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MARTHA GELLHORN AS RECORD KEEPER: "A VERY VALUABLE JOB"

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores Martha Gellhorn's role as a journalist and author during World War II. She was concerned with the educational power of media and emphasized accurate, ethical reporting. In her published works, as well as private letters found in the Crowell-Collier Collection at the New York Public Library, Gellhorn discussed the importance of the public record and her duty to contribute to it. Though her work is sometimes overshadowed by her contemporaries, her writing added an unexplored facet to the record: disadvantaged, unheard voices. I will explore her work, both published and unpublished, as it relates to oppressive governments, gender disparity, and societal ignorance. She describes her dismay at these topics in particular within *A Stricken Field*, *Love Goes to Press*, and *Point of No Return*, alongside many articles and personal letters. I intend to demonstrate Martha Gellhorn's value as a contributor of unheard voices to the public record.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Chapter 2 Oppression – Refugees in the Media.....	8
Chapter 3 Inequality – Women at War	16
Chapter 4 Alienation – Soldiers after the War.....	28
Chapter 5 Conclusion.....	37
BIBLIOGRAPHY	39

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: This photograph of Lieutenant Cordelia Cooks, the first Army nurse wounded in Italy, as she treats an injured artilleryman, was also published with Gellhorn's "Postcards from Italy" in *Collier's* magazine (1 July 1944) (McLoughlin 109).¹⁷

Figure 2: This photograph, published with Gellhorn's article "Postcards from Italy" in *Collier's* (1 July 1944) depicts Janet Evans, a USO entertainer, and Sergeant James Hearne dancing on stage (McLoughlin 108). Evans' attire indicates that she is unranked, suggestive of the boundaries of roles for women at the front.¹⁸

Figure 3: In this photograph, Martha Gellhorn is pictured riding in a jeep, holding a rifle alongside the Carpathian Lancers; she spent much of her time with soldiers so that she could describe their experiences as a man would (McLoughlin 214).²⁸

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Chapter 1

Introduction

During World War II, “that most horrific of all the horrific developments of war,” the female war correspondent, sparked anxiety in the media, militaries, and governments alike (Carpenter 32). Iris Carpenter, one of the first female correspondents permitted to cover World War II, wrote for the North Atlantic Newspaper Alliance throughout the war. In her memoir, *No Woman’s World*, Carpenter reflects on her experiences as a woman reporter on the European front, and on the role of the woman war correspondent. Many other female reporters shared her sentiments toward covering the war, especially Martha Gellhorn. Though they are often forgotten, those women played an instrumental role in bringing the war back to America. Martha Gellhorn epitomizes the World War II woman correspondent, dismissed in favor of her male contemporaries but determined to show the war to her audience. She wrote for *Collier’s* magazine throughout the war, but just weeks before troops stormed the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, her editors replaced her with Ernest Hemingway, her estranged husband. Gellhorn therefore lost her accreditation from *Collier’s*, along with her travel orders. She disregarded this obstacle and carried on reporting from fronts throughout Europe, narrating the conflict abroad for her audience.

Even as a child, education and advocacy factored prominently in Gellhorn’s development. She grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, the daughter of a renowned doctor and a well-known community activist. Her father, George Gellhorn, conducted influential medical research and worked as Professor of Gynecology and Obstetrics at the St. Louis University School of

Medicine. Her mother, Edna Fischel Gellhorn, was a social reformer and leader of the suffrage movement. Following in her mother's footsteps, Gellhorn attended Bryn Mawr College, but withdrew after her junior year to become a journalist; she dreamed of becoming a foreign correspondent, leaving her own formal education to bring news to the masses. Her parents were both very dedicated to their respective passions, pursuing improvements for the causes they supported; Gellhorn was equally tenacious, but rather than supporting any one issue, her passion was for reporting the truth. She shared her experiences with readers to educate them, advocating for truthful reporting by producing eyewitness stories herself.

Gellhorn spent most of the 1930s travelling the United States and Europe; as she put it, her "plan for life was to go everywhere, see everything, and write about it," for her audience (Kert 286). She began her career by working for a variety of newspapers, an advertising agency, *Vogue*, and the United Press Bureau. She wrote her first novel, *What Mad Pursuit* (1934), from Europe; it follows Charis Day, Gellhorn's first woman reporter character, a trope she would return to throughout her career. Day represents Gellhorn's belief in the reforming power of journalism as she protests a variety of social issues. Gellhorn later criticized the novel, claiming that it is immature; however, it also reflects the development of her style, combining straightforward news report writing with vivid descriptions of characters and settings (McLoughlin 22).

Throughout 1936, Martha Gellhorn worked as a relief investigator for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. This position, too, was crucial to her professional development. Through her work, she met one of her most influential patrons, Eleanor Roosevelt. She also gained more experience as a reporter. She travelled the United States to interview average Americans about the impacts of the Great Depression in their lives. Her reports detailed

infrastructure and employment problems and exposed corrupt and ineffective local officials.

Though she only worked as a relief investigator for a year, her time at FERA was a period of rapid growth. She wrote her second book, *The Trouble I've Seen* (1936), inspired by her interviews, and continued developing the investigative journalism skills she would be known for later in her career.

In 1937 she returned to Europe to cover the Spanish Civil War for *Collier's* magazine. While there she encountered Ernest Hemingway, whom she had met a few months before in Key West in December 1936. Initially, Gellhorn was merely “a tourist of the war,” learning from the work of the experienced correspondents with whom she travelled (Wagner 118). She did not file any stories for *Collier's* until Hemingway himself reminded her that writing about what she saw would be the best way to help the Spanish republicans she supported. Her first story landed her name on the magazine's masthead, which was extraordinary for a young, inexperienced female reporter.

Her experiences in Spain point to several important developments in Martha Gellhorn's life, both personal and professional. Hemingway and his contemporaries became her mentors, fostering growth in her writing and influencing her ethical standard. Because of this, her work is often criticized for its similarities to Hemingway's style. Sefton Delmer, who wrote for the *Daily Express*, noted Hemingway's influence on Gellhorn as a budding reporter. “[Hemingway] lectured her on how to observe things as a writer,” Delmer wrote in his autobiography (Delmer 329). Many critics extended Hemingway's mentorship to discredit Gellhorn as a correspondent in her own right. While his advice surely shaped her work, the marks of her style could already be seen in her earlier writing. Scholars suggest, for example, that her writing is careful and controlled, mimicking normal speech patterns (McLoughlin 69). These traits can be seen in her

private correspondence with *Collier's* editors and is further evidence that she voiced the stories of average people, silenced or disadvantaged. In all, while their writing styles are similar, their shared brevity and clarity are aspects of popular news writing of the time and not evidence enough of Hemingway's influence.

As her style developed, her sense of professional ethics grew as well. Gellhorn was determined to call attention to the Spanish Civil War, and more importantly, to call her audiences to action. When she arrived in Spain on behalf of *Collier's* magazine, she was still inexperienced as a journalist, and especially as a war correspondent. By the start of World War II, due in part to her mentors and in part to her dedication to the profession, Gellhorn was prepared to report on wartime experiences.

Collier's magazine once again contracted Martha Gellhorn as their European war correspondent for early actions of World War II. Her contract called for stories on conditions in Czechoslovakia, England, and France; topics ranged from politics to popular opinion. Gellhorn's primary duty as a foreign correspondent was to provide eyewitness accounts of situations throughout Europe for her audience on the home front in America. She worked tirelessly to gain access to important events, sacrificing personal safety to show her readers various wartime perspectives, despite the physical and emotional toll. She refused to look away from scenes of war in order to present an accurate account of events to readers.

Martha Gellhorn found a front row seat to witness many of the horrors of World War II. She reported on events like D-Day, the liberation of Dachau, and the Nuremberg Trials. Her fiction writing reflects her struggle to gain access to the war. *Love Goes to Press* (1946), coauthored by Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles, who wrote for *The Sunday Times*, depicts their difficulties. The play features Jane Mason and Annabelle Jones, reporters at a press camp in

Italy unable to pursue their stories, blocked by male officers and reporters. Without eyewitness experience, Gellhorn and her characters were silenced, a function of her professional ethics.

In “Visit Italy,” an article she wrote for *Collier’s* magazine in February 1944, Martha Gellhorn says, “perhaps it is impossible to understand anything unless it happened to you yourself” (*The Face of War* 128). Female writers were especially subject to criticism in this respect. Willa Cather, for instance, was harshly criticized for her World War I novel *One of Ours* (1922); Ernest Hemingway himself accused her of modeling her story around scenes from reports written by experienced war correspondents (McLoughlin 91). On one occasion, Martha Gellhorn’s own editors asked for proof that she had actually witnessed the events she discussed in her articles. In order to write about the war in any capacity, it was commonly believed that reporters must experience it firsthand. This standard was often used to discredit women’s writing about war’s effects away, even away from the battlefield, as was Martha Gellhorn’s focus.

Gellhorn was not always able to get to the front, but followed her passion and ethics to tell the stories of average people affected by the war. Her role as a correspondent mirrored her duties as a relief investigator, reporting personal experiences of individuals. In *A Stricken Field* (1940) Gellhorn portrays the stories of Czechoslovakian citizens and refugees through the eyes of her main character, another woman reporter, Mary Douglas. Douglas, like Gellhorn, builds those stories into her articles; this is, she believes, the duty of a journalist.

In her search for stories to share, Gellhorn saw many facets of the war that disillusioned her. She witnessed unspeakable acts of cruelty toward humanity, as described by Jacob Levy’s experiences in her World War II novel *Point of No Return* (republished in 1989), originally published as *The Wine of Astonishment* (1948). Levy, the main character, is a Jewish-American

soldier fighting throughout Europe; he is a conduit for Gellhorn's stories about soldiers, as well as the liberation of Dachau, a concentration camp in Germany on which Gellhorn reported.

She witnessed the effects of war, in terms of lives lost and countries torn apart. She witnessed institutional discrimination, which prevented her and her female colleagues from completing their assignments. After World War II, Martha Gellhorn had little hope that the world would change for the better. Her published works reflect her disappointment in the state of affairs and describe her shift in expectations. Early in her career, she believed that eyewitness journalism had the power to shed light on injustice and lead readers to action. After the war, though, she felt that the duty of the journalist was still to witness and accurately report, preserving a public record from which willing readers can learn. Throughout her experience as a foreign correspondent, she recorded her travels publicly, through her news writing and fiction. Those topics are further illuminated by what she wrote privately, in correspondence with family, friends, and colleagues. Materials that survive in the archives of *Collier's* magazine at the New York Public Library show her unguarded thoughts on the issues she discussed in her published works.

Despite the disillusion evident in her letters and literature, Martha Gellhorn was a force of change, improving conditions through her writing. Unfortunately, Martha Gellhorn is not as widely remembered as she ought to be; she is more often recognized as Hemingway's third wife than as a writer. Her work is worthy of its own attention, though. She made important contributions to literature by focusing her works on disadvantaged voices and by exposing injustice and distress. During her time as a World War II correspondent, Martha Gellhorn called attention to oppression, inequality, and alienation, giving a voice to ordinary people affected by

the war and educating her readers about wartime experiences, both in her published and private writings.

Chapter 2

Oppression – Refugees in the Media

After the Spanish Civil war, Martha Gellhorn was disheartened. Initially, she believed in the power of the journalist to spark action in his or her readers. Journalists, she believed, served the public conscience, exposing injustice and calling for action (*The Face of War* 1). Media set the public agenda, telling audiences what to think about, providing information on issues that should be in the foreground of public discussion. Without mobilizing messages, which direct readers on how to raise their concerns, agenda setting fails. Gellhorn and her mentors were unable to effectively mobilize their readers by reporting from Spain, and so she re-evaluated her vision of journalism.

Her shift in beliefs coincided with Martha Gellhorn's assignment from *Collier's* magazine to cover the beginning of World War II. "Journalism at its best and most effective is education," Gellhorn states in her introduction to *The Face of War* (3). Her primary goal throughout the war, rather than serving the public conscience, became preserving the public record. Her early World War II novel *A Stricken Field* (1940) presents this effort through the actions of Mary Douglas, the main character.

Mary Douglas, a young American journalist, travels to Czechoslovakia to report on the German invasion of the Sudetenland in 1938, shortly before the outbreak of World War II. The invasion was one of Germany's first overt acts of aggression; Nazi soldiers crossed the German border into Czechoslovakia, occupying the region, which was part of Germany prior to World War I and the Treaty of Versailles. Without help from the Allied Forces to uphold the Munich

Agreement, which redefined the German-Czechoslovakian border, the Czechoslovakian army failed to protect against the invasion. As the novel opens, Mary arrives in Prague, the Czechoslovakian capitol, just after the defeat of Czechoslovakian forces.

While in Prague, Mary connects with her fellow reporters, which she calls the followers of catastrophe. They are all men, mostly older and considerably more experienced. Mary, it seems, is in Prague to collect material for an article on the economic impact of the occupation, as evidenced by her questions for the economic specialist in the group. She withholds her queries, though, so that she does not appear uninformed or unimportant. During their dinner conversation on the first night, she thinks to herself, “they probably know it all ... or else they don’t need such information for their stories” (*A Stricken Field* 22). She is self-conscious, both about her lack of knowledge and about the types of stories she writes, compared to the men around her. Surprisingly, Mary uncovers the most valuable story of the group, after a coincidental meeting with Rita, who the reporters worked with in Germany.

Rita Salus, a German communist, sought refuge in Prague after being released from a German prison camp. Prior to her imprisonment, Rita and her brother worked with the reporters, providing updates on Communist politics in Berlin. In Prague, she worked at the Solidarität, a relief agency for German Communist refugees. After seeing Rita on her first day in Prague, Mary’s mission changes. She visits Rita the following day at one of the refugee homes. Rita asks her to help protect the refugees; Mary, thinking Rita needs money to get them safely out of Czechoslovakia, calculates a budget and promises her paychecks. Rita, though, is asking for a different kind of support.

To Mary’s surprise, Rita asks Mary to use her media influence to shape public opinion. Rita believes that pressure from the Allied Forces is the only way to persuade the

Czechoslovakian government to protect the refugees. Mary takes on the challenge but with little optimism. She warns Rita that public mobilization is unreliable; “it has not been something you can count on,” Mary says, likely in reference to the Allied abandonment of Czechoslovakia in the face of the German invasion (*A Stricken Field* 56). “And if you have it,” she continues, “there’s not much you can exchange it for,” meaning that public opinion is not always enough to motivate government intervention (56). Mary’s opinion seems to stem directly from Martha Gellhorn’s experiences during the Spanish Civil War, from her failed attempts at agenda setting and mobilizing messages. Rita is undeterred by Mary’s warning, though, and insists that Mary and her colleagues can help save the refugees.

To provide persuasive material for Mary’s articles, Rita introduces her to other refugees, provides anecdotes about their experiences, and takes her to refugee homes. Mary is concerned for Rita and the other refugees who rely on an unlikely Allied intervention for safety. “If that’s the help they’re going to get, they’re dead now,” Mary thinks, reflecting on how slowly the public mobilizes (*A Stricken Field* 70). While touring refugee facilities, Mary grows attached to the refugees; she associates names and stories with real people, whom she has met. Meanwhile, refugees are deported every day, sent back to Germany and no authority is helping them. When Mary realizes the very real danger her new acquaintances face daily, she agrees to dedicate her effort to their cause.

Mary’s abilities as a member of the media are extremely limited. When she arrives in Prague, she learns from her colleagues that the Czechoslovakian censorship policies are very restrictive. “You can’t understand it,” one reporter tells her, “unless you realize that the Nazis already own Prague” (*A Stricken Field* 25). The censors eliminate any material that shows the reality of the conflict in Czechoslovakia, especially in regard to refugees. Her colleagues

recommend, unless Mary can sneak her writing out, which would be extremely dangerous, that she wait to write her reports until she arrives in Paris, where she will not be so strictly censored.

With this warning in mind, Mary continues gathering material for her assignment, as well as for Rita's story. For example, while waiting for Rita one afternoon, she talks to young refugees about their experiences in prison. One boy, Thomas, who learned English in a "very fine prison," serves as Mary's translator; he jokingly refers to his camp as "the university of the people" (*A Stricken Field* 49). Others were not as fortunate; another young man, named Jacob, "get in concentration camp and learn nothing. Just how to sing," her translator explains (49). Jacob spent two years in a labor camp where prisoners were required to sing all day or else be beaten. Katy, one of the girls staying in the refugee apartment, spent three years in "the best prison of all" with Rita (50). None of the 500 female inmates were permitted to speak, but late at night they communicated through knocks on their cell walls. "It is not the same as talk," though, so the women planned to revolt to get permission to wish one another goodnight (51). According to Katy, the revolution failed; the leaders, including Rita and Katy, were beaten and locked in the cellar. The young refugees speak frankly, and Mary tries "to talk as they did, about plain facts," but behind their bravery, they are still scarred by the oppression they experienced (50). Their jokes help them cope, but they still wish to communicate their most horrific memories to Mary so that she can share them with her readers who might be able to aid protection efforts.

Mary spends most of her week in Prague working to help the refugees. By the day before she has to leave, she has given up on her power as a journalist. She cannot get a story out on time to persuade Allied Forces to send help. She cannot even envision a story to communicate the many acts of oppression she witnessed. In true journalistic fashion, Mary attempts to arrange

each of the anecdotes into an article; however, “she could not see it, plain and informative, colorful but unimpassioned, on a page,” organized into lead, body, and conclusion (*A Stricken Field* 119). While touring Czechoslovakia “she had seen the innocent punished and insulted, pursued and destroyed;” the refugees are no match against their relentless enemies (120). Unable to shape public opinion through the media, Mary returns to her original assignment on the Czechoslovakian economy.

She meets with a railroad manager to gather figures for her article, but “she hadn’t even understood what she heard, only writing down, in wobbling letters, anything that sounded instructive” (*A Stricken Field* 224). She does not care to report on meaningless statistics. “Statistics were only black marks on paper ... and if she learned that an unpronounceable Czech manufacturing town had become German it meant nothing, until she thought of the people who worked in the factories and where they would go now” (21). Numbers, Mary feels, are not emotive enough; without an understanding of the human aspect behind them, they tell no story.

After witnessing the human aspect of the occupation of Czechoslovakia, Mary is fully committed to writing about the refugee experience. She aims to educate and motivate the global community, to inspire them to stop the oppressive Nazi regime and prevent a reoccurrence of the events she witnessed. She admits that change will come slowly, that public opinion is difficult to shape. On her final day in Prague, Mary receives a visitor and one more opportunity to offer the refugees assistance, to speak for ordinary people under an oppressive government.

This visitor, a friend of Rita’s who also worked at the Solidarität, came to Mary with a book of letters. The letters, the woman says, “are the facts ... no one else has them” (*A Stricken Field* 210). She then asks Mary if that is important; Mary reflects the value Martha Gellhorn places on factual accounts and preserving the public record and soon agrees to carry several

hundred letters to France. They recount experiences under the oppressive Nazi regime: threats, scenes of torture, and crimes against humanity. Each letter is a personal story, written by a refugee and delivered to Mary's visitor. Many refugees who contributed stories have since disappeared and these letters are that is left of their lives.

Suddenly, the warning from Mary's colleague about the censors becomes a reality. The task of smuggling uncensored documents out of a German-occupied country is extremely dangerous, but Mary determines that she is likely to succeed. She agrees to smuggle the book of letters out of Prague, to take them back to Paris to be published. Though she fails to put her own reports of oppression from Prague into words, she will be able to protect the refugees' legacies through "this record for all who have no other way to speak" (*A Stricken Field* 283). Mary's visitor also reflects Martha Gellhorn's dedication to truth. "We are still fighting ... and we do the only thing we can do. To tell the truth, so that it shall not disappear and be forgotten, is our fighting," she explains, impassioned. She continues, saying, "we believe still ... that truth is strong" (284). Mary is moved by the refugees' collective determination; they refuse to accept defeat as long as they still have truth. They continue to fight oppression as long as their stories serve as a warning and prevent further violence.

In her writing, both fact and fiction, Martha Gellhorn called attention to oppression; she gave a voice to the ordinary men and women affected by war. According to her personal letters, which survive in the archives of *Collier's* magazine, she was disappointed by the early critical reception of *A Stricken Field*, which focused on the frame of her message, rather than the message itself. "I am advised to write my experiences as an autobiography, and not stuff them into a novel," she wrote to Charles Colebaugh, a *Collier's* editor. Readers believed that the character of Mary Douglas was truly Gellhorn herself and that "the thin disguise seems

unnecessary” (Letter to Charles Colebaugh 13Mar1940). Gellhorn insisted that, though the background was similar, *A Stricken Field* was not an autobiography because Mary Douglas’ experiences were inventions, not recreations of Gellhorn’s time in Prague.

According to an agreement between *Collier’s* magazine and Martha Gellhorn from March 1938, found in the Crowell-Collier’s records at the New York Public Library, Gellhorn was in Czechoslovakia researching a story on the economic, political, and social impacts of the German invasion at the start of World War II (Document 22Mar1938). Her time in Prague influenced her novel, but Gellhorn and Mary Douglas did not share experiences. Rather, they shared motivations. In a letter to her friend and editor at *Collier’s*, she told Charles Colebaugh, “I wrote from love about people and events that concerned me greatly, and I was sad to see that all lost in this silly business of identifying me with Mary” (Letter to Charles Colebaugh 31Mar1940). Mary carried the collection of letters through customs because she understood their importance in exposing the oppression that concerned her throughout her week in Prague.

Martha Gellhorn felt that critics were too distracted by the potential autobiographical aspects and missed the true message of the story. Fortunately, after the initial round of reviews, readers began to focus on the message and not method of Gellhorn’s story. “It has worried, and made them think about the little people,” she wrote to Colebaugh (Letter to Charles Colebaugh 31Mar1940). She was able to portray common struggles, exposing the rampant violence and oppression of World War II through the experiences she invented for Mary. Mary’s story, which communicated Gellhorn’s concerns, is thought provoking. Gellhorn likely incorporated elements of her own research into the content she created, but Mary’s experiences were not her own.

Ultimately, Martha Gellhorn provided a complete picture of oppression for her readers. Her series of articles commissioned by *Collier’s* in 1938 gave readers an eyewitness account of

the war brewing in Europe. Her fiction writing, published soon after, emphasized the human aspect of the war, and especially of the oppressive Nazi regime. *A Stricken Field* effectively communicated Gellhorn's concerns, and effectively inspired concern in her audience. Both styles were educational for readers. In line with her shifting values, her news writing and novel emphasized accuracy in preserving the public record, whether through statistics or through the letters her character Mary carried out of Prague. On that subject, Martha Gellhorn wrote to Colebaugh, "as we are people concerned with the written word, the only regular and permanent job we can do is to keep the record straight. I think it is a very valuable job" (Letter to Charles Colebaugh 31Mar1940). Gellhorn was a valuable record keeper who spoke out for people without a voice. Without her reports, both fiction and nonfiction, the World War II record would lack the emotive human aspect her writing presents.

Chapter 3

Inequality – Women at War

During World War II, women were expected to play supporting roles in military success. Social norms dictated that women remain on the home front, maintaining industry and agriculture until men returned from war. Women were permitted near front lines under very restricted circumstances. Those roles were only as auxiliary services or support. Each branch of the military developed a women's auxiliary group by the end of World War II. The juxtaposition of "woman" and "soldier" presented major concerns, especially for how women could "be allowed to serve in the masculine environment of the U.S. military yet still be able to maintain their acceptable feminine roles in society" (Ulbrich 611). They faced varying levels of discrimination and harassment while trying to simultaneously prove their value as soldiers and maintain feminine respectability (612). Nonetheless, more than 350,000 women joined auxiliary services in the United States Armed Services (610). Their roles were restricted to non-combatant positions and few were ever permitted to serve near front lines, but their impact permanently shaped the United States military.

The Army Nurse Corps, a subsection of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, served an integral role in military medical service. Approximately 32,500 women served overseas through the Army Nurse Corps, closer to the front lines than ever before (Vuic 441). These women landed with troops, or only a few days after initial assaults, to provide medical services (441). While they were still criticized for their involvement in the military, these women filled one of the very few acceptable service positions available to females. In fact, nursing was the only

unanimously agreed upon occupation for women at war in popular opinion (McLoughlin 107).

Aside from providing care and medical service, women were occasionally allowed into military camps as entertainers. The YMCA, Red Cross, and others organized performance groups, mostly of women, to tour camps providing entertainment and distraction for the soldiers stationed overseas. Outside of these roles, there was no place for women at the front.



Figure 1: This photograph of Lieutenant Cordelia Cooks, the first Army nurse wounded in Italy, as she treats an injured artilleryman, was also published with Gellhorn's "Postcards from Italy" in *Collier's* magazine (1 July 1944) (McLoughlin 109).

Martha Gellhorn and her female colleagues faced considerable challenges gaining access to areas of conflict. Reporters, even men, provided little value to the military and often created additional work, and additional danger, for public relations officers and other soldiers. Women, therefore, faced even more discrimination. *Collier's* magazine, although aware of Gellhorn's struggles, rather insensitively published many of her articles alongside images of women in

acceptable service roles. “Postcards from Italy,” an article about camp conditions, for example, is accompanied by an image of a nurse caring for a wounded soldier (Figure 1) and a performer dancing with an officer (Figure 2). The images are powerful, but are unrelated to Gellhorn’s writing and reinforce those roles as acceptable, while ignoring Gellhorn’s own role as war correspondent.



Figure 2: This photograph, published with Gellhorn’s article “Postcards from Italy” in *Collier’s* (1 July 1944) depicts Janet Evans, a USO entertainer, and Sergeant James Hearne dancing on stage (McLoughlin 108). Evans’ attire indicates that she is unranked, suggestive of the boundaries of roles for women at the front.

Archival materials from the Crowell-Collier Collection at the New York Public Library address the disadvantages Martha Gellhorn and other female war correspondents faced. In a letter to the *Collier’s* editorial staff, Colonel Ernest Dupuy explained accreditation restrictions, as they would apply to Gellhorn and other female correspondents. “It is against War Department

policy,” he wrote, “to accredit women correspondents for attachment to the headquarters of any U.S. Army forces actually operating in the field” (Letter from Colonel Ernest Dupuy to *Collier’s* editor Robert McCormick 17Jan1942). He offered instead to send Gellhorn to any other location outside of operations. She faced this prejudice, though, and disregarded it. In another letter to Charles Colebaugh, she referred to her sex as a handicap, one that she worked with since age five. She assured him, mockingly, that she “shall just forge ahead, bravely, despite the army” (Letter to Charles Colebaugh 3Feb1942). When she and her colleagues were unable to disregard the Army’s accreditation policies for women any longer, Gellhorn spoke out against gender disparity at the front, both in her public and private writings. Specifically, she challenged the notion that women needed protection from the combat experience.

When a hold on travel for female correspondents prevented Martha Gellhorn from completing her assignment, she wrote a letter, dated 24 June 1944, to Colonel Lawrence, the American Public Relations Officer for the European Theatre of Operations. She later describes P.R.O.s in *The Face of War*, as “a doctrinaire bunch who objected to a woman being a correspondent with combat troops” (*The Face of War* 108). P.R.O.s, who oversaw travel for the American press, constituted a considerable challenge for women reporters. The letter to Colonel Lawrence reflects her negative experiences working with P.R.O.s. She criticized the enforcement of General Dwight D. Eisenhower’s policy regarding correspondents and travel; “men and women correspondents would be treated alike, and would be afforded equal opportunities to fulfill their assignments,” she stated (Letter to Colonel Lawrence 24June1944, quoted in *The Selected Letters of Martha Gellhorn* 166). Women reporters were authorized to travel as far into conflict zones as Army nurses were permitted. Nearly three weeks after D-Day, though, long after nurses reached France, the nineteen accredited women correspondents were

still not able to cover the situation (166). “I felt like a veteran of the Crimean War by then, and I had been sent to Europe to do my job, which was not to report the rear areas or the woman’s angle,” she explains (*The Face of War* 108). Considering her experience in the field, Gellhorn could not rationalize this injustice.

Later in the argument her letter presented to Colonel Lawrence, she referred to her colleagues as nineteen people, not nineteen women, who were prevented from working. This change in language, though subtle, supported her next point. “I find myself plainly unable to continue my work in this theatre, for no reason that I can discover than that I am a woman,” Gellhorn wrote (*The Selected Letters of Martha Gellhorn* 167). “Being a professional journalist,” she continued, “I do not find this an adequate reason for being barred” (167). Once again, Gellhorn shifted her language from woman to non-gendered professional. In creating distance between the two identities, she demonstrated the unreasonable recent enforcement of Eisenhower’s equal opportunity policy, which prevented nineteen capable, experienced reporters from providing accurate information to readers on the home front.

According to Caroline Moorehead, Martha Gellhorn saw “no conflict between being a woman and achieving what you wanted” (*Martha Gellhorn: A Life* 21). It is unsurprising, then, that she should be a voice seeking equality for women at the front. *Love Goes to Press* (1946), which she co-wrote with Virginia Cowles, a British woman war correspondent, mocks the institutionalized inequality they faced. The play, highly acclaimed when it was released in the West End in London, calls attention, using humor, to the sexism and stereotyping they and other women reporters encountered.

The action takes place over only three days in a press camp in Italy. The characters adopt the institutionalized inequality into their own interpersonal and social constructs. For example,

Major Philip Brooke-Jervaux, the public relations officer at the camp, is enraged that a woman will be coming to his press camp. After receiving a call from Naples, he spouts several stereotypes, barring women from his camp and demonstrating his contempt for women at the front in general. “Any decent woman would stay at home,” he states, “There are plenty of quiet useful civilian jobs for women” (*Love Goes to Press* 10). Philip embodies the war department accreditation policy forbidding women access to the front. He takes this a step further, ensuring discomfort for the female war correspondent, hoping to discourage her from remaining at his camp; to Corporal Camp, he says, “Miss Mason won’t stay long” (11). When Jane Mason arrives, and Annabelle Jones comes unexpectedly, the major attempts to stonewall them with policy, preventing them from working, or even being, at his front.

First, surprised by Annabelle’s arrival, he requests her credentials and travel orders. Without permission from Naples, Philip says, she is not allowed at his camp. Jane’s sharp retort and Annabelle’s promise to leave the next day silence him briefly. Later, when Annabelle leaves for Poland on an unapproved assignment, the major intends to strictly enforce travel and accreditation policies. “There is an end to what can go on, even with women,” he continues, as though special allowances are made for women, when in actuality, special excuses are made to prevent women from reporting from the front (49). Jane reprimands him for disregarding the goals of the press, which are to distribute the truth and educate the public. “You don’t care about anything but your own measly little authority,” she says (50). “And if she got killed or captured or deformed for life,” Jane adds, “you’d only be furious because she hadn’t done it through the proper channels,” (50). This scene highlights travel and access problems Martha Gellhorn encountered while working at press camps.

As she mentioned in her letter to Colonel Lawrence, policies were enforced unevenly and unfairly, preventing women correspondents from fulfilling their assignments and sending stories back to their respective media outlets. This instance mirrors those struggles as Major Philip Brooke-Jervaux attempts to block access to the front. As Gellhorn demonstrates, the major is not truly concerned for Annabelle's safety or for the story she hopes to share with the public. He is concerned only for the enforcement of prejudiced rules.

In *Love Goes to Press*, Martha Gellhorn looks beyond the institutionalized inequality that engendered discriminatory policies and procedures to assess the causes, namely prima donna female reporters and overprotective men. In another letter to Charles Colebaugh from the Crowell-Collier Collection editorial correspondence series, Gellhorn wrote "you thought I was joking about how those prima donna correspondents have spoiled the racket for us obscure girls" (Letter to Charles Colebaugh 21 May 1942). She outlined their nuisance value and the attention they attracted, and the negative image they created for all female war correspondents.

This too, factors into the major's opinion of Jane Mason. Philip describes her as "a really nasty one. The 'internationally known, glamorous war correspondent' Jane Mason," before she even arrives from Naples (*Love Goes to Press* 10). Gellhorn was equally concerned with the glamorous woman war correspondent, "who introduces sexual excitement and volatility into the male space that is the war zone" (McLoughlin 203). Tex Crowder, another correspondent, points out that "the feminine touch has brightened up our little nest," and Corporal Cramp is happy to accommodate the women reporters because they are English-speaking women, something the officers have not seen in a long time (*Love Goes to Press* 41). The women are noticeable disruptions to the daily operations of the camp.

Moreover, the women make no apology for the disruption they cause. Jane Mason calls the commanding officer of the front, General Pinkerton, to send her a closed-in staff car, rather than a jeep, to use while at the camp. They complain about the cold and sleep late. They bring a tremendous amount of luggage and “an errand brigade” to transport it all for them (*Love Goes to Press* 18). The first part of the major’s stereotype, they epitomize, “dressed up in Molyneux uniforms. Cooing at all the men” (10). Throughout the play, Gellhorn selects details of Jane and Annabelle’s behavior to satirize some of her fellow female correspondents to reveal how damaging their behavior can be to the profession. In other instances, Martha Gellhorn was reprimanded for criticizing her female colleagues, namely Alice Moats, for this type of behavior. She defended herself in several letters to her editors, contained in the Crowell-Collier Collection, against criticism of stories she wrote that were perceived as attacks on the women with whom she worked. However, audiences are clearly meant to agree when Jane and Annabelle play up the stereotypes in some ways, often to their own benefit. It seems that this particular critique, then, is aimed more sharply at the men at war and their stereotypical views of female correspondents.

Love Goes to Press also assesses the protective male figures, ranging from officers to other correspondents, that Gellhorn and her leading ladies encounter. “If there’s anything I really loathe, it’s a woman protector” Annabelle states after meeting the surly major (*Love Goes to Press* 25). Men, almost instinctively, protect Jane, Annabelle, and real female correspondents, without realizing that the women neither needed nor wanted special protection. That instinct to protect the fairer sex, rooted in chivalry, grew into an institutionalized gender bias that discredited women reporting on the war. Annabelle, reflecting on her experiences, considers “the number of times we couldn’t even get out of a car when shelling started because the men pinned us down with their elbows while they stepped over us” (17). “It makes me sick with

rage,” she continues, demonstrating that she and her colleagues see no need for the overbearing nature of the men around them (17). Though they see no reason for it, Jane and Annabelle can do little to change the ingrained prejudices they encounter.

The front line was a gendered space where women were unwelcome. Women’s Army Corps recruitment pamphlets, explaining the hostility toward women in the armed forces, said that “he wants the same sweet girl waiting for him when the war is over” (McLoughlin 107). “He” is the soldiers fighting abroad; they were motivated by the girls back home who they fought to protect, and were disturbed, unsurprisingly, to see women at the front alongside them. For instance, one male correspondent at the press camp attempts to explain away the major’s unkindness, saying that he spent three years “fighting to protect womankind from the horrors of war. And then womankind walks in on him” (*Love Goes to Press* 25). Institutionalized bias once again infiltrates his opinion on women at the front. What soldiers fail to consider, though, as the WAC pamphlet states, is that women at war “not only stay just as feminine, but that [their] charm and appreciation of his problems will increase” (McLoughlin 107). Jane and Annabelle, with their fashionable dress backed by practicality informed by following the war, demonstrate this. The information was a powerful recruiting tool, but failed to sway soldiers’ assumptions.

Major Brooke-Jervaux, shaped by this bias, presumes that women are not fit to see front line action. “Want to go to the front, and scream when they get there,” he says (*Love Goes to Press* 10). This attitude, based on inaccurate assumptions, discredited female war correspondents and prevented them from completing their assignments. Men at the front line further discredited them by infantilizing them, but by their actions, women like Jane and Annabelle shine a light on the foolishness of that attitude.

Rather than being treated as adult women correspondents at the front, Jane and Annabelle are viewed as little American girls in hair bows, papa's babies, to be lifted and spun when they arrive at camp (*Love Goes to Press* 23). Throughout the play, they are described as child-like, typically referred to as girls, and, once again, in need of protection. Major Dick Hawkins is the first to do so when he brings Annabelle to the press camp at the outset of the play. "Any man would give his eyes just to take care of girls like you," says Dick, "and instead you go off doing these dangerous things" (18). They give little response to "Dickie," who himself has been infantilized, unknowingly, by the women in this play. Annabelle talks to him like a child or a dog, and he is characterized as dumb, "not the reading type," and struggles to open the bottle of cognac he brought (18). Despite how they mock him, Dick's characterization, shared by the other men in the play, affects Jane and Annabelle, who are limited by gender stereotypes, while their remarks have no effect on him. However, through comical encounters like this, they do expose those male attitudes to questioning and ridicule by the play's audience.

Joe Rogers, one of the correspondents at the camp, is also overprotective, specifically of Annabelle. In the opening of the play, when the major announces that a woman reporter is coming to the press camp, Joe, "a close-mouthed bird" reveals that he was once married to a newspaper woman (*Love Goes to Press* 11). "They never stop trying to scoop you," he says, "and when you scoop them they divorce you" (10).

When Jane and Annabelle arrive, Jane announces that after the war she plans to leave the newspaper business to settle down. Annabelle warns against it though and reveals that she and Joe Rogers were married for a short time earlier in the war. Annabelle describes her husband's betrayal, scooping her story in Russia immediately after their honeymoon. "He said he did it because he loved me so much he couldn't bear to have me in danger," Annabelle says (19). Jane

argues that, had Joe's excuse been anything else, she would have forgiven him. Discrediting Annabelle and her work, adding difficulty to her already challenging restrictions, is unforgiveable.

Annabelle and Joe meet again at the press camp moments later. He offers some explanation for his behavior, saying, "how could I sit in Moscow and allow my wife to be smashed into a bloody pulp" (*Love Goes to Press* 26). Annabelle rejects this defense, though. It was not his place to allow her to do her job, in the same way that it was inappropriate for P.R.O.s to prevent other women correspondents from doing theirs.

Beyond representing policy, Major Philip Brooke-Jervaux is also overly protective. After his engagement to Jane Mason, he takes on the same role as Dick Hawkins and Joe Rogers. He prevents her from reporting on the attack from Mount Sorello, letting her sleep through it instead, because he believes she needs the rest. "I can't have you going to the front any more," he tells her, with his arm around her as he leads her to a couch (*Love Goes to Press* 60). His behavior, somewhat belittling, displays his inclination to protect Jane. Before their engagement, when Jane speaks of returning home, he tells her not to leave Europe because "someone's got to report what's going on, and there are so few first class correspondents to do it" (54). Once she is his fiancé, though, he disregards her profession, unconcerned about who will cover the war, and emphasizes her protection. "You're mine now," he says, "If anything happened to you I couldn't stand it" (60). He plans to send her to his home in England, where she can live with his mother and sister. Jane, though, does not want to adjust to his lifestyle. She does not want to care for bees, work on the farm, or go duck hunting. She only wants to write, and when she realizes Philip will not even allow her to do that, she rebels against his patriarchal plan for their future. In the punch line at the end of the play, she leaves him to report on the Forgotten Army in Burma

with Annabelle, preferring to go to another war rather than settle into a stereotypical female role on the home front.

Both Jane and Annabelle reject the overbearing protection of the men around them in order to file their stories. They are concerned instead with speaking for common people who have no voice, sharing those experiences with their readership. Ethically, they need first hand experience to report on the war because “to describe conflict without having earned this right can be perceived as a form of exploitation of others’ suffering” (McLoughlin 100). If they were unable to reach the front through approved means, Jane, Annabelle, and Gellhorn herself would have to dodge public relations officers to get their stories. Gellhorn, dedicated to collecting all facets of the public record, accepts the challenges of being a female war correspondent to pursue her passion.

Chapter 4

Alienation – Soldiers after the War

Martha Gellhorn, as an eyewitness reporter compiling an accurate record, emphasized finding and telling the truth. She spent most of her time in Europe recording the soldiers' stories to help her readership relate to their experiences (Figure 3). Men returning from war were infuriated by widespread public ignorance (McLoughlin 63). They worried about coming home to communities that did not understand their new worldview. Gellhorn gave them a voice by covering combat, travel, and camp conditions.



Figure 3: In this photograph, Martha Gellhorn is pictured riding in a jeep, holding a rifle alongside the Carpathian Lancers; she spent much of her time with soldiers so that she could describe their experiences as a man would (McLoughlin 214).

Her work offered soldiers an opportunity to reconnect with their families, friends, and pre-war lives (McLoughlin 63). She impacted millions of men who felt alienated during and

after the war, along with their families, who were better able to support them. Through *Point of No Return* (originally published as *Wine of Astonishment* in 1948 and republished in 1989 with the title she preferred), Gellhorn describes many aspects of soldiers' lives overseas as she follows Lieutenant Colonel John Smithers, Jacob Levy, and their company as the United States Army fights its way across Europe.

The first step in diminishing alienation was to bring the front lines to the home front. To do this, Gellhorn portrays the European Theatre in terms of the American landscape, often sarcastically. By carefully describing locations and supplementing them with details, Gellhorn reconfigures unfamiliar regions of Europe into recognizable places. She references places her readers may have visited and relates soldiers' tasks to civilian activities. She then juxtaposes those familiar scenarios with a soldier's experiences, sharply contrasting the comfort of home with the unusual wartime lifestyle. For example, a *Collier's* copy edited version of "Postcards from Italy," found in the Crowell-Collier's records, provides the subtitle, "vignettes of what life is like in sunny Italy for our soldiers" ("Postcards from Italy" Draft July 1944). The article, though, depicts only rainy, stressful experiences, far from what the restive title suggests. Gellhorn refused to look away from the soldiers' difficult, dangerous duties, and refused to shield her readers from it as well.

The startling, unyielding descriptions feature prominently in *Point of No Return*. As he rides into Luxembourg, Lieutenant Colonel Smithers, characterized as a southern gentleman, feels at home amongst the pine trees. They remind him of the peaceful Georgian countryside where he grew up (*Point of No Return* 43). Gellhorn capitalizes on this defining aspect for which Georgia is known. She continues to develop the setting, where "the hills were like home too, and so was the quiet," then quickly switches back to war-torn Europe in the same sentence,

elaborating, “nothing burned at the sides of the roads, and no broken telegraph poles with the white insulators blown into the trees, and no snarled khaki traffic” (43). Just as her readers acclimate to the hills of Luxembourg, she reminds them of how far the soldiers are from home and safety.

Gellhorn brings the war home again on a spring afternoon. After they arrive in Hildenwald, Jacob Levy and Bert Hammer go out to visit the town. As they walk, Bert talks about fishing in a stream they passed, a relaxing way to spend the afternoon that would resonate with Gellhorn’s readers. They have no poles to fish the old-fashioned way, nor do they have the time, so instead they go looting. Once again, Gellhorn takes an idea her readers would recognize, this time a fishing outing, and connects it to an unexpected alternative.

In line with the quiet country landscape, Gellhorn defines another landmark that readers may recognize. As Levy drives through Germany in the last months of World War II, he describes the mountains ahead of him, representing the end of his journey; “he was loyal to the Smokies,” where he spent summer vacations, but he looked toward the mountains excitedly because “when they reached them, his life which had never started would start at last” (*Point of No Return* 254). The battalion keeps moving across Germany, though, and soon Levy is out of the countryside with no view of the mountains, trapped instead in a cold, gray canyon of buildings, the topographical opposite. Gellhorn shifts from an American landmark, the Smoky Mountains, to “the efficient apparently chaotic business of settling in,” establishing military headquarters in a battle-destroyed city (257). She has, once again, juxtaposed a relatable experience with one that would surprise her readers.

The comparisons Gellhorn makes in these instances are effective because they are shocking. They each offer a familiar concept that readers would recognize: country roads, a

fishing spot, the Smoky Mountains. Then, each one is followed by a startling wartime experience. By providing the reader with an unfamiliar view, Gellhorn is better able to show how different life at the front line was from life on the home front.

Many World War II soldiers were still unable to relate to their families back home, though. Gellhorn demonstrates this through soldiers' letters home, as well as their own descriptions. Lieutenant Colonel Smithers, for example, depicts his uneasiness in his weekly v-mail. Smithers believed that his family back in Georgia lived in a different time and space, a grotesque "scurrying loud patriotic antheap where everyone babbled his stupid head off about the war as if any of them knew what they were talking about" (*Point of No Return* 23). In the letter to his parents, he writes that his battalion is lying around with nothing to do; the statement is untrue, and just hours later the battalion is engaged in The Battle of the Bulge. He keeps his family uninformed because "there was nothing he could tell his family, nothing he wanted to tell, and very little he wanted to hear" (23). There is a disconnection between what his patriotic parents think they know and his actual experiences. To prevent any further discussion, Lieutenant Colonel Smithers gives no information at all.

Later, with the end of the war in sight, Smithers reflects on his post-war plans. "He could never go back to being the boy he was," in La Harpe, Georgia, an uneducated blue-collar boy named Johnny (*Point of No Return* 252). There was no way to explain the places he visited, people he met, or what he had seen. He could not tell them about the special privileges he received based on his rank, treated as an officer and a gentleman. He could not describe the cultured cities he travelled to, London, Paris, Luxembourg City. He could not prove that he befriended Lord and Lady Rayne and stayed in their manor several times. Finally, Lieutenant Colonel Smithers concludes that:

He couldn't tell them anything that happened to him and all that he had become.

He could tell them nothing of the real war, they would never understand and he never wanted to speak of it. It was too serious to shoot the bull about with people who had not seen and felt it (*Point of No Return* 250).

In this passage, Gellhorn identifies the ultimate concern of all who fought abroad and the very concept she worked to prevent. They could not discuss what they had experienced with anyone who had not been there, because civilians could not understand. The war itself isolated those soldiers, alienating them from the misinformed communities they fought to protect.

Lieutenant Colonel Smithers would therefore be alone in his hometown. In his time abroad, he became Lieutenant Colonel John Dawson Smithers, a successful and respected officer; he was no longer Johnny Smithers, the boy his community knew. As Lieutenant Colonel Smithers, though, he could not relate to the lifestyle or people he left behind. Unable to fall back into the boy he was before the war, he realized that "in the end, he belonged nowhere" (*Point of No Return* 252). The war had changed everything about Smithers, and he no longer felt connected to his community.

He was right in thinking that the war had changed him. This was true for most soldiers, Gellhorn revealed. Smithers, disappointed by the prospect of returning to La Harpe, realizes that "nobody's going back the same, after this" (*Point of No Return* 249). Gellhorn discusses how the war changed some soldiers in "The Price of Fire," published by *Collier's* in the December 1943 issue. The article covers the effects of war on several injured veterans at one of the four Royal Air Force burn centers. Most of the men are young, but badly burnt from plane crashes and bombings. They stay for nearly two years, undergoing reconstructive surgeries and rehabilitation. Unlike the soldiers in *Point of No Return*, they all hope to return to their villages,

to their intended career paths, as if the war did not affect them; “in fact,” Gellhorn explains, “they would all like to go back to what was before, before the war and the flames got them” (*The Face of War* 118). The point of no return, as Gellhorn explains in the epilogue of the novel, is the point in a flight where pilots must turn around or they will not have enough fuel to make it back to base. Figuratively, though, the point of no return for those soldiers was the point at which their lives were so altered by war that they could not go back to their pre-war lifestyles. The soldiers in “The Price of Fire,” *Point of No Return*, and those actually fighting in World War II all shared this dynamic experience.

Lieutenant Bill Gaylord, Lieutenant Colonel Smithers’ closest friend and confidant in the battalion, reaches his point of no return when he receives a letter from his wife. While he is in Hackenthal throughout January, she writes asking for a divorce. “The good old home front again,” Smithers remarks to himself (193). Gaylord’s wife only contributes to his lifetime disillusionment; “nothing was ever enough,” the lieutenant thinks, not the war, not his lifestyle, not his marriage (194). The lieutenant cannot relate to his wife, and she does not seem willing to listen.

Gaylord’s thoughts turn dark and his behaviors become erratic. He reaches his point of no return and his life changes quickly. Ultimately he dies in just as dramatic a fashion as he would have liked, shot while leading an ambush. One of the soldiers on patrol with him recalls, “he said to me, ‘That’s the most fun I had in this war’” (*Point of No Return* 208). Lieutenant Bill Gaylord, disillusioned and unable to return to his life back in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, would not go back home. He remained in the memory of the men he worked with, like Sergeant Black, Major Hardcastle, and especially Lieutenant Colonel Smithers. His plan for going home relied on going back with Bill, “they could go into business together, some kind of business, how did Bill

know, maybe everything would be fine after the war” (211). In failing to consider his friends, Lieutenant Gaylord left them even more isolated.

When he joins the second battalion, Jacob Levy believes he will be hit for the third and final time, so he does not plan on going home. In the hospital after his second injury, though, he envisions a new life outside of his hometown of St. Louis. Shortly after he arrives at Lieutenant Colonel Smithers’ battalion, Levy learns that Smithers “can go anywhere and not get hurt,” that he is lucky and brings good luck to his men (*Point of No Return* 30). Suddenly, after Levy sees Smithers walking around the forest “like it was no worse than a street at home,” he has hope that he will make it out of Europe without sustaining that third and final wound (30). After that, with new hope for his future, he too would be unable to return home. “There was everything to go back to. He did not want to go back,” he reflects (14).

While in Luxembourg, Levy receives a letter from home. The letter demonstrates that, while his mother really cares about his safety, she has no idea what conditions for soldiers are like or what progress had been made. “She couldn’t really be so foolish” to think he would be home for the holidays, Levy reflects (*Point of No Return* 99). His mother, who was pretty and youthful, did not understand the war at all, so she baked and sent Levy care packages and wrote him letters, with little else to do. In Chapter Nine, Levy appears even more alienated from his community. On a dreary afternoon, he considers writing a letter home to feel less alone, but “hell, what could a fellow say in a letter?” (105). He could say “I love you,” or “you are everything I have lost,” or “write to me,” or “address it with my name. So that I may know I am someone” (105). He never writes the letter, because he cannot express those emotions to his family back home. In the end though, Levy is the most alienated by his community, but also the most hopeful, because he has found someone who he believes understands his wartime

experience. Gellhorn, by giving a voice to soldiers who felt disconnected by their time abroad from their communities, aimed to make their experiences relatable, as Levy thinks he can.

After the war, Levy plans to move to the Smoky Mountains, just as he pictured while recovering from his second injury; as a child, he vacationed in a cabin near a stream in those mountains, so throughout the novel, he recalls the stream as his soothing escape from the war. He soon expands his plan to include Kathe, a young waitress he falls in love with while on leave in Luxembourg. His plans change, though, when he visits Dachau, a recently liberated concentration camp in Germany. Dachau, as Gellhorn's title indicates, is Levy's point of no return. He is greatly disturbed by the inhumane treatment that prisoners endured at the camp and the lasting impact it left on them. When he arrives at the camp, he meets Heinrich, imprisoned for being a social democrat twelve years earlier, who gives him a tour and explains the various types of torture. For example, they visit the small room where Heinrich stood for several days, packed in with seven other men. Heinrich can no longer remember what he was accused of or what his life was like before Dachau; he only knows about Dachau and wants to share his experiences with other, "to infect them with his pain" (*Point of No Return* 282). Jacob Levy realizes what he fought against while in Europe, and how clueless he had been about the cause of the war. Though Levy's understanding is slightly misdirected, not all prisoners were Jewish, and not all who witnessed the torture agreed with it, his motivations shift from getting home to helping the people imprisoned. He knows there is no good luck for them like the luck he found with Lieutenant Colonel Smithers, but he risks his life, acting as a voice for the prisoners. While leaving the town of Dachau, he is disgusted by the civility and comfort of the town compared to the camp. He is also disturbed by the townspeople and their ignorance, for standing by while people were tortured on the other side of the fence. He was enraged, he sought to punish them,

and “at sixty miles an hour, Jacob Levy drove his jeep onto the laughing Germans” (292). He killed six people, and meant to kill himself too, by hitting a tree along the roadway. Instead, though, he was hospitalized for injuries. He planned, then, to plead guilty in his court marshal, to be punished for doing what he considered too little to help the prisoners.

While in the hospital, he realizes a new fear, that “what happened once could happen again,” that humanity is not safe from the horrors of Dachau (*Point of No Return* 323). He regains his hope, though, because unlike the other soldiers in his battalion, he has found Kathe, who, living in war-torn Luxembourg, has shared Levy’s experiences. Kathe’s potential for compassion gives Levy hope for the future; meanwhile, the other men in his battalion are hopeless. They do not look forward to the end of the war because they will have to return home, alienated and misunderstood. Martha Gellhorn shared soldiers’ stories, though, aiming to ease the transition. By providing anecdotes of startling wartime experiences, Gellhorn helped communities to understand soldiers’ experiences and helped war-weary soldiers assimilate into their lives at home.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

As an eyewitness reporter to the beginning and end of World War II, along with several other conflicts over her sixty-year career, Martha Gellhorn saw many aspects of human nature. Mostly, she was disappointed in what she found. Her experiences resulted in vast disillusionment, shaking her beliefs and restructuring her view of the journalist's profession. Her introduction to *The Face of War* describes this shift. By the end of her career, she no longer believed in her ability to shape public opinion or to spur her readers to act. This is reflected even in her early works like *A Stricken Field*. Instead, she grew to see her role as that of record keeper, representing what she saw as accurately as possible. In an interview about her work during World War II, Gellhorn said, "I reported it exactly as it was," later continuing, "you don't conceal anything, you don't add anything, it's there in front of you" ("The Outsiders" interview, quoted in McLoughlin 65). Through Jacob Levy in *Point of No Return*, she defines a hope to prevent the inhumanity she witnessed from ever happening again. Ultimately, though, she makes a startling realization, that it cannot be prevented. If it happened once, it could happen again, and it does, as Gellhorn explains in *The Face of War*.

Despite what she saw, Gellhorn remained dedicated to educating her public, whoever might listen and learn from her experiences. She provided an outlet for many silent voices. In defense of oppressed people, refugees, prisoners, and ordinary citizens, Gellhorn wrote *A Stricken Field*. Mary Douglas, her main character, brings personal stories of oppression with her from Czechoslovakia. Gellhorn used her own work to expose those stories. She spoke out

against the unequal treatment women received as correspondents abroad in World War II. In personal letters to her editors and to military officials, Martha Gellhorn defined the unfair treatment she and her colleagues received, for no reason other than being women. She also wrote *Love Goes to Press* with Virginia Cowles, a fellow female war reporter, which outlined in a mocking and humorous tone, the misinformed attitudes that shaped their experiences. She fought alienation, bringing the war home to her readers and telling soldiers' stories so that they might be better able to assimilate back into their communities. In *Point of No Return*, she demonstrated that no one really went home the same way they left, if they returned home at all. In sharing their stories, Gellhorn gave them a voice.

In fact, she gave a voice to ordinary people under an oppressive government; she gave a voice to the women correspondents facing inequality as they just tried to do their jobs; she gave a voice to the soldiers alienated by the communities they fought to protect. Her duty as an eyewitness to oppression, inequality, and alienation lends importance to her work. While other correspondents of World War II sent stories back to their media outlets, Gellhorn paid special attention, representing not only the facts, but the impacts of the war on common people rather than only covering acts of war. Her works focus on sharing those stories, giving a voice to people who had no voice of their own. This is her greatest contribution, imparting the true stories of regular people who would not otherwise be seen or heard. In her chosen role of record keeper, with the goal of educating by articulating the truth, and inserting the truth into the record, Martha Gellhorn is very successful.

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