“WHAT SHE CARRIES WITH HER”: INVESTIGATING WOMEN’S INTERWAR TRAVEL NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

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“What She Carries With Her”: Investigating Women’s Interwar Travel Narratives

December 2023

In *Cruises and Caravans* (1942), Ella Maillart notes that “The intense curiosity so many of us feel, springs out of our deepest need: we have to understand, we are not meant to remain forever ignorant” (Robinson 459-460). This dissertation investigates women’s travel narratives from the Interwar period in order to understand the intersections of writing, photography, travel, and identity. In this study, I analyze the travel photography and writing of “Aloha” Wanderwell, Ella Maillart, and Ruth Gruber through the lenses of cultural rhetorics, visual rhetorics, feminist geography, and narratology. I also use arts-based critical inquiry to create my own travel narratives and photography to put in conversation with the works from these Interwar women—calling into question our rhetorical choices surrounding gender, privilege, power, class, and authenticity. Investigating women’s travel narratives in this way will give means for the public to delve deeper into the cultural and social restrictions made not only on women’s experience but also on memoir as a viable means of scholarly inquiry. These works, along with a firm grasp of space and place, can be used to reconstruct how we look at travel, women’s voices, and identity on a global scale.
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You were known as “Lois” to many, and as “Momma” to some, but you will always be “Granny” to me.
I dedicate this dissertation, my graduate journey, and my transformation into a rhetorician to you.
Thank you for your wisdom, your laughs, your support, and for encouraging me to always stay true to myself.
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Dedication

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"We are volcanoes. When we women offer our experience as our truth, as human truth, all the maps change. There are new mountains."

--Ursula K. LeGuin, Bryn Mawr 1986 Commencement Speech

Introduction

When I was ten, my family members began to share stories about my great grandparents—Grandma Thibodeau and Grampy—trekking across Europe. Some of their travels connected to visiting my Uncle Cookie who was deep in research in Germany, while other countries like France served as vacation spots. As they moved from country to country, Grandma Thibodeau and Grampy focused on living in what Ruth Gruber calls “inside of time” (Inside of Time). My great-grandparents made numerous slides of their travels. What stood out to me was the intense vigor in which the stories were told by my grandmother, my great aunt, and other relatives; yes, the places my great-grandparents traveled to captivated my interest, but so did their desire to expand their worldview. Unfortunately, the slides of my great-grandparents’ European adventures were destroyed in a fire and I never got to see Europe through my great-grandparents’ eyes.

Looking back, I wish I had been more inquisitive about what they did, the choices they made as they crossed borders—especially through the eyes of my great-grandmother. I do not remember her well; sadly, she passed away when I was two years old. Whether it be luck or by design, we share legacies of exploration and writing: she and I both enrolled in rhetoric programs (Simmons University and Texas Woman’s University, respectively) fifty years apart, we both had an intense desire to write, and each of us chose teaching as a profession to help other people. In the past decade I have been able to travel to several countries and trek outside of my Texas community thanks to scholarships, coursework, and several teaching opportunities. Ghana, Russia, and Japan are just a few places where I was able to “make[e] an external journey alongside the more vital internal journey, learning about [my]self and the outer world along the way” (Crispin x). Although I enjoy(ed) my time overseas, the thought “Does my travel experience as a woman really matter?” latches itself time and again to my brain and does not let go.
I think back to Grandma Thibodeau, who traveled to swampy, sparse Southeast Texas to start anew and break from her northern U.S. roots; I think about my grandmother who, like her own mother, balanced resourcefulness with wit. I wonder: when my maternal ancestors found themselves in the humid and swampy backwoods of Vidor, Texas, did they struggle with this question, too? Sidonie Smith accentuates the connection between travel, gender, and agency in her book *Moving Lives: Twentieth Century Women's Travel Writing* (2001):

"...travel functions as a defining arena of agency. We cannot imagine Odysseus without his travels, or Aeneas, or the knights of the Round Table, or Columbus, Captain Cook, Boswell, Byron, or Loli, or closer to our own times, Jack Kerouac. Nor can we imagine them without their travel narratives(x)."

There is no doubt that female travelers in the Interwar period wrestled with these same questions (or chose to ignore them completely). I wonder, though, in what ways ethics of photography have changed in the past century; I also wonder how the myth of authenticity in women’s travel narratives (x).

Anger, then disappointment, surges through me each and every time I am told things like “Your story isn’t exciting enough!”, “You’re telling us too much (or too little),” and the penultimate “your pictures are boring!” opposed to what I do, who I meet, and why I travel—locally or otherwise. If there’s not a shocking tale, or surprising photo, the travel gets ignored. But we have all wrestled with the same struggle at one point in time: How many photographs should I take? Should I post that I’m there? Should I post my thoughts about the landscape? Should I admit to what I do, who I meet, and why I travel? And as a result, my meaning-making processes and rhetorical choices are pushed aside in favor of “my Instagrammable moment”, and nothing else matters. In those frustrating moments, the product overwhelms the process. The desire to hear about glamorous moments from travel can bleed into unwanted, heavy criticism toward travel stories and experiences—even for women.

Why, then, are women’s travel narratives put under such scrutiny? Nowadays, we cannot separate women’s travel writing from the likes of *Eat, Pray, Love*, Amelia Earhart, and other famous women who trekked across the globe. Chimamanda Adichie might have an answer to this in her TED Talk, “The Danger of a Single Story”: “The single story creates a stereotype and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” (00:13:01-00:13:04)

There have been moments where others latch onto the allure of my travel instead of my purpose/reasoning for traveling in the first place; and, as a result, my meaning-making processes and rhetorical choices are pushed aside in favor of “my Instagrammable moment”, and nothing else matters. In those frustrating moments, the product overwhelms the process. The desire to hear about glamorous moments from travel can bleed into unwanted, heavy criticism toward travel stories and experiences—especially for women.

There are hundreds, possibly thousands, of memoirs and travel narratives we are not aware of due to lack of circulation and availability. Amelia Earhart has two memoirs, in fact, about her time as a pilot and working as a professor at Purdue University: *20 Hours, 40 Minutes: Our Flight in the Friendship* (1928) and *The Fun of It* (1932).
Or, if the space and others are focused, no context is given for their appearance—just photos and videos as backdrops for music of our time—or, more often than not, of a time not our own. What we have to keep in mind here is the fact that “tourism is a negotiated reproduction of space, and this notion enables researchers to address contested and multilayered place identities” and, in my case, rhetorical choices made in those spaces, as well (Donna Chambers and Tijana Rakić). Chambers and Rakić are correct when we create and share our travel memories we add our own narrative of the space or place among pre-existing histories and narratives; once we’ve done that, we then tailor our stories to entice or persuade specific people—aka, reproduce the space for our needs.

The Feminine Gaze

I have learned to tackle negative critiques of my travels with a grain of salt. But I also have ten years of frustration festering in my mind that needs an outlet. In “How to Not Be Elizabeth Gilbert,” Jessa Crispin asks: “Is it the book itself or instead the author’s pose that matters in travel writing?” I wondered, then, is it the portrayal of emotion that increases popularity of women’s life writing, or is it the experience of emotion that causes people to buy a book, watch a movie, or, in worse cases, invalidate a woman’s travel experience? What happens, then, when we add the female gaze as the lens in which we view travel? This is where a question arose for Gruber in her own dissertation, *Virginia Woolf: The Will to Create As a Woman*, which was published 88 years ago. She asks: “[W]hy is our current literary world still ‘torn between tradition and experiment’ (61)?

There has been a rise in women’s travel narratives in the past century, and I argue that the hype behind their experiences are collective and heavily influenced by culture and pre-existing narrative identities of places around the globe (ex. Hawaii as a ‘perfect surf spot’; Chambers 2223). Yet, worry and tension continue to linger for women writers. Many women are writing that they do not feel safe while traveling, or they are publishing riffl travel stories outside of the memoir genre, which deepens the chasm of the public seeing memoir (and, by extension, women’s travel narratives) as less than worthy of academic study (Rakić 485).

Our travel experiences can include gazing upon others or being gazed upon ourselves; through narrative we can choose to subvert femininity or embrace it in order to access places others cannot. I also believe during travel “we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (Bhabha 2). And yet, all of these narratives (and by extension, our experiences) are tailored to our readership and can erase the histories of the places and people around us. How is it that deeper conflicts with racism, privilege, and power can be exchanged for exotic depictions of faraway places?

Why is it that our emotional journey or problems that are not connected to travel at all become the forefront of adventures away from our homes? According to Marybeth Bond, “[in the twenty-first century], 80 percent of all travel decisions are made by women” (“Women Travel Statistics”). This means that we have a hand in how our experiences and choices are articulated to the public—which includes how and if we position ourselves above the voices and stories of others. So, I wonder, where and how can I re-engage with these tensions within women’s travel narratives? And can I do it in a way that honors the women that came before me instead of focusing on the here and now? Like many other writers and memoirists, (Akerstrom; Clark; Dologuhua), I seek authenticity within my travel writing—which goes hand-in-hand with understanding how power, gender, and bodies move in different places/spaces. Burton explains: “Authenticity becomes the avowed purpose of both journey and narrative. But whose authenticity, determined how, by whom, for what purposes, remains subjective and contestable” (184). This seems more true than ever in today’s literary world, but what about the past? What about during a time period that was continually in flux—physically, politically, and culturally?

Although there are numerous studies of women’s travel narratives during the WWI and WWII eras, there is a lack of rhetorical study in between; however, Ann George et al.’s *Women and Rhetoric: Between the Wars* has been immensely helpful. This is where my project *What She Carries with Her* comes into play. In *Cruises and Caravans* (1942), Eliza Mailkert notes that: “The intense curiosity so many of us feel springs out of our deepest need: we have to understand, we are not meant to remain forever ignorant” (Robinson 459-460). It is in this vein that I embark on my research. I’m studying women’s travel narratives from the Interwar period in order to help readers understand the intersections of writing, photography, travel, and identity. In order to do that, though, I have to look at both sides of the coin: the author and “Mrs. Crusoe 2022.”
"Mrs. Consumer"

Gourley lays bare the numerous conceptions American women had in the Roaring 20s: “During these years, popular culture reflected not one but many images of the modern woman. She was a diva who appeared onstage and on the movie screen. She was Mrs. Consumer; more scientifically aware than her mother had ever been. She was Miss Innocent, catlike and stalking a husband…” (132). A century later, women can receive passports in their maiden names or their married names without having their partner’s information on the document. In the Interwar period however, that was a different story:

If you were married and traveling abroad, your husband probably had one passport that identified both of you as “Mr. John Doe and wife.” That’s because only unmarried women could get a passport with their birth name. If a married woman applied for her own passport to travel alone, it would still arrive in her husband’s name as “Mrs. John Doe.” But really, you weren’t supposed to travel alone in the first place. (Little)

These Interwar women consumed what they produced in a systematic way. Make no mistake: they catered their stories to be what the public wanted to hear–most of the time. There were moments of subversion–especially where sharing stories was concerned. Teju Cole gives the following argument on listening to, and sharing, other peoples’ stories in his article “A Too-Perfect Picture”:

Art is always difficult, but it is especially difficult when it comes to telling other people’s stories. And it is ferociously difficult when those others are tangled up in your history and you are tangled up in theirs. What honors those we look at, those whose stories we try to tell, is work that acknowledges their complex sense of their own reality. (16)

I am making connections between Mrs. Consumer, rhetoric, writing, and travel in order to deconstruct and understand why women made certain choices during travel that, to my eyes, might seem outlandish. Scholars, rhetoricians, and teachers need to continue staging interventions in past research and bring those thoughts to the present. Surely Interwar women made strides and trends that we continue to follow today? Why not explore them? We should not ignore controversial travel narratives because they do not fit neatly into the current status quo. And, we should not let opportunities pass us by to test our mettle with academic tropes, either.

Starting the Journey

My goal is to produce a body of work that crosses boundaries and spaces on and off the page. I want to know if the women I investigate here were just as-if not more than–adamant about discovering the “self” through travel. I also want to see if there are trends from the Interwar period that have resurfaced in modern day women's travel writing. To accomplish these goals, I will do a deep dive into the words and images these women used to make their works. I balance my writing and research with photography–both the photos that I took with 1930s cameras as well as photos made by Aloha, Gruber, and Maillart. The use of image and text is important since both worked together to circulate the narratives and attract readers. There are interesting unseen battles going on in these photos, as well: creator versus the subject, the feminine versus masculine gaze, middle-upper class versus lower class, and erased stories versus social status quo. The images will reinforce the stories we tell as well as possibly highlight spaces our words overlook. Travel writing in the Interwar period held numerous thematic dichotomies, including: “The comfortable balance between self and world; between pleasure and duty enjoyed by late Victorian travel writers was thrown off kilter by the now insupportable idea of an essential self or a real world” (Blanton 21).

When I sat down to begin my dissertation, “I experienced that sinking feeling you get when you know you have conned yourself into doing something difficult and there’s no going back.” (Davidson 3). I am crafting this dissertation as a white, feminist rhetorician with an interest in narrative and the experiences that accompany those narratives. *What She Carries with Her* is a testament to the risks, journeys, and lenses women used while traveling in a time before Instagram, Facebook, and smartphones. This work is a combination of critical inquiry and “getting creative” with exploring the intersections of rhetoric, gender, writing, and travel during the Interwar period. The women I am exploring are all connected within three categories: their writing/travel was connected to work, they wanted to explore the world, and they wanted to break out of the gender conventions of their respective communities.
I want to channel my frustration and creativity into a project that allows me to dig deeper into women’s travel narratives to investigate my own growth/relationship with gender, rhetoric, and travel. This dissertation did open the door for the public to see the misunderstandings attached to women’s life writing and travel narratives as a whole. We have all felt tensions before, during, and after travel; yet few of us (myself included) have been more than deciding to openly wrestle with our privilege, internalized biases, and reactions to the peoples, cultures, and spaces we move through during our travels. In the words of Kershaw and Kimyongur, “There has therefore been, and still is, a need for uncovering, for recuperation of women’s past” (12). Reflection can be a powerful tool for change—especially when someone molds gender, power, and narrative into one conversation.

Investigating women’s travel narratives in this way gives the public a way to delve deeper into the cultural and social restrictions imposed not only on women’s experience but also on memor as a viable means of scholar inquiry. The writing and photography of these trailblazing women is embedded with rhetorical strategies and reflections; these pieces of work, along with a firm grasp of space and place, can be used to reconstruct how we look at travel, women’s voices, and identity on a global scale. I recognize that I was/am a white body moving through foreign spaces but I also recognize that there is a certain level of privilege and ignorance that comes with each of the times I travel. This privilege and ignorance, for me, cannot remain unchecked baggage. There is power in researching the past; other scholars have juxtaposed female travelers across discipline, country, and purpose for years (Duncan Rak, Showalter) but few have explored their works in a vein like my arts-based approach. Not only am I digging deeper into works from the ‘20s, ‘30s and ‘40s.

My hope is that What She Carries with Her provides a unique combination of compelling storytelling, vibrant photography, and rich, rhetorical analysis. By examining the writing and photography of these women from an age past, we can better appreciate the risks, and rewards, that we endure in the present. Here, in this confluence of rhetorical theory, privilege, narrative, grit, and gender, is where I want to make my stand as a rhetorician and investigate the strategic moves women make when sharing travel stories with others. My research into women’s travel memoirs functions as a fascination and catalyst for building upon my relationship with rhetoric, travel, and the women like me who were told they should not—and could not—travel, alone or otherwise. And, our sense of travel has changed since the early twentieth century—as has our ability to circulate stories in a dynamic way (Crispin; Giorgia & Hill; Instagram, TikTok, Electric Lit, and Medium are just a few apps and places that have encouraged the increased circulation and creation of women’s life writing and travel experiences. I wondered, then, which women began the arduous journey of putting their stories (and lives) on the line to share their travel experiences with others. We need to understand the technology they were using, these women needed to have a firm understanding of cultural and historical contexts, angle, light, and space in order to articulate images and text to the way they moved through places and spaces.

My dissertation employs mixed methods, namely comparative analysis and arts-based critical inquiry. My goal was to juxtapose my works alongside Aloha’s, Maillart’s, and Gruber’s narratives. The use of comparative analysis and arts-based critical inquiry was my step into familiar tools of engagement with narrative—the deeper I look within texts, the more hands-on I am with the material—the better my scholarship. My methodology is multi-layered. Specifically, I employ feminist geography, narratology, visual rhetorics, and multimodal theories in order to create my dissertation. I use theorists such as Pratt, Siegel, and Smith to chart how gender moves between spaces and places. It serves as a tangible means of tracking the rhetorical and physical moves of my authors as they crossed borders during their travels. Finally, I employ visual rhetoric in order to critique the photographs taken by each of these women (as well as the tools they used) to create their travel narratives. One text, Heimer and Hill’s Defining Visual Rhetorics, (2004) has proven a great start to digging deeper into visual literacy, photography, and travel.

Finding the Travel Narratives

Aloha Wanderwell’s A Call to Adventure recounts the author’s eight year-long journey as a driver and secretary on the Wanderwell Expedition, where she remarks on her trips across Asia, Europe, North America, and South America. Her narrative did serve as a grim but needed opening to women’s voices and travel—and how women’s lives are manipulated to suit the needs of the reading public. Note: For the rest of this work I will use Aloha’s first name to eschew continuity with her previous works and align my scholarship with her she presented herself to the media and public; also, by using “Aloha” instead of Wanderwell, I am distinguishing her from “Cap” Wanderwell. Ruth Gruber’s Witness: One of the Great Correspondents of the Twentieth Century Tells Her Story (2007) provides a far-reaching critique of traveling and identity while working as an international correspondent across Europe and Asia. Ella Maillart’s The Cruel Way: Switzerland to Afghanistan in a Ford (1939) tells of a 4,200-mile trek from Switzerland to Afghanistan with the intent of keeping her friend, Christina, from falling prey to addiction; she weaves tales of photography, ethnography, and travel with in historical and cultural contexts of each country they visited. Women like Maillart, Gruber, and Aloha have a grit and grace that I want for myself—something to bring forward and use to guide me in the cities and places that have changed since they saw them years ago. Their writing is vivid—not that modern pieces aren’t; as well—but their writing focuses on a combination of what they did and how they felt, not just one or the other. I did analyze/dissect/juxtapose the shifts in dialogue, imagery, rhetoric, and space these women use in their narratives depending on the places and spaces these women travel through in their respective memoirs. We can see not only the mental and emotional barriers that were crossed but also the physical borders these women trekked over to finish out their goals.

Tangibly working with the same tools helped me understand and appreciate space, place, and movement is the key of this exercise and built my appreciation for the combined efforts of Maillart, Gruber, and Aloha throughout their respective travels.
We can see the mental, emotional and, physical borders these women trekked over to finish out their goals. Tangibly working with the same tools did allow me to understand and appreciate space, place, and movement is the key of this exercise and, with hope, did allow me to appreciate the combined efforts of Maillart, Gruber, and Aloha throughout their respective travels. I also juxtapose my own narratives and photography alongside the works of these women to demonstrate the applicability and relatability of the tools, themes, and practices they used when they were on the road. My dissertation is theory combined with meaning-making processes to bring about my own observations on gender, travel writing, and my position as a white rhetorician traveling through different spaces in print and on foot.

Colonialism—and the use and distribution of power—is crucial to my research and understanding of these works. All of these women—including myself—traveled in positions of power and privilege; the unsavory aspects of these rear their heads throughout these works and that is why I want to examine them more closely. Each of us take photographs and craft narratives to disrupt power structures. ere these women and their works contributing to colonial ideals and, if so, can we find evidence of this in my analysis? Can, in fact, find some similarities in class and race that hit close to home? What does this mean about how I approach race, class, and privilege in my travels? My writing and photography?

Charting a Path through the Dissertation

The Author’s Note serves as an introduction to not only my topic but my journey of unlearning and relearning facets of my own rhetorical moves, privilege, and writing. I exchanged a traditional review of literature chapter for a Context of Photography: pages that give a tight, chronological view of the development of photography, cameras, and women’s use of technology during the Interwar period. Next, I divided my methodology and research design into two chapters—Interpretive Lenses and Technology—in order to separate the theory from the tools that I used to build my analysis of the travel narratives. A key question that arises from these two chapters comes from Gregory Clark’s “Rhetoric on the Road”: “How does the location and culture affect what a woman writes about in a memoir?” (17). From there, readers enter the “body” of my dissertation; each woman has a separate chapter where her rhetorical choices, narratives, and photography are critiqued via four categories:

- defining self in space
- understanding cultures and people through photography
- manifesting narrative agency, and
- telling stories about other women

The body of the dissertation allows for readers to see in what ways Aloha, Mailiart, and Gruber, and I attempted to “truly listen to people and their cultures, what they believe and why they live the way they do” (Akerstrom 19). And, following that thread, how the narratives promote or argue against those attempts to be more culturally understanding and less ignorant. This is where my hands-on experience with making travel writing, using Interwar cameras, and developing film comes into play. My artifacts will stand alongside the works of these Interwar women; readers will see how I follow, diverge, and subvert Interwar gender roles, rhetorical choices, and narrative themes in my writing and photography. The chapter that contains my writing and photography is organized slightly differently than the others—I organize my narratives and pictures by date/event and, near the end, give a more comprehensive view of the mistakes made and lessons learned while using (and developing photos with) Interwar cameras.

I encourage readers at the end of this work to look ahead. In all honesty, I believe the conversations I explore here about women’s writing, rhetorical moves, and photography are far from over. The final chapter provides “food for thought” questions on how women have transformed travel and life writing to suit present-day readers; and, by extension, how outside factors like social media and COVID-19 have affected how the public views travel writing. This chapter concludes with an academic and personal reflection on my research and dissertation journey as a whole. And, of course, how I will keep looking ahead to see what lies in store.

Limitations and Restrictions

For this study, I established the Interwar period as between 1918 and 1945. Historians (including the U.S. Department of State) give different timeframes for the period, too (including but not limited to 1921-1936 and 1918 to 1935). I shifted the timeline to the mid 1940s so readers could see the closure of not only Ruth Gruber’s narratives, but also the ends of both World Wars.

There are three main limitations within my research: time, race, and genre. I chose the Interwar period for my research to dig deeper into trends and beginnings of modern-day fixation on bodies in spaces, places, travel narratives, and photography. The twenty-first century has seen a boom of technological and rhetorical advancements. I wonder where all those advancements began—or, even better, where there were blunders to learn from in the early twentieth century? Although many scholars have studied twenty-first century women’s travel narratives and the rhetorical moves made within them, I thought it prudent to look to the past to fill the gap of research on women from the Interwar period.
My intent is to let my research help fill that gap; and, possibly, provide a foothold for others to continue filling that rhetorical gap. I would like to note that the majority of travel from the three women I am examining was made during the Interwar period. Some of Ruth Gruber’s work does bleed into the World War II era; and, my own work falls well beyond the Interwar era. All of the women in this dissertation are Caucasian/white. My main reason for choosing each woman was to point out a gap in research that, to put it bluntly, openly wrestles with the privileges, ignorance, and responsibilities that white women in the Interwar period had, misused, and rejected while they traveled overseas.

Mind you, this includes my own writing and rhetorical choices made during travel. I am not immune to keeping my rhetorical choices and cultural awareness in check-none of us are. Finally, I thought it impractical to limit the places/spaces women traveled during the Interwar period because these women accomplished so much in such a short amount of time. I wanted to have the flexibility to examine their works in different geographical areas without placing limitations on where their travels brought them.

I want to evoke a world long gone to me. Unfortunately, I was not able to spend much time with my great-grandmother; she passed away when I was two years old. Her memories live on through the stories told to me by my grandmother, my great aunt, and my foremothers who insist that, whether it’s by design—or fate—I should traverse back in time to see what captivates me so from the Interwar period: is it the way women used such vitriol in their narratives? Or was it the way they could truly drop off the map and fulfill their purposes of travel, without worrying about their connection to society? I want to invoke the stories of my great-grandmother and use Interwar technologies to “…interact in discourse as travelers if they write and read in ways that render participation in discursive exchange a transformative act of crossing an alien space rather than the more defensive act of occupying a familiar place” (Clark 16).

It could be that, like Maillart, “I was [am] fond of difficulty” (12). Deep down though, I think it’s because I know I miss my great-grandmother and grandmother’s stories and their enthusiasm for sharing those stories with family and friends. And I want to do the same: share my stories and stories of women before me who traveled around the world and (hopefully) returned home as wiser, humbled, and more understanding women.

Let’s get started, shall we?
Context of **Photography**

"Life without photographs is no longer imaginable. They pass before our eyes and awaken our interest; they pass through the atmosphere, unseen and unheard, over distances of thousands of miles. They are in our lives, as our lives are in them."

- Lucia Moholy, *A Hundred Years of Photography*

**Introduction**

Photos abound in private and public spaces. Over time, people have learned to take and share photographs in provocative ways. Moholy is undoubtedly correct—there is no way to separate photography from the modern world; but, one has to wonder when and where photography started to gain traction with the public. The history of photography is rife with power, creativity, and change; yet, there is also a hefty amount of violence and oppression within its history, as well. Those threads of creativity, power, and change can be used as anchors for scholars to dig deeper into Interwar photography; and, by extension, photography within travel narratives, too. The first step, then, would be to investigate why and how photography became a global phenomenon.

The camera, and photographers, adapted their photography techniques in order to see, capture, and do more. Those adaptations emerged alongside expansions in transatlantic travel and image-developing technology from the late 1800s to the Interwar period. Nowadays, though, photography has become so ingrained in society and culture that it would be painstaking to try and fish it back out again. “Whether one likes it or not, there is little room to skip images in the twenty-first century” (Foliard 12). The same could be said for the 20s, 30s, and 40s—cameras and photography morphed from a hobby of the elite to a public activity to a means of advocating cultural, political, and social change. Photography had several purposes in the Interwar period, with two important ones being to circulate information and to capture moments in time. If it were not for the photographers who experimented with time, light, and chemicals in the past, modern-day photography and developing processes would function and look drastically differently than they do now. Not only that, but the ways people use photography today would be different, as well. Photography, then and now, helps others to interact and understand the world around them; for travel photographers in the Interwar period, this understanding placed the public and elite photographers in conversations on race, class, and visual literacy. These conversations were troublesome, especially for women attempting to circulate their photography to the public. A woman’s role as a narrator, photographer, and storyteller were questioned, as well.
In the case of women’s travel narratives, especially travel memoirs and biographies made in the twenty-first century, photography has become more commonplace and a key strategy to appeal to readers. Lawler points out that “...no narrative belongs to the teller alone: they also incorporate the narratives of others” (43). Lawler’s argument holds true for cameras and photography, too. Like typewriters, cameras allow users to layer contexts, prejudices, ideas, and conceptions onto a photograph or experience; this is especially true during the Interwar period.

Using a camera as a tool of liberation and oppression began before the Interwar period began; and, for the sake of this research, it is the thread that I will use to weave Wanderwell, Mailart, and Gruber, and my works together into a cohesive collection of women’s travel narratives that explores power, gender, and image using multimodality and arts-based critical inquiry. In this chapter, I will provide a road map of how photography (and cameras) developed from the daguerreotype in 1838 to the range-finders and dual-lens cameras that were used in the Interwar period. The public-facing quality of cameras will be examined here, too, as well as how power and privilege alter the use of photography in terms of travel writing.

One thing to keep in mind is that the advancements of photography and cameras are, by nature, scientific. This connection makes sense—especially when someone thinks about the meticulous steps, chemicals, and processes that are required to transfer photos from film to paper; but, even that description is a modern view of the photography process. The view of photography as a scientific, mechanical process eventually morphs into a means to express creativity; simultaneously, the tools that are used in photography (namely, the gradual switch from plates to film) address issues in accessibility and impact how creative photographers had to get in order to take a picture. Both of these threads of development help to highlight that photography can be used as a means to interact with and understand the self, the world, and other cultures.

**Obscuras, Daguerreotypes, and Brownies**

Photography’s early evolution looked vastly different from the photography people use today. Scientists (and later, artists) scrambled for a way to perfectly keep and maintain an image of a person, object, or place. Immediacy was the main concern. Even before the Interwar period, people had to systematically test different materials and tools in order to identify a pivotal concept about photography—and, most importantly, how to harness it. Photography, as a whole, is focused on light—light can drastically alter a photo; this was especially true in the early history of photography. In the 1800s, scientists and artists alike were looking for a more reliable means of capturing a permanent image than relying on a camera obscura.

Even so, there was still the lingering problem of finding a way to efficiently take (and keep) a clear photograph. Louis Daguerre, a Romantic printmaker, searched for “a means to capture the fleeting images he saw in his camera obscura, a draftsman’s aid consisting of a wood box with a lens at one end that threw an image onto a frosted sheet of glass at the other” (Daniel). After years of tinkering and a large amount of patience, the daguerreotype made its worldwide debut in 1839. The lineage of the camera obscura is as far-reaching as its applications across the sciences and arts. In approximately fourth century B.C.E., the Chinese author Mozi describes a camera obscura as a “collecting point” and “treasure house”; even Aristotle questions the purpose of this optical tool in Book 15 of Problems, (“Camera Obscura”). Regardless of origin, the obscura as a tool is a mix of science and art.

A daguerreotype is a photograph developed on a metal plate; it is a reverse image of what is seen through the camera obscura. The reversed/“thrown” image was a flipped version of whatever was seen through the camera obscura—a reflection that was truthful but not quite honest. Unlike a digital or film image, daguerreotypes are made with a process of copper, mercury, and salt water. First, the photographer needs to plate a sheet of copper with silver-making sure to wipe and polish it to a fine shine. Then, the copper plate is placed in a light-proof container and then directly into the camera.
A photographer then takes a picture with the camera; thereby exposing the copper plate to light. At that point, the developing process for the photograph becomes a blur of chemicals and layers of salt, mercury, and chloride. Finally, the photograph is washed with water and dried. The development process alone could take anywhere from fifteen to twenty minutes ("The Daguerreotype Process"). The goal is to preserve the image taken with a camera obscura. Diego et al. analyzed five separate daguerreotypes found in a museum in Italy using a multi-modal scientific approach. He and his colleagues found... the conservation of a daguerreotype image goes beyond the single image plate. Their structural complexity and the multiplicity of materials present must be considered ("The Degradation of Daguerreotypes"). Learning how to make a photograph with a daguerreotype was tough—and the developing process was even more rigorous and time consuming.

The development and photography process for daguerreotypes was complex and dangerous. Some of the chemicals that were used in the development process include iodide, mercury, sulfuric acid, chloride, and cyanide. Mercury was especially important in the development process, as it aided in transferring an image onto the copper plate. Mozami expands upon the intricacies of chemical usage to make daguerreotypes—and the drastic repercussions, as well. She notes: “There were even reports of some photographers getting ‘mad-hatter syndrome’, or mercury poisoning.” The possibility of developing “Mad-Hatter syndrome,” expensive equipment, and using dangerous chemicals were all part of the process for making daguerreotypes. The rewards, in this case, outweighed the risks. Yet, that was not always the case. Some requests for daguerreotypes required photographers to travel and bring large amounts of equipment and chemicals from location to location. The margin for error was finite. For example, if at any point the plates were damaged, the photograph was a lost cause.

The preservation of chemicals, camera pieces, the glass plates, and processing materials worked hand-in-hand to give daguerreotypes their popularity and complexity.

Also, something to keep in mind is that it took more than one person to make an early daguerreotype; the photographer and assistant had to work together to prepare chemicals, set up the image, take the photograph, and then develop it. The only problem? Due to the narrow angle of the image, a photographer could not copy the photo—either one photo was painstakingly made, or the photo was not made at all ("The Daguerreotype Process"). Crafting daguerreotypes took time, effort, and patience, but the reward was worth it. With the right amount of money, for the first time, individuals could own a keepsake that was unlike paintings and portraits of years past: Did the novelty, availability, and price of daguerreotypes, in addition to their small size, encourage patrons and daguerreotypists to assign particular meanings and uses to them? Or did people ascribe to daguerreotypes the traditional meanings associated with more luxurious portraits in oil or watercolor on ivory—as reminders of the sitter for present and future generations, markers of rites of passage, or objects of gift giving or exchange? (Verplanck). Verplanck contends with these questions in her research, and they could also be applied a century later to Interwar travel photography, but with added context; I wonder, does travel photography made by women encourage viewers to assign particular meaning to those photographs? If the photograph was taken by a woman, does the rhetorical value of that photograph diminish at all? If so, how come?

The daguerreotype brought with it a new means to interact with public and private spaces, as well as a means to cast illusions/deceive others. Through portraiture and landscape daguerreotype photography, some photographers began to overwrite others’ narratives with their own stories and perceptions. The meticulous positioning that is involved in making (and taking) a daguerreotype did not allow for viewers to see outside of the subject of the photograph—in other words, the daguerreotype casted a type of illusion. In her article “The Age of Gold and Daguerreotypes”, Moroz explains: “The medium [daguerreotype] was considered scientific in France, since mechanized precision was deemed inferior to the idealized art of painting. But it was seen as a democratizing and theatrical tool in the United States.”

Social, cultural, and political contexts could be blurred or erased altogether, meaning people could play with social standings as well as the extent of travel. Unlike twenty-first century photographs, daguerreotypes did not normally come with detailed descriptions of what (or who) was within the image(s). Without an informed description with the daguerreotype, viewers could only guess who, where, and why someone/something was being photographed in the first place. Daguerre reenforced the use of his invention overseas, particularly to capture images of famous places across the globe and boy did photographers deliver: one year after Daguerre presented his work to the public, Excursions Daguerriennes was commissioned; a multi-year daguerreotype collection filled with images of monuments, sculptures, and landmarks like Notre Dame, pyramids of Egypt, and the Acropolis in Greece, among other places. Those daguerreotypes “played an important role in popularizing the notion of the artist-daguerreotypist as trustworthy eyewitness” ("Excursions Daguerriennes"). Daguerreotypes streamed in of places and cultures far from home. Photographers and consumers began to claim they were “experts” on these faraway places, locales, and cultures—even if they had not experienced them firsthand. Behdad notes that, as a result, places like the Middle East, Asia, and Africa became ground zero for “the rise of a scientific form of Orientalism in the nineteenth century that claimed to offer definitive and comprehensive understanding of the Orient” (2). That claim of “comprehensive understanding” and the erasing of narratives are problems that persisted in photography—and continue to do so—in the Interwar period and far beyond it to today. In the context of empire and global movement, cameras during the Interwar period were tools of liberation and oppression. Transatlantic travel, the daguerreotype, and portable cameras and typewriters all contributed to imperial expansion and the documentation of violence, oppression, and racism. hose advances also contributed to how and where daguerreotypes were used. Daguerre’s desire to preserve led to creating a means to objectify places and people in a new way.
As popular as the daguerreotype was, it was still not readily available for the public to use—the price alone was restricted to upper class patrons. Yet, with more people becoming interested in the daguerreotype process people began responding to them in different ways, especially in comparison to painted portraits. In her article “The Inconstant Daguerreotype: the Narrative of Early Photography”, Williams analyzes the rhetorical function of images within Secrets of the Dark Chamber, a daguerreotype exhibit made by the National Museum of American Art. “Rather than being worth a thousand words, the daguerreotype seemed to demand verbal articulation…a written attempt to understand—and sometimes to overcome—the representational power of the image” (16). I argue that a visceral response to the daguerreotype makes sense, especially when one considers the simultaneous advances being made in travel, empire, and technology in the interwar period. The daguerreotype and its development process were following and benefitting from the technological trends of the late nineteenth century. I also posit that modern day photographers and users embrace multimodality to demand what Williams called “verbal articulation” from audiences. Today, “verbal articulation” has morphed into Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Threads—social media apps that encourage users to multimodally mix image and text to communicate with friends, family, and other people at their leisure. Other programs like Canva and InDesign encourage users to embrace multimodality to wrestle with (and/or harness) “the representational power of the image”. It would take time for daguerreotypes to morph into the types of photos that people take today. First, photographers needed to hone their daguerreotype experience; and the first step to that process came with the rise of portrait studios: and need for portraits: one of the most-in-demand daguerreotypes by consumers in the latter nineteenth century.

A year after the daguerreotype made its global debut, official portrait studios began to appear around the globe. Photographers would use daguerreotypes to take pictures of nobles and other members of the social elite. They experimented with the chemicals used to develop photos, too. Most of the chemicals photographers used were dangerous and difficult to move around; despite these drawbacks, portrait studios continued to flourish in major cities. It was a profitable cycle: the social elite would request portraits, the portrait studio would take and develop the photograph, and then the clients would be satisfied with the results. But the portrait studios brought with them a rising problem: how could photographers make more than one daguerreotype at a time? Sure, someone could make a copy by re-daguerreotyping a daguerreotype or engraving the original image. But exposure times were arduous and it would take a while for development time to be cut down, too (“The Daguerreotype Medium”). The invention of ambrotypes, at least, helped to cut down on production and chemical costs of portraits. Both the daguerreotype and ambrotype are placed in protective cases after an image develops. Unlike daguerreotypes, though, ambrotypes are made on glass plates that are placed in front of a black background and then into a frame/case. In her blog with the National Portrait Gallery, Finlayson explains that “The ambrotype quickly grew in popularity because it maintained the image clarity of the daguerreotype, but was faster and cheaper to produce” (“Through the Looking Glass”). The problem of duplication remained with ambrotypes, though. Photographers had to use a camera to make duplicates of images. As it turns out, George Eastman would bring the public two solutions that would change how people viewed the world and photography as a whole: the snapshot and the Kodak Brownie.

Right before the turn of the twentieth century, George Eastman began to tinker with the amount of film people could store into their cameras at his company, Kodak. Eventually, in 1889, he began to sell rolls of film, which allowed people to take and develop more photographs. Then, a year later, Eastman unveiled the Kodak Brownie—a photography marvel with more film and a snapshot feature that solved the duplicate problem from daguerreotypes; ambrotypes; and other plate-focused photographic processes.

Sleek and easy to use, Kodak Brownies were a perfect tool for early photographers. Someone could buy a Brownie and Kodak film for no more than two to three U.S. dollars (“The 1st Brownie Camera”). Amateur and professional photographers used Brownies to document moments in war zones, on the street, and even to take photos of the RMS Titanic when it sank (“Kodak Brownie”). Kodak marketed the Brownie to everyone—especially women and children.

The snapshot revolutionized what, where, and when people took pictures. Cameras and photography became less formal and more spontaneous, prompting people to become inventive with their images. “Everyday life” became a major focus for photography, especially Kodak Brownie users. Not everything with this camera was sunshine and roses, though. Thompson sheds light on the drawbacks of the snapshot and Brownie phenomenon: “Not everyone was happy with the rise of the snapshot. Professional photographers were repelled by the weird, ungainly, often out-of-focus shots that amateurs produced.” (2020). Other pundits bemoaned “Kodak fiends,” camera obsessives who carried their device everywhere and were apparently so constantly taking pictures that they would space out and miss their trains” (“The Invention of the ‘Snapshot’”).

Does that sound familiar?

Kodak, as a result of Eastman’s ingenuity, became a photographic powerhouse for the public and social elite. The release of the Brownie, along with other box cameras that incorporated film versus glass or wet plates, increased the way photos were made, shared, and consumed. Smaller box cameras traded clunky, expensive equipment for cheaper manufacturing materials, easier maneuverability, and economically safe processing materials, too. Marketing for the Kodak Brownie was widespread, especially towards women and children—which is great—but that did not stop the company from catering to themes of expansion and colonialism, either.
The popularity of amateur photography soared throughout the early 1900s. "During the first decade of the twentieth century, a number of serious amateur photographers reacted to the snapshot craze by forming organizations dedicated to promoting photography as fine art, rather than as a popular pastime or commercial pursuit" (Fineman). Yet, the fine art of travel and casual photography also merged with photos of war, expansion, and power. In this camera ad to the right, Kodak focuses on promoting simplicity and removing the possibility of making errors while using a camera. Those well-wishes are supported by a young Asian man pulling a rickshaw with a young, seemingly wealthy, woman riding in the seat. This image harks eerily back to Isabella Bird's travel memoir *Tracks in Japan* and serves as foreshadowing for Aloha Wanderwell's *A Call to Adventure!*—both of which enact the same rhetorical moves used in this ad by juxtaposing comfort with images of colonialism and exotizing the Orient. Thanks to companies like Kodak, Leica, and others, cameras, film, and developing materials became more affordable for the public. This opening of the floodgates allowed for photographers to find new ways to take photos and develop their images—of "everyday life", work, and beyond.

### Secrets of the Darkroom

By the start of the twentieth century, photo-making no longer belonged exclusively to the social elite. Mobility and usability were two concerns associated with the developing process. Photography companies decided to cash in on the surge of people experimenting with cameras by cutting costs of cameras and developing equipment. There were (and still are) many secrets lurking in darkrooms—and the materials used to make photos helped to shed some light on that part of photo developing for the public. Developing photos during the mid to late 1800s was expensive. The availability and cost of camera equipment and darkroom materials was limited to upper classes. Thanks to more affordable means of taking photos, people also began to experiment with developing processes, as well. The silver nitrate used to develop daguerreotypes (wet glass plate photography) was traded in for a "mixture of fermented chloride and egg white, dried and then floated on a solution of silver nitrate" to make albumen prints ("19th Century Photographic Processes"). In the latter nineteenth century, when cyanotypes came onto the scene, photographers used iron salts for processing images—this is what gives cyanotype their recognizable blue color. First, two solutions are made, using water potassium ferrocyanide and then water and ferric ammonium citrate. Once these respective solutions are mixed together they become light sensitive. The photographer uses that mixture to coat a piece of paper and leaves the paper dry in a dark place. From there, the photographer places the thing they wish to print and puts this in direct contact with the paper. UV light (like the sun) is used to expose the paper.

According to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Anna Atkins botanical study (left) is the earliest photograph by a woman to enter the Museum’s collection. If anything, Atkins’ work goes to show the advances women were making in the arts and sciences before the Interwar period began. As an upcoming artist and scholar, this cyanotype is a means of inspiration for me and assists in uplifting women’s work in research, arts, and scholarship—especially in this dissertation.

Nowadays, people have made cyanotypes in innovative ways—on Pinterest, for example, there are links and instructions for how to make "cyanotype clothing" with blue jean pants, jackets, and more. Different companies sell “Blue photo printing” kits for all ages, beckoning photographers to set down their phones and modern cameras to try out a photo process that, thankfully, continues to never go out of style. Many different light-sensitive materials were used to make photographs, including but not limited to: carbon printing, oil printing, bromoil printing, and platinum printing ("Photographic Processes and Materials around 1900"). Developing film photography is a complex but rewarding process to experience first-hand. From the late 1800s leading into the twentieth century, photographers wrestled with maneuvering plates, chemicals, and other equipment to develop their work; thankfully, innovative photographers came up with the idea of mobile darkrooms to optimize on space, time, and cost of film development. The darkrooms took a variety of forms, from tents to hotel rooms to wagons. While these options were innovative, problems continued to linger; inconsistent lighting and unavailable processing materials hampered photographers right and left. Innovation was key to get developing done—bathrooms, then and now, came in handy to change film or develop photos on the road. "As 35mm film took over the world of photojournalism, and transmission by wire became the norm, news services like United Press International and The Associated Press,...
began to outfit photographers with portable darkroom kits that fit in a trunk and turned a hotel bathroom into a makeshift darkroom” (Schneider). Provisions like these, more often than not, came from well-backed institutions; if a photographer did not have the right connections, they had to make do with whatever was on hand. All of those developing processes emerged and were enhanced from 1900 all the way past the Interwar period.

Adapting to the Field...and Beyond

Flash photography, faster shutters, and mobile darkrooms worked hand-in-hand to make cameras adaptable in different environments. Night photography, for example, became popular in the 1930s. The ability to make the original size of a photo larger came about around 1906. This gave photographers the ability to hone and edit their works. While the daguerreotype was a landmark addition to photography, there are other vital adaptations that made it easier (and far more enjoyable) to take photos. Faster lenses and shutters helped to cut exposure time in half from minutes to seconds, depending on the lighting in the area (Williams “Early Cameras, a Timeline”). With the daguerreotype and similar large-format cameras, portability and accessibility were difficult. There were tons of pieces of equipment to haul around, not to mention the dangerous accessories that went along with the cameras. For example, in the 1800s gunpowder was used for flash photography. Smaller, more portable camera designs and development processes aided in cutting expenses for chemicals and minimized the danger of breaking plates or other pieces of the camera while maneuvering it from location to location.

The world could not deny that the camera, and photography, had gained traction thanks to modernism and technological advancement. The remarkable multiplication of contacts between different societies brought about by the expansion of European influence connected numerous cultures, each one with its own understanding of the boundaries between senseless violence and a justifiable force. Societies on all continents were confronted with ideas and objects that travelled with unprecedented speed over increasingly vast distances (Foliard 19-20).

it would not be until 1970s when rangefinders would be placed within viewfinders (“Rangefinder”). Kodak and Leica brought out the first rangefinder cameras in the early twentieth century; and, in this dissertation, two out of the three women from the Interwar period used a type of rangefinder camera in their work (Maillart and Gruber, respectively). In terms of Interwar photography, this meant some photographers had full control of which photos were published, how the captions were written, and how much context was shown alongside each photo. On the other hand, photographers who were taking images for places like The New York Times, National Geographic, or the government had little authority in any of those decisions. Therefore, photographers relied on science, grit, and creativity in order to gain back their narrative agency.

Personally, I am only able to identify and understand the connection between photography, rhetoric, and writing thanks to working hands-on with Interwar cameras and the developing process. At first glance that scientific connection might not be as clear to see. Whether or not people realize it, the modern world benefits from the thousands of photographers who experimented with different chemicals, materials, and subjects for their photos. There were--are--many methods to meticulously find ways to adjust light, distance, and frame to accurately capture (and keep) a photograph. Yet, Romer believes “[h]ow it (photography) changes is not as interesting as why it changes” (26). In this work, I posit the “why” unfolds simultaneously with the “how” through experimentation, mistakes, and attempts to address the question “what do we want photography to be?” (26). Most of the answers for “why” questions stem from issues of photo development, light control, and camera type.

Cameras between the Wars

The beginning of the Interwar period ended with the chaos of World War I. Archduke Franz Ferdinand’s assassination catapulted the world into levels of bloodshed, violence, and chaos on an unprecedented scale. Soldiers and civilians were caught in the crossfires of the Allied and Central Powers grasping for control and expansion. Behind every photograph was a demonstration of control–of evidence of a country’s military and racial power over the peoples and places captured in those photographs. Make no mistake: “The mythologies of race and empire were intertwined; both reinforced the worship of force” (Rebirth of a Nation 2). Statistica implies that the worship and use of force was the spark for “the deaths of almost 15 million soldiers and civilians combined. Approximately 8.8 million of these deaths were of military personnel; while six million civilians died as a direct result of the war; mostly through hunger, disease and genocide.” (“WWII”) Families were ripped apart, homes forcibly being taken away.

This is a photograph of my Leica IIC camera. I was thrilled to find it and use it to take pictures; however, the shutter mechanism was broken after purchase and I have not been able to fix the problem myself.
The looming presence of taking—and documenting—that control—carried forward. There is a common misconception that WWI and WWII went hand-in-hand in terms of the scale of violence, themes, and advancements made during both wars. Many scholars, including myself, were way off in that assumption. Braybon and Sumnerfield argue that, in fact, “The wars themselves were quite dissimilar. The fact that they are known as the First and Second World Wars encourages people to see them as alike” (2). What characteristics, then, specifically set these wars apart from each other?

Each war had a separate goal, cameras and photography were seeped in access and control across the Interwar period. Catarina Bellinetti argues that countries began seriously limiting the amount of images that came from battlefields “to hide the tragedy of death during wartime. Yet, these regulations did not take into account the fact that, thanks to new lightweight and portable cameras, officers and soldiers were also taking photographs” (“The Tragedy of WW”). Time, it seemed, did not decrease these attempts at restriction; that, at least, did not change, though the world kept moving forward. The 1920s were inundated with change. The Roaring Twenties laid the groundwork for political, societal, and cultural progress—and cameras were no exception to that, either. The 1930s (especially the Great Depression) would bring about a continued battle of wages, social class, and travel for women. With these world changes, the camera would become a mainstream for artists and journalists across the board. “Avant-garde painters, graphic designers, and journalists turned to the medium, seeing it as the most effective tool to express the fractured, fast-paced nature of modernity and the new technological culture of the twentieth century” (“Photography Between the Wars”). Lighter cameras assisted with photographers being as close to “anonymous” as possible when traveling through different spaces. Women’s access to cameras like the Rolleiflex and Leica expanded in the Interwar Period thanks to careers and demographics. One point to consider and keep in mind here is that movement—the restriction of it, flexibility of it, and range—is intertwined with power. Whether through military, economic, or social means, mobility paved the way for cameras and photography to continue its global reach. “Photography during colonial rule imaged the world in order to study, profit from and own it” (Cole, “When the Camera was a Weapon of Imperialism”).

Over time, photographers began to explore place and space with their photography. Field photography became especially popular throughout the Interwar period, when journalists were sent on assignment, portable cameras and photography became necessities in order to gather the most information possible. Camerawon, these travel narratives, align with as well as disrupt women’s overall focus on domesticity especially when “[that] restriction is considered inevitable, right, or a muddled combination of inevitability and right” (Peel 83). Each of these women had their special way of using a camera to encourage viewers to lean into and/or question their personal views on societal expectations, gender norms, and views on race and power. Photography in the 20s focused on highlighting celebrities and the emergence of photojournalism, while correspondents between the 30s and 40s might have used photography in documentary projects, fundraising efforts, or to sharpen visual representation of countries around the globe. Kreinik explains “Photography, then, seemed to offer more than a new method of image-making—it offered the chance to change paradigms of vision and representation” (“An Introduction to Photography”). Range-finding cameras reinforce personal freedom, oppression, and the circulation of certain narratives by female travelers. The Rolleiflex camera provides a wider range of mobility, which meant these women could do more work and have an easier time of documenting their experiences abroad. Rolleiflex and Leica cameras from this period are compact. The “how” and “why” photography changed since the dogmerenotype was fast-paced, but those changes emerged alongside travel and accessibility to far-off places. As WW II continued, would be a reflection of trauma, political upheaval, and attempts to rebuild not just for the United States, but in Europe and Asia, as well. Many people, especially the women in this dissertation, saw life “in the raw” (“Out of the Cage 68).”

New levels of recording and preserving emerged with early twentieth century photography. Thanks to more affordable materials and ease of access, people began taking photos of, well, everything. The camera became further entrenched in power, war, and violence. Journalists, soldiers, and other people working overseas began to develop more and more photos of faraway places. The result? New views of imperialism and control. Cameras reflected it [violence] back on the imperial metropolises and from one continent to another, giving it a renewed visibility. It was a tool of differentiation, a visual boundary between spaces obeying different rules” (Folard 21). The cycle of meaning making, erasure, documentation, and memory developed alongside imperialism, racism, and exploration time and again.

The Camera, the Photograph, and the Consumer

People consumed photography in a variety of ways. As stated earlier, newspapers and magazines expedited the amount of photography people saw inside and outside their homes. Postcards sent between family members sometimes held photographs of far-off places; portrait studios, too, encouraged more people to become involved with photography over time. Movie and photo lectures, like ones by “Aloha” Wanderwell, aided in the consumption of photography, film-making, by extension, encouraged photo consumption too. As mentioned earlier, portrait studios helped propel photography forward for the elite. Once affordable cameras were made available to the public, photos took the world by storm; news agencies began to use photos as a means to reach wider audiences. Magazines and newspapers like The New York Times, Life, and Look—amateur and professional organizations alike—began to capitalize on the popularity of photography.
Photography functioned as a lens into local and national issues, especially when it was used as propaganda by news agencies or governments. In a travel memoir or biography, readers might see a picturesque scene on a beach or a shot of mountains in a far-off valley. Or, in the case of interwar photography, readers might see bodies lying across a battlefield or receive a postcard of Indian women being exoticized for the sole purpose of a travel agency making a profit. Stark images like these were made for shock value, yes, but one would hope that photographs of that nature would cause the public to respond in some way to the violence or imperialism in front of their eyes. Most of the time that was not the case—people would collect and gaze at their photos on their mantles without feeling the political, social, or cultural repercussions of what was not shown in those photographs. In “Discerning Photography’s White Gaze”, Weber criticizes the awardees of the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize—all of the winners were white photographers who took portraits of black or brown people. All of the photos, Weber argues, “give people permission to stare. Shots of this nature—those which give white viewers the ability to gaze without action—circulate widely, and popularly. But whom are they for, and what do they accomplish?” (Weber)? That thread is crucial in this research because the interwar travel narratives examined in this dissertation contain images that provoke readers and put preconceived notions of gender, race, power, and class into question. Readers can no longer afford to “gaze without action” at interwar or modern photographs.

Excavating the dual-purposes of freedom and oppression that lie within cameras of the interwar period is crucial for this work. With luck, that excavation will help uncover the rhetorical trends women used when moving in, between, and around the countries impacted by imperialist expansion. And, there will be room to examine how freedom, oppression, and power continue to work hand-in-hand through modern photography. This new form of documentation also gave more accuracy to storytelling on a political and economic scale; these cameras and photographers were taking images of wars, communities, and the everyday lives of countries and people that readers only saw through newspapers. Some photographers, like Dorthea Lang and Marjorie Collins, used cameras to fight for political and social reform. Lears notes that “If society could be conceived as an organic whole that, like the individual human being, melded physical and moral components, then it was easy to link the political and the personal” (10-11). Cameras and photography were now being used to confront social, cultural, and political issues that affected the elite and the public alike.

Social class undoubtedly affected how travel photography, specifically, was made and circulated by the public. For Western women in the interwar period, the struggle with social class manifested in upper class women benefiting from the struggles of lower class women and women of color. Victorian and interwar women travelers were primarily white and middle-upper class. One reason for this is how travel and tourism were advertised to the public and colonized countries were labeled as romantic “getaway” places and tourist companies capitalized on that imperialism. These women could freely take photographs of these colonized places. Organizations like the Royal Geographic Society and the Thomas Cook Agency exacerbated the tensions between travel, photography, and social class via experiences and trips to colonized countries like Egypt and Palestine. These trips were originally geared toward catering to Britain’s middle class but leaned more toward “the cream of Victorian society” (“Travelers Stranded”).

Cameras in the hands of the people allowed for a more diverse amount of information to be circulated on a global level—especially in terms of violence. “In a way, battlefields functioned as destinations with the soldier as visitor, using the camera to capture the familiar and (often heinous) unfamiliar, the physical journey, and moments of leisure” (Aspinwall). This trend stays consistent through the interwar period. Bodies and bloody aftermath of wars and small battles were slapped onto postcards and sent all over; photos of majestic destinations were placed side-by-side with images of death, destruction, and pain.

Photography and Rhetoric

Photography and writing are full of rhetorical choices. There are two distinct rhetorical situations people find themselves in concerning photography: taking a photograph and consuming a photograph. Photographers and journalists in the interwar period “celebrated technology while embracing spontaneity and improvisation; these artists captured the spirit, vitality, and invention of a new age” (“Photography from the Interwar Period”). Teju Cole adds to this, writing: “Art is always difficult, but it is especially difficult when it comes to telling other people’s stories. And it is ferociously difficult when those others are tangled up in your history and you are tangled up in theirs. What honors those we look at, those whose stories we try to tell, is work that acknowledges their complex sense of their own reality” (16).

In her article “Sight-Seeing in School”, Good deconstructs the rhetorical strategies industries used to promote visual tools in classrooms during the interwar period. “Common themes included their efficiency in transmitting knowledge to learners with minimal effort; the economy of educating large numbers of students with a single device; the ability to arouse the interests of learners through vivid images, sounds, and emotional appeals” (105). These rhetorical themes apply to how photography can be used in travel narratives, too. Simply put, photography can be used as a meaning-making process. The act of moving in a space and using a tool to collect and preserve experiences assists in people crafting perceptions and opinions on communities, places, and people.
The camera obscura (translated from Latin as “dark chamber”) was useful and popular with scientists as well as artists. Its creation comes from a desire to gain a better perspective on distance, parallelism, and perception of an image or object. Simply put, a camera obscura is a small hole in a darkened room allowed for just enough light to filter in and project the image of whatever was on the other side of the wall in the dark room. At times, paper was used along with screens to capture images; an artist would trace the reflected image on paper or screen by using a mirror to flip the image so it was facing the viewer instead of being upside down. By tracing the image from the camera obscura onto paper or screen, artists could work on perspective and scope in their drawings. The opportunity to be able to achieve a near perfect perspective of an image was too good to pass up. The camera obscura eventually morphed from rooms to boxes to give artists more mobility and range for where they could draw and paint. Mathematicians used the camera obscura to test theories, improve understanding of optics, and stargaze.

Photography can simultaneously affirm and disorient, and unsettle a person’s worldview. Photography and travel also require people to physically interact with the world around them. Cronin notes that maps “demonstrate how much translation has to be done, if only to justify their narrative role as interpreter of the scenes they witness” (36). Within an Interwar context, photography works along these same lines. Map-making and photography require someone to navigate a certain space or place. The map and camera have certain features that assist the user with becoming familiar with, and remembering, the space they are in; and, most importantly, maps and cameras encourage a sharing of information. Maps are traded and shared to make traveling easier and more memorable. When people take photographs and share those photographs with others, the photographer can argue or explain their reason for taking the photograph in the first place. Maps and cameras in the 20s, 30s, and 40s gave travelers more room to explore and expand their understanding of place, space, and movement across borders near and far from home. But, it took time for cameras to bear resemblance to the high-speed, sleek types people see today. The development of the modern camera has humble beginnings: a small hole, some science, and a lot of light.

**Conclusion**

Cameras, then and now, are used to report, identify, and document events worldwide. Yet they were—are—more than static pieces of technology. Photographers have to be acutely aware of space, weight, posture, and the methodical steps needed to take the photo (and keep the film safe) for development later. The camera and photographer are both active makers and consumers of the surrounding spaces they occupy. The dual functions of photography—freedom and oppression—remain constant today. There’s no denying that fact. The changes made in photography since the daguerreotype paved the way for flexibility and creativity in terms of who gets to take pictures, where, and when pictures are taken, why the pictures should exist, and how those pictures are developed. If anything, the rapid changes in types of cameras, film, and development processes show that “The photographer inevitably transforms her subject simply by framing it” (On Photography 20). The subject of an image is not the only thing transformed here; rather, the photographer, the space, and the subject in a photo undergo change.

All of this change, experimentation, and development means that photography was a dire and necessary tool for cultural and social interaction. Journalists, photographers, and political figures alike use photography to solidify (or debunk) truths, expand knowledge about the world, and keep in circulation certain themes and goals like control, power, violence, and so forth. Travel and travel photography only exacerbated these goals. And the fascinating part is that not only photography, but photographers and travel, too, underwent rapid change and adaptability to keep pace with the trends in technology.

The question that can be explored, then, is how do all of the changes from daguerreotype to rangefinding cameras change the definition—and purpose of—photography? In my application, we will explore how women used photography to help define how they move through space as well as how they juxtapose their stories with the stories of others. After all, there is a big difference between how someone makes, tells, and shares “Their story” versus stories about someone/something else.
Introduction

The interwar years, and the travel narrative I have constructed a century later, are undeniably politically and culturally charged. Questions of space and place, gender norms, privilege, and power are spaced throughout this dissertation (especially this chapter). It was impossible for me to use a single theory to examine these travel narratives and photographs made by each woman because there are so many layers to writing, experiencing, and sharing travel stories with the public. By examining the more prominent theoretical threads in these travel narratives, I was able to gain a comprehensive look at how each woman used photography, travel writing, and rhetoric to "mak[e] an external journey alongside the more vital internal journey, learning about herself and the outer world along the way" (Crispin Introduction). Using cultural rhetorics, feminist geography, narrative theory, and visual rhetorics, I triangulate personal liberation, power, and privilege within each travel narrative and question the rhetorical choices these women made while traveling. I thought it would help if we walked through the choices I made in regards to the narratives and theories (aka "interpretive lenses") I used to make this dissertation. Uden notes: "The travel text, then, is itself a meeting point, a space in which authorities are explored and recombined. The author writes—or writes over—the places she sees and experiences, combining literary and lived experience in a palimpsest of ever-accumulating layers" (6-7).

This dissertation is a meeting point, too—a space where feminist theory, rhetorical strategy, archival work, and arts-based inquiry collide into research that endeavors to strengthen the position of women's life writing as viable scholarly inquiry. Some thoughts I have at the moment are these:

- Who's stories are left out of photography and women's travel writing?
- What does writing over the places and people we see and experience look like?
- How are these women framing their photography and writing?
- Am I writing over these Interwar narratives of these women by making my dissertation on how I perceive their work?

"The writing does not create us, but in the act of writing we are; by writing we reaffirm and proclaim our being in the here and now"—R.P. Yagelski, 2009
These women are all long gone; they cannot vocally defend their positionality, use of gender norms, or awareness of privilege. Yet, their narratives remain here—molded in the past and situated in the present—with us. While written recollections of experiences add depth to historical events, it is up to readers to be cognizant of how and when they purposely gloss and/or “write over” the narratives of others. Photography, too, can and does layer over, enhance, and erase the narratives of others. In this case, I posit that travel narratives are still being expanded by the layers of theory and practice we put upon them in research. And, like the women before me, I had to pull research and practices from a variety of places in order to rigorously investigate the works of Aloha, Maillart, and Gruber. As I found my theories, I also formed some main questions I wanted to tackle throughout my dissertation, namely:

- how do these women abide by and/or subvert gender roles during the Interwar Period?
- how do these women frame their travel writing and photography?
- whose stories are left out of women’s travel writing and photography?
- do I follow in their footsteps with my travel narratives, or are we as a society too interconnected and attached to do so?
- can we still have travel narratives like those from the Interwar period, or are we as a society too interconnected and attached to do so?

Essentially, I will use cameras from the ’30s and ’40s to make a travel narrative to juxtapose with travel narratives from the Interwar period. From there, I will use cultural rhetorics, feminist geography, narratology, and visual rhetoric to investigate Aloha’s, Maillart’s, Gruber’s, and my own travel narrative and question the rhetorical choices we made as we crafted our narratives for the public. I will simultaneously question the rhetorical moves of Interwar women and myself and constellate the results here in a multimodal way.

Each of these theories provides insight into how I crafted this dissertation, from analysis to construction to design. Although the narratives and experiences these women wrote about captivated my interest, I found myself getting frustrated with the lack of information on how these women used cameras to make their works: did they have a hard time physically maneuvering the equipment on their trips? How did they feel about developing film? Why didn’t we get to learn about these processes, too? After I mulled it over, I instinctively knew I’d need to use a mix of theories and techniques in order to dig deeper into the travel narratives in the Interwar period. I also knew that the only way I would be able to truly appreciate the rhetorical strategies these women used was if I went hands-on myself.

I searched for the same (if not similar) cameras that the women used to make their works and set about doing the same for my research. As I built this dissertation page-by-page I realized that Yagelski was right: in writing this dissertation I am reaffirming my positionality of a white feminist rhetorician who is examining the trailblazers of writers from our past to better appreciate not only our present and future, but the past, current, and future history of women’s narratives, as well.

And, I suppose, the focus on being in the “here and now” is what I needed to anchor me in this research. Too often I find myself looking far back or far forward into the future and, as a result, gloss over the present. I found out fairly quickly that I had to anchor myself to the present to fully comprehend all the steps that are involved in using Interwar technology. The interpretive lenses and technologies I use in this dissertation reinforce my thoughts: each piece has a sharp focus on the “here and now,” it is by weaving these practices together that I create a framework in which to analyze and appreciate their rhetorical moves and my own.

You know the saying “If you want something right, do it yourself?” Learning how to operate and physically maneuver Interwar cameras was thrilling—but also equally draining. I learned a whole lot about these tools (and developing film) by making lots—and I mean lots—of mistakes. Right after this picture was taken, I realized that I exposed the wrong side of the plate, so my photo did not, in fact, come out. Don’t worry: I eventually took a successful photo with the camera! It just...took a while to get the hang of it.
Therefore, in this chapter I will take time to show my selection process for the travel narratives, how each theory functions in analyzing women’s travel narratives, and the value of synthesizing those theories together to make a comprehensive and constellation approach to wrestle with rhetoric, travel writing, and photography.

**No EasyFeat: Choosing the Narratives**

In order to pick the women I wanted to study, I had to narrow my gaze from a century’s worth of women’s travel writing to a shorter time frame. Before I started this dissertation, I had decided to make my area of specialization “women’s travel narratives.” When I started compiling the narratives I wanted to read for my comprehensive exam, I did not set a geographical boundary; rather, I gave myself a wide range of time to wrangle with a century’s worth of work written by women.

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### Women’s Travel Memoir Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solo Expedition (Enlisted by others)</th>
<th>Pair Expedition (Enlisted by others)</th>
<th>Group Expedition (Enlisted by others)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The White Mouse:</strong> The Autobiography of Australian Wartime Legend by Nancy Wake (1965)</td>
<td><strong>The Valleys of the Assassins and Other Persian Travels</strong> by Freya Stark (1934)</td>
<td><strong>In Moroco</strong> by Edith Wharton (1920)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rome and a Villa</strong> by Eleanor Clark (1952)</td>
<td><strong>Travels with Myself and Another: A Memoir</strong> by Martha Gellhorn (1979)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A Flying Girl:</strong> Travel Tales of an Exotic British Airways Cabin Crew by Amanda Epe (2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>An Age of License</strong> by Lucy Keasley (2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Interest Solo Expedition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self-Interest Pair Expedition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self-Interest Group Travel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tracks:</strong> A Woman’s Solo Trek across 1700 Miles of Australian Outback by Robyn Davidson (1980)</td>
<td><strong>My Journey to Lhasa</strong> by Alexandra David-Neel (1927)</td>
<td><strong>M.F.K. Fisher A Life in Letters</strong> (1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Hurry to Get Home</strong> by Emily Hahn (2000)</td>
<td><strong>All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes</strong> by Maya Angelou (1986)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self Made Organizational Chart for Women’s Memoirs 2021.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Returning Home/Searching for Ancestry Solo</strong></td>
<td><strong>Returning Home/Searching for Ancestry Group Travel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return</strong> by Marjane Satrapi (2005)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Freedom &amp; Going Solo</strong></td>
<td><strong>Freedom &amp; Traveling in Pairs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Freedom &amp; Group Travel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nan’s Pilgrim</strong> by Lisa Dempster (2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adventure, Romance and War in the Far East: The Iris Hay-Edie Diary: A Historical Memoir</strong> by Iris Hay-Edie (2015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leisure &amp; Going Solo</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leisure &amp; Traveling in Pairs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Leisure &amp; Group Travel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Nomad: Diaries of Isabelle Eberhardt</strong> by Isabelle Eberhardt (1987)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>America Day by Day</strong> by Simone de Beauvoir (1950)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strangers Have the Best Candy</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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**Legend**

- **Red**: Changed Categories After Reading
- **Orange**: Essay
- **Yellow**: Journal/Vollogue
- **Green**: Memoir
- **Blue**: Letters
- **Purple**: Diaries
- **Pink**: Photos & Graphic Novels
In order to organize the vast number of texts, I made a chart and thematically organized the narratives based on these characteristics: “Expeditions (Enlisted by others),” “Travel for Self-Interest,” “Returning Home/Searching for Ancestry,” “Freedom Travel,” and “Leisure Travel.” Then, I made three conditions in which those women traveled: Solo, In Pairs, and Group Travel. Fast-forward to post-comp exams, and I found myself facing a dilemma: I had to pick and choose the narratives I wanted to analyze for my dissertation. It was no easy feat.

It was difficult, especially since most, if not all, of the travel narratives I found in my comprehensive exam reading list were captivating in one way or another. However, the more I dug into those narratives the more I realized that the writing from the Interwar period kept me invested in their lived experiences in a way that the modern narratives did not; I don’t think that was necessarily a bad thing, per se, but recognizing that investment helped to trudge through picking a time to focus on for this dissertation.

It was a tedious process to narrow down texts that were written and published during the Interwar period. Some authors, like Maillart, had a much more diverse collection of texts than Aloha Wanderwell, whose main written piece is *A Call to Adventure!* The authors balanced one another out in terms of content; Wanderwell created eight different films during the Interwar period that connected to travels, whereas Maillart and Gruber provided texts that bleed from WWI and into WWII and events that occurred in between. There were also women from this time period that were in my Comprehensive Exam Reading List but did not make the “final cut,” like Edith Wharton, Iris Hay-Edie, and Nancy Wake—mainly because they did not have photography to aid their narratives.

If you enjoy WWII history, please do yourself a favor and go read Nancy Wake’s *The White Mouse: The Autobiography of Australia’s Wartime Legend* (1985). Wake’s narrative is as gripping as it is funny; she was the only female spy in her squadron and made her work count: she escorted refugees and was one of the number 1 most wanted by the Gestapo and never got caught. It broke my heart to take her out of my dissertation. I never could find out if she had any photos archived in a museum somewhere; nevertheless, she deserves mention here. There is a movie about her life and autobiography on Amazon, too, but honestly? The book is better than the movie.

I would like to reiterate that the women from my reading list, and the women in this dissertation, were not the only women making travel narratives and photography in the Interwar period. Tsuineko Sasamoto, Harriet Chalmers Adams, Zora Neale Hurston, and Juanita Harrison are a few women whose works I would want to investigate thoroughly in future projects. I would encourage you, too, to look at the works of these women and bring their writing and photography into the forefront of discussions on gender, travel, and rhetoric. In the end, I decided to find three women that traveled globally and were not restricted to a certain continent or country. I posit that placing Wanderwell, Maillart, and Gruber in conversation with one another will show they collectively agree “that the structures which had long kept women subordinate were illusory and mutable: in their writing and their lifestyles, they wanted to break boundaries and forge new narratives for women” (Wolff 9). I will also add that these women provide a sliding scale of “women as object, women observing, and women observing and being observed.”

While Aloha could be called a poster child of 1920s travel, Maillart and Gruber give rigor and intimate looks at traveling alone, with others, and documenting the world around them from a more mature perspective. These women balance one another out in terms of experience, power, writing styles, and understandings of self, of place, and travel. I will add here that although I focus on Wanderwell, Maillart, and Gruber in this dissertation, there were by no means the only women making travel narratives in the Interwar period.

I decided to put these three women in conversation with one another to see how they inherited and used their power as women, workers, and travelers to interact with the world around them—especially since each woman uses their power and privilege differently across the Interwar period. And, by putting my own works in conversation with theirs, I am able to see how I follow or subvert gender roles from the Interwar period as well as wrestle with my own use of power and privilege during travel. All four of us wrestle differently with narrative agency; that agency spreads into how we took our photographs, made our travel narratives, and situated our writing to the public. But the thread that weaves all of our works together is this: we use travel, writing, and photography to transform and better understand ourselves, our motives, and desires.
Mapping the Constellation: Choosing a Theoretical Framework

I knew, for sure, that the rhetorical framework for this dissertation could not be linear or bound to a single theory/approach; it felt wrong to restrict my analysis in that way. Much like the maps and stories in *A Call to Adventure!, The Cruel Way*, and *Witness*, this collection of theories crosses and re-crosses borders, "facilitat[ing] community-based performances that reconstruct or blur both physical and abstract boundaries" (Given 143). I separate each of these theories below for the sake of clarity, but in my application I constellate them to give a comprehensive analysis of each travel narrative. The synthesis of these theories provides a lens through which readers can watch and reflect on each woman's rhetorical approach to writing, gender, photography, travel, and the self.

Cultural Rhetorics

Cultural rhetorics can be defined as exploring practices that can be associated with cultures via space, literature, and activities like cooking, dancing, and storytelling (Selber and Cruikshank). All of the women (including me) write about the communities and cultures they see while traveling—since those stories diversify their narratives it makes sense to analyze how and why they write about those cultures. Cultural rhetoric goes hand-in-hand with my research and the other theories I incorporate here—culture is the thread that weaves narrative, technology, space, and movement together for Interwar travel. Foley believes that there is a weaving of rhetoric as purpose and persuasion in cultural rhetorics, and I posit that his thoughts hold true in this application, as well: "An ethnic culture's cultural practices and forms are, therefore, whatever the group invents from their present struggle and from their past. Such a process is ceaseless, is always reflective of deeper societal contradictions, and is always some unpredictable synthesis of the old and new" (166).

Critiquing how these women leaned into and subverted their own cultural identities and those of others provides a foundation for me to excavate moments of ignorance, racism, and power. I am using cultural rhetoric to give myself and others room to wrestle with questions like:

- What acts of silencing did these women use on cultural communities as they traveled?
- How do we (all of us) better understand the connections between culture, space, and narrative?

I can also use cultural rhetorics to analyze photos within these travel narratives, like this one for example: Ruth Gruber took this photograph of two hunters gathering furs for trade in the Soviet Arctic and published it in her 1939 travel narrative, *I Went to the Soviet Arctic*.

This photo, along with several others Gruber gathered while traveling through Russia from 1935-1936, shows the continued economic strength of fur trading within Yakut communities across Igarka and other cities across rural Russia. When Gruber first released this photograph, audiences might have been drawn to the conflicts with fur trading or to Gruber's interest in highlighting the political and economic successes of women in the Russian Arctic. Alone, this photo depicts a slice of the lifestyle of men and women living in the Soviet Arctic a century ago; this is why I want to study the writing and photography of these women together; combined, the text and images give a whole view of how each woman embraced and interacted with cultures they came in contact with. The writing and images connect and constellate with ongoing social, political, and cultural movements during the Interwar period.

Constellating, too, is key in my research and used heavily in cultural rhetorics. In short, constellating means finding and exploring the threads and connections between ideas, cultures, practices, spaces, person(s), or whatever you want to investigate ("Our Story Begins Here"). Now, it’s best known as a practice instead of a term. It’s best visualized. I think, as a map on a whiteboard; you start with the main topic or thing you want to constellate and then work outwards from there. Each time you make a connection to a related thing, topic, or idea, you need to think about what both things or topics represent to you, the space they are in, each of their contexts, and histories. As you make more connections, you will see that your constellation will grow and become more in depth until it’s finished.
Each part of the constellation (in theory) should affect, be affected by, or build upon a different part of the constellation and help represent and define the constellation as a whole. What’s important to remember is that cultural rhetorics and constellating require us to engage in an ongoing meaning-making practice in order to learn about a people, identity, narrative, and/or culture—which is perfect for my approach to these travel narratives from a period of engagement and ongoing movement (‘Our Story Begins Here’). The cultural is social. I believe Aloha, Gruber, and Mallart also constellated their own practices in order to articulate their experiences and memories.

In “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” Alcoff notes: “...a speaker’s location (which I take here to refer to their social location, or social identity), has epistemically significant impact on the speaker’s claims and can serve either to authorize or deauthorize one’s speech” (7). This notion has not diminished in the least from the Interwar period and continues to strain how women’s experiences are viewed by the public today. In this application, this means the juxtaposition between culture and class will be examined here in detail for each woman. All of these women (including myself) come from an upper middle-class background; examining their cultural interactions in this way will give insight into how they constructed their narratives for the public, as well. And, cultural rhetorics goes hand-in-hand with a look into how these women physically navigated the world on their travels; for that, we need to look at feminist geography.

**Feminist Geography**

Feminist Geography holds its roots in using feminist theory to the study of the environment and geographical space (Abu-Lughod, Blidon, Marianne and Sofia Zaragoza). It makes sense for me to use this theory as a cornerstone of my research since it directly requires me to see how women’s actions are affected by the places/spaces they occupy while moving from space to place to country. At the core of this field lies the relationship between the “researcher and the researched”—much like in narratology when one attempts to distinguish the line between author and audience. In this case, I believe it will be ideal to build upon when analyzing each woman’s approach to retelling their experiences about who they met/where they met to public audiences, including my own. Movement is important here, as people can examine physical and rhetorical shifts that occur within a work; for travel narratives, tracking both of these paths of movement is essential. Attached to this discussion is how these women dealt with the female gaze and upheld feminist ideologies, too, while traveling.

The origins of Feminist Geography stem from within Second Wave feminism in the 1970s in a not-so-distant world where the public and academia came together to approach the problem of recognizing women’s voices in research and work; unfortunately, that collaboration continues to be strained due to marginalization of women’s research, praxis, and advances in pedagogy (McClish and Bacon). In this application, I argue that this research is an attempt to engage in feminist intervention—much like travel transforms the self, scaffolding Feminist Geography with narratology, cultural rhetorics, and visual rhetorics will transform the way people traverse across borders and interact with people around them. My hope is that this research intervenes at the intersection of ignorance, privilege, and power. A Dictionary of Human Geography points out that: “Importantly, feminist scholarship has also examined the ways in which gendered divisions are historically and geographically differentiated, varying over time, and across space and cultures” [Rogers et al].

During the Interwar period, this geographic, gendered, and social difference manifested itself as restrictive laws, restricted mobility for lower-class women and women of color, and snide comments from companies that thought women just needed to stay home. Take this short letter to the Royal Geographic Society, for example:

“A lady explorer? A traveler in skirts? The notion’s just a trifle too seraphic: Let them stay and mind the babies. Or hem our ragged shirts. But they mustn’t, can’t and shan’t be geographic.”

-Letter to the Royal Geographic Society, June 1893

Unfortunately, giving a “traveler in skirts” the side-eye in the Interwar period did not ease up; if anything, it got worse. Women were looked at as objects of intrigue and derision, depending on who was doing he looking. And, the tendency to grasp for meaning and purpose from outward sources did not ease up, either. The question, then, is what social, political, and cultural shifts put strains on this struggle for women during this time? Women like Nellie Bly, Ella Maillart, Isabelle Eberhardt, and others echoed the same concerns for autonomy that would resound a century later: “Instead of looking in myself for what my soul requires, why do I look in others, where I know it cannot be found?” (The Nomad 38).

The Royal Geographic Society (RGS) began as an elite society that promoted “advancements in geographical sciences”; however, the underlying motives of expansion and control soon became apparent as it used exploration in colonized countries as a means to craft documents for The Geographical Journal. During the Interwar period, RGS was reluctant to allow women to join their ranks of British geographers. The letter to the left, I believe, gives a clear reason why.

Many women would argue that there is a distinct difference between traveling through spaces versus being analyzed during her travels through different spaces. Mary Doane agrees. In *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, she makes this claim:
“If for the female spectator there is a certain over-presence of the image—she is the image” (4). But are travelers and spectators one in the same—should they be? Like women from the Interwar period, I, too, am the gazee and gazed upon during travel, and, like my predecessors, I too will wrestle with the effects that positionality has on my writing and photography. This idea is interdisciplinary; Feminist Geography, narrative, theory, and anthropology all confront this practice. Choosing and constructing a subject, creating distance between writer/photographer and reader, and constructing places intersect with framing a subject. With that in mind, some questions that I will wrestle with that connect with feminist geography include:

- Am I intentionally or unintentionally objectifying the people I photograph?
- How do I avoid using the places and spaces I photograph as a backdrop for my dissertation?
- Do I have a firm understanding of how I move around in a place with my cameras?

Thurlow and Jaworski also support this claim, stating: “Through our ways of seeing and ‘doing’ the world we become both viewing subjects and knowing subjects, with a sense of the world as both apprehendable and knowable” (490). And, if certain women have more power and privilege than others, those women would have different ways of ‘doing’ the world that might raise cause for concern. Travel writing, as a genre, has characterized the image of the female traveler from rebellious to cautious; and, for the most recent modern woman, to “the woman who carries her own bag”. Baumgarten explains: the prototype of the woman who carries her own bag, who travels by and for herself, for her own, personal, and financial interests, is a major signifier of the liberating effects of modernity, in the metropole and overseas, and it rewrites the narratives of male exploration, migration, and tourism (91).

The purpose of travel, then—as well as how these women moved in different places—work hand-in-hand for feminist geographers (and those like me who wish to analyze women’s travel writing using this theory). In A Companion to Feminist Geography, Nelson and Seger propose: ‘Feminist Geography, anchored in the body, moves across scale, linking the personal and quotidian to urban cultural landscapes, deforestation, ethno-nationalist struggles, and global political economies’ (2). In other words, power, gender, and narrative go together for this approach, too—especially since all of the narratives weave these parts together to depict their travel experiences as a whole. A key distinction within feminist geography, the Interwar narratives, and my research is how place and space manifest in writing and photography. Most important in this application is how these women travelers intervene with pre-existing cultural, political, and global conventions using feminist practices. For my research, place is a location instilled with meaning by those who occupy it, whereas space is a location where groups can interact with each other (Massey). Here is a quick comparison of the two:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space (location where groups can interact)</th>
<th>Place (instill meaning in location)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus Library</td>
<td>“Study Place” in Starbucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery Store</td>
<td>“Our Spot” favorite restaurant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Parking Lot</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A self-made comparison between definitions of place and space using Massey’s Space, Place, and Gender (1996)

Feminist Geography can constellation body, location, culture, and language to be studied in tandem. It seems fitting to investigate how place and space affectwhat a woman chooses to write about in her works (Clark). Physical difference is not the only way feminist geography can be used; though social and gendered differences can be examined in this way, too. The three women examine in this application vastly differ from one another in terms of narrative agency, cultural politics, and identity building; yet their travel was a catalyst for cultural, social, and political awareness outside of their respective communities. If the social is cultural, then making global connections can be powerful in its own right. According to Billon and Zaragoza, “Global connections and feminist solidarities are still very much needed in order to promote and extend feminist geography” (915). Using feminist geography to analyze women’s travel narratives in this period reinforces the need to question how women wrote about the “transformative act of crossing an alien space rather than the more defensive act of occupying a familiar place”, and, if they (and I) found a difference between the two (16).
The separation of place and space is also important in terms of how these women (myself included) wrote about and took images of the peoples and places they wrote about in their narratives. For example, at the start of my research, my writing and photography centered more on places–locations that held deep meaning with me due to previous experiences–than spaces. That hesitancy, on my part, stemmed from being afraid to approach and focus on people, places, and spaces. This transformation of a space to place (and the reverse of it) carries several power moves:

- Are you authenticating the place and space you occupy as truthfully as possible?
- Are you manifesting different descriptions of space and place via narrative and photography that distort the truth for a certain audience or purpose?
- Are you erasing the stories and truths of others?
- Are you cognizant of the layers of narratives that come before, during, and after you occupy a space and place?
- Do you define the place by your own terms?

Truth in writing and photography are hot topics in current research. Since these questions are connected, I am curious to see how much historical, cultural, and social context these women include in their works. There are moments that Aloha, Maillart, and Gruber fought against that hesitancy and wrestled with it, as well. Mewshaw notes, “We are shaped by where we are. Place works on us just as do events and people, and we become—or have the capacity to become—different people in different settings”; this is tangibly true in women’s travel narratives. Each of the women I am exploring made explicit decisions on writing, travel, security, and interaction that reflected or was impacted by the spaces and places they occupied.

One example of how I use Feminist Geography to study the narratives is to investigate how women describe the places/spaces they move through, analyzing the rhetorical choices each makes. Every chapter and photo was tailored for a specific audience, which meant some words and images did not make it on the page. For travel narratives, especially, the narrative and photography work together to illuminate experience and place for readers. As I read through each narrative, I wondered if these women gave more personal importance to rural spaces over urban ones—or vice versa. I also wondered how much editorial power they had in regards to providing enough historical and social context so readers could easily identify those places/spaces on a map. In her book Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London, Elkin argues rural spaces and places give way to vibrant, poised writing, meanwhile cityscapes can be seen as spaces “where women have been empowered, by plunging into the heart of them, and walking where they’re not meant to” (75). I wonder, then, did these women see different spaces like St. Petersburg, the Khyber Pass, and Tokyo the same way? Did each of them feel empowered as a traveler moving through those cities and mountains, or were they more inclined to claim ownership of a space thanks to political prestige? I am immediately inclined to say that, no, none of us moved through overseas spaces and places the same way—especially since we brought varying perceptions and ideologies about those countries with us during travel.

Feminist Geography helps me understand and appreciate the flexibility and restrictions on movement within the travel narratives, and how gender factors into that equation. It foregrounds my exploration of these narratives and enhances the way that narrative, visual rhetoric, and gender studies constellate with one another. The flexibility of movement each woman had during travel can be traced back to power, political, social, and gendered power. To be sure, there is no doubt that war contexts shifted spaces into places for the public—women like Maillart, Gruber, and Aloha enhanced that place-personal connection with their works that explored how people interact with each other and their environments. But power remains at the forefront of their travel experiences. The gendered and political power these women held allowed them higher amounts of access and opportunities to benefit from imperialized countries. I am deploying Feminist Geography in order to make transparent the actions and repercussions of erasing the narratives of others, the shift of transforming spaces into places, and how I describe the ways in which I move in different places and among different people.

The place from which power is exercised is often a hidden place. When we try to pin it down, the center always seems to be somewhere else. Yet we know that this phantom center, elusive as it is, exerts a real, undeniable power over the entire framework of our culture, and over the ways we think about it. In Chapter 2, “The Privilege and Problem of Narrative Authority,” Burton begins by writing: “The twentieth century’s geopolitical transformations threaten the privileges that modern European subjects presume to be theirs: mobility, autonomy, ease of association, and the right to represent. To presume freedom of movement is to expect deference” (28). Wanderwell and her contemporaries approach their presumptions differently, with Aloha holding a tighter grip on her privilege than Maillart or Gruber. But there is no doubt that power and privilege directly affected how, when, and where women traveled in the Interwar period—by themselves or otherwise.

Feminist Geography builds bridges to other theories connected to my research. As a tool and analytical guide, it fills in holes left in other schools of thought. For example, Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu note that “[s]pace is a relatively neglected dimension of narrative, especially when compared to time” (16). Articulating how we perceive space impacts our telling and sharing of events; feminism geography builds upon narrative, which builds upon cultural rhetoric, and so on. Newberry writes emphatically about her struggle with the female gaze as well as her own self-criticism: “The mirror is alluring. It is a magnifying glass where I might glimpse the surface of the cultural text that is myself. A device that measures “beauty” to be reflected back and judged by the viewer? That measures the achievement of a feminine identity? A measure of control, through which we discipline our own bodies? Or a porthole to another place?” (27).
On one hand, we could say the travel narrative is our mirror—we could ask how our travel experience contributes to measuring control, influence, or the status quo of feminine gender roles. Our other hand might be tied behind our back due to our self doubt, or preconceived notions of beauty, cultural text, and success in travel writing industries and beyond. Or, hopefully, our other hand is not bound at all. Short leaves readers with this thought on interwar women’s narratives: “‘through exploring their own encounters with the foreign, the other and the unknown, each traveler considered in these articles begins to re-examine concepts around notion, gender and class to formulate her own range of identifications as a political and social agent, a real modern woman’ (3). Feminist geography, then, is a perfect means in which to look at not only how we navigate space, but how we carry societal and personally construed conceptions of gender roles with us during travel.

**Narratology**

Narratology, or the study of narrative, is crucial to my work. I need to study the form, genre, and style in which these women and I fashion our narratives. Using this theoretical framework allows me to attempt to answer questions like:

- How am I defining travel narrative in this work?
- Are these narratives defined as memoir or autobiographical?
- How does power affect narratives?
- Is there really a tangible difference between women exclusively writing about travel experiences versus the emotions felt during travel?
- And, most importantly, why is there continuous disdain for studying memoir in the first place?

I believe it is important to define what I mean when I say travel narrative here. In this dissertation a woman’s travel narrative can be equated to a travel memoir or a text (written, visual, and/or multimodal) that discusses a set moment in time where a woman reflects on their travel to a space and/or place. All of the women’s narratives I examine here (mine included) abide by this definition. And that definition is by no means prescriptive for all travel narratives. In fact: “It (the travel narrative) is a kind of evolution that betrays its long ancestry because the more narrow group of narratives that we have come to call the modern travel book has inherited elements of all of its predecessors as well as its close cousins. This complex family, then, includes memoirs, journals, and ships’ logs, as well as narratives of adventure, exploration, journey, and escape” (Blanton 2). The main qualifier here that upholds my definition of travel narrative is the scope of time that’s discussed within the text; and, the narrative is considered whole with image and text—the photographs are not supplementary. I am leaning into the “snapshot” moments that are afforded in travel and these travel narratives, respectively. Although, I do believe a deep dive in each of these author’s works needs to occur in rhetorical and narrative scholarship; and, thanks to other researchers, this goal is being attained.

In the literary world, memoir can be broadly defined as a writer’s gaze on a specific period of events within the author’s life. It could be said that memoirs are in direct opposition to autobiography, which very well may contribute to its lack of research in scholarship. According to Doloughan, memoirs are “a consciously self-reflexive and ‘literary’ book which reads current personal and societal concerns and interests in relation to the views and insights of past travelers and border crossers” (110). This definition goes hand-in-hand with the idea that our narratives are not ours alone: our experiences are affected by those around us who contribute to our sharing and retelling of stories, experiences, and life events. This is an idea that I defend in this work; although not all the women portray this perspective in their narratives, it is one that I will critique as we read through Wanderwell, Gruber, Maillart, and my pieces.

Unlike memoir, the content in an autobiography spans the entire lifetime of the author. It trades a narrow view of a moment with an elongated prose that can span thirty, forty, even fifty years of experience. In my case, it makes sense that the texts I analyze here should be labeled as memoir over autobiography due to their scope and depth. Unfortunately, even with the bounds made in narratological scholarship (Rak, Showalter, and Lanser) memoir is still seen as a lesser form of autobiography. This argument focuses on three sub-questions:

- Where did memoir originate?
- How do we define memoir/life-writing?
- Why is memoir seen as lesser than autobiographical writing?

Burke notes that “rhetoric is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew” (41), so it stands to reason that the definition and construction of memoir has shifted over the years, as well.

The genealogy of memoir could be said to originate from Augustine’s On Confessions—the first time when society got their hands on “a consciously self-reflexive and literary book which reads current personal and societal concerns and interests in relation to the views and insights of past travelers and border crossers” (119).
Yet, like Showalter, I wonder “Is difference a matter of style? Genre? Experience? Or is it produced by the reading process, as some textual critics would maintain?” (183). Honestly, I believe we manifested the stark difference between memoir and autobiography through the rhetorical choices we made when documenting and sharing our experiences with others. Life writing (and memoir) in my view has just as much room for rigor, ingenuity, and depth as autobiographies do—the real difference lies in how authors depict the time of their experiences for readers. The choice to focus on a shortened or longer amount of time is rhetorical—which is why I think difference in women’s travel writing is could be a blend of style, genre, experience, and the reading process because you cannot separate these from one another; the choices we make in each category inform the next steps we take in crafting a narrative.

Phelan and Rabinowitz propose that authors are “agents who construct the text”—but Cruikshank, Clark, Noy, and I wholeheartedly disagree. Wander well, Gruber, Maillart, and I are more than “agents who construct the text”—we fill in the gaps of autobiography, those murky spaces where we cannot fully see the fact that “narratives are collective in the sense that no narrative belongs to the teller alone: they also incorporate the narratives of others” (Lanser 6). In Inside of Time, Ruth Gruber weaves the experiences and stories of men and women who had settled in Alaska during World War II with her own descriptions of Alaskan wilderness, rural life, and cultural traditions. Meanwhile, in Forbidden Journey, Maillart layers political and cultural commentary from passersby she meets as she makes her way from China to Afghanistan. Wander well does the opposite and uses the political and economic disparity of others as the backdrop for her own travels in her narrative.

All of us should remember that with storytelling and narrative-crafting comes a certain amount of power, and with that power comes a line of questioning about privilege. The questions of who gets to tell certain stories, and when, undoubtedly affects how and when readers can access these narratives. All four of us women used our positionality as writers with external support to get the opportunity to share our narratives with you readers. Each one of us, in our way, wrestles with the privilege and access that comes with that power. External support (in this case, funding) can lessen the barriers between a narrative and its audience; and yet, the source of external support can also negatively affect how readers view the narrative (and its source of power) in the first place.

There are scholars, both from the Interwar period and now, that would argue narrative study does not have a solid foundation in scholarship—not there are others, like Lawler, who would disagree. Lawler writes that “narrative is a necessary (though not a sufficient) mode of understanding the world” (38). I disagree—narrative is lived, human experience. The benefit of narrative is that people and places are all layered with stories and—although we do not live it—our stories are not wholly our own. Much like this dissertation, narratives are woven from numerous sources, places, and experiences. Both my research and narratology afford to “demonstrate how much translation has to be done, if only to justify their narrative role as interpreter of the scenes they witness”; and, by extension, the conflicts witnesses cause during their travels (36). As I and other narrative inquiry, we should keep in mind rhetoricians uncover old wounds within Minh-ha’s words:

> The differences it [writing] brings about are differences not only in structure, in the play of structures and of surfaces, but also in timbre and in silence. We—you and me, she and he, we and they—we differ in the content of the words, in the construction and weaving of sentences, but most of all, I feel, in the choice and mixing of utterances, the ethos, the tones, the places, the cuts, the pauses” (2).

The choice to remain silent or write about certain experiences is just as important as the methods we use to share those experiences. The ethos Minh-ha mentions here is what solidifies our authenticity to readers—there’s no doubt that Wander well, Maillart, and Gruber knew this from the get-go and, as a result, meticulously put effort into how they constructed their narrative and, by extension, how they articulated certain events.

Cruikshank and Pratt call for reimagining of rhetoric and narrative writing as transient, meaning-making processes that stray away from rigid, territorial identity practices. For my purposes, this means that I will be looking at how Interwar travel narratives and their authors describe traveling through spaces and, hopefully, see that their rhetorical strategies avoid defensive or empirical ideologies. We will see how Wander well, Gruber, Maillart, and I shift between identities of tourist and traveler: Do we use rhetoric and places we see as backdrops for our personal issues, or do we respect those places and the histories within them?

In the Interwar period, it was a struggle for women to be able to narrate and have their narratives deemed as “worthy” in narrative cannon; for a long period of time, only wealthy white women reaped the advances in mobility and travel. This meant that the stories from those women were the ones that were circulated—if they were shared at all. “Women’s travel texts are constructed in the process of interaction of colonial textual constraints and constraints of gender” (Mills 40). This interaction could take many forms: political sanctions to access/restrict travel in certain countries, insistence from travel agencies to travel to far-off countries and exotize the place and people for a profit; and, the most common situation for the women in this application, women using their positionality due to work to enter and move around countries.
Aloha and her contemporaries gained authority to publish their narratives thanks to work; although they had authority to write those narratives each woman exercised a different amount of narrative agency (which will be discussed at length in future chapters). Fleckenstein argues that “Two elements common to both epideictic and memoir—constructing a virtuous ethos and oscillating between public and private—function in tandem” in Frances E. Willard’s: A Wheel within A Wheel— I would argue this idea works for travel narratives and travel photography, as well (18). So, women in the Interwar period had to balance narrative agency, their social location, constraints of gender and colonial constraints in order to begin thinking about publishing a travel narrative. That list of struggles is by no means exhaustive, but it highlights the major restrictions for this deep dive into women’s Interwar travel narratives and photography.

The long-standing notion that women should write only about emotional growth rather than experience via travel needs to be broken down so that we can get to the heart of why faux travel memoirs—while entertaining—should not be the “gold standard” for women’s travel narratives (Crispin, Lanser and Showalter). Admittedly, women travel writers are not so rare anymore; we have evolved with the genre and are now creating new hybrid means of sharing our lived travel experiences. But I am concerned that only words will not be enough. Our experiences on the road, in places unknown need to be taken more seriously and be seen as more than particular—need to be seen as “universally” as men’s stories are. “Authenticity,” Burton writes, “becomes the avowed purpose of both journey and narrative. But whose authenticity, determined how, by whom, for what purposes, remains subjective and contestable” (164). Culture, space, and narrative have all been explored via theory, but there is one crucial part of travel narratives that is still missing from my earlier constellation: the visual.

**Visual Rhetorics**

Visual rhetoric, as a practice, falls under the larger umbrella of visual literacy— or being able to create and use visual images. In my research, I am using visual rhetoric to analyze and interpret the way Wanderwel, Maillart, Gruber, and myself acted in, and took knowledge from, different places, spaces, and events around the world. The photographs from these women, as well as the ones I made, will be analyzed in terms of representation and how those images support or subvert previous conceptions about place, women’s experience, and travel. Campelo, Aitken, and Gnoth argue "Visual rhetoric should address both parts of this [representational advertising] communication: the place on one side and consumers on the other side. The complexity resides in how to create coherent communication able to be perceived as real, genuine and truthful for both sides" (7). Juxtaposing representation of place and culture alongside how people consume those representations will be crucial in this research, especially since each woman used different techniques to craft their representations of places, people, women, and travel altogether.

Outside of the image, the crux of visual rhetoric revolves around communication and interaction—whether it is the viewer and image, viewer and author, or creator/author and the image. Visual rhetoric helps me see the cameras, developing, and images as rhetorical vehicles “for conversations (or silenced moments) on gender, race, and travel” (Foliard 14). I designed my research in a visual way to pay homage to those processes and reinvigorate these Interwar works with modern visual aids and technology. The images in these travel narratives are persuading me— you— all of us, really— to deeply invest in the narratives and experiences of these authors. Like Roland Barthes argues in *Camera Obscura*,” The Photograph belongs to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves [in my case, narrative and image] cannot be separated without destroying them both” (6). This collection of images has a mix of posed and in-action photos from the Interwar period and the present. The posed photos, especially, seem to draw us into a specific moment where time seems to stop; when, in fact, it keeps moving; both of the photos I took had a flurry of activity surrounding the subjects in both pictures.

**The Ethics of Photography**

A vital conversation that circulates around and within each of the above interpretive lenses is the conversation on the ethics of photography. Aloha, Maillart, Gruber, and I all made specific decisions on who, how, where, when, and why we took photographs of different people and places; and yet, I don’t doubt that there were moments where we glossed over the ethics of taking those photos in the first place. Several questions come to mind, like: “What stories do my photographs tell others?” “Did I gain consent from someone before taking a photograph of them?”, and “Am I preserving the person and place’s identity and privacy in my photographs?”

“Aloha, Maillart, Gruber, and I all made specific decisions on who, how, where, when, and why we took photographs of different people and places; and yet, I don’t doubt that there were moments where we glossed over the ethics of taking those photos in the first place. Several questions come to mind, like: “What stories do my photographs tell others?”, “Did I gain consent from someone before taking a photograph of them?”, and “Am I preserving the person and place’s identity and privacy in my photographs?”
Each of us navigated the ethics of photography differently, and I believe it important to acknowledge and wrestle with those differences here in this work. In “Objects of Love and Decay: Colonial Photographs in a Postcolonial Archive,” Liam Buckley argues “the ‘social lives’ of colonial photographs, as well as the places they currently inhabit (such as museums, coffee table books, online photograph galleries and auctions, traveling exhibits, and academic books), have received little attention” in anthropological research (254). I believe I extend that conversation here to my dissertation—a public-facing, academic document that contains colonial photographs analyzed in a postcolonial archive and context. As much as I would like to say otherwise, the photographs taken by these interwar women (and my own) do not provide a comprehensive or accurate view of the people, places, or moments within the images. The myth of authenticity and ethics of photography shape how we documented our experiences and constructed our narratives; in truth, it is an addictive and ostracizing cycle of immersion. We used cameras, film, and narrative to understand the world around us and document our experiences; meanwhile, we either acknowledged or ignored the fact that those very cameras and pieces of narrative distracted us from the genuine experience of travel in the first place. For now, though, we need to shift our attention to the tools used to make this dissertation. Don’t worry—we will circle back to talk about the cycle of immersion later on in this work.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, the goal is to give a snapshot, if you will, of four different women using photography and writing to inform how they interacted with the world around them. This could be classified as recovery work; however, there were hundreds of other women using writing and cameras to inform the world of what was happening outside of their homes and communities. By synthesizing my interpretive lenses together, readers gain a complex and comprehensive view into how women’s travel narratives and photography can be constructed and shared to the public. Although I wrote about each theory separately here for clarity, these theories will be constellated together in the individual chapters about Aloha, Mailart, and Gruber, as well as with my own travel narrative. To constellate these theories—my “interpretive lenses”—in this way, I am encouraging readers, scholars, and researchers to consider engaging in “shifts that prompt us to rethink how we read and contextualize literature.

The road to such a revised conception of literary studies leads, however, to a garden of forking paths” (Helgesson et. al, xii). I have paved a path forward into women’s travel narratives of the past with theories on gender, movement, culture, and power using three women who held varying degrees of control over what was said, which pictures were included, and which stories were written over/excluded from the public.

The second part of my “path” will go into depth about the technology—specifically analog cameras—that was used in making this dissertation. Self-expression, power, and mobility will continue to be prominent points of discussion regarding the use of Interwar cameras.

1935 is at her finger tips. Kodak ad. 1935.
Introduction

As I started reading works from Wanderwell and Maillart (and later, Gruber) I began to notice a theme: none of these women explicitly talked about working with their cameras. There are photos here and there that show the women using a camera, but little to no information on how they learned each camera’s functions and drawbacks. It was like there was a large amount of context missing from the narrative and photos themselves. The photos that appear in each travel narrative are a mix of life in action and what Sontag calls “the photogenic.” Nowadays, taking a selfie at a landmark event is sometimes seen as more important than the experience of the event itself. I wondered, though, what were the choices these women made to “convert experience into an image” (9)? And, curiously, do I make similar choices when I take photographs? So, I thought a great way to fill that gap in their travel narratives was to learn how to use Interwar cameras and write about the process myself. It was easier said than done. I was curious to figure out the intricacies of the “back matter” of these travel narratives, which includes questions like:

- How much work went into transforming a photograph taken in a moment in time and placing it in a travel context in a public-facing narrative?
- What were the issues/problems of photo developing that these women did not talk about?
- Did wrestling with cameras go unstated because those issues—at that time—were understood and accepted as normal?

I wonder if we had seen the challenges of making a narrative if that acknowledgement and understanding would have us cherishing these narratives more or less? As it turns out, the work would be extensive and grueling, but worth the effort.

As a young, white woman who travels/ed abroad for work and leisure I thought it would be a great bridge to connect as well as appreciate authentically vintage technology to modern critique and storytelling. The technology these women used in their works is the building blocks of the phones, computers, and cameras we use today.

"A way of certifying experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it—by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir. Travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs."

—Susan Sontag, On Photography
This hands-on approach gave me a deeper understanding of how those women navigated physical space with their cameras, as well as gave me insight into their photographic interests. This chapter gives a road map of how I found, chose, and worked with two specific cameras from the Interwar period.

**Finding the Cameras**

The first step to this embodiment process was to find out which cameras each woman used in her respective travel narratives. Maillart and Gruber’s works provided informative captions or pieces of information under their photographs that indicated which brand of camera they used. Leica was a shared preferred camera brand for both women. While Maillart preferred using a Leica III (Leica F), Gruber is shown time and again with the same Leica and a Rolleiflex.

On the other hand, finding out which camera Aloha used was extremely difficult. In *A Call to Adventure!*, Aloha only has one photo of her holding a camera and a camera stand. But, it is impossible to see what type or brand of camera she used. After glancing at other pictures from the expedition (ones that were not in *A Call to Adventure!*), I found out that Aloha most likely used a 16 mm film camera for photographs and a 35 mm nitrate camera negative stock to make her films (*Across the World and Back*).

Once I identified which cameras each writer used, the next step was to try to find the same type of camera (or a similar one) to use with my research. After weeks of looking, I found two cameras to use for this project: The Rolleiflex and Leica II. I did not have any previous experience using either of these cameras, nor did I have any practice developing film before this point. Working with these cameras (and later, learning to develop film) provided learning curves that were as steep as the ones that lay ahead in writing a dissertation from start to finish. Nevertheless, although I set a daunting challenge for myself I was eager to get started and fill in the gaps that Wanderwell, her contemporaries, and their editors left out of each woman’s respective travel narratives.

The Rolleiflex is a twin-lens reflex (TLR) camera that was popular in the 1930s to 1940s for providing accessibility and comfort to different photo styles beyond portrait/still life. Since they are constructed with metal and glass and covered in leather, Rolleiflexes fit comfortably in the photographer’s hands (Wagner). It uses two lenses with the same focal length. The top lens is the viewfinder while the bottom lens captures the image in front of you (“Range finder” [Britannica]). The photographer flips the hood up, holds the camera at approximately chest height, and looks down at the viewfinder to check the focus and composition of the picture. “Quality, compact size, and the ability to focus and compose up to and during exposure made it a particular favorite of press photographers and other professionals seeking action shots” (Ward). After all, “The worst fate for any camera, let alone a Rolleiflex, is to become a dusty shelf queen” (Wagner).

Maneuvering a Rolleiflex is a different experience from using a modern camera, especially when the photographer has to make sure there are no cracks or rays of light leaking onto unexposed film in the camera. This happened to me numerous times; as a result, parts of the film became “blown”—making the images captured on the film unusable. Aloha, Maillart, and Gruber, I’m sure, had similar obstacles come up during their travels.

Another difference in maneuverability that comes with using the Rolleiflex is when someone takes a photo with the camera. Instead of physically lifting the camera to eye-level to look into the viewfinder, photographers must flip open the viewfinder cap, keep the camera at waist level, and look down into the viewfinder to identify subjects for picture(s). Personally, I think this motion gives people more room to better acclimate themselves in different spaces/places. A photographer can look down to alter the image in the photograph while simultaneously surveying their surroundings outside of the frame of the camera.

The Leica II, on the other hand, works a bit differently. In the early 1930s, the Leica II made its debut on the photography scene. It contains a built-in rangefinder, which gives the photographer the ability to accurately measure distance when taking photographs. Viewfinders alone cannot do this; they only show the photographer the image that will be captured on film. The Leica II used in this dissertation has a body made of chrome and metal. In order to take a picture, the photographer must set the aperture, focus, ISO, and shutter speed to take a proper image. Leicas were immensely helpful in field photography in the Interwar period, especially for Maillart and Gruber; they relied on their rangefinders to gather the thousands of photos they took across the globe. Acquiring and learning how to use these cameras was the stepping-off point in this research. Both of these cameras are similar to the ones Wanderwell and her peers used in their works.
Learning the Ropes

If there was any advice to give to other researchers who want to use Interwar cameras, I would say: practice, practice, practice. Learning how to use these film cameras, and then develop that film, takes time and effort. One reason why Aloha and her peers did not write about the “back matter” of developing film or taking pictures might be because their editors thought it was unnecessary information for readers. However, for this research that information is vital. These women had to make strategic, rhetorical choices about which cameras to use, what/what to photograph, and how to combine their writing and photography for the public so they demonstrated their expertise. Not only that, but the narrative and photos together play roles in “building meaning...because each modality offers what the others cannot, encouraging invention to tap into these identifiable opportunities and constraints” (2). Taking a hands-on approach helps researchers, artists, and designers to synthesize opportunities and constraints within their fields.

Cameras, narrative, and film development were needed in order for Maillart, Gruber, and Aloha to share their experiences with the world. Most, if not all of the women, had to learn how to use these devices on the road, which makes the processes (and products) of their work all the more interesting. Clark insists that “people can interact in discourse as travelers if they write and read in ways that render participation in discursive exchange a transformative act of crossing an alien space rather than the more defensive act of occupying a familiar place” (16). I felt alienated and confused as I began to learn about and use cameras from the interwar period; that alienation was compounded exponentially when I began developing film on my own. Yet, it is through that alienation and letting down my defenses of creating research that was wholly familiar to me that I was able to fully appreciate the steps needed to make an interwar travel narrative—words, images, and travel altogether. The defensiveness that comes with diligent research and gaining expertise about a topic gave way to slow, deliberate analysis through the histories and travel experiences of these women—and my own experiences a century later.

The immediacy of altering/changing a text or image was slim to none in the interwar period, especially in comparison to modern editing capabilities. The filters and sliding-scale alterations we make to photos, as well as the editing buttons on a keyboard were not available to cameras of the past; those processes were more intricate and, to be blunt, more painstaking than the ease with which we type and take photos today. If we don’t like the way a sentence is written or an image looks on a screen, we can simply alter its appearance with a click of a button or scroll of a mouse wheel. That immediacy of revision didn’t exist in interwar publishing and photography.

The immediacy and intimacy needed to operate these tools cannot be understated. You can move a typewriter in front of a mirror and watch yourself type—now we take selfies in front of a mirror with our phones. I wonder if the intimacy and immediacy has shifted in modern computers and cameras—or if it’s lingering from the interwar period?

There was an overwhelming amount of focus, patience, and labor throughout the photography and developing processes. By focusing wholeheartedly on taking a picture with the Rolleiflex and Leica—and not being distracted by other work—I was able to better appreciate the rigor and the amount of work it took to create a single image for a book, journal article, or even to gaze at a photo on a mantle. But, much like learning other skills, it was almost too easy to dive down rabbit holes and get caught up in mistakes made during the process. And I made a lot of mistakes. The mistakes helped me learn and, in this application, I firmly believe I gained more insight from learning what not to do than getting something right the first time around. In the early twentieth century, cameras were seen as tools for documentation—all of the women in my dissertation used cameras to document events and their interactions with others; yet, there is an extra layer to their use in travel and life-writing. These women took photos of themselves in and out of certain moments; all of them are behind the camera lens yet they make strategic moves to place themselves in the center or on the periphery of the memory of an image.

As readers we can consciously choose to ignore histories, narratives, or themes within an image and, as a result, misinterpret or erase the photographer’s message. “[V]ision is thus a cultural operation...we see and perceive because we are part of everything within our gaze, rather than because we look at the world from the outside” (Giorgio and Hill). The visuals travelers see while moving give information as well as provide several varied forms of persuasion, allowing the traveler to interact with cultures and places they come across:

Words we read days or centuries after they are recorded grant us a glimpse of their native instant. They are the photograph of an idea, a feeling, a thought, frozen and lifted from their surroundings. Just as the lens captures a moment’s reality, so a person’s words represent a moment’s state of mind. In both cases, the instant is gone; only an afterimage remains (Barthes, Camera Lucida).
The main camera I used to create my work for this dissertation is the Rolleiflex 3.5 twin-lens camera. Unlike modern cameras, the Rolleiflex requires you to adopt a different understanding of light, space, and movement as you take photos. There was no immediacy in knowing that the photo I wanted to take would turn out well until I had the photos developed—either by myself or through Photographique (located in downtown Dallas). On top of that, the availability of time and space to develop my photos added a layer of frustration and complexity to my image work: I couldn’t take a peek at the film if exposure to light, the image runs the risk of being ruined. Simply learning how to load and unload film into the camera took practice and patience, especially since I would roll the film back incorrectly at times, resulting in skewed photos. Taking a photo, and then developing it, were two additional beasts to tackle.

At times I would take the same picture twice—once with my Rolleiflex and once with my Canon or cell phone—to get an idea of the weight of difference in recognizing and being able to affect ISO, shutter speed, aperture, and more. I was happy there were apps to help me identify the correct light reading to get a good shot with my Rolleiflex; however, I quickly realized that my Canon took away that learning curve and replaced it with immediate results. That loss and gain affected my understanding and use of the Rolleiflex and the Leica. Unlike my cell phone or Canon, the Rolleiflex and Leica require me to take more pause and put an equal amount of focus on each step of the photo-taking process; you have to truly understand how shutter speed, light, and aperture works in order to get a photo to develop correctly onto film, whereas with modern cameras the technology is so advanced it does those steps for you—giving you a perfect, frameable picture every time you use it.

The other camera I used in combination with the Rolleiflex is a circa 1940s Leica IIC with a Summitar 50mm f/2 lens. This camera served as my comparison to the Leica IIIF rangefinders that Ella Maillart and Ruth Gruber used on their travels. Although I could not find an exact replica of the camera, this one would serve the purposes of juxtaposing twin lens camera work with rangefinder abilities; and, as a result, show different ways cameras functioned in the period.

Whether people realize it or not, these women travel writers used technology as a cultural operation, too. Even now, a century after these women traversed the globe, we continue to embrace technology as a cultural operation and make everything we use within our gaze—cameras and phones and computers allow us to better immerse ourselves with the world around us.

Developing the Film

When I first started learning how to develop photos by hand, I compared the process to a science experiment—there were certain steps I had to take and an overwhelming requirement to stay present as I worked with the film to create my photos. By learning about and participating in this process, I give myself “the ability to make the rhetorical decisions that professional photographers routinely make in the darkroom: the ability to adjust contrast and tonality, to make precise determinations about how an image is cropped, to select an appropriate size and shape for the print, and more” (Sheridan et al., 34).

The hardest part was loading the film into the spool so it does not shift as you pour in chemicals and agitate the film. The first time I tried loading the film onto the spool, I dropped it three times onto the floor. It made me wonder which option was more labor intensive for the women in the Interwar period—send off film with the hopes of not having it confiscated by government officials at border crossings or finding a town/city so you could develop the film on your own. I will also point out here that none of the women explicitly discussed the developing process in their respective narratives; therefore, I wanted to shed light on the process and fill in that gap that exists within their works.

Although I wish they had discussed how they took photos, developed film, and sent their works to publishing houses, this means that I am able to recover a part of the process and product each of these women crafted for their own communities.
The first step to developing your film is to find your “noses.” The catch? You have to load the film on the reel/spool in the dark. By feel.

The "noses" help guide your film onto the spool and keep the negatives straight as you place the reel in the developing container. Despite my best efforts, I'm sad to say I still cannot load my film on a film reel perfectly by myself. That's what colleagues are for, right?

Here are the main steps I used to develop my film:

1. Take the film out of the camera and separate the film from the film paper (each one feels different).
2. Feed my film through the "noses" onto the film spool while keeping my thumbs on the ridges of the noses for guidance. (Think happy thoughts.)
3. Twist the film spool back and forth to wind the film onto the spool.
4. Stick the film spool into the black canister (always check to make sure you use the correct spools in the canisters, too).
5. Put the funnel on top of the canister and twist it until you hear a firm "click."

Did I mention you do all of this in the dark?

The second part of developing my film and photos was making a contact sheet, which is a collection of all the negatives from a roll of film onto one sheet of paper. The chemical process for making the contact sheet is similar to the first step of developing film:

- 1:9 developing chemical to water
- 1:9 stopper chemical to water
- 1:9 fixer chemical to water

One difference, though, is the time you take to put your test strip or contact sheet in each chemical combination. Unlike the longer times of developing to agitate the film, you need to be quicker about moving your contact sheet from developing to stopper to fixer, otherwise your negatives may not turn out right. Some of the complications that occurred when I made the first contact sheet involved mechanical errors and rattling nerves. For instance, instead of making a horizontal, 4x1 strip of images from my film, I cut each individual photo to fit in the film sleeve for developing later; as a result, I had unintentionally made it difficult to differentiate between my images as well as keep the contact sheet straight. As you can see in the photo to the right, my images were overlapping each other, which was due to the cut-outs not fitting in the sleeve properly.

There are major and subtle comparisons between the cameras I am using in this work. One similarity each tool has is its heavier—heavier to use, heavier to move, and heavier in terms of learning how to use the things. It took a long amount of time to learn how to become comfortable using the cameras. Another fascinating fact I learned is that noise affected how I used the tools themselves. For example, the Rolleiflex and Leica have a quieter shutter noise, making it easier for me and the women I investigate here to move around and take photos without announcing our presence to others.
When I would switch to my Canon, the noise the shutter made when taking the picture was so loud that it startled me.

**Photographic Violence**

Something that cannot go unstated is the violence that continues to permeate photography. Colonial photographers (and modern photographers/photography) incorporate violent terms like “snapshot,” “image capture,” and similar phrases when taking pictures. As I have previously mentioned, we four women use[d] our cameras and photographs to make sense of the world around us; and yet, within those images and that rhetorical choice comes the strain of authority, agency, and—most importantly—power. Susan Sontag elaborates on this in her book *On Photography*: “Photographs really are experience captured, and the camera is the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood. To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge — and, therefore, like power” (3). For the women I examine here, that power fluctuates rapidly over the course of the Interwar period; as we will soon see, Aloha abuses the privileges that come with the ethics and power of photography, whereas Maillart and Gruber have different but similar struggles with their own wielding of their cameras and images. Taking the photograph is not the only issue here—choosing whether to share photos to others must also be put into consideration in an Interwar (and modern) historical context. Maria Popova pulls Sontag’s concerns to the present, writing:

“...as we fill our social media timelines with images, as if to prove that our biological timelines — our very lives — are filled with notable moments, which also remind us that they are all inevitably fleeting towards the end point of that timeline: mortality itself. And so the photographic image becomes an affirmation of our very existence” (“Aesthetic Consumerism”).

And, whether we choose to recognize this or completely ignore it, that affirmation can turn unbelievably toxic.

**Conclusion**

Although the feats and travels of Aloha, Maillart, Gruber, and myself are filled with wanderlust and excitement, I must note that all of us benefit from, and at times take advantage of, the imperial structures set up in the places we travel; whether we hold ourselves accountable and recognize our involvement in accepting those structures is part of my investigation here and cannot be ignored. Aloha, Maillart, Gruber, and I all have to wrestle with where, how, and why we use our cameras to photograph public and private spheres; we must acknowledge our privilege and access in terms of how we use cameras to get to certain places when others cannot do the same.

What is wrong with showing a culture in its most authentic form? The problem is that the uniqueness of any given country is a mixture not only of its indigenous practices and borrowed customs but also of its past and its present. Any given photograph encloses only a section of the world within its borders. A sequence of photographs, taken over many years and carefully arranged, however, reveals a worldview. To consider a place largely from the perspective of a permanent anthropological past, to settle on a notion of authenticity that edits out the present day, is not simply to present an alternative truth: It is to indulge in fantasy (Teju Cole, 16).
"But there is one thing about being born to the life of the adventurous: The more trouble one meets, the more one dares oneself to get out of it. It may be a vice and it may be a virtue, but I have never had any patience with going around obstacles; I've always wanted to jump them" (35, A Call to Adventure!).

Introduction

To begin our investigation of women's interwar travel narratives, we need to start our search in 1920 with the adventures of Idris Galcia Hall, aka “Aloha” Wanderwell. This young woman “had a queer feeling of kinship, a feeling which [came] back to me over and over when [she] set foot in the strange, out-of-the-way places of the world” (45). She was inspired by stories filled with wanderlust and a sense of being different from everyone else; and yet, her writing and filmmaking also carried a heavy amount of racism, ignorance, Orientalism, and, most importantly, a sense of Othering that cannot be ignored. Although she was the face of the Wanderwell Expedition, Aloha would eventually become known for her filmmaking, with the acclaimed *River of Death* (1934) being the most popular of her films. *River of Death* is the only movie Aloha made that had sound. The film shows Aloha’s journey through Brazil in 1925 as she searches through jungles for Colonel Percy Fawcett (who, ironically, was sent by the Royal Geographic Society to complete research). You can watch her film thanks to the Library of Congress. It contains themes of Orientalism and colonialism and is very jarring to watch. I won’t give spoilers here—you’ll just have to see it for yourself.

DePrest focused her dissertation on Aloha’s filmmaking, and noted the following: “Aloha’s films slide across the porous boundaries of documentary and ethnographic filmmaking. Her representation of Indigenous populations, communities and cultures different than her own can be addressed through and contribute to wider scholarship on ethnographic filmmaking as a form of visual anthropology” (5). Several of Wanderwell’s contemporaries (including Maillart and Gruber, who I will investigate later) published numerous travel narratives during their time as writers and photojournalists; however, Aloha’s only written account of her travels is *A Call to Adventure!*, published a decade after the Expedition took place.
Aloha’s films are discussed in scholarship far more than her writings—whether this is because her films gained more traction then and now, I’m unsure. Aloha’s contradictions and travel experiences provide a foundation for us to dive into the ways gender, rhetoric, and writing intersect. We will see the different ways in which she abides by (and breaks) interwar gender roles and power structures with her travel narrative. There are three core questions that will guide my analysis of each woman and her travel narratives, starting with Aloha:

- How does each woman define herself in spaces/places?
- How does photography help women understand the peoples and cultures they interact with during their travels?
- How does each woman’s narrative agency manifest in the text under analysis?

All of these questions intersect with cultural rhetorics, feminist geography, narrative theory, and visual rhetoric. In this chapter I will deconstruct the origins of the Wanderwell Expedition and analyze how Aloha defined herself during travel, used photography to interact with and understand cultures & people around her, and how she manifested narrative agency in her work. Some sub-questions I will investigate in this chapter include:

- How does she work within the institutional limits imposed upon her narrative agency?
- And, curiously, how does Aloha depict and describe other women she encounters on her travels?

But first, we need to see where Aloha's travel adventures began, as well as the steps Aloha took to craft her image as the face of the Wanderwell Expedition.

**Answering the Call for “Brains, Beauty, and Breeches”**

“A Call to Adventure!” starts when Aloha comes across an advertisement in a newspaper in Nice, France. The advertisement—“Brains, Beauty, and Breeches”—asked for a young woman to serve as a secretary and driver on a multi-year expedition around the world, noting “the young woman must learn to work before and behind a movie camera” (26). There were, however, a few catches: she could not marry for three years, she had to forgo skirts, and wear breeches for the duration of the journey. This expedition was backed by Walter “Cap” Wanderwell, a man on a mission with a “Million Dollar Wager”:

> a global, mobile endurance race between himself and his ex-wife to "Cap" Wanderwell, a man on a mission with a "Million Dollar Wager": the duration of the journey. This expedition was backed by Walter Wanderwell, a man on a mission with a "Million Dollar Wager": a global, mobile endurance race between himself and his ex-wife to see who could visit the most countries possible in a Ford Model T (Aloha Wanderwell Biography).

The background of “Cap” Walter Wanderwell is as surprising (and mysterious) as the Wanderwell Expedition. Polish by birth, his given name is Valerian Johannes Pieczynski. During WWI, “Cap” was placed in prison under suspicion of being a German spy and released in 1918. From that point, he used his charm to gather as many supporters for his expedition as possible. Unfortunately, there is not much information on his meeting with the League of Nations; but, there is plenty of speculation about his murder on the Wanderwell Yacht in December of 1932. Some people believed Aloha had something to do with it, while others blamed colleagues of “Cap’s” for committing the crime. Captain Wanderwell’s murder remains unsolved to this day.

Two years later, Captain Wanderwell and his then-wife Nell created the Work Around the World Educational Club (WAWEC), in order to spread goodwill and uplift the League of Nations. Cap’s goodwill was not always received that way, though. In The Encyclopedia of Unsolved Crimes, Michael Newton unearths less-than-stellar background knowledge of WAWEC, including the fact that “Nervous FBI agents, always alert for new threats, noted WAWEC’s strict disciplinary code and branded it a private army with subversive potential” (385). So, Walter Wanderwell turned to well-crafted advertisements and flashy travelog films to get men and women interested in being his aid, translator, driver, while fulfilling a smattering of other duties. That is what brought him and Aloha together in a small movie theater in Nice, France: pictures and film of Canadian forests, “Cap’s” enthusiasm, and the need for “Brains, Beauty, and Breeches.”
Aloha ran home and begged her mother to let her answer “Cap’s” call to adventure. After some negotiating, Aloha’s mother and the Captain agreed with the stipulation that the captain would be Aloha’s guardian as they traveled. The newspaper ad, and his explanation of what Aloha would be doing on the Expedition seemed perfectly staged to me. By the time Aloha came into the picture, Walter and Nell were still married (the divorce had not been finalized). This meant that “Cap” abandoned Nell for Aloha’s company and involvement in the expedition. “Cap’s” grooming of Aloha, the purpose of the Expedition, and Aloha’s actions during and post-expedition conflict with one another to make modern audiences look upon her work with a hefty amount of skepticism.

Once I found this out, I wondered did “Cap” ever tell Aloha his true inspiration for the expedition? And, more importantly, was Aloha okay with it? I have to assume, at some point, that “Cap” eventually told her the truth; I also must assume that Aloha was complicit with most (if not all) of the beginnings of the expedition, otherwise she would not have stayed with “Cap” and his crew. What I’m curious about, though, is why none of this is mentioned in A Call to Adventure!—if this conversation did come up, would readership have declined in the 20s and 30s? Would Aloha’s expertise as a world traveler—the face of the Expedition—as the future wife of “Cap” Wanderwell—have been tarnished? The more I dug into the Expedition, the more I posit that these silences were meant to avoid conflicts with audiences—and more importantly, sustain profits for the Expedition.

There are two key qualities that define the Wanderwell Expedition, Aloha’s grooming, and the narrative structure of A Call to Adventure! controversy and suture. Alongside the duties of the WAWEC, the Wanderwell Expedition functioned as a secret international police force with the intent of documenting the rations, morale, and military might of the countries they visited. This is where controversy begins to grow exponentially. “Cap” and WAWEC eventually caught the attention of then-President of the FBI Edgar Hoover, “who feared Wanderwell was building his own subversive private army. (However, it has been plausibly alleged that WAWEC was nothing but a con aimed at luring gullible would-be ‘fighters for peace’ into handing over the $200 ‘membership fee’ (“The Weird Wandering Wanderwells”). Peace and war were simultaneously broadcasted on the cars that carried Wanderwell through country after country on the expedition. What is most troubling is photos like this one, where readers can very clearly see “expedition for international police” placed front and center under Wanderwell’s name on the side of the car. In other photos you can see a growing list of countries on the cars. The juxtaposition of war, exploration, expansion, and violence throughout the Wanderwell Expedition is staggering.

But I believe, deep down, that the list of countries on the Ford Model T’s represents more than a “travel stamp collection. In combination with phrases like “police force”, it could be a list of possible countries that the United States could, eventually conquer with military and cultural power. These controversial purposes and advertising are compounded by a specific use of imagery to captivate audiences and, ultimately, continue the expedition. This junction of purpose and imagery is where suture comes into play. The Wanderwell Expedition profited off of blatant racist and colonial educational propaganda—especially when you consider the original purpose of the expedition: an international police force to take note of armaments, rations, and military prowess overseas in case there was a need for another World War (AlohaWanderwell.com). The Captain and Aloha use a film technique called suture to strategically focus on certain aspects of their travels—and ignore other parts that might need further investigation or discussion. Suture is used by film to make us forget the camera that is really doing the looking. Laura Mulvey argues that there are, in fact, three looks implied by film instead of one: 1) the look of the camera itself; 2) the look of the audience watching the film; and 3) the look of the characters on screen (54). For example, look at this photo:

Aloha and the snake charmer are in focus for the audience, while the famous Taj Mahal stands blurred in the background of the image. This is the image we see through the lens; upon closer inspection, viewers are drawn to Aloha as the object of attention instead of the Taj Mahal. And, unfortunately, this image is constructed to turn the snake charmer and surrounding scenery into a background for Aloha’s “leisurably” afternoon in India. When we begin reading A Call to Adventure!, we find that Aloha embarked on the seven year expedition at the age of fifteen. So, it stands to reason that her writing and tone could be less mature than her counterparts Maillart and Gruber. Yet, what I find fascinating is how she quickly and seamlessly learns ways to use her power as the face of the expedition—and her positionality as a young woman—to do things that no one else would dream of doing while traveling abroad.
Scholars and bloggers alike give a range of Aloha’s age during the Wanderwell Expedition; articles show a range between fifteen to twenty. Aloha mentions in her travel narrative she began the Expedition at fifteen; yet, if we look at postcards made of the Expedition we see Walter start in 1919. So, if people were not aware that Aloha joined the expedition after 1919, they’d figure that she was thirteen during all of these travels.

Defining Self in Space

As a member of the Wanderwell Expedition, Aloha had very little choice on how she presented herself to the public thanks to the many requirements set by Captain Wanderwell; the breeches, makeup, and outfits she wore helped solidify her image as the “ideal” travel woman. Her name, however, is a different story. She combined her childhood nickname with “Cap’s” last name and voila: Aloha Wanderwell was born.

Aloha is the face, body, and physical representation of not only the Expedition, but also the adventurous antithesis of who the “modern woman” of the late 1920s should be. It is sad to see how she was physically and mentally groomed for the role and, what’s more surprising (or not) is that she used this grooming to her benefit. As the speaker and face of the expedition, Wanderwell’s role was solidified as an “expert” on the places she visited for the audience. This meant that she was able to navigate places that Captain Wanderwell and other men could not while simultaneously having the Captain’s support (and, by extension, the support of Ford and other companies that sponsored the expedition) in case she got into trouble.

Researchers, museum curators, and film enthusiasts argue about the level of accuracy from Aloha’s travels and Captain Wanderwell’s occupation; and, unironically, reinforce this thought from a blogger who works at Bowers Museum: “The best biographical stories are those that are so wonderfully implausible that it is impossible to tell if they are fabricated or just stranger than fiction. The tale of the intrepid female explorer Aloha Wanderwell assuredly has a little bit of myth woven in” (“Around the World”). I can only assume Aloha’s account of her time on the expedition most assuredly has a bit of myth woven into it, as well. I wonder, was it the “wonderfully implausible” of Aloha’s exploits that drew people in as well as drove viewers away in disgust? Or, was Aloha leaning into trends that already existed before she came onto the travel scene—especially where the travelog lectures were concerned? After several years of overseas travel, Aloha returned to America and made this observation: “I discovered it was one thing to be the visiting white stranger among a lot of other nationals, and another thing to be a white stranger amongst one’s own people” (183).

Nevertheless, Wanderwell started her journey at the age of fifteen–young enough to feel the sharp burn of the male gaze while also grappling with ignorance and previous teachings as she moves between continents. I wondered, at one point, if she was too young to go on the expedition; Aloha explained her reasoning for joining “Cap” Wanderwell was that she “wanted a career and I wanted to become the man of the family” (23). The juxtaposition of Aloha wanting to be the breadwinner versus a dolled-up adventurer is startling; and, at times, powerfully ironic. Near the beginning of A Call to Adventure!, Aloha laments about the start of the expedition in this way: “Our progress for six months, I am sure, was a disappointment to the children and other nationals, and another thing to be a white stranger amongst one’s own people” (183).

Travelogs were just as they sound like: a combination of travel experiences told to audiences via first person. Men and women would find locations to give their talks with photography or film playing in the background—the biggest resource gained from these talks was, of course, cash. A main concern with travelogs (especially for the Wanderwell Expedition) was the depiction of truth—the more people who believed their tales of adventure and woe, the more money they made. As we will find out, though, not everyone was impressed with “Cap,” Aloha, and their globetrotting adventures.

For “Cap,” Aloha, and their crew, this meant they had to strategically use words and images and enthusiasm to draw people into their work. The popularity of Victorian women’s travel writing, Blanton notes, rested more on their speaking ability than their travels, so that formal respect and inclusion in the all-male world of travel was slow to come (45). I am sure Wanderwell faced these same issues, which is why the Expedition was modeled the way it was: they would use film that Aloha shot herself to solidify her ethos and, with luck, gain a large audience and funds to continue their travels. Sadly, most of the interactions Wanderwell speaks of concerning her speaking roles are blocked out in favor of digging into the events themselves. Moy writes: “Most travel shorts played up the “exotic” otherness of their subjects to sell tickets, and while some of the Wanderwell’s footage utilized the chauvinistic language of the era, they went to great lengths to explore the common humanity and good nature of the people they befriended in their films” (“The Wanderwell Expeditions”).
Wanderwell was-and continues to be-objeect and objectified in the Expedition and *A Call to Adventure!* Although she accepted the position and all the rules it entailed, Wanderwell was used as propaganda to promote 1920s American nationalism and wartime efforts. In the 20s and 30s, women were fighting against the domestic roles pressed upon them. Thanks to travel advertising, transatlantic travel, beauty hype, and work assignments around the world, personal liberation became a hot commodity for women of the elite social class. But, like Wanderwell demonstrates in her work, that personal liberation was not equitable or accessible by all: contemporary journalists, politicians, social scientists, and the general public debated whether Modern Girls were looking for sexual, economic, or political emancipation. They also raised the possibility that the Modern Girl was little more than an image, a hollow product of clever advertising campaigns in the new commodity culture (12).

The advertising material for the Wanderwell Expedition and for Aloha’s part in that expedition work at stark cross purposes. There are several photos, booklets, and pieces of film that portray the expedition as more than an educational tour. Some pamphlets, like this one from the National Automotive History Collection, give more context about the writing and photography than Aloha’s own travel narrative. At any one point in time, the Expedition can be viewed simultaneously as a competition, an educational tour, and an international police force. Wanderwell, too, is portrayed in a very specific way.

In Aloha’s case, the “ideal” travel woman was colonial and imperial. Much like Lady Britannia in the 1902 cartoon “From the Cape to Cairo”, Aloha was the face of 1920s civilization—of progress—for the Expedition. Time and again the Wanderwell Expedition brought photographs and lectures to colonized and uncolonized countries, whether people wanted to see them or not. Those lectures and film viewings reinforced American ideals, nationalism, and even moreso, compounds Aloha switching between treating foreign places, cultures, and people as Other—in order to showcase her lived experience versus subverting her education and Victorian/1920s American idealism. Her thoughts, and Cap’s, as well, go against Hawhee’s support occupying a familiar space rather than move through the space as an “alien” (16).

Without a doubt, Aloha is the most contradictory of the three interwar women travelers I examine in this application. As she moves into her mid-twenties, her use of privilege and power multiplies almost as quickly as her popularity. Throughout her writing, we see an ebb and flow of where she decides to exert her power of identity; and, we see much of her interactions via travel. But, we also see racism, Orientalism, and discrimination against lower class citizens in her work. Near the middle of her narrative, Aloha describes a man she comes across Calcutta with biting, crude language: “I came on this four-legged man suddenly, and 10-year-old something that wandered along a by-street and begge mutely for alms… I turned the corner of the street with that restless wish to see what comes next, and this creature reared to his four-footed height before me: I blew my police whistle which I carried, and which was the signal for Cap to come.” (81-82).

Aloha frequently dehumanizes the people she meets on her expedition. This is hyper focused on citizens she meets overseas and is saved almost explicitly for people of color. Her Othering of the world around her is juxtaposed sharply with phrases like: “I tried to explain why traveling fascinated me, but I could not find words to express the inexpressible desire for new countries, and that indescribable sense of kinship which I have for strangers and the strange places of new continents” (128). The kinship, to me, seems to be a truth shrouded in illusion of nationality (129).

One of the most shocking moments, for me, during the Wanderwell Expedition came when she was traveling through China in order to reach Japan, the next country on their travel docket. After her car has engine trouble, Aloha and her company head to the local village to try to find help. As she attempts to interact with the people who live in the village, she does the following: “At last I captured one young boy by the nape of the neck and forced a bit of chocolate between his teeth. At first his terror was uncontrollable; his muscles stiffened, his eyes rolled, he gurgled in his throat—and then a change came which would have proved a fortune as an advertising picture for some chocolate manufacturer: That cooie boy relaxed, swallowed, and smiled” (137).
This scene, and others, is meticulously crafted for readers to be shocked and amazed not by her actions, but by the child’s response to the chocolate bar. Wanderwell uses phrases like “uncontrollable terror,” “gurgling throats,” and “eye rolling” to emphasize the moment—and only makes it “okay” by saying it would “prove a fortune” for advertising photos. My question, then, is what would that photo look like? And, more importantly, would the image be focused on her, the boy who is seemingly choking on chocolate, or both? Neither Maillart or Gruber in their works write about or demonstrate that they physically shared something with another person in order to elicit a response. Part of me wonders if this passage is meant to praise as well as dehumanize—this is not, I don’t think, a proper way to engage with cultures or people.

Out of the three women I am investigating, Aloha’s actions and narratives made me the most angry, embarrassed, and frustrated—not only for her twenty-year-old self, but for myself, too; as she was trekking across Africa and Asia in her budding twenties, so too was I searching for a truth—however tangibly means of saying “yes, I am here in the middle of Ghana in the middle of August in 2012 for a reason outside of portraying this place, this community, these people, as Other, as Object, as Characters of a bigger story.” Scholars note that there are moments that Wanderwell’s writing may be misinterpreting the truth; or, at times, outright lying about her experiences. Not only is she contradictory about her approaches to identity, feminism, and space, she obides by and contradicts the views of colonialism she grew up with as she went through schooling in France; take this snippet from Aloha’s narrative, for example:

In Benares, which may have been the cradle of the human race, I came into closer touch with the religious beliefs which then began to interest me. I had had quite a strict upbringing in my own creed, but young as I was then, I was quick to see that somewhere discrepancies had crept into that teaching. I found that Hindus were not pagan, as I had thought—heathens we called them” (101).

These moments of subversion are few and far between. Her lack of maturity enhanced her ignorance and racism. In some instances, though, she pushed her privilege over the edge of respectability and did things that made me cringe and my stomach drop in horror (sneaking into Mecca was one of the more alarming instances of this). Her writing and travel career is woven with moments of disregard and carefully crafted language to entice readers and, I posit, to position herself as a reliable author and world traveler extraordinaire. There are moments when I can clearly see her sentiment of “I was lost in the romance of the surroundings and fear never entered my head” in her photography and A Call to Adventure! (56). Her ideology is steeped in colonialism and it is unique to see her publishing a book about her travel experiences almost a decade later. There are also moments where she acknowledges her privilege but also seems callous when talking about underlying issues in the countries she visits while on tour. Her blase point of view of danger might seem cute at first; yet, as Wanderwell completes each of her escapades her blase nature shifts into blatant ignorance. The privileges Aloha gained by being the face of the Expedition are heightened only by the way she uses that power to manipulate, extort, and take advantage of the places and people she encounters during her travels.

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Once the Wanderwell Expedition ended, Aloha made a movie from the collection of photos and film from her travels and titled it With Car and Camera Around the World. Reception of the film was varied. In the New York Times, one reviewer wrote: “True, there are views of the Taj Mahal, African huts and Venetian canals, but they all seem to be obstructed by this well-traveled girl. The film, for the most part, is exactly what a majority of tourists would take with a motion-picture camera” (“Around the World Movie”).

I am inclined to agree; the photography and Wanderwell’s center-focused narrative backs the reviewer’s claim. What I found funny about this review, and my own viewing of scenes from the movie, was Wanderwell’s appearance becomes a burden rather than a boon, the focus on place turns into focus on a person; and, for me, puts a sour taste in my mouth for the move and Wanderwell herself. After the mysterious murder of her husband, Wanderwell did “[s]he might have done...used the publicity surrounding the Captain’s death to promote River of Death” (Rickey). No matter which way I look at her, Aloha’s work on defining herself via travel is checkered; and, unsurprisingly, her photography on the Wanderwell Expedition follows this pattern, as well.
Understanding Cultures and People through Photography

Aloha’s progression as a cinematographer cannot be understated—in the span of two decades she made eight films and completed an eight-year expedition while learning the ropes of filmmaking in her late teens; impressive as her skills are, though, we also cannot underestimate the explicit demeaning and objectifying she uses of civilians and spaces she explores. Her photography mimics her writing. Even though A Call to Adventure! was published a decade after the Expedition, we could argue that the images highlight her lean towards colonialism and racist cataloging of events (whether they be intentional or not). This intention goes hand-in-hand with the Expedition’s lack of photographic ethics; many of the advertising materials and photos taken on the expedition were taken without permission; without secure measures; and without respect for the person and/or place being photographed.

It would have been nice to see how Aloha physically handled maneuvering all of her tools and tech as they went on the Wanderwell Expedition. Direct connections between Wanderwell’s knowledge on using a camera and her travels are few and far between. Near the end of A Call to Adventure! Aloha notes how: “We were seeing too much in too short a time really to assimilate it, but we could not help that. We would just have to think it all through later; and then there were the feet of film that we were getting as a memory aid” (103). A part of me can, at length, relate to this sentiment: when I went to Japan in 2016, I took well over 500 photos over the span of three weeks. During that time I, too, found it difficult to write down everything that happened as we trekked through Hiroshima, Kyoto, Osaka, and Tokyo. However, I wonder if she could have expanded more on the process of learning the mechanics of her camera as they moved:

- Did she experiment with lighting?
- How did she compensate for certain shutter speeds?

I believe she used the poised, perfect roles of using different tools to increase her popularity while on tour—if she had not, surely the sponsorships would have been taken away—resulting in an underfunded (and possibly failed) expedition. Unlike Maillart, Gruber, and myself, Wanderwell dealt exclusively with big format cameras instead of a mix of camera types like a Rolleiflex or forever-sacred Leica rangefinder cameras. She was also the least vocal about using those tools even though her job eventually relied heavily on her becoming an expert with a camera. In Aloha’s case, we have eight films she directed and produced during the interwar period along with A Call to Adventure! yet we do not see her plainly mention her handling of (and managing) cameras.

The photos in A Call to Adventure! demonstrate a very picturesque, ideal tour around the world; and yet—I posit that the truth and the scenes within each image are crafted by the author who, with discrimination, wanderlust, and authority, encourages us readers to take her narrative as Truth. There is an undertone of violence that permeates the photos in A Call to Adventure!; in this image from a promotional pamphlet, for example, the body of a leopard is draped on top of a box next to a gun. The caption reads: “Two good shots... by gun and camera” (3). It seems as though Aloha and “Cap” are not attempting to connect their travel narratives with pre-existing stories of people and place; rather, the entire Expedition acts as a smokescreen—a blatant use of the world as propaganda for monetary gain.

Here, Aloha photographs “Cap” as he stands by one of their sanctioned vehicles. He has a film camera beside him on his right, while on the left there is a collection of a skeleton and bones hanging from the car. The contrast of bones, camera, and a military man is off-putting—are the intentions of the expedition, and this man, good in nature? Or does their choice of putting skeletal remains on the car represent something else—darker, mysterious intentions? “Orientalist photography is not a unilateral visual regime produced solely by Europeans, but rather one that must be understood as a mode of representation produced through cultural contact between the West and the East” (Behead 7). There’s a layering of space and place happening in this image, as well. Landscape stands behind “Cap” and his vehicle with the bones, backpack, and adventure wear representing travel and/or exploration. The written caption on the camera (and a small section of “around the world” on the car) emphasizes the far-reaching goals of the expedition, too.

Admittedly, it is difficult to parse out which photographs were taken by Wanderwell and which ones were taken by the Captain or another member of the Expedition. Most of the photos in A Call to Adventure! as well as those on the Aloha Wanderwell website have the young woman front and center. Like her writing, photographs of Aloha write over the stories, cultures, and places she ventured to on her expedition. Yet, Wanderwell and her expedition were advertised so well—so well, in fact, that she took the world by storm with her adventures. “In particular, the words and actions of young, white, middle-class feminists formulated a new American narrative, one meant to inspire women like them to forge empowered self-hoods and initiate meaningful change in mainstream society” (Teorey 17). As reviewers and scholars have noted, though, Wanderwell’s actions were not always seen in a positive light. This criticism extends to how she acts in front of (and behind) a camera.

There are other photos that reinforce Oriental and imperial themes, especially this one from Wanderwell’s tour of East Africa. Although Aloha and the Kavirondi Chief are smiling, Wanderwell is directing a spear at the chief “in fun”—the undertone of violence and power cannot be ignored. In this scene she “Joking,” as the caption implies, by craftily using her identity as traveler and Expedition member to impose power over the chief himself. Wanderwell faces away from the camera; her expression not as visible; but, I wonder, did the chief actually believe...
This collage and advertisement could have been made using modern tech and photographs and no one would be wiser; it was strategic to make a collection of photos that demonstrate Wanderwell interacting with the world around her and have a closer-up portrait in the foreground. I wonder if this was used as a promotional item for her filmmaking post-Wanderwell Expedition. As we examine the smaller photos behind Wanderwell’s portrait, I wonder if those images were all taken on the Wanderwell Expedition or, more likely, they are a collection of all of her travels in the 20s and 30s. I’m also curious to see which cameras were used to take the collage of photos behind the front image–did they use a mix of Rolleiflex, Bell Howell, and Leica cameras? In the image, below, we see Wanderwell sitting outside of a dwelling next to supplies and a pot lies in front of her. Based on her expression, Aloha seems to be intently thinking about something. This photo was taken in the later stages of the Expedition, so it’s nice to see Aloha look a bit older; however, I wonder if the image is supposed to represent her “roughing it” in the wilderness or if the wilderness is again but a backdrop to her thinking about her travels and/or Africa as a whole. This picture seems staged, almost to the point of exhaustion. With the caption “Africa 1927,” it seems like this picture is meant to encompass all of the historical and cultural depth of Africa…with Aloha front and center. I do appreciate the use of shadows and light in the image, though. The house or hut she is sitting by serves as a foreground of the wilderness and Aloha in the background. As viewers, we could be seeing Aloha from inside the dwelling.

Although this photograph was not taken by Aloha herself, it serves as a nice point of analyzing how she physically occupies space in the image. Viewers see the profile of The Great Buddha with his features well-defined while Wanderwell’s profile is blurred. She gazes up at the statue, either in splendor, wonder, or another emotion. I appreciate this photo more than the others in her narrative because she is not, for once, the prominent person in the photo. Unlike the majority of the other photos in A Call to Adventure, Aloha seems almost blurred here (which I like) and the intent is set more on her surroundings than the woman. I also like that the surrounding rocks/carvings are shown in the image, as well. Wanderwell and/or the publisher of A Call to Adventure give very little cultural, historical, or social context for each image in the travel narrative. The captions are either blatantly prejudiced, too vague, or nonexistent.

A staggering example of an unhelpful caption is when readers find Aloha’s writing and photography about driving through the Khyber Pass. She emphasizes her and her accompaniment establishing authority in the space, “keeping natives” from their vehicles/belongings. The photograph puts Aloha and a guide in focus with a native on the ground underneath Aloha’s map. After the interaction, Aloha noted how she “listened while the soldier assured me that under no pretext whatsoever is a permit issued to a white woman to travel over that road. I turned away to the waiting car–anyway, I had driven through the Khyber Pass” (98). What I wonder is why her promotional material had more context than her actual narrative? Why were the informative captions from pamphlets and advertisements exchanged for phrases and false information like the caption for the photos in Khyber Pass?

Another scavenger hunt I would embark on with Aloha’s work is to try and find as many pieces of Wanderwell advertising material as possible and analyze it using visual rhetoric.

I would compare the Wanderwell Expedition advertising material with the film advertisements she made after “Cap” passed away. I wonder if there are numerous similarities or more differences?
Time and again, Aloha’s narrative and photography depict that she was front and center of the—supposedly educational—expedition, but how much agency did Aloha really have while traveling?

**Manifesting Narrative Agency**

In early 1940, one year after *A Call to Adventure!* was published, an article called “No Strings Tied to Her” appeared in the *Atlanta Constitution*. The book reviewer implores people to “follow on, adventure reader; it’s not too late now to sign on for a jaunt you’ll never forget. You may join Aloha on a breath-taking journey around the globe, with every day filled with the space and adventure of hazardous and intrepid living” (51). Wanderwell’s narrative is heavily influenced by her adventurous, glamorous position as the face of the expedition, and there are moments where her photography reflects this glamor, as well. Nestled within her narrative and photography is her struggle to maintain narrative agency in her work. Near the beginning of *A Call to Adventure!* Aloha writes: “If I had really been a young man instead of being dressed like one in riding breeches, white shirt, leather jerkin and uniform cap, with my leather flying-helmet slung on my blanket roll and knapsack, the whole story would have been different” (35).

But I wonder if that would really be the case? Would her writing style, tone, and awareness of the audience shift? Or, what I posit, the colonialisit, racist language and Othering be compounded even more throughout the narrative and—by extension—advertising material for the Wanderwell Expedition? More questions pop up for me from this line of thinking:

- How would certain experiences have gone down for a young, 16 year-old man aboard a ship in third class?
- Would he have been approached on the streets in the same inquisitive manner if he wore skirts?
- Would his photography and attention to subjects drastically change?
- In what ways would he rely on and/or subvert institutions of power during his travels?

In any case, Aloha’s use of the power structure available to her via the expedition is both cunning and concerning; she manipulates her power and privilege while simultaneously losing most of her narrative agency. Although she was the face of the expedition, she had no control over where she went, what she did, or how she appeared in front of the camera. Her appearance, interactions, and lectures on the expedition were meticulously crafted so she consistently appeared alluring and captivating to audiences—all for the sake of finances and Captain Wanderwell’s personal goals.

There are pieces of Aloha’s expedition that leave me wondering if content is missing—more specifically, content that would put her actions and positionality under more scrutiny. In the online article “This Girl Likes Living Dangerously” from the Aloha Wanderwell Estate website, we are left with this ending quote: “Somebody once said to me that you never really live unless you live dangerously, and while it may not be true of everybody, it certainly is true of me” (2014). The piece threads several harrowing events together—being a prisoner of war in China, camping among elephants, and trekking through starvation in the middle of Australia; yet, none of these events are mentioned in *A Call to Adventure!* On top of that, most (if not all) of the dangerous events in Aloha’s travel narrative seem to be underscored with humor or insincere concern.

Throughout the majority of *A Call to Adventure!* Aloha defies cultural and political boundaries simply because of her rambunctious nature. While she thought her antics were daring or revolutionary, more modern readers (like me) interpret her actions as blatantly disrespectful and discriminatory. One jarring instance of this disrespect occurs when the Wanderwell Expedition is staying in Egypt. At one point, “Cap” notes how he “had already begun to seek permission from the authorities to let us travel on a pilgrim ship to Jidda and join a caravan there so that we can get within sight of the walls of Mecca—I know we cannot go any further, but that will be something” (46). Despite protests and concerns from her crew and guardian, Aloha sneaks away from her group, disguises herself, and sneaks into Mecca. After sneaking into Mecca and taking in her surroundings, she writes: “There was no appearance of a sacred and solemn pilgrimage; all that sense of glory and urgent exultancy that I had felt in the moonlight when I stretch[e] my arms out toward Mecca, was gone” (68). What strikes me here is how unapologetic she seems to be about the entire experience. There are moments when Wanderwell’s writing takes on an alluring tone. For example, at the beginning of her narrative she writes that “One side of my character is strictly Victorian and more than slightly religious. I abhor drinking; there has been no room in my life for smoking and carousing; jazz and jitter leave me cold” (21). Quotes like this one call attention to the layering pattern she adopts throughout her entire narrative—in this instance, she weaves Victorian characteristics, wanderlust, and Orientalism together to go head-to-head against the 1920s flapper craze. Her narrative agency, as distorted as it is, follows this woven pattern. It is important to note here that although Aloha had narrative agency behind the camera, two core facts are true: 1) Most of the photos she took are of “Cap” Wanderwell. 2) Aloha is part of the media that was generated for the Wanderwell Expedition.
How is she as a subject in the travel narrative different from the propaganda around her? That leaves one final, core question: How did Aloha tell and share stories about other women in *A Call to Adventure*?

**Telling Stories about Other Women**

In Aloha’s text and her photography, women are as objectified as the monuments, cities, and other people she meets during her travels. They become fodder for Aloha to extort their appearance for her benefit. Here, we see at least two women sitting in front of a makeshift tent with guns and other tools at their feet. A pyramid stands tall behind them, yet we do not know who these women are: their blurred faces make it difficult to discern which person sitting in the half-circle is Aloha herself. I can only assume that the other woman is Aloha’s sister, Miki. It is unclear whether they are preparing for an excursion, resting, or feeling worried about something.

If there are photos taken of Wanderwell, she is front and center; if she is taking photos she highlights the exotic and seemingly unnatural characteristics of what (or who) is in front of her lens. It’s as bothersome as it is familiar—especially since I would do the same thing when traveling in my early twenties. Even so, I could not at the time identify it as staying on the periphery, I was able to realize that there was more to the person or place I’m photographing than the characteristics I wished to highlight for others to see. Aloha, though, does not recognize this Othering and Orientalism as faulty or wrong—instead, she embraces it and as a result is simultaneously a key characteristic and flaw in her work.

Throughout *A Call to Adventure!* Aloha openly gives scathing critiques about women of color. As I read her text with modern eyes, it both surprised me (yet, at the same time, not at all), to see comments like this one appear throughout the narrative: “Peasant women trailed black skirts in the dust, and their chains of barbaric jewelry swung and clinked with each step” (45).

Aloha’s disrespectful approach to various historical monuments and cultural customs has me wondering if she purposely portrayed herself as a blase, yet confident traveler in order to gain sympathy from readers or if that is, in truth, how she felt/thought about the people, places, and customs she encountered via the expedition, especially when she writes and takes photography of other women. “Near here we photographed an Annamite girl with her black lacquered teeth which is a fashion that makes even an otherwise lovely face quite horrible!”—even though the practice is centered around maturity, beauty, and preserving teeth in older age (131).

As for other white women, she seems to highlight nicer and discriminatory behaviors. Aloha longs to be like the women in paperback novelettes, writing: “What those heroines did! What narrow escapes they had, and how I longed to become one of them!” (23). Did these novelette heroines reinforce Othering peoples, spaces, and cultures they came across? For example, when Aloha describes her time in Calcutta she hone in on the colonial gaze: “They shaded their heads with parasols when the weather was fine enough to go into their lovely gardens, like a bit of transplanted England, and they sipped their tea from cups held in hands encased in long white gloves” (128). At this moment she is talking about the other wives of European soldiers stationed in Calcutta. She fits between describing Calcutta as an exotic, but abnormal place with racist comments about people on the streets.

The entire expedition was focused on Aloha’s movements around the globe. Very little information (if any) is given about her chorts in the dust, and their chains of barbaric jewelry swung and clinked with each step” (45). As for other white women, she seems to highlight nicer and discriminatory behaviors. Aloha longs to be like the women in paperback novelettes, writing: “What those heroines did! What narrow escapes they had, and how I longed to become one of them!” (23). Did these novelette heroines reinforce Othering peoples, spaces, and cultures they came across? For example, when Aloha describes her time in Calcutta she hone in on the colonial gaze: “They shaded their heads with parasols when the weather was fine enough to go into their lovely gardens, like a bit of transplanted England, and they sipped their tea from cups held in hands encased in long white gloves” (128). At this moment she is talking about the other wives of European soldiers stationed in Calcutta. She fits between describing Calcutta as an exotic, but abnormal place with racist comments about people on the streets.

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**Conclusion**

Aloha’s travel career is definitively shrouded in glamour, propaganda, and mystery. *A Call to Adventure!* is a reflection of several ideologies at odds with one another: Victorian “new woman”, Orientalism, and “the story” vs. people’s stories. A century later, Aloha’s narrative and expertise as a “globetrotter” are even more skewed. The continuity of Aloha’s legacy is nonlinear. There are various accounts of Aloha’s travels, especially where the expedition is concerned. For example, Sandy Levins writes about how Aloha began the expedition “With her mother’s permission and her sister in tow as chaperone” (“Aloha Wanderwell: Transcontinental Adventurer”). However, in *A Call to Adventure!* Aloha explains how she did not see her sister in person on the expedition until they reached Africa. Simply put, the facts do not add up.

To be sure, I am not wanting to discredit other scholars invested in Aloha’s works; rather, I am wanting to point out that Aloha’s legacy is still shrouded in mystery.
A frustrating part of Aloha’s *A Call to Adventure* is the accessibility of her work. Most of her work is housed under the Richard Trust and Baker Estate—and the Aloha Wanderwell website has tons of photos that do not appear in her printed narrative. These unused photos highlight the themes of Orientalism, power, and racism that are prominent in *A Call to Adventure*. As I was comparing photos between the website and *A Call to Adventure*, I found some questionable threads. First, there are few photos of Wanderwell working behind the camera, which, if we remember, was the intent of her taking the sition on the expedition. There are more photos taken of her posing in front of a historical place or artifact than there are photos of her using cameras or typewriters. In fact, there are more photos of her using a car to drive around than of her doing the job she was asked to do in the original ad for the expedition (Keep in mind that Ford was a major sponsor of the Expedition, so the plethora of Ford Model T’s in Aloha’s work makes sense).

Namely, most of the confusion stems from promotional material that gives conflicting information about dates, places, and people involved with the Wanderwell Expedition. Aloha was a powerful figure within an Interwar context; now, her narrative and filmmaking have dropped even more into obscurity. Some information remains constant while other parts change. One of the most frustrating aspects of viewing Aloha’s work outside of her narrative is the lack of context and captions for her photos.

If you are interested in finding Aloha’s films, here is a comprehensive list of the films she made within the Interwar period:

*With Car & Camera Around the World* (1929)
*The Last of the Bororos* (1931)
*Flight to the Stone Age Bororos* (1931)
*The River of Death* (1934)
*To See the World By Car* (1937)
*Australia Now* (1944)
*India Now* (1944)
*Explorers of the Purple Sage* (1945)
*Victory in the Pacific* (1945)

You can find all of these films within the Academy Film Archive.
"I linger by a water-fall pretending to take trial shots with the cine, but I only want to break the trance woven by so many miles of tarmac gliding underneath our singing wheels. I want to touch your earth once more" The Cruel Way, 11

Introduction

As a journalist, photographer, and adventurer, Maillart had the uncanny ability to encompass the entire space/place she was in during her travels. Maillart’s skills and experience are elaborate: she was a teacher, scholar, Olympian, sailor, journalist, friend, and a woman who did not fear traveling to faraway places. She has published works in French, German, and English, and a large amount of her works are archived in the Bibliothèque de Genève in Switzerland. During the Interwar period, readers came out in droves to read Maillart’s works. She had a fiery spirit and craved to fully immerse herself in the cultures, places, and spaces she encountered on her travels. Undoubtedly, Maillart was a Renaissance woman. Sadly, almost a century has passed and Maillart’s work remains largely unstudied using rhetorical theory. However, scholars have engaged with her works in other fields, including narrative theory, Francophone studies, and French studies. (Borella, Fischer, and Topping)

Thankfully, translators and writers continue to study Maillart’s manuscripts today. Last year, Ma Philosophie du Voyage was released—a book containing fifteen never-before-seen texts written in French by Maillart throughout the Interwar period. For me, it was exciting to see one of the women I am investigating pop up inconspicuously on a bookshelf; and, it made me wonder: what made Maillart’s works so popular a century ago?

Some critics argue about how “It’s hard to tell if Ella Maillart was a traveling writer or a writing traveler,” due to her humor, depth, and ingenuity within her works (“Voyage, Voyage”). The catalyst for why she traveled, however, is clear: The Dictionary for Women Worldwide explains: “[S]he went adventuring in reaction to the first world war; she wanted to sail or stride away from a Europe of closing borders and minds” (1194-1195). This sentiment rears its head time and again in Turkestan Solo, The Forbidden Journey, and The Cruel Way—three of her most popular pieces of travel writing published in between World War I and World War II. Her narratives and photography focus less on her occupying a place or space and more on her moving through space, “touching the earth once more” after extended periods of travel by car, boat, or train. Maillart’s spatial awareness, along with her snarky attitude, is what caught my attention when I first encountered her work. I found Maillart’s narratives by accident—after digging for travel narratives near World War II, The Cruel Way nestled its way onto my reading list; and, soon enough, several of her other travel narratives captured my attention.
Her photography is famous in its own right. Maillart’s collections of travel photos have been included in several exhibitions, the most recent being the National Gallery of Art exhibition *The New Woman Behind the Camera*, a collection of photographs from “new women” across the globe who embraced modernism, feminist empowerment, and the rapid changes in technology between the 20s and 50s. Maillart’s works are unique because we can see her apply a range of skills to numerous concerns over mobility, cultural understanding, and communication with her travel companions. There is a focus on the public—on people and space—that I particularly enjoy in Maillart’s works; she makes her spatial and cultural awareness known in her narratives whether she is writing for a French magazine or publishing a travel book. And, I will admit, I was captivated and impressed by the variety of experiences she had by the time she was thirty; she worked on a sailboat in the Atlantic, competed in the 1924 Olympics, and taught overseas before turning her attention to travel writing.

When I first started digging into Maillart’s backstory, I wondered if there are any differences in how she writes when she’s alone versus when she travels with other people. In this application, I survey three texts that span across the Interwar period. Maillart’s adventure in *Turkestan Solo* began her exploration of the East; while she travels on her own in this narrative, she journeys further into the East with Peter Fleming in *Forbidden Journey*. Ella Maillart’s trip in *The Cruel Way: Switzerland to Afghanistan in a Ford* is focused on a two-person road trip intended to keep her long-time friend, Annemarie Schwartzzenbach (aka “Christina”), from falling prey to addiction and is the backdrop for Maillart’s own historical/journalistic re-journeying to the East. One common thread throughout Maillart’s narratives and photography is Maillart’s vibrant attempt to ‘acquire self mastery’ (26). In this chapter, I will investigate her attempt to do just that by taking a closer look at the means in which Maillart blends feminist geography and cultural rhetorics to craft her travel narratives. I will also examine why her thoughts on travel, transformation, and her self-image do not quite align with the time-old metaphor that travel is transformation. In the introduction to *The Cruel Way*, Crispin explains if we “look a little closer… she [Maillart] does not quite fit. She is not quite of our age. The displacement starts to show. That hat isn’t vintage inspired, it’s actually vintage. And her version of self-actualization, it is not our own” (introduction x). With that in mind, my questions are these:

- Does my own version of self-actualization align with Maillart’s, or is it something entirely different?
- How does Maillart disrupt the enchantment of travel?
- Why should we bring Maillart back into conversations on rhetoric and women’s travel writing?

All of these questions focus on self-reflection in one way or another; this, too, is a prominent characteristic of Maillart’s narratives. To understand Maillart’s approach to mastering the self, I first have to look at how Maillart defines herself in place and space to see how she differs from her contemporaries.

**Defining Self in Space**

As a native Swiss, Maillart constantly questioned her positionality towards the ongoing war and struggling economies in both the West and the East. And, although Switzerland aimed to remain neutral during the conflict in the 1930s and 40s; Maillart, not so much; (Maillart’s) Swiss citizenship made her free as a writer [at least freer than Fleming, whose every paragraph is written to the greater glory of the empire: Her travelogs don’t touch on borders with colonial discourse, they are also more emotional, more marginal and do not have to please any Anglocentric expectations (“Voyage, Voyage”).

Although I agree that Maillart’s writings and photography are emotional and marginal, I argue that Maillart openly wrestles with colonial discourse on purpose because Maillart herself deemed it necessary. After all, one of the defining characteristics of Maillart’s work is the blunt disenchantment she provides about travel, gender roles, and class issues. Maillart openly questions her positionality and nationality in her works. At the beginning of *Turkestan Solo*, she writes: “Was there a chance, I wondered, of my insignificant person, backed by its Swiss passport, being able to travel freely through the land” (14-15)? Unlike Aloha, Maillart did not immediately assume she would have free range of movement during her travels; she is hyper aware of the social and geopolitical shifts occurring across the globe, as well as her own positionality within those shifts. Her willingness to include discussions on nationality, gender, class, and privilege within the contexts of war and travel is what makes her writing and photography seem like fresh air in comparison to Aloha’s works.
Maillart also makes sure to emphasize the fact that she is wearing several hats: journalist, woman, sister, friend, tourist—but not an expert. At one point, she writes: “I am no expert; I speak as a tourist comparing details seen at Khiva, Bokhara, Samarkand, Herat, and Moshed” (184). Bidian and Zaragocin argue there are “unequal plains of knowledge construction across geographies, and the persistent dominance of certain spaces over others” in Feminist Geography. I contend that this state of knowledge construction and sharing applied to Maillart’s work, as well (196). By refusing to gate-keep knowledge on different countries and cultures, Maillart weakens the structures of dominance, Orientalism, and colonialism in place in countries across the Global South, including Soviet Turkestan, China, and Afghanistan. Her travel narratives do not conform to colonial expectations, but they do not deny the imbalance of knowledge, power, and loss of narrative voices, either.

Indeed, Maillart openly attempts to dispel the rumors and racist commentary on the countries and people in the East. During a speech about her time in Central Asia, Cox notes that Maillart makes the following comment in the interview: “After a few years I suppose conditions will be the same on both sides of the border as a result of the propaganda slowly being carried on by means of the cinema and newspapers and, of course, the radio” (145). What I appreciate here as a modern reader is that Maillart addresses the controversies with circulation of information, audience, and context for her readers and the public at large. Aloha attempts to address her being objectified by viewers via her memoir. Gruber, on the other hand, aligns with Maillart in keeping audiences aware of the overlapping ideas, historical events, and contexts within her works.

That is not to say that Maillart is without faults—there are moments where Maillart leans into the cultural and social trends of her time and uses what we would call today derogatory language—“coolies” and other terms appear periodically throughout her narratives, as shown earlier; this is similar to Aloha’s works, too, but not as extensive. One point of contention I have with her work is that she instills a ton of historical facts throughout her memoir; unless you had prior knowledge of these events or dug deeper into the different figures and moments of history she writes about, you wouldn’t have as clear a scope on her works. As I read through her works, I find myself looking up specific places/monuments rather than the cities she went to, which surprised me a bit. She also seems to have a stronger mastery of writing about place and space (along with Gruber), whereas Aloha focuses her attention on how events solely affect her and her experience within a space/place. Nevertheless, Maillart strives to provide a deeper context and awareness for readers of her narratives from as many sides as possible; because, like her counterparts, Maillart positionality is connected to her photography and journalism career.

Thanks to smaller magazine submissions in France and across Europe, she is able to cobble together funding to go to the East and report on countries like Kazakhstan, Iran, Tibet, and Pakistan, among others. Borella, a scholar who’s explored Maillart’s works for decades, notes: “She [Maillart] makes observations that express cultural awareness of her own presence as the other/outside. Because she does not fully belong to the colonial enterprise, she is able to navigate around it, to circumvent its imposed discourse” (131). The advanced mobility granted to her through journalism encouraged a need for her to continue questioning everything and everyone who came across her path—especially her own actions and worldview. “Along the surface of the earth I shall find our way where I have journeyed before; and inwardly, where I have long ago begun to ask myself questions so like yours, may the little that I have found help you to find what each of us has to find by himself” (5). If anything, this is a key tenet of Maillart’s positionality during travel. Very rarely does she overexert her power as a journalist and photographer to gain access to different places; instead, she lets her previous experience and her down-to-Earth conversation skills speak for themselves.

I was fascinated by Maillart’s fearlessness to venture out from her home. Maillart’s vibrancy and ethos stand as stark opposite to those of infamous “Aloha” who became Maillart, for sure, manipulates her power and privilege but in a more respectful way. Dervia Murphy makes this point: “Like so many women travellers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, she [Maillart] was Liberated with a capital L—and without benefit of any Feminist movement back-up. Which raises the question: Why, since 1945, has travel been dominated by men?” (xv)? In what way, I wonder, was Murphy saying Maillart is Liberated? Is Murphy addressing Maillart’s Swiss nationality here, or that Maillart had the financial support to not be encumbered from travel due to her positionality as a well-off middle class woman? Something else to note here is that Murphy calls Maillart a traveler, not a writer making a piece on travel; I believe this, too, is another critical aspect of Maillart’s positionality in relation to her peers. She is acutely aware of her presence as she travels; not to mention she pays close attention to historical and cultural shifts as she moves from place to space via work or leisure.

These characteristics, in addition to her witty tone, are what help Maillart turn the “New Woman” persona of the Interwar period on its head. Cruce notes: “Ironically, while a True Woman was assumed to be a pillar of moral strength and virtue, she was also portrayed as delicate and weak, prone to fainting and illness. She dared not exert herself too much physically or be emotionally startled for fear of her health” (189). By no means does Maillart depict herself as fragile, but she does admit her limitations—this gives her writing and experience a deeper sense of relatability for audiences (and for me, as well).

Maillart’s commentary on class was refreshing. She and Gruber agree: acknowledging one’s privilege and not using it as leverage were important in the field of journalism. And yet, Maillart seamlessly blends sarcasm with critiques on class to make all readers feel welcome to the conversation:
"We had much time to notice how privileged we were. But having travelled steerage more than once, I remembered our feelings: none of us ever gave a thought to the 'upper ones' and if some of my neighbors had been shifted up there would have felt miserable. They needed the herd around them, they enjoyed its noise, its warmth, its struggle for life." (39).

Her thoughts here are like fresh air in comparison to Aloha’s point of view. Maillart did not need, or have time to, mince words—especially when there was a commodity on news in the quickest and most reliable way possible. Maillart provides a more thorough examination of the places she travels through as well as brings the current political, social, and economic status of those places into her writing with ease; we simultaneously feel informed and intrigued by how she depicts her travels in the East. Her historical approach is intentional; I'd wager, because her more popular works were published in the throes of World War II. Borella interrogates Maillart’s positionality in this way:

This does not mean that Maillart did not carry a certain colonial baggage with her, but rather, that her own indoctrination into the colonial world differed from the understanding of her fellow French and British travelers. Maillart did not have to travel for the greater glory of England or France, for that burden was never cast upon her (125). Maillart wrestles with her colonial baggage by uncovering, advocating, and sharing her experiences of and from the East to inform her audience of what’s really happening overseas.

One way she accomplishes this goal is via disenchantment of class throughout her works. Traveling via the upper class does not make an ideal travel experience, according to Maillart. At times, she travels with British elite like Peter Fleming when she moves across borders; however, the company she prefers to keep is of the public—the “herd”. We had much time to notice how privileged we were. But having travelled steerage more than once, I remembered our feelings: none of us ever gave a thought to the ‘upper ones’ and if some of my neighbors had been shifted up there would have felt miserable. They needed the herd around them, they enjoyed its noise, its warmth, its struggle for life. (*The Cruel Way* 39)

Even though Maillart was using cars, typewriters, and cameras to move through and see the world around her, she did not let those tools overwhelm her physical movement and enjoyment of her travels. "Nor would we allow speed to build an invisible wall between us and the life around—sound of voices, smell of new spices wafting from a farm, coolness of a shy breeze near a brook! This journey was to be ours and not the car’s." (20). Maillart places more emphasis on using the tools rather than letting the tools dictate her movement. Her wit and self-awareness remain strong in these moments, too.

Another strong point of Maillart’s writing and tone is that she weaves humor with important aspects of travel—for example, at one point she writes: “I failed to make [Christina] smile by saying that such are the joys of travelling when you do not speak the language of the country you are travelling through” (92). She understands that she is an outside body moving through a space that is not her own and, as such, recognizes the need to support her friend while they both reflect on the process of travel while moving forward: “Very slowly that overwhelming impersonal emotion became a thought—that something was keenly suffering for Paris. It was as if the flesh and the spirit of Paris were maimed, martyred, torn apart and as if I had become a mass of compassion large enough to envelop the whole wity capital I knew so well” (Maillart 7). Maillart has a knack of investing her time in readers as well as making each place she visits distinct from each other. She knows to add in points of history and threads that tie back to travel; she does this periodically by talking about the patron saints of travelers, retelling accounts and histories of travelers that came before her and—hopefully—will come after her, especially in the East.

It was interesting to see her wistful nature stay stable throughout her works, whether Maillart was traveling on her own or with someone else. Her snark stays constant, too, but seems to be more striking in pieces like *The Forbidden Journey*, where she travels with Peter Fleming. I especially appreciated the physical limitations Maillart had while travelling, too. Near the beginning of *The Cruel Way*, she notes: “Fatigue should be frankly acknowledged since neither of us was in good health (I had a chronic pain in the spine). Pre-arranged stages could be altered it was important to travel intelligently, noticing all those little changes that make one country different from another” (20). She does not sugar coat the rigor that comes with travel, nor does she exclude it from her narrative. Maillart’s positionality and travel narratives are comprehensive and complex in terms of space, identity, and movement; it is no surprise that her photographs, too, follow a similar pattern.

**Understanding Cultures and People through Photography**

Maillart has this unique way of constellating her experiences and the cultures of people she meets in her photography. Topping argues that “Maillart engages[s] with the implications of choosing to exploit—or not—a photo opportunity” (69). While I believe that is true, I also posit all of these interwar women were required to wrestle with this choice; a century later, I believe we have expanded the implications to an entirely new level, especially when we place photographs on social media. Maillart did not have Facebook, a blog, or TikTok; she did, however, have a Leica. Even with a lack of social media, Maillart maintains a consistent spatial, physical, and cultural awareness throughout her narratives. Unlike Aloha or me, “Ella Maillart hardly exhibited her photographs at the time of their creation, using them only to illustrate her travel stories, her conferences and the numerous articles she wrote for the press” (*Pictures*).

A shocking fact about Maillart’s work is that she “processed some seventeen thousand negatives” during the height of her photography and journalistic career (*The New Woman Behind the Camera* 265). Knowing this, I also wonder why Maillart did not elaborate more thoroughly on the development process in any of her works; she does talk more about using the camera than Aloha, yet I still found myself frustrated with the lack of information about which cameras she preferred, what she liked to take pictures of, and how she developed her film. For example, did she send her film off to France—or elsewhere—to process negatives? Despite the lack of that information, we can still appreciate Maillart’s photography as an example of “Celebrating technology while embracing spontaneity and improvisation” (*At the Harn Museum*).
Maillart’s use of visual rhetoric becomes especially prominent within her large collection of photographs in each narrative. The way she markets destinations is intentional and far from frivolous. If we juxtapose Maillart’s photos with Aloha’s, Cox et al. notes how we see a huge difference in how she ‘address[es] both parts of communication [in visual rhetoric] the place on one side and consumers on the other side’ (1). To give an opposite perspective of this, Aloha’s expedition materials and personal photographs seem to manifest as a type of propaganda; meanwhile, Aylanak argues Maillart’s photographs ‘venture off the beaten track and provide a comprehensive view of both life and scenery in each country she visits (Aylanak).

In terms of photographic ethics, Maillart is much more aware of her position as a photographer and her need to gain consent than her previous counter-part Aloha. Throughout most of her narratives, Maillart consistently makes reference to striking up conversations with people she photographs before she takes their picture. This is not to say that she did not follow this rule on all her travels, but she definitely worked to craft a specific narrative about the cities and people and cultures she saw throughout her investigation of the East. Scarles notes how “Through visual practice, tourists socialise dest-nations: selectively acting out place and creating copresences between self and other. Photography provides opportunities to selectively author destinations. It becomes a performance in itself as tourists search to ‘be’ in place” (469).

Maillart’s photography, if anything, focused on details. No matter the location, she used her camera to document the intricacies of monuments, mosques, public spaces, and people. In The Cruel Way, she writes: “It seemed to me that the geometrical designs of her apron could be related with those of the embroidered plastron that brightens the dresses of Baluchistan; the same affirmation, strong and joyful, emanates from both. The same boldness and symmetry often appears in carpets made by nomadic tribes. These patterns ‘speak’ to me so directly I feel as if I had lived with them before” (17). Unfortunately, Maillart and her publishers do not provide a photograph to accompany this description; nevertheless, she accomplishes what Doloughan explains as “not raising the question of a correspondence between the ‘real’ and the verbally realized image depicted in the book but rather as an illustration of the ability of language to trigger or cue images in our minds” (25). Maillart’s word choice, acknowledgement of physical location, and focus on “joyful” and “strong” emotions turns an apron into a lasting memory of art, culture, and experience.

Maillart’s photography supports people across class and race. One large comparison between Maillart and Wanderwell is that Maillart does not dehumanize or demean any of the monuments or places she visits during her travels. She uses proactive, centering language on the place—rather than herself—to help readers conceptualize where she is and what she is doing at any given point in her trip. Maillart is the spectator but not the star; Maillart recognizes that although she’s the vehicle of sharing her memories to the public, she should not—in fact—be the focus of the work. Rather, time and again Maillart juxtaposes the places and people she finds on the road with her home country of Switzerland. I believe she makes these comparisons to help readers answer the question that Maillart ponders during her own travels: How do I connect my feelings of travel home, and self together? McColley gives insight into this question by analyzing Maillart’s “cogent desire to break away from home and homeland in order to make discoveries about her selfhood within a larger context of a new geography” (12). That new geography came with “another kind of new sight—cinemas, newspapers, railings, pavements, electric wires” (The Cruel Way 18).

Maillart rarely takes a wistful tone when writing about home. The spirit of her writing—indeed, her very essence—seems to be aching to get as far away from home as possible. This need for exploration, to simultaneously unmake and remake herself in the East, bleeds repeatedly through her photographs. Along with that remaking of herself sits a hyper focus on place, culture, and people in her photography. The following photos exemplify this best—although this collection of images is by no means extensive.

Maillart took this photo at Rybachy, located in northern Russia. Ribatchy can be translated as “Fisher Peninsula” (Wikipedia). In Turkestan Solo, Maillart describes this place as “an unpolluted Geneva barely born; the most vital difference, however, is that only solitude surrounds the metallic-looking flowers of the immense thistles.” (69) At first glance, we see a nice amount of balance in the entire photo; the mountains, water, cargo, and camels each take up the photo in an equal amount without crowding into each other. Maillart is nowhere to be seen in the photo, which puts more emphasis on the space she sees through her lens; this photo is ironic, too, because one of Maillart’s focus lenses popped out of her camera after taking this photograph I could have wept for vexation. All I was seeing and all I had been hoping to see, and the pictures I had come such distances to hunt for! There was no way of profiting by them because I could not tell what I was focusing on. All I could do was to trust to luck, and that was as bad as having one’s eyes shut (58). I empathize with her lament—especially because interval cameras (the Leica, especially) had to heavily rely on the built-in rangefinder to sharpen an image and compensate for distance. Yet, I appreciated that Maillart chose to include this small snippet of how a mishap impacted her ability to take photos on her travels.
This image is a photograph of the great Buddha in India taken in the mid-1930s; although we can posit that Maillart took this photo herself, we can be sure that the statue, rather than the people under it, is the focus of the photograph. Shadows encase the statue’s body and sides of the statue while a few onlookers stand at the great Buddha’s feet, looking upward. As a viewer, I like that we do not see Maillart, or any of her companions, in the image; it puts the intent on the historical landmark rather than Maillart being with the statue. As I read more of Maillart’s works that led into the beginning of World War II, I wondered where the “messiness that reminds us of the life happening outside the frame (as well as within it)” was in Maillart’s photographs (Teju Cole 16).

Taken in early 1932 during Turkestan Solo, this image surveys old-town Bukhara, an ancient city in Uzbekistan known for its ornate minarets and secret market. This image gives a long-view of a bolstering cultural site. She uses her Leica to give depth and scope to the place, as well as captures people walking to and from the dome. Here, her focus is on space and place—this is a religious site as well as an overall meeting place for people.

At the very end of The Cruel Way, readers see a standalone photograph of the Khyber Pass in all its glory. Nestled in Pakistan near the border of Afghanistan, this mountain pass functioned as a guide not only for Aloha Wanderwell but also Maillart as well. Using her Leica, Maillart focuses on the scenic landscape and color of the mountain range. Accompanying valley side. The photo serves as a nod to the dual winding paths of Maillart’s journey across Europe and Asia as well as her twisting and time-tested friendship with Annemarie Schwarzenbach. I found it to be a fitting means to end The Cruel Way—and a nice reminder that no matter what lay within Maillart’s camera lens, she made sure to place what Susan Morgan calls an “awareness of the slipperiness, the dangers, and the sheer deceit of situating culturally and geographically, where or whom I am from” (Place Matters 2-3).

Manifesting Narrative Agency

Most, if not all, of Maillart’s works resonate with a certain level of confidence in traveling abroad; that confidence, interestingly enough, does not change when she travels alone or with other people. As she continued her travels across Asia with Peter Fleming, Maillart wrote: “I was so completely absorbed in the life of the trail...the life of the beasts; of the elements, it was as though I had always been living it” (The Forbidden Journey 66). Her previous expertise as a journalist as well as travel in the East gave her the roadmap necessary to guide travel with her peers. Compared to Aloha, Maillart is more historically and culturally aware of the countries she visits and travels through. She is also far more open about questioning her life’s purpose with how she and others view cultural appreciation and personal agency via travel. Some readers might be drawn into her answering the question: “What am I trying to be? Unencumbered by possession, everywhere at home, intensely alive, without masters, unlimited by nationality” (x). In truth, I found that her writing mimicked that of an older contemporary of Maillart—Virginia Woolf. In “Street Haunting”, when Woolf asks, “is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give the reins to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves?” I see a similar vein in Maillart’s writing—that giving into the wishes of travel and focusing on the present is far easier and better (mentally) than wrestling with how outsiders define them (4).

Like her counterparts, Maillart used her travel as a means of reconstructing narratives on gender, travel, and work. Before she took her drive across Switzerland to Afghanistan, Maillart traveled and explored the world in different ways that created “tectonic shifts on the rhetorical landscape” (Rayster and Kirsch 17). For example, Maillart notes: “Suddenly I understood something. I felt now, with all the strength of my senses and intelligence, that Paris, France, Europe, the White Race, were nothing...The something that counted in and against all particularisms was the magnificent scene of things that we call the world” (76). She was not bound by colonial expectations to craft false narratives of far-off places to gain money; rather, she intimately understood that travel and exploring the world eclipsed the “carry-on luggage” of World War II’s political upheaval, propaganda, and personal struggles about publishing stories for magazines in France. Her assuredness to continue traveling, and persevering through travel, is so strong that it is a binding thread within her narrative identity—gifting her with narrative agency.

Maillart’s witty and down-to-earth writing style helps readers to relate to her struggles and joys during travel—whether they had the same experiences or not. At one point, I started laughing when Maillart wrote about her and Annemarie’s cameras being confiscated after they left Germany in The Cruel Way. “With thick fingers tanned by acids the photographer was in vain trying to open our small-film cameras. At last he said he could not handle or develop such a material” (29). My reading of this moment was enriched with the fact that I have worked a bit with 120 film.
**Telling Stories about Other Women**

Like Gruber, Maillart practices due diligence to share many different perspectives on (and stories from) women she meets in the East. Her narratives and photographs that focus on the progress of women are refreshing, especially in comparison to Aloha’s overbearing focus on herself and reluctance to, if at all, put her own actions under scrutiny. Maillart is not afraid to speak her mind. Time and again Maillart makes sure to point out discrepancies in travel logistics throughout the 1930s in the wake of WWII. In *The Cruel Way*, she makes mention that “by the way, that even for unaccompanied women there is no danger nowadays in traveling through Afghanistan, and so my story will disappoint anyone who is looking for adventures” (20). In one stroke, she’s highlighting adventures in both a positive and negative light. I wonder, though, if she would agree with some of Aloha’s blatantly sexist comments on women traveling solo versus with other people. After Maillart had gained literary traction from her travels across Asia, Baroness Blixen-Finecke (also known as travel writer Isak Dinesen) asked to join Maillart on a trip to the East. Maillart voiced her concerns:

“But she [Baroness Blixen-Finecke] had seen little, stopped nowhere, and her photographs showed nothing but her Ford in sand, in water, in crowds, in deserts. So when she invited me to accompany her, I refused. And felt obliged to lecture her: what a pity that with a car superbly fitted for Asiatic travels she did not go to remote places where little-known tribes were on the eve of disappearing” (20-21).

In a 1988 review of women’s travel books, Neustadtl made this collective comment on enchantment: “The majority of us travel on patched-together goals. We are hungry for risk but limited in endurance. We moan at the horizon but can’t help thinking in standard currencies. So what can these women who roamed before jets have to say to us?” (8). Her point is poignant, here, especially when we compare Interwar travel books to popular culture travel phenomena. The risk, reward, and dangers are shown to us point-blank in Aloha’s, Maillart’s, and Gruber’s works; yes, those experiences might be altered to suit an editor’s or audiences’ tastes; nevertheless, the goals are more defined.

![Young Kazak woman train walking toward a Tashkent train to board it; we find it during Maillart’s first journey to Central Asia in her narrative *Turkestan Solo*. What sets Maillart’s photographs apart from her colleagues is the level of authenticity we find within them. The woman’s expression is clear—she is smiling—and Maillart also is sure to capture the woman’s surroundings, too; other people wait for the train on a seemingly sunny day. The entire moment, photograph, and caption are simple, moving, and vibrant. Unlike Aloha’s descriptions of women in *A Call to Adventure*, Maillart gives readers a fuller picture of what she is seeing and who she meets as she travels. The quality of the photograph seems clearer, too.](image)

Maillart’s portrayal and captured images of other women are candid. The photography, at a glance, seems more genuine and less staged. In this photo, a group of women, men, and children prepare to go about their day in Amrīstār, India. The lighting and crisp view in which we see the woman’s smile, the man’s headwrap, and Śrī Harmandir Sahib behind them is lovely; it is in photographs like these that I wish Maillart and her counterparts had used color film.

![India: ‘The Extraordinary Travels of Elsa Maillart’](image)

This is one of my favorite photos from Maillart’s works. At the beginning of *The Cruel Way*, Maillart gives us a lovely view of how she and Anne-Marie Schwarzenboch began their cross-country trek to Kabul. This photo inspires comfort as much as it does realism. Unlike Aloha’s self-centered imagery, Maillart places herself out of the image and focuses on the tools and people that she and Annemarie are using to make the journey their own; their Ford, tent, typewriter, and meager ingredients. Even so, this photo is akin to the large amounts of travel posts on social media; it’s giving an upfront view of what’s happening in the beginning throes of travel. The description is simple, yet effective, with an emphasis on being “free to travel”—which could harken back to their journalist goals or having the privilege to travel in the first place. Personally, I think that this photo encapsulates the main themes of Maillart’s works: super well realism, focus on place, and disrupting enchantment are all represented here with the foundation of travel as exploration.

![Bulgaria road wide open ahead, free to travel with car, tent, and companion. *The Cruel Way*, 1939.](image)
Maillart is more than an explorer to put on a bookshelf–she is a traveler who understands the beauty of things that live longer than we do and the tragedy of what happens when you maliciously erase the Truth from the stories you share and narratives you create for others. Her meticulous approach to weaving conversation with historical events made me rethink how I structured my Context chapter and, in the long run, absorb information about the Interwar period on a global scale. Her popularity remains today–many of her works have been translated into English, German, and other languages for the public: “I knew that self-knowledge can be acquired wherever one is but I was too weak or too silly to insulate myself from the revolt, panic, militarism, and febrile planning that was sweeping Europe off her feet. Distance would help, I felt sure. In the West anyway, everyone seemed as lost as I was; why not try the East” (27)?

Maillart and her contemporaries challenged the stereotype of the “modern woman” and used her narratives to break preconceived notions about women’s interests. From sports to travel to ethnography, she focused her attention on personal growth, exploration, and breaking gender stereotypes. Her diversity, experience, and wanderer spirit aided in pointing out to others that, yes, women could and should travel abroad on their own initiative. In Ma Philosophie du voyage, Maillart explains: “From the beginning, I wanted to live my own life and, patently, against all odds, I strengthened this desire” (14). The journalist Simon Schreyer enthusiastically describes Maillart as a “an ardent traveller, a bride of the wind and a storyteller, like the world had not seen before” (“Voyage, Voyage”).

Even though Maillart was not as heavily bound by institutional pressure to publish certain stories about the East, she still carried the responsibility of recognizing and addressing the intersection of place, class, and culture in her works. Maillart’s narratives are not perfect, by any means, but with deeper analysis readers can see more clearly into why her approach is truly vintage; and, although her travels are varied, readers should be cautious about replicating some of Maillart’s rhetorical choices she made while traveling overseas.
"I am experiencing that feeling of zest which goes with exploration. I am in the thick of an historic moment. I am in an era in the making..." - First lines of Ruth Gruber's initial dispatch from the Soviet Arctic, 1935

Introduction

Politically savvy, witty, and always on the search for the next story, Ruth Gruber is an icon for photojournalism and travel narratives published during the Interwar period. Her eighty-year journalism career is a testament to her work advocating for women and refugees. As a young American Jewish woman, her attention was drawn to her faith, stories, and the perseverance of women in the face of adversity. In the introduction to *Ahead of Time*, Marie Brenner describes Gruber's reporting as "vivid, a document of the self; she comes from an era of personal journalism and does not avoid placing herself in the middle of the scene" (x). Even though Gruber may place herself within the action, her writing takes careful care to give a wider view of what is happening inside and outside of her lens or on the page. Gruber's growth of the self and careful attention to others is what makes her works so captivating, at least for me.

She has a long list of accomplishments: she earned a PhD at twenty years old, wrote fifteen books over a span of sixty years, witnessed the creation of the state of Israel, and escorted 1,000 refugees from Italy to the United States. During all of this time, she wrote and took photos across the world and used them for interviews, lecture circuits, books, and more. Four out of the five narratives I examine in this chapter are directly related to her photojournalism work via the Herald Tribune or her assignments as a foreign correspondent under the directory of Secretary Harold Ikes within FDR's administration. Her dissertation, "The Will to Create as a Woman," has been republished as a book organized into two parts: correspondence between Gruber and Virginia Woolf and Gruber's dissertation taking a feminist lens to analyze Virginia Woolf's works. I am keen to see if our dissertations contain any similarities in terms of focus, writing style, and rhetorical appeals. It is hard to not be impressed by Gruber's rigor. Her doctoral degree and journalism career is hyperfocused on challenging the expectations and gender norms placed upon women. Each of her narratives that I examine in this application contain a drive to experience the world and "combine the physical life with her spiritual [one] to...become a great artist" (158). While *Inside of Time* focuses on her work as a member of FDR's administration in Alaska and Canada, *Ahead of Time* gives readers lenses to view her path through her doctoral degree and journey to Russia as part of investigative work for the U.S. government. *Haven: The Unknown Story of 1,000 World War II Refugees*, published in the late 1940s, depicts Gruber's secret mission to escort refugees from Germany to the United States—I was shocked to find out that this was the only time during WWII that FDR sanctioned the transport of refugees to the U.S. Finally, *Witness* is a 80-year reflection of her work in journalism and peace efforts during World War II and after—especially as Palestine was changed to Israel.
I was most shocked by her language, her descriptions, and her ability to almost seamlessly capture so many emotions and events in single images. At one point, she mentions how she was “taking photos with her heart, not her hands”—which built up her pathos and credibility with Holocaust survivors, DP’s, and interviewees she encountered across the Middle East. Time and again I found myself drawn into her dedication in her work and her relentless portrayal of the situations she found herself in—no matter how gruesome. Her assuredness is a comfort in this research process and, I hope, an indicator of how dynamic her writing and photography can be.

Gruber was a photographer, writer, guide, mentor, and advocate. Her focus on the self, on women, and history serves as a perfect segway into the end of the Interwar period. Gruber, undoubtedly, has the most holistic approach to narrative agency and spatial awareness. In a moving obituary to Gruber, MaCadden remembered a key characteristic of Gruber’s work: “Her empathetic coverage, she often said, was rooted in her pride as a Jew and as a journalist with a mission” (“Ruth Gruber, A Fearless Chronicler”). In this chapter, we will examine Gruber’s coverage, promotion of women, and success with photojournalism at home and abroad. Some questions I will attempt to answer about Gruber’s work are as follows:

- In what ways does Gruber’s writing style embody a feminist approach?
- How does Gruber abide by/subvert institutional norms for publishing her photojournalism work?
- How does Gruber navigate sharing her narrative alongside other peoples’ stories and experiences?

These questions are grounded in objectivity, trust, and scope—all major concerns of Interwar and modern day journalism. In *Ahead of Time*, Gruber writes: “I had two tools to fight injustice — my typewriter and my camera.” With that thought in mind, I will examine Gruber’s combined use of cultural rhetorics and feminist geography to inform and educate readers about numerous tumultuous events that occurred during World War II.

**Defining Self in Space**

In comparison to Aloha, Maillart, and I, Gruber has the most thorough weaving of awareness of space, people, and place in her travel narratives. Gruber’s writing style is autobiographical and inclusive. At times, she may use a retelling of her personal experience to highlight another person in the conversation or, as necessary, emphasize specific cultural and/or historical events connected to where she traveled. I believe she balanced her own point of view with historical information for two reasons: one, she was focused on informing readers about a situation/event as accurately as possible; two, she wished to dismantle misconceptions connected to topics she was passionate about, including but not limited to women’s rights, refugee work, and antisemitism. Yet I think her personal voice and positionality put her in a place of heavy critique for the possibility of having misinformation in her narratives. Duro discusses the misinformation tourists create and consume about places they wish to travel to in his book *Rhetoric, Remembrance, and Visual Form: Sighting Memory*: “This rhetoric, evidenced through countless travel journals, memoirs, and recollections, in text, in image, or in sound, had to be learned, often against the run of tourists’ initial impressions. Accounts of the sundry travails of cultural travel serve to illuminate the truth of the experience of place” (55).

If anything, Gruber demonstrates that she does learn and attempt to expand readers’ knowledge and awareness of cultural, political, and social happenings in countries outside of readers’ home communities. She gives as much historical and cultural background as possible and, as a result, her travel narratives read more like conversations than books. She holds a feminist approach in her works—all of her travel narratives touch upon Gruber’s investigation of the successes and growth of women in culture, society, and technology. There are moments, though, where Gruber’s personal reflections seem to overlap and erase the stories and narratives of others. Those narratives (namely *Haven* and *Inside of Time*) could be seen as epistemically oppressive.

Fricker breaks down the meaning of epistemic oppression as “the powerful have some sort of unfair advantage in ‘structuring’ our understandings of the social world” (191). The advantage Fricker writes about can (and is) constellated and complex. Institutional support, societal expectations, and epistemic privilege can affect how narratives restructure, erase, and rewrite people’s understandings of the world. Gruber wrote and published *Inside of Time* and *Haven* in connection to her work in FDR’s administration. That position enabled her to move freely in places like Alaska, Germany, Israel, and Russia without receiving major repercussions. But my question is: does Gruber’s journalistic point of view positively alter epistemic oppression at the cost of increasing her use of epistemic privilege?

Epistemic privilege can be roughly defined as each person having an amount of knowledge that no one else can access or get on their own. If we combine these two concerns with the fact that Gruber was able to freely move through war-torn countries and catalog stories time and again, someone could argue that Gruber unfairly restructured our understanding of not only World War II, but refugee narratives and imperial expansion, as well. I argue that Gruber’s positionality as a foreign correspondent gave her an easier time to juxtapose her lived experience with the master narratives of World War II propaganda, 1930s and 40s gender norms, and shifting borders. Whether the public at large believes Gruber marginally wrote over the narratives of refugees, other government officials, and European citizens is unclear; yet, I think that questioning is what makes Gruber and her narratives so fruitful for research and conversation. Simply put, these interwar women (Gruber included) wove threads of oppression and privilege to reinforce their travel narratives. Honestly, I do not think we can separate these two concerns from the contexts of war, innovative technology, and travel—especially in the wake of both World Wars.
In “Who Knows? Reflexivity in Feminist Standpoint Theory and Bourdieu,” Sweet encourages scholars to pay attention to epistemic privilege within feminist standpoint theory, writing: “This split or doubled position allows subjects to take a strange view toward ideology, to see the contradictions between master narratives and marginal experience. The epistemic break occurs within experience” (930). Feminist standpoint theory analyzes the connection between political power, knowledge-keeping, and social power; if we situate Gruber at the intersection of these connections we can start asking more rigorous questions, like:

- Does Gruber uplift marginalized people and their stories?
- How does Gruber’s photojournalism weave culture, knowledge, and gender together in a proactive way?
- Does Gruber model her positionality in the same way as her contemporaries?

If we compared Aloha and Gruber, we could posit that their narratives and positionality are directly opposite of each other. Aloha’s persona and writing seem immature and lofty in comparison to Gruber’s vivid and polished narratives. She is more akin to Maillart in how she uses her privilege and travel identity to travel abroad; most, if not all of her narratives and photography focus on documentation and sharing stories, images, and experience. Gruber was sure to refine, polish, and shape her writing and photography—not just for the direct recipient of her work (I’m speaking here to Herald Tribune, Secretary lies, or other government officials) but for wider audiences, as well.

Monberg insists that scholars must “move within [one’s] own borders or communities, listen for the deeper textures present in the place[s] [people] call home” (22). Gruber navigates place and space across her travel narratives with a steady confidence and open ears. Thanks to the historical and political contexts she provides during her travels, readers can clearly see her actions and the consequences of her actions as they arise in the narratives. Out of the three Interwar women examined here, Gruber’s work best exemplifies that “Neither gender identities nor places are stable, fixed, or given. However, neither are they freely chosen or easily transformed” (Bondi and Davidson 16). Throughout her journalism work, Gruber was constantly seeking the ways women broke the confines of gender roles from the 1930s and well beyond the Interwar period. If anything, Gruber’s interactions overseas and narratives are defined by how women challenged social stereotypes and discovered themselves by using their skills to advance their knowledge/careers in education, the sciences, the economy, and politics. This meant Gruber had to have a healthy knowledge of the places and spaces she was sent to investigate—whether they were conference sessions, refugee camps, or foreign government offices; time and again she provides readers with the contexts necessary to understand and acknowledge the importance of place and space at home and overseas.

A defining moment in Gruber’s works occurs in 1943 during her time working for FDR’s Secretary of the Interior. Gruber was tasked with escorting 1,000 Jewish refugees from Italy to Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York. At the request of Secretary Ikies, Gruber was gathering narratives from the refugees to better inform the American public of Hitler’s atrocities in Europe. During one conversation, a refugee is reluctant to share his story with her, explaining: “It was too obscene, and you’re a young woman…” to which Gruber responded with: “Forget, if you can, that I am a woman” (Witness).

Here, she is worried more about sharing the trauma and experiences of the refugees than her own emotional well-being. I will say, though, that Gruber’s autobiographical tone in her travel narratives is the main point of contention for Gruber scholars; some people believe that Gruber’s narratives are inaccurate accounts of major historical moments across the Interwar period (and beyond). While I personally appreciate Gruber’s narrative and stylistic choices, I have to concede that the naysayers have a valid point regarding Gruber’s works—especially when we consider the plethora of other journalists and writers that worked alongside her.

Understanding Cultures and People through Photography

Gruber was well aware of the restrictions placed on photojournalism and women’s progress as the world shifted into World War II. Her photography “reveals rather than makes hidden assumptions” about different countries, people, and places (131). All her images require you to pay attention and appreciate the depth of hope, despair, and growth as she captures people, landscapes, animals, architecture, and casualties of war. The collection of photos in this application are taken from several of her travel narratives and span the length of her photojournalism career during the Interwar period. Some of them—like Runnymede Park—become famous and shown all around the world overnight. Many of the other photos I have placed here are just as important in showing the many slices of life for men, women, and children across the war-torn globe.
Gruber’s photography and focus on people is captivating and, surprisingly, soothing; not only does she give as complete a picture as she can with her camera, she also pays attention to how she describes the scene we see through her lens. Allan argues that Gruber’s rhetorical photography choices “provide a transparent window on reality” throughout the places she visits for her correspondent work (185). For example, this seemingly basic photo of a man with his cow turns into a sharper view of the economic and personal lives of citizens deep in Alaska. The lighting and development of the photo is clean, too; this makes it easier to see the finer details of the buildings and fences behind the man and his “beast of burden.” In Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods, Shawn Wilson advocates for scholars to “extend this thinking—of viewing objects as the relationships we share with them—on to how we see concepts and ideas. The concepts or ideas are not as important as the relationships that went into forming them” (74). Gruber accomplishes this goal by first establishing connections with the people she meets prior to taking their photographs; each narrative weaves relationships, culture, and history together via Gruber’s point of view. Her photographs follow this pattern, too.

Gruber’s photography coincides with highlighting the growth of communities worldwide. The true-to-life nature of Gruber’s images emphasizes Gruber’s variety of how she took images, too. In this photograph, we see hunters and a salesperson purchasing flour in a warehouse in Alaska. The lighting and development of the photo is clean, too; this makes it easier to see the finer details of the buildings and fences behind the man and his “beast of burden.” In Inside of Time, her balance of narrative inquiry and photography is something to behold.

Gruber’s refugee work and coverage of their narratives is a key tenant of her journalism career and cannot be understated. Here, she places four different photographs of Jewish refugees side-by-side, highlighting the haunted and courage expressions that appear on the children’s and adult’s faces. In the bottom right image, Gruber is photographed with displaced persons (DPs) at the refugee camp in Oswego, New York; she supports the emotions in the image with narratives that tell of violence, oppression, and hope to return to Israel. These men, women, and children are not backdrops for her stories; rather, she makes it her mission to share their stories of love, loss, and perseverance with the public. What I especially like about Gruber’s photographs is the amount of historical, cultural, and personal context her captions give readers. Compared to her contemporaries, I believe she has the most thorough and rich captions for her works. And, when she cannot or does not provide captions, her images speak for themselves.

This is arguably the most famous photograph that Gruber took during her entire journalism career. Gruber captured this image in 1947 when she went aboard the British prison ship Runnymede Park to document the stories and images of the conditions of the Jewish refugees. The painted Swastika on the Union Jack is intentional—hundreds of Jewish refugees were denied access to the Runnymede Park—a ship docked in Palestine by the British. Gruber snuck her camera onboard and was astounded by what she saw. “Inside the steel cage was a wooden outhouse with two six-holers for 1,500 people. The smell, the agony, the contempt for life, the human tragedy made me want to shake the world by its lapels: how can you let this happen?” (Witness 123). The refugees swarmed her, asking her to check on their sons, daughters, and parents; at one point, a refugee encouraged her to “Go below,” a man shouted; “Go see our floating Auschwitz” (124). Pain and survival radiate from the image. Though many of the refugees’ expressions are covered in shadow, we can clearly see the barbed wire and flag at the top of the photo.

Gruber showed all aspects of life in Alaska in the late 1930s. Her photos held a mix of the urban and rural—in this photo on the left she showed the progress that came with building a new highway throughout the state to help boost the economy as well as start a prosperous path towards increased mobility. Smith notes, “Travelers could no longer be assured of earning any real distinction in mobility, especially as they too easily melded with tourists, those hordes of people seeking prepackaged destinations in comfort” (29-30). Her patient and in-depth approach to the places, people, and topics she writes about for different audiences touched me in a way that did not happen for others like Aloha or Maillart. Whether I am looking at Inside of Time or Witness, her balance of narrative inquiry and photography is something to behold.
She carries a mastery of understanding how she should move in different spaces and pays careful attention to how others act around her in order to make others comfortable with her presence, writing a story, etc. Time and again Gruber mentions how she had to find innovative ways to secure her presence in a news conference or meeting room. As her dissertation, news clips, and photography began to circulate, so too did the media and war photography. “The media mirrored these cultural changes and the choices women made. Images of flappers and the new American woman began to appear in advertisements, movies, and on the radio...” (Flappers and the New American Woman 11). American photography, television, and radio churned continuous flashes of flapper fashion, violence, patriotism, and new art. Gruber, with her photography, situated herself within the churns and displayed an expert amount of range in how she took images during her travels.

**Manifesting Narrative Agency**

Out of all the women here, Gruber has the most narrative agency with her works. While there were moments she was employed or directed by bigger institutions to write and photograph certain events, Gruber’s work remained authentic; I will note here that she had a large amount of control into what went into her articles, presentations, and lectures. Even when she worked under Secretary Ikes, the majority of her writing and observations remained untouched. She did not have the same restrictions upon her narratives as Aloha did, for example; Gruber was not used as an object or propaganda under ulterior motives. In fact, scholars could argue that Aloha and Gruber are opposites of each other. Wanderwell had very little agency with her narrative, nor did she have much agency when she was in front of or behind a camera. Meanwhile, Gruber maintains consistent control over where, how, why, and when she uses her writing and photography to document the events happening around her. Although government and academic institutions gave Gruber privilege to access hard-to-reach places, Gruber had an authoritative power of her own.

Gruber has the most explicit description of how she uses, fights against, and moves with power that flows from different arenas. As she worked in FDR’s administration under Secretary Ikes, Gruber fell in love with the people and scenery of Alaska; however, she felt adrift from her religious identity and work as a journalist for The Herald Tribune. Throughout her other works like Ahead of Time, Haven, and Witness lies a similar theme: “The five years I had worked for the Secretary had taught me the uses of power in government, now I was ready to return to words and images as instruments of power” (Inside of Time 223).

While **Inside of Time** focuses on her work as a member of FDR’s administration in Alaska and Canada, **Witness** is a 80-year reflection of her work in journalism and peace efforts during World War II and after—especially as Palestine was changed to Israel. I was most shocked by her language, her descriptions, and her ability to almost seamlessly capture so many emotions and events in single images. At one point, she mentions how she was “taking photos with her heart, not her hands”—which built up her pathos and credibility with Holocaust survivors, DP’s, and interviewees she encountered across the Middle East. Not all critics favor Gruber’s work. In a 1984 book review over Gruber’s Haven, Lawrence Baron points out that Gruber:

“Is at her best when she deals with matters in which she was directly involved; however, Gruber’s habit of of letting her autobiographical perspective displace historical accuracy and analysis detracts from what otherwise is a thoroughly engaging narrative about the tribulations and eventual triumphs of the Holocaust survivors who were housed at Fort Ontario” (394-395).

**Gruber’s journalism work expanded beyond the Interwar period. She continued to publish articles and completed refugee work well after she turned 100. She passed away on November 17, 2016 at the age of 105. You can find more of her interviews and photographs via the Jewish Women’s Archives, NPR, and through the International Center of Photography (ICP).**

**Telling Stories about Other Women**

The first published story Gruber wrote about other women was her dissertation on Virginia Woolf’s literary style. Even though the copy published in the United States is a facsimile of the defended dissertation (which Gruber gave in 1935), Gruber’s wit and rhetorical strength are no less powerful than her works published during—and after—World War II. Gruber’s dissertation and her travel narratives lay within this five-point constellation: feminist theory, rhetoric, self, narrative, and movement. I was surprised to read her dissertation, “The Will to Create as a Woman.” Gruber crafted an analysis of Virginia Woolf’s works and where the “will to create as a woman” stems from for women writers of her time period. At times, I was shocked to see the quantity of pages in her chapters—her first chapter had seven pages—but by no means did the quantity dilute the quality of her research. “The Will to Create as a Woman” is captivating and informative. I could see threads of feminist geography, questions on class, and an overarching theme of female empowerment; all of these eventually found their way into her later travel narratives.
Like Maillart, Gruber highlights the women she encounters on her travels with a positive tone, and she especially pays attention to women breaking gender roles. Braybon and Summerfield hint at this frustration in the introduction of Out of the Cage: Women’s Experiences in Two World Wars: “In both wars there were women who felt that they had been ‘let out of the cage’ even when they were critical of the pay and conditions they had to put up with, and the way that men reacted to them” (1).

In this photograph, a woman is working in the heart of the Arctic Circle. Our view focuses on the woman and the machine. Gruber’s caption, “Women work alongside men, turning the wheels of economic life” gives agency and importance to the growth of women’s impact in the economic growth of the Russian Arctic. Here, women and technology are highlighted together (Blair 25). Unlike Aloha, Gruber is sure to place women and their stories front and center in her works; like her narratives, Gruber makes sure to record and maintain as much narrative authenticity as possible from the people she met while working for FDR and completing refugee work.

Sarah Frajerman, the mother in the photo on the left, stands with her two children outside of the barracks at Oswego. Gruber wrote how the Army had given every adult an ID badge that read casual baggage; yet, despite the trauma and horrors of Hitler’s camps, women like Sarah prospered: “She later gave birth in the camp (Oswego) to her fourth child, Harry. The life juices that for many of the women had dried up in the concentration camps returned at Oswego” (85). Gruber photographed women at work and at play; life prospering is a central theme that permeates all of the photos she sent in with her reports overseas and on American soil. Gruber’s photography emphasizes emotion and life inside and outside of a photo lens. Here, a refugee acting and singing group lift spirits of the refugees brought to Oswego, New York to help with rehabilitation of over 1,000 Jewish refugees. Although the group of singers and actors pose for the photograph, their stances and facial expressions do not seem “staged” in any way. Gruber’s works demonstrate the ongoing struggle of women subverting gender norms in between WWI and WWII. New forms of social interaction between the sexes and across class lines became possible, but expectations about family and domestic life as the main concern of women remained unaltered. Furthermore, post-war societies were largely in mourning” (Grayzel, “Changing Lives). That mourning came from the violence and oppression that stemmed from civil wars, border control, and, in Gruber’s case, lack of care for refugees in Europe and Palestine.

Gruber’s memoirs are full of lively prose and, out of all my authors, she is best at documenting each step she took and the tools she used while traveling across the world. I deeply appreciated the depth she provided in Witness on her relationship with photography, especially her experiences of working in hostile environments like concentration camps, DP camps, and government meetings like the Geneva Convention. Although Witness is an accumulation of her 80-year journalism career, her focus on intent and context remains the same as her previous works like Inside of Time, Haven, and Ahead of Time. Her mastery of feminist geography (even before it was coined as such) is evident in her work. She makes sure to mention her movement, and reactions to her movement in political, social, and private spaces. Gruber understands the intricacies of World War II and how it altered travel, survival, and the role of women in society long after D-Day. She picked the questions she asked others with as much care as she used when picking her clothing and equipment for her work; nothing was overlooked.

Conclusion

In an article for The Guardian, Sara Wheeler concedes that “It’s true that women were thin on the ground in the two modern golden ages of travel literature: the 1930s and 1970s. But the 20th century did produce role models” (“Where have all the travel writers gone?”). Although her name does not appear there, Gruber earned her place as an influential twentieth century travel writer. Indeed, she had the will to create, explore, and subvert as a woman. I will end this chapter with a lovely quote by Gruber from a 2012 article for Pop Photo:

I first picked up a camera as a student. When I looked through that Leica for the first time, it was wonderful. Later I got a Rollei. I was so startled when I looked in it. You could see a whole scene there. I didn’t think a camera could do that. People ask, “Did you take a course?” Who took courses? You just learned by doing. The camera taught me.
Introduction

My writing and photography in this chapter encompasses the experiences that occurred in the past year as I wrote my dissertation. Each event portrayed here served a different personal purpose; academically, these events serve as a constellation of my moving through different places/spaces while learning the ins and outs of my typewriter and cameras. This is my attempt to give myself more depth and a larger scope of understanding about how I identify myself in space, view travel, and use photography as a means to interact with the world around me. And, most importantly, I wanted to see if I could emulate Aloha’s, Maillart’s, and Gruber’s rhetorical choices using modern theoretical lenses.

I’d like to add that some of these journeys I took alone, while others decided to accompany me in order to gain some experience and insight for themselves. All of the writing was done immediately after or upon reflection of an event/experience. The photos in this chapter are a mix of photos I took with my Rolleiflex, Leica, and cellphone camera; I wanted to give a scope of how I judged clarity, quality, and range of lighting and structure when taking photographs in different environments and situations. If anything, this is the chapter where I put everything I learned about interwar gender norms, rhetorical trends, and writing styles together to document the present moment. This chapter is a combination of modernity and mobility, my attempt to “turn to the travel genre as a natural extension of [my] imaginative work” (Farley 3). I instinctively knew there was no way I would be able to properly reflect on the choices these women made unless I, too, attempted to follow in their footsteps and make a travel narrative of my own using a camera from the interwar period.

Daichendt highlights the importance of hands-on research in his book *Artist Scholar: Reflections on Writing and Research*. He explains that hands-on artistic practices provides more opportunities for scholars to “create toward the rich and multifaceted process artists [writers, and photographers] enable in the studio [and darkroom]. Art-making at the most basic level is thinking made visible” (47).
Dallas Zoo June 13, 2022:

I enjoyed my visit to the Dallas Zoo with Dr. Busl, especially since I was able to enact a different means of moving through spaces with my equipment. It was a learning experience with my Rolleiflex and light meter—and especially so when I switched rolls of film. Overall, it was a good exercise in what Doane calls “writing in the body” (2).

The most unique spatial agency moment was when I had to change spools and rolls of film in dark places throughout the zoo. I can’t change film in the light because it will ruin the photographs, so we had to get creative for me to use more spools in my camera. We tried finding a lockable, family restroom but had no luck. It turned out the best spot to change film was in the “Underzone”: a dark, condensed tunnel underneath monkeys with mustaches. I had to be conscious of several things: not exposing the film to light, threading the film through the spool while the film was hidden in a lead bag in my camera bag which was covered by Dr. Busl’s hat to not expose light. I kept thinking back to how Gruber, Aloha, and Maillart changed the film in their cameras—and, by extension, developed the film-while traveling. It was reassuring to have Dr. Busl say encouraging things outside of the tunnel, but a funny memory nonetheless about how, for future trips, I really need to be cautious of finding a spot to change film. Dr. Busl recommended I get a changing tent—which made me think of Yzma’s purple sleep tent in Emperor’s New Groove.

I was able to use my Rolleiflex outside to catch photos of animals and flowers. I enjoyed my visit to the Dallas Zoo with Dr. Busl, especially since I was able to enact a different means of moving through spaces with my equipment. It was a learning experience with my Rolleiflex and light meter—and especially so when I switched rolls of film. Overall, it was a good exercise in what Doane calls “writing in the body” (2).

It was funny, at times, to wrestle with which animals to take pictures of in the zoo since I have 11 “good shots” and 1 possibly “warped” shot to work with on the Rolle. Some of the animals (Galapagos tortoise, flamingoes, monitors, and Chinese gator) were extremely stationary—making it easy to photograph them. Meanwhile, the mustache monkeys, giraffes, anteaters, and “Gus” the hippo kept doing flips, twirls, and moving just enough to make it challenging to photograph them—even if they were showing off to us.

Moving through the zoo took more effort than if we were just walking around with our phones. We were carrying camera bags, light meters, camera cleaning equipment, phones, and bottled waters; and, although for me that meant having two bags and a bottle of water in and out of my hand, it did complicate being able to move more freely to different exhibits. This was especially true near the end of the visit when we were jogging/running to take snapshots of the elephants, giraffes, and the hippo. I was cautious of running too heavily because I didn’t want to jostle my Rolleiflex too much. It was also difficult to keep track of smaller equipment; Dr. Busl had to retrace her steps to track down her light meter (when, meanwhile, it was safely tucked away in her bag the whole time).

There were several moments where people stopped and asked us questions about our cameras; and, at the end of our visit, I invited an employee to hold my Rolleiflex and look top-down through the lens—she appreciated the ingenuity of the camera and its history (late 1930s). As we walked around the zoo, we did not see any other people with more vintage cameras or equipment—which gave me a nice feeling but also made me think my use of these tools was a smart one. I would be interested in using the 35 mm adapter for our next photography trip—I’m curious to see how “panoramic” photos look from my Rolleiflex. And, if possible, I could get my hands on color film to take some very strategic photos and compare notes to more modern photography that I’ve taken with other cameras and/or my cell phone.

I’m happy to say that I was able to correctly develop some of the photos that I took at the zoo! Unfortunately, some of the photos did not come out “perfect” due to mismatched lighting settings. Even so, it was a lot of fun taking pictures of animals with a Rolleiflex at the Dallas Zoo.

If you haven’t been to the Dallas Zoo (or the Forth Worth Zoo), you should go—both places are beautiful and have lots of room to explore.
Muskogee, Oklahoma September 2, 2022:

Today, Margaret and I drove four and a half hours from Denton to Muskogee, Oklahoma to stay at a Holiday Inn for the Cherokee National Holiday Festival. We both noticed that there were waterways that lacked houses, docks, and people moving from the water further inland; this is different from the waterways Margaret and I have seen in Galveston, Gulf Shores, and in cities across the Gulf Coast. The water here in comparison to rivers in North Texas seemed calmer, too; we both noted how we’d love to go fishing or swim here if given the chance. As we drove through smaller towns down Highway 70, we also noticed how the towns seemed poorer in comparison to Denton and the DFW area. Small farmer’s markets, gas stations, and boarded houses/shops provided land coverage for almost half of the drive to Oklahoma proper. When we finally made it to Muskogee, I had a sense of familiarity with the space; it reminded me of when I drove through Buna, Evadale, Jasper, and other towns that dot the land between Beaumont and Southeast Texas lake getaways like Toledo Bend and Sam Rayburn. Muskogee—as well as the Southeast Texas towns I’m used to—had sparse traffic lights but large amounts of space between grocery stores, restaurants, and shops.

We eventually ate at Sakura, a Japanese hibachi restaurant, for dinner; but, Margaret noted that few (if any) of the staff and customers might be Japanese. I kept getting interested in the catchphrases made by the chef: “Japanese ketchup” was soy sauce, “Japanese ice cream” was butter, and all the women at the table (except a 7-year-old girl) were called “mama.” I had not heard of most of the phrases he used to signpost his way through our meals. I appreciated the skill and humor of the chef; as he cooked our meals, he made sure to keep an eye on his work and on us and involved us in smaller games (like catching veggies in our mouths) to keep us entertained. My hibachi chicken was pretty good. I especially liked the large mix of vegetables that came with the meal. Mushrooms, squash, carrots, peas, and a vegetable I couldn’t identify made the meal filling but tasty—and the yum-yum sauce wasn’t bad either!

I am excited about our trip tomorrow to the Cherokee Festival. Margaret seems excited, too. She noted that her journalistic side is eager to see the different events and people in motion; meanwhile, I’m excited to learn more about Cherokee culture, Tahlequah, and see different events play out, including: traditional games, the parade, inter-tribal gourd dance and pow-wow, and cultural talks on gardening and storytelling. I brought my Rolleiflex, my Bell and Howell Speedster camera, and my cellphone to take pictures throughout our time at the festival. I also have a notebook to take notes and use to reflect on different aspects of the event. I have concerns about whether I can take photos during the inter-tribal gourd dance and pow-wow; hopefully I can find a volunteer and ask questions to not disrespect the attendees and participants at the festival. If we have time, I’d also like to explore more of downtown Tahlequah.

Tahlequah, Oklahoma September 3, 2022:

During the parade, I used my Rolleiflex and my 8 mm film camera to take photos and video the event. My movement while carrying the photos was clunky at best; I had to be sure to not move suddenly or trip in case I dropped the cameras; or, worse, had my Rolleiflex come off my neck from its strap. There were a few people who stopped me to ask about my cameras—most of the comments were saying that it was “cool” to use the camera and bring back film developing; whether out of fear or nervousness, I did not ask anyone at the parade to take their portrait/picture. Having the light meter was handy in the sunny weather.

The downtown parade marked the beginning of our attendance at the Cherokee National Holiday Festival for the weekend. Prior to the parade, I was expecting to see several dancers, decorated floats, and marching bands—all crammed together as they walked down Muskogee Avenue. What surprised me is that each car, band, and float were given ample space to stop and interact with parade-goers; parade, I was expecting to see several dancers, decorated floats, and marching bands–all crammed together as they walked down Muskogee Avenue. What surprised me is that each car, band, and float were given ample space to stop and interact with parade-goers; there was no rush to the parade at all. Most of the parade participants were connected to Miss Cherokee pageants, high school marching bands, food banks, or other organizations that have worked to help Cherokee people and Tahlequah’s citizens bounce back from the devastation of COVID-19. There were hundreds of people in attendance; Cherokee elders, men, women, and children lined the streets and weaved through the artisan tents as the parade carried on in front of us.

The young women who participated in the Miss Tahlequah and Miss Cherokee pageants were wearing regalia fit for their title and riding on convertibles and trucks. This part of the pageant reminded me of when I participated in rodeo pageants—there were similarities in dressing up, wearing crowns and doing the “pageant wave” as you threw candy to people on the street.

The State of the Nation Address was held downtown Tahlequah, Oklahoma, across from where the parade took place. There was a surprising amount of Christian undertones; throughout the State of the Nation address, the speaker used Bible verses and alluded to God as both almighty and the Creator. Around 300 people attended the address; local, regional, state, and national Cherokee and U.S. government members—plus a centenarian WWII veteran—were in attendance. Where Margaret and I were sitting, we could see young men and women aged 8 and up gathered on the left side of the stage, along with event coordinators and citizens from Tahlequah. The speakers at the address focused on community, legacy, and bravery while calling attention to past and present concerns within the Cherokee nation; including; focus on education of Cherokee language, a reviving arts grant, and decreasing access to drugs for young adults and teens present and those lost in
the past and lost most recently due to COVID-19. When we listened to the State of the Nation address, I was shocked to find each speaker using more Christian undertones than I thought would be used throughout the festival. Several bible verses were used to emphasize the unbroken chain of culture in the Cherokee community, and there was a weaving of Cherokee language, American ideals, and Christian ideologies. One of the first phrases uttered at the State of the Nation Address was “Our future is ours to write”—there was a reemphasis on family, honor, bravery, and leadership—the same qualities that are symbolic of the eagle in Cherokee culture. Since 1839, the signing of the Cherokee constitution, there has been a redoubling effort to forge legacy and lifting up the Cherokee people, especially in the ongoing repercussions of COVID-19. Several Bible verses were woven into the Chief’s speech, including Proverbs 16:9.

The part of the speech that caught my attention was when the Chief talked about “living in peace with the natural elements and within ourselves—especially our inner self”, which is one of the sacred directions. Time and again members of the Cherokee government and citizens applauded at phrases that bolstered the Cherokee community. “At a time when the world is facing economic crisis, Cherokee businesses thrive,” “Strength is built on decades”, and “we measure our strength by how well we are serving our people”. Other major concerns that were addressed in the address included protecting tribal sovereignty and Cherokee literacy. “Sovereignty is not a threat; it is an opportunity”; this was balanced with the concern of empowering but failing to use that power is where fear manifests itself.

(Later That Day...)

I am sitting at the Cherokee National Cultural Grounds behind Sequoyah High School in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Right now, they are performing a gourd dance. Throughout the afternoon, Margaret and I have been periodically walking around the arena looking at artisan stalls and food trucks spread out across the grounds. Interestingly enough, some of the foods being sold could be called “festival food,” like hot dogs, pizza, burgers, and funnel cakes. There are a few food trucks selling non-festival food, like succotash, to festival attendees. The succotash we had contained squash, okra, corn, chicken, beans, and spices and was a healthier alternative to funnel cake. Another interesting part about the cuisine is there were meals that were mixed, like “Indian tacos”—bread with ground meat and taco toppings like lettuce, tomato, sour cream, and salsa.

Something that caught my attention about the gourd dance was how Margaret and I cried periodically as the singers and dancers moved around the arena. Although we could not see the arena clearly (we were behind lots of chairs and heads), we were still heavily affected by the ceremony. The song they are playing currently is honoring Jake Shenae, the grandson of a Cherokee elder from this area. Unlike the songs sung in previous gourd dances, this one seems lighter perhaps—I’m not sure if that is because the song connects to his age or not. There are not many people taking pictures of the gourd dance, either. I did not because I had read somewhere that it was disrespectful to do so; for the pow-wow, however, I’d like to take some photos. It’s very humbling to be at the 70th anniversary of this national festival, listening to the gourd dance as I write for my dissertation. It makes me wonder, too, how Maillart, Gruber, and Wanderwell connect to his age or not. There are not many people taking pictures of the gourd dance, either. I did not because I had read somewhere that it was disrespectful to do so; for the pow-wow, however, I’d like to take some photos. It’s very humbling to be at the 70th anniversary of this national festival, listening to the gourd dance as I write for my dissertation. It makes me wonder, too, how Maillart, Gruber, and Wanderwell would view and write about the event. Would they be as intrigued about the gourd dance and songs as I am? Or would they be drawn to the artisan market, foods, and other attendees at this festival?

My favorite part of the trip was when Margaret and I attended the intertribal powwow at the Cherokee cultural grounds behind Sequoyah High School. The excitement was infectious and rolled across us in waves—as time ticked closer to 7 p.m., more than 4,000 people swarmed the arena with folding chairs, blankets, and snacks from the food trucks and stands on the west side of the arena. We were seated in front of a light pole, far enough away from the action to get a bird’s eye view of the arena but not close enough to see the intricate detail of the regalia, buckskins, and costumes participants were wearing for the event.

Up to this point, the festival was not what I (or Margaret, in some ways) expected, and I was curious to see how the powwow would align with that. The beginning of the ceremony started with a flag dance and prayer that, like the State of the Nation address, wove Cherokee and Christian themes together; the speaker broke into tears from the weight of the pandemic and emotional strains that families across the Cherokee nation held for the past two years. We found out, too, that the ceremony would be aired live online so people around the world could see the event. As the flags were carried around the arena, men, women, and children dressed in regalia followed Cherokee elders counter-clockwise in a circle; meanwhile, four different groups of drummers played through flag and memory songs—both to honor the present and those lost in the past and lost most recently due to COVID-19.

The entire festival was alight with color—yellow fringe, brown feathers, and washes of green, blue, and pink drew our attention to the center of the arena as dancers wove and twisted their way through the space. Different competitions required dancers to move to different sets of music; for example, the men and women’s fancy dances aligned to what people would normally
associate with powwows; men and women twirling, spinning, and donning intricate regalia to represent their families, tribes, and Cherokee nation as a whole. As the four groups of drummers rotated playing music, the dancers would instinctively alter their movements to follow the music; it was a beautiful sight. I was taken aback by the fluidity and combination of respecting people and nature through the dance moves.

**Dallas, Texas October 17, 2022:**

I was excited to attend the State Fair in Dallas for two reasons. One: I had never been to the state fair in Dallas before. All of my fair experiences—whether I was showing livestock in the auction or riding rides—are based on the Southeast Texas State Fair, which is normally held outside of Beaumont, Texas in Ford Park. The second reason I was excited was because everything was supposedly bigger and better at this fair: the food, the rides, the livestock show, and especially Tex. I’m happy to say that I was thoroughly impressed but also immensely wistful the entire time we were at the fair. When we first walked through the fair gates, my nose was hit with the faint smell of funnel cakes and manure; a weird combination, indeed.

It felt odd carrying my Rolleiflex as we walked throughout the fair—I felt myself getting frustrated that I could not zoom in on specific people/objects scattered around, like the flipping of corn dogs in food stands, the light sources on floats in the mini-parade, or the expressions of joy and nervousness on ferris wheel riders. Instead, I had to rely on moving my body closer to get the photo or shot that I wanted; at this point, I haven’t developed that film so I’m unsure if inching closer or farther from people worked in my favor.

**Little Elm, Texas January 29, 2023:**

I decided that today would be a great day to go on a nature walk near the pond behind my apartment complex, which is nestled between rows of duplexes deep in Little Elm. The trees had a mix of orange and brown leaves with some branches bare. It was nice to also see a blue heron swooping back and forth across the pond; heron sightings are few and far between in the Denton/Little Elm area—at least for me. Thanks to the spaced out benches, wooden bridge, and calm atmosphere, I think the pond is my favorite place at my apartment complex—maybe even more than my actual apartment! There’s a sense of serenity there that I, unfortunately, can’t achieve in white walled, 1 bed-1 bath apartment. As I walked around the pond, I kept getting drawn to the grass, leaves, and trees and purposely stopped to hear birds move from branch to branch.

**Little Elm, Texas February 5, 2023:**

This project—and the tools I am using to complete it—are heavy. Physically, I can feel myself being weighed down with film, cameras, cleaning equipment, and typewriter as I move from location to location; emotionally, I wonder if this was too large of an undertaking. It is interesting to note how people react when I bring my typewriter or cameras out in public: almost every time, someone inevitably comes by to reminisce about how their grandfather, mother, aunts, or uncles used these instruments to record memory, to cherish experiences. And, almost every time, after I explain what I am doing walking around with these tools and the basis of my project, people’s eyes go wide and they smile—or gasp—or give me a “well, good luck, honey!” as they walk away. Those interactions, more than anything else, should demonstrate the impact my work and these tools have on our present.

I’m not naive. I know that the process I am going through is an extremely long path to finishing the dissertation—and I almost definitely added some large potholes to skirt over along the way. But, the way I figure it, is if I’m not willing to try to really investigate—to uncover the silences and absences of making work with a typewriter or taking images with vintage cameras—then what is the point of my work outside of reading and analyzing and writing? The hands-on approach gives this work depth and rigor; it is an invitation for others to either look back on, or look forward to, learning about how these tools work and, through the process, learn about women who used these tools to make travel pieces from the past. Something I’m curious about is how my photo-taking techniques will change once I can get a hold of a rangefinder camera (fingers crossed for a Leica!), especially since a rangefinder and my “Rollie” have vastly different maneuver abilities.

**Denton, Texas February 11, 2023:**

I went with Dr. Busl to downtown Denton to take pictures with my Rolleiflex as well as help her test out her Toyo camera—a large-format film camera that was as beautiful as it was intimidating. It was also interesting to see one of my mentors filling both roles of student and teacher—I kept reminding her (and myself) that if she was able to teach me what to do (and, more importantly, what not to do) when handling the Toyo, then she had a more concrete understanding of how to use the field camera than she expected or thought. Unlike my Rolleiflex or the Leicas that Maillart and Gruber used, this Toyo camera had more weight and heft to it—making us appreciate the maneuverability of our more compact cameras.
There were five of us snorkeling—Erin, me, and three men from Germany. Funny enough, it turned out that one of our adventure.

There were five of us snorkeling—Erin, me, and three men from Germany. Funny enough, it turned out that one of our adventure.

As we rode out on a boat to the middle of the water, Gavin and Krystal relayed a smattering of interesting facts about manatees, such as: they can hear your heartbeat up to six feet away, they cannot survive in water colder than 66 degrees Fahrenheit, they only have molars (all the better to chew with!), and if we equated their sight with ours they would be legally blind. As they were talking, I was flooded with a sense of ease and excitement as I looked out at fishing boats, paddleboarders, kayakers, and the occasional diving osprey catching prey. Boat houses, ornate condos, and shacks dotted the coastline; I kept thinking back to Crystal Beach and of the colorful beach houses that run from Galveston all the way down to High Island.

The scenery was beautiful. It was a clear day with fishing boats, sails, and manatee tours out on the water. The wind made riding the boat mostly bearable (riding back after swimming was a different story). Finding the manatees took patience; you had to find their snouts popping up out of the water and then, with keen eyesight, locate where they were in the water. If we spooked them with the motor of the boat, or if they became skittish at all, they could leave the area up to 25 miles per hour. My eyesight is assuredly not as keen as those of our boat captain and dive partners, but I’m happy to report that I was able to (at least once!) identify a manatee snout among the choppy waves.

Swimming with manatees is surreal. The larger manatees we saw in the water were as large as grand pianos. Their skin resembles that of an elephant and felt bumpy on my fingers. The two biggest rules we had while in the water were: 1. Let the manatee initiate contact, and 2. Don’t intentionally step on, antagonize, or harm any manatees. I was shocked when, as soon as I began treading water with my trusty noodle, that I was a hair’s width away from riding the back of a manatee! The amount of grace and ease they use when moving through the water stunned me. It was also a bit intimidating that, much like sharks, you could not see them in the brackish water until they were right in front of, behind, or under you.

At first, I was having trouble making myself relax enough to be around the manatee and get towards their face rather than their tails; they cannot see you if you’re behind them, so getting in front of them where they can look at you is best. However, after thirty minutes I finally embraced my inner manatee and laid out completely flat on top of the water. I made sure to slow my breathing and not move my legs or arms. Suddenly, a baby manatee glided out of the gloom and “booped” my face with their snout. Being face-to-face with this gentle giant had me smiling through my snorkel piece. The manatee was intensely curious, sniffing and nibbling along my mask, my cheek, and my wetsuit. At one point, the manatee directly looked into my eyes and I was startled to find that theirs were small and glazed over. Later, I found out that manatees can see in color, which made me wonder how in the world they were able to find us so quickly in the brackish water. It was nice, too, that we were not in deep water. If you concentrated and weren’t fighting the current, you could barely see a sandy bottom.

Florida, March 7, 2023:

Florida is really, really green—the trees and fauna we passed reminded me of flying over England; even more interesting is how the trees, grass, and surrounding swamps resemble arteries that flow through the state (both in the air and on the ground). Spanish moss, cows, and power lines dotted the highway as we made our way to Fun2Dive in order to check off something that has been on my bucket list since I was a little girl: swim with manatees. I had told my best friend, Erin, about the idea and she surprised me with a trip to Crystal River—a bastion for manatee conservation and research.

When you walk into the main building, you immediately see lots of manatee merchandise: shirts, plushies, pins, carvings, and books line the walls and middle of the meeting place. The left back corner of the building is where Fun2Dive allows patrons to slip on their wetsuits with the middle and right sides dedicated to checking in, signing waivers, and grabbing free coffee if you are so inclined. Families, boat captains, and water guides were bustling about the place; some people were embarrassed about putting on their wetsuits while others leisurely walked around the store with their bikinis and chests showing. Right at 10:30, Krystal came to fetch us so we could change into our wetsuits and start our adventure.
Writing and Photography in Conversation

I believe my work lies parallel with Aloha’s, Mailart’s, and Gruber’s through attempting to authenticate myself via travel and experience. Though we traveled for different reasons, all of us were consistently searching for the answer to this question: How can travel change how I interact with the world?

Aloha

My work intersects with Aloha’s via threads of description and power. Both of us attempt to use vivid wordplay and imagery to entice audiences to become interested in our travels. However, it is through my use of feminist theory and analysis of power that allows my work to diverge from Aloha’s. We are similar in that we have financial and educational support from external places—Texas Woman’s University and the Wanderwell Expedition, respectively—and we are quick to fluctuate in how we use power to get into hard to reach places. Unlike Aloha, my current work branch out from myself as focus of narrative and instead become inquisitive of the people, place, and actions that surround me when I travel. Like the other women I am examining, her travel is directly related to her work; yet, she seems to mix the ability to travel freely in these spaces with her identity as a young, financed white woman. I found myself seeing similar threads in her own writing compared to my travels to Ghana in 2012—both Aloha and I were going into different countries without information about the political, cultural, and economic situations of those spaces. And, we both had (at a young age: me 19, she 20s) a zest for adventure and wanting to help, but that idea of helpfulness is/was misplaced by the intention and overall context of why and how we were traveling in the first place. “They could not understand the anomaly of a girl who was attempting to drive a car around the world, and yet who was Victorian at heart” (119)

In my view, I believe Aloha uses the spaces/countries she occupies as containers—platforms for her presence and expedition (which, in a way, they were); yet, time and again she fails to see how those spaces/countries allowed for flow of movement, communication, and development. Both of us have traveled to Japan—her in the 1920s, me in 2016, and we have very different ways of describing the landscape and our movement within it. Here is how Aloha describes traveling through and viewing the Japanese landscape: Only one road leads from Kobe to Osaka. It was bordered by the slums of the nation, at least it appeared so to us on the morning we traveled over it. Its whole length seemed to be a cesspool of humanity; with filth and degradation around the outcasts of a race” (170-171).

Here, it seems as though she places herself outside of the moment altogether, even though she is walking/driving from one city to another. Her attention is paid to the atmosphere, but she does not place herself within it. If anything, most of the time Wanderwell places herself above the people and places she visits—which makes her scathing views on class and race even more impactful. Yet, almost immediately after this thought, she says although she was “Alien and travel-stained, I think I glimpsed there something of the soul that may once have breathed in old Japan” (177). I wondered if this meant she thought the “old soul”—the Japan of the Tales of Genji, perhaps, was gone and a lesser, more disappointing country took its place. Uden points out this conflict by asking: “This tension between a desire for difference and a call to similarity reflects a tension inherent to travel writing itself. Writers anchor the unfamiliar by comparing it to the known. In doing so, do they themselves participate in the erasure of difference” (127)? In this case, I am inclined to agree with Uden—Wanderwell is disregarding the fact that the “old soul” of Japan was present at all at that moment. Unfortunately, I and the other women I examine here do the same kind of erasure throughout our writing and photography. Below is an excerpt from my own writings from Japan as we made our way into Osaka proper:

The streets of Osaka thrummed with life—food vendors, partygoers, and tourists alike thronged along the pathways between stores, restaurants, and business buildings. Neon signs lit the more darker corners as we made our way toward the center of all the movement and noise. It seemed like there was a celebration going on, but we never found out for who or what. Although we were physically moving, it felt more like my friends and I were adrift in a sea; my movement and the movement of the city and her people simultaneously put me on edge and calmed me, if only for a moment or two. While adrift, I kept my eye out for taiyaki, a fish-shaped cake normally filled with red bean paste or, as I eventually found out (and adored), caramel and custard!

As we read, we can see how my focus shifts between my physical movement with the crowd on the street to my surroundings: I attempted to pull in vocabulary I learned through travel and make the food (a common vehicle to build community) as descriptive as possible. Unlike the original 2016 version, I added images of taiyaki and Osaka so you could gain a better understanding of the atmosphere and amount of space the food stalls and tourists took up that night.
My photography work diverges from Aloha's, because there is a focus on place and space–without me in the image. Out of all the photographs shown in *A Call to Adventure!*, there are only five of them that do not show Wanderwell in some way. The majority of those photos, interestingly enough, are taken of “Cap.” What frustrates me about that is that he is shown actively using or posing by cameras, whereas there are only two photos in her narrative that show Aloha engaging with film; if we remember, that was her primary duty on this expedition. So, I wonder, why are there not more photos of her demonstrating her skill set and growth in photography? The photos that I take, and ones taken of me, run somewhat parallel with Aloha’s work–especially photos I took of myself when I traveled in my 20’s. Thanks to “selfies” and the ever growing amount of filters on apps like Instagram, I am able to make photos and instances of memory that “pop” on social media–which, hopefully, garner more likes from viewers.

Using Interwar Cameras

This is one of the first photos I took with my Rolleiflex camera. It’s a snapshot of my great aunt and uncle’s house. Near the bottom of the windows, we see some gardening tools, plants, and a large magnolia tree. I didn’t have a light meter at the time, so I was testing the lighting and aperture speed. I did look up a quick tip for taking outside photos with film, but the settings on the website did not match the settings on my camera. If you look closely, you can see small, white dots appear on the left side of the photograph. This happened because the bottom of the camera was not completely closed; and, as a result, light filtered through the camera and onto the film I was using to take pictures. At first, I did not like that the dots were there, but over time I have come to like their presence in the photo; it gives the image more personality.

I took this photo with my Samsung Galaxy S23 phone camera while on the metro in Washington D.C. The original photo was taken in color and I altered the filter and settings to make it appear in black and white. Like Maillart and Gruber, I placed my physical body out of the picture to focus on the people in front me on the train; the result is a seemingly quiet photo of “metro life” in downtown D.C. I also altered the aperture to make the image brighter for viewers; the lighting on the metro was actually fairly dim.

The collection of images here are of the audience and scenery at the Cherokee National Festival in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. We can see the fairgrounds here, as well as trees and foliage in the area. I wanted to document the amount of people at the pow-wow; and, with luck, get a photograph of the dancers during the ceremony itself. When I developed this roll of film, I was able to see the range of sturdiness as I held the camera and, more importantly, the importance of timing the developer and stopper liquids to get a better image on paper. What we see here is a mish-mash of images that use different levels of lighting and range on the Rolleiflex to get a clear shot.
In contrast, there are many mistakes that can be made when developing film—and I made a bunch. When I developed this photo sheet, I did not properly cut the negatives so each photo had its own space; rather, I cut each photo separately and loaded it onto a sheet to be developed. The result is clear: some photos overlapped to make funkier pieces. Also, my aperture and f-stop settings on these images were too far from where they needed to be to make clear shots. It is times like these where I became increasingly frustrated with the development process—and wondered how Wanderwell, Maillart, and Gruber managed to solve their problems—if they solved them at all.

What was it like using an Interwar camera?

You can see the dots of the film paper on this photo.

Cut each negative out and placed them in photo sleeve. E1G "no-no"!

What was it like using a Interwar camera?

Underexposed to light.

Slow shutter speed = blurry photo.

Overexposed to light.
"The fact that the itinerary can usually only be known after the end of travel exemplifies not only the backward logic of causal relation but also the importance of the crucial experiences of unresolved direction and shattered expectations during travel" Mikkonen (p. 297).

Introduction

We have spent a large amount of time looking backwards—surveying how thirty years of war, technological progress, and boundary-shifting altered the way women used power, privilege, and gender norms to not only travel around the world but also share their travel narratives with the public. I spent countless hours rereading narratives, retaking photographs, and reordering my thoughts. And now, we must look forward to situating these Interwar women, their works, and my research into modern day literary circles. Mikkonen makes their point exceedingly clear: unresolved direction and shattered expectations occur during travel. Ironically (perhaps, rather unironically) I found out that shattered expectations can also occur when someone writes a dissertation, especially when scholars consider how their area of study aligns (or shatters) previous expectations and conceptions from other academics and the public.

Some of the rhetorical moves Aloha, Maillart, Gruber, and I made seem foreign to us—while others are hauntingly familiar. But what does all of their work mean? How does my analysis of their work (and my own) fall into conversations about interwar rhetoric and women’s travel writing? How has women’s travel writing evolved as a genre from the late 1800s (the beginning of our contextual journey) to now? What should we do with what we learned from their narratives and choices? In Ahead of Their Time: A Biographical Dictionary of Risk-Taking Women, Duncan critiques the “spark” of women’s journeys, noting:

“Together, they [Interwar women] redefined what it means to be a woman and turned their world into a planet without borders. The overwhelming commodity was one of the spirit—they were diding to go where others fear to tread, didingly, almost compulsively, to undertake the unknown—simply because it was there” (8).

I undertook the unknown, too, by crafting this dissertation at the crossroads between textual analysis and arts-based critical research. Honestly, I just wanted to try and undertake the “unknown” of film developing and using Interwar cameras to see what those processes were like myself.
Women's travel writing continues to be a viable genre of study with opportunities for cross-disciplinary work. Analyzing women's travel writing from the Intervar period is a rich way to look at how women multimodally engaged with the world around them during that time period. These travel narratives are accurate representations of white western women and are not accurate representations of the places those women went during travel. All four of us physically moved through spaces in specialized ways during travel to get "the perfect travel photos," and by doing so made rhetorical choices that we would have otherwise not dealt with/acknowledged on a regular basis.

I will show which threads from these women's works continue to linger in modern-day travel writing, as well as wrestle with my own lingering questions about rhetoric, the Intervar period, and travel as a whole. I would like you all to keep in mind that although this portion of my dissertation "concludes" my work, in no way do I believe any of the conversations, findings, and scholarship I investigate here are ending anytime soon.

Finding 1: Women’s Travel Writing Is a Viable Genre of Study

Women's travel writing has morphed exponentially from its beginnings of documenting major travel tours in the 1800s (from companies like Thomas and Cook) to the vibrant and multifaceted modern narratives we see today. The spark that keeps scholars engaging with women's narratives, I believe, has to do with its fluidity and opportunities for cross-disciplinary study. The "how" and "why" women made travel narratives, on the other hand, is explicitly connected with identity and travel as self-transformation; this pattern began, I believe, in the Victorian era. The Victorian woman's travel narrative was a maintained juxtaposition of freedom and restriction – purposes of travel were caught in a triangulation of pleasure, exploration, and conquest/expansion; that juxtaposition grew from grand tours of colonized countries as well as countries close to home (or cities at home). Reinforced themes of upper class mentality and expansion makes travel narratives like Isabella Bird's *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* and Nellie Bly's *Around the World in 72 Days* shed light on Orientalist, colonialist, and intersectional thoughts of women from the late nineteenth century.

Victorian women taking trips overseas and across borders were "pioneers [who] were intent on seeking strange lands and exotic countries without accompaniment and writing about their discoveries or publishing journals along the way" ("Early Women Travel Writers"). Women who made travel narratives from the late nineteenth century into the twentieth century began to decipher their intersectionality; as a result, the genre of women's travel writing became a mix of describing and experiencing place with the journey of describing the self–two extremely complex journeys of their own right. Helen Buss notes that: "[Memoirs] often end not with resolution but with a condition of continuing renegotiation" (13). Scholars and the public engage in "continuing renegotiation" with women's travel narratives via their research and books; they find new ways to weave their research interests with major themes that lie within these narratives, including: transformation of self, women's narrative authenticity, and women's mobility (Liang & Frost and Morris). For example, I use a unique combination of narrative theory, feminist geography, and photography to put three women in conversation that have never before been compared to one another in rhetorical study. This constellation of women's narratives and theory would not have been possible if women's writing were not a sustained means of scholarly inquiry. There is a huge difference, too, between reading a text and looking at pictures and doing analysis versus embodied research; embodied research and narrative study make a perfect segway for scholars to engage in ethnological, archival, and other types of analytical narrative work that contribute to narrative study as a whole.

As women continue to move around the world, so too does travel writing expand as a means of inquiry; the more women wrote, the more readers could see snippets of women's ideas on intersectionality, culture, self-identity, and transformation: "The persistence of this kind of writing is undoubtedly related to human curiosity and to a travel writer's desire to mediate between things foreign and things familiar, to help us understand that world which is other to us. But curiosity alone does not account for the persistence of this genre" (Blanton 20). Engagement, whether that be physical or mental, constitutes a large part of how women articulate their narratives to the public. For me and the Intervar women I examined here, this engagement was multimodal and multifaceted.

Finding 2: Engaging with the World Multimodally between the Wars

Centuries later, I believe that Aloha, Mailiart, Gruber used travel as a means of inquiry – whether that meant becoming globally aware or questioning their own stances on gender, class, and privilege. "We want to make choices, and have some agency in getting lost, and getting found. We want to challenge the city, [the places and spaces beyond it], and decipher it, and flourish within its parameters." (Elkin 73).
Though their travels were connected to their occupations and historically situated in a time of constant shifts, travel (and by extension, their narratives) provided opportunity for reflection on why they should (or at all) interact with spaces, people, and places that surrounded them. In *Space, Place, and Gender*, Massey ponders the question: “Can’t we rethink our sense of place? Is it not possible for a sense of place to be progressive, not self-enclosing and defensive, but outward-looking?” (147). Maillart and Gruber, in some ways, shared this sentiment in their narratives whereas Aloha either reinforced her nationality or circled her thoughts back to herself.

Kramarae argues: “Breaking out of silence means more than being empowered to speak or to write, it also means controlling the form as well as the content of one’s own communication, the power to develop and to share one’s own unique voice” (389). Studying travel writing from the Interwar period as a rich way to analyze women’s experiences and how they engaged with the world around them. Aloha, Maillart, and Gruber all wanted to further define themselves through travel, and, they used writing and photography as a means to document their perspective on various countries around the world. They used the technology available to them to circulate their perspectives on communities and spaces distinct from their home communities. Wolff situates James Clifford’s analysis of travel in a gendered context, writing: “It [travel] is both literal - the ethnographer does leave home to do research - and epistemological - it describes knowledge in a different way, as contingent and partial” (226). For these interwar women, their knowledge gathering and sharing was multimodal.

The key point to remember is this: Aloha, Maillart, and Gruber’s combined use of narrative and photography as a narrative— is a glimpse into their meaning-making process of women’s rights, expansion, war, travel for pleasure, and a smattering of other themes and ideas. In order for them to make their narratives, though, they had to engage with the world using multiple means of communication: they physically moved from country to country, they listened to countless stories from other travelers, other writers, and other people; they navigated space differently depending on their situation, and they used language as a means to break (and sometimes build) barriers between them, the people, and countries they traveled to in their works. Their representation of place was a different situation altogether.

**Finding 3: Juxtaposing Accurate Representations of Self and Place through Travel**

No matter the author, travel narratives are always biased by the person who writes them; with that in mind, I think these narratives give an in-depth look at how white western women moved through colonized and uncolonized spaces. Although each woman (Maillart and Gruber especially) give mountains of historical facts about the countries and cities they visited, their narratives cannot be considered accurate representations of those places. Lewis argues about this concern in *Photography, a Feminist History: Gender Rights and Gender Roles on Both Sides of the Camera*.

Among the biggest tasks of a “feminist history,” though, is to create a narrative without smoothing over differences. We live in a moment when the question of who is telling whose story is (quite rightly) scrutinized; and with this comes the justifiable concern that individuals’ experiences will be homogenized. But it is possible to identify commonalities in ideas about photography (and travel) without making reductive generalizations. And, arguably, it is essential to do so in order for progress to be made. (13, addition mine)

All three of the women examined here “smooth over differences” of their positionality in one way or another—they reinforce, rewrite, or don’t mention certain aspects of their travel to gain more readers. As such, this means that their bias undoubtedly affects how they depicted the cities, countries, and places seen during travel. Their narratives neglect a comprehensive and authentic approach to place; the historical, cultural, and social aspects of their work are embedded in early twentieth century gender norms, interwar politics, and remnants of Victorian travel themes. This is not necessarily a “bad” quality to have; however, scholars (including me) would need to be more diligent about finding ways to fill in the gaps these women left behind—find ways to fully encapsulate a place in a way that uplifts the narratives, cultures, and practices of that place without putting ourselves front and center. This can be easier said than done, though—especially when we have a camera in our hands.

**Finding 4: Moving in Special Ways to Get “The Shot”**

These women used photography (and cameras) as a way to move through spaces differently, they made decisions that were abnormal or unique in order to take a picture. In *The Available Means of Persuasion*, editors Sheridan, Ridofo, and Michel mark the alarming rate in which we produce, consume, and use technology today via an analysis of multimodal courtroom evidence: “Technology and practice change more rapidly than our ability to theorize the implications of those changes” (137). I posit that this sentiment applies to the way Aloha, Maillart, and Gruber used their photography during travel, at times Gruber, specifically, even admits when she is unsure of how her works will change the future—she only knew in that moment, with her camera, she needed to act. Maillart was more open about how and where she used her camera to get photos, and she too did some unique maneuvers to capture moments abroad.
Teju Cole writes: “The dominant power decided that everything had to be seen and cataloged, a task for which photography was perfectly suited. Under the giant umbrella of colonialism, nothing would be allowed to remain hidden from the imperial authorities” (16). Colonialism, then, is a means of permission for these women to sneak into restricted sections, bypass security, and take photos of men, women, children, and places without anyone’s consent. Physical movement counts here, too: Aloha (though we don’t see it in her narrative) carried film equipment by foot, boat, and car across borders to take pictures; Maillart had her Ford and passport; Gruber had the support of FDR’s administration, the Herald Tribune, and people from other like-minded institutions who wanted her to gather information about women’s evolution, refugee work, and the political state of the West. In sum, these women made choices outside of the ordinary in order to take pictures during travel.

What I Carry with Me

Thomas Sloane starts the prologue of *Reengaging the Prospects of Rhetoric: Current Conversations and Contemporary Challenges* with these words to describe the 60s: “It was the best of times because much of our academic, cultural, and political rigidity was being challenged. It was the worst of times for the same reasons. Any optimism or despair about change was joined in the middle with uncertainty” (1). I believe that his sentiment carried forward to today; challenges abound in rhetorical scholarship—this rapid consumption expands to social media, academia, photography, and self-identity. As I keep moving forward, more doubts surface in my head: Is my approach to rhetorical scholarship worthy of inclusion in spaces where women’s travel narratives are analyzed? What is going to happen to women’s travel writing as a genre five, ten, fifteen years into the future? How is my scholarly identity going to change? These thoughts will continue to be the luggage I carry with me as I move forward in my academic career.

As a rhetorician, I realize I walk a line parallel to rhetoric and literature—weaving the two to suit my needs and (hopefully) make invigorating spaces of inquiry for other scholars, readers, and lovers of travel. As a traveler, I will work to be more conscious of my movement through spaces especially when I have a camera in my hand. I will also do my best to listen more than I talk in order to better immerse myself in a place far from home. As a white western woman, I will continually question my use of power and privilege in the classroom and during travel.

I tried to do my best for my ten-year-old self: be more inquisitive about the places women traveled to, who they met, and what they did. Although the stories I’ve gathered here are not about women specifically from my family, I am still grateful to have immersed myself in their worldview just for a little while. And, what’s more, I’m surprised at the amount of stories I wrote and images I made for this dissertation; I think it is a combination of things I always have, and will continue to carry with me: curiosity, grit, humility, and exploration.

Thank you, reader, for taking this journey with me. Now it’s time for you to take a journey of your own. Go out into the world—find new places to explore—and don’t forget to bring a camera with you.
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