The things they carried: a gendered rereading of photographs of displacement during the Spanish Civil War

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ABSTRACT

During the Spanish Civil War, photojournalism established itself as a modern practice. Photographers situated themselves as autonomous agents, offering passionate, implicated coverage of a war that engaged collective emotions. Their photographic practices were staunchly rooted in the tenets of observation without eschewing political commitment. In this paper, we argue that Spanish Civil War photographers, specifically Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, Kati Horna and David "Chim" Seymour, developed a range of visual practices that were entangled with questions regarding gender and politics. Both in the production of images and in their circulation and reception, photographers were acutely attuned to the politics of visually representing human suffering. Although ideals linked to the male soldier were essential to establishing the figure of the modern photo-reporter, we argue that war photographers produced something far more complex than a simple "masculine" gaze. By considering photographs that captured experiences of wartime displacement, we analyze the figure of the mother as a key visual trope in the Spanish Civil War archive. We argue that photographs of mothers on the move provide a window into understanding how, despite humanitarian claims to political neutrality, humanitarian photographic practice is deeply political in its ability to situate practices of care at the center of visual strategies deployed to narrate and represent the horrors of war.

As one of the first modern conflicts to be systematically photographed, the Spanish Civil War produced an immense body of visual documentation. The circulation of images in the national and international press situated the conflict as one that could be witnessed from afar. These photographs have been subject to multiple rereadings and play a key role in the production of memory discourses regarding the war and its aftermath. Within this extensive corpus of photographic evidence, one can identify a series of visual tropes used not only to narrate the conflict but also to incite a compassionate, empathetic gaze toward civilians whose everyday lives were altered by war and violence. In the context of this visual archive, photographs of civilian populations embarking on a mass exodus to somewhere else have played a primordial role in producing narratives of war while simultaneously contributing to a collective imaginary regarding the conflict and its violent effects. In these images, women, children and the things they carried speak to homelives disrupted and to practices of care that continued despite the destruction provoked by armed conflict.

The Spanish Civil War implicated soldiers but also targeted noncombatants, provoking the displacement of large populations of civilians. The combined effects of aerial bombardment and harsh forms of social and political repression exercised against everyday citizens drove many families to pick up and leave in search of safer havens. From the beginning of the war, the movement of people was frequent in zones controlled by both sides. As a result, the visual corpus of images depicting the war

identified new protagonists: mothers and their children who had been forced to leave their homes. Novel and shocking, these photographs intrigued and captivated the international press. They promised an alternative kind of visual engagement that would move beyond images of battlefield violence, whereby photographs of everyday human suffering could provoke feelings of compassion and empathy in those who viewed them. Photographs of displacement appealed to viewers' self-recognition, their ability to see themselves as ordinary citizens whose lives might also be affected by war and the growing global spread of fascism. Once framed and photographed, bodies on the move – bodies forced to flee – accentuated the value of human life. Directed toward a community of viewers, these images invoked possible reactions and forms of assistance.[1] In this sense, this corpus of images – photographs of homes abandoned and unexpected journeys elsewhere – can be interpreted within a humanitarian framework, in which images of human suffering are used not only to provide evidence of the effects of violence but also to appeal to a shared sense of moral duty. This double aim of the photographs we will study gives the lie to the claim frequently made by humanitarian initiatives that they are politically neutral. The photojournalists discussed in this essay were explicitly committed to the Republican cause and approached photography as a tool for prodding international publics into action. By allowing others to witness the affliction experienced by those in the Republican zone, they hoped to alleviate the suffering caused by war and promote the international anti-fascist network.

Historians Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno argue that although the category of "humanitarian photography" is relatively new, it is in fact a "historical problematic" that can be traced through the long visual history of humanitarianism itself (2015, 3). Defined as "the mobilization of photography in the service of humanitarian initiatives across state boundaries", this particular category of image and practice points

to what images *can do*, their ability to galvanize emotions in order to address human suffering (Ferhenbach and Rodogno 2015, 1). Humanitarian photography – its social life as a medium capable of capturing, making known, representing and even mitigating the "pain of others" – has been the subject of much analysis and critique.[2] The practices of producing and circulating images that frame trauma and affliction rightly deserve such reflection. They raise important questions about power dynamics implicit between photographer and subject, as well as those that connect a person who views an image and the photographic excess that expands beyond the image frame. As scholar Nicholas Mirzoeff has argued, we must separate the right to look – to contemplate human experience – and "the authority of visuality" (2011, 2). For Mirzoeff, visuality is an act of imagination, in which information, images and ideas are assembled to create a visual account of history. In this reading, the predominance of sight as the sense that lends itself most readily to depicting, describing and defining events is inseparable from a longer history of surveillance and control that often blurs how experience is narrated and who is invested with the authority to do so. Proposing a counter-history of visuality, Mirzoeff seeks to claim autonomy from this authority. It is "the right to look", he argues, "the right to the real", that is "the key to democratic politics" (2011, 2).

In the analysis that follows, we do not seek to ignore how Spanish Civil War photography – specifically, those images depicting the unraveling of domestic space and the mass exodus of civilian populations – is implicated in such power dynamics. Rather, our main interest is to explore how the concept of humanitarian photography can provide a useful interpretative framework for understanding how this vast body of images can elucidate how photographs of human suffering were used to make the conflict "comprehensible, urgent, and actionable" (Fehrenhach and Rodogno 2015, 4) to international audiences. This humanitarian frame is fitting, we argue, given the

intentionality that mobilized graphic reporters to document the war and its everyday effects on civilians. As reflected in both photographers' and scholars' writings on the Spanish Civil War archive, photographing the conflict was entangled with a broader range of practices that aimed to make the fight against fascism visible on an international scale.[3] Specifically, we seek to understand how images of exodus and displacement were mobilized to produce very specific narratives and moral framings around the human suffering caused by war. In particular, we will analyze how the female body and the materiality of the domestic sphere, once captured in image form, were activated to "create communities of emotion and action" capable of responding to the war and the spread of fascism beyond Spain (Fehrenbach and Rodogno 2015, 4). How, we ask, might considering this corpus of images within a humanitarian frame permit a rereading of them that takes into account the centrality of gender in the production and circulation of photographs of suffering? In posing this question, we seek to emphasize how analyses of Spanish Civil War photography have often privileged masculinist gendered readings of this visual corpus. By attending to how women, specifically mothers, are represented in photographs of displacement, we provide an alternative reading not only of the images that make up the Spanish Civil War archive, but also of the practices that produced them. In doing so, we offer a consciously gendered rereading of war photography that is attentive to the representation of women and that challenges the idea that the photographic practices that produced them were linked only to a masculine gaze.

Medieval historian Barbara Rosenwein coined the term "emotional communities" to describe the "systems of feeling" undergirding social groups and the individuals that sustain them (2010, 3; see also Rosenwein 2002). Emphasizing the "affective bonds" and "emotional expression" through which collectivities make sense

of social life, she uses the term to think through how groups express emotions, how they evaluate the feelings of others and how such expressions are expected, encouraged or deplored. In this sense, the concept identifies how groups are "animated by common or similar interests, values, and emotional styles and valuations" (Rosenwein as quoted in Plamper 2010, 253). Humanitarian photography – as a category and an interpretative framework – emphasizes a push toward action, a mobilization of sentiment and morality, a desire to incite a particular reaction. It is here, we posit, that the term *humanitarian photography* is theoretically useful when unpacking how images provoke an emotional reaction while simultaneously considering how they constitute collectivities. This, in turn, allows us to consider how ideas about gender shaped a particular kind of image production, circulation and consumption, in which publics – real and imagined – could identify with a female body that was both vulnerable and strong, both suffering and defiant.

In our analysis, we are sensitive to how war photography was both highly gendered and emotionally flexible. Photographers managed the emotional malleability demanded by their trade through their movement between *proximity to* and *distance from* a suffering population. In this sense, we argue, the masculine gaze so often associated with the figure of the photo-reporter is a simplification of a more complex picture. We will reread particular series of photographs that document and narrate key moments of retreat, in which communities experienced evacuation and dislocation, in order to consider how their depiction of women's bodies and of the children and things they carried serves to mobilize economies of care.

Photographer-soldiers, *milicianas* and combative mothers: rereading gender and emotion in Spanish Civil War photography

The Spanish conflict coincided with the emergence and uptake of new imaging technologies that radically changed how photographers documented war. Lighter, more transportable cameras, like the Leica or Contax, together with the introduction of 35mm film, altered the war photographer's gaze. Above all, these technological shifts allowed photo-reporters to experiment with a new kind of physical proximity to their subjects and the action that surrounded them. The time needed to release the camera's shutter became faster, more analogous to shooting a gun. This flexibility made it possible for documentarians to "follow" and document wartime action up close and quickly, thus eliminating a clear boundary between image-maker and combatant. In this context, proximity gave way to new imaginaries regarding the war photographer, a figure whose social construction would emulate that of the soldier on the frontline. Given this context, photographing the conflict quickly became enmeshed with ideas about masculinity, fearlessness and youth. Both photographer and combatant shared similar values such as heroism, commitment and courage in the face of danger, which were typified and expressed by a male body that was skilled, strong and resistant.

Of course, as we know, female photographers also documented the war as well as the suffering behind the frontlines. The imaginaries surrounding the coverage of combat by both male and female photojournalists were tightly entangled with the figure of the fighting soldier and the characteristics associated with virility and strength.[4] In this sense, the new repertoire of photographic practices that emerged during the conflict was linked to the articulation of a masculine gaze that was physically close and emotionally distant. Susan Sontag, for example, described Spanish Civil War photographers as "star witnesses … renowned for their bravery and zeal in procuring

important, disturbing photographs" (2003, 27). In this construction, the ability to accurately and adequately document the war was dependent on not only physical proximity to one's subjects, but also emotional distance from them. Capa's famous motto, "If the photographs aren't good enough, you're are not close enough" (Schaber 2006, 24), first uttered to his partner, Gerda Taro, on the Spanish front, celebrates the photographer's ability to stay close, to witness, to overcome fear – that is, emotion – in order to get closer, despite the risks it might pose.

We argue, however, that there are important fissures in the social imaginaries surrounding the figure of the war photographer made soldier. These ruptures with the norm are often perceptible in photographers' own reflections regarding their subjective positionings toward the "pain of others" and, thus, toward the task of photographing human suffering. For example, in Sebastiaan Faber's analysis of Capa's work, the author references the photographer's musings regarding an image he took of a young child in Barcelona during the winter of 1939 (Figure 1). In the photograph, a young girl, slumps over a mountain of worn bundles in Barcelona. Tapping into the emotions that consumed him when taking the picture, Capa describes the scene:

De estar muy cansada, ya que no juega con otros niños, no se mueve. Pero sus ojos me observan; unos grandes ojos negros que siguen cada uno de mis movimientos. Es muy difícil trabajar bajo una mirada así. Es muy difícil trabajar en un sitio como este y no poder hacer nada excepto grabar el sufrimiento de los demás. (As quoted in Faber 2010, 405)

Fig. 1 here

In many ways, this textual fragment reveals Capa's discomfort with his photographic practice. He does not explicitly reflect on the ethical implications of capturing the pain felt by his subject. However, he does describe how his emotional impulses, together with the expectations of his trade, make it difficult for him to take action beyond activating his camera's shutter. These ruminations reveal a complex subject position that seeks to articulate a moral framing that will hold space for the human suffering caused by war. Fulfilling the role of the photographer-soldier, he seeks proximity. It is closeness, however, that situates him as the object of the young girl's gaze. As his subject looks back at him, Capa decides that shooting the camera is the only reasonable action available to him. While he affirms the necessity of photographing human affliction, he does so while also questioning if this is enough. His meditations reveal the, at times, incongruent subject positions that war photographers assumed: a firm belief in photography's ability to mobilize viewers did not extricate them from questioning the utility of visual documentation over direct action. In order to access the empathetic gaze of a broader public, Capa posits, the suffering provoked by war must be seen. This, in turn, reveals the other side of the coin. For Capa, photography's ability to act as a motor of action resides in its ability to shock and, thus, incite political mobilization (Faber 2010, 405).

Although ideals linked to the male soldier were essential to establishing the figure of the modern photo-reporter, we argue that during the Spanish Civil War photographers produced something far more complex than a distanced masculine gaze. Attending to how photographers articulated moral framings that could explain and promote their practice reveals how a culture of emotion informed their work. Before turning to our analysis of photographs of displacement, it is important to pause on two female figures that are central to visual representations of the conflict in Spain: the

miliciana and the combative mother. If the battlefront was the site where the masculinity of the heroic soldier and the (conventionally conceived) war photographer was performed, the rearguard inhabited by women and children was where "non-men" would provide support from home (Vincent 2001, 346). This distinction between "front" and "home", between "man who fights" and "woman who provides care" situated the domestic sphere as one that existed in support of – at the service of – the masculine project of military action and political struggle. This discursive opposition between battlefront and domestic sphere is a key point of inflection that needs to be questioned when unpacking how the female body was depicted in photo-reportage of the war. Pausing on the visual tropes that reify this division provides clues as to how photographs of displacement can serve as a starting point for a powerful rereading of war photography that considers how emotions and political ideals were entangled in attempts to mobilize publics to action.

In many analyses of gender politics during the Spanish Civil War, authors describe how the figure of the miliciana made revolutionary values visible while putting forth a radically new model of femininity that questioned traditional gender roles (Martín Moruno 2010). At the beginning of the conflict, women across Spain publicly assumed a defiantly anti-fascist stance by enlisting in militia groups that were sent to different war fronts. However, as Mary Nash argues, only some women were able to transgress gender roles in doing so. Many milicianas were not respected by their male counterparts and more often than not were expected to carry out tasks related to "care" such as cleaning, cooking, nursing (1998, 99–102). Inhabiting the masculine space of battle did not mean excising oneself completely from the labor associated with gendered domestic space. Even so, the image of the miliciana marked a radical break from traditional female iconography by presenting women as active, aggressive and able to

fight, characteristics that until then had been associated solely with masculinity. Photography played a key role in the construction of this new female identity. Photogenic and novel, militiawomen were extensively photographed and quickly became a necessary trope in photojournalists' coverage of the war. This was especially so for photographers who supported the Popular Front. Taro's photographs of militiawomen taken in the summer of 1936 are a salient example (Figure 2).

Fig. 2 here

The miliciana phenomenon, however, was short lived. Only months after the war's outbreak, political parties and unions agreed to withdraw militia troops, often arguing that the presence of women at the front disrupted traditional gender differentiations and spread venereal diseases. With the reorganization of the army in October 1936, a coercive policy forced women to immediately abandon their posts. This shift coincided with similar changes in wartime propaganda, which called on women to carry out their domestic work – the labor of care – in the rearguard. In this context, a new image of femininity emerged, that of "combative mothers". Women would fight, not on the battlefront, but rather from the home. The image of the mother who would resist by keeping the domestic sphere in order quickly became a dominant visual trope in wartime propaganda, as well as in other fields of cultural and artistic production, including painting, sculpture and photomontage.

Fig. 3 here

The existence of these two dominant imaginaries (Figures 2 and 3), the woman who fights and the mother who resists, gave rise to some of the most fundamental images, indeed icons, of the Spanish Civil War.[5] In literature on the subject, they are often interpreted as two sides of the same coin (Nash 1999). The miliciana is understood as a potent symbol, and in fact a historical reality, linked to ideas of emancipation, modernity and political engagement. She is a figure that accentuates the radicalness of the Republican project that sought to destabilize the patriarchal order of things. In contrast, the combative mother is interpreted as a product of retreat, a move back to conservative values, indeed to a moral economy that situates women and their domestic role in an apolitical private sphere. In this construction, it is the figure of the mother, not that of the miliciana, that is linked to a humanitarian impulse that seeks to make visible the violence of war and the havoc it provokes (García López 2016). Images of suffering mothers and their children – often described as "docile", "powerless" "victims" – were circulated in illustrated magazines in order to evoke an emotional, supposedly de-ideologized response to the horrors of war (Brothers 1997, 143). In the following section we will dispute the notion that such images of suffering mothers are depoliticized.

Mothers on the move: vulnerability, strength and the politics of care

We now turn to an alternative reading of Spanish war photography, one that calls into question the assumption that motherhood is not political and that images of women engaged in acts of care are a retreat to a patriarchal gaze that confines women to an apolitical private sphere. This, we believe, has implications for the larger category of humanitarian photography in that it helps underscore how attempts to mobilize feelings, reactions and sentimental ideals can be deeply political. Attending to how

photographers framed and captured the practices associated with mothering, we argue that the image of the displaced mother was, and continues to be, a politically potent one that embodies the strength and vulnerability implicit in relations of care. The female figures that appear in these photographs of displacement have little to do – at least iconographically – with images of the Madonna. Rather, they capture mothers on the move, mothers who walk and who, above all, carry the things and people who are most precious to them. In this sense, these images evidence notions of strength and resistance. By providing an alternative analysis of a particular corpus of images, we consider how photographs of displacement make visible the mechanics of "care", inviting us to consider the importance of "putting life at the center" when imagining alternative political futures.[6]

As we have mentioned, the Spanish Civil War provoked and witnessed some of the largest population displacements of the first half of the twentieth century. The mass movement of people marked the starting point for what would become exile for many, drawing attention to atrocities such as air raids that razed rural and urban communities, with the civilian population as a target of aggression. Throughout the war, people were forced to move, to pick up and leave, regardless of their side in the conflict. That being said, the magnitude of repression experienced in zones controlled by the Nationalist rebels was unparalleled. At the end of July 1936, Franco airlifted his Army of Africa into Spain, initiating a campaign across the southern part of the peninsula that would carve a military path to Madrid. In the process, large swaths of Andalusia and Extremadura were transformed into killing fields. Employing tactics previously deployed in colonial wars, the Nationalist troops exercised extreme forms of violence in the name of ideological cleansing (Graham 2018, 55). Their unstoppable advance covered five hundred kilometers in just one month, and by September 1936 they

reached Talavera de la Reina in Toledo province. In response, a vast wave of refugees fled north, creating the first large-scale influx of internal refugees to pass through Madrid in the autumn of 1936. As the conflict continued, the displacements became more extensive, with the refugees continuing on to Barcelona and Valencia. By the end of 1936, there were almost 350,000 refugees in Catalonia, as well as thousands of unofficially displaced persons (Graham 2018, 79, 94).

At the start of 1937, the Nationalists attacked Málaga, at the time still under Republican control, with the support of Italian troops supplied by Mussolini. Panic spread through the city, provoking a mass exodus along the coastal road to Republican-held Almería. Between 7 and 8 February, the road was thick with refugees making their way on foot to what they believed was a safe haven. They were strafed by bombers and shelled by warships stationed along the coast in a brutal massacre of thousands of civilians. Capa and Taro, touring the Granada coast and the Alpujarra at the time, covered the famous evacuation known as *la desbandá*. Their deep concern with showing the plight of refugees up close is evidenced in their visual reportage of the evacuation route as well as the shelters that took in those who survived.[7] The documentation of the refugee trail by both Capa and Taro shows a particular concern with children and with childhoods marked by the violence of war. Their images repeatedly include injured and bandaged children and the adults who cared for them. Many of the images are carefully composed portraits taken against the anonymous backdrop of refugee shelters, appearing decontextualized from the broader circumstances of the war. The power of these images resides in their ability to portray the physical and emotional effects of violence. Young faces, empty gazes and the gestural language of exhausted bodies make explicit the extreme consequences of displacement. Although many of the photographs present viewers with wounded and

bandaged bodies, the majority belonging to children, they are not crude or condescending but convey the dignity of survival.

Many of these images were published in the French magazine *Regards*, a publication known for its communist leanings, on 18 March 1937. They also appeared in the chapter entitled "On the Road from Malaga" of the photo book *Death in the Making* (1938).[8] We can assume that the magazine editors and art directors of *Regards* sequenced the visual essay published there while Capa is likely to have supervised the image selection and design for the photo book. However, it is curious and indeed important that both selections begin with images of women on the move. The cover of *Regards* showcases a low-angle portrait of a woman on horseback (see Figure 4). The animal's rump is weighed down by bundles of belongings, while its head occupies a prominent position at the center of the frame. The horse's presence is exaggerated and fills a large part of the frame. Together, the woman sitting upright in the saddle and the animal staunchly supporting the weight of the bundles allude to movement, defiance and a gaze that points to somewhere else. The saddled horse that provides the mode of transportation doubles as a visual reference to the flight from Málaga.[9] Curiously, the photograph is serene, without visual references to violence and offset by the title printed on a thick black band. It reads, "Malaga: exodus in terror". The photograph is monumental, with the stout profile of the female subject evoking the iconography of battle: the combatant whose gaze is trained on the war front. This is not an image of vulnerability and victimhood, but of strength and defiance.

Fig. 4 here

A similar aesthetic and compositional approach is used in Capa's photo book *Death in the Making*, particularly in the chapter "On the Road to Malaga" where the photographer narrates the desbandá. The first page of the visual essay features a single photograph of a defiant woman carrying her child as she walks along the road to Almería (see Figure 5). Printed in a full bleed that occupies the lower margins of the left page, the image captures a mother's facial gestures that, combined with her body language, highlight the focused concentration of an act of resistance. The frontal shot suggests that the mother has been carrying her child, who gently rests its head on her shoulder, for a long time. Perhaps asleep, or simply drained of physical energy, the child nestles its face in the crook of the mother's neck while its naked buttocks and legs rest on her arms. The mother's tired face, her concentrated expression, accentuate the long duration and difficult conditions of the two-hundred-kilometer journey on foot to Almería. The text accompanying the image reads, "They flee before the rebel troops. And they leave everything behind, everything except what is most precious". Written by Capa, the text calls attention not only to what displaced persons carried, but also to what was most treasured by those who fled. Here the photograph of a mother on the move emphasizes that the most precious thing is, indeed, life. This sensitivity to lives sustained and the attention paid to the value of human life give structure to the entire photo essay, which documents the wartime displacement of men and women of all ages, together with children.

Fig. 5 here

In late 1937 and early 1938, several photographers, including Kati Horna, Robert Capa and Augustí Centelles, covered the evacuation of Teruel. The presence of

multiple cameras was part of a propaganda strategy to inform civilians of the mandatory clearance of the city, then under Republican control, out of a humanitarian and military concern to vacate the area before it was demolished by Nationalist heavy artillery and bombing. The hope was that an abandoned urban area would be more easily defended, but the battle, fought in the thick of winter, turned brutal as soldiers died from the extreme temperatures. By the end of February, the city was taken by Nationalist troops in a major turning point in the war (Graham 2018, 131). In the photographs of the Teruel evacuation, civilian subjects – particularly children, women and the elderly population – play a key narrative role. They make visible the disrupted everyday lives that they are forced to take to the road. This focus on the fleeing subject draws viewers' attention to the fact that the civilian population had become an increasingly common target of mechanized violence. According to Rafael Tranche and Beatriz de las Heras, the systematic appearance of women, children and the elderly in photo reportage of the time was due, in part, to its novelty as graphic news. Photographs of civilian subjects were also more emotionally arresting, more visually compelling than portraits of soldiers at the battlefront, which had become an exhausted visual trope in representations of the war (Tranche and De las Heras 2016, 4). In this respect, the production of these images, like all photo reportage, was entangled with emergent ideas about effective wartime propaganda.

Fig. 6 here

Kati Horna published photographs of the Teruel evacuation in the anarchist magazine *Umbral*, for which she was also the graphic editor (see Figure 6). We will focus our analysis on the two images that open the visual narrative. Both are shot head-

on, one from close up and the other from a distance. In these two images, Horna establishes compositional, volumetric visual interplay between the individual or collective human figures and the road, emphasizing the long trek set in motion by forced expulsion. Horna trains her gaze on the bodies of women who carve out a new route of displacement. Their bodies are heavy with the things they carry. An old woman carries an oversized wicker basket; groups of women carry their children and suitcases. The photographs not only document the event but visually convey the experience of unsettlement and dislocation, captured by the road and in the emotional and material burdens they bear. The road is a fundamental aesthetic and narrative element. The photographs do not look back toward the city that has been abandoned but ahead at an indefinite horizon situated at the edge of the photographic field of vision. The road is a liminal intermediary space but also a contradictory one – open and exposed, but the only path to salvation (Pelizzon 2014, 201). The road also features in Capa's photographs of the Teruel evacuation, which were published in multiple foreign magazines (see Figure 7). Although Capa's compositions do not carry the same poetic weight as Horna's, they too situate *el camino* as an important visual trope in depicting the experience of displacement.

Fig. 7 here

In the photographs Capa took in the winter of 1938–1939 during the evacuation of Tarragona, viewers are asked, once again, to rest their gaze on distressed faces and determined bodies trudging under the weight of babies and baggage as they advance along the road. The affective expressions and gestural language that Capa captures emphasize that these are bodies marked by violence and heavy with pain. At times, they

appear to walk mindlessly, almost robotically, without knowing where they are going. But these bodies are also strong; they are able to advance, to forge on. They carry objects, bundles, babies and small children. They assist the elderly. Capa's attention to the materiality of displacement in this series locates and narrates the vulnerability but also the human interdependence of those who flee, emphasizing the relationships of care that sustain life and the women who maintain them.

By January 1939, as the Nationalist siege of Catalonia heightened, thousands of soldiers and civilians fled north from Tarragona and Barcelona bound for the French border. Robert Capa and fellow photographer David "Chim" Seymour documented the mass exodus. The resulting series establishes a cohesive narrative marked by variants:

… huido con todos los enseres, montañas heladas, llegada a los pasos fronterizos (Le Perthus, sobre todo), desarme de la tropa, abandono del Ganado y de los bienes, larga espera e internamiento en los campos de concentración a orillas del Mediterráneo, en particular el primero, el de Argelès, todavía desierto y sin alambradas. (Sánchez-Biosca 2012, 26)[10]

In all of these photographs, Chim and Capa draw viewers' attention to the materiality of exile, the things that people carry on the journey elsewhere: packages, bundles, baskets, suitcases, cars pulled by horses and oxen, sacks, mattresses and other domestic objects. These symbolic objects are essential to understanding and codifying a repertoire of emotions, both social and collective, related to the abandonment of home in an attempt to escape danger. In documenting the materiality of homes undone, these images pose the question: What do you take from your home when you are forced to leave it? In one of Capa's photographs published in the German newspaper *Zürcher Illustrierte* (see

Figure 8), a group of women wait at the roadside with their children. Beside them is a baby's crib – a poignant example of the way in which these photographs of refugee trails capture objects essential to child-rearing practices and things carried in the attempt to maintain human relationships and the practices of care.

Fig. 8 here

In her analysis of Francis Bartolozzi's *Dibujos de la guerra*, Maite Garbayo (2018) describes the artist's novel proposal regarding human relationships. Bartolozzi's drawings narrate the Civil War. However, unlike the photographs previously described, they were not circulated at the time. They remained hidden under the artist's mattress until the end of the dictatorship. Women appear frequently in these drawings. In each one, the female body carries, transports and sustains different things: babies, bags, sacks, household goods, even a photograph. In her analysis, Garbayo argues that the artist pinpoints a particular mode of relating to others, closely linked to Bracha Ettinger's concept of *carriance* (2006), which emphasizes the shared experiences of carrying, sustaining, caring for (Garbayo 2018, 70). For Garbayo, Ettinger's concept of *carriance* "implica llevar a algo/alguien, contenerlo haciéndose responsable de ello, cuidándolo activamente" (2018, 70). Garbayo's discussion develops a new perspective for cultural analysis of the Civil War by allowing us to trace a "red thread" linking a series of cultural phenomena activated during the conflict, thereby providing room to "pensar de otras lógicas en las cualidades afectivas, empáticas y políticas de las imágenes" (Garbayo 2018, 70). We would like to extend Garbayo's red thread to connect Bartolozzi's drawings with the photographs of displacement we have analyzed, as well as with other fundamental artworks like *La Montserrat* by sculptor Julio González (1937). In this piece, the Catalan peasant mother is depicted carrying a sickle in one hand and a baby in the other. This trope – a reference to political militancy that

traverses wartime iconography of the mother – is also found in Horacio Ferrer's 1937 painting *Madrid 1937 (Aviones negros)* depicted above (see Figure 3). In this famous example, women flee the devastation provoked by an air raid, carrying their children. In the center of the painting, a mother raises her clenched fist as she looks angrily up at the fascist planes that just moments before destroyed her home. The women's naked breast suggests that the falling bombs interrupted her as she breastfed her young child. Here, we argue, motherhood and practices of care are depicted as political.

In a similar vein, Kati Horna's two photographic series documenting a maternity center in Vélez Rubio, in the province of Almería, for women evacuated from a besieged Madrid and a maternity ward in Barcelona privilege an empathetic, body-centered gaze that erases distinctions between mother, motherhood and politics. Taken in 1937 and subsequently printed in the anarchist publications *Umbral* and *Mujeres Libres*, the photographs in these two series point to Horna's interest in photographing breastfeeding mothers. As Miriam Basilio has argued, this interest in the mother nourishing her child can be understood as politically aligned with feminist anarchist ideals (2016, 69). It is important to note that the article accompanying Horna's visual essay in *Umbral* is by the well-known anarchist poet Lucia Sánchez de Saornil, who was staunchly committed to the political project of understanding mothers as caretakers but more importantly as individuals. Horna's photographs reflect a similar vision of "conscious motherhood" made explicit through her treatment of women engaged in acts of tenderness and intimacy (Pelizzon 2014, 150). They can also be interpreted as embodiments of *carriance* that seek to sustain life through practices of care. Here, the figure of the mother is marked by vulnerability, but that vulnerability is also a source of strength. In this sense, Horna's photographic depiction of motherhood is not a retreat into a patriarchal system that assigns the mother to an apolitical private sphere. Rather,

the forms of care implicit in looking after others, in raising children and in sustaining life are depicted as part of a deeply political, radical project that Horna would mobilize for humanitarian ends. Horna's portrait of a breastfeeding mother (see Figure 9) provides a glimpse of her unique photographic practice, which unlike that of Capa, Taro and Chim did not focus on the movement of battle but rather on the intimacy of everyday life. These intimate photographs, too, emphasize the theme of carriance discussed by both Ettinger and Garbayo.

Insert Fig. 9

Focusing on the things and people that women carried, the photographs of mothers that we have analyzed narrate the experience of displacement by capturing how refugees attempted to sustain life in the march to somewhere else. By drawing viewers' attention to the value of human life, the humanitarian gaze activated in these photographs of displacement taps into worlds of emotion in an attempt to mobilize a reaction, to incite a response. If up-closeness came to characterize the war photographer's trade, it was not only because it enhanced veracity, but also because it allowed for a particular kind of photographic practice that captured the intimacy of social life. In this sense, the humanitarian photographic practices deployed by Spanish Civil War photographers were mechanisms that mobilized, shared and made visible a certain ideological and moral framework. Documenting displacement – photographing female bodies, the things they carried, the lives they sustained – was a strategy that sought to activate empathy, aid and resistance for political ends.

Homes turned inside out: some conclusions on photography, the humanitarian frame and the history of emotions

The political weight of the images that we analyze in this essay was made more explicit at the end of the war, when photographic collections, like the civilian population, were subjected to forced displacement and exile.[11] Many of those images belong to photographic collections that exist because networks of individuals smuggled them across national borders. Carefully packing prints and negatives in suitcases and bags, people transported images in an attempt to preserve them. These acts of care were often performed with the assistance of a larger community of individuals invested in their survival. As Republican territory fell to the Nationalists, the survival of this visual archive was at risk on the battlefront. As a body of work that could communicate, testify to and denounce the human suffering caused by war, photographs of the Spanish conflict possessed an undeniable political and narrative value. With time, these images would become a key source of visual memory and testimony regarding the fight against fascism and, more specifically, the experience of displacement. If they are able today to provide a visual record, it is because in many cases photographers too were forced to pick up and leave, carrying their images to safety. Traveling along the same routes traversed by those who fled, crossing the same points of passage that they documented, photographs also experienced expulsion and exile.

We should remember that it was not only the work of war photographers that was smuggled out of the country, but that photographs were also among the things that refugees carried. In his analysis of family photographs and their role in the contemporary historical memory movement in Spain, anthropologist Jorge Moreno Andrés describes how photographs became an important means of communication between those who fled and those who stayed behind, both during and after the war

(2018; see also Moreno Andrés and Douglas 2016). Treated as objects of exchange, family snapshots and their accompanying inscriptions traveled across national boundaries in order to remember what had been, while also narrating lives remade. This resonates with other analyses of Spanish vernacular photography that describe how these personal objects were invested with powerful and precious emotional value (Alonso Riveiro 2019; Moreno Andrés 2018; Rosón 2016). While it is difficult to determine exactly what personal objects were carried by those who fled, the transportability and emotional significance of family photographs make it more than probable that they were among the things safeguarded on the long journey out of Spain.[12] Other things were left behind.

In late 1936, Capa and Taro produced a series of photographs that "documented the material and human devastation wrought by Nationalist bombing campaigns that targeted the civilian population" in major Spanish cities, including Madrid (Faber 2018, 12; see also Lahuerta 2010, 172). Unlike the photographs of displacement, this series focuses on homes turned inside out, domestic space interrupted: bombed buildings, empty apartments destroyed by fire, intimate objects – including family portraits – abandoned and left behind (see Figures 10 and 11). As Faber notes, images of damaged homes became a visual trope in photomontages that superimposed human suffering on a backdrop of the material devastation of war (Faber 2018, 19–20). This new genre of photographic production combined "the production methods and aesthetic principles of modernist manipulation and experimentation with documentary photojournalism and an explicit political commitment" (Faber 2018, 28). In this context, image makers and editors viewed cutting, pasting and juxtaposing material devastation and human resilience as a way to move photographic representation closer to truthful modes of narrating war and its effects. Photographic documents could be layered, cropped and

manipulated to disseminate awareness of how the spread of fascism produced human suffering on a massive scale. Such manipulation should not be seen as lessening the images' truth-value.

Figs. 10, 11 and 12 here

The photographs taken by Capa and Taro on the streets of Madrid focus specifically on the material remnants left by wartime violence, a kind of mechanized brutality that was new in its targeting of civilians and their domestic lives. Homes turned inside out were evidence of the collateral damage posed by war, a powerful harbinger of what might become the norm if the fascist project were to grow and spread. At the same time, these images – taken early in the conflict – are a portrait of a city in resistance. They too, like the photographs of mothers on the move, narrate a story of resilience in which the sudden disappearance of what once had separated private and public spheres revealed the materiality of the home, that intimate space that sustains the production and reproduction of life. Here, the taken-for-granted objects – the things left behind – implicit in the push and pull of everyday experience become a metaphor for a particular strain of resistance in which vulnerability and exposure are, once again, posited as a source of strength. Like the photographs of women carrying their children and belongings to safer havens, these intimate images suggest that the gaze of the war photographer could be attuned to an iteration of proximity that was not an expression of masculine heroics on the battlefield but in which *getting closer* was a mode of documenting the collateral effects of war experienced from the domestic space of the home or, when home was interrupted, from a road to elsewhere. In this sense, the war photographer's "masculine gaze" is a construction, an imaginary, that erases or makes

invisible the emotional labor implicit in the photographic practices that produced a vast archive of wartime reportage.

Our rereading of the visual archive produced by photographers who documented the Spanish conflict is intended to contribute to a history of counter-visuality in which "the right to look" (Mirzoeff 2011), provides room for considering how photographic practice and modes of representation have carved out new ways of imagining different social worlds where everyday life would be at the center of an alternative political project. By considering this body of images from a perspective attuned to the representation of mothers and material objects, we explore other lines of analysis – other possibilities regarding the production of knowledge – in which the emotional potential of photographic documentation, the empathetic gaze that produced it and its close attention to the female body point to a political commitment that situates the *(re)production of* and *care for* human life as a necessary component in the struggle against fascism.

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Figure captions

Figure 1. Robert Capa, *Barcelona, enero de 1939.* Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, International Center of Photography / Magnum, 1939.

Figure 2. Gerda Taro, *Republican Militia Women Training on the Beach, outside Barcelona*, International Center of Photography / Magnum, 1936.

Figure 3. Horacio Ferrer, *Madrid 1937 (Aviones negros)*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and heirs of Horacio Ferrer, 1937.

Figure 4. Photograph by Gerda Taro and Robert Capa. Cover of *Regards*, 18 March 1937, Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Figure 5. Photographs by Gerda Taro and Robert Capa, published in *Death in the Making* (New York: Civici-Friede), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, International Center of Photography / ICP.

Figure 6. Photographs by Kati Horna, published in *Umbral*, 8 January 1938, Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Figure 7. Photographs by Robert Capa, published in *Regards*, 13 January 1938, International Center of Photography / Magnum.

Figure 8. Photographs by Robert Capa, published in *Zürcher Illustrierte*, 3 February 1939, International Center of Photography / Magnum.

Figure 9. Photograph by Kati Horna. Cover of *Umbral*, 2 October 1937, Biblioteca Nacional de España.

Figures 10, 11 and 12. Gerda Taro and Robert Capa, *Madrid, Winter 1936–1937*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 1936–1937, International Center of Photography / Magnum.

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Notes

[1] For an analysis of how Spanish Civil War photography circulated in domestic and international illustrated magazines during the conflict, see Mendelson (2008), Young (2010) and Faber (2018). As Jordana Mendelson posits, illustrated magazines were integral to the creation of a "networked world" and a "growing sense of public culture" (2008, 14). In this sense, the wide circulation of images via print culture accentuated the image's role not as mere illustration but as part and parcel of a growing public debate regarding the war in Spain. This, in turn, accentuates the fact that the collective reception of these photographs and the emotional responses that they may have provoked provide a window onto why Spanish Civil War photography – and, more specifically, photographs of displacement – can be read as a visual corpus that is both humanitarian and political, rather than neutral and removed.

[2] Our use of the concept "the pain of others" draws from Sontag's seminal text (2003). However, it is also important to reference the work of multiple scholars who address how photographs represent the suffering of others and the ethical implications of the possibilities that photography affords for different communities of spectators. See particularly Baer (2002), Batchen et al. (2012), Boltanski (1999), Brink (2000), Crane (2008), Linfield (2010) and Zelizer (2008).

[3] This entanglement between photographic practice and political engagement is most clearly evident in the catalog analyzing the reappearance of "The Mexican Suitcase" (Young 2010), in analyses of Spanish Civil War reporting (*Corresponsales en la guerra de España* 2006; Preston 2007*)* and in other writings

regarding Spanish Civil War photography (Fusi 1999). It is also discussed at length in Faber's analysis of Spanish Civil War photography (2018). It is worth noting photographers' reflections regarding their anti-fascist stance, which can be seen in memoirs written by Capa (1947) and Centelles (2009), as well as in Manuel García's study of exile culture where he draws on testimonies given by Horna and Los Hermanos Mayo (2014).

[4] In this article we discuss photographs by two key female image-makers who documented the Spanish Civil War: Gerda Taro and Kati Horna. As we know (Young 2010), Taro is renowned for her close coverage of the frontlines, and much of her work was attributed to her partner Robert Capa rather than being published under her name. Praised for her audaciousness, she was killed on the Brunete front, thus enhancing her image as a daring figure. Horna, in contrast, did not photograph military action. Using a medium format Rolleiflex camara, she developed a photographic practice that was unique for war reportage, in that it often privileged portraits taken from a waist-level camera angle, rather than showcasing battle scenes (Romero 2017). In the case of Taro, the masculinity ascribed to war photography allowed her to be seen as crossing gender lines. As we will see, in the case of Horna this masculinist view of the war photographer does not apply. In what follows, we will argue that, in fact, it does not apply to many images taken by the other photographers we discuss, who have been more conventionally seen as photographer-combatants.

[5] We recognize that the miliciana and the combative mother were not the only female figures to be mobilized in visually representing the Spanish conflict. For example, images of women working in munitions factories in the rearguard and of female political figures, such as La Pasionaria, played an integral role in creating and sustaining visual imaginaries regarding the Republican project. In this article, we argue that the figures of the miliciana and the combative mother were central to photographic representations of the battles fought on the frontlines and their effects on the civilian population.

[6] The phrase "putting life at the center" or "la vida en el centro" is a common adage repeated in contemporary social movements, particularly ecological ones, in Spain that draw on feminist theory and practice (see Pérez-Orozco 2014).

[7] This collection of images can be found online as part of the International Center of Photography's digital archive: https://www.icp.org/search-results/malaga/all/all/relevant/2. Accessed 11 December 2019.

[8] This photo book – part war diary, part photographic report – was published in 1938, in the middle of the war, as the catalog of the exhibit of the same name that Capa organized in New York to honor the memory of Taro, killed at the Battle of Brunete in July 1937. Capa supervised the overall design and authored the texts, which together with the images create a narrative drawing on his firsthand experiences, as well as those of his partner, Taro. The images included in the exhibit and catalog were taken by both. For more information, see https://museo.unav.edu/coleccion/la-coleccion/death-in-the-making. Accessed 11 December 2019.

[9] It is important to note that the horse appears repeatedly as a trope in visual representations of the Spanish Civil war, perhaps most notably in Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* but also in other examples of photographic war reportage.

[10] The narrative regarding this final displacement is also documented and chronicled in the film *L'exode d'un peuple*, shot by the amateur Louis Llech and filmed on both sides of the border during the harsh winter of 1939.

[11] One of the most paradigmatic and well-known cases of image exile is that of "The Mexican Suitcase" – a collection of three boxes of negatives containing images taken during the Spanish Civil War by Capa, Taro and Chim. The collection, thought to be lost after it had been carried out of France after the outbreak of World War II, reemerged in Mexico in the mid-2000s, thus permitting a re-analysis of the photographers' work in Spain (Young 2010). Interestingly, this kind of reappearance is not unique. The work of other key photographers, including that of Centelles (2009) and Horna (Rubio Pérez 2020) whose work we analyze in this article, also traveled to safer havens, with much of it recuperated many years later – in the case of Horna, only in 2019.

[12] The authors would like to note that closer examination of the objects that were carried by refugees is needed. This is an area of research that they are developing.