Jean Watts and the Spanish Civil War: Writing, Politics, and Contexts

A Case Study Collection

Case Study Four: Jean Watts and Women's Spanish Civil War Journalism

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Jean Watts's contributions to Canadian journalism on the Spanish Civil War find cognates across the field of war journalism. I explore the Canadian context in the previous case study: Watts and fellow Canadian journalists Ted Allan and Henning Sorensen produced politically motivated journalism for small newspapers. Their work as journalists offers a counterpoint to a larger Canadian journalistic field in which large, mainstream newspapers increasingly depended on British and American news agencies like Reuters and Associated Press. By contrast, as I demonstrate in Case Study One, small newspapers like the *Daily Clarion* and the *New Commonwealth*, for which Watts, Allan, and Sorensen wrote, employed dedicated foreign correspondents to cover the war in Spain.

I now turn from the Canadian contexts of the previous case studies towards a broader international context. Watts shares striking similarities with female journalists and war correspondents, many of whose careers flourished during the Second World War, a conflict that broke out less than six months after the end of the Spanish Civil War. Other female

journalists included Americans Helen Kirkpatrick who wrote for the *New York Daily Herald* and British papers the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph*, Ruth Cowan who wrote for the Associated Press and the United Press, and Virginia Cowles[1] who wrote for the North American Newspaper Alliance and the *Sunday Times of London.* These women were engaged in the writing that would establish them as key journalistic figures of the twentieth century. In an obituary, British newspaper *The Independent* eulogizes Kirkpatrick as "one of the first and best American war correspondents in the Second World War" (8 Jan. 1988), the *New York Times* draws on contemporary journalist-historian, Julia Edwards, to praise Cowan as "one of the few women covering the really big stories" (qtd in *New York Times* 6 Feb. 1993), and the *New York Times* describes Cowles as "an American debutante who became a noted foreign correspondent and author" (20 Sept 1983). Female journalists became prominent historical figures, and such studies as Julia Edwards's *Women of the World: The Great Foreign Correspondents* (1988) attest to the rich network of female foreign correspondents that emerged during the two world wars of the twentieth century.

Scholarship has identified the female journalists of the Second World War as a community of writers who made significant cultural impact on the history of both war correspondence and women's public writing.

[1] Virginia Cowles reported extensively during the Spanish Civil War as well as the Second World War, and, along with Martha Gellhorn, authored a play text on the Spanish Civil War. I have chosen not to compare her to Watts as her approach to journalism was to report on both the fascist and anti-fascist perspectives on the war. This political agnosticism contrasts Watts's overt political commitment.

Expanding this scholarly project, I take a closer look at the journalism of the Spanish Civil War in order to reveal that the work of female journalists like Watts sets a precedent for the Second World War female journalists. In other words, communities of female journalists have a more sustained and long-standing history in modern war reporting, and Watts is a key figure in the Canadian context of this history.

The early journalism of one woman in particular has some striking parallels to Watts's own contributions: Martha Gellhorn, whose first experience as a war correspondents was for the Spanish Civil War, and who would eventually become "one of the finest war correspondents of the 20th century" according to her obituary in *The Independent* (17 Feb. 1998). Both Gellhorn and Watts viewed journalism as a ticket to Spain at a time when there were fewer other avenues for women to join the conflict, and they both developed a narrative, eye-witness style of reportage. Much of the criticism Watts's journalism has received from scholars—that it was relegated to what, at the time, might have been considered the "women's beat" (Hannant), and that it did not concern itself with the more serious business of reporting from the front—find echoes in contemporaneous criticism of the fictionalized style of Gellhorn's reporting. Watts's and Gellhorn's careers have parallel origins in the Spanish Civil War. But the later trajectories of their careers diverged. Although the Spanish Civil War offered, for Gellhorn, a first taste of the war reporting career for which she would soon become famous, Watts would not continue her journalistic or volunteer work for much longer after the war. As the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion

newsletter would describe it in 1948, "Jean 'Jim' Watts Lawson[,] Spanish Veteran[,] drives a baby pram now instead of an ambulance, but is always ready to do the Lions [sic] share, if there is any work to be done" (qtd. in Hannant 162). Regardless, both women's activities during the Spanish Civil War constitute a significant contribution to the journalism of the 1930s.

This case study attends, first, to the motivations that brought Watts and Gellhorn to Spain. For both, journalism offered access to the conflict and a means of travelling to Spain. However, Gellhorn's initial motivations seem to have had little to do with the work of producing journalism while Watts's initial investment in writing seems to have been more deeply rooted in performing politically motivated work. Next, the case study turns to how both women retrospectively perceive their careers as journalists. Both women obscure or dismiss their previous experiences that would have qualified them better than many men to act as correspondents in the war in Spain. These concealments perhaps paradoxically expose some of the resistance that women of the time might have encountered to their participation in international conflict. Finally, the case study analyzes two exemplary articles, one by Gellhorn and one by Watts, in order to demonstrate how each woman drew from similar content but developed distinct styles of reportage. Watts and Gellhorn fit into an emerging community of female writers during the Spanish Civil War, one that has received very little critical attention, and one that paves the way for the journalistic activities of women during the Second World War. Their experiences and writing are relatively

unusual; they still contain, however, striking commonalities that allow me to begin to piece together the lived experiences of women as journalists for the Spanish Civil War.

Watts's and Gellhorn's Journalism: A Means of Access to Politics

The circumstances and motivations by which Watts and Gellhorn were able to travel to Spain shaped their experiences in sometimes unexpected ways. Neither perceived enrolling in the International Brigades to be an option open to them. And neither considered nursing or other medical work as a means of joining the conflict. Instead, they both turned to journalism in order to gain access to the conflict. Journalism facilitated a politics of commitment—it provided relatively safe passage to Spain, in some cases provided material support and transportation to writers,[2] and was a legible, non-combative and non-medical role that women could fill. Gellhorn and Watts both detail their pragmatic approaches to becoming journalists: for Gellhorn, journalism justified her presence in Spain in order to protect her from legal authorities; for Watts, journalism was a means of work and participation available to her when others were not. For each, journalism served a greater goal of support and participation in the conflict.

Gellhorn indicates that producing journalistic writing was an afterthought to the access that a journalistic role provided to the conflict.

[2] See Case Study Two.

In her memoir, *The Face of War* (1959),[3] she describes how she viewed her assignment from the American publication, *Collier's Magazine* as merely a formality that would get her to Spain:

> In New York a friendly and spirited man, then an editor of *Collier's*, had given me a letter. The letter said, to whom it might concern, that the bearer, Martha Gellhorn, was a special correspondent for *Collier's* in Spain. This letter was intended to help me with any authorities who wondered what I was doing in Spain, or why I was trying to get there; otherwise it meant nothing. I had no connection with a newspaper or magazine… (*Face of War,* "The War in Spain," n.p.)

Gellhorn did not consider herself connected to *Collier's*, a publication in which much of her early journalism on the Spanish Civil War would appear. Instead, her letter from *Collier's* rests on the tacit understanding that her "journalist" status was merely a cover. It would excuse her presence to any authorities and offer her protection and legal immunity from the Non-Intervention Agreement. Journalism was a legible and legally permitted role in the conflict. Gellhorn depended on that legibility for access to Spain.

While Gellhorn looked to journalism as her first port of call in order to access the conflict in Spain, Watts considered more militaristic

[3] For all of my discussions of *The Face of War*, I draw on an e-book edition that contains the text published in a 1986 revision of the original 1959 publication. As this is an e-book, there are no paginations, but I have indicated the chapters and articles I quote from. Future researchers should note, however, that multiple editions of the memoir exist and that Gellhorn made substantial changes to those editions.

avenues before deciding that those avenues would block her passage to Spain. In an interview from the late 1960s, Watts says that she was "dying to go [to the Spanish Civil War] and [she] knew quite well that the Brigade wouldn't take [her]" (Watts 0:46). Watts was aware that participation in the Brigades would not allow her to join the conflict. Instead, she took up a position with the *Daily Clarion*, a posting to Dr. Norman Bethune's Blood Transfusion Unit that provided her "only pretense at being a writer" (Watts 0:16). Watts variously describes her role with the *Clarion* as a "kind of public relations person" (Watts 0:46) and as having a "scope was as wide as [she] wanted" (Watts 0:56).[4] Where Gellhorn viewed journalism as a means to excuse her presence in Spain, whether or not she was actually a journalist, Watts pursued the work of journalism in the face of other forms of participation that were blocked to her.

In *The Face of War*, Gellhorn's early perspectives on the Spanish conflict further illustrate her use of journalism as an incidental cover for her presence in Spain. The young Gellhorn "believed that all one did about a war was go to it, as a gesture of solidarity, and get killed, or survive if lucky until the war was over" (*Face of War*, "The War in Spain," n.p.). For Gellhorn, her presence was a "gesture of solidarity"—it expressed a largely non-verbal form of support for the cause of the Spanish people. Gellhorn's early perspectives seem to conflate militaristic means of participation with an observational one: she expected that her presence in wartime might result in her death, and

[4] For a closer discussion of Watts's scope and mobility as foreign correspondent, see Case Study Two.

that her survival to the end of the war would be "lucky." However, this death would not come about through combat, but simply from her presence as a "gesture of solidarity." Gellhorn understood her presence in and observation of a war to be inherently risky, in much the same way that a combatant would be at risk in the war. If Gellhorn understood her presence and gestures of solidarity to be her primary goal in going to Spain, she figured her eventual publication with *Collier's* to be merely incidental. She would not produce any writing for *Collier's* until "a journalist friend observed that [she] should write" (*Face of War*, "The War in Spain," n.p.).[5] Once Gellhorn did send material to *Collier's* for publication, she was surprised at how easily her work was accepted and published:

> I mailed my first Madrid article to *Collier's*, not expecting them to publish it; but I did have that letter, so I knew *Collier's* address. *Collier's* accepted the piece and after my next article put my name on the masthead. I learned this by accident. Once on the masthead, I was evidently a war correspondent. It began like that. (*Face of War*, "The War in Spain," n.p.)

While war correspondence would become the work for which Gellhorn has become known and celebrated, she accounts for her presence in Spain as a result of her political rather than journalistic commitments.

[5] Gellhorn's biographer, Caroline Moorehead, identifies this "friend" to be an amalgam of Ernest Hemingway, who himself produced journalism on the war, and to whom Gellhorn was not yet married, and Herbert Matthews, an American reporter for the *New York Times* who would serve as one of the models for Robert Jordan in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (Moorehead, Chapter 5, n.p.).

For Gellhorn, those two interests would become more and more entwined over the course of her life, as she developed a journalism that bore witness to the experiences of people in a war.

While the work of journalism would become a by-product of Gellhorn's presence and political solidarity, the logistics of a journalistic role would restrict Watts's goal of political commitment to the extent that she would eventually seek out other modes of participation. Once Watts was in Madrid, she found her mobility limited, telling her interviewer that "[she] had no money, as other correspondents had, so [she] couldn't employ a leg-man or lay on transportation" (Watts 0:56). As the war moved further away from Madrid, Watts would find it "impossible…to really function as a correspondent" (12:53).[6] Watts, however, wished to stay in Spain, and so took up work in the censorship bureau while simultaneously organizing an English-language radio transmission with Ted Allan from the Blood Transfusion Unit in Madrid to North America.[7] This role seems at odds with her political commitment, but it would prove short-lived. She would then join the International Brigades as an ambulance driver. While Watts "knew quite well the Brigades wouldn't take [her]" (Watts 0:46) while she was in Canada, she managed to join the Brigades in Spain. In fact, she seems relatively nonchalant about being able to join the Brigades once already

[6] See Case Study Two.

[7] Allan and Watts would broadcast the transmission at 1:00 in the morning so that it would reach North America in the evening. Watts describes how the transmission, put together on a shoestring, would interview visitors and was well received in North America: "Of course there were always complete lack of anything. And while we got used to it, it was very hard on visiting people and everyone who came, visiting people, were interviewed. And apparently it was heard here. We used to get a lot of fan mail from Canada, some of which we never saw. Apparently it went to the ministry and didn't trickle through to us…" (Watts 14:40).

in Spain: Watts "simply asked whether they would take a driver, and sort of sent messages down from Madrid. And was told, alright, come down and have the driver's test…And so I was in" (15:41). Despite stories about Watts's bombastic insistence upon being admitted to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion,[8] her acceptance to the Brigades once in Spain seems relatively straightforward.[9] There are several possible reasons for her acceptance in Spain and not Canada: individual members of the Canadian leadership in Spain may have observed the participation of the Spanish *milicianas* or had another reason to put greater faith in the participation of female participants in the Brigades. Alternatively, Watts's drive to engage in meaningful, politically motivated work, frustrated in her journalistic role, may have emboldened her to insist upon her inclusion in a role previously blocked to her. Watts's move away from journalism and towards a militaristic role further evinces the political commitment that motivated her participation in Spain—a commitment that she sought to express in the forms of work she took on in Spain.

Gellhorn's and Watts's motivations in going to Spain, and their means of entry into journalism, were different. Gellhorn's political solidarity was her primary motivator while the work that she performed was, at first, an incidental cover and afterthought to her support of a political cause. Journalism, for Gellhorn, was initially a role that

[8] See Conclusion.

[9] When her interviewer asked whether Watts had been brought into the Brigades "in some formal way" (17:22), Watts responded that there was nothing memorable about her induction: no "lovely ceremony…or anything," simply that she "got [her] pay book and…signed documents" (17:30).

provided cover and depended on a legible legitimacy in the face of potentially curious authorities. Watts's primary motivator was likewise political; however, she pursued work, rather than the excuse that a given role would provide her, as her means of expressing that commitment. Her eventual enrolment with the International Brigades, a decision that would have contravened the Non-Intervention Agreement and removed the legal immunities that journalism offered, evinces an ethic of work as participation. Gellhorn's journalism, for all its incidental support of her participation the Spanish Civil War, would earn her international renown over the course of a long and prolific career. Watts, by contrast, would not continue in a journalistic career after the war in Spain. These subtle differences in motivation may have facilitated Gellhorn's continued career while stultifying Watts's. Despite the differences of initial motivation and eventual longevity, Watts's and Gellhorn's desires to participate in the Spanish Civil War emerged from a strong, anti-fascist political stance. Their ability to leverage journalism as their mode of participation suggest that journalism may have begun to offer women a platform for political commitment during the Spanish Civil War. Their politically motivated body of work on this conflict marks an important precedent for the communities of female journalists that would emerge in the Second World War.

Writerly Self-Fashioning

Despite each woman's modesty in recounting—decades later—her wartime journalism, Gellhorn and Watts's biographies reveal that both had backgrounds in political activism and journalism that more than qualified them to act as war correspondents. There may be multiple motivations for that modesty. On one hand, either woman might have perceived her previous experience not to be a valuable asset to her career more generally, or may have felt it not to be valuable in the context of war reporting. On the other, either woman may not have perceived a role for herself in the male-dominated journalistic field; both participated in the conflict in relatively unusual roles for women. Scholarship has argued that meliorist, non-political roles characterized women's participation in the conflict[10]. Watts's and Gellhorn's mode of participation contradicts this scholarly perception. They chose a mode of participation that was overwhelmingly populated with men. The ways in which each woman narrativized her qualification for the role of journalist and the kinds of information that each omitted hint at how she perceived her gender in relation to her journalism.

Watts had been an important political and artistic agent in Canadian leftism for the five years preceding the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, a background that she omits in the interview she gave in the late 1960s. Watts figures her time with the *Daily Clarion* as a unique occurrence for which she had not established a precedent:

Interviewer: "How long had you been with the *Clarion*?"

[10] Some examples of women who understood their work to be political in nature exist, particularly women like nurse Salaria Kea and ambulance drivers Thyra Edwards and Evelyn Hutchins.

> Watts: "Oh, I hadn't, actually. I hadn't worked for them at all. It was really my only pretense at being a writer [other than][11] a university education, I guess. (Watts 0:11-0:16)

Watts suggests that her posting with the *Daily Clarion* at the Blood Transfusion Unit was her only work for the newspaper and, further, was her only claim to being a writer. However, Watts's contributions to Canadian cultural production were profound and varied. She helped found the Theatre of Action (originally the Workers' Experimental Theatre) and she funded the establishment of explicitly Marxist literary journal *New Frontier* (1936-38).[12] During her theatre career, she visited a Soviet theatre festival, which she reported on for the *Daily Clarion*. By the time she was hired by the *Daily Clarion* as correspondent, she had made considerable impact on the Canadian artistic field, and that impact would have been familiar to the *Clarion* which had already published her reporting. In complement to her artistic impact, Watts had also proven herself a committed leftist political activist: she had come to the attention of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for "distributing communist literature" (Hannant 156). Watts's artistic and political careers were closely intertwined. If Watts had little faith that the Communist Party of Canada would admit her to the International Brigades, her key role in the communist cultural landscape of 1930s Canada should have offered adequate testament to her political

[11] Tape difficult to hear. Bracketed material supplied by author.

[12] See General Introduction.

commitment and suitability both to volunteering with the Brigades and to writing for the *Daily Clarion*.

In a similar vein, Gellhorn's *The Face of War* obscures the considerable experience that she would have amassed reporting on the Great Depression in the United States. Gellhorn narrates her experiences confronting Nazi Youth in Germany and "working with miserable determination on a novel about young pacifists in France" (*Face of War,* "The War in Spain," n.p.). She then mentions that she returned to America, "shoved [the novel] forever in a drawer," and set her sights on Spain. What Gellhorn omits, Caroline Moorehead supplies:[13] Gellhorn had followed in the footsteps of journalists like fellow American Lorena Hickok, and was hired by Harold Hopkins of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration to report on the plight of working-class Americans during the Great Depression. During this time, Moorehead notes, Martha developed a style of reportage that was clear and simple, but nevertheless "barely contained [the] fury and indignation at the injustice of fate and man against the poor, the weak, the dispossessed" (Chapter Four, n.p.), which was to become her signature style. As a result of her reports, Martha developed a close confidence with Eleanor Roosevelt, then First Lady and friend of Gellhorn's mother, Edna Gellhorn. Between Martha's encounter with the Nazi Youth in early 1934, and her departure for Spain in 1937, three years and considerable journalistic experience passed. Martha's motivations for obscuring this experience

[13] I cite from an e-reader edition of Moorehead's biography of Gellhorn, *Martha Gellhorn: A Life*. As such, my citations indicate sections but not pages.

may be simply to provide a more coherent narrative of her political development from naive, aspiring novelist to anti-fascist participant in the Spanish Civil War. This rhetorical move, however, has the effect of rendering her considerable skills of reportage seem inconsequential to the early moments of her career as a war reporter. Like Watts's lack of faith that the International Brigades would admit her as a volunteer despite her demonstrative political involvement, Gellhorn does not see fit to mention the depth of her domestic political commitments as a key aspect of her political and journalistic development.

Although each has become known for her bombast and disregard of conventional gender roles, each obscured the previous experience that made her a strong candidate to be employed as a journalist. If this self-effacement is a product of a perceived barrier to political engagement that stemmed from gender, both women had reason to feel that her options were limited. Evelyn Hutchins, an ambulance driver during the conflict, provides a corroborating example of the kinds of barriers to participation that women would have faced. Hutchins recalls the explicit sexism that barred her participation in the Spanish Civil War:

> All those people at the American Friends of the Spanish Democracy just couldn't accept the fact that a woman could be a driver. I started accusing them of chauvinism, one at a time and then collectively. Of course they denied it, but I wasn't getting my shipping orders as a driver. They tried to get me there as a nurse but I did not have a certificate. They

> tried clerk typist. Why the hell would anybody want to send a clerk typist there? These kind of stupidities kept galling me and I kept arguing and so finally they said, "Well she has to go because of her husband." I got furious and screamed, "He is there because of me! Not that I want to go because of him!" The chauvinism was just unbelievable, although it was camouflaged at the time, and you had to be very alert to fight it. (qtd. in Gerassi 65-66)

In Hutchins's account, the American Friends of the Spanish Democracy could conceive easily of certain kinds of roles for women—care work like nursing, office work, or accompaniment as a dutiful wife—but could not bring themselves to send Hutchins as an ambulance driver. Hutchins eventually did join the conflict with papers that identified her as a "nurse's aide" (66), but would work as a driver. Hutchins fought to be able to participate in the Spanish Civil War on her own terms, in a role she wished to play, not simply in a role that was available to her.

Most importantly in this context, Hutchins experienced barriers despite being fully qualified to undertake the work she wished to do. She had driven trucks while she attended night school and while she was a member of the Works Progress Administration. In her own words, she "had driven probably more than any of the male drivers" (64). Watts and Gellhorn may have come across a similar barrier: despite the fact that they were perfectly qualified for the work at hand, their qualifications may not have overridden their gender. Watts and Gellhorn may have

been justified in assuming that their previous experience was largely irrelevant, even as they narrativized their experiences years later.

In addition to the barriers to participation that women like Hutchins experienced, the persistently gendered perspectives of 1930s politics were keenly felt by many women across the burgeoning journalistic field. Dorothy Livesay, celebrated Canadian poet and childhood friend of Jean Watts, famously identified these dynamics: "In theory, we were free and equal as comrades on the left. In practice, our right hand was tied to the kitchen sink!" (*Right Hand Left Hand*, 115, 124). Despite the promise of female equality that many women pursued in their allegiances to leftist politics, the holdovers of gender roles frequently worked against their achieving that equality. In the Spanish Civil War, Hutchins's experiences demonstrated the more explicit barriers to her participation in a role for which she was eminently qualified. In journalism, Watts's and Gellhorn's downplay of their previous experience may also be an indication of the barriers they expected to encounter, despite the promises of gender equality in the new Spanish Republic and in worldwide leftist politics.

Watts's and Gellhorn's Style

Watts and Gellhorn both reported on a wide range of issues. Watts's articles covered the Mobile Blood Transfusion Unit, the activities of Spanish civilians undertaking volunteer work, and military victories and

defeats. Similarly, Gellhorn's reportage alternated between reports from the front and vignettes featuring Spanish families adapting to the effects of war in their own homes. Within their reportage, the material that concentrates on the day-to-day activities of Spanish civilians in the extenuating circumstances of the civil war is some of the most emotionally affective. These stories provided the platform for Watts and Gellhorn to develop their distinct narrative styles.

Watts's and Gellhorn's writing is most similar in its content. Gellhorn's article "High Explosive for Everyone" (*Face of War,* July 1937, n.p.)[14] primarily contains descriptions of quotidian events and necessities for which her narrator acts as observer. Her narrator describes the experience of running errands during an air raid:

> So perhaps you went into a store because that was what you had intended doing before all this started. Inside a shoe shop, five women are trying on shoes. Two girls are buying summery sandals, sitting by the front window of the shop. After the third explosion, the salesman says politely: "I think we had better move farther back into the shop. The window might break and cut you." (n.p.)

Gellhorn's article concentrates on the everyday experiences of Spanish people. Despite the extreme circumstances of the air raid, "you," the second person pronoun that represents the American reader, goes into a store she had intended to visit, preserving the normalcy of her daily

[14] All of Gellhorn's articles are quoted from *The Face of War*, her retrospective collection of war reporting. Gellhorn's introduction indicates that some of the titles of articles have been changed from the original *Collier's* publication.

routine. The description of the store suggests that three explosions occur before the women, girls, and salesman acknowledge the immediate danger that they face near the window. Even when they acknowledge this danger, the politeness of their interactions dampens the strength of their expression. Despite Gellhorn's statement elsewhere that "you can get killed sitting in your own parlour" (July 1937, n.p.), the salesman identifies only the breaking glass to be a threat to the women's safety, and the characters seem to silently preserve the assumption that the interior of the shop is safe from the bombings. In Gellhorn's description, the bombings of Madrid become part of the rhythm of daily life in the city, as the imagined subject moving through the streets goes about her shopping and errands while acknowledging only some of the reality of imminent danger.

Watts's article, "Fascist Shells Slay Civilians of Madrid" (21 May 1937) likewise concentrates on the day-to-day experiences of the Spanish people. Watts's focus, however, is on the imminent threat of danger rather than the polite social means of navigating that danger that Gellhorn explores:

> Just imagine yourself going about your business every day, walking from your house, riding in street cars, working in factory or office or school, and no matter where you are, knowing that any minute the great roar which means the end of the world to you may sound in your ears. You might never know anything any more, and then again, you might wake up

> in a hospital minus arms, legs, or part of your skull. (21 May 1937)

In Watts's writing, the everyday "business" of the Spanish people is overwritten with the threat of the "great roar" of shells and the possibility of death or dismemberment. While Gellhorn depicts an avatar navigating the streets of Madrid, Watts describes the activities of communities. The call to "imagine yourself going about your business everyday" begins specific, as the imagined subject quickly expands to collective existence—"riding in street cars"—and fractures to a host of different possibilities and identities of individuals—"working in factory or office or school." While Gellhorn's writing focuses on the individual, Watts's writing imagines the general population hanging together as a community in which individuals fulfil multiple roles. Watts goes on to make this shared community experience explicit: "That's how the 80,000 inhabitants of Madrid have been living for the last 18 days" (21 May 1937). Watts and Gellhorn converge in subject matter—the daily lives of the citizens of Madrid. However, as they frame this converging subject matter, Gellhorn's preserves an individual subject going about the day's errands, while Watts imagines the collective activities of the citizens of Madrid.

Watts's use of the second person pronoun—"imagine yourself"—calls explicitly upon her reader to identify with Spanish people, and collapses into an imagined depiction of community. Focalization through pronoun usage frames the way both articles seek to deliver their emotional content. Gellhorn's article slips easily between

the first person pronoun and second person pronoun, and, in turn, the use of second person pronoun slips between a generalizing gesture equivalent to "one," and a pointed invitation for the reader to imagine herself as "you." For example, Gellhorn's narrator describes how accumulating dust during the air raids made the air difficult to breathe using the first person: "*I* went downstairs into the lobby, practicing on the way how to breathe" (July 1937, n.p., emphasis mine). Here, the pronoun "I" indicates a specific personal experience of the war. The following sentence, however, quickly moves to the generalized second person pronoun: "*You* couldn't help breathing strangely, just taking the air into your throat and not being able to inhale it" (July 1937, n.p., emphasis mine). The narrator's specific embodied experience expands to the general second person pronoun in order to indicate that this experience is a shared one. The second person pronoun, furthermore, acts as a call for the reader to imagine herself walking around the streets of Madrid:

> Later, you could see people around Madrid examining the new shell holes with curiosity and wonder. Otherwise they went on with the routine of their lives, as if they had been interrupted by a heavy rainstorm but nothing more….You went to Chicote's bar at the end of the day, walking up the street which was No Man's Land, you could hear the shells whistling even when there was silence, and the bar was crowded as always. On the way you had passed a dead horse and a very dead mule, chopped with shell fragments, and you

> had passed crisscrossing trails of human blood on the pavement. (July 1937, n.p.)

This paragraph begins with a second person pronoun that could be read as general. The construction "you could see" combines the second person pronoun with the conditional mode "could." This combination allows the observation of new shell holes to be an experience common to all inhabitants of Madrid. Halfway through the paragraph, however, the pronoun becomes specific to the imagined avatar of the American reader. The more specific description of "you" going to Chicote's bar and passing geographical landmarks like "No Man's Land" and grisly circumstantial landmarks like dead animals and "trails of human blood" narrows the experience "you" might have from the general to the specific and vividly imagined.

Watts's article leans less heavily on the second person pronoun. Instead, the article retains Watts's writerly persona, whereas Gellhorn's article attempts to efface the writer and allow the reader's imagined avatar to stand in for the writer and observer. Watts's article contains only one explicit appeal to its readership—"imagine yourself going about your business every day" (21 May 1937). The use of the second person pronoun remains general and conditional—"*If you* are in a street car and the shells begin to fall, the conductor simply takes the little handle off his box and retires to the nearest doorway" (21 May 1937, emphasis mine). These are the common and potential experiences of the residents of Madrid.

Watts balanced these imagined possibilities with the insistent presence of her own journalistic persona. She inserts her own journalistic persona into that community. Despite the sole call for the reader to imagine herself in the shoes of the Spanish people, Watts notes that her reader is in fact quite distant from the conflict:

> Compressed into neat little black figures on the typewriter these reports can be considered quite coolly; but when you have been living for eighteen days in the midst of people who are not sure whether each day will be their last, they mean a lot more. (21 May 1937)

The article points out the detached attitude that the assumed readers may take, considering the reports compiled of impersonal typed figures "coolly." The article then aligns Watts's writerly persona with the experiences of the residents of Madrid; the small typed figures "mean a lot more" to Watts has she has been living "in the midst" of the Madrileños. Watts's narrator's emotional investment is keenly felt here, as the work of her writing has become a meaningful record of trauma to both her and to a community engaged in civil war. Watts's narrative voice aligns herself with the people of Madrid more explicitly still: "I include myself as one of them," one of the "80,000 inhabitants of Madrid" (21 May 1937). While Gellhorn's writing includes the journalistic persona only intermittently, effacing the role of the observer in favour of soliciting the reader's imagined experiences in Madrid, Watts solicits this identification on the part of the reader only occasionally, leaning on the journalistic persona. Watts's journalistic

persona is insistently present, and her implicit and explicit inclusion in the community in Madrid frames her observations, creating the effect of eye-witness reportage.

The roles of journalistic personae in Watts's and Gellhorn's articles accounts for each writer's strategies for creating emotional impact in their work. Gellhorn relies on the strategy to elicit the reader to identify with an imagined subject navigating Madrid, and extends that identification to a specific subject. Gellhorn describes the death of a young boy during an air raid:

> So now the square is empty, though people are leaning close against the houses around it, and the shells are falling so fast that there is almost no time between them to hear them coming, only the steady roaring as they land on the granite cobblestones.
>
> Then for a moment it stops. An old woman, with a shawl over her shoulders, holding a terrified thin little boy by the hand, runs out into the square. You know what she is thinking: she is thinking that she must get the child home, you are always safer in your own place, with the things you know. Somehow you do not believe that you can get killed when you are sitting in your own parlour, you never think that. She is in the middle of the square when the next one comes.
>
> A small piece of twisted steel, hot and very sharp, sprays off from the shell; it takes the little boy in the throat. The old

> woman stands there, holding the hand of the dead child, looking at him stupidly, not saying anything, and men run out toward her to carry the child. At their left, at the side of the square, is a huge brilliant sign which says: GET OUT OF MADRID. (July 1937, n.p.)

The passage begins by describing people huddling together at the edges of a square during a raid. When the old woman and the young boy run across the square, the narration at first remains general and descriptive. However, it quickly switches, relying on the second person pronoun that the article has made liberal use of; in this case, the second person pronoun straddles the general mode—"Somehow you do not believe that you can get killed when you are sitting in your own parlour"—and the reader's specific imagined subject—"You know what she is thinking." The description then uses the second person in a third way, to ventriloquize the old woman. Framing the sentence by eliciting the reader's identification with the imagined subject, moving on to describe the imperative to get the child home, it then switches to state, almost fearfully, "you are always safer in your own place," as though these thoughts belong to the old woman. The mechanisms that Gellhorn's writing relies upon in order to ask the reader to imagine herself as a subject in Madrid shift to request that the reader identify with the old woman. At the close of the passage, the narration backs away rapidly, describing the old woman's stunned reaction, and moves out further still to observe the warning to leave Madrid. These sudden switches in focalization are jarring, the brief identification with the old woman

painfully undercut by the image of her uncomprehending shock. Gellhorn's writing relies on the ability to switch between focalizations and move her reader between general and specific identities, and she does so in a way that weaves an affective frankness into her difficult subject matter.

While Gellhorn's writing relies on its focalization through the second person pronoun for emotional impact, the mechanisms of emotional impact in Watts's writing rely more heavily on the presence of her writerly persona and the observational reportage that Watts's writerly persona delivers. The article accumulates the details of atrocities in Madrid:

> Always blood, blood which must be washed from the pavements daily and hourly by the strong current of a hose.
>
> An infant six months old, killed in its grandmother's arms; a guard with his legs sliced clean off; a newsboy blown to bits, with his papers scattered, all blood-spotted on the street.
>
> Terrible as such sights are, there has never yet been an occasion when the uninjured have not rushed to the aid of the injured, regardless of their own safety. If another shell falls nearby, they will be killed, and they know it. But they go to grab the dead and dying to a doorway until the ambulance arrives. And the ambulance arrives quickly. The telephone numbers of the Socorro Rojo are posted in every shop and office. (21 May 1937)

Watts's description of the casualties of the bombings is strikingly similar in content to Gellhorn's descriptions. Small children are frequent victims and, despite the danger, the uninjured run into the way of danger in order to help the injured. Watts, however, does not rely on switching focalizations or on the narration of a specific death. Instead, a series of nominal phrases describe the victims of the bombing, accumulating to communicate the scale of human loss. Watts continues to accumulate further information in nominal phrases: "Two hundred dead in the morgue in a single day. A total of 550 dead for eighteen days, and more than 900 wounded, is the unofficial estimate" (21 May 1937). While she admits that the "casualties during the Great War dwarfed these in number," she laments the deaths of civilians, largely women and children, "who died with only a shopping bag or toy in their hands," ridiculing Franco that he could "fear such weapons" (21 May 1937). These short, nominal phrases communicate a terse, contained anger.

Anger aligns Watts as eye-witness closely with the Spanish people that she portrays. Despite the intent of Franco's forces to demoralize the Republican loyalists by frequent and unpredictable bombing of civilian targets, Watts notes that it is anger, rather than demoralization, that the bombs elicit amongst the people of Madrid. She writes, 'No one can say by the wildest stretch of the imagination that people are demoralized, but they are certainly angry and certainly cautious" (21 May 1937). Watts again aligns herself with the Madrileños that she has lived amongst during the bombing, echoing their anger and caution in her own barely contained anger.

Watts's and Gellhorn's styles of reportage are similar in subject matter and in their sympathies with the Spanish Republic. But the presence of the journalistic persona, the focalization of narrative perspective, and appeals to a readership through the second person pronoun unveil the subtle differences in their approaches to journalism. Gellhorn's writing stands back from the narrative, preferring to mimetically fictionalize the traumas of the civil war. She casts her reader as the observer and sometimes the subject of the narrative. Watts's journalistic persona is insistently present, aligned with the people of Madrid as though the experiences of the war. For Watts, any attempt to empathetically imagine these experiences, to engage in the atavistic exercise that Gellhorn asks of her reader, is inadequate. They may only be diagetically listed by one who has lived through them.

Conclusion

This case study situated Watts in relation to Gellhorn. It looked for Watts's immediate contemporaries in the international field of women's war reporting. As the case studies have moved from the domestic Canadian context, to the context of Canadian journalism on the Spanish Civil War, to the more general international field of writing on the Spanish Civil War, this comparison with Gellhorn demonstrates that Watts is part of a trend. Women find journalism a particularly available means of politically committed participation in the war. And it is this trend that is of historical importance: it elucidates the freedoms and

restrictions placed on women at the time and how those freedoms and restrictions produced certain kinds of writing in certain kinds of contexts. That Watts and Gellhorn did not, or could not, choose to join the conflict as combatants is a significant restriction. Leveraging journalism as a way to access the conflict was the strategy available to them, and a strategy that they navigated adeptly.

There has been little scholarly work on the female journalists of the Spanish Civil War. Giovanna Dell'Orto argues that Gellhorn's journalism is stylistically similar to the 1960s, male-dominated New Journalism. Dell'Orto implies that Gellhon's journalistic accomplishments are singular, both in the moment of the Spanish Civil War and as a precedent to New Journalism. However, if we take Watts's and Gellhorn's Spanish Civil War journalism together we may begin to see a trend in women's journalism, whereby war correspondence offers to women a means of politically motivated participation in international politics. As Dell'Orto argues that Gellhorn's writing is a precedent to the male-dominated New Journalism of the 1960s, so I argue that Gellhorn's and Watts's contributions together are a precedent to the communities of female war correspondents that emerge in the Second World War. Furthermore, their contributions emerge alongside many of the journalistic writings of better-known male writers like Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Ted Allan, and the group of writers frequently associated with poet W. H. Auden, demonstrating that much of the literary journalism by men that has become celebrated finds cognates in women's writing that are largely forgotten. Watts and

Gellhorn are part of multiple genealogies across the development of journalism and of women's writing, from an early example of the stylistic innovations of New Journalism, to the immediate precedents for the female journalists of the Second World War, to the largely forgotten contemporaries of male writers in the Spanish Civil War.

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