in Bryon's (2001) study of the testimonial writing of Doris Tijerino (2001); and in Plaza Azuaje's (2010) discussion of visual representations of the armed mother. Neither study, however, pays close attention to photography, although photographic images are referenced.

⁵ The publication *Nicaragua: A Decade of Revolution* (Dematteis, Galeano and Vail eds. 1991) provides a photographic anthology, but there is no critical analysis of the images or their context.

libraries or institutional repositories. While in no way exhaustive, the data presented in this discussion testifies to the range, quantity, and vitality of women's political photographic projects in Nicaragua during the period. By assembling formerly dispersed fragments into a unified object of critical analysis, I offer a foundation both for this particular investigation, and for future research.

Susan Meiselas and the limits of conventional war photography

Susan Meiselas photographed extensively in Central America in the late 1970s and 1980s. Today considered a leading figure in photography, her innovative work has reached viewers via international periodicals, museum exhibitions, and numerous monographs, notably *In History* (Lubben 2008a), published to accompany a major retrospective at the International Center for Photography in New York in 2008. Meiselas has consistently engaged with issues of conflict and human rights, and has been an intelligent and articulate critic of the ethical dimension of her photographic practice. Her work from Nicaragua has attracted considerable attention from scholars and critics (cf. Rosler ([1981] 2003); Desnoes ([1985] 2008); Binford 1998; Moynagh 2009; Breckinbridge 2006; Lippard 2008; McInnes 2012; Selejan 2014a). The stature of Meiselas has meant that her work dominates discussion of photography and Nicaragua. An analysis of her benchmark publication, *Nicaragua: June 1978–July 1979*, is therefore essential before turning to less-celebrated projects by other female photographers.

Nicaragua (figure 38) remains the best-known photographic record of the nation in its revolutionary phase, and has accrued the status of a classic. Meiselas's pioneering use of colour, then considered unsuited to depicting war, was enormously influential and has since become the norm for photojournalists (Parr and Badger 2006: 252). In 2008, Aperture published a special twenty-five year anniversary edition, declaring the book 'a contemporary classic – a seminal contribution to the literature of concerned photojournalism'.⁶ As a further endorsement of the book, *New York Times* photography critic Andy Grundberg asserts that *Nicaragua* marks 'a new chapter in the history of photojournalism'

⁶ This unattributed quotation features on the bookjacket of the Aperture anniversary edition (Meiselas and Rosenberg 2008).

and 'has acquired a cultural cult status'.⁷ The publication has been recognised as 'one of the best war photobooks since those produced during the conflict in Vietnam' (Parr and Badger 2006: 252) and remains a seminal contribution to the field of war photography.



Figure 38. Book cover of *Nicaragua June 1978—July 1979*

Susan Meiselas (1981 New York: Pantheon)

For a female photographer of the era, Meiselas's achievement is remarkable. She experienced gender prejudice, such as segregation in the National Press Club, and as a Magnum Photos nominee had to contend with the 'men's club' atmosphere of the agency, where only three of the twenty-eight full members were women (Davies and Meiselas 2014: 45).⁸ Her strategy for dealing with 'larger male communities of travelling media bands' was to blend in and be as

⁷ Cited on the bookjacket of the Aperture anniversary edition (Meiselas and Rosenberg 2008).

⁸ Meiselas was nominated to Magnum Photos in 1976, and was awarded full membership in 1980. From 1978–79 there were 44 male photographers associated with Magnum Photos (full members, associate members, contributors and correspondents), and six women. Full members were directors of the company and had voting rights. The three female full members at the time of Meiselas's nomination were Eve Arnold, Inge Morath and Mary Ellen Mark (source: www.magnumphotos.com).

unobtrusive as possible. Consequently, Meiselas recalls, 'as a young woman, no one took me seriously' (2008: 118).

Although sympathetic to the ethos of the women's movement, Meiselas did not consider herself feminist (Davies and Meiselas 2014: 50). Her work in Nicaragua emulated the conventional masculine mode of photojournalism espoused by Magnum co-founder Robert Capa. Photography historian Brett Abbott asserts that

following Robert Capa's famous dictum 'if your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough', Meiselas took great pains, and great risk, to photograph the action from the point of view of those involved in it, largely rejecting telephoto lenses that could have provided the safety of distance (Abbott 2010: 121).⁹

Working in the 'Capa mode', and with undeniable bravery, Meiselas produced many arresting images of the violent action of insurrection, including a powerful image of a guerrilla throwing a Molotov cocktail (figure 39). In its freeze-frame of a crucial moment in the field of battle and as a register of the photographer's proximity to the combatant, the image had all the makings of a classic war photograph, recalling the template of Capa's *Falling Soldier* (figure 2). Fittingly, Meiselas received the Robert Capa Gold Medal 'for outstanding courage and reporting' in 1979, only the second woman to do so since the award's inauguration in 1950.¹⁰ *Molotov Man*, as Meiselas's image was subsequently dubbed, has become one of the very few images by a female photographer to enter the canon as a *bona fide* icon of war photography.¹¹ Furthermore, despite the presence of prominent male photojournalists in Nicaragua, including Magnum colleagues James Nachtwey and Abbas, Meiselas emerged as the revolution's preeminent photographer. For the first time in history, the definitive photographic record of a conflict had been made by a woman. In many ways, Meiselas had radically enhanced the credibility of women to succeed in the masculine domain of war photography.

⁹ Lippard corroborates this assertion, stating that Magnum sent Meiselas a 400mm telephoto lens 'because they thought she was getting too close to the action. She used it only once, saying "I wanted to be up close"' (2008: 213).

¹⁰ The first female recipient was Catherine Leroy, in 1976.

¹¹ For a visual account of the afterlife of the photograph, see Meiselas (2016). For a study of the characteristics that define iconic photographs in photojournalism, see Hariman and Lucaites (2007).

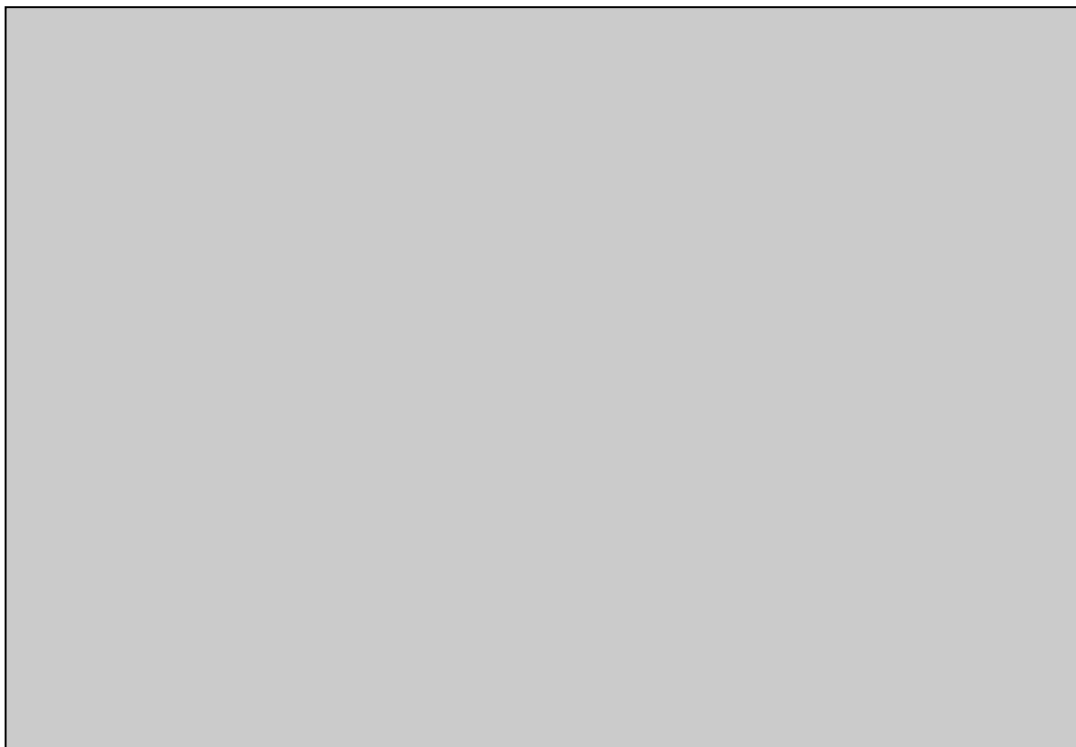


Figure 39. Plate 64 from the book *Nicaragua June 1978–July 1979*

Susan Meiselas (1981 New York: Pantheon).

The corresponding caption at the back of the book reads ‘Sandinistas at the walls of the Estelí National Guard headquarters’. The image has become better known as *Molotov Man*.

Despite success in the international press, Meiselas lamented her lack of control over her work (Meiselas and Karlin [1985] 2008: 229–230) and strove to bring formerly dispersed images published in news stories into a coherent whole. The result was a substantial monograph, featuring 71 full-colour plates, presenting a visual narrative of the Sandinista Revolution. The book begins with the last vestiges of the Somoza regime, progresses through drilling of troops, violence in the streets, and ends with the rebels’ final victorious entry into the capital, Managua.

Given the illustrious afterlife of *Nicaragua*, it is easy to overlook the fact that the book’s original reception in the US was mixed, even hostile in some quarters. At the time of the book’s release, two years after the FSLN’s victory, the staunchly anti-communist Ronald Reagan had been president some eight months. The US government and mainstream media expressed fears of unstable Soviet allies in the ‘backyard’ of Central America, and the Sandinista struggle had transformed

into an armed conflict against the US-backed Contras.¹² The stakes for photographic representations that could shape US perceptions of Nicaragua and the FSLN were therefore high.

At the same time, the discipline of photography studies was coalescing in the US and Western Europe. Photo-documentary was scrutinised through a postmodern and poststructuralist lens by theorists and practitioners. As Levi Strauss (2008) and Selejan (2014a) have observed, *Nicaragua* 'came out into the teeth of a trenchant new critique' (Levi-Strauss 2008: 108). The truth-value of photography and the persona of the 'concerned photographer' (to use the term coined by Robert Capa's brother Cornell) were two fundamental concepts challenged by a new generation of influential photography theorists including Martha Rosler, Abigail Solomon-Godeau, Allan Sekula, and John Tagg.¹³ These scholars problematised photography's evidentiary capacity and status as objective record of reality. Instead, they claimed that photographic 'truth' was a constructed commodity, often in the service of the elites and the state. Rosler offered some of the sharpest criticism of photo-documentary which, she contended, served not to alleviate the plights of those depicted, but testified 'to the bravery or (dare we name it) the manipulateness and savvy of the photographer' (Rosler [1981] 2004: 264). Top of Rosler's list of offending documentary genres was war photography, and both Susan Meiselas and Robert Capa came under fire as two of 'the most currently luminous of documentarian stars' (264).

Concurrently, in 1980 French theorist Roland Barthes published his seminal work *La Chambre Claire* (published in English as *Camera Lucida* in 1981), a subjective ontological study that advanced his photographic theory of *studium* and *punctum*. The photographic images that compelled him, Barthes contended, were characterised by the collision of 'discontinuous elements': the ostensible subject of the photograph (*studium*); and the incongruous element that 'pricked' him (*punctum*) (Barthes 2000 [1981]: 23—26). Barthes's theory has become one of the most influential conceptions in photography studies. Yet the fact that it was originally stimulated by two photographs of conflict in Nicaragua (by Dutch

¹² For a discussion of the term 'backyard' with reference to US imperialism and Nicaragua, see Kenworthy (1995: 26).

¹³ Cornell Capa's term comes from his 1968 edited volume *The Concerned Photographer*, featuring his brother Robert and five other male photographers.

photographer Koen Wessing) has, as Selejan (2014d: 77) observed, been almost entirely overlooked.¹⁴ What is striking about Barthes's analysis is the degree of his detachment from the plight of the Nicaraguan people depicted in pain and distress. For Barthes, the images are 'banal enough' and elicit a 'kind of general interest, one that is even stirred at times', but ultimately leave him disconnected and uncomprehending, 'knowing nothing of the realities of guerrilla warfare'. He is content to contemplate these images with a kind of detached pleasure, 'constructed in the manner of a classical sonata' (Barthes 1981: 25—27). Barthes's response seems to highlight the problematics of the privileged Global North viewer viewing the plight of the powerless, attesting to Rosler's accusations of documentary photography's moral redundancy in the sphere of conflict.

Meiselas owned that she was 'a million miles away' from what she considered the 'irrelevant' debates within the metropolitan intelligentsia (Lubben 2008b: 118). In Nicaragua, her images were received enthusiastically. She was published in anti-Somocista paper *La Prensa*, and her *Molotov Man* image was co-opted as an official symbol of the Sandinista movement, incorporated into graffiti, posters, stamps, and murals (Meiselas 2016). In the US, however, both the leftist photo-community and the liberal reviewing establishment were critical. A fundamental problem was the alleged lack of information conveyed by Meiselas's photographs. Andy Grundberg (1981), in contrast to his praise twenty-five years later, opined in his review for the *New York Times* that Meiselas' book was 'naggingly incomplete – even compared to what can be learned in a 60-second television news report'. Rosler found that 'art takes centre stage [and] "news" is pushed to the margins' and that 'the revolutionary process itself is depicted as fragments' (Rosler [1981] 2004: 246). Meiselas, these critics claimed, had prioritised the aesthetics of her images over politics, resulting in the failure of her photographs to adequately communicate the nuances of the political struggle.¹⁵

¹⁴ Selejan argues that the context of conflict is crucial to the formulation of Barthes's conception, given that the upheaval of war provokes 'discontinuous elements'. She traces the particulars of the Wessing images in some detail (2014d: 73–86).

¹⁵ The foregrounding of aesthetics was in part attributed to Meiselas's innovative use of colour, which at the time was associated with fashion and art photography rather than the serious business of photojournalism. Ironically, colour later became an accepted mode of photojournalism, and is today considered less 'artistic' than black and white images, demonstrating that aesthetic sensibilities must be historicised. For a discussion of Meiselas's use of colour and critics' reactions, see Lippard (2008: 215).

One of the main sticking-points for US critics was the relationship – or lack thereof – between image and text. Although Meiselas's book featured a contextual section with captions, testimonies, maps and chronology of events of the conflict, the section was positioned at the end of the book, separated from the images themselves. The photographs were therefore devoid of what Barthes elsewhere ([1977] 2003) termed 'anchorage', in the shape of accompanying text that both identifies the subject matter and steers the viewer to a particular interpretation. Barthes conceives anchorage as 'repressive', acting as 'a kind of vice which holds the connoted meanings from proliferating' (118). By making his claims through the example of an advertisement for an Italian food product, Barthes suggests that anchorage ushers the unwitting viewer towards certain behaviours, such as the passive consumption of consumer goods.

Meiselas's publication was essentially aimed towards purchasers of photography books, that is, an art audience (Rosler [1981] 2004: 246). Rather than spell out the meanings of her images via anchoring text, she left interpretation open to the viewer.¹⁶ Despite the sophisticated audience her book addressed, for some her images failed to satisfactorily speak for themselves. Grundberg complained that 'the photographs are completely ambiguous', and that 'it is impossible to tell who is fighting whom, or why' (Grundberg 1981). Meanwhile, Rosler deplored the book's 'fuzziness' and 'hit-and-miss' approach to details ([1981] 2004: 253). Left to puzzle out what was going on, the critics claimed, the average US viewer remained ignorant and bewildered.

¹⁶ Lippard contends that Meiselas later regretted the decision to split the images and captions, which was a logistical solution to printing the book in three languages (2008: 214). However, presumably other means could have been devised if the integration of image with explanatory text were a priority.



Figure 40. Plate 14 from *Nicaragua June 1978–July 1979*

Susan Meiselas (1981 New York: Pantheon)

The corresponding caption at the back of the book reads “Cuesta del Plomo,” hillside outside Managua, a well known site of many assassinations carried out by the National Guard. People searched here daily to look for missing persons’.

An examination of one of the most horrific and memorable the most images in *Nicaragua* illustrates this problem. The image depicts a lush landscape with blue skies and, in the background, a lake. The foreground of this bucolic scene is ruptured by the remains of a headless corpse, the victim’s spine protruding from the lower body, which is still clad in blue jeans (figure 40). The brief caption at the end of the book states that the corpse belonged to a victim of the National Guard, but does not elucidate either cause or motive (in fact, bodies of dissidents were regularly dumped in this prominent place in an attempt to intimidate opponents of the Somoza regime). As Meiselas stated later, ‘[T]he American public could not relate their reality to this image. They simply could not account for what they saw’ (Meiselas 1988:11, cited in Binford 1998: 5). Cuban art critic Edmundo Desnoes voiced misgivings over the ways in which Meiselas’s images were interpreted by US audiences. He contended that ‘what [Meiselas] saw and what she shot in Nicaragua could not be plucked away and packaged in New York’, and consequently her images fell ‘prey to a whole range

of distortions' ([1985] 2008: 220–21). Meiselas countered that 'the Nicaraguans would have understood' (Meiselas and Karlin [1985] 2008: 227), but for US viewers ignorant of the context, the book's images were as surreal and incomprehensible as a nightmare.

What was lacking from *Nicaragua*, the book's critics maintained, was the sense of a unified struggle rooted in specific political circumstances. Although Meiselas later claimed she had discovered 'the reality behind the face of American foreign policy' (Lubben 2008b: 116), this reality was not conveyed. *New York Times* reviewer John Leonard (1981) opined that the conflict was presented as typical of 'those little, noisy nation-states, full of Spanish bravado and Indian passivity and surreal novelists' in Latin America. For Rosler, the book failed to convey 'a sense of the *systematic* relation between US policies and exploitation of the Third World' that had led to the conflict (Rosler [1981] 2004: 253, original emphasis). In this respect, *Nicaragua* conformed to the tendency of the mainstream US media to ignore US intervention in Central America in the Cold War period, instead attributing conflicts to the abstract forces of 'chaos' or 'modern times', and conflating all groups and factions as instable terrorists (Parada 1984: 14).¹⁷ The book's cover (figure 38) depicting a group of masked guerrillas, did nothing to counter the view of a faceless communist threat.

The effect of these frameworks was once again to configure Latin America itself as fundamentally incomprehensible and chaotic. Political scholar Eldon Kenworthy (1995) has shown how this conception has been persistently invoked in US cultural and political discourse, conceiving Latin American nations and peoples as feminine, childish, chaotic, unable to rule, and in need of the masculine, older, wiser, paternalistic US to govern and ensure democracy for the global good. For some viewers, *Nicaragua* reinforced this template. The country was presented as unstable and unfit for self-government, unwittingly providing justification for Reagan's policy of intervention. Although Meiselas had raised awareness of the Sandinista struggle, rendering the conflict visible to US viewers for the first time, *Nicaragua* was clearly less successful in portraying the revolution as a sustained political response to US-sponsored repression.

¹⁷ Binford (1998) offers a similarly sharp critique of the failures of Meiselas's project and of the ethics and problematics of US photographers depicting suffering in the Global South. Her argument, however, is made from a present-day perspective, rather than examining the historical reception of *Nicaragua* when the book emerged in 1981.

Despite her considerable achievements as a woman working in the masculinist genre of war photography, the historical reception of Meiselas's project points to the limitations of the 'Capa mode'.¹⁸

Photography and Cold War propaganda struggles

Meanwhile, photography was co-opted into propaganda and counter-propaganda struggles between the Republican government in the US and the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. The Reagan administration was eager to eradicate the perceived Soviet threat in Nicaragua. Concerned that the lingering failures of the Vietnam War might dampen the nation's enthusiasm for further military intervention (Weber 2006: 34–35), the Reagan administration mounted a major 'public diplomacy' campaign. Military psychological ops specialists were deployed to persuade the public and Congress of the need to take action on the Nicaraguan issue. In 1983, a dedicated government agency, the State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean (also known as the S/LPD) was established to drive the campaign, with an annual budget of one million dollars. The S/LPD held press briefings, set up interviews with pro-Contra spokespeople, monitored the media, and circulated stories, reports and images. Literature was distributed to 1,600 college libraries, 520 political science faculties, 122 editorial writers, 107 religious organisations, and unnumbered news correspondents, conservative lobbyists, and members of Congress (Smith, C. 1996: 268–9), indicative of the extent to which the agency aimed to sway opinion formers, and shape public and congressional perceptions of Nicaragua.¹⁹

There is no shortage of studies that examine US government propaganda and mainstream media perceptions of Nicaragua, and their role in shaping public opinion and foreign policy. Rather than photography, however, these studies focus principally on language, political speeches, television broadcasts and newspaper reports, (cf. Tamayo 1985; Spence 1987; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Lenart and Targ 1995; Smith, C. 1996: 231–279; Leiken 2003; Nepstad

¹⁸ Meiselas would address the shortcomings of traditional documentary practice in her subsequent work. She returned to Nicaragua to produce the photographic billboard project *Reframing History* (2004), which explored the legacies of the conflict.

¹⁹ The details of the activities of the S/LPD (known from 1986 as ARA/LPD) are drawn from Kenworthy (1995: xii and 86–91) and Smith, C. (1996: 268–69).

2001; Burton-Vulovic 2013). One of the few solidarity scholars to acknowledge photography is Christian Smith (1996: 241–242), who briefly refers to the use of photographic images in supporting various Reaganist ‘frames’ that aimed to shape public interpretations of the conflict. Smith asserts that certain types of images – Nicaraguans with Soviet weapons, or FSLN leader Daniel Ortega meeting Castro – were promoted to support the S/LPD’s core messages, such as the conflict functioning as a proxy for Soviet aggression (Smith, C. 1996: 241–242).²⁰ While Smith highlights the mobilisation of photographic images in the ‘public diplomacy’ campaign, he does not elaborate, and specific instances of images in use are neither reproduced nor discussed in his account. The lack of attention paid to the photographic dimension of the campaign means that the integral role that photographic images played in providing ‘evidence’ of the FSLN threat and discrediting the Sandinistas has been underestimated. By extension, I argue, so too have the photographic projects undertaken by women to counter the Reaganist dominant narrative.

The photographic booklet *Nicaragua: The Stolen Revolution* by Max Singer, published in 1983, is a striking illustration of ‘public diplomacy’ tactics in action. The cover image (figure 41), depicting a framed picture of Marx and Lenin held aloft at a demonstration, plays to fears of the Soviet threat. The critical viewer, however, might wonder if the closely cropped frame suggests the picture’s relative isolation among the surrounding FSLN flags and banners. Inside the booklet, textual captions are used to modify – even contradict – the photographic content. Taken on its own, an image of FSLN leader Daniel Ortega striding out with cotton pickers might suggest his allegiance with workers. The accompanying caption, by contrast, tells the viewer that the ‘regime’s mismanagement of agriculture has resulted in plummeting harvests’ (Singer 1983: 17). In this instance of the repressive function of ‘anchorage’ (Barthes ([1977] 2003: 118), the viewer’s interpretation is steered from one of admirable worker solidarity to political corruption and agricultural crisis. Although published by The United States Information Agency, an active player on the public diplomacy team (Kenworthy 1995: xii), *Nicaragua: The Stolen Revolution* was presented as a neutral document. Its declared author was the ‘independent academic’ Max Singer, whose views were claimed to ‘not necessarily reflect the

²⁰ In a further example, Smith asserts that the charge that the FSLN had replaced one dictatorship with another was backed up by images of peasants purportedly braving threats of violence in elections (Smith, C 1996: 241–242).

viewpoint of the United States government'.²¹ With its combination of apparently objective text and images, *The Stolen Revolution* clearly enlisted photography for its evidentiary powers in the service of Reagan's foreign policy.

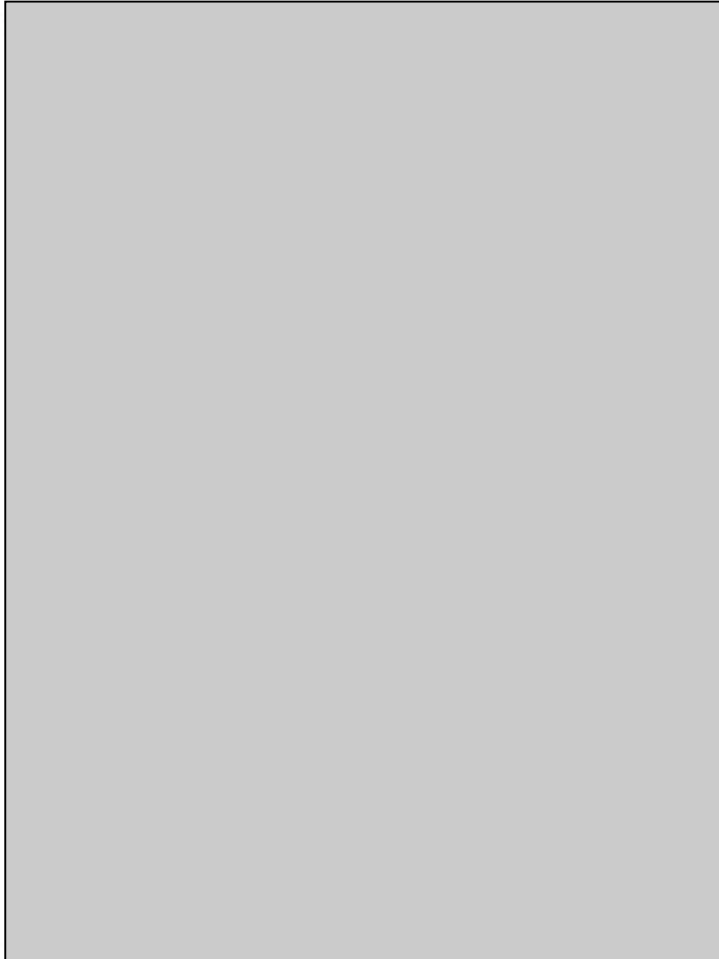


Figure 41. Cover of Nicaragua: The Stolen Revolution

Max Singer (1981 New York: The United States Information Agency)

The Stolen Revolution was only one example of a range of photographic strategies employed. Positive images of the Contras were actively sourced or commissioned. A draft strategy by pro-government agency National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty advocated casting the Contras as 'the underdog', and called for 'pictures of the Hind helicopters coming over the hill and in some cases getting shot down' (cited in Kenworthy 1996: 118). To galvanise public

²¹ These claims appeared on the first page and the back inside cover.

and Congress, Col. Oliver North oversaw attacks against highly visible military targets in Nicaragua, a procedure that Kenworthy interprets as 'lethal photo-ops staged on other peoples' soil' (1996: 97). In one particularly audacious piece of propaganda in 1984, Col. North staged a narcotics sting resulting in a photograph purporting to show a top FSLN aide loading a shipment of Nicaraguan-produced drugs bound for the US, the sale of which, it was alleged, would finance the FSLN's military campaigns.²² The photograph was included in North's slide-show presentations to lobby congressmen and elicit private donations from wealthy government supporters, and was eventually aired on prime-time national television as part of Reagan's seminal 1986 address to the nation to garner support for the Contras.²³

The mainstream press largely upheld the official government line, their mobilisation of photographic images sometimes extending to willful misuse. *Business Week* (24 January 1983) reproduced an image by Susan Meiselas apparently showing Nicaraguans lining up for food rations during the alleged humanitarian crisis prompted by mismanagement of the FSLN government. The image was in fact made in July 1979 and depicted the effects of Somoza-era deprivation (Quintanilla 1993: 12, cited in Selejan 2014c: 61 n.113). Despite the avowed independence of the US media, the S/LPD was effective in lobbying and restraining dissenting voices and viewpoints, aggressively if necessary.²⁴ As a result, the mainstream media rarely deviated with any consistency from the views promoted by the US government (Smith, C. 1996: 270–272).

²² For a discussion of the photograph and a reproduction, see Kenworthy 1996: 124–5.

²³ Reagan's television address states 'This picture – [indicating] – secretly taken at a military airfield outside Managua, shows Federico Vaughn, a top aide to one of the nine commandantes who rule Nicaragua, loading an aircraft with illegal narcotics, bound for the United States. No, there seems to be no crime to which the Sandinistas will not stoop; this is an outlaw regime.' Reagan (1986).

²⁴ Among other instances, National Public Radio was threatened with having federal funding cut after an extended report on a Contra massacre at a Nicaraguan farming cooperative in November 1984. Journalists suspected of being Sandinista sympathisers reported receiving threatening phone calls, while others were defamed by accusations of accepting sexual favours from Sandinista prostitutes, male and female. See Sklar (1988: 245) and Smith, C. (1996: 272–3).

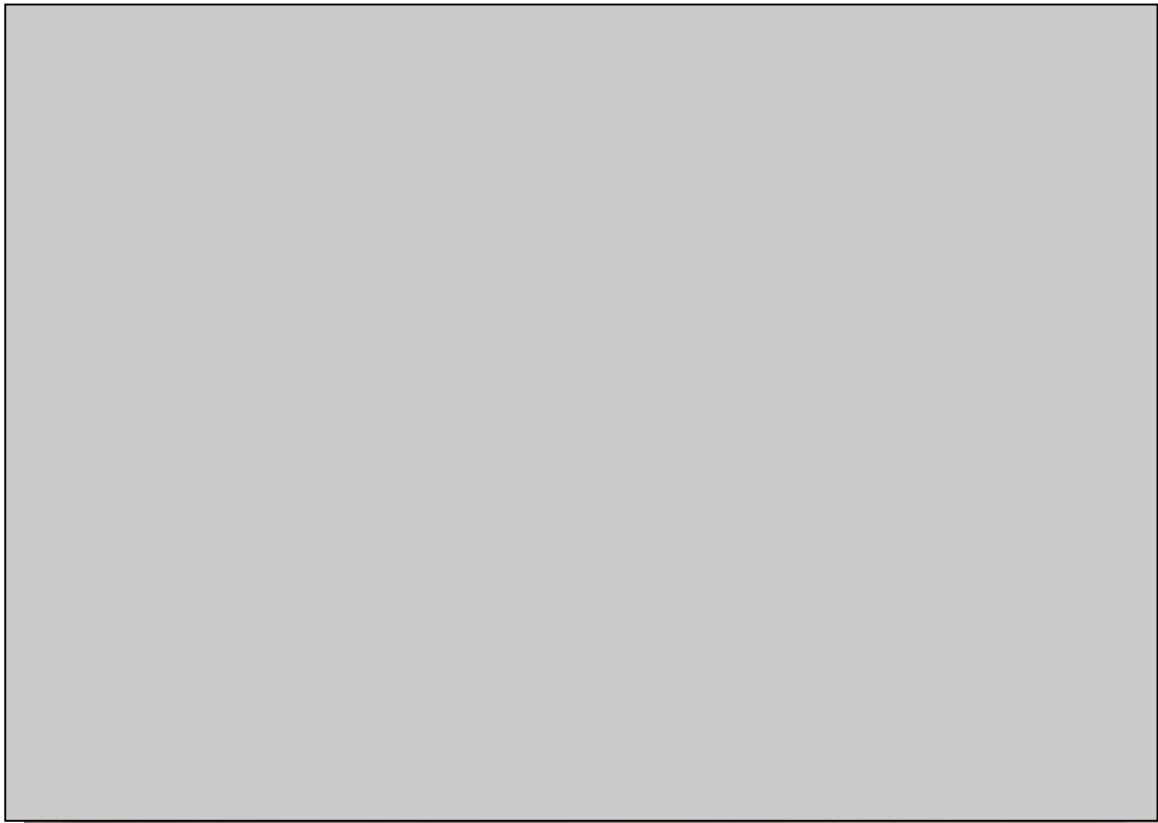


Figure 42. Cover of the booklet *The Dawning of Nicaragua* (1983)

Cover image: Cordelia Dilg

Published in Managua by the Instituto de información de Centroamérica y del Caribe (Institute of Information of Central America and the Caribbean)

Dissenting viewpoints, however, sought alternative platforms for photographic images. One notable example is *The Dawning of Nicaragua* (figure 42), published in 1983, the same year as Max Singer's publication. In its physical appearance, this 64-page booklet, simply bound with a stapled card cover and profusely illustrated with of black and white images, bears comparison to *Nicaragua: The Stolen Revolution*. Like Max Singer's publication, *Dawning* was also the product of a government agency: the Instituto de información de Centroamérica y del Caribe (Institute of Information of Central America and the Caribbean), an agency of the FSLN's Department of Propaganda and Political Education (Parada 1984: 14). As a work of counter-propaganda to *The Stolen Revolution*, *Dawning* strives to present Nicaragua as a democratic, ordered, and progressive nation. This is achieved partly through its selection of images. In place of confrontational masked rebels (like those that appeared on the cover of

Meiselas' *Nicaragua*, (figure 38), the cover of *Dawning* features a portrait of a pensive, half-smiling peasant worker. His rifle is held loosely, rather than gripped ready for action, and the photograph's shallow depth of field, which renders the background slightly out of focus, contributes to the intimacy and repose of the scene. The camera gazes slightly downwards onto the worker, emphasising his unthreatening nature. He, in turn, gazes upwards out of the frame, as though towards a better future for his nation.

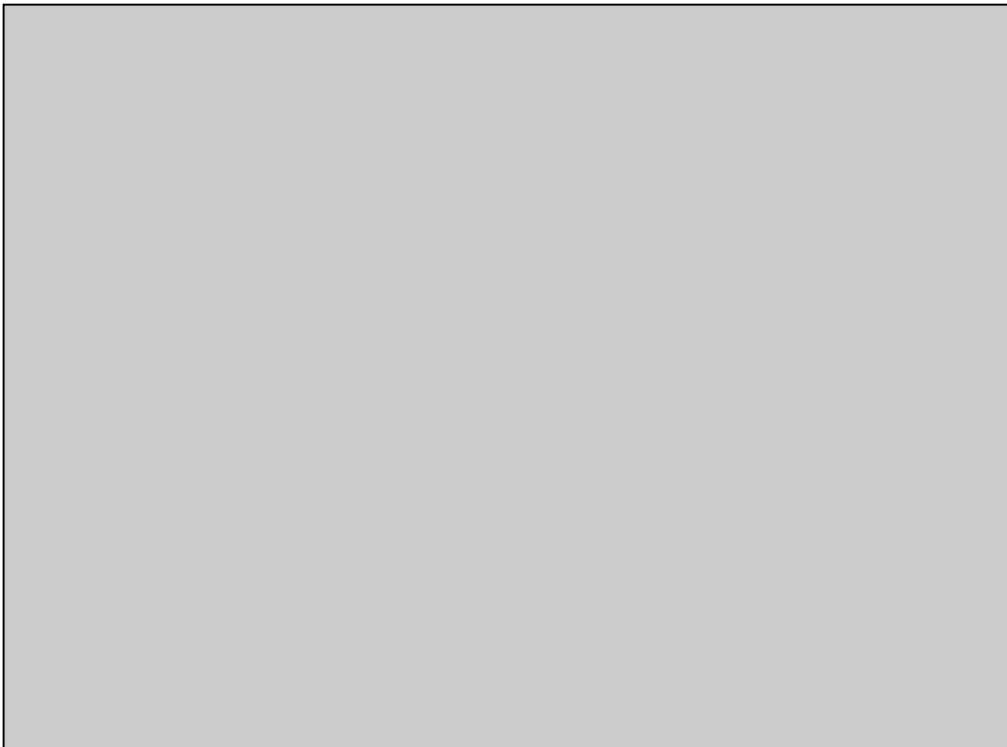


Figure 43. Page 62 of the booklet *The Dawning of Nicaragua* (1983)

Image by Adriana Ángel
Published in Managua by the Instituto de información de Centroamérica y del Caribe
(Institute of Information of Central America and the Caribbean)

Inside the booklet, images consistently uphold positive viewpoints on Nicaragua. A woman is depicted picking coffee shoulder-to-shoulder with a male *compañero* (figure 43). The woman's face is uplifted and absorbed in her task. Although presumably back-breaking and monotonous work in reality, the pose emphasises the dignity of labour. The coffee plants, which fill half the image frame, and the abundance of beans in the woman's basket, suggest a natural

bounty that contradicts the rumours circulating in the US media of an FSLN-prompted agricultural crisis. Other images in the booklet show people working alongside each other to rebuild their country. Buildings are constructed; farmers sow corn; and children learn to read. Steadfastly resisting suggestions of disorder, *Dawning* offers an affirmative narrative. Rather than show the violence of revolution, the images portray victory celebrations, and post-revolution reforms and progressive initiatives. Collectively, the image-content of the booklet conveys the Nicaraguan people as peaceful, industrious, and united.

The efficacy of images alone to convince the viewer, however, is not taken for granted, and *The Dawning of Nicaragua* assiduously steers readers towards a specific interpretation. The images are anchored by captions, the narrative of the book is divided into clear sections with headings to orient the reader, and the body text offers an accessible account of the progress made and challenges faced by the country. The pastoral image of the coffee-picker, for instance, is accompanied by a caption asserting that workers perform their labour under constant threat of violence from Contras based on the Honduran border, reminding the viewer of US-sponsored violence. The publication concludes with an explicit plea that 'Nicaragua asks simply to be left in peace so that its people may enjoy the fruits of their revolution – may enjoy the dawning of their new society' (61). It is of no little significance that *Dawning* was published in English as well as Spanish. The appeal is clearly aimed at US citizens to persuade them to oppose their country's intervention in Nicaragua.

What is notable about *The Dawning of Nicaragua* is that almost all its contributing photographers were female. The publication brought together images by a multi-national cohort of women photographers: Margarita Montealegre and Claudia Gordillo (Nicaragua); Adriana Ángel (Colombia), Margaret Randall (US), Deborah Barndt (Canada), Cordelia Dilg (West Germany) and Fiona Macintosh (UK). Only one image in the entire publication was credited to a man.²⁵ That the FSLN should endorse an almost entirely female roster of photographers for this international advocacy project is striking. Moreover, the fact that the gender of the photographers went entirely unremarked in the publication indicates a divergence from the orthodox masculinity of the 'Capa mode', in which women photographing in the context of

²⁵ US freelance photojournalist Larry Boyd.

conflict are singled out as aberrations. To account for such a project, the context from which it emerged must be understood.

Compañera photographers and the 'photographic scene'

To garner international opposition to US aggression, the Sandinistas mounted a counter-propaganda campaign in which disseminating their version of the 'truth' was paramount. The FSLN government pragmatically drew a distinction between the belligerent Reagan administration and a potentially divergent US public and Congress, correctly surmising that gaining support of the latter two would be vital to survival. Nicaraguan government officials and state agencies instigated a range of initiatives to elicit international support (Perla 2009: 84–85). Many of these enabled US citizens to by-pass the information disseminated by pro-Reagan platforms in order to form their own opinions. FSLN initiatives included staging conferences, disseminating publications, and making links with US-Nicaragua solidarity organisations such as Witness for Peace to facilitate visits by 'ordinary' US citizens (Weber 2006: 5). This last initiative was particularly effective: between 1982 and 1986, more than 100,000 US citizens travelled to Nicaragua (Perla 2003: 84).²⁶

Individual opinion-formers were also encouraged by the FSLN to visit the country (Perla 2003: 84). These included US female activists and photographers Susan Sherman, Esther Parada, and Margaret Randall. Sherman's photographs of her FSLN-sponsored trip in 1983 featured in her report published in the feminist US journal *Off Our Backs*. She cited Minister of Culture Ernesto Cardenal's address to the Conference on Central America, urging that foreigners should 'see the truth of Nicaragua with [their] own eyes'. Sherman reported that

the Nicaraguans are obsessed with getting the truth out about their revolution, through the blanket of misinformation that has been spread about them. To them, "Truth" and "Freedom" are linked (Sherman 1983: 8).

²⁶ The gulf between the mainstream media presentations of Nicaragua and the accounts of returning visitors cannot be underestimated. Mike Clark, a member of Witness for Peace, recalls that 'coming back from Nicaragua [...] was like coming back from Mars' (cited in Smith, C. 1996: 261).

As I shall discuss shortly, this emphasis on truth and eyewitnessing had a particular correlation with photography.

By 1980, the international women's photography scene in Nicaragua was growing. Although organic in nature and clearly accommodating a heterogeneous group, the scene drew upon the related notions of *compañeras* and 'sisters' that were circulating in feminist communities in Latin America and the US respectively. *Compañera*, the feminine form of the generic/masculine form *compañero*, signifies a friend, colleague or companion: someone in the same circumstances, or who shares a common purpose with another. In the context of Latin American revolutions and resistance movements in the late twentieth century, *compañera* held socialist or communist undertones, signifying something akin to 'comrade': one who is an ally in the struggle and who holds the same political beliefs (Lugones and Rosezelle 1995: 138). In Nicaragua, the word was used as

a popular substitute for the conventional *Señorita* [Miss] or *Señora* [Mrs] in Nicaragua, where it suggests a condition of equality, one accorded women after their participation – often in active combat – in the overthrow of the corrupt Somoza regime (La Duke 1991: xii).

Beyond national struggles, Latin American women used the term to express their allegiance to transnational feminism. Foreign women participating in Latin American feminist projects also used the term proudly to indicate their solidarity. In this sense, *compañera* is akin to the Anglo-American concept of 'sisterhood' used in the same period, which signified solidarity between women as non-biological 'sisters', and especially indicated the bonds between women who supported feminism.²⁷

The notion of a transnational sisterhood as a simple unifying force that erases barriers of class, race and culture has been long exposed as idealistic and over-simplified, notably by feminist theorist bell hooks (1984). In a study of the women's movement in Nicaragua, feminist scholar Maxine Molyneux warns of the limits of cross-cultural solidarity (1985: 234), claiming that women's unity on gender issues cannot be assumed, but must be constructed. Gender historian Katherine Isbester (2002: 139) further contends that US and Nicaraguan

²⁷ For an in-depth discussion of the politics and nuances of the terms 'sister' and 'compañera' in the context of feminist solidarity, see Lugones and Rosezelle (1995).

feminisms have different connotations and each movement should therefore be understood as emerging out of discrete circumstances and historical precedents, and potentially divergent in goals and tactics.²⁸ Nonetheless, the ideal of a transnational sisterhood remained a powerful concept among female supporters of the Sandinistas.

FSLN-led Nicaragua was particularly conducive to the cultivation of photography in the name of both gendered and political solidarity, for three reasons. Firstly, women had been crucial to the revolution, and subsequently assumed key political and military posts in the new government.²⁹ In pursuit of gender equality, legislation was passed to increase women's rights and an Office of Women established, among other reforms (Whitham 2014: 206). Eager to learn from Nicaragua's gender revolution, notable US feminists such as Adrienne Rich, as well as Randall, Parada, and Sherman, went to see theory being put into practice by Nicaraguan women. The US feminists travelled the country conducting interviews, taking photographs, and attending conferences, often reporting back to US feminist journals. Susan Sherman's 1983 article in *Off Our Backs* conveys to readers the groundbreaking nature of Sandinista society and its potential to offer a gender-neutral utopia:

The relationship between social classes, sexual relationships, individuals' consciousness of themselves as part of a community is being irrevocably altered. Everything is being called into question... (Sherman 1983: 9)

The second factor that catalysed the 'photographic scene' was the centrality of culture in Nicaragua. Many key FSLN leaders were poets and artists, and plans for ambitious cultural programmes were intrinsic to revolutionary politics (Craven 2002: 117). One such initiative was the *Corresponsales de guerra* (War Correspondent Corps), established to photograph the events leading to victory and the post-revolutionary process (Ramírez 1997: 212). Upon seizing power in 1979, one of the first acts of the new government was to establish a Ministry of Culture. A further initiative, the *Asociación Sandinista de Trabajadoras Culturales* (ASTC; Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers) was begun the

²⁸ Nicaraguan feminists, for instance, often contended that the issue of women's rights had to be deferred until larger issues of social equality were achieved, in contrast to views held by US feminists (Ketrón 2010: 12).

²⁹ The roles of women in the revolution have received significant scholarly attention. For recent accounts, see Bayard de Volo (2012) and Montoya (2012).

following year (Whisnant 1995: 199; 237). The ASTC aimed to support creative production by working people, both as a means of fostering a more authentically 'Nicaraguan' culture that rejected colonial imports, and as a statement of revolutionary values (Sherman 1983: 10; Whisnant 1995: 237–242).

Befitting the FSLN's espousal of gender equality, Nicaraguan women were prominent in both the cultural worker programme and in photography. The poet and political activist Daisy Zamora served as Vice-Minister of Culture, and Rosario Murillo headed the ASTC. In 1982, the ASTC established the Unión de Fotógrafos Nicaragüenses (UFN; Union of Nicaraguan Photographers), one of six cultural state agencies (Whisnant 1995: 237). Among its female members was photographer Olga Martha Montiel, who also served as Director of International Relations with the Ministry of Culture (Parada 1984: 14). The UFN staged exhibitions at the ASTC gallery in the capital, in which women were well-represented: the first two solo shows were by Claudia Gordillo and Margaret Randall (Parada 1984: 9).³⁰ These activities and appointments underscore the importance the FSLN accorded to women photographers as cultural-political actors in shaping post-revolutionary society.

The third factor that encouraged the efflorescence of women's photography in Nicaragua was the growing international feminist photography movement. In the US, a host of initiatives emerged, including the not-for-profit group Professional Women Photographers (1975); the women-only workshop programme the Ovulars (1979); the network Women in Photography International (1981); and the journal *The Blatant Image: A Magazine of Feminist Photography* (1981).³¹ The Sandinista commitment to gender equality, and the credibility of women as cultural producers in Nicaragua, chimed with the aspirations of feminist photographers, who championed the validity of women behind, rather than in front of, the camera. One tangible indication of a shared ethos was the prohibition of advertisements in Nicaragua 'that utilise[d] women as a sexual or commercial object' (La Duke 1991: 27), a move that resonated with feminist challenges to the objectification of women in Western visual culture. In addition, the Sandinista principles of worker unity and equality dovetailed with the tenets

³⁰ For details on Gordillo's exhibition, see Parada (1984: 10) and Selejan (2014c: 55–60).

³¹ For details of these initiatives, see Corinne (2003), 'Professional Women Photographers: Our History' (2016) and 'Women in Photography International: History' (2015).

of feminist photographic practice, which questioned hierarchical structures inherited from patriarchy and capitalism. By contrast, feminist photographers often favoured cooperatives and modes of working that supported exchange, collaboration, and collective action (McCarroll 2005: 507–511).

The convergence of all three factors – progressive gender politics, the centrality of culture in the FSLN agenda, and the feminist photography movement – made Nicaragua a unique context in which women’s photography flourished. In this light, it is not surprising that the FSLN state agency should choose an almost entirely female roster of photographers for the international advocacy project *The Dawning of Nicaragua*. The project underscores the central position that women occupied in the political and activist sphere in Nicaragua. Moreover, the fact that the gender of the photographers went entirely unremarked in the publication indicates the degree to which the agency of women to shape politics and the prosecution of conflict was naturalised, both within the photographic scene and in FSLN society.

This scene was markedly different from the mainstream international press photography circuit. The latter was described by Meiselas as constituting ‘male communities of travelling media bands’ (2008: 118): groups of photojournalists went from one war to another, operating as fleeting observers who would ‘parachute in’ on conflict zones, to use Rosler’s acerbic phrase ([1981] 2004: 251). Margaret Randall was particularly scathing of the shortcomings of apparently objective male journalists. She declared that they ‘came, stayed a few days in the local luxury hotel, and left’, after deriving their information ‘from conversations over drinks at that hotel’s Americanised bar’ (Randall 1991: 104). While professional photojournalists maintained the need for detached observation, Rosler and Randall argued that the position of detached outsider produced superficial portrayals of subjugated nations that replicated Global North templates of imperialism.

To be sure, some women came to Nicaragua as press photographers on assignment or in search of a story. Those from Mexico included Elsa Medina Castro, staff photographer at *La Jornada*; Marta Zarak, photo-correspondent for newspaper *Unomásuno*, and Maritza López, whose work was published in *Proceso*, *Unomásuno*, and *Revista 7*. Women from the US included Dayna Smith at *The Washington Post*; Sylvia Plachy at *Village Voice*; and Maria

Morrison, a 'stringer' (casual correspondent) for United Press International.³² Some female photojournalists conformed to the orthodox template of objective outsider, and came and went without becoming involved in the struggle. Susan Meiselas's methodology was a mixture of both sustained observation and objectivity. She placed emphasis 'on *staying* – as opposed to coming and going like many photojournalists did' (cited in Lubben 2008b: 115), remaining in Nicaragua for thirteen months and developing sympathy towards the Sandinista cause. Nonetheless, she declared herself 'an outsider' who was first and foremost 'a professional photojournalist' (Meiselas and Karlin [1985] 2008: 228). As such, she refused to be drawn in to any personal involvement, and sought to maintain an objective view on the struggle.

Other women photographers, by contrast, were closely integrated into Sandinista society. Native Nicaraguans included Rossana Lacayo, María José Álvarez, Celeste González, as well as Margarita Montealegre, who joined *La Prensa* in 1977, and was the nation's first female press photographer. Expatriate photographers returned to Nicaragua after the overthrow of Somoza: Olga Martha Montiel, who returned from Canada and became a member of the UFN, and Claudia Gordillo, who had studied in Italy before joining the War Correspondent Corps in 1982. Adriana Ángel, a Colombian photographer and film-maker, was already living and working in Nicaragua.³³ These women had a stake in the future of their country, and in how photographic representations could shape that future.

Other women photographers came from abroad, driven in part by solidarity activism. US photographer Michelle Frankfurter worked for the UK press agency Reuters, but also provided images for Witness For Peace. West German photojournalist Cordelia Dilg provided images to the mainstream press, but prioritised images for FSLN projects. Wendy Watriss, also from the US, was a

³² Sources for biographical information are as follows: Elsa Medina Castro (Rodríguez 2009; Mraz 2009: 216–218); Marta Zarak (Eder de Blejer 1982; Flores 2008: 74); Maritza López (Casanova 1980; Krinsky 2012: 154); Dayna Smith ('Dayna Smith' n.d.); Sylvia Plachy 'Guggenheim Fellows: Sylvia Plachy' (2015); Maria Morrison (Davis, P. 1987: 112).

³³ Sources for biographical information are as follows: Rossana Lacayo (Parada 1984: 13; 'Entrevista' 2014); María Jose Álvarez (Quirós 1999; Guardián and Kauffmann 2014); Celeste González (Quirós 2000); Margarita Montealegre (Del Cid 2011); Olga Martha Montiel (Parada 1984: 14); Claudia Gordillo (Guardián and Kauffmann 2014; Selejan 2014d: 96–97; Martínez Rivas 2004); Adriana Ángel (Parada 1984: 13; Ángel and Macintosh 1987).

freelancer and antiwar activist. Donna De Cesare provided images for leftist political magazine *Mother Jones*. Shoshana Rothaizer was a contributor to feminist journal *Off Our Backs* as well as an active member of the US organisation Professional Women Photographers. Some women were aligned to the activist art scene, including Esther Parada, a former art instructor for the US Peace Corps in Bolivia. Still others had interests in sociology and international development, including the British women Alison Rooper, a television researcher, documentary filmmaker, and social scientist; and photographer and film-maker Fiona Macintosh.³⁴

A number of women did not identify themselves primarily, or at all, as professional photographers, but positioned themselves as feminists and/or political activists who used photography in their work. Susan Sherman, in addition to contributing to *Off Our Backs*, was editor of feminist art journal *Ikon*, taking photographs to accompany her reports on Nicaragua. Other women were firmly integrated into Nicaraguan politics and were employed in government initiatives. Margaret Randall was actively involved in the FSLN as a publicist at the Ministry of Culture, and Deborah Barndt worked for the Vice-Ministry of Adult Education.³⁵ Randall was an advocate for participation, believing that integration into Latin American society gave women special insights. As participants in the society on which they reported, she asserted, women could relate 'to situations of everyday life as workers or as mothers with school-aged children' (Randall 1991: 104). The insider perspective, she claimed, endowed women's reportage with a greater degree of conviction and authority.

The women's participation and distinctly partisan stances made them unsuited to succeed as conventional photojournalists operating as objective and neutral outsiders. Photojournalistic success, however, was not the aim of women who wished to use their photography in support of the Sandinista cause. In fact, as Parada (1984: 14) reports, some women actively rejected mainstream media as outlets for their images. Wary of the way in which their images might be

³⁴ Sources for biographical information are as follows: Michelle Frankfurter ('Michelle Frankfurter: About' 2016); Cordelia Dilg (Parada 1984:14); Wendy Watriss ('Wendy Watriss' 2014); Donna De Cesare ('Donna De Cesare: Bio' n.d.); Shoshana Rothaizer (Rothaizer 1986); Esther Parada (Parada 1993; Rajotte 2005); Alison Rooper (Rooper 1987); Fiona Macintosh (Ángel and Macintosh 1987).

³⁵ Sources for biographical information are as follows: Susan Sherman (Sherman 1983; 'Susan Sherman: Vita' n.d.; 'Susan Sherman' 2016); Margaret Randall (Whitham 2014: 206–208; Randall 'Curriculum Vitae' n.d.). Deborah Barndt ('Deborah Barndt' 2016).

manipulated, women chose to disseminate their images in books, magazines, pamphlets or as posters produced by FSLN agencies or small-scale international publishers sympathetic to the Nicaraguan cause. As a result, the women's endeavours were not determined by the press's insistence on dramatic moments of combat action, nor were women motivated to be first on the scene in order to obtain exclusive images. Instead, women chose to depict less spectacular events: the ongoing detrimental impact of the Contra War on the Nicaraguan people, the positive effect of FSLN social programmes, political and agrarian reform, and human rights advances.

Dependent upon sales of her images to the press, Susan Meiselas's relationship with other photographers was tinged with rivalry. She owned that despite her friendliness with her colleagues, her competitive edge ultimately came to the fore (Meiselas and Karlin [1985] 2008: 230). For other women on the Nicaraguan scene, however, journalistic scoops were not a priority. Liberated from competitive pressure, women worked collaboratively, and the principles of exchange and sharing informed many of their endeavours.

In fact, a hallmark of the Nicaraguan photography scene was the rejection of the single-author photographic narrative, exemplified by Susan Meiselas' *Nicaragua*. Instead, a number of women worked in partnerships or presented viewpoints of Nicaraguan women in their own voices. Adriana Ángel, a Colombian, teamed up British photographer Fiona Macintosh to produce the publication *The Tiger's Milk: Women of Nicaragua* (1987), a series of photographs accompanied by first-person accounts of women living in the Pacific coastal region. Margaret Randall co-authored numerous works of testimonial literature with Nicaraguan women including *Inside the Nicaraguan Revolution*, written with military leader Doris Tijerino and published in 1978. These projects demonstrate the desire to foster non-hierarchical ways of working that emphasised allegiances of gender, rather than nation.

Foreign women aimed to support to the Sandinista project in practical ways. Parada reported that Nicaraguan photographers were 'frustrated by the scarcity of materials and the lack of books, lectures, and other educational opportunities' (1983: 9–10). The US trade embargo had starved Nicaragua of film stock by its biggest supplier, Kodak. With no domestic production of photographic materials, photographers were dependent upon foreign contacts (Parada 1984: 9–10).

Photographic knowledge was also lacking. Few museums, academies, or cultural programmes had been established in the 150 years since Independence (Whisnant 1995: 192). With a pre-revolutionary illiteracy rate averaging 60 per cent, 93 per cent in rural areas (Randall 1981: v), Nicaraguan women often lagged behind their North American counterparts. Photographic education in Nicaragua had been extremely limited, restricting in-depth study to those – such as Gordillo, Álvarez, and Montealegre – who were fortunate or wealthy enough to travel to the US and Europe. One of the initiatives to address this skills gap was Deborah Barndt's series of photojournalism workshops, taught to adult educators under the auspices of the Vice-Ministry of Adult Education. Nicaraguan photographers were also constrained by political obligations, such as performing military service due to the war against the Contras. As a result, Nicaraguan women had limited time to take or archive photographs (Parada 1984: 14). International women were in a position to help, by supplying their own images to be used in FSLN projects such as *The Dawning of Nicaragua*.

Harder to trace, but no less important, was the flow of ideas and experiences between Nicaraguans and foreign women, shared informally via conversations between co-workers or friends. In this way, US and other international women learned about radical gender politics in action from the experiences of their Nicaraguan colleagues. While I do not imply that the dynamics of such North-South relationships were necessarily unproblematic, the acts of collaborations and exchange demonstrate an appetite to exchange, share, foster dialogue, and help in the shared project of political solidarity and feminism.

Photography as 'truth' and 'testimonio'

As discussed earlier, at the time of the Nicaraguan conflict, the truth-value of documentary photography was being called into question by Anglophone photo-theorists. Ironically, it was precisely at this time that photography's assumed veracity was co-opted by Latin American revolutionary struggles. *Fotografía testimonial* (testimonial photography) was part of the wider *testimonio* (testimony) movement that emerged in the 1970s, particularly in relation to

Central America.³⁶ Primarily a literary genre typified by first-person narratives, often by marginalised or disenfranchised persons, *testimonio* enabled witnesses to socio-historical events to share their experiences, usually mediated through a professional editor or author. The genre was hailed as ‘a uniquely Latin American literary form, one that represented the creative vitality of Latin American culture and its power not only to alter the paradigm of subaltern representation but to effect socio-political change as well’ (Sklodowska 2005). Photography’s associations with truth and evidence, and its distinction as a direct physical register of its referent, made photography an obvious choice to perform *testimonio*. As an apparently unmediated eyewitness, photography was prevailed upon to present the ‘truth’ of foreign repression and intervention in Latin America.

However imperfect this assumption of truth in reality, photography became intertwined with Latin American revolutionary causes in the 1980s. The Biennial of Photography in Mexico City (1980) announced that ‘the Latin American crisis and liberation struggles in Central America have renewed interest in testimonial photography’ (*Catálogo Bienal de Fotografía* 1980: 20), and cited female Mexican photojournalist Maritza López, who had photographed in Nicaragua, as one of its exponents. The 1984 Nicaraguan publication *Corresponsales de guerra: Testimonio de cien días de sangre, fuego y victorias* (War Correspondents: Testimony of a Hundred Days of Blood, Fire and Victories) similarly presented images by Latin American photographers as authentic eyewitnesses and participants in revolutionary struggles. At the three major Coloquios Latino Americanos de Fotografía (Latin American Photography Colloquia) held during the period (in Mexico, 1978 and 1981, and in Cuba, 1984), leftist political rhetoric dominated discussion (Young 2005). Images of conflict and revolution were prominent in the accompanying exhibitions (Castro 1998: 63–65), which were characterised by their rejection of the formal, artistic or subjective approaches associated with imperialist US and European photography. Instead, conventional black and white photo-documentary predominated due to its apparent suitability to convey ‘the raw realities of Latin America’ (Debroise 2001: 7).³⁷ The credibility of documentary photography

³⁶ For an account of the emergence of the *testimonio* genre in Latin America, see Gugelberger and Kearney (1991).

³⁷ Selejan (2014a) argues that the divergent aesthetics and topics of revolutionary (political) versus personal (art) photography in Nicaragua created tensions.

within the rhetoric of revolutionary struggles reached its apex at the 1984 colloquium in Havana, when Fidel Castro made an unscheduled appearance, eulogising the role of photographic images in the Cuban Revolution (Young 2005: 911).

Meanwhile, the ethos of testimony was also being mobilised by the US-Nicaraguan solidarity movement. The strategies of bearing witness and of sharing testimony were central to campaigns to reveal the 'truth' of the Nicaraguan conflict to a US public apparently duped by mainstream accounts (Weber 2006: 18–19). The solidarity initiative Witness for Peace, as the name suggests, was the most prominent exponent of this tactic. Campaigns such as 'What We've Seen and What We've Heard' and 'Thousand Eyewitnesses' indicate the importance placed on visual testimony. Through these programmes, US citizens were enabled to visit Nicaragua to see what was happening for themselves and to disseminate their experiences upon return via talks, local radio and non-mainstream press (Smith, C. 1996: 261–263; 266).

The logistical challenges to international solidarity, however, were significant. In a special issue dedicated to hemispheric solidarity, the journal *NACLA* (North American Congress on Latin America) highlights the obstacles facing activists who wish 'to make common cause with people who speak a different language, who are physically far away, and who might not share the same cultural references or values' ('Reinventing Solidarity' 1995: 15). Photography offered solutions to some of these challenges. The special combination of photography's mimetic capacity and indexical nature meant that images appeared as direct, unmediated eyewitnesses, 'sliced out of the flow of events' in Central America (Desnoes [1985] 2008: 221). Images could be easily reproduced; travel as border-crossing artefacts (such as books and pamphlets); and communicate in a visual language that ostensibly needed no translation. These qualities were exploited by women in the Nicaraguan photographic scene.

There were numerous paradoxical aspects to this faith in the testimonial power of photography to communicate 'truth' in the context of US solidarity with Latin America. As Allan Sekula argued in an article published in 1981, photography is not a transparent universal language, but 'depends on larger discursive conditions, invariably including those established by the system of verbal-written

language' (Sekula 1981: 16). Moreover, the relative semantic weakness of photography had been demonstrated repeatedly by the manipulation of images of Nicaragua to support Reagan's agenda. Furthermore, Rosler asserted ([1981] 2003), conventional documentary was an essentially capitalist practice structured through asymmetric power relations, and had repeatedly proven ineffectual in galvanising real change in society and politics. How were activist photographers to address these shortcomings? Two contrasting projects by women in Nicaragua – Esther Parada's *C/Overt Ideology*, and Margaret Randall's *Sandino's Daughters* – attempted to break the documentary stalemate.

Activist artist Esther Parada chose a conceptual approach to tackle the issue of journalistic and photographic truth. Following her visit to Nicaragua in 1983, she produced a ten-page photo-text entitled *C/Overt Ideology: Two Images of Revolution*, which was published in the critically-engaged US photographic journal *Afterimage* in 1984 (figure 44). In her introduction, Parada alerts readers to the bias of the mainstream media:

What is so disturbing about the information system in the United States is that we maintain the illusion of receiving objective information and that, on the basis of this (mis)information, most American citizens support or at least tolerate our government's massive military expenditures and interference in other countries in the name of protecting our 'vital interests' (Parada, 1984: 7).

To shatter this 'illusion', Parada structured *C/Overt Ideology* as a dual visual-textual narrative that runs across consecutive pages. The top half reproduces newspaper cuttings on Central America from the mainstream US press, the ostensibly neutral and factual content of which is critiqued by Parada. The lower half offers an alternative account, composed of Parada's own photographic images and text focussing on her experiences in Nicaragua and the photographic issues she encountered.



Figure 44. (C) *Overt Ideology: Two Images of Revolution*, Esther Parada
Page 14 of a photo-text work published in *Afterimage* (March 1984)

One section of *C/Overt Ideology* highlights female contributions to photography, juxtaposing newspaper reports of the 1983 Guatemalan coup with Parada's reports on women in the Nicaragua photographic scene (figure 44). The top central portion of the page reproduces the *New York Times*'s article 'In Command in Guatemala', which features a photograph showing civilians and military personnel clustered around a tank, their faces indistinct. To the right, a full-page advertisement from the Financial Corporation of America is illustrated with a band of men from the American Revolution era holding aloft the Star Spangled Banner. The advert is captioned 'The New American is Here. \$20 Billion Strong'. The visual rhetoric of this cheerful imperialism is condemned by Parada in her accompanying critique of the *New York Times*'s failure to attribute Guatemala's current economic situation to the legacy of US intervention (Parada 1984:14).

On the lower half of the page, Parada presents first-person accounts by two women photographers she met and interviewed in Nicaragua: West German photographer Cordelia Dilg and US feminist Margaret Randall, both of whom had contributed to *The Dawning of Nicaragua*. The distinctive 'voices' of the two women in text are accompanied by their images from pro-Sandinista photographic projects. Both women reflect on the challenges of making photographs in the Nicaraguan context. Dilg recounts how her images have been distorted by the mainstream press, contending that her photograph of FSLN leader Tomás Borge 'speaking forcefully' was 'presented as though he were a dictator', (Parada 1984: 14). Dilg continues:

There are certain photos that I'll never send to Germany because I know they'll be used in an absolutely false context. For example, pictures of children with weapons – I know ahead of time what the caption would be: 'cannon fodder'... (Parada 1984: 14).

Dilg confesses that at times she opts for self-censorship, restricting the kinds of images sold to German periodicals to those that would have minimal chance of being misinterpreted.

Parada's reported conversation with Margaret Randall also reveals the realities of making photography in post-revolutionary Nicaragua. Randall cites logistical challenges faced by photographers, such as 'lack of time [and] the fact that most photographers here don't work full time'. Parada supports this assertion, stating

that she was unable to meet Nicaraguan photographer Olga Martha Montiel because she was on military service. Furthermore, Parada reports, the UFN had yet to set up a systematic archive of members' photographs, meaning she was unable to make slides of Montiel's work to share with a wider audience. By focusing on the source and supply of images, and exposing the ways in which photographic images are mediated, Parada calls for the readers of *Afterimage* to be circumspect in their consumption of images of Nicaragua in the mainstream media.

While *C/Overt Ideology* draws attention to the contributions of women photographers, Parada does not explicitly address how gender issues articulate with the interrelated projects of feminism, photography, and solidarity. Margaret Randall, whose photographs feature in both *The Dawning of Nicaragua* and Parada's *C/Overt Ideology*, was a pivotal figure in this regard. A prominent US feminist, Randall was well-versed in Latin American politics and a fluent Spanish speaker, having lived in Cuba since 1969 before relocating to Nicaragua in 1980.³⁸ Randall was perhaps the most prolific and prominent Anglophone exponent of *testimonio* in the context of gendered solidarity with Nicaragua. She authored a number of testimonial publications including *Inside the Nicaraguan Revolution* (1978), which featured the story of Doris Tijerino 'as told to Margaret Randall', as well as *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle* (1981). Randall's image depicting a group of laughing female soldiers, used on the cover of the latter book, is reproduced in the lower right portion of Parada's *C/Overt Ideology* (figure 44).³⁹

Randall believed the testimonial genre – 'the first-person narrative, testimony or oral history' – to be feminist in genesis and approach. Testimony, she claimed, offered an alternative to conventional journalism, 'another way of telling the story, a way evolved and explored mainly by women' (1991: 104), which enabled the agency and lived reality of the female speaker to be communicated. *Sandino's Daughters* presents transcribed accounts of Nicaraguan women who had lived through the revolution. Encompassing prominent figures, such as former guerrilla commander Dora María Téllez and Special Attorney General

³⁸ For a biography of Randall and assessment of her output, see Witham (2014: 206–208).

³⁹ *Sandino's Daughters* was first published in Spanish as *Todas estamos despiertas: testimonios de la mujer nicaragüense de hoy* (1980).

Nora Astorga, as well as 'ordinary' workers, mothers and soldiers, *Sandino's Daughters* makes a case for the centrality of women to Nicaraguan politics and conflict.

As well as the testimonies themselves, Randall included a number of her own photographs, many of them portraits of women in the act of giving testimony. In an isolated consideration of the visual dimension of testimonial publications, Linda Crawford (2006) argues that illustrations and photographic images reproduced alongside testimonial literature play a vital role in shaping readers' interpretations, yet these visual elements are invariably overlooked.⁴⁰ Certainly, the role of Randall's images in *Sandino's Daughters*, then and now, has gone unremarked.⁴¹ To ignore Randall's portraits, however, is to neglect the crucial role they play in the communicative and connotative powers of Randall's book. *Sandino's Daughters*, I suggest, operates as a photo-text in which images and words are mutually reinforcing, offering a double testimony. By enabling the reader to 'see' the woman who is speaking, via the immediacy and specificity of the photograph, Randall invites the viewer-reader to personally encounter individuals in particular circumstances. Although Susan Meiselas had included textual testimonies in the end section of her publication *Nicaragua*, these featured as disembodied voices with no direct relation to people depicted. By contrast, the format used by Randall, in which the voices of individual Nicaraguan women are anchored to their portraits on the same page, makes the speaking subject vividly appear before the viewer-reader.

The women depicted in *Sandino's Daughters* exude dynamism, forthrightness, and a lack of self-consciousness. Randall's portraits convey a sense of spontaneity and authenticity, as though the women had been recorded 'just as they are'. This apparent artlessness is misleading. Realism is not a quality intrinsic to photography, but is conveyed via a style and set of assumptions. The effect of artlessness achieved by Randall is in fact constructed by a series of conceptual and aesthetic decisions. Randall employs a natural, candid reportage style, rejecting the use of special clothes, make-up, or styling for her

⁴⁰ Crawford discusses several examples of testimonial literature, including Randall's mediated account of Doris Tijerino (published in English as *Inside the Nicaraguan Revolution* (1978). Crawford is mistrustful of the capacity of photographs to compromise the apparent objectivity of the textual accounts.

⁴¹ Brita Contreras (2015), for instance, does not refer to images anywhere in her study of *Sandino's Daughters*.

sitters. The women are portrayed in everyday settings and are apparently unposed, at times awkwardly accommodated in the image frame. The use of ambient light, necessitating slow shutter speeds in dark lighting conditions, sometimes renders the women partially blurred in mid-flow as they speak and gesture. Randall's editing choices, selecting just a few dozen images from four thousand frames (Randall 1980: 10), further underscores the high degree of mediation undertaken in constructing the photographic content.

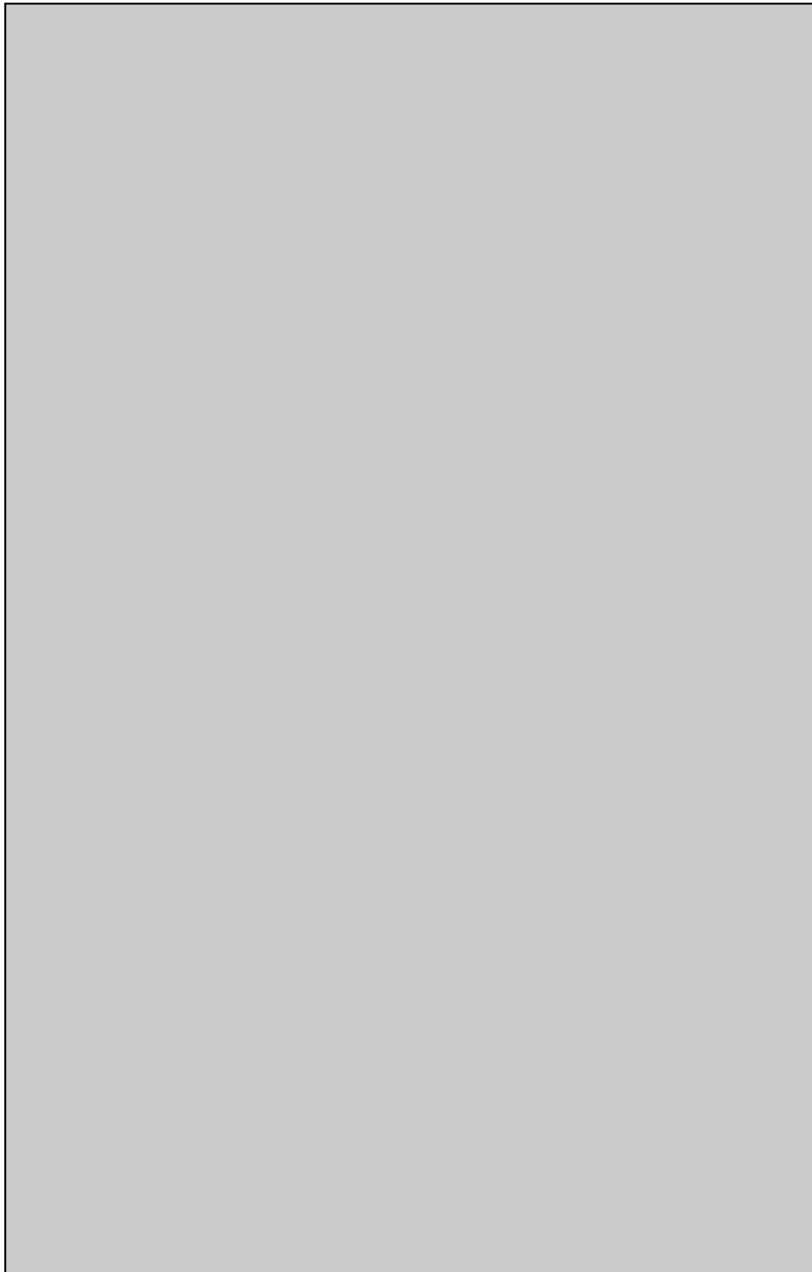


Figure 45. 'Leticia' by Margaret Randall

Page 55 of *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle* (1981)

In addition, the materiality of the book itself is well-suited to reflect what Debroise terms 'the raw realities of Latin America' in the 1980s (2001: 7). Produced as a small paperback, the book embodies basic production values, with its images cheaply reproduced as monotone images on mass-market uncoated paper stock. Through its physical qualities, *Sandino's Daughters* emits a sense of robust and unpretentious functionality. Collectively, Randall's aesthetic decisions produce a rhetoric of authenticity that endorses the 'truth' of the women's spoken testimonies.

The portraits of *Sandino's Daughters* are notable in their nuanced presentations of Nicaraguan gendered identities. In one such image, 'Commander Leticia' is depicted in military drabs, slouched in a large wooden chair with her arms overhanging the sides (figure 45). The chair appears comically over-sized in proportion to her small frame, as though she has usurped a seat reserved for a larger (perhaps male) figure. While her face and figure appear conventionally attractive and feminine, her pose – slumped in the chair with legs apart – bespeaks masculine self-assurance, rather than 'ladylike' containment. The pose recalls that of the 'hotshot' WASP depicted in the snapshot from the Second World War, discussed in Chapter 5 (figure 37). Like the female aviator, Commander Leticia eschews feminine codes of elegance. Instead, she is presented as an active participant in conflict and in the progression of world events. Her broad smile and relaxed posture suggest confidence and pleasure in recounting her FSLN career and contribution to the Revolution. Although a military actor who might properly be considered heroic, Leticia is not depicted in a formal or reverential way. Instead, the viewer is invited to participate in an intimate encounter with her as a female confidante, as well as a military strategist.

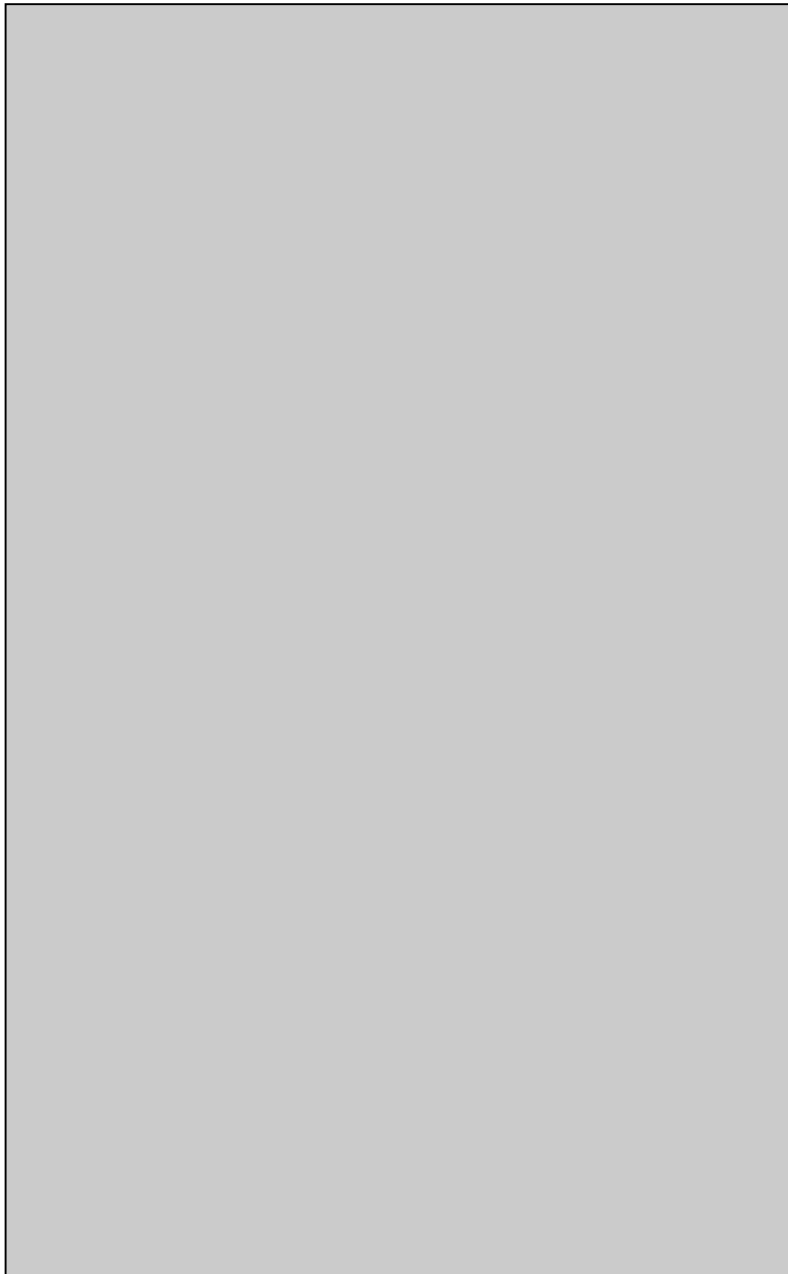


Figure 46. Image of Monica Baltodano by Margaret Randall

Detail of page 55 of *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle* (1981)

A further portrait by Randall depicts Monica Baltodano, a 25-year-old former guerrilla commander (figure 46). With her three-year old son cradled to her shoulder, Baltodano's image seems to rehearse the Catholic trope of Madonna and child, upholding the Latin American convention of the self-abnegating mother. Like the image of Commander Leticia, however, this is no stereotypical portrait of femininity. Baltodano's appearance has androgynous, even masculine qualities. She wears an unfussy checked shirt, her dark curly hair is pulled back in a practical fashion, and unisex aviator-style sunglasses almost obscure her

eyes. The everyday details captured by the photograph – the plucked eyebrows and shadows under her eyes – suggest not a timeless Madonna but a flesh-and-blood woman in a specific historical moment. In her accompanying testimony, Baltodano reflects on gender relations in Nicaragua and recounts the difficulties in combining romantic relationships and motherhood with a military career (Randall 1981: 58). Together, image and text convey the lived reality of the woman represented, rather than an idealised image. Like the other women depicted in *Sandino's Daughters*, Baltodano retains her individuality and complexity as a multi-dimensional person. Her identities as mother, lover, political activist, and soldier are allowed to co-exist, even if, as Baltodano attests, this coexistence sits uneasily with some male comrades (Randall 1981: 66; 73—74).

The portraits of *Sandino's Daughters* were emphatically feminist in their rejection of the conventional binary of masculine action and female passivity in visual culture. Although this binary may now appear self-evident or simplistic, in the 1970s and 1980s the representation of women in visual culture came under intense scrutiny by feminist visual theorists, notably Linda Nochlin ([1971] 1994) and Laura Mulvey (1975). These scholars questioned the visual convention of presenting women as passive objects for male consumption, whereby, Mulvey argued, 'women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact' (Mulvey 1975: 11).

Randall's portraits complicate these binaries. The women do not arrange their bodies to best display their erotic potential to male viewers, but appear un-selfconscious, wholly absorbed in the telling of their story to their female interlocutor. The women are seen to act, gesturing and 'speaking' through their accompanying testimonies, even voicing their criticisms of the post-revolutionary state. Neither sex-objects nor overlooked victims, the women of *Sandino's Daughters* are conveyed as active participants in the forging of their country's new society.

It is of course possible that Randall, by virtue of her gender, may have elicited from her female subjects a different response to that of a male photographer, and that all-female interaction might have produced increased candour and

intimacy.⁴² However, I argue that intimacy is socially produced rather than a function of essentialist notions of womanhood. Gender alone was not sufficient to guarantee Randall the special connection she elicited from her sitters. Far more relevant was Randall's status as a feminist, Spanish-speaker, and prominent activist who had proved her long-standing political commitment in Cuba. Randall had all the credentials of a true *compañera*, fitted to understand the concerns of Nicaraguan women, speak on their terms, and share in their debates, struggles, and victories. Moreover, Randall was in the country at the invitation of FSLN Minister of Culture Ernesto Cardenal, and was supported by the prominent Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses Luisa Amanda Espinoza (AMNLAE, Luisa Amanda Espinosa Nicaraguan Women's Association). Randall's status as an internationally esteemed intellectual and officially-invited ally of Nicaragua, together with the book's intended audience of leftist and feminist readers, clearly generated a comradely environment in which the women depicted were ensured of a sympathetic reception among transnational *compañeras*.

Although *Sandino's Daughters* was not addressed to an exclusively female audience, its feminist ethos resonated with women in the US. By 1983, when the book was released, Nicaragua had become something of a crucible for feminist politics. Support of the FSLN came to be seen by the international feminist community as virtually synonymous with support of feminism itself (Rich 1983:10; Sherman 1983: 10; Witham 2014: 200). In an account of women's solidarity film-making in the US, Nick Witham argues that feminism was seen to transcend the distinct socio-political contexts of the US and Nicaragua. By opposing US intervention, he asserts, 'American women activists also felt that they were making a contribution to the growth of international feminism' (Witham 2014: 200). Female photographers similarly upheld the perception that support of feminism and the FSLN were interchangeable. Susan Sherman, whose photographs of her visit to Nicaragua in July 1983 appeared in feminist journal *Off Our Backs*, declares that

I came away from Nicaragua more than ever convinced and conscious of the fact that our struggle as women, as human beings,

⁴² Alfonso Zamora and his sons are acknowledged as providing 'help with photography' (Randall 1981: viii–ix) and may have been present at some of the sessions. Nonetheless, their role as assistants is itself an assertion of Randall's persona as a woman in charge.

and the struggles of the Nicaraguans is the same struggle, against the same oppressive forces, both internal and external. (Sherman 1983: 10)

This conflation of feminism with the Nicaraguan struggle was a powerful tool in the US-Nicaragua solidarity movement. Randall's presentation of Nicaraguan women as liberated citizens in a progressive society highlighted the dilemma that confronted US audiences. How could their nation maintain its self-proclaimed role as upholder of global democracy, while simultaneously opposing a democratically-elected government that supported gender equality and the advancement of women's liberation? Jillian Ketron (2010: 2) hypothesises that this paradox was exploited by the wider US-Nicaragua solidarity movement to recruit support. Beyond the call for peace, Ketron argues, the movement aimed to persuade the public of the FSLN's policies of social justice, highlighting improvements in women's rights and participation in the public sphere. The ethos of sisterhood and gendered solidarity was promoted by both US solidarity initiatives and the FSLN to catalyse opposition to US foreign policy. The Nicaraguan women's organisation AMNLAE, for instance, produced specially-targeted pamphlets and brochures, and frequently sent representatives to the US to elicit more support for the Sandinistas from women's groups (Ketron 2010: 12). In this way, the global project of gender equality was strategically mobilised to provide women with both the justification, and reward, for resistance to Reagan.

Published in the year Reagan assumed the presidency, *Sandino's Daughters* was presented as an explicit call-to-arms. In her preface, Lynda Yanz (1981: i) asserts that the book is being published 'at a time when the Nicaraguan Revolution is facing a serious threat from the "destabilisation" policies being promoted and financed by the Reagan administration'. More than a mere record, she declares, *Sandino's Daughters* is a 'tool' that can assist in opposition to foreign intervention in Nicaragua (Yanz 1981: i). These claims might seem ambitious given that the book was a product of small-scale political publisher New Star Books in Vancouver, Canada, in tandem with the radical cooperative Zed in London. To some extent, the book preached to the converted – US feminist solidarity sympathisers – but it also sought to catalyse action. With its publishers marketed towards radical, feminist and leftist readerships, *Sandino's Daughters* reached a vocal and proactive US audience that had considerable will and determination to oppose Reagan's policy. The book was New Star's

best-selling title for many years, and according to Randall elicited 'the greatest number of excited letters' of all of her titles (Randall 1995: i, vii). The publication subsequently ran to a further four editions between 1982 and 1985, amounting to some thirty thousand copies, demonstrating its impact on US audiences.⁴³

Randall's impact is evidenced by the attempts made by US government agencies to curtail her influence. Her books were condemned as communist and dissident (Grossman 1987), and in 1985 US Immigration contested her right to residency. *Off Our Backs* reported that Randall was described by federal lawyer Fred Vacca as 'a propagandist employed by Castro and [...] the damage she had done to political and national interests of the U.S. could not be precisely measured' ('Randall Regains Citizenship' 1989: 8). Although Randall eventually avoided deportation due to a legal technicality, the incident makes clear that her work, of which *Sandino's Daughters* was the best known (Salisbury 1986), was considered influential enough to constitute a real threat to the Reagan administration.

Randall, along with many of the women that featured in *Sandino's Daughters*, would later be highly critical of the failures of the FSLN to fully develop the promise of its feminist agenda. A sequel publication, *Sandino's Daughters Revisited* (Randall 1994), reveals the ways in which patriarchal structures continued to shape women's lives, and conveys Nicaraguan women's frustration at the stalled project of gender equality. This subsequent disillusionment notwithstanding, the portraits of *Sandino's Daughters* offer a powerful portrayal of women's empowerment and political agency at a particular historical moment: a corpus of images that remains compelling even today.

Conclusions

My examination of the women's photographic scene in Nicaragua has argued for the high degree of political engagement and commitment of its participants, and highlighted their efforts to make a difference through projects of

⁴³ The book was reprinted by Zed 1982; by New Star books in 1983, 1984 and 1985. It had first been published in Spanish in Mexico City by Siglo XXI Editores S.A in 1980. A Portuguese translation was published by Global in Sao Paulo in 1982; a Turkish translation by Metis in Istanbul; and a partial version in the Dominican Republic (undated). See Randall (1995: vii).

transnational gendered solidarity. The significance of the scene, however, lies not only in how women contributed to solidarity activism, but in how they adopted alternatives to masculinist war photography. From the early 1980s, the US photography intelligentsia had debated the shortcomings of photo-documentary, wondering how to answer Rosler's ([1981] 2003: 271) call for a 'real' and 'radical' documentary' that could support the oppressed. Women photographers on the ground in Nicaragua, I suggest, developed projects that offered practical responses to Rosler's call. In contrast to Susan Meiselas's *Nicaragua*, with its emphasis on dramatic events in the combat zone captured by an outsider, women's projects eschewed the 'Capa mode'. *The Dawning of Nicaragua*, *Sandino's Daughters*, and *C/Overt Ideology*, though divergent in specifics, each examined the ongoing impact of revolution and conflict, and conveyed the photographic viewpoints of committed participants in the struggle. The three projects employed a range of non-conventional strategies to this end: the deployment of testimonial devices; critique of propaganda and the mass media; and control of the mutually-influencing relationship of image and text. Collectively, these projects offered ways in which photography could support revolutionary Sandinista politics, and, by association, help undermine the repressive power structures of capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy.

Despite these radical intentions, the photography of Parada, Randall, and the contributors to *The Dawning of Nicaragua* was not particularly visually experimental. Their black and white realist images had more in common with the Workers Photography movement of the 1920s and 1930s than the more conceptually ambitious postmodern approaches advocated by contemporaneous photographic practitioners, such as the US conceptual artist Cindy Sherman, so in vogue at the time.⁴⁴ The radical dimension of the women's Nicaraguan projects, I argue, lies in the ways in which they were made and mobilised, rather than through aesthetic innovation. To be sure, in their aim to produce a rhetoric of authenticity, *The Dawning of Nicaragua*, *Sandino's Daughters*, and *C/Overt Ideology* were certainly products of aesthetic consideration. None, however, came close to matching the technical accomplishment, aesthetic ambition, and high production values of Meiselas's *Nicaragua*. This may explain why Meiselas's book is still revered by

⁴⁴ Cindy Sherman's seminal series *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–1980) critiqued the construction of female identity through staged self-portraits.

photographers and photo-historians as a high-watermark of war photography, while *The Dawning of Nicaragua*, *Sandino's Daughters*, and *C/Overt Ideology* remain overlooked. Yet as I have argued, retrospective aesthetic judgements may prove irrelevant to more pertinent questions of the efficacy of photography to achieve real change in politics and society of the period.

This discussion has also highlighted the limited international mobility of photographic theory. Edward Said (1987) has influentially challenged the assumption that critical theory is universally applicable or capable of easily crossing borders. With particular regard to photography, Andrea Noble (2008) invokes Said to caution against transposing US and European photography theory to situations in Latin America. Her examination of the use of family photography in protests against state terrorism in the Southern Cone demonstrates that Global North debates may function quite differently in distinct cultural contexts, a topic taken up in the next chapter on Argentina. My discussion here of the Nicaraguan conflict has similarly shown that US and European photographic theory may be of limited value in assessing activity in Latin America. Barthes's subjective account of the *studium* and *punctum* on the one hand, and the postmodern critiques of Rosler and her circle on the other, remain seminal and influential readings of photography. Yet, I argue, these ontological debates are not easily transposed to solidarity struggles. Far from being viewed with suspicion, the assumed truth-value of documentary photography was actively mobilised by women who maintained its powers of *testimonio*, evidence and eyewitnessing. The Nicaraguan case suggests that alternative frames of analysis to the default modes of Global North should be considered when examining photography in Latin American contexts.

It remains difficult to quantify the contribution that women's photography made to the curtailment of US intervention in Nicaragua. As David D. Perlmutter (1998) has shown in his study of photographic images and US foreign policy, it is challenging to track the political effects of images in ways that can be directly substantiated.⁴⁵ Solidarity scholars have argued that the US-Nicaragua solidarity movement and the Central American peace movement were crucial to limiting governmental aid to the Contras, and helped prevent full-scale military

⁴⁵ David D. Perlmutter's study *Photojournalism and Foreign Policy: Icons of Outrage in International Crises* (1998) explores the effects of various photographic images on US foreign policy, although none of his case studies connects with Latin America.

intervention by the US (Smith, C. 1996: 370; Weber 2006: 34–35; Perla 2009: 80–81, 94–96). By applying pressure on Reagan, solidarity scholars contend, the movement forced the administration to pursue clandestine operations. This course of action ultimately led to the Iran-Contra scandal of 1985–1987, with the result that the president was brought close to impeachment. While the role of the movement in turning public and congressional opinion is hard to substantiate, Perla claims that,

according to the Reagan administration official and key congressional leaders of the time, the grassroots pressure on Congress and the constant flow of information from this movement to the public were the principal reasons the administration's Central American policy was constrained (Perla 2009: 80–81).

While not decisive in isolation, it is reasonable to conclude that the efforts of the women's photography scene contributed to the critical mass produced by the collective cultural and media efforts of the wider solidarity movement. As part of this collective 'pressure' and 'flow', women's photographic activities helped to shape public and congressional perceptions of Nicaragua, influencing opinions of Reagan's foreign policy. The Nicaraguan case, I argue, demonstrates the zeal of women to find new modes of photographic engagement beyond the 'Capa mode', to intervene in the sphere of politics, and to participate in the larger conversation on how and why wars are fought on their behalf by their governments.

7. Pictures of Graciela: Domestic Photography and Photographic Agency in Argentina's 'Dirty War'

We retired to bed and suddenly a horrible, violent ringing of the doorbell wrenched us both from our sleep, and then another assault began: the search and seizure of our home. The first thing I remember is their screaming at me, 'We've come for your daughter' [...] From my house they took me to an empty apartment of ours... there they did another very violent search and seizure. They used some grenades to blow out the door. [...] Afterwards, back again to my house. [...] It was devastated, papers, notebooks, books thrown on the floor... They had taken away... notebooks... appointment books... photos... (Matilde Mellibovsky 1997: 226–227)

The scene of family devastation recounted by Matilde Mellibovsky marks the disappearance of her daughter during Argentina's so-called 'Dirty War' (1976–1983).¹ Graciela was a 29-year old government statistician who was abducted in Buenos Aires by military police on the afternoon of Thursday 25 September 1976, never to be seen again by her family. Graciela was one of an estimated thirty thousand people to be 'disappeared' (that is, illegally abducted, incarcerated, and killed) during Argentina's seven-year military dictatorship.² Like other mothers of disappeared children, Matilde Mellibovsky began a search for her daughter. The year after Graciela was abducted, Matilde joined with some of these women to establish a mothers' protest group: Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of May Square). During the nine years that the group was active, the Madres campaigned for the safe return of their children and made demands for truth and justice, eventually achieving worldwide recognition in the sphere of human rights. To help their cause, the women adopted a number of protest tactics, including the use of photographs of disappeared loved ones. The Madres ushered in a new mode of women's photographic engagement with

¹ Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (1992: 240) highlights the problematics of the name 'Dirty War', which was employed by the Argentina military to justify a war against subversion and 'cleanse' the country of dissidents (by implication, 'the dirt'). 'Dirty War' suggests a war of equal sides rather than a unilateral assault on civil society; alternative terms, such as state terrorism or genocide, are commonly used by victims to denote the period of violence. However, as Bejerano (2002: 146) asserts, some families and human rights activists have subsequently re-claimed the term 'Dirty War' and deflected it back onto the state, to emphasise the *junta's* illegal war against innocent people. Scare quotes are used throughout this discussion in recognition of the subjectivity of the term. Capitalisation distinguishes between the historical conflict ('Dirty War') and the generic mode of warfare ('dirty war').

² The actual figure is disputed. The figure of thirty thousand has the greatest currency in Argentine human rights circles (Feitlowitz 1998: 257 n.1).

conflict, a mode that proliferated in contexts of 'dirty war' throughout Latin America from the late 1970s onwards.

The Madres de Plaza de Mayo, and the group's subsequent offshoots,³ have attracted significant attention from scholars in the humanities and social sciences with regard to human rights and women's activism (cf. Navarro 1989; Guzmán 1994; Taylor, D. 1997; Bejarano 2002; Gorini 2006; Bosco 2006; Sutton 2007). And yet, with a few notable exceptions detailed below, the Madres' prominent use of photographs in protests is considered only in general terms. Furthermore, although gendered agency has been a salient concern for scholarship, there has been little attention to the ways in which gender articulates with the women's use of photography. Nor have the Madres' photo-protests been considered in relation to war photography, despite the fundamental importance of photographs to the prosecution and protest of 'dirty war'. Consequently, the Madres' activities are frequently presented as an inevitable part of protest culture rather than – as I shall argue – embedded in, and emergent from, gendered photographic practices and the *modus operandi* of 'dirty war', a mode of conflict I shall explain shortly.

The following discussion seeks to address a number of questions. How did masculinist war photography in the 'Capa mode' (as defined in Chapter 2) fare in a situation of 'dirty war'? How did gendered constraints shape the photographic engagement of civilian mothers? In what ways did the photographs themselves enable action that would have otherwise been impossible? And how might the women's engagement be considered particularly innovative or potent with regards to war photography? In responding to these issues, I shift the debate away from the undisputed agency of the women themselves, and bring photographic objects and practices to the fore. Instead of conceiving photo-protest tactics in generic terms, or considering 'the disappeared' as a vast but undifferentiated group, my discussion focuses on three specific actions undertaken by Matilde Mellibovsky concerning her

³ There is often imprecision regarding Madres de Plaza de Mayo and its two related but separate groups. The original Madres de Plaza de Mayo (hereafter referred to as the Madres) was formed in 1977 and split in 1986 to form two ongoing groups, the Asociación de Madres de Plaza de Mayo (hereafter referred to as the Asociación) and the Madres de Plaza de Mayo Línea Fundadora (hereafter referred to as the Línea). The Asociación do not mobilise photographs of disappeared individuals and are not considered within this discussion. For an account of the split and the divergent tactics of the two groups, see Bosco (2004).

daughter, Graciela. Although any of the mothers' activities would be worthy of study, the Mellibovsky case has particular importance beyond the micro-narrative of one missing daughter, given Matilde's prominent role in the Madres. Examination of pictures of Graciela, I shall argue, offers insight into photographic agency: not only that of the women, but also of the photographs themselves.

By engaging with theory on the agency of objects and the materiality of photographs, I propose a network of numerous factors that together enable photo-protest activities to take place. The network approach promotes a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics between the human actors and the photographs, whereby human action may be catalysed, or simply made possible, by the existence of photographic objects. Such an assertion necessarily rejects the conventional notion of the photograph as the crystallisation of a 'decisive moment', an elegiac but inert receptacle of the past. Instead, the Mellibovsky case reveals the potential for photographs to lead lives long after the moment of their taking, and to produce unexpected social-political effects or inflect future human actions. By shifting the terms of the debate away from the sphere of human rights – the usual context in which the Madres groups' work is discussed – and into the arena of war photography, new insights emerge into the capacity of women's photographic engagement to communicate and protest the experience of 'dirty war'.

Historical and scholarly contexts

In the mid-1970s, a distinct kind of conflict began to be waged in the hemisphere. 'Dirty war' became synonymous with state terrorism and the policies of Latin American military dictatorships to target and destroy particular sections of society within a deliberately created climate of impunity (Roberts, S. 2009).⁴ In contrast to modes of conflict examined in earlier chapters of this study – the Mexican Revolution, the Second World War and the Sandinista Revolution

⁴ Although use of the term can be traced back to French involvement in Indochina and Algeria ('la sale guerre'), 'dirty war' became commonly associated with Latin American conflicts in the 1960s and 1970s (Smith and Roberts 2008: 377–78). As well as in Argentina, *juntas* (military regimes) were established in nations including Chile (1973–1990), Bolivia (1971–1978) and Uruguay (1973–1985). For a comprehensive overview of 'dirty wars' in South America, see Kohut and Vilella (2010).

– Latin America’s ‘dirty wars’ lacked frontlines that could be geographically located, or open battles or uprisings. Instead, fuelled by paranoia of political dissidence, this mode of conflict was typified by clandestine operations, state surveillance, and forced disappearance of ‘subversives’.

One of the most notorious of the *juntas* (military regimes) instigated a period of state-sponsored violence in Argentina on an unprecedented scale. Named *La Guerra Sucia* (‘The Dirty War’) by the *junta*, the conflict was framed as a response to a guerrilla terrorist threat and an attempt to wipe out all existing or potentially dissident citizens: students and nurses, trade unionists and human rights activists, lawyers and artists, among others.⁵ A range of tactics was deployed, including control of the press, illegal detention, suspension of *habeas corpus*, interrogation, torture, and ‘disappearance’. This last euphemism denotes a clandestine state killing in which the existence of the victim was denied, their remains eradicated, and the crime placed outside the protection of the law.

It is difficult to overstate the pervasiveness of ‘The Dirty War’, which exceeded the political-military arena to rupture the domestic-family sphere. The vivid recollection of Matilde Mellibovsky (1997: 226–227), cited at the opening of this chapter, testifies to the violent nature in which homes were, figuratively and literally, blown apart. Victims were often seized from their homes, and it was not unusual for groups of family members – siblings, parents, children – to be collectively disappeared. Women, including those who were pregnant, were raped; some were forced to watch the torture of their own children (Navarro 1989: 246). As a result, the familial and domestic realm could not be assumed safe or neutral territory, but became part of an extended combat zone.

The invasion into home and family, traditionally a feminine sphere in Argentina, prompted female-led resistance (Navarro 1989). In parallel with other women responding to ‘dirty war’ in the region, a female grass-roots collective came together in Buenos Aires in 1977. Named after the politically symbolic public square in which the women performed their Thursday afternoon *rondas* (circular marches), the Madres de Plaza de Mayo began to protest the illegal detention

⁵ The *junta* also used the more euphemistic term the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*, also known as *El Proceso* (‘Process of National Reorganisation’ or ‘The Process’).

and disappearance of their children and loved ones. Although other family collectives were active in the Southern Cone before and since, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo became the most prominent women's protest movement in the context of 'dirty war' (Navarro 1989: 241).⁶

Scholarship on the Madres has shown how the women moved from the domestic sphere to that of politics, to ultimately become globally recognised symbols of resistance (Navarro 1989; Gorini 2006; Guzmán 1994; Bejarano 2002). While the women's use of photographs is frequently claimed to be one of the hallmarks of the Madres' protests, such claims are often made fleetingly or with a lack of precision, failing to acknowledge how photographs are manifest, in what phase of the Madres' work they are used, or the manner in which the photograph is deployed. This tendency to generalisation inevitably limits insights into the nature of women's photo-protest tactics.

A smaller number of scholars, however, are more attentive to the nuances of the Madres' use of photographs. Political geographer Fernando Bosco (2004) examines the conflicting memorial strategies of the two (often conflated) groups that emerged after the 1986 split of the original Madres de Plaza de Mayo: the Línea Fundadora and the Asociación. Bosco argues that visual or spatial devices making reference to individuals (such as monuments or placards bearing photographic images) continue to be used by the Línea, but are rejected by the Asociación as inconsistent with their collectivist, anti-memorialist stance (Bosco 2004). Although photographs *per se* are not the focus of Bosco's account, he demonstrates the importance of precision when considering photo-protest tactics. Also paying attention to the visual dimension the women's protests, hemispheric scholar Diana Taylor (1997, 2002, 2003) offers some of the most sustained enquiry with regards to performance. Taylor argues that photographs, once activated via embodied performance in the public realm, function as evidence, demanding justice and transmitting traumatic memory (Taylor, D. 2002). Both Taylor and Bosco show that photographs operate within a larger visual terrain of demonstrations, memorials, and symbolic clothing such

⁶ In Argentina, significant family collectives include the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Grandmothers of May Square), founded 1977, and Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio (Children for Identity and Justice against Forgetting and Silence), founded 1995. In Chile, the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (Group of Families of the Detained and Disappeared) was formed earlier than the Madres, in 1976. The CoMadres group in El Salvador formed in 1977.

as the women's white headscarves. As a result, however, photographs are discussed in broad terms, as categories of actions or meanings. Indeed, the photographic object itself is sometimes dematerialised altogether. Taylor asserts that, 'wearing the images, like a second skin [...] the Madres created an epidermal, layered image, superimposing the faces of the loved ones on themselves' (Taylor, D. 2002: 160). This impressionistic statement reduces the photograph to a dematerialised and generic element, subservient to the actions of the women and seemingly beyond further scrutiny.

An alternative approach makes photographs the focus of enquiry, engaging with ontological and semiotic frameworks to understand the role of photography in the context of forced disappearance. Chile-based art theorist Nelly Richards (2000) has influentially argued for the role of photograph-as-index; that is, as a representation with a direct physical or causal relationship to its subject.⁷ By retaining a structural link to their (now absent) referent, photographs function both as evidence for the existence of the disappeared person, and as poignant receptacles or triggers for memory. While essential in helping us to understand why photographs of disappeared subjects are so resonant in both artists' work and in protests, the ontological and semiotic approach tends to assume a dematerialised or free-floating photographic image through a kind of 'poetics of disappearance', rather than consider the specifics of materiality.

There are, in fact, very few studies that pay close attention to photographic objects in specific contexts. Ana Longoni (2010) offers a partial but nonetheless invaluable historicised account of the Madres and related groups' work with photographs and hand-painted silhouettes, showing how and when particular visual strategies originated and developed, and why they were later contested by various sections of membership. The way in which media presentation has reflected changing conceptions of the Argentine disappeared is discussed in Catherine Grant's (2003) examination of the presentation of photographs in films and documentaries. Also exploring media contexts, Cora Gamarnik (2010) analyses the crucial but overlooked role of press photographers in developing and disseminating the image of the Madres during the dictatorship. Andrea Noble (2008, 2009), while not focusing exclusively on the Madres, offers insights

⁷ For a historicised account of the conception of the index in photographic theory, see the chapter 'Tracing the Trace: Photography, the Index, and the Limits of Representation' in Hauser (2007: 57–104).

into the material culture of protest and the photo-op in the sphere of human rights in Latin America.

These notable exceptions demonstrate an affinity with what Elizabeth Edwards (2002) calls the 'material turn': an anthropological, rather than semiotic or art historical, approach to photographs. In this conception, photographs are not images that function in isolation or have inherent meanings, but are optic-haptic objects that are shaped, constructed, mediated and transformed through their material contexts and interactions with social structures. What remains missing, however, is a consideration of the ways in which women's photo-protest tactics articulate with the gendered photographic practices of 'feminine' family photography and 'masculine' war photography. Attention to gendered constraints, I suggest, offers insight into the potency of certain photographs to function, not as an inevitable or natural part of protest, but as a pragmatic and socially-constructed strategy in defiance of 'dirty war'.

Visibility problems: the 'Capa mode' in 'dirty war'

War photography, as discussed in Chapter 2, is conventionally considered a masculine practice, typified by dramatic images of action made by risk-taking photojournalists. Yet without a clearly demarcated combat zone, or an easily identifiable enemy, Argentina's 'Dirty War' proved, at least initially, resistant to such a practice. In fact, as Diana Taylor (1997: 119–138) persuasively argues, lack of visibility was a hallmark of the conflict. The transformation of the verb *desaparecer* (to disappear) into a transitive form ('to make someone disappear') highlights how murder was strategically reframed as a visual process of erasure. The *junta* carried out a campaign of 'percepticide' (to use Taylor's term): literally, the killing of sight. Violence was frequently clandestine, with abductions enacted under the cover of night, and victims detained in secret (though often centrally-located) torture centres. Corpses were rendered irrecoverable, consigned to unmarked mass graves or jettisoned from aircraft over the sea. This is not to say that abductions and other acts of state terrorism were never carried out in public view. However, in a climate of fear and impunity, intimidated citizens were forced to look away and 'cultivate a careful blindness' for their own safety (Taylor, D. 1997: 122).

How could conventional war photography portray the covert nature of 'dirty war'? Cora Gamarnik (2010), in her stimulating account of press photography during the dictatorship, asserts that at the beginning of the regime press photographs were characterised by their banality. She cites an image made by Jorge Sanjurjo in August 1976, which depicts of an orderly queue of families outside the Ministry of the Interior waiting to request information on missing persons (figure 47). While the photographer has recorded the fact that families were beginning to make searches, the scene itself is static, mundane and bureaucratic, unlikely to arrest the viewer or to elicit empathy or action. Moreover, it was rare for press photographs even to be published in Argentina. From the beginning of the dictatorship, newspapers were shut down or strictly controlled, journalists and photographers persecuted, and images of disappeared persons suppressed in the media (Knudson 1997; Gamarnik 2010).⁸ With few dramatic or conventionally 'photogenic' events, and barriers to publishing in the press, the 'Dirty War' rendered hypermasculine photojournalism in the 'Capa mode' a redundant practice.

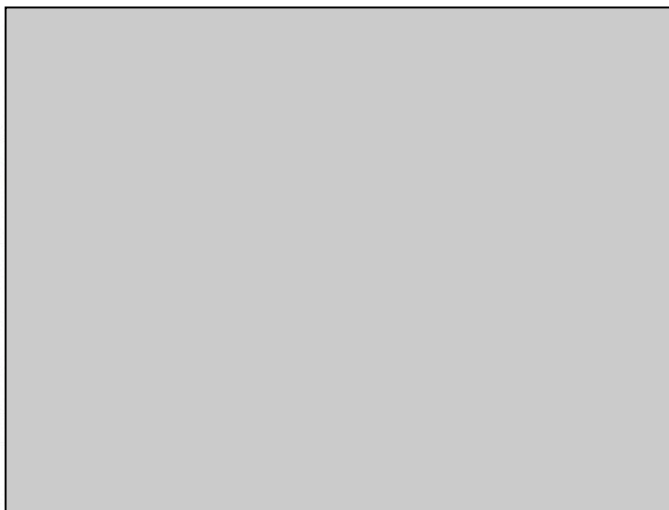


Figure 47. 'Families of disappeared persons in front of the Ministry of the Interior, 12 August 1976'

Jorge Sanjurjo
Source: Archivo Crónica /
Gamarnik (2010)

⁸ The dictatorship kept strict control over the national press, immediately closing down dissenting newspapers and publishers, and in April 1976 issued a notice forbidding, among other acts, the reporting of missing persons (Knudson 1997: 101). Other newspapers, such as the three main nationals, *Clarín*, *La Nación* and *La Prensa*, actively colluded with the government by both denying censorship and condoning military repression (Knudson 1997: 100). Photojournalists with left-wing sympathies were persecuted: some kidnapped and killed, and others driven into hiding or exile. The Sanjurjo image, in fact, remained unpublished until 2006 (Gamarnik 2010).

Nonetheless, photographs played a vital role in struggles between state and citizen as the conflict unfolded. Many of the photographs that were enlisted, however, came from the realm of domestic photography, by which I mean civilian, everyday, family or personal photography.⁹ Instead of the hypermasculine photojournalist, a new figure emerged, characterised by her femininity: the protesting civilian mother. To account for how this happened, it is necessary to understand the ways in which the 'Dirty War' affected women in Argentina, and how the conflict displaced 'feminine' practices of photography.

Brandishing photographs: the protesting civilian mother

The tactic of holding up a photograph depicting a disappeared family member (figure 48) has become an iconic gesture in the hemisphere and beyond (Noble 2008). According to Chilean writer and critic Ariel Dorfman, 'marching women brandishing a black and white photo have become so natural to our eyes' that they constitute a brand as familiar as 'the Golden Arches of Macdonalds' (Dorfman 2010: 2). I want to unpick this naturalisation, to consider the specific context from which the iconic gesture emerged, and the gendered photographic structures that shaped it. The fact that it is usually a woman, and usually a mother, who brandishes the photograph of the missing person bears closer examination.

A full history of the iconic gesture in the context of war – the woman brandishing a photograph a person killed in conflict – has yet to be written. Its genealogy may, however, be traced back much further than the Madres. As Batchen (2004:12) and Noble (2009: 75) have noted, early daguerreotypes often portrayed sitters holding an image of a deceased loved one. The device

⁹ A distinct order of photograph used by the Madres is the ID photograph. Richard (2000) discusses the ways in which the potentially repressive ID photograph, designed to categorise and control the citizen, is deflected back on the state in the wake of forced disappearance to claim existence of the missing person. Although my own discussion does not focus on the connotations of this kind of photograph, there are parallels to the way in which the ID photograph emerges from the domestic and civilian realm: the ID photograph is a personal possession of the disappeared subject, similarly brandished by a civilian mother. Furthermore, many photographic images used in the Madres' protests that appear to be ID photographs are, in fact, details cropped from domestic photographs, as I argue later in this discussion.

becomes particularly poignant in the context of war, when lives are cut short, as can be seen by the proliferation of US Civil War-era portraits of widows, mothers and orphans posing with daguerreotypes or ambrotypes of lost husbands, sons or fathers (figure 49). This visual device, however, is memorial rather than confrontational, seeking to commemorate loss rather than make demands.

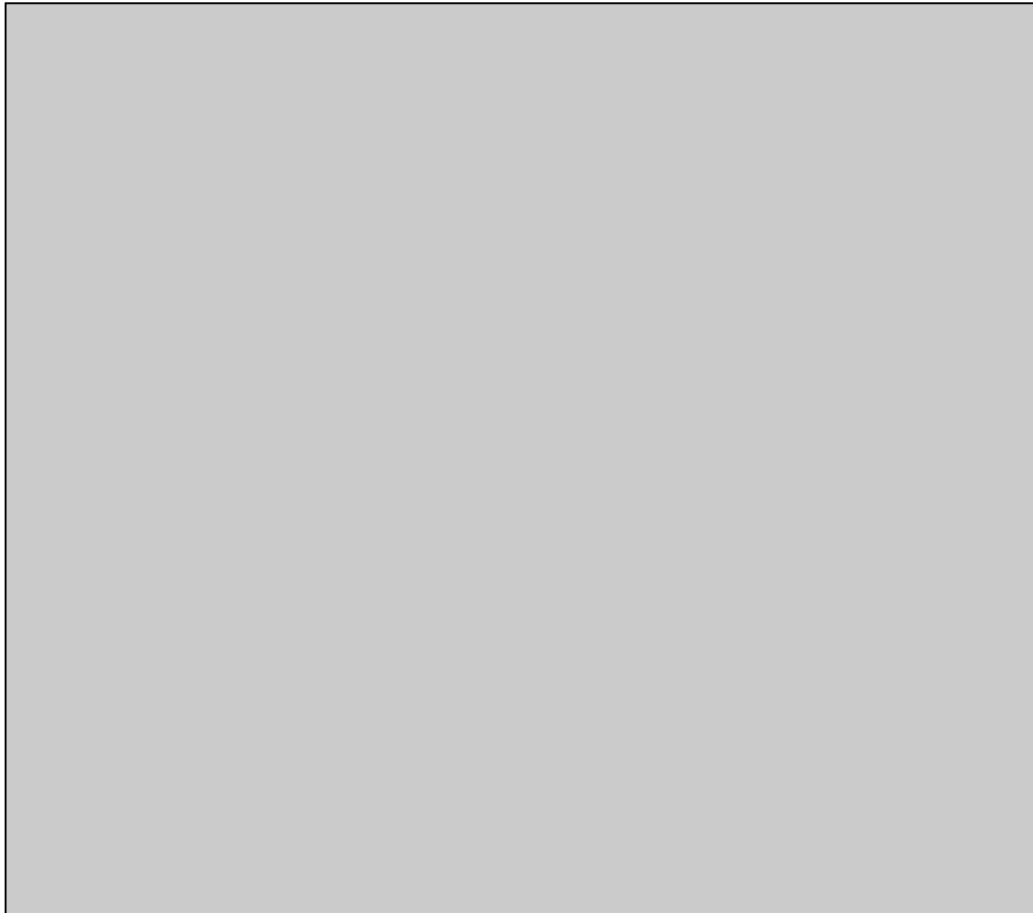


Figure 48. 'Madres de Plaza de Mayo', 1981, Eduardo Longoni

Matilde Mellibovsky holds up a snapshot of her daughter, Graciela
Reproduced by permission of the photographer

It is not clear when the gesture was first employed in a protest capacity, but it was certainly in use by the late 1970s in Latin America. The Madres may not have inaugurated the tactic, as is often assumed. Chilean scholars claim that the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD; Group of Families of the Detained and Disappeared) was the first women's protest group to strategically mobilise photographs of disappeared family members, during a hunger strike conducted at the United Nations building in Santiago, Chile, in June 1977 (Dorfman 2007: 2; Peñaloza 2001). Ana Longoni (2010: 5). claims

that in Argentina the women initially held up photographs in a purely practical capacity, as aids to identification when making missing persons enquiries at police stations, hospitals, churches, and government offices. It was only later that members began to use photographs more consciously, making small posters with photographs or wearing them on their bodies during their marches or on visits to officials, although Longoni does not specify exactly how or when (6). By 1981, the Madres were holding up family snapshots and other photographs of the disappeared to onlookers at their public marches and demonstrations, as can be seen in the photograph of Matilde Mellibovsky made by Argentine press photographer Eduardo Longoni (figure 48).

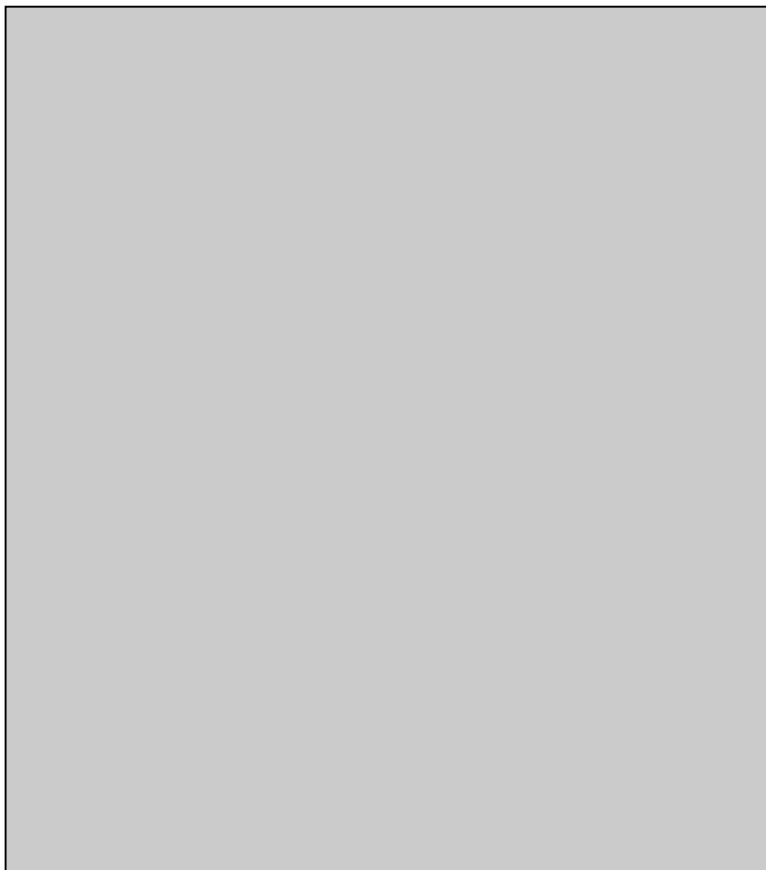


Figure 49. Girl in mourning dress holding framed photograph of her father, c.1861–1870

Unknown photographer

Source: United States Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division
Digital ID ppmsca.36863

Longoni's image depicts Mellibovsky marching in one of the Madres' *rondas* at Plaza de Mayo. A jumble of figures fills the crowded composition, but the viewer's eye is drawn to the snapshot of a young woman brandished by

Mellibovsky (figure 44). Despite the young woman's conservative clothes, she is laughing and perched on the edge of a desk, feet dangling. The occasion for the photograph is not clear: perhaps she is about to begin a new school or embark on her career. The informality of this image marks it as a private snapshot made to be shared with friends or family, displayed in a photo album, or tucked into a box or drawer.

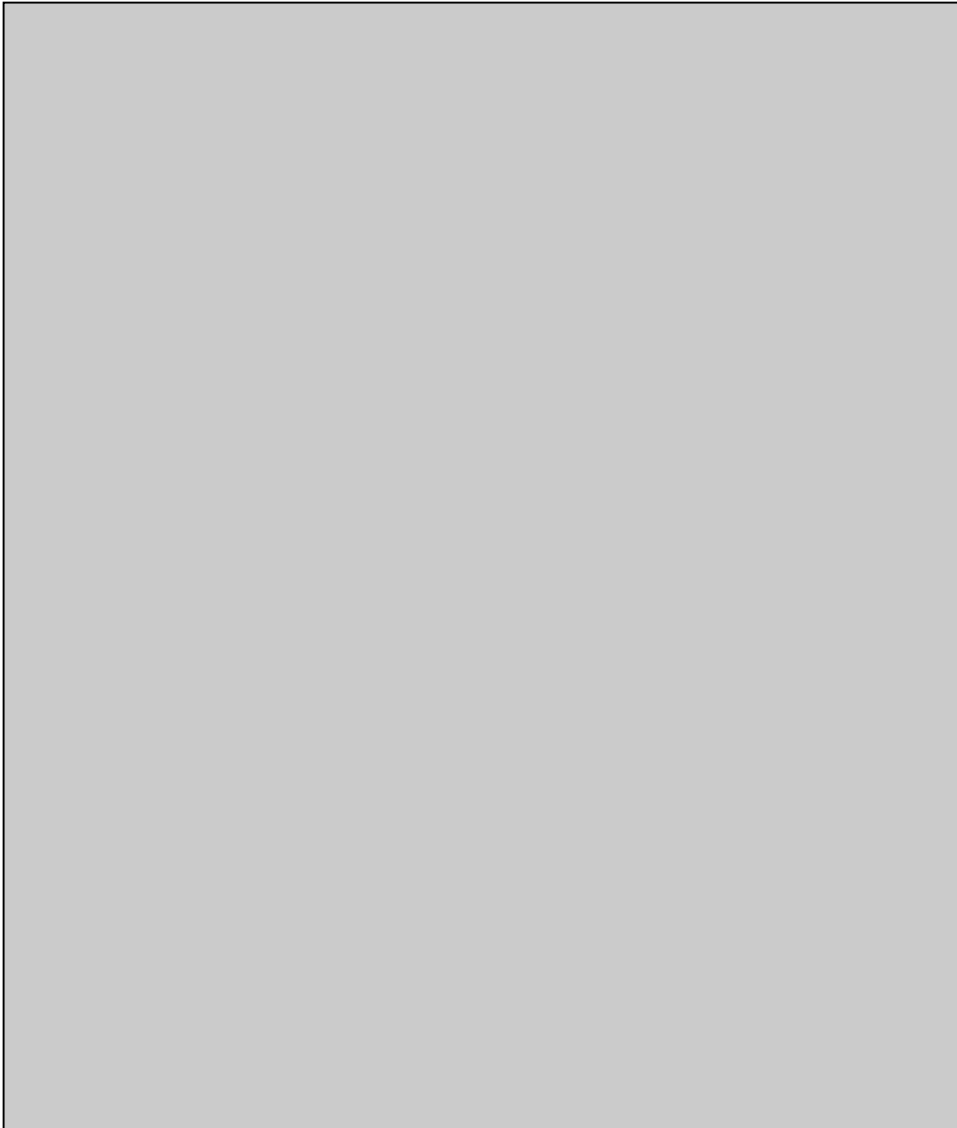


Figure 50. 'Madres de Plaza de Mayo', 1981 (detail showing snapshot of Graciela Mellibovsky)

Eduardo Longoni
Reproduced by permission of the photographer

That it should be a woman who proffers the photograph of the missing person is significant. The grieving woman who awaits the return of warriors, and perpetuates their memory, is a longstanding template of femininity in war in Western culture (Gallagher 1998: 1–2; Smith, L. (1998: 69). In her account of the AFDD, Chilean scholar Carla Peñaloza (2001, unpaginated) asserts that the grieving woman template is similarly recognised in Southern Cone societies, where women are held responsible for rites of grief, burial, and memorialisation. Peñaloza contends that the role of the grieving attendant is traditionally conceived as feminine and passive, in contrast to the warrior, who is masculine and active. Nonetheless, there is potential for the female mourner to be confrontational. Peñaloza draws on the Greek tale of Antigone, a woman who defies the law and city authorities to recover the body of her outcast brother and obtain for him a proper burial. The Antigone myth reveals a contradiction, whereby women are authorised, indeed societally-impelled, to undertake mourning and burial rites, even if to do so would be in defiance of the state (Peñaloza 2001). To protest the disappeared person, claims Peñaloza, is merely compliant with the traditionally feminine duty ‘to honour [the dead] and keep alive their memory once fallen on the battlefield’.

The cultural and religious trope of the mother, moreover, has a particular potency in the hemisphere, where Catholicism and the cult of the Virgin Mary are widespread. The culture of *marianismo* (the feminine counterpart of *machismo*) promotes the ideal of self-abnegating mother, passive and subservient, devoted to her family. As numerous scholars have argued (Navarro 1989; Taylor, D. 1997; Sutton 2007), the Madres repeatedly drew on gendered conventions to exploit notions of motherhood. The civilian mother, Navarro argues was ‘politically invisible’ in Argentina (1989: 257). By framing their actions as a natural maternal response to the loss of children (or other loved ones), the women used their gendered status to legitimise protest and deflect state reprisals.

The use of the family snapshot is entirely in keeping with the traditionally feminine roles of grieving attendant and self-abnegating mother. As discussed in Chapter 5, domestic photography in the mid-twentieth century became increasingly coded an unskilled, apolitical, feminine, practice (Vettel-Becker 2005). The photography of one’s own children, documenting their lives growing up, was a particularly prominent strand of domestic photography. The practice

followed traditional gendered templates in modern Western, including Southern Cone, societies for women to be designated the keepers of family memory (Peñaloza 2001), producers of albums and photographic keepsakes (Batchen 2004: 93), and compilers of genealogical bibles and scrapbooks (Snyder 2006).

To return to the Longoni photograph, its emotional power can be partly accounted for by the painful dissonance of the private snapshot made public in the most distressing of circumstances. The onlooker is appealed to, even importuned, to share in the woman's grief and perhaps act on her behalf to seek redress for her loss. And yet, although Matilde Mellibovsky brandishes the snapshot of Graciela in defiance of the authorities, the photograph remains embedded in the unthreatening practice of unskilled family photography: that is, a feminine, domestic, trivial practice. Mellibovsky's call for truth and justice – for the reappearance of her child – is framed as civilian and feminine, for nothing could be more 'natural' to convey maternal bonds than the family photograph.

Of course, a double tactic is at work via the Eduardo Longoni photograph, for its viewer is not physically present as an onlooker to the march, but observes the Graciela snapshot from a distance, as a photo-within-a-photo. Taylor (1997) has argued that the Madres' marches were highly visible spectacles, planned to attract attention not just from passers-by but also, as the Longoni image demonstrates, from the press. By using photographs in their protests, Gamarnik (2010) argues, the Madres provided what was hitherto lacking from a photojournalistic depiction of the 'Dirty War': 'photogenic' events. The dynamism and human drama of Longoni's image is in marked contrast to Jorge Sanjurjo's earlier image depicting a sedate queue of people outside the Ministry of the Interior (Figure 41).

As Andrea Noble (2008: 48) asserts in her account of the iconic gesture in the field of human rights, if protests are to go beyond the local, they depend upon the presence of photographers and film crews to disseminate them more widely. None of the women, however, was a professional photojournalist. Consequently, they did not themselves document their protests or produce photographs for media distribution. Instead, with an astuteness that belies their image as 'ordinary' mothers, the Madres cultivated a close and strategic relationship with the press (Gamarnik 2010). The women informed photographers in advance of their activities to ensure adequate representation, and staged protests to

coincide with events that would attract the international press, which was allowed much greater freedom than the Argentine media.¹⁰

The potential media dissemination of this double visibility – both the Madres' protests and the photographic proof of the disappeared that they brandished – was clearly an embarrassment and threat to the *junta*. Military police sought out photojournalists at demonstrations, seizing film rolls, breaking cameras, and even physically assaulting or detaining photographers (Gamarnik 2010). Nonetheless, photographs were published in the international press from 1977 onwards (Gamarnik 2010), and even within Argentina, a handful of photographers and editors attempted to afford visibility to the Madres. Eduardo Longoni managed to distribute his image of Matilde Mellibovsky brandishing the snapshot of her daughter through the agency *Noticias Argentinas*, and the photograph was published by a provincial newspaper.¹¹ From October 1981, moreover, independent exhibitions in Argentina began to show unpublished or censored press photographs (Gamarnik 2010). As the Madres' protests gained momentum, press photography of their activities would provide a vital means of making their protests public on a national and global stage, and they increasingly sought visual strategies to that would be media-worthy (Longoni, A. 2010).

The women's successful press strategy demonstrates the active role they played in shaping their own photographic representation and the visual dissemination of their ongoing struggle against the military dictatorship. Although they themselves did not take pictures, nor exert total control over the ways in which they were depicted, the Madres' relationship with press photographers complicates notions of photographic agency. Patricia Hayes, whose conception of women's conditions of visibility is discussed in Chapter 1, cautions against a photographic gaze that is 'invasive and immediate, effecting a gendered extraction' (2005: 522–23). Far from being depicted against their will, it is clear that the Madres explicitly sought to be made visible. The women performed for press cameras with a view to achieving political ends.

¹⁰ The women's protest at the visit of the US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in November 1977, for example, resulted in a photograph that was circulated by American news agency, Associated Press, and reproduced in international newspapers (Gamarnik 2010). Due to tight control of the national press, until 1981, the Madres remained better known internationally than in Argentina.

¹¹ Personal correspondence with Eduardo Longoni, August 2011

The double-layered strategy taken by the Madres – the display of domestic photographs and cultivation of press coverage by professional photojournalists– constitutes a distinct mode of photographic engagement with war to that of the ‘Capa mode’. Although the women operated under the aegis of civilian mothers seeking the whereabouts of their missing children, they developed a tactical and considered relationship with photography. By capitalising on the snapshot’s embeddedness in gendered structures, the Madres found a way to mobilise ostensibly apolitical photography to achieve political means. Despite not being photojournalists, the women’s directional role in staging photo-protests and garnering press coverage demonstrates the high degree of agency the Madres exercised.

Photos-on-the-march: the agency of photographs

The photographs themselves, however, also have an indispensable part to play in this command of agency, a multi-layered term that merits unpacking. The word ‘agency’ originates from the Latin *agens*, meaning to drive, lead, act or do: in short, to bring about some kind of action. In recent decades, the notion of agency has taken on political and ideological connotations within the field of cultural theory. The term is used to convey the resistance of disempowered groups, often via a compromised level of action negotiated within larger, more dominant structures (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 349; Moser and Clark 2001: 4–5). In this conception, agency is a hallmark of being human, denoting the means to exercise volition, and to be empowered to make decisions: to act in certain ways and not others.

More literally, the terms ‘agent’ and ‘agency’ denote action by a third-party or proxy, whereby business is undertaken by one entity on behalf of another. The term ‘agency’ may even imply a non-human instrumentality. An agent may provide the force behind a certain phenomenon or effect (‘an agent of change’), or be a chemically, biologically, or physically active substance that produces a material transformation. I highlight the full shades of meaning in the term ‘agency’ to help re-evaluate the role of photographs in the activities of the Madres, and pictures of Graciela in particular.

Civilian photographs – even apparently innocuous family snapshots – took on a new freight in the ‘Dirty War’. Yet while they were considered powerful as images, photographs were vulnerable as objects. Military police frequently seized photographs from the homes of abductees and their families (Mellibovsky 1997: 227; Taylor, D. 2002: 159; Longoni, A. 2010: 9). Seizures were made, in part, to supply photographs that could identify targets for illegal arrests. In other cases, military police sought to remove evidence of the victim’s existence to enable the state’s negation and denial of culpability, and to impede subsequent searches and demands for justice by the victim’s relatives. These acts paralleled the literal disappearance of the subject, removing not only the victim herself, but attempting to erase any traces or evidence that she had existed.¹² State erasure of visual evidence of politically targeted individuals is not in itself new.¹³ However, the *junta*’s seizure of everyday photographs of civilians – graduation portraits, holiday snapshots and the like – is different both quantitatively and qualitatively. This was not a selective public erasure of a handful of images of key politicians, but an expurgation of the family album. The very survival of photographs overlooked by military police became critical to the women’s protests.

While the Madres clearly demonstrated photographic agency in their protests and relationship with the press, how might the photographs themselves be considered agents? Diana Taylor (2002: 156) is doubtful of the power of photographs, conceiving them as inert objects, dependent upon being ‘activated’ by the Madres’ performances of protests. To be sure, photographs of disappeared persons are inanimate objects that cannot exercise volition in their own right. Nevertheless, as Noble (2009: 70) has proposed, such photographs do make possible actions by others that would not otherwise happen. Social scientist Bruno Latour has influentially considered the vital role of objects in his Actor Network Theory. Latour (2005) posits that events, situations, and societies can best be understood by analysing the networks that exists between all the entities (‘actors’ or ‘actants’) that constitute them, whether human or non-

¹² In addition to these tactics, undercover suspects sometimes colluded in their own erasure by electing not to produce photographs of themselves (Longoni, A. 2010: 9). Photographs taken of prisoners in detention centres were also routinely destroyed later (Brodsky 2003: 90), to erase evidence of the missing person.

¹³ The practice dates back at least to the ancient Roman government decree of *damnatio memoriae* (Bond 2011); while within the scope of photographic history, Stalin’s regime had photographs and history books retouched to remove important political figures executed during the Great Purge of 1936–1938 (King 1999).

human. Latour calls for recognition of the ways in which objects might 'authorise, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, [or] forbid' human actions (72). There are many shades, he asserts, 'between full causality and sheer inexistence' of an object: the hammer does not itself cause the nail to be hit, but the action would be impossible without the hammer (72).

Photo-historian James L. Hevia (2009), in his study of the Boxer Uprising (1899–1901), makes similar claims to Latour. Hevia proposes a 'photography complex', which constitutes a 'network of actants made up of human and nonhuman parts' (2009: 81). This network, he suggests, includes photographer and end-user; camera and chemicals; the subject that is photographed and the material manifestation of the image (2009: 81). Consequently, Hevia argues, 'photography seems to be more like a heading under which a range of agencies, animate and inanimate, visible and invisible are clustered' (Hevia, 2009: 81), in which the photographic object has a vital role.

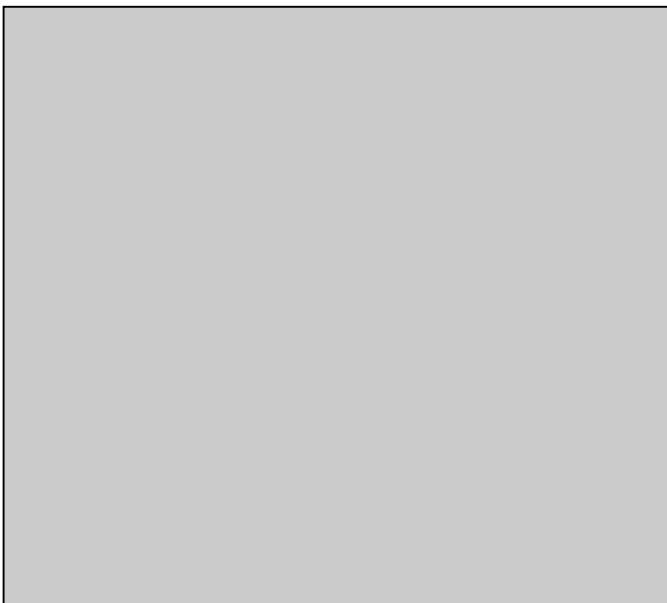
The agency of photographic objects in the context of forced disappearance, however, is more complex than envisaged by either Latour or Hevia. The actors they cite are prosaic: the hammer that enables the nail to be hit (Latour 2005: 72); the wet collodian plate that registers the image (Hevia 2009: 81).

Photographs of disappeared persons, however, clearly exert a particular power that goes beyond their material existence. The relationship between Matilde Mellibovsky and pictures of Graciela is revealing. On a visit to the Mellibovsky family home in the late 1990s, Marguerite Feitlowitz witnesses Matilde interact with photographs of Graciela as if they were her daughter. At one point, Matilde gently touches a picture, 'as though brushing a lock of hair from the young woman's eyes' (Feitlowitz 1998: 90). In her own memoir, Matilde attests to the potency of photographs to evoke her daughter's presence, attesting that 'here in Graciela's photo... she is beside me' (Mellibovsky 1997: 3).

Matilde Mellibovsky attributes a kind of personification or anthropomorphism to the pictures of her daughter that is not uncommon. Photo-theorist W.J.T. Mitchell (2005: 28) makes a compelling case for the ways in which pictures still have a primitive hold over our imaginations, and seem to possess a vitality and supernatural power that can make us both fear and worship them. This is not to suggest that pictures are literally animate; rather through our language and

behaviour, we frequently ascribe animation to them, engage with them, and interact with them as if they were living entities.

Mitchell (2005: 46) proposes the word *picture* to denote the image in its material form, as an object that has a *face* (or surface) that the viewer encounters. The notion of the personhood of pictures appears at its most viable when applied to those that literally have a face. Mitchell proposes, by way of example, the famous ‘Uncle Sam’ U.S. Army recruitment poster that accosts the viewer, and an eleventh century Byzantine icon whose face has been worn away by the devotional attentions of the devout possessor. The image of the human face appears to be key to the picture’s ability to transfix the beholder and produce an interaction or emotional engagement. Mitchell (2005: 31) argues that while ‘no modern, rational, secular person thinks that pictures are to be treated like persons, [...] we always seem to be willing to make exceptions for special cases’. Photographs of the disappeared in the context of ‘dirty war’, as the behaviour of Matilde Mellibovsky attests, seem to be just such ‘special cases’.



**Figure 51. Untitled
snapshot of Graciela
Mellibovsky, c.1976**

Photographer unknown
Source: www.sinolvido.org

With this in mind, where might such photographs be situated on Latour’s scale of agency that ranges from ‘full causality’ to ‘sheer inexistence’? One image of Graciela in particular (figure 45) conveys the force of causality that photographs might exert. Graciela appears in three-quarter profile as a strikingly beautiful

adult, dressed in a simple floral vest, her dark hair curling on her bare shoulders. Her large eyes are turned to a sight beyond the image frame and her gaze inexpressive, even enigmatic. While by default all photographs of people record their subjects looking at something the external present-day viewer cannot see, in the context of disappearance the gaze has greater weight. The photograph, according to Matilde Mellibovsky, was Graciela's last before being abducted.¹⁴ The young woman's gaze into the unknown provides a haunting metaphor for a future that will be brought to an abrupt halt.

The anterior death foreshadowed by the photograph has been a fundamental contention in ontological accounts of photography. Barthes ([1981] 2000: 95–6) influentially describes his response to an image of a condemned prisoner, who is both 'dead' and is 'going to die'. Barthes observes 'with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake', and shudders 'over a catastrophe that has already occurred' (96). Marianne Hirsch (1997), in her seminal discussion of images of victims of the Holocaust, considers the photograph's anterior death with particular regard to war. In the photographs of subsequent victims 'we see faces looking ahead toward a future they were never to have', creating a 'temporal irony [that] elicits mourning and empathy' (Hirsch, M. 1997: 267). As Catherine Grant (2003: 66) has argued in her study of the cinematic representation of photographs of Argentina's disappeared, the same order of melancholy haunts the images of those lost in the 'Dirty War'. Viewed with the knowledge of Graciela's impending death, her gaze acquires a similarly elegiac quality, her youth and beauty representing a tragic loss that the haunting photographic image memorialises.

While a Barthesian reading of the Graciela image demonstrates the undeniable pathos of photographs of the disappeared, paying attention to specific material contexts elicits greater insights. In what circumstances might the image have been taken? The simple head-and-shoulders composition, the unsmiling expression of the sitter, and the blank background are consistent with a formal ID photograph used for official documents. However, this reading does not account for Graciela's gaze which, instead of meeting the (apparently institutional) camera as expected, looks sideways out of the frame. It is more

¹⁴ The photograph is appended with the caption 'su última foto antes de ser secuestrada 1976', her last photo before being abducted, in assemblages made by Matilde Mellibovsky (CP.MPM).

likely that the image was, in fact, made in a personal capacity. Matilde's memoir describes the last family gathering that Graciela attended, on 14 September 1976, before her abduction eleven days later. A small group of family members joined to celebrate her 29th birthday, and 'her father gave her a gold chain which she immediately put on' (Mellibovsky 1997: 225). The image – the last made before Graciela was abducted – may well have been taken at this birthday gathering, a likely occasion for photographs, and shows her wearing the gift of the gold chain.

The survival of this particular image is crucial. As Matilde Mellibovsky (1997: 227) attests, both the family home and that of her daughter were raided by military police who seized photographs of Graciela, yet this particular photograph escaped detection. Perhaps, given its newness, it had not yet been displayed in a frame or album, or a copy had been given to another family member. The image may not even have been printed, remaining hidden in the camera as an undeveloped negative. Whatever the reason, the photograph's survival is critical to the work it would later perform.

The image appears to have lain semi-dormant for some years, or at least, it did not enter the public domain. Some six years after its inception, however, the image was instrumental in instigating a new order of photo-protest tactic. Although photographs had long formed part of the Madres' activities, they had generally been used on a small scale or in their original format, held up to onlookers, as seen in Eduardo Longoni's photograph (figure 48). In April 1983, Matilde and her husband came up with the idea of enlarging the photograph of Graciela and those of other disappeared persons. The couple printed the images in a small dark-room in their own home, producing a series of 50cmx70cm prints. These were mounted on cardboard on T-shaped wooden frames (Longoni, A. 2010: 6).

This simple physical transformation of the photographic image radically enhanced the legibility and visibility of the photographs. Previously, photographs carried in the Madres' marches around Plaza de Mayo were difficult to see from a distance. The new device of enlargements on placards enabled photographs to emerge above the heads of demonstrators and be seen from further away to engage new onlookers. The results were startling. Matilde Mellibovsky recounts how she carried the placard with Graciela's photo on a march with other

members of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. A former fellow student of her daughter ran to embrace Matilde, saying, 'I left my office, I saw the photos and from a block away I made out Graciela's' (cited in Mellibovsky 1997: 134). The 'March of the Posters', as the demonstration became known, inaugurated 'the definition of a visual politics: the sharp awareness of the impact that these faces – as they marched among the crowd, or rather, above it – would have on viewers' (Longoni, A. 2010: 6).

Ana Longoni's language in describing the work of these photographic placards is striking. They are no longer objects, but animated faces that march among the crowd. Matilde Mellibovsky similarly attributes vitality to pictures in her account entitled 'They Are Not Just Photographs: They Are Our Children's Faces':

This 'March of the Posters'... had great emotional significance for me [...] It was the first time that our kids had come out in the streets with us since their disappearance. While we were waiting we held the posters high so that over our heads beautiful faces appeared, youthful, full of life: our children's faces. And how did people passing by us react? At first, surprised, dumbfounded, they stopped. Their eyes remained fixed on the eyes in the photos; the posters remained immobile; immobile also the faces of the passers-by. They looked at each other. Because the photos were not simply portraits. They demonstrated an unquestionable existence that had to be restored (Mellibovsky 1997: 133–134).

Like Longoni, Mellibovsky describes the photographs not in terms of simile – being *like* their children – but *being* their children. The term 'March of the Posters' itself suggests not that women are carrying posters, but that the posters themselves are marching; the women become mere vehicles: bodies holding up other heads that are now 'full of life'. The passers-by do not engage with the demonstrating women but with the photographs, which literally stop onlookers in motion, arrest them, and still them like a photograph. In an instance of what W.J.T. Mitchell (2005: 36) describes as 'the Medusa effect' of the picture, there is an exchange of vitality from onlooker to photograph that stills the faces of the passers-by. There seems to be a two-way interaction in the way 'they looked at each other'. Finally, Mellibovsky emphasises, 'the photos were not simply portraits'. That is, they were not merely cardboard objects with printed images, but beings that made demands and 'demonstrated an unquestionable existence that had to be restored'. The combination of image as proof of the disappeared subject; the power of its gaze; and its physicality as a moving, marching object that looked down on the viewer all combined to achieve a crucial breakthrough

whereby 'for the first time our children's strong presence... was shared by the rest of the people' (Mellibovsky 1997: 134). The picture of Graciela, marching down the street, powerfully illustrates Mitchell's (2005: 31) claim that though 'no modern, rational, secular person thinks that pictures are to be treated like persons, [...] we always seem to be willing to make exceptions for special cases'.

The notion of vitality, attributed to the photo-on-the-march, brings to mind Latour's imaginative vision of the agency of objects:

As if a damning curse had been cast unto things, they [objects] remain asleep like the servants of some enchanted castle. Yet, as soon as they are freed from the spell, they start shuddering, stretching, and muttering. They begin to swarm in all directions, shaking the other human actors, waking them out of their dogmatic sleep (Latour 2005: 73).

While Latour's fairy-tale allusion is undeniably fanciful, his conception calls for greater attention to objects and the crucial part they play in human actions. The 'March of the Posters' demonstrates that photographs are never merely transparent windows onto the past, but are objects in flux that may in the future 'wake up', or more precisely, have the capacity to wake others. Film theorist Laura Marks (2004) has identified a similar process in her account of the delayed emergence of photographic and cinematic works. She compares these works to fossils: indexical traces of former living beings that surface during an earthquake or other rupture, 'bearing witness to forgotten histories'. Such photograph-fossils, she asserts, seem to possess a disturbing 'radioactivity' so that, once disturbed, they are propelled into action and may behave uncontrollably when exposed to viewers (Marks 2004: 84–85). Photo-historian and anthropologist Christopher Pinney (2003) also offers insight into the unexpected afterlives of photographs. He rejects Barthes' 'stress on the flat image's preservation of anterior temporal space'. Instead, Pinney proposes, 'the photograph is more like a message in a bottle, or like a seed: an object transmitted to the future, ready at any moment to burst forth' (Pinney 2003: 5).

I suggest that pre-existing domestic photographs, exemplified by the Graciela snapshot, possessed precisely this latent capacity for disruptive behaviour described by Pinney and Marks. Dislodged by 'dirty war' from their proper place – the family album, the photo-frame in the home – images of disappeared

persons left the domestic sphere to enter the arena of conflict. Through their work in the Madres' photo-protests, photographs of disappeared persons demonstrated the capacity to affect social and political fields, being both disturbed and disturbing.

What accounts for the belated emergence of the Graciela photograph, and its inauguration of a new order of photo-protests? It is likely that a number of historical factors coincided to cause the 'awakening'. Matilde Mellibovsky was by 1983 a key activist within the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, a group which had now been operating for six years and was continually seeking new modes of protest that would raise awareness. The *junta* had descended into chaos following the failed Falklands/Malvinas conflict in 1982. A return to democracy – with an attendant amnesty to those involved in human rights abuses – was being negotiated. By early 1983, the current president Reynaldo Bignone had loosened free speech restrictions. The protests of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo had the potential to increase in scale and visibility, and to be bolder in their use of photographs. With the lifting of repression, and the issue of impunity on the political agenda, the photograph's 'time had come', so to speak.

The 'March of the Posters' was a significant breakthrough for the Madres, being the first time that the disappearances of their children were acknowledged and questioned by the general public (Mellibovsky 1997: 134) The tactic of using enlarged photographs on placards, although by no means the only activity undertaken by the women, would dominate the Madres' activities until the split of the group in 1986, and photographs of the women's protests became widely recognised via the international media.

The picture of Graciela, of course, was only one photograph among many that had lain semi-dormant in family homes, awakening with a new significance for women. In fact, photographs of their children were repeatedly cited by members in the Madres groups as not only prompting action, but also sustaining the women's efforts over the years. Matilde Mellibovsky vividly conveys the fundamental way in which pictures of disappeared children 'spoke' to members of the Madres, urging them to continue their protests: 'the son's photograph on the night table, every Thursday it would point the way – 'Today is the circle, Mom; – to the Plaza!' (Mellibovsky 1997: 83).

To identify agency in photographic objects refutes Diana Taylor's (2007: 156) conception of inert and dematerialised images that must be 'activated' by the Madres. While, as I have argued, photographs cannot undertake actions on their own, their material existence clearly stimulated, enabled, and sustained the actions of the women. The trajectory of the Graciela picture demonstrates that photographic agency should be considered a hallmark, not just of the protesting women, but also of the photographs themselves.

Family photography and the 'exploded album'

The final part of this discussion considers more closely the dynamics of domestic photography, via a lesser-known photo-protest tactic undertaken by the Madres in the 1980s until the split in 1986. Women assembled hand-made posters using copies of family photographs and ephemera, which were sequenced into meaningful narratives, and appended with handwritten captions. The women then displayed the assemblages in parks and other public spaces in Buenos Aires, offering passing strangers oral accounts of the lives of the missing subjects (Bosco 2004: 388–38; 'Colección Pancartas' 2011).

Matilde Mellibovsky made several of these assemblages for her daughter Graciela.¹⁵ One example (figure 52) is constituted of typical domestic photos: a baby portrait captioned 'two months'; a snap of a toddler at a birthday party; a clumsily-composed shot of three laughing teenagers. None of the images shows Graciela in adulthood, perhaps because police had seized such photographs at the time of her abduction. At the centre, however, is the haunting final picture of the 29 year-old Graciela that featured in 'March of the Posters', appended with the handwritten caption: 'Her last photo before being abducted'.

The affective power of the assemblage is considerable. My own encounter occurred in the cramped headquarters of the Madres, located on a busy street close to the Plaza de Mayo. I was struck by the artefact's intimacy and tactility, which demanded my close attention and physical proximity. Born and raised in

¹⁵ Although not signed, Matilde's authorship is confirmed by Ana María García Barbará, archivist for the collection Memoria Abierta (conversation with the author, Buenos Aires 2011). According to García Barbará, the activity continues to be undertaken by some members of the Línea Fundadora, and the assemblages therefore remain in use.

Britain, I have no cultural or ethnic connection to Argentina, nor any first-hand knowledge of the experience of state terrorism. Nonetheless, I found myself drawn in to the tragic narrative of Graciela's life. I looked at the image with tears in my eyes; I was upset and angry; I empathised with the family's loss.

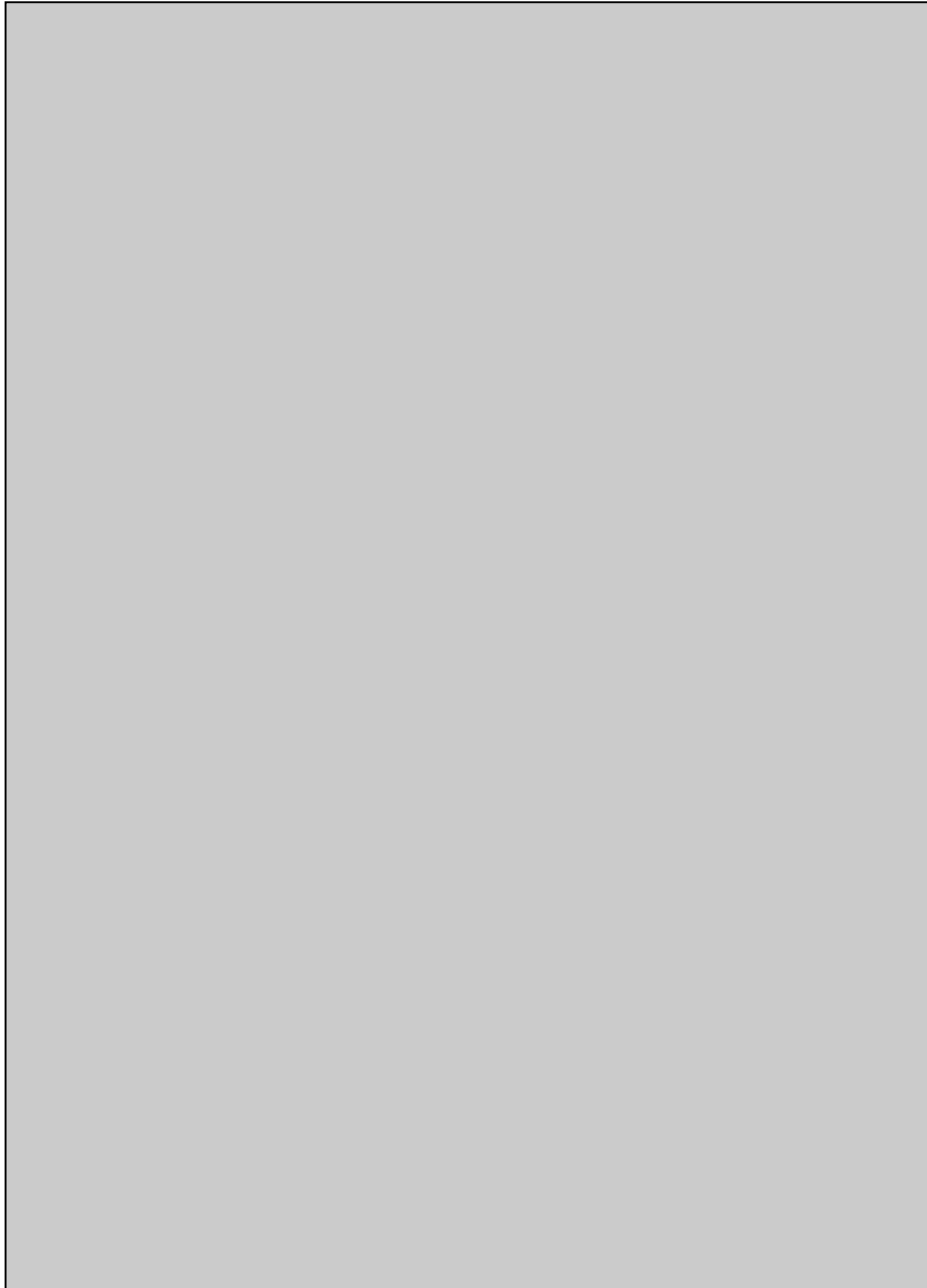


Figure 52. Untitled assemblage of Graciela Mellibovsky, undated

Attributed to Matilde Mellibovsky
Colección Pancartas (Placards Collection), CP.MPM
Source: Memoria Abierta

Reflecting on this affective response, I began to consider the nature of these assemblages. Why are they in this format and what is done with them – and by them? What might they offer that other photo-protest tactics (the photo-on-the-march, for example) cannot? In what ways do they draw on the language of the family album, and what happens when family albums are shown to strangers? The Madres' protests in the wake of the 'Dirty War', I propose, radically expanded the format, function and scope of the family photograph album. Presented in poster, rather than book format, these assemblages function as 'exploded albums', a term I shall explain shortly. Although the assemblages draw explicitly on the language of the family photo album, they go far beyond the album's conventionally anticipated audience and purpose.

Let us leave aside for a moment why the Madres should mobilise the language of the family album in their 'exploded albums', and consider first questions of material format. How has the experience and context of conflict and protest transformed the conventional form of the family album? Why not, in fact, take out an existing album and show that to passers-by in the park? One answer is that, as Matilde Mellibovsky (1997: 226–227) has attested, both homes and domestic collections of photography were both literally and figuratively blown apart by state police. As a direct result of the violent military rupture into the home and seizure of photographs of the abductee, the album-as-object may no longer physically exist in its entirety, or even at all.

Part of the work the Madres perform is to reconstruct the missing or despoiled album using whatever photographs remain, in order to restore the family member to a more complete (albeit arrested) biographical narrative and to create an artefact that may be displayed to others. In this way, the Madres' work has a memorial dimension, following the tradition of women in modern Western and Southern Cone societies as the designated keepers of family memory and domestic photography (Peñaloza 2001; Batchen 2004: 9; Snyder 2006). Clearly, the politics of memorialisation in the face of state negation and denial has become a key issue for the Madres and for other human rights groups in post-dictatorship Argentina, evidenced by the inclusion of the Madres' assemblages within the Memoria Abierta (Open Memory) project, a collaborative archive of national collective memory.

However, the Madres' assemblages exceed in scope and function the retrospective nature of the memorial object. Rather than recreate the album in conventional book format to be kept at home, the Madres have elected to produce them as placards destined for public spaces. Like other examples in the Madres' archive, the weather-beaten aspect of the assemblage of Graciela, pierced at the corners to allow string to be fastened to railings, attests to its display in the Parque de las Heras, a public park in the *barrio* of Palermo in Buenos Aires. This photo-protest differs in essence from the March of the Posters, in which the photograph is a 'moving' entity in both senses of the word, as it both marches past onlookers and compels them with its gaze. In this case, the photographs themselves are stilled, displayed attached to railings, allowing passers-by to choose to pause to pay closer attention, not just to a face, but to an entire biography, and to potentially speak directly with the subject's mother accompanying the poster (Bosco 2004: 389).

The poster format enables an immediate visual impact, better able than an album to attract the attention of passers-by in their strolls across the park. The intimacy of the photo-album, a hand-held book designed to be leafed through sequentially, is reconfigured into an 'exploded' form in the technical sense of the word: that is, a diagrammatic, flattened-out, single-page version where all elements can be seen and comprehended in one gaze. Rather than displaying the precious remaining original photographs, the women have glued photocopied images to the backing card. Instead of producing treasured albums, destined to remain within the confines of the home and shown to invited family members and guests, the women have made robust objects designed to be shown outdoors to groups of strangers. Hence, while the assemblages share a memorial function with conventional albums, the primary function of these 'exploded albums' is to act as weapons of protest. In the wake of the 'Dirty War', these assemblages physically enter public space and confront strangers.

Why, though, take these reconstructed family albums outdoors at all, and what is the nature of the work they perform? What happens when family photographs are shown to strangers? The ideology of family photography (and one of its key manifestations, the family album) has been a site of intense critical enquiry since the late 1980s. In particular, feminist theorists have denounced its master narrative of the happy nuclear family, and its tendency to perpetuate stereotyped and repressive gender roles at the expense of more complex

identities or painful truths (see, for instance, Spence and Holland 1991; Kuhn 1995; Hirsch, M. 1997). While seminal and invaluable work, the limitations of its hermeneutics of suspicion have recently been tested by studies foregrounding processes of identification and reception in viewers of family photographs beyond the invited family circle (Noble 2008; Rose 2010).

The potency of the family-photo-made-public is most acute in the context of war and disaster, where family photographs are published in the media to communicate the pathos of human suffering and the poignant dissonance of private images exposed to strangers. Recent scholarship has considered how family photographs of victims or missing persons have circulated in the global media in the wake of 9/11 (Dorfman 2007); the London bombings of 2007 (Rose 2010); the 2004 tsunami (Rose 2010); and in the context of forced disappearance in Chile (Dorfman 2007) and Argentina (Noble 2008). As Andrea Noble persuasively argues, while family photography is not an unproblematic *lingua franca* uniting distinct geographical, historical, and cultural contexts, its practices and visual language may nonetheless be broadly recognised by mass audiences. Although the devastated family may be unknown to the onlooker, Noble contends that 'I recognise myself in relation to this family through the structure of my own family album, in which I am positioned as somebody's daughter' (Noble 2008: 53). In this capacity, the family photographs of others demonstrate their potential to evoke empathy by inviting the onlooker to position herself as a family member by proxy (Rose 2010: 86).

The Graciela assemblage offers an alternative to the placard bearing an enlarged photograph, used in the breakthrough 'March of the Posters'. One of the effects of the placard tactic, asserts Ana Longoni (2010: 6) was to remove photographs from the intimate and maternal body and to reposition them as collective devices. The mass of placards in the march, representing an overwhelming crowd of faces, urged onlookers to consider the disappearances at a political, rather than personal level: as genocide rather than a series of individual murders. Consequently, there followed a shift in emphasis from the individual photographic image, with its indexical link to a particular subject, to the photographic image as metonymic, or broadly iconic of disappeared subjects in general (Longoni, A. 2010: 15).

The success of the collective tactic, however, was achieved at the expense of individual identity. A photograph of the 'Wall of the Disappeared' (figure 35) illustrates the problem. In this mural composed of photographic portraits based on those used in the March of the Posters, each image becomes interchangeable with the next. Indeed, it is only by a concerted effort that the viewer is able to recognise the face of Graciela (she appears in the fourth row from the top, eleventh from the left). The tactic of metonymy reflected a move among a section of the Madres towards a more collectivised and radical notion of motherhood as part of their political strategy, while others sought to maintain a search based on individuals (Bosco 2004).

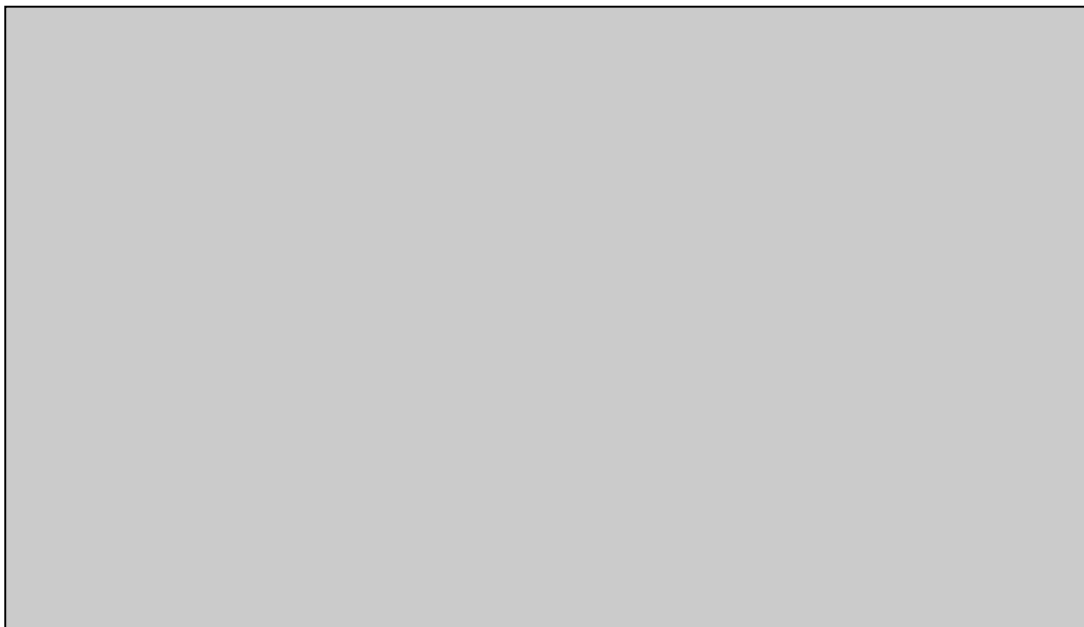


Figure 53. *Wall of the Disappeared*, 2005, Pepe Robles

Some of these women, including Matilde Mellibovsky, turned to the more complex narrative language of the family album as an alternative to metonymy. On viewing the assemblage of Graciela, the onlooker sees not merely a generic portrait of a nameless disappeared subject, but witnesses an individual's family ties, achievements, and fuller biography. Graciela is seen growing up: from a baby held in her mother's arms; as a little girl celebrating a birthday with her friends; as a diligent pupil evidenced by the school certificate; as a vivacious teenager surrounded by friends; and finally in the haunting last image as a young woman. By creating assemblages in which photographs are sequenced and displayed alongside captions and contextual ephemera such as poems and

certificates, Mellibovsky and her colleagues visually and textually 'recount the life and ideals of the victims' ('Colección Pancartas' 2011).

But the family album does not function merely visually, as a collection of images that are looked at, but also (in the anthropological sense) as an optic-haptic object that is experienced within oral and performative traditions (Edwards, E. 2009: 38). Albums are 'prompts for speech, an excuse for friends and families to gather, for stories to be exchanged, incidents to be recalled, biographies to be invented' (Batchen 2004: 49). In use, displayed attached to the railings in the Parque de las Heras, the Graciela assemblage would have been accompanied by the subject's mother, Matilde, standing by ready to supply verbal information about the life of her disappeared daughter. In this way, two mutually reinforcing narratives are performed: the oral history spoken by the mother standing next to the poster and the parallel visual-textual biography communicated by the assemblage. By talking to Matilde, the onlooker might have understood Graciela as a fully rounded person with attendant faults: not just 'beautiful' as her image attests, but also 'nervous, obsessive, agitated, doing everything at once' (Mellibovsky cited in Feitlowitz 1998: 90). The humanising details offered by the photo-narrative and the mother's oral account configure Graciela not merely as an icon or a statistic, but as an individual human being with all of the complexity and emotional resonance that implies. Hence, by participating in this familiar (in both sense of the word) ritual of the passing round of family albums, the onlooker more fully engages with the disappeared subject and is drawn deeper in to Graciela's history.

Given the visual politics of the 'Dirty War', a further important task is performed by the Madres' tactic. Conventionally, the presentation of the family album is usually a private activity, reserved for invited family members and guests. By being opened up to a stranger – both figuratively and physically in the double meaning of the word 'exploded' – it is demonstrated that the disappeared subject and family have nothing to hide. Although a painful process of revelation for both mother and onlooker, who gains a disturbing insight into the plight of families that have been 'blown apart', the frank openness of the mother's gesture of transparency and visibility counters the clandestine and insidious nature of state terrorism.

Indeed, the very ordinariness of the photographs on display, and their adherence to the ideology of family photography and the family album, underscores the normality of the disappeared subject. Graciela is presented as an innocent baby and trusting child; as a diligent pupil and worthy citizen. Through photographs, she is constructed a 'normal' person who, like many others, was linked to the larger social structures of family, school, and work; and whose life was photographically punctuated by the conformity of birthday parties and trips to the seaside. This reading diverges from the critical probing of Hirsch *et al.* into the dark secrets of the family album, and the detection and exposure of deviations from its dominant ideology. Rather, it is Graciela's very conformity to the language of the family album and the perpetuation of its hegemonic ideological structures that is emphasised. In the wake of state terrorism, the rhetoric of the family album is productively mobilised to deflect the state's accusations of the victim's 'subversion', and to forcefully attest to the victim's innocence.¹⁶

As discussed in Chapter 4, the making and keeping of family albums has been frequently dismissed as a trivial mode of photography without aesthetic or political value. The domestic photographs contained within its pages have been criticised for not only their banality, but for their perpetuation of the 'ideal of the private sphere [for women] where political forces appear irrelevant' and 'politics and world affairs, even the most disruptive, are pushed to the background of consciousness' (Holland 2004: 144). However, close attention to specific examples of women's family albums challenges their assumed insularity. Recent studies have demonstrated in diverse ways how non-domestic concerns may enter into the album (cf. Di Bello 2003; Siegel 2003; Snyder 2006; Lien 2009). My own discussion in Chapter 4, of Kate Leach's albums made during the Mexican Revolution, has demonstrated the ways in which politics and conflict may intermingle with domestic and familial narratives. In this light, it is short-sighted to assume women's compilation of family albums an intrinsically apolitical or irrelevant practice, wholly unconnected to the wider world.

¹⁶ This is not to suggest that those guilty of 'subversion' – members of the far-left guerrilla group Montoneros – justified the treatment they received, which contravened the law and human rights. However, as Suárez-Orozco (1992: 235) argues, those who explicitly identified as guerrillas were almost entirely eradicated in the early phase of the dictatorship, and 'the state-controlled terror continued for years, now haunting largely innocent civilians and even children' (Suárez-Orozco 1992: 235).

With its terse caption 'her last photo before being abducted', the Graciela assemblage might also be viewed in these terms, attesting to the ways in which the political invades the familial sphere, and conflict and suffering enter the family album. What is so striking and potent about the Graciela assemblages, however, is that the penetration of the family album by politics and conflict is not a one-way invasion. Rather, the Graciela assemblage 'explodes' outward into the public sphere and the domain of conflict, as an affective and effective force. Both figuratively and physically, the assemblage enters an expanded combat zone, a family album radically re-worked in order to function as a weapon of protest.

Conclusions

This discussion of photo-protest tactics – the brandished family snapshot, the photo-on-the-march, and the 'exploded album' – has sought to accord photographs the attention they merit, neither overlooking them, nor attributing to them inexplicable powers. Instead, my point is that photographs are agents that affect social fields, sometimes with dramatic results, and possess the latent capacity to permit or provoke action through their relations with people. Far from being an inevitable part of protest, photo-activities emerged in specific ways and at specific times, due to a special combination of circumstances. By drawing on certain gendered constraints – the language of domestic photography, the family album, and the cultural trope of the grieving mother – the Madres were able to appeal to strangers through familiar social structures, performing political work under an apolitical guise.

The Madres' photo-protest tactics achieved measurable results in the campaign for truth and justice: results that would have been unobtainable via conventional war photography in the 'Capa mode'. Together with other activist groups, the women helped achieve concrete victories such as the establishment of the Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas (National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons) in 1983. The commission investigated illegal repression during the military dictatorship, producing the following year the seminal report *Nunca Más*, based on the denunciations of family members of the disappeared and the testimonies of survivors. A further victory was the repeal of two impunity laws in 2003, enabling perpetrators of disappearances to

be brought to justice. While the struggle is not over, and continues to be fought by the Madres' offshoot Línea Fundadora and other groups, these legal gains were significant. Other groups in the hemisphere, moreover, have taken up the tactics made famous by the Madres, demonstrating the currency that photo-protests retain in contexts of 'dirty war' (Taylor, D. 1997: 184; Mellibovsky 1997: 201; Noble 2008: 47).¹⁷

The power and agency of photographic objects notwithstanding, my account of Argentina's 'Dirty War' reveals photographs to also be vulnerable objects, entities that are at risk of destruction or erasure. Indeed, the very absence of photographic objects may have consequences within the sphere of 'dirty war'. In her study of violence in Uchuraccay, Peru, Alexia Richardson (2003: 109) argues that the circulation of photographic representations of murdered journalists contributed to their privileged memorialised status, in contrast to indigenous victims who were without photographs. In a further case, this time in Chile, Ariel Dorfman (2007) considers a booklet produced by the Association of Relatives of Arrested and Disappeared Persons. Dorfman notes that a small number of victims are represented in the booklet by a blank space, presumably because no photographs survived that could be reproduced (Dorfman 2007: 4). These two instances suggest that disappeared persons who leave behind photographic traces may be more prominent in processes of memorialisation and justice, at the expense of victims without photographs.

Finally, this discussion has highlighted the inadequacy of conventional war photography to reflect the clandestine nature of 'dirty war' or to effectively protest the disappearance of civilians. By contrast, the innovative modes of photographic engagement devised by the Madres proved to be both potent and influential. The women's actions challenge the notion of war photography as a masculine sphere characterised by dramatic images of frontline action taken by professional individuals. Despite not operating in the 'Capa mode', the women exercised a high degree of photographic agency in their protests. By re-

¹⁷ One such group is the Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos (Association of Families of the Detained and Disappeared) in Bogotá, Colombia. In an interview with *San Francisco Chronicle*, one of the group's members, Adriana Quitero, is reported as saying that although she 'wasn't born when the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo began demanding justice [...] their achievements are her inspiration' (Wright 2004). Quitero is depicted standing next to two members of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo Línea Fundadora; the three women each hold up representations of photographs of the disappeared.

purposing pre-existing photographs, furthermore, the women showed that any photograph might be inflected by war, and that even a family snapshot from a birthday party might be considered part of war photography's expanded territory. The contributions of the Madres forcefully demand a widening of the scope of war photography, in order to encompass both the nature of 'dirty war', and women's photographic agency in protesting its effects.

III. AFTERMATH

8. Conclusions: Traces and Legacies

'Aftermath' is a term commonly used to denote the widespread consequences of the violent and disastrous events of war, both immediate and years later. The term itself, originating from archaic English rural dialect, has a secondary, less-used meaning: a crop or harvest after the first mowing. In this sense, aftermath is suggestive not only of the repercussions of war, but also of the struggle to revive and re-emerge in conflict's wake. War's aftermath, of necessity, is invariably a time of recovery, of reconstruction and renewal. The instances of women's photographic engagement examined in this study attest to the double-layered meaning of 'aftermath'. Though war may be painfully felt, it gives rise to change and re-growth in women's photographic engagement, prompting creativity and productivity to emerge from the rupture of conflict. Women have been persistently resourceful and inventive in adapting photographic practices in the context of war. They have co-opted, re-aligned, and reconstructed photographic practices to articulate their demands and make sense of their experiences of conflict. The case studies of this thesis have each revealed, in varying ways, how women's participation in war has shaped their lives and their photographic engagement, leaving both transformed.

In these concluding pages, I develop these implications, assess what has been achieved by my research, and explore its potential for 're-growth': to progress scholarly thinking on the nexus of women, war and photography. The study has sought to answer a number of research questions: how might war photography be considered a gendered practice? In what ways do women participate, and what factors shape their participation? How may women's photographic engagement with war be characterised, and what do their activities achieve? What does attention to women's engagement reveal that is otherwise elided in masculinist conceptions and histories? Without attempting to conflate differences between the diverse instances examined in this thesis, I draw together the commonalities to identify five core findings.

Core findings

1. Gendered constraints, rather than essential characteristics, shape women's photographic engagement

Women's photographic engagement with war cannot be accounted for via gender essentialism. The case studies examined defy simple categorisation via traits conventionally held to be feminine. Women are not intrinsically opposed to gazing upon images of violence and suffering, nor are they uniformly empathic or pacifistic. Nor can women's photographic engagement with war be defined as a consistent, singular practice, identifiably 'feminine' through recognisable formal or aesthetic criteria. Instead, women's photographic engagement with war is diverse, multiple, and wide-ranging in its viewpoint, subject matter, approach, intention, and mobilisation. The gendered dimension of women's photographic engagement with war does not proceed from some innate or biological quality, but through subject positions articulated via individuals' negotiation of the constraints, structures and systems in which they are enmeshed. Instances of engagement must be understood as products of specific historical circumstances: the geo-cultural context; societal norms for women; means of education; the political climate; legislation and rights; the kind of warfare undertaken; and the aptitude, inclination, and circumstances of individuals. The variance of these factors accounts for the multifarious modes of engagement undertaken by women.

Women's photography and their participation in war have historically been subject to socially-constructed gendered constraints that differ from those experienced by men. Women have therefore engaged with photography and war in different ways to those of men, for different reasons, with different viewpoints, or with different results. As discussed in Chapter 2, women have historically been encouraged to undertake certain kinds of photography perceived to be suitably 'feminine'. Although the contours of what constitutes feminine photography have shifted according to era and context, women in hemispheric America have persistently experienced resistance to their engaging photographically with war.

Gendered constraints may be concrete and overtly enforced. Photographic training and employment offered to women have promoted professionalism in the fields of portraiture, fashion, and domestic photography, rather than photojournalism or war photography. Women's access to the battlefield has historically been more limited than that of men. As discussed in the case of US participation in the Second World War, female war correspondents such as Lee Miller were prohibited by the military from reporting from combat zones, restricting the kind of images women made. At a systemic level, a combination of logistical, practical, educational, professional and legal constraints have shaped the kinds of photography women may undertake in the sphere of war.

Gendered constraints may also be implicit and pervasive, felt and learned through societally acceptable behaviours and attitudes. I have proposed war photography to be a gendered practice at a discursive level, whereby the 'rules' for normative gender behaviour have disqualified women from operating in the orthodox and masculinist 'Capa mode', personified by the risk-taking photojournalist at the frontline. Female war photographers have been judged differently from their male counterparts. Deemed non-combatants by virtue of their gender, women have been denied the status of authentic observers, the preserve of male war photographers. Women who have operated in the 'Capa mode' have been popularly seen as incapable, voyeuristic, domineering, or otherwise unfeminine.

In turn, mass marketing has encouraged women to engage photographically with war in suitably coded-feminine ways. The case of Kodak's advertising campaigns in the Second World War, discussed in Chapter 5, presents a tangible manifestation of attitudes towards gendered photographic behaviour in wartime. Kodak's prescription urged women to make domestic snapshots that could serve the desires of servicemen, snapshots in which acknowledgment of women's own experiences of war were absent. The case of Kodak typifies the ways in which women's photographic engagement with war has frequently been configured as fundamentally civilian and domestic, and manifest in low status genres such as snapshot or family photography. In the main, women's photographic engagement has been deemed invalid, irrelevant or peripheral to the central, masculine experience of war.

II. Gendered constraints, including those governing photography, are destabilised in war

Gendered constraints, however, are continually being re-drawn, particularly so during the extraordinary conditions of wartime when the stakes for 'correct' gendered behaviour become particularly charged. With important exceptions, such as the Sandinista Revolution, it is usual for men to be called upon to fight, often under the aegis of protecting their womenfolk, while women are co-opted into support and auxiliary roles. While these divisions maintain the traditional archetypes of warrior-male and female-bystander (Elshtain 1998: 453), the vacuum left by men often means that women must undertake masculine-coded work. War thus often leads to a temporary expansion of female roles, enabling or impelling women to participate in activities or fields normally considered unsuited to them. As a result, women have often moved into new professional spheres or occupied new spaces, which disrupts the gender *status quo* and potentially destabilizes society.

This disruption is evident in the domain of photography, as revealed by the case studies. While the impact of war upon women is by no means always enabling, expansions in women's lives prompted by war may lead to unanticipated modes of photographic engagement. A consistent trope is the way in which women have realigned feminine-coded peacetime photographic practices, such as studio portraiture or domestic snapshot photography, to the masculine-coded sphere of war, in order to reflect their new realities. Sara Castrejón, to cite one example, responded to the business shifts presented by the Mexican Revolution, adapting her civilian photographic services to the demands of an occupying army.

Such realignments of gendered photographic behaviour have not always been welcomed. As the Kodak wartime campaigns make evident, women were exhorted to remain conventionally feminine and civilian in their photography, fulfilling the expected role of US women in the Second World War as warrior's justification and reward for fighting. However, in acts of resistance evidenced by the archive of servicewomen's snapshots assembled by former WASP pilot Anne Noggle, women sometimes disregarded the prescription of dominant culture. The female aviators' snapshots reflect their experience of war as a time of dislocation but also of liberation. Their images of self-sufficient and technically

competent women in a military culture were far removed from the conventional subjects and viewpoints advocated by Kodak. Attention to such instances of photographic engagement is valuable precisely because it enables detection of women's departures from the script of accepted feminine behaviour.

This is not to suggest that war is simply an external (coded-masculine) force that catalyses women previously detached from the public spheres of labour, armed conflict, and politics. In the case of the Sandinista Revolution, women were decisive in instigating, prosecuting and directing conflict – as political activists, soldiers and commanders – as well as being architects of post-war policies to expand women's rights and liberties. The engagement of women who formed part of the photographic scene in Sandinista-led Nicaragua was exemplified by collective, collaborative, and testimonial strategies that proceeded directly from the women's political commitment and feminist principles.

Photography may itself be a mechanism to enable women to expand their roles and spheres in wartime. Demands for photographic skills have enabled female professionals to enter masculine-coded territory and physically adopt vantage points denied to non-photographers. Sara Castrejón's local monopoly on photography led to her assuming a prominent place in observing and recording events in Teloloapán during the Mexican Revolution. As a quasi-official photographer to the occupying army, Castrejón found herself physically centre-stage in military territory, occupying a privileged viewing position at the signing of treaties, military funerals, and executions by firing squad. In the Second World War, Lee Miller was able to transform her role at a woman's magazine from that of fashion photographer to official war correspondent. Her accreditation to the US Army, made possible through Miller's affiliation with *Vogue*, provided her with a greater degree of access to European theatres of war than would otherwise have been afforded. While combat zones, as noted earlier, were prohibited to women (an order Miller chose to ignore), she was permitted to witness historic scenes such as the liberation of Nazi concentration camps in Dachau and Buchenwald. In Nicaragua, Susan Meiselas's vocation as a photojournalist provided the impetus to travel to the country at a time when popular unrest was escalating. Meiselas was on the ground at the outbreak of the Sandinista Revolution due not simply to a desire to be at the centre of historic events, but prompted by the need to produce newsworthy photographs that could be marketed by Magnum Photos, and would support her career

progression within the agency. The examples of Castrejón, Miller and Meiselas attest to the ways in which the demand for women's photographic skills has repeatedly offered both means and motivation for women to view the events of war and undertake activities in ways that would be otherwise off-limits.

The cases of Castrejón, Miller and Meiselas demonstrate how photography may offer women license to physically penetrate masculine-coded spaces.

Photography has the capacity to expand women's geographies, enabling women to spatially transgress the territories of war and politics where women would not ordinarily have a right to be. Such transgressions, I suggest, are characteristic of photography more broadly, which has historically provided a pretext for women's forays into 'hostile' terrain, most notably in the field of street photography. The US photographer Berenice Abbott (1898–1991), to cite one prominent exponent, undertook frequent solo excursions through Lower Manhattan in the 1930s, under the aegis of recording the neighbourhood's architectural changes. When told by a New Deal project officer that 'nice girls' should avoid certain areas of New York, Abbott reputedly retorted, 'I'm not a nice girl. I'm a photographer' (cited in McEuan 2011: 251). Abbott's declaration reveals her belief that her identity as a photographer could enable her to overcome gendered restrictions: to legitimately roam the streets like a man, without being stigmatised a 'streetwalker'.

Feminist scholarship on the gendered politics of geography has examined the notion of the 'flaneuse' and of women's shifts in freedom of access to public urban space (cf. Meskimmon 1998; Parsons 2000; DeSouza and McDonough 2006). There is still relatively little, however, on women's photography, and still less on the subject of war, which represents an area ripe for further investigation.¹ Future research might yield further insights into the gendered politics of space and the territorial expansions gained through women's photography in the context of conflict.

¹ Two scholars have profitably considered how women's photography has promised them greater mobility in public spaces in the hemisphere. Nancy West examines the Kodak Girl marketing campaign in turn-of-the-century US, arguing that women's amateur photography was portrayed as an inducement to increased freedom and mobility in the spheres of leisure and travel (West 2000: 36–73). Esther Gabara contends that that Mexican illustrated magazines of the 1920s and 1930s portrayed women photographers as mobile, curious, and even rowdy observers-at-large in the city (Gabara 2008: 143–195). Women's wartime photography in this capacity, however, remains overlooked.

In addition to enabling incursions into masculine spaces, women's photographic engagement has also prompted extensions in viewing capacity. To be sure, all photographic images permit the viewer to see, by proxy, something that would otherwise be unavailable. Women's engagement with images of war, however, represents a striking expansion of normative feminine ocular behaviour. Photographic engagement enables female viewers to survey that which they would not normally be encouraged to see: the masculine sphere of war.

I have argued, however, that engagement constitutes more than simply increased access to a wider visual panorama via a one-way traffic of images of war served up to the passive or indifferent female spectator. Instead, women's photographic engagement configures them as active observers, who persistently seek to extend their viewing rights, and demonstrate agency in their relations with the territory surveyed. The album-making activities of Mrs. Leach in the Mexican Revolution are indicative of women's efforts to accrue and engage with images of war. Leach selected, edited and compiled photographs into coherent narratives in an attempt to make sense of the events of the conflict, and to see them radiate out from her as central observer-participant. The case of US *Vogue* readers in the Second World War offers a further example of women viewers seeking out images of war. By evolving a community receptive to war photography, *Vogue* readers helped create hospitable conditions for the publication of images of extreme violence and suffering that were presented within a distinctly female forum, inviting viewers to contemplate and reflect upon what they saw. While both *Vogue* readers and Leach negotiated within limiting constraints and structures coded as civilian, feminine and low status – the photo-album and the fashion magazine respectively – the women exerted a degree of visual agency that stretched gendered conventions of the time.

III. The 'Capa mode' is inadequate to women's activities in the hemisphere, and an expanded conception war photography is needed

The dominant mode of war photography, the 'Capa mode', has clearly been inaccessible to women for a number of material and discursive reasons. Nonetheless, a greater number of women have operated in the 'Capa mode' – as trained photojournalists seeking out the frontline – than is popularly assumed

or admitted by conventional histories of war photography (such as those of Lewinski 1986; Brewer 2010). Some of these women, including Lee Miller and Susan Meiselas, overcame considerable barriers to produce important bodies of published work in the 'Capa mode', and have retrospectively garnered significant attention. The 'problem' of Miller and Meiselas, however, is that they are held up as exceptional individuals. Presented as anomalous female examples of the archetypal risk-taking photojournalist at the frontline, they attract surprise and acclaim precisely because of their gender. The work of such women is held to be a rarity in its capacity to measure up to the standard set by male war photographers.

Without minimising the achievements of female war photographers in a male-dominated field, my approach has been to set their endeavours in a wider context. My reassessment of Miller has placed her within a mass circuit of readers of a fashion magazine, restoring agency to the readers of *Vogue* and advocating a combination of factors to account for the publication of Miller's work, rather than Miller as an irruption of 'conscience' into an otherwise war-free magazine. Similarly, my re-evaluation of Meiselas's *Nicaragua* has contextualised her book alongside other photographic publications to emerge from the international women's photography scene in Nicaragua. As a consequence, Meiselas is revealed to be only one of a cohort of professional female photographers who produced photographic responses to the Sandinista Revolution. In the cases of both Miller and Meiselas, my approach has been to reject exceptionalism as the default explanation for the apparent absence of mass female activity at the nexus of war and photography. Instead, a host of female behaviours is revealed that is constitutive of mass participation.

In order to identify this participation, I have argued that masculinist conception of war photography must be re-thought. The case studies have collectively proposed a broader, more generous notion of war photography that includes practices that traditionally fall outside the canon. In this expanded conception, 'war photography' emerges as a cluster of activities and practices at the nexus of photography and war, rather than a restrictive genre that privileges professional frontline practice. This more expansive redefinition of war photography allows a much greater range of women's photographic activity to come into view.

By redefining war photography in this way, compelling alternatives are found that address the shortcomings of orthodox practice. The 'Capa mode' is predicated on the idea of war as a photographable – even photogenic – event, characterised by dramatic or heroic acts of combat by discernable soldiers in demarcated conflict zones, and captured by an objective outsider working for the media. This conception upholds the conventional binaries that define what war is, and what it is not. War is pictured as military, not civilian; as public, not private; and as masculine, not feminine.

The analyses advanced in the case studies of the thesis, however, resist these simple categories. Modes of warfare that have been prevalent in the hemisphere – such as revolution and state terrorism – do not have clearly defined frontlines, but are pervasive and covert practices that directly affect civilians. Argentina's 'Dirty War' against so-called 'subversives', for instance, resulted in the domestic and familial terrain becoming a site of conflict, resistance, and politics. In turn, feminine photographic practices surged out into the public domain. The 'exploded album' of Graciela Mellibovsky, I have argued, brought family photography and the shared language of the family album into the public sphere, mobilised to exonerate the disappeared person and to demand truth and justice.

The example of the Mellibovsky 'exploded album' is indicative of the ways in which the domestic and personal nature of 'feminine' photography may become a political practice in the context of war, an assertion borne out by the other case studies. Portraiture, photo-albums, snapshot photography, and fashion magazines have all been used by women in ways that reflect the porous boundaries between the personal and the political; civilian and military; frontline and homefront. Such practices show that conventional binaries, upheld by the 'Capa mode', are inadequate to an understanding of war photography, or indeed war.

The hemispheric focus of this study indicates a further limitation of the 'Capa mode'. In the context of the longstanding history of repressive US intervention in Latin America, the 'Capa mode' emerges not only as masculinist, but as an imperialist practice. As scholars have persuasively argued, US imperialism and masculinism go hand-in-hand. US-Latin American relations have persistently been articulated in US political-cultural discourse (speeches, political rhetoric,

cinema, the media, and visual culture) in gendered terms (Jeffords 1994; Kenworthy 1995; Richard 1996). The US is personified a white, macho, hard-bodied, rational male, who is obligated to impose order upon a feminised, weak, chaotic, primitive Latin America. The 'Capa mode' replicates this asymmetric relationship in the figure of the hypermasculine, objective US war photographer who 'parachutes in' to Latin American conflicts, serving up dramatic visual fragments that reinforce perceptions of inherent violence and disorder.² My discussion of Susan Meiselas's book *Nicaragua* has revealed the shortcomings of the 'Capa mode', even when emulated by a woman. The masculinist-imperialist template of 'objective' photojournalist is not necessarily suited to reveal the US's role in fomenting the conditions for revolution, or to garner support for groups, such as the Sandinistas, that strive to resist US domination.

Women's photographic engagement in the hemisphere may offer potential to counter the imperialist and masculinist template of orthodox war photography. The 'Capa mode' promotes the dissemination of images that are visually and emotionally compelling in a media context, but such images may not necessarily elicit action. By contrast, the activities of women in the US-Nicaragua solidarity movement show how photography was more effectively mobilised to an anti-imperialist agenda. The collective activism of *The Dawning of Nicaragua* (1983) and the testimonial photography of *Sandino's Daughters* (1981) were more suited than Meiselas's orthodox war photography to garner public opposition to US military intervention. In a further example, the use of family and domestic photography in protests by the Madres de Plaza de Mayo groups in Argentina was instrumental in advancing claims for truth and justice, leading to legal victories such as the repeal of certain impunity laws. These instances of photographic activism point to viable alternatives to the 'Capa mode' that may be more effective in achieving tangible gains in the spheres of foreign policy and post-war judicial processes.

IV. The model of photographic engagement offers a more adequate understanding of war

² Although 'Robert Capa' (real name André Friedmann) was Hungarian-born, his migration to the US and his adoption of a US pseudonym and persona signals his affiliation with US cultural identity. The phrase 'parachutes in' draws on the terminology established by Martha Rosler in her critique of Susan Meiselas's work in Nicaragua (Rosler 2004: 251).

The case studies have revealed that although few women have operated in the 'Capa mode', they have repeatedly found alternative ways to participate at the nexus of photography and war. Engagement, I have proposed, goes beyond the production of images – the literal pressing of the camera shutter – to encompass all forms of active participation in the terrain of photography as it connects to war. This includes viewing, handling, collecting, compiling, publishing, and preserving photographs. The model of photographic engagement advanced by this thesis offers a means of identifying a majority behaviour in women that would otherwise go unnoticed, revealing the ways in which women have actively engaged in debating, viewing, supporting or protesting war through photography on a mass scale.

The engagement model, furthermore, offers an enhanced understanding of war as it connects to photography. The 'Capa mode', with its insistence upon dramatic moments of action in the combat zone, fails to convey the nuances of the causes and consequences of war, and to reflect the embeddedness of war in society. To be sure, any photographic record is limited in its capacity to convey the essentials of a complex situation. In an early critique of the limitations of photography, Bertolt Brecht expressed scepticism of photography's mimetic capacity to convey the complexity of ideological systems and structures:

[A] simple 'reproduction of reality' says less than ever about reality itself. A photograph of a Krupp factory or the AEG [General Electricity Company] says practically nothing about these institutions (Brecht 1931; cited in Long 2008: 201).

In his discussion of Brecht's photographic book *War Primer* (1955), J.J. Long asserts that 'Brecht argues that reality cannot be reduced to the visible surface of things but has to be understood as a set of functional and abstract social relationships' (Long 2008: 201). While Brecht offered a Marxist critique of capitalist production, his concerns are equally illuminating with regard to situations of conflict. In the Brechtian sense, photography is inadequate to the task of conveying the complexity of war. War's structures and systems; the unseen workings of politicians, military and government; and war's impact and consequences are essentially unphotographable in the conventional photojournalistic 'Capa mode', which focuses on the 'on-the-ground' action of individuals.

The expanded conception of war photography and the model of engagement together offer a more adequate portrayal of the complexity and pervasiveness of war. The case studies examined in the thesis reveal diverse aspects: homefront activities and the civilian war effort in total war; the role of propaganda and ideological warfare; business, commercial and corporate interests; the processes of memorialisation of war and the gulf between personal experience and official histories; illegal government activities and human rights abuses; and political activism, lobbying and campaigning by those who support peace, or demand truth and justice. Although the thesis has focused on the ways in which women participate in war, these less prominent facets of conflict are not exclusive to women. A consideration of photography as it articulates with these aspects offers a more comprehensive and representative view of the experience, prosecution, and impact of war, far beyond the battlefield.

V. Women's photographic engagement demonstrates their persistent assertion of agency in the sphere of war

The extent of historical photographic engagement evidenced by the case studies signals women's persistent wish to participate at the intersection of war and photography, despite barriers to participation. Attention to the material artefacts of engagement offers a methodological solution to the problem of tracking the ephemeral attribute of agency. As demonstrated in the cases of Mrs Leach and Sara Castrejón, close examination of photographic prints and albums makes tangible the women's sense of historical consciousness. Rather than being the patients of the historical process, the activities of Leach and Castrejón demonstrate the ways in which women participated in and chronicled the Revolution, 'making history' both as actors and photo-historians.

The construction of history by women, in which their experiences and viewpoints are central, lies at the heart of the project of feminist history. Feminist cultural theorist Teresa De Lauretis's defines empowered women as 'social beings producing and reproducing cultural products, transmitting and transforming cultural values' (1984: 93; cited in Fleckenstein 2015: 2). Although Leach and Castrejón may not have identified as feminists, seen retrospectively their photographic engagement constitutes acts of feminist empowerment. Leach and Castrejón demonstrated that 'ordinary' women of their era were capable of critical reflection upon events supposedly beyond their grasp, and that despite

being excluded from full citizenship and the right to vote, women could be capable and resourceful historians of war.

Women's assertion of their centrality to narratives of war forms part of the broader struggle over the validity of gendered wartime roles. Women's rights have often been (and continue to be) mobilised in the name of war, with women being promised progressive policies and expanded rights and liberties in return for their support of the war effort or acceptance of occupying foreign armies (Armstrong and Prashad 2005: 214).³ However, as Higonnet and Higonnet (1987) have argued in relation to their notion of the 'double helix', expansions in gender roles during wartime are inevitably followed by post-war contractions, and only slowly lead to hard-won incremental advances. After wars have ended, women's participation has frequently been coded civilian, and their contributions sidelined or ignored. Despite the suffering and deaths of women in war, their designation as non-combatants renders them ineligible to claim full participation in war and its rewards upon cessation. Given that citizenship has traditionally been predicated on the capacity to fight and die for one's country (Elshtain 1998: 451), the reconfiguration of women's participation in war as essentially civilian has far-reaching political consequences.

These tropes are borne out in the hemisphere. Full suffrage for Mexican women, much debated during the Revolution, was not granted until 1953, and veterans' pensions were denied to women combatants. After the Second World War, WASPs similarly found their wartime service reconfigured as civilian, denying them both financial reparations and public recognition. In Nicaragua, the FSLN's initially progressive gender policies were insufficient to dismantle the long-installed patriarchal structures of power, and female Sandinistas were eventually disillusioned with the realities of their lives post-revolution. Women's assertion of their fundamental participation in war has thus accrued extra freight in the period of post-war settlement and struggle for women's rights.

As evidenced by the case studies, women have repeatedly called upon photography to evidence their participation in war and to support their claims, formal or otherwise, to citizenship and equality. Women have sought to make

³ For a recent discussion of the ways in which the issue of women's rights has been mobilised in support of US foreign policy in Vietnam and Afghanistan, see Armstrong and Prashad (2005).

public their participation, and to produce photographic archives for posterity. This desire can be detected in Sara Castrejón's presentation of her Mexican Revolution images to President Cardenal; Mrs. Leach's fabrication of photo-albums; in Anne Noggle's compilation of snapshots made by female US Air Force pilots; and in Margaret Randall's publication of testimonial portraits of female FSLN military leaders in her book *Sandino's Daughters*. Such photographic legacies offer important counter-narratives to mainstream histories of war.

The range and quantity of activities uncovered in this study – which is by no means exhaustive – demonstrates that women consider themselves fundamentally implicated in warfare. Through photography, women actively document their experiences and viewpoints; take part in debates on why and how war should be fought by their governments; and seek to support or condemn their nation's war effort. Attention to women's mass photographic activities provides evidence for more extensive and varied participation in war than is popularly assumed. The expanded conception of war photography reveals war to be a central experience in women's lives, and for women to be central to war – for better or worse. Without adequate consideration of women's photographic engagement, our understanding of conflict is significantly limited.

Challenges and opportunities for future research

This study has argued that women's low-status and vernacular photographic practices should be considered valid practices worthy of critical attention, with the capacity to reveal women's visual agency and their active participation in war. This claim, however, disturbs conventional gendered hierarchies of history, memory, and archives. In their critique of gender and archival practice, Tucker and Bogadóttir (2008) assert that the work of keeping and transmitting private and personal memories – considered low status – is assigned to women. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to create, contribute to, and consult archives, and to author public accounts and histories. Consequently, women's activities have been sidelined by conventional histories of war photography, and women's photographic engagement has not featured in mainstream education programmes of photography or history.

Institutional neglect poses a significant hurdle to further research. Lack of archival resources, or relevant data where such material exists, means that tracking women's photography and the traces of their engagement is challenging. Women's mass photographic practices – snapshot photography, the family album, provincial studio portraiture – have traditionally fallen outside the remit of public archives and museums, meaning that artefacts often remain beyond public access. Although instances can be found, such as the album of Mrs Leach examined in Chapter 4, inadequate representation in archives means that there are still many gaps in knowledge of women's photographic engagement with war.

One problem is that attribution of female authorship may be lost through change of museum personnel, or simply be unknown from the outset. It is not known, for instance, if female photographers made images pertaining to the US Civil War. Given that a number of women worked as studio photographers, daguerreotypists, ambrotypists and itinerant portraitists in the 1860s (Brown, Mary 1997; Rosenblum 2010: 45), and given the popularity of commissioning photographic souvenirs of departing soldiers, it is feasible that female authorship is waiting to be identified. Snapshots and low-status, vernacular photographs, however, are unlikely to be signed by their maker, and are particularly susceptible to becoming unhitched from authorship.⁴ There may well be other Revolution-era albums by unskilled photographers like Mrs Leach, for instance, which are circulating in secondary markets or remain catalogued anonymously in archives. To support scholarly research, more adequate curatorial work is needed to identify and prioritise women's engagement. This is an undertaking that will require institutional shifts in policies and priorities of acquisition and collections management in museums and archives. The recent 'vernacular turn' in photography (Batchen 2000), however, has seen an increased readiness in museums to accession and conserve everyday photography, which bodes well for future research in this area.

⁴ In a further example uncovered by my research, an image made on the occasion of the Battle of Ciudad Juárez (1911) by US snapshotter Jacqueline Dalman is reproduced without a credit in Berumen and Canales' study of photography in the Mexican Revolution, *Mexico: fotografía y revolución* (2009), thereby eliding an instance of female visual agency. I am grateful to Patricia Worthington, Volunteer Curator of the El Paso County Historical Society, who shared her knowledge of Jacqueline Dalman's donation of her series of snapshots made in El Paso. The provenance and contextual information pertaining to acquisitions may sometimes only be remembered by the archivist, and not recorded in a formal document available to the researcher. In such cases, the authorship of the item may be lost.

This thesis has considered only a handful of case studies, but there are many further conflicts that might yield notable instances of women's photographic engagement, such as the Cuban Revolution (1953–59). The visual culture of the Revolution has been dominated by masculinist photography of Raúl Corrales, Osvaldo Salas, and Alberto 'Korda' Díaz Gutiérrez, typified by images of heroic cavalry charges and powerful men such as Fidel Castro and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara. The conflict, however, was characterised by a high degree of female perception, and at least one Cuban woman, Maria Eugenia 'Marucha' Haya, was instrumental as photographer/curator in constructing a national history and archive for Cuban photography after the revolution. The potential for a photographic counter-narrative to the dominant masculinist iconography of the Revolution has not yet been explored. Cuba's relative political isolation has meant that women's photographic participation in the Cuban Revolution has remained relatively unstudied in the Anglophone academy.

Other nations in the hemisphere have suffered sustained bouts of war, repression and economic underdevelopment, which have exerted negative effects on resources for photography scholarship. Guatemala, which suffered a civil war from 1966 to 1990, lacks a nationally-funded photography archive; there are few histories of Guatemalan photography and a foundational account of women's photography in that country remains to be written. The huge task of recovering and assembling data is required before scholars can even begin to critique, analyse, assess and theorise their contributions and significance. There is considerable will in the photographic research community, however, to support the development of photographic resources in Guatemala. The Fototeca Guatemala, established in 1979 by the not-for-profit research organisation CIRMA (Centre for Mesoamerican Regional Research), is slowly developing its collections and undertaking digitisation projects in an effort to 'rescue the visual memory of Guatemala'.⁵ Consequently, although there are definite challenges to further investigation of women's photographic engagement in the hemisphere, the cases of the US Civil War, the Cuban Revolution, and the Guatemalan Civil War, offer fertile possibilities for future investigation.

⁵ See the website of CIRMA, <<http://cirma.org.gt/glifos/index.php?title=Categor%C3%ADa:FG>> [accessed 8 May 2016]. I am grateful to Guatemalan photography and activist Daniel Hernández Sálazar for sharing his knowledge with me.

A further line of enquiry opened by the thesis is an assessment of hemispheric power dynamics in relation to women's photographic engagement with war. Shukla and Tinsman propose that the hemispheric paradigm may have potential to locate instances of transnational solidarity, such as histories of feminism that cut across national narratives of North to South domination (2007: 21). This hypothesis is confirmed in several instances of gendered photographic solidarity examined in the thesis. In Nicaragua's Contra War, US women in the solidarity movement distanced themselves from the actions of their government, undertaking projects that supported the survival of the Sandinista government and the continuation of its progressive feminist policies. In the case of Argentina's 'Dirty War', women worked collectively to achieve their goals and receive support and maximise visibility through organisations such as the Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Women's protest groups elsewhere in Latin America have subsequently made explicit links to the Madres in their shared struggles for truth and justice. These examples demonstrate that gendered photographic bonds between women in the hemisphere have, at times, proved more powerful than national ties.

The hemispheric approach might be fruitfully brought to bear on further cases of photographic engagement with conflict and politics in the region. One salient topic of critical concern is that of gendered relations in and between Mexico and the US, with attention to the phenomenon of 'femicide' in Mexico, the porosity of the US-Mexican border, and the growing Latina diaspora in the US. The hemispheric approach might yield striking instances of women's photographic engagement that complicate national identities and frameworks, and resist conventional one-way power dynamics of North/South.

I do not wish to suggest that women are unproblematically united in their endeavours, particularly with regard to attitudes to feminism and imperialism. As demonstrated by Mrs. Leach's photo-albums, women may reproduce the dominant ideologies of their era, to convey colonial assumptions of class and racial hierarchies. Feminism and resistance to patriarchy are by no means a consistent or united across geographical boundaries, and women may cohere more strongly through class and racial identity than by gender. The aim of this thesis has been to consider the question of photographic engagement with war through the single prism of gender, and more research would be needed to think

through the ways in which class, race and sexuality articulate with the model of gendered engagement.

Finally, it is worth re-emphasising that my insistence on the identification of women's visual agency is not to suggest that women's experiences of war are transformative in a uniformly positive way. As Lorentzen and Turpin have argued in their study of women's experiences of war, women as civilians are more likely to be killed and to become war refugees than men (Lorentzen and Turpin 1998: xi). Women suffer gendered forms of violence in war, such as mass rape as a means of punishment and 'ethnic cleansing'; enforced prostitution and sexual torture; and subsequent disgrace as violated women or as mothers of children born of rape (Turpin 1998: 4–8). Hence, while some women may experience greater freedoms in wartime, others must cope with the legacies of gendered violence in war.

The expanded notion of war photography advanced in this thesis might be helpful in revealing the ways in which women have suffered gendered violence. Argentine photographer Paula Luttringer has produced a photographic series entitled *El lamento de los muros* ('The Wailing of the Walls', 2000–10). Luttringer's work offers an insight into her experience as an expectant mother imprisoned in a clandestine detention centre during Argentina's 'Dirty War'. Some two decades after the event, Luttringer collected testimonies of other women who were imprisoned, and photographed at the sites of the former detention centres (Fortuny 2014). In an evocation of the Latin American testimonial photography approach established in the 1970s, Luttringer takes the position of witness-participant rather than objective outsider. Text excerpts from the women's testimonies are presented alongside depictions of the very floors and walls of the prisons in which they were held, positioning the viewer as though inside the cell herself (figure 54). Luttringer offers a powerful and harrowing portrayal of state terrorism in which women's viewpoints are central, recognising and valuing their experiences of war.



Figure 54. Untitled, from *El lamento de los muros* ('The Wailing of the Walls')

'I went down about twenty or thirty steps and I heard big iron doors being shut. I imagined that the place was underground, that it was big, because you could hear people's voices echoing and the airplanes taxiing overhead or nearby. The noise drove you mad. One of the men said to me: so you're a psychologist? Well bitch, like all the psychologists, here you're really going to find out what's good. And he began to punch me in the stomach.' Marta Candeloro was abducted on June 7, 1977 in Neuquen. She was then taken to the Secret Detention Centre 'La Cueva'.

Paula Luttringer, 2000–2010
Black and white photograph accompanied by text

El lamento de los muros exemplifies the 'aftermath' approach, a recent direction in contemporary art and photographic practice. Aftermath photography explores the immediate or long-term consequences of catastrophic events, often in long-term projects and via a series of images, rather than the single dramatic frames favoured by the media (Herschdorfer 2011). Practitioners, like Luttringer, often choose to make oblique visual references, focusing on the physical traces and scenes of past violence, or the stories of survivors, rather than explicit depictions of violence. While Luttringer's reflective approach would not ordinarily be deemed constitutive of war photography, *El lamento de los muros* powerfully avows that the experience of incarcerated women constitutes a valid and authentic war narrative.

Potential beyond the thesis parameters

While the thesis has focused on instances of photographic engagement with twentieth-century conflict, this does not imply that the contested territory of photography, war and gender lies solely in the past. The issue of gender remains a contentious factor in war and war photography in the twenty-first century, despite the fact that women are more prominent in the spheres of war, politics, and the military. In Latin America, political agency of women remains notable, evidenced by the number of female heads of state including, among many others, Christine Kirchner in Argentina (2007–15), Laura Chinchilla in Costa Rica (2010–2014), and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil (2011–16). Feminist and grass-roots women's activist organisations are prominent in the region; a third of insurgents in the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) in Mexico are female. Women are permitted to undertake military roles in the state armed forces of nine Latin American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Brazil, Paraguay, Ecuador, Uruguay and Colombia). Technically, this implies participation frontline combat roles, though this has yet to be put into practice ('Mujeres latinoamericanas también en la línea de combate' 2013). Moreover, scholars detect the re-drawing of Latino masculinities, exemplified by men's increasing involvement in the traditionally feminine labour of care-giving and changing attitudes to homosexuality (cf. Gutmann 2003; Macías-González and Rubenstein 2012). Despite these developments, traditional roles for men and

women remain the default in dominant culture, and gender equality is still an aspiration.

In the US, despite a strong feminist movement, gender roles in war and politics also remain asymmetric. In 2014, women held less than 20 percent of congressional seats (Hill 2014), and the nation has yet to see its first female president. The US military expanded the number of combat positions open to women in 2012–13, but active-duty military positions, including the infantry, combat tank units, and Special Operations commando units, remain off-limits (Keating 2012). A number of women operate as war photographers in the ‘Capa mode’ – *New York Times*’s Lyndsay Addario being one of the most prominent – but female photojournalists remain the minority (in 2016, the roster of Magnum Photos included only eleven women out of a total of ninety photographers). All of these factors demonstrate that, where war and war photography are concerned, women are not yet in gender-neutral territory. Consequently, there is contemporary relevance and urgency to the issue of how women engage with photography and conflict in the hemisphere.

The theoretical and methodological frameworks proposed by this thesis might, moreover, shed light on conflicts beyond the hemisphere. There has been a swell of scholarly, media, curatorial, and popular attention in Europe to the First World War in its centenary. Books, articles, exhibitions, museum displays, and digital archives have brought more female photographers to light. These have made accessible to scholars the contributions of overlooked professionals Olive Edis and Christina Broom, as well as snapshot photography made by women serving in army auxiliary services.⁶ These enriched resources offer exciting possibilities to augment the embryonic research on women’s photographic engagement with the First World War, begun by Callister (2008) and Higonnet (2010).

⁶ Recent resources of female photographers in the First World War include the first exhibition of photographs by Christina Broom (Museum of London 2015), accompanied by the book *Soldiers and Suffragettes: The Photography of Christina Broom* (Sparham 2015); the digitisation and online availability of holdings of photography by Florence Farmborough, Olive Edis, and Mairi Chisholm at the Imperial War Museum, London; and the digitisation and online availability of the Olive Edis collection at Norfolk Museums and Galleries, UK.

The Eastern hemisphere in the Cold War might also yield distinctive stories of women's engagement. How has photography figured in communist societies such as the USSR, China, and North Korea, where political ideologies have professed commitment to gender equality, and there has been a relatively high degree of female participation in war, politics, and the military? Research in this region remains difficult due to Cold War legacies of political and ideological segregation, but more data and material is being available to scholars in the Western academy, especially with regard to China (cf. Roberts, C. 2013; Parr, Lundgren, and Gu 2015).

In recent years, the issue of gender has been a contentious factor in the so-called 'War on Terror'. The conflict has elicited striking examples of rhetoric from the US government, which declares that military action is needed to support women's rights in Iraq and Afghanistan (Armstrong and Prashad 2005: 213–214). The highly-publicised exploits of US servicewomen Lynndie England and Sabrina Harman at Abu Ghraib prison have elicited condemnation and surprise that women may be 'as cruel as the men' in their roles in the abuse of Iraqi detainees.⁷ The case of England and Harman refutes essentialist assumptions of women's empathy and pacifism. The photographs of humiliated prisoners taken by England and Harman, and images by male colleagues depicting the women as perpetrators, offer a disturbing example of the way in which women's photographic engagement might be repressive, even sadistic.

Meanwhile, the Arab Spring has seen a high degree of female political activism, and women have been central actors in Muslim activism, motivated by a range of positions on gender, ideology, and religion. Women-only photo-collectives are emerging, such as the Middle-Eastern/Iranian group of photojournalists Rawiya ('She Who Tells a Story'), which offers insider viewpoints on aspects of conflict in the region, often focusing on issues affecting women (Kidd and Quadry 2013). The ways in which women's photographic engagement with war plays out in Muslim societies, where not only gender, but also visibility, has rules that are quite distinct from those of the West, demands particular investigation. This research area might be fruitfully explored via the engagement model and the expanded conception of war photography advanced in this thesis.

⁷ *Sunday Herald* (n.d.), cited in Gourevitch and Morris (2008: inside cover).

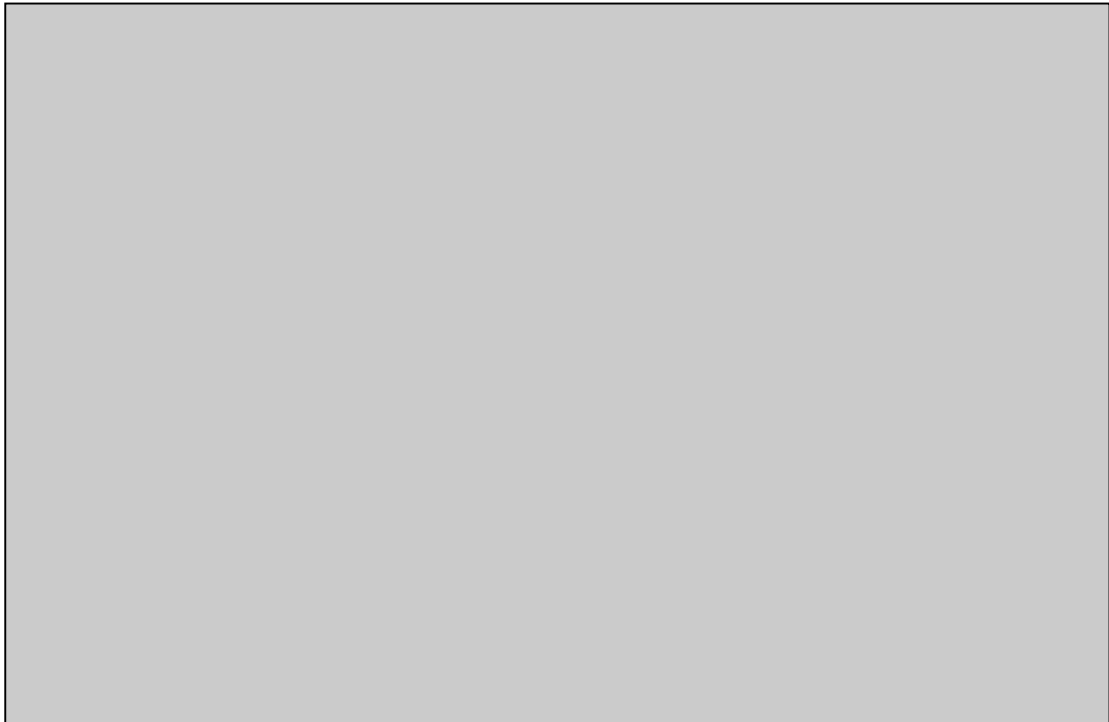


Figure 55. *Puerta (Door)* from *Desde adentro (From Within)*, 2003

María Elvira Escallón
C-type photograph, dimensions variable

The theoretical and methodological frameworks I have proposed might also help analyse photography in relation to a wider range of modes of warfare than those admitted by the 'Capa mode'. The decades-long armed conflict in Colombia, for instance, has been a highly complex situation involving the Colombian government, left-wing guerrilla groups, paramilitary units, and drugs cartels; characteristic tactics included intimidation, kidnappings, bombings, and mass displacement of rural communities. Conventional war photography has proved a one-dimensional response to such complexities.⁸

The aftermath approach, as observed above with reference to Paula Luttringer's photographic work on Argentine state terrorism, offers a potent alternative to the

⁸ At the time of thesis submission in 2016, a plebiscite had been called to approve a peace deal between guerrilla army FARC and the Colombian government, which would officially end the conflict. In a report for the BBC, Juan Carlos Perez Salazar asserts that 'strangely, despite the Colombian war's longevity, there are very few defining images recording it' (Perez Salazar 2016).

'Capa mode'. Colombian artist María Elvira Escallón has also employed the aftermath approach, photographing the interior of her workplace in Bogotá after a bomb attack. Her series *Desde adentro* ('From Within', 2003) depicts the traces of the occupants trapped in the building, whose footprints and finger marks are inscribed in the soot-encrusted floors and walls (figure 55). Escallón's virtually abstract depictions offer a counter to the Colombian press's insistence on explicit images of violated corpses. Such an approach, the artist avows, aims to invite a more contemplative response that dignifies the victims, as well as constituting a legacy for an event that has been denied public commemoration (Brown and Oldfield 2007: 12). Escallón's work, with its insistence upon interiority, absence, and abstraction, is far removed from the tenets of the 'Capa mode', but nonetheless offers a powerful response to the realities of conflict experienced by a Colombian female civilian. The possibilities for women to undertake war photography in the 'aftermath' mode is worthy of further exploration. The high number of women working in this manner might indicate that male and female photographers experience more parity than in the field of traditional photojournalism. Although aftermath photography has attracted some critical notice (cf. Company 2003; Duganne 2007; Herschdorfer 2011), the ways in which the approach articulates with gender has yet to be examined.

The expanded conception of war photography and the model of engagement might also prove a more adequate way of responding to the methods of twenty-first century warfare. On the global stage, the last two decades have been marked by conflicts that do not adhere to the conventional 'hot war' mode. Religious extremism, insurgency, and the so-called War on Terror have brought a range of tools and practices into the spotlight: suicide bombing, terrorist cells, IEDs, drones and unmanned aerial warfare, and techniques of detainment, interrogation, and torture. The development of remote weaponry and military visual technology has further accentuated the importance of surveillance and sight as a means of domination and control over the enemy. At the same time, photographic practitioners have debated the diminishing viability of war as a conventionally 'photographable' subject (Oldfield 2010). The conceptions of engagement and the expanded notion of war photography might offer strategies for bringing these aspects of conflict into view, and making them the object of analysis. Such an approach offers a supplement to the 'Capa mode', one that is better fitted for revelation and examination of the structures and systems of war.

While the scope of thesis has been restricted to analogue (chemical) photography, there is increasing readiness to understand the proliferation of digital photographic practices and platforms in the sphere of war (cf. Rose 2012; Adami 2016; Shepherd and Hamilton 2016). The obsolescence of analogue technology has weakened photography's purchase on the index and its status as a physical register of its referent. As a result, photography has lost some of its associated truth-value in the sphere of war.

While some commentators, including archetypal war photographer Don McCullin lament the erosion of photography's indexicality (Brown, Mark 2015), digital photography offers new ways for producing, sharing and disseminating photographic images, which demand critical enquiry. How, for instance, might gender articulate with practices of citizen journalism and non-professional digital photography? How have mobile-phone technology and social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, helped disseminate images across borders? Digital images and social media have been mobilised in the name of visual activism, opposing repressive regimes in recent revolutions (Adami 2016). The free circulation of digital images, however, may not always be liberating. As noted above, the digital photographs produced and shared by US servicewomen Lynndie England and Sabrina Harman at Abu Ghraib indicate the ways in which the repressive practice and racist ideology of US imperialism might be disseminated via digital platforms. Although unpalatable, such instances of women's photographic engagement are vital to understand. Together, the model of engagement and re-conceptualisation of war photography could help investigate the ways in which women digitally engage with photography and war, both now and in the immediate future.

Finally, the thesis has potential value to scholars working in fields other than simply gender, to reveal the participation of marginalised groups besides from women. As this study has shown, the default viewpoint on war remains that of the white Global North heterosexual male. The orthodoxy of heterosexuality remains pre-eminent in the military; the experiences of white Westerners as soldiers and photographers are prioritised in the Western media over alternative views; and the 'Capa mode' continues to privilege the virile, risk-taking, masculine photojournalist. Attention to engagement and the expanded conception of war photography might reveal overlooked perspectives on war by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender groups and individuals; and by people of

black, Latino, indigenous, Arab or other non-Caucasian descent. Such an approach has the potential to produce a more adequate picture and understanding of war as it affects all those involved, including those who have traditionally been excluded from the canon. By drawing on the notion of photographic engagement and the expanded conception of war photography, there is great potential to more adequately communicate the viewpoints of *all* those affected by war. In today's geopolitical climate typified by global suspicion of 'the other', an enhanced understanding of viewpoints from a range of sites and positions is perhaps more urgent and relevant than ever.

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