



Martha Gellhorn, seated on deck chair, aboard the SS Rexx, returning from Europe, January 12, 1940. Photo: Bettmann/Corbis.



Gerda Taro and Robert Capa, January 1, 1936, Paris. Photo: Fred Stein/dpa/Corbis.



Andrée Viollis on the occasion of the Prix de L'Europe Nouvelle, 1933.
Photo: Roger Viollis.

Rebels with a Cause: Women Reporting the Spanish Civil War

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Abstract: This article evaluates the war journalism produced by Martha Gellhorn, Gerda Taro, and Andrée Viollis, three women whose work reflects the many circumstances that brought them on the battlefield, including their gender. All three used journalistic style and emotional substance to advance readers' understanding of the conflict and push their political agenda. Their meticulously crafted reportages focused on human suffering, but they also presented military action and interpellated politicians. They drew attention to burning issues in Spain but also connected the Spanish tragedy to transnational concerns. Their unabated fight against fascism was generated by a sense of responsibility, and in creating a discursive space to help others exist they embraced alterity. Running counter to any emotional freezing, the dual articulation of movement and agitation in their reporting consolidates the link between attachment and engagement. This journalism was deeply rooted in the lived experience of soldiers and civilians with whom they endured the fights on the frontlines and the shelling of cities. Emotional journalism was a strategy to alienate their inner selves and get closer to their subjects, which their own subaltern positions facilitated. Their femininity was used to serve their journalistic calling and access an almost exclusively male public sphere. The texts and images produced also foregrounded a common political stance and determination. They used aesthetic tools to ethical ends, and their emotional journalism was used to move us and make us move.

The death of the *Sunday Times* war correspondent Marie Colvin in Homs, Syria, on February 22, 2012, was declared as a terrible loss for journalism. She died in action, reporting from the heart of the conflict, concerned for the plight of a starved and bereft people relentlessly bombed by a cruel dictator. Colvin had borne witness to countless conflicts across the world and

was determined to give a voice to innocent victims mercilessly crushed by brutal regimes and evil forces. Moral responsibility and dedication to others defined her journalism. As Roy Greenslade wrote in her obituary, political strategy and weaponry were not her main concerns. Rather, Colvin's focus was the effect of war on civilians.¹ She was committed to accurately reporting and exposing the atrocities of war, hoping the international community would take action. "Why is the world not there?" she lamented from Syria, and repeatedly from other places prior to the conflict that killed her.² Among her personal effects on her last assignment was Martha Gellhorn's *The Face of War*.

Journalism of Attachment

Colvin was one of the most respected war correspondents because her first-hand accounts were delivered with a just indignation, and because she was fearless in the face of adversity. She was not a literary journalist, but because she covered wars and conflicts, like the women discussed in this article—Gellhorn (1908–98), Gerda Taro (1910–37), and Andrée Viollis (1870–1950)—her impressive career is my cue to tackle the specificities of war journalism produced by women, in particular literary and photographic journalism. My hypothesis is that these women's dedication to the innocent casualties of war—their papers expected them to write human interest stories—resulted in the production of what might be called "emotional journalism," for want of a better term. This is not to say that I posit a journalistic *écriture féminine* that would reductively be conceived of as sob stories. I would even side with those who might question the necessity of creating a distinctive gender-based category of literary journalists. Yet my contention is that each one of the aforementioned reporters, both for microcosmic reasons (family background, education, personal and professional life paths sprinkled with exceptional encounters but also riddled with obstacles) and macrocosmic circumstances (the context of the Spanish Civil War, the media that commissioned their texts and photographs, their readership in various locations) produced original journalism not unrelated to their being *women* on the frontline. In other words, I am interested in examining their distinctive textual and photographic production, which reflects the many circumstances that brought them on the battlefield including, but not limited to, their gender.

Journalism with an emotional quality might be compared to the partisan and partial "journalism of attachment," coined by Martin Bell, who defines it as reporting that takes the human and emotional costs of war into consideration.³ Journalism of attachment "is not only knowing, but also caring."⁴

Both Colvin's and Gellhorn's work have been labeled as journalism of attachment.⁵ It is difficult to resist the conclusion that journalism of attachment and literary (photographic) journalism share similarities, particularly because of the sensitivity and humanity infused in such reportages. Those who champion journalism of attachment insist that it not about emotional dependence: it is journalism that holds authorities to account and aims to galvanize people into action. As O'Neill suggests, "[I]n emphasizing attachment over neutrality, and emotionalism over objectivity, the new breed of attached reporter became more like an activist, an international campaigner, rather than a dispassionate recorder of fact and truth."⁶ Gellhorn, Taro, and Viollis used both reportorial and aesthetic means to inform their readers, but because they did not limit themselves to warfare and military strategies, the conflict became everyone's concern and responsibility. As such, their "emotional" journalism prompted profound soul searching and invited essential questions.

Conversely, the detractors of journalism of attachment denounce its biased combatant spirit.⁷ In this article, I hope to demonstrate that Gellhorn, Taro, and Viollis, used journalistic style and emotional substance to advance their readers' understanding of the conflict and push their political agenda, not as personal crusades. Gayatri Spivak's views on activism help elucidate how these women were using their journalism for "ethical intervention" at a global level.⁸ In so doing, they were not only drawing attention to the burning issues in Spain but were also connecting the Spanish tragedy to transnational concerns. Their unabated fight against fascism was generated not only by audacity but, most importantly, by a sense of responsibility, which Spivak understands as the ethical act of creating a discursive space to help others exist and, in so doing, embrace alterity. Gellhorn, Taro, and Viollis made visible the plight of the oppressed by propelling their local reportages onto the international scene. They used aesthetic tools to ethical ends. Their epistemological performances constituted a violent critique of European democracies that opted for nonintervention. The reportages that resulted from their expeditions to and from the warring cities of Spain are evidence of their dedication to the job: They were constantly in motion to elicit their readers' emotions.

Interestingly enough, the etymology of the term emotion, from old French *émotion*, first meant "a (social) moving, stirring, agitation," and from Latin *e-movere*, "move out, remove, agitate,"⁹ before it took on any reference to feelings. Running counter to any emotional freezing, this dual articulation of movement and agitation underpins the literary and photographic journalism of Gellhorn, Taro, and Viollis, and consolidates the link between attachment and engagement. The call to action these women initiated, and the profoundly humanist compassion they showed, dovetailed to create a unique

form of journalism. It may be the case that this journalism tinged with emotions, arguably gender-specific and feminine in perspective, was deeply rooted in the lived experience of soldiers and civilians with whom these journalists endured the fights on the frontlines and the shelling of cities. Their literary and photographic journalism was triggered by a sense of urgency and fostered by their own position of subalterns—they were performing as minorities in their profession—representing other subaltern subjects. Spivak envisions “the imagination as an in-built instrument of othering ourselves.”¹⁰ Imagination should be envisaged here as journalistic imagination, a creative representation of reality. Spivak’s words illuminate the rationale behind the trio’s work: They resorted to emotional journalism as a strategy to alienate their inner selves and get closer to their subjects, which their own subaltern positions may have facilitated.

Women Reporting the Spanish Civil War

Gellhorn, Taro, and Viollis hailed from various geographical, social, and cultural locations. Albeit with different backgrounds, the threesome covered the Spanish conflict in which they unambiguously supported the Republican cause. In this sense, paradigmatic relations may be established between their coverage of the conflict and possible gender-defined proclivities. Collating their texts and images framed within the same cultural context points to some common features, despite their distinct roots and routes. They all traveled extensively, spoke several languages, worked across borders, trespassed boundaries in an effort to denounce and expose the suffering of others. Comparing their journalistic productions amounts to “suspending oneself and entering the text and the other,”¹¹ while accepting Spivak’s warnings against “the false promise of a level playing field” when bringing texts together “to discover varieties of sameness.”¹² Indeed, it is essential to acknowledge that the journalistic and photographic texts scrutinized here must be approached beyond the time-space limits of their context, according to the journalists’ respective itineraries.

From its inception, the Spanish Civil War polarized not only the Spanish people, but also the world at large. While the Nationalists were helped and supported by the Italian and German military, the revolutionist Popular Front in Spain was not helped by French or British allies, who decided not to intervene in the conflict, lest it might spread to the rest of Europe. The confrontation between communism and fascism, revolution and dictatorship, and the absence of action from the Allies led a number of artists and intellectuals to embrace the Loyalist cause and produce an impressive artistic corpus about the war. The flood of texts, films, and reportages from American

and European authors was their response to the unbearable failure to take responsibility and the expression of strong partisanship. According to Martin Hurcombe, many intellectuals wrote about the Spanish Civil War because it was essentially about values, which made it a “nobler” fight than other conflicts that rested upon economic, political, or even imperialistic motives.¹³ Hurcombe also highlights the tension foregrounded by some critics between the Spanish representations of the war and external (in particular, French) attempts at comprehending it, the latter being dismissed due to their alienation from the origins and stakes of the war, hence the propagandistic and stereotypical quality of some politically engaged artistic works.¹⁴ However, he also believes that the internationalization of the debate neither revealed foreign appropriation nor downplayed the local specificities of the conflict, which foreshadowed a global war. Indeed, as George R. Esenwein shows, this domestic conflict unfolded also through the intervention of European powers, jeopardizing peace on the continent and threatening the world order, hence the necessity to get involved, at least discursively or creatively.¹⁵

Women on the frontlines were not a common occurrence in the 1930s, and yet outstanding female journalists played an instrumental role in documenting the Spanish Civil War. David Deacon presents some of the reasons why female reporters were enthusiastic about “going to Spain with the boys.”¹⁶ In spite of the patriarchal constraints of their professional environments, they benefited from the support of “male mentors” and their female perspective was valued, essentially for three reasons.¹⁷ First, their gender was in itself a novel quality publicized by newspapers: creating high profiles of female reporters was a strategy to bank on a growing female readership. Second, the mass observation movement had prompted interest for ordinary people. Third, the conflict was a total war with air attacks that killed women and children and erased the frontiers between “frontline and home front.”¹⁸ While these elements are important to identify characteristics of female journalism, Deacon also joins McLaughlin¹⁹ in warning against essentialist views that would imply that journalism produced by women is not concerned with military, political, or strategic aspects of warfare. As he astutely remarks, meticulous observations of the civilian populations were also essential in understanding the combat. Moreover, the journalism of Gellhorn, Taro, and Viollis was also scrupulously informative, factual, and accurate. Indeed, statistics of casualties, descriptions of weaponry, and essential encounters with high officials and politicians, were reported in detail. Their dispatches and pictures constitute invaluable sources of documentation to understand how the conflict unfolded.

Gellhorn was twenty-eight years old, and the Spanish conflict led to her

first experience of war journalism. Taro, also in her twenties (and war photojournalist Robert Capa's girlfriend), was a newcomer to journalism. Her photographic reportages were published as major pictorials, and she died in a vehicle collision during the conflict. Andrée Viollis was a politically engaged and respected reporter, already sixty-seven years old at war's outbreak. All were present in Spain, albeit intermittently, in 1936 and '37. Gellhorn apparently never met Taro, even though they both stayed at the Hotel Florida in Madrid in spring 1937.²⁰ Gellhorn became one of Capa's best friends, whom she got to know just after Taro's accidental death. As for Viollis, there is no evidence that she met either of them, but her daughter, Simone Téry, also a journalist, had her work published in *Regards* and illustrated with pictures by Capa and Taro. Gellhorn, Taro, and Viollis, despite their different backgrounds and trajectories, all advocated the Republican cause. Gellhorn became a supporter of the Loyalists as soon as she read the Nazi press referring to them as "Red-Swine-dogs." Taro and her family suffered from anti-Semitism, and some of her relatives were killed. Viollis had been a leftist all her life. As they converged in a war zone, along the same frontlines, I propose to compare their journalism along three different axes: the reasons that led to them to Spain and the circumstances in which they produced their reportages; the poetic qualities of their journalism; and their political commitment and possible activism.

From Sidelines to Frontlines

Gellhorn traveled around the world and covered wars until a late age. Her journalistic production reflects her sense of observation, empathy, and dedication to the troubles of others. Her chronicles of and dispatches from conflict zones were published under the title *The Face of War* (1959), which reflects her unabated support and unflinching compassion for innocent civilians. Her first book, *The Trouble I've Seen* (1936), a novella based on her reportage of the Depression, received great critical acclaim and brought her laudatory comments, including a comparison to Hemingway.²¹ Although she had no formal accreditation, she convinced Kyle Crichton at *Collier's* to write a letter stipulating she was a war correspondent.²² Gellhorn doubted her capacity to provide a sound piece of reporting from a female perspective.²³ Nevertheless, her name on the masthead of *Collier's* confirmed her newly acquired status.²⁴ Hemingway played an instrumental role in her career shift—some interpreted their relationship as an opportunistic move for Gellhorn—by encouraging her to report the effects of the war on civilians, rather than its technical aspects,²⁵ and also because they cosigned some articles.²⁶ However, several critics also point to the negative, even harmful, influence

of Hemingway on Gellhorn, particularly in his attempts to prevent her from covering the Second World War.²⁷ Their fertile collaboration turned into fierce, fiery competition.

Gellhorn thus “[went] to Spain with the boys,” motivated by Hemingway’s presence and aware that she was in an unusual, privileged position to break through as a journalist. Being a young, elegant female reporter in such a violent context was rare, and her daredevil posture did not go unnoticed. *Collier’s* published several dispatches that confirmed her status of war correspondent in Spain, including “Only the Shells Whine” (July 17, 1937), “Men without Medals,” (January 18, 1938), and “City at War” (April 2, 1938). Kate McLoughlin explains that Gellhorn was not especially constrained by *Collier’s* editors, which allowed her free rein to collect her own impressions of the war. Her articles were long—not front-page news—and appeared intermittently in the paper.²⁸ As a result, her journalism outshone Hemingway’s thanks to its “intensity, focus, and unity” and because of its “lack of self-referentiality.”²⁹ Gellhorn’s legacy, Wilson insists, was to expand the sense of possibility for women reporters,³⁰ and presaged a new type of war journalism.³¹

Like Gellhorn, Taro’s work must be examined in a diachronic and transnational perspective. Gerta Pohorylle, who later changed her name to Gerda Taro, was born on August 1, 1910, to a middle-class Jewish family in the then Austro-Hungarian Empire. She was a German Jew with a Polish passport and was imprisoned because of her participation in antifascist actions and her open criticism of Hitler.³² Her exile to France brought her in contact with many intellectuals and artists, which influenced her choice to become a war photographer. Gellhorn’s mother was a feminist, a suffragette, and a close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt. She grew up in a privileged environment that fostered free expression and self-assertiveness. Taro’s life was different. She attended political meetings in Paris, but women in exile did not express themselves openly in that community. Their presence was welcome in those circles, but they were not expected to speak publicly, and did not. Mostly, they listened to men.³³ For these women refugees, self-realization was still uncharted territory. Taro would later go through a transformative process, teaming up with Robert Capa, taking up photography, shaping a new persona, and landing her own contracts. Her life was inseparable from Capa’s, even though her name fell into oblivion while his came to prominence. At least, that was her trajectory until three boxes containing untouched negatives were found in Mexico and delivered to the International Center of Photography in New York in 2007. The so-called “Mexican suitcase,” an astonishing trove of more than 4,500 thirty-five millimeter negatives, included work not only by Capa and the Polish photographer Chim (David Seymour), but also, most

importantly, work by Taro.³⁴ In fact, the Taro negatives contained in three boxes that had been sitting around since 1939 cover almost all of her work between February 1937 and her unfortunate death six months later.

As Irme Schaber explains, Taro's fate is a complex assemblage of personal and political trajectories. At that time Capa was still Endre Enró Friedmann, and Taro actively promoted his career as Robert Capa, a byline they shared. He benefited from her managerial skills, while she learned the craft from him. Their joint venture led them to Spain, where they both captured the emotions of their subjects on camera. Schaber notes that proximity and alterity were closely intertwined in their photojournalism. Their images were slices of the Spanish reality traversed by a universal call against fascism.³⁵ Several critics have commented on the difficulties of distinguishing between their respective pictures, as the pair worked together, focused on the same subjects, and published in the same papers. The similitude between the photographs was not limited to Taro and Capa—the identification of Chim's own pictures also required some meticulous expertise.³⁶ Therefore, a theory that would posit Taro's work as distinctively gender-specific would not hold given the circumstances. By way of illustration, the work in which she and Capa foregrounded militia women was not her exclusive preserve. Also, both photographers documented military action as much as the plight of victims and refugees. However, because Taro's pictures were not credited, competition and differences may have emerged between the two, hence her decision to work independently for French communist paper *Ce Soir*, where at long last her pictures were stamped "Photo Taro."³⁷

Like Gellhorn, Taro opened new avenues for women reporters, this time through photojournalism. There exist many representations of her, from saint and martyr to femme fatale and whore, explains her main biographer.³⁸ Also like Gellhorn, she drew the attention of the soldiers because of her looks and her apparent fearlessness. As a young and charming photojournalist, she was a magnet for attention and used her special status to gain access to the front. She was both photographing and photographed, notably by Capa himself. Their occasional separations during the Spanish Civil War had a positive outcome for Taro, who for the first time landed her own commissions and earned solo credits in the French magazine *Regards* (April 15, 1937).³⁹ "Robert Capa," the joint signature that eclipsed her, had been a major bone of contention in their collaboration. At that point, Rogoyska argues, distancing from Capa was a prerequisite to Taro's attempts at self-definition as a photographer.⁴⁰ Sadly, she was also the first woman photojournalist to be killed in the field, crushed by a tank during the ferocious Battle of Brunete, which killed 25,000 Loyalist militiamen. Devastated, Capa purportedly lamented

her lack of judgment and miscalculation of risks, which led to a tragedy he could have prevented had he been there.⁴¹ The reason why she responded so intensely to the Spanish Civil War is that the conflict crystallized all the antagonisms she had been fighting against up until that point in her life. The war in Spain was a harbinger of the impending doom and of the extermination of her family. Her unequivocal dedication to reporting from the front and to bear witness to the effects of the conflict was determined by her own personal tragedy.

Even though objectivity is the backbone of any reporting, balance can be easily tipped in conflicts where opponents stand at far political ends. According to Hurcombe, French intellectuals responded more bitterly than their British and American counterparts for two main reasons. First, Spain is a neighboring country, and second, both the far right and far left were active in France, too. Even though intellectuals and artists are known to have mostly supported the Loyalists, public opinion was more divided at the time. French representations of the conflict, be they pro-Nationalist or pro-Republican, were inextricably linked to the radical debates that were raging in France. Andrée Viollis was one of the major figures of French literary reportage in the twentieth century. She was probably the most famous female journalist of the interwar period, determined to expose social and racial injustices, and to uncover inconvenient truths. Still, her journalism is hardly known today, despite her impressive coverage of wars and conflicts, which spanned three decades. From the 1920s to the '40s Viollis covered the conflict in Ireland, the Bolshevik and Indian rebellions, civil war in Afghanistan, colonialism in Indochina, the Spanish Civil War, Nazi Germany, and racist tensions in South Africa. Her lack of visibility in literary journalism was regrettable until Anne Renoult and Alice-Anne Jeandel repaired that glaring omission with two monographs. These two French scholars have revived interest in Viollis's career, including her assignments in Spain.⁴²

Viollis was married twice, first to a journalist (Gustave Téry), then to a writer (Jean Viollis), and had four daughters. She was educated at the Sorbonne in Paris and at Oxford University, and opted for a career in journalism, a predominantly masculine profession at the time. Her passion for traveling and her multilingualism helped her break through in the heyday of *grand reportage*. She was a devoted communist, socialist, freethinker, and soon worked for papers such as *La Raison*, *L'Action*, and *La Fronde*, and landed exceptional interviews with Lloyd George, Nadir Khan, and Gandhi. She was an ardent feminist who joined the Women's World Committee against War and Fascism in 1934. As Boucharenc notes, Viollis personified the "intellectual female reporter" and was the first woman to join the prestigious

Association française du grand reportage. Therefore, it can be claimed that *grand reportage* contributed to women's emancipation, Boucharenc insists.⁴³ Viollis worked as a special envoy during the Spanish Civil War for *Le Petit Parisien*, *Vendredi* (which she codirected), and *Ce Soir*, which also published Taro's photos. She went to Spain four times and met President Manuel Azaña, Dolores Ibárruri (La Pasionaria), and the charismatic socialist leader Largo Caballero, among many others. She traveled frequently across the country, to Barcelona, Valencia, Madrid, Alicante, La Sierra, and Cordoba.⁴⁴ Unlike Gellhorn and Taro, Viollis was already a full-fledged and highly respected reporter when she arrived in Spain.

The Poetics of Literary Journalism

Gellhorn's writing is literary in that it contains rich descriptions, dialogue, historical reconstructions, and insightful comments. She was a keen observer of the victims of the war. Her poetic talent, along with a determination to expose the suffering of others, forms the backbone of her literary journalism. Being a novelist, she used characterization and other literary devices to personalize her reports. In spite of the intensive bombing, she went to the trenches and visited hospitals. Her literary journalism is suffused with heartrending descriptions and poignant dialogue, framed by realistic detail of the ongoing conflict. She zooms in and out of the warring zone, inviting the reader to the streets of Madrid. Her use of alliteration in "Only the Shells Whine"—whistle, whirl, whine; speed, spinning, scream—and the foregrounding of herself as a direct witness of events add sensitivity and humanity to her stories:

At first the shells went over: you could hear the thud as they left the Fascists' guns, a sort of groaning cough, then you heard them fluttering toward you. . . . The shells whistled toward you—it was as if they whirled at you—faster than you could imagine speed, and spinning that way, they whined: the whine rose higher and quicker and was a close scream—and then they hit and it was like granite thunder. . . . I went downstairs into the lobby, practicing on the way how to breathe.⁴⁵

In "City at War," Gellhorn uses similar melodic tools—"[s]treetcars, with people sticking like ivy on the steps and bumpers, burned muffled blue lights"—which make a lasting visual and acoustic impression on readers.⁴⁶ Other strategies to strengthen the aesthetic fabric of her reporting include literary and musical references, either to Byron and Shakespeare, or to Spanish opera and American jazz. Transcultural landmarks are constitutive of an aesthetics of impact that can thrill an audience and stir its soul.

Gellhorn introduces her readers to the victims and alternates between

everyday scenes in the Spanish cities with statistics and facts about the assaults. She was working as a “walking tape recorder with eyes,” an oft-cited attempt at self-definition that both showed her dedication to truthfully representing reality, but also as a way to problematize it, since she repeatedly relinquished “this objectivity shit.”⁴⁷ According to McLoughlin, Gellhorn’s objectivity should be understood as “stylistic restraint,” since being objective was not possible, either in Spain or Dachau.⁴⁸ This argument shows that her journalism, McLoughlin further notes, brings out emotions rather than expresses them.⁴⁹ These claims may be verified in “Men without Medals,” where Gellhorn praises the courage of the young volunteers that joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to defend the Loyalists:

Last spring and summer, more Americans came. They crossed the snow passes of the Pyrenees on foot, in little bands. They traveled in fishing boats down the Mediterranean coast to Barcelona. There were those two who drowned when the *Ciudad de Barcelona* was torpedoed. They knew what they were coming to, and they came anyhow: several thousand of them. Now they were trained troops, with a proud record in Spain. It was a strange thing, walking through that olive grove, bending your head against the dusty wind, and seeing the faces from Mississippi, and Ohio and New York and California, and hearing the voices that you’d heard at a baseball game, in the subway, on any campus, in any hamburger joint, anywhere in America.⁵⁰

Her equation of Spain and America through almost bucolic landscapes and familiar faces strikes an emotional chord as it binds two alienated nations’ destinies in their fight for democracy. Gellhorn informs her readers about the battalion’s movements, military offensives, the shelling and bombing of Madrid. But the examples above also demonstrate that the literariness of her texts gives them particular substance and depth.

Taro’s photographs tell a similar story. They should first be considered, says critic Jane Rogoyoska, as the work of a (photo)journalist, not an artist, because her main goal was “to bear witness.”⁵¹ Taro’s pictures certainly document the violence of the war and reveal some hidden truths, such as the initial success of the Republicans at the Battle of Brunete, a fact that had been obliterated on the basis of written sources.⁵² The photographs taken a few hours before her death—the poor quality of which is evidence of the pending tension and imminent catastrophe—disclose a complex, albeit fragmented, narrative:

There is a strong sense of the immediacy of the action: the photographs do not follow a narrative sequence, but are random, disjointed, as if Taro is swinging her camera round to capture first one thing, then another, as it

forces itself upon her attention. There is not time for composition or framing: the impulse is just to capture events now, as they are happening.⁵³

The rolls of negatives show exhausted soldiers and ruined landscapes, but they also contain portraits of artists (Rafael Alberti reading Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*) as well as lyrical and poetic images of trees and horses.⁵⁴ Her pictures therefore exhibit aesthetic qualities that combine literary references and visual elements. Anthony L. Geist captures a spectral quality in Taro's last photos, not only due to their deterioration but also to the ghostly scenes that punctuate the negatives. Indeed, Geist argues, the smoke and haze, and the blaze that encircles the characters, combine to compose a particularly sinister partition. The looming disaster becomes legible in the collection of Taro's images more than from any individual negative.⁵⁵ While Gellhorn's texts present visual and filmic features, Taro's pictures contain textual elements once they are considered in their broader context. Her photographs are not static—the terror-stricken, wounded soldiers, and the debacle of the Battle of Brunete, speak volumes about the unfolding tragedy and the point of no return the war had reached. Taro's responsibility was to capture the events, while the viewer's was to elaborate on the unwritten script of the event and to work on the "composition" and "framing" needed to make sense of the story.

Viollis's first article from Spain, which landed on the front page of *Le Petit Parisien* on July 30, 1936, emphasized the proximity of the war, as she drew close parallels between the two countries to such an extent that the frontiers between France and Spain were blurred.⁵⁶ Like Gellhorn, Viollis creates parallels between countries to elicit emotional reactions and prompt political actions, the message being that fascism is a threat to all, and that the bravery of the Spanish people must be emulated. A comparison of Viollis's articles to her male colleagues' (mainly André Salmon and Louis Roubaud) published in *Le Petit Parisien* does not result in a strictly gender-defined categorization of writing techniques, and thus fails to single out stark contrasts in either form or content. Although male journalists tend to provide more data about military warfare and strategies, Viollis's reports devote many column inches to facts and figures—advances on both fronts, statements by prominent politicians, combats on the frontline. Albeit aged sixty-seven, and confessing she was no military expert, Viollis traveled with her male colleagues and crawled in the trenches with the soldiers.⁵⁷ Elizabeth Brunazzi argues that Viollis's reports from Madrid are instructive, because she developed a holistic approach to her subject, which she covered almost as if using a camera, cruising the streets of the capital city. Consequently, she provided "close-up images of the war through . . . eye-witness accounts of individuals she interview[ed], blending them with her own highly localized on-the-ground descriptions."⁵⁸

She furnished visual images of the situation in Barcelona, Madrid, Toledo, with admittedly particular concern for women, children, and the elderly. At times she also includes literary—Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*—and artistic references—Greco and Velazquez—to stir emotions and pander to a cultivated readership.

Viollis thus waxes lyrical about the Spanish people and shows literary talent in her descriptions of both leaders and common people. The magnanimity and greatness of the former is rendered in the most laudatory terms, while the elegance, the generosity of spirit and strength of character of the latter is expressed with equal force. Indeed, Viollis met Lluís Companys, president of Catalonia, and other prominent politicians, such as José Giral, Julio Alvarez del Vayo, and Francisco Largo Caballero. Most importantly, she interviewed Manuel Azaña, president of the Republic, on August 6, and again on October 7, 1936. She lionized him in an impressive portrait, highlighting his strong constitution and oratory skills, praising his deep voice and eloquence tinged with indignation. This deft characterization is on a par with the description of the magnificence of the palace and superb tapestries, which adds to the grandeur of the scene. Viollis emphasizes the solemnity of the moment and even creates complicity between the politician and the journalist: “In an elevated French language, to which the hoarse accent of Spain adds surprising vigor, the President expressed his disillusion. . . . Then, all of a sudden: ‘All this cannot be published, he tells me, stretching out his arm. You understand I have a duty to preserve secrecy, above all at this moment. But I will make a brief statement.’”⁵⁹

As for the common people who fell victim to the violence of combat, Viollis strikingly uses saintly and Christlike imagery, not for religious purposes, but to endow these unwitting heroes and innocent victims with a sacred dimension:

[A] beautiful young girl looks asleep, her long eyelashes leaning on her dark cheek, her golden brown hair encircled with white carnations, a wreath of lilies in her arms. . . . In a corner, I see two tiny oblong and all white coffins, embellished with drawings and golden ornaments, irresistibly evoking large boxes of sugared almonds—two babies. . . . Then . . . I see something I will never forget: in one of these graceful caskets lined with white fabric, looking more like a cradle than a coffin, a child aged two or three is at rest, without apparent wounds, a smile on her lips, so adorable that she looks like the baby Jesus in the Christmas crèche. The quivering candlelight animates and blushes her face, a pink ribbon is tied in her blond and soft hair, around her white dress, and her doll’s feet are in pink shoes.⁶⁰

Another similar description of corpses at the morgue in Madrid in Feb-

ruary 1937 calls to mind the pictures taken by Taro in Valence earlier in May. Both reporters came face to face with death: “The first victims—among them forty mutilated children covered with blood, stiff—were lined on paving stones at the morgue. Arms, legs, and other unidentified body parts were piled in wooden white coffins.”⁶¹

Viollis does not shy away from unbearable situations and goes to some lengths to create photographic images that depict the total war that is wreaking havoc in Spain. Her graphic reportages aim at triggering emotions and visceral reactions against the cowardice of the French authorities.

The Politics of Literary Journalism

As discussed earlier, Gellhorn rejected the idea that one could be neutral when faced with atrocities of war: “the idea that you are so brain dead and stony hearted that you have no reaction to it strikes me as absolute nonsense.”⁶² Her concern and her sense of responsibility also show in her correspondence to Eleanor Roosevelt. In a letter dated June 1937 from New York, Gellhorn informed the president’s wife about the homeless and orphaned Basque children waiting for sanctuary in America, and regretted the country’s failure to assist them.⁶³ Gellhorn admitted that “[e]motional women are bad news. . . . It is hard nowadays not to get emotionally terribly involved in this whole business.” She also confessed her outrage: “Anger against two men whom I firmly believe to be dangerous criminals, Hitler and Mussolini, and against the international diplomacy which humbly begs for the continued ‘co-operation’ of the Fascists, who at once destroy Spain and are appointed to keep that destruction from spreading. This is emotional, probably. But I don’t know how else one can feel.”⁶⁴

Gellhorn then expressed perceptive opinions about the Spanish Civil War determining the future of the continent, and of America. She questioned the effectiveness of her writing about desperate situations that probably failed to really touch people, make them feel, and subsequently take action.⁶⁵ Because she was haunted by the suffering of the Spanish people, and “angry to the bone,” Gellhorn later wrote again to Eleanor Roosevelt that “the only place at all is in the front lines, where you don’t have to think, and can simply (and uselessly) put your body up against what you hate.”⁶⁶ As her biographer indicates, “She had been haunted by what she had seen; now, she had to haunt others.”⁶⁷ In view of this, she was a conduit between the victims of the Spanish tragedy and her American readers, whom she addresses with direct questions: “Who told you, does he know? What, what did you say? . . . Everybody wondered why the Fascists shelled last night and not some other night: does it mean anything? What do you think? . . . And what about all the rest, and all

the others? How can you explain that you feel safe at this war, knowing that the people around you are good people?”⁶⁸

The many authorial postures she adopted in her journalism, both “in the field and in the text,” as McLoughlin convincingly shows, echo Spivak’s strategy of intervention. For Gellhorn “the idea was never just to see the show or get the story . . . journalism equaled truth, and that truth would inspire people . . . to protest, to intervene,”⁶⁹ albeit she eventually lost faith in the power of journalism.

There was no obstacle to Taro’s exposing the atrocities of the war. Her reckless attitude at the frontline was the ultimate attempt at convincing noninterventionist forces of the forthcoming fascist destruction. Being the eye behind the camera but also an active rebel on the field foreshadowed Taro’s tragic end. She was an embedded photojournalist who kept pressing the shutter while taking part in the attacks. As long as the Republicans were fighting, she was there to observe, and to participate. In the manner suggested by Spivak, Taro “othered herself” and became what author Vicente Salas-Viu called “an internationalist prototype.”⁷⁰ Her death at a young age came as a shock in France, where she was buried with pomp and circumstance at the Père Lachaise cemetery. Her funeral was orchestrated by *Ce Soir*, which made her into a “poster girl” supporting the Republican cause and subsequently the agenda of the Communist party.⁷¹ Taro’s photographs then fell into obscurity, while Capa’s fame grew. Renewed interest in her work today is mostly because of her main biographer, Irme Schaber; Richard Whelan; the Spanish Civil War archives being made available since Franco’s death⁷²; and the recent discovery of the Mexican suitcase. All documents and studies converge to claim that Taro in her short career built an impressive oeuvre, one consistent with her hardline personality and inextricably linked to her constant readjustment to adversity, her repositioning as a stranger in foreign lands, the reinvention of herself through different names and languages, and the spectre of her family’s forthcoming doom. Creating a space to reinvent herself in the absence of Capa, she was offered solo commissions by *Regards* magazine in April 1937. As soon as she became visible as an author, she disappeared. Perhaps her newly gained autonomy lured her into believing she was invulnerable. Those who met her shortly before her death, namely German writer Alfred Kantorowicz and American journalist Jay Allen, claimed that she had become a sensation among the Loyalists. The former noted that “[s]he identified herself—more out of emotion than political awareness—. . . with us”; the latter confessed she had become a “reassuring talisman” to men on the front, thanks to her charms and innocence.⁷³ Through her identification with the Loyalists, Taro became the Other to such an extent that she transformed into a sacrificial

symbol of the war. The uprooting or othering process went too far at a time when facing her own identity and reality—fascism destroying her Jewish family—led to an escapism strategy in which she threw herself headlong and ultimately lost herself.

Viollis's partisanship was not welcomed by all, and she finally had to stop writing for *Le Petit Parisien* in December 1937.⁷⁴ In *Le Soir* and *Le Petit Parisien*, Viollis reported on a daily basis; in *Vendredi* she essentially published reportages in which her engagement is palpable.⁷⁵ She recontextualized the conflict in Europe and ferociously attacked the nonintervention policy that prevailed in France and other European nations. Viollis's legacy is immense, and thanks to the monographs of Renoult and Jeandel she now has a legitimate place in the history of literary journalism. Viollis's career also found an extension with her daughter, Simone Téry, who was equally devoted to the cause of the Spanish Republic. Téry joined the French Communist Party in the mid-1930s and worked as a correspondent for *L'Humanité*, *Vendredi* and *Regards*. Besides *Front de la liberté: Espagne 1937–1938*, dedicated to the French volunteers who died in the conflict (1938), she also penned *Où l'aube se lève* (1945), a novel inspired by the conflict. While Viollis's work for *Vendredi* had been illustrated with pictures by Chim, her texts were accompanied by Capa's and Taro's pictures in *Regards*. These multiple perspectives and fertile collaborations did not prevent atrocities from being committed, but they denounced the hypocrisy of nonintervention.

Gellhorn, Taro, and Viollis's destinies crossed during the Spanish Civil War. They converged on the same war zone without, apparently, ever meeting one another. They were female reporters using literary and photographic journalism, not as a springboard for self-aggrandizement, but as a powerful tool to raise consciousness. They were revolted by a profoundly unfair situation and could see the beginnings of the barbarity that would soon rage in Europe and beyond. They also sensed that it was essential to have women at the front cover conflicts from a different perspective without reductively limiting themselves to coverage of women and children. Their meticulous, courageously crafted reportages focused on human suffering, but they also presented military action and interpellated politicians. As for their femininity—the three were known for their charm and elegance—it was used to serve their journalistic calling and access an almost exclusively male public sphere. They were advised, helped, and respected by their male colleagues, yet at times they needed to distance themselves from their partners in order to create the space to invent themselves as intellectual forces in their own right. By sensitizing their readers to the pain of others, these literary and photojournalists triggered a movement that decentered them from themselves

and toward the Other; in that same movement, they invited their readers to distance themselves from their inner concerns and consider alterity as an essential component of our humanity. Despite profound differences in their itineraries, their engagement was total. The reports and images of the Spanish Civil War produced by these women—notwithstanding the fact that they reflected different cultural identities—also foregrounded a common political stance and determination. Their emotional journalism was used to move us and make us move.

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Notes

1. Roy Greenslade, "Marie Colvin Obituary," *Guardian*, February 22, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/feb/22/marie-colvin>.
2. Marie Brenner, "Marie Colvin's Private War," *Vanity Fair*, August 2012, <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/2012/08/marie-colvin-private-war>.
3. Martin Bell, "The Journalism of Attachment," in *Media Ethics*, ed. Matthew Kieran (London: Routledge, 1998), 15–22.
4. _____, *In Harm's Way* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1995), 128.
5. See, for instance Farwa Zahra, "Marie Colvin's Journalism of Attachment," *Express Tribune Blogs*, February 24, 2012, <http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/10359/marie-colvins-journalism-of-attachment/>. See also an extensive discussion of Gellhorn's journalism of attachment in Deborah Wilson, "An Unscathed Tourist of Wars: The Journalism of Martha Gellhorn," in *The Journalistic Imagination: Literary Journalists from Defoe to Capote and Carter*, eds. Richard Keeble and Sharon Wheeler (London: Routledge, 2007), 125–27.
6. Brendan O'Neill, "Dangers of the 'Journalism of Attachment,'" *Drum*, February 24, 2012, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-02-24/oneill-dangers-of-the-journalism-of-attachment/3850566>.
7. See Mick Hume's criticism of journalism of attachment in Herbert N. Foerstel, *From Watergate to Monicagate: Ten Controversies in Modern Journalism and*

Media (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), 106–7. The reference to Mick Hume is also made in Kate McLoughlin, *Martha Gellhorn: The War Writer in the Field and in the Text* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 44; as well as in Deborah Wilson, “Journalism of Martha Gellhorn,” 126–27.

8. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

9. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=emotion>.

10. Jenny Sharpe and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “A Conversation with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Politics and the Imagination,” *Signs* 28, no. 2 (Winter 2003), 622.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Chakravorty Spivak, “Rethinking Comparativism,” *New Literary History* 40, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 611.

13. Martin Hurcombe, *France and the Spanish Civil War: Cultural Representations of the War Next Door, 1936–1945* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 3.

14. *Ibid.*, 2–4.

15. George Richard Esenwein, *The Spanish Civil War: A Modern Tragedy* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

16. Martha Gellhorn, in a letter to Betty Barnes, the wife of foreign correspondent and editor Joseph Barnes, famously wrote, “Me, I am going to Spain with the boys. I don’t know who the boys are, but I am going with them.” See Caroline Moorhead, ed., *Selected Letters of Martha Gellhorn* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006), 49.

17. David Deacon, “‘Going to Spain with the Boys’: Women Correspondents and the Spanish Civil War,” in *Narrating Media History*, ed. Michael Bailey, foreword by Elihu Katz (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2009), 74.

18. *Ibid.*, 75.

19. Greg McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 170.

20. Gerda Taro and Robert Capa stayed at the Hotel Florida in Madrid, with Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and Herbert Matthews in April 1937, before leaving for Paris on April 22 or 23. See *Gerda Taro*, eds. Irme Schaber, Richard Whelan, and Kristen Lubben (New York: International Center of Photography, 2007), 163. Martha Gellhorn arrived in Madrid and stayed at Hotel Florida end of March 1937. Apparently, she never met Taro. This is confirmed by Irme Schaber, who writes that Gellhorn met Capa a few months after Taro’s death. See Irme Schaber, *Gerda Taro. Une photographe révolutionnaire dans la guerre d’Espagne* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2006), 261. Translated by Pierre Gallissaires from Irme Schaber, *Gerda Taro: Fotoreporterin im spanischen Bürgerkrieg* (Marburg, Germany: Jonas Verlag, 1994).

21. Lesley McDowell, *Between the Sheets: The Literary Liaisons of Nine 20th-Century Women* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2010), 232, 237.

22. Caroline Moorhead, *Martha Gellhorn: A Twentieth-Century Life* (New York:

Henry Holt, 2003), 107.

23. _____, *Selected Letters of Martha Gellhorn*, 49.

24. McLoughlin, *War Writer in the Field and in the Text*, 43.

25. McDowell, *Between the Sheets*, 253–54.

26. This “joint effort” was claimed by Leicester Hemingway. See Carl Rollyson, *Beautiful Exile: The Life of Martha Gellhorn* (London: Aurum Press, 2002), 77–78.

27. McDowell, *Between the Sheets*, 259.

28. McLoughlin, *War Writer in the Field and in the Text*, 8–9.

29. Rollyson, *Beautiful Exile*, 77, 103. Moorhead adds that Hemingway’s Spanish dispatches were “contrived and self-centred.” See Caroline Moorhead, *Martha Gellhorn: A Twentieth-Century Life*, 122.

30. Moorhead, *A Twentieth-Century Life*, 5.

31. Wilson, “Journalism of Martha Gellhorn,” 127–28.

32. Gerta Pohorylle was taken to jail on March 19, 1933, and finally set free thanks to her Polish passport. See Irme Schaber, *Gerda Taro*, 74.

33. *Ibid.*, 109.

34. Cynthia Young, ed., *The Mexican Suitcase: The Rediscovered Spanish Civil War Negatives of Capa, Chim and Taro* (New York: International Center of Photography; Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2010).

35. Schaber, *Gerda Taro*, 166.

36. Chim, a.k.a. David Seymour, was a photojournalist who cofounded the Magnum agency with Capa and Cartier-Bresson. The negatives of his work found in the “Mexican Suitcase” have expanded our knowledge of the Spanish Civil War considerably.

37. Schaber, *Gerda Taro*, 186.

38. *Ibid.*, 9.

39. Jane Rogoyska, *Gerda Taro: Inventing Robert Capa* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2013), 136, 140.

40. *Ibid.*, 140, 142.

41. *Ibid.*, 212.

42. See Alice-Anne Jeandel, *Andrée Viollis: Une femme grand reporter. Une écriture de l'événement, 1927–1939* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006), and Anne Renoult, *Andrée Viollis: Une femme journaliste* (Angers, France: Presses de l’université d’Angers, coll. Prix Mnémosyne 2004). All factual data about Viollis in this article have been collected from these two comprehensive books.

43. Myriam Boucharenc, *L’écrivain-reporter au cœur des années trente* (Ville-neuve-d’Ascq, France: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2004), 107–08.

44. Jeandel, *Une femme grand reporter*, 84.

45. Gellhorn, “Only the Shells Whine,” *Collier’s*, July 17, 1937, 12.

46. _____, “City at War,” *Collier’s*, April 2, 1938, 19.

47. This short soundbite is repeatedly quoted, in Moorhead, Wilson, and McLoughlin.

48. McLoughlin, *War Writer in the Field and in the Text*, 65.

49. *Ibid.*, 72.

50. Gellhorn, "Men without Medals," *Collier's*, January 15, 1938, 9–10.
51. Rogoyska, *Inventing Robert Capa*, 15.
52. "Taro. La Bataille de Brunete. Mi-juillet 1937," in Cynthia Young, ed. *La Valise Mexicaine. Les negatives retrouvés de la guerre civile espagnole*. Volume 2: les films. Trans. Daniel De Bruycker (Arles: Actes Sud, 2012; New York: International Center of Photography; Göttingen: Steidl, 2010), 258–70.
53. Jane Rogoyska, *Inventing Robert Capa*, 213.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Anthony L. Geist, "Le Fantôme de Gerda Taro," in Cynthia Young, ed., *La Valise Mexicaine: Les négatifs retrouvés de la guerre civile espagnole*, trans. Daniel De Bruycker, vol. 2 (Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2012; New York: International Center of Photography; Göttingen, Germany: Steidl, 2010), 277–78.
56. This example is also in Jeandel, 84.
57. Renoult, *Une femme journaliste*, 151.
58. Elizabeth Brunazzi, "Andrée Viollis: A 'Grand Reporter' in the Intellectual Resistance, 1942–1944," *French Cultural Studies* 22, no. 3 (August 2011): 231.
59. Andrée Viollis, "Nouvelles déclarations du président Azaña à notre envoyée spéciale," *Le Petit Parisien*, October 8, 1936, 1. See also Viollis's previous encounter with the president: "Un entretien à Madrid avec le président Azaña," *Le Petit Parisien*, August 6, 1936, 3. Translation mine.
60. _____, "Les Petits enfants sous les bombes," *Ce Soir*, November 5, 1938, 8. Translation mine.
61. _____, "Madrid encore," *Vendredi*, March 26, 1937, 1. Translation mine.
62. Martha Gellhorn interviewed by Jenni Murray for BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* in 1993, qtd. in Deborah Wilson, "Journalism of Martha Gellhorn," 126.
63. *Selected Letters of Martha Gellhorn*, 52.
64. *Ibid.*, 54.
65. *Ibid.*, 54–55.
66. *Ibid.*, 58.
67. Moorhead, *A Twentieth-Century Life*, 87.
68. Gellhorn, "City at War," *Collier's*, April 2, 1938, 18, 19, 60.
69. Susie Linfield, "Martha Gellhorn, Journalist," *Nation*, April 13, 1998, 10.
70. Schaber, *Gerda Taro*, 219.
71. Rogoyska, *Inventing Robert Capa*, 7, 224.
72. *Ibid.*, 13.
73. *Ibid.*, 177, 203.
74. Renoult, *Une femme journaliste*, 153; Jeandel, *Une femme grand reporter*, 85.
75. Jeandel, *Une femme grand reporter*, 83, 86.