

FRENCH FASHION WOMEN & THE FIRST WORLD WAR

**MAUDE BASS-KRUEGER & SOPHIE KURKDJIAN,
EDITORS**

Maude Bass-Krueger
Johanne Berlemont
Jérémie Brucker
Margaret Darrow
Susan Grayzel
Sophie Kurkdjian
Michele Majer
Anais Raynaud

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Exhibition curators and catalogue editors: Maude Bass-Krueger and Sophie Kurkdjian

Project director: Nina Stritzler-Levine
Assistant curator: Emma Cormack

Book designer: Irma Boom Office
Copy editor: Barbara Burn
Manager of photographic rights and reproductions: Alexis Mucha

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Introduction

MAUDE BASS-KRUEGER

War changes everything, even what is furthest away from it.

(La guerre change tout, et jusqu'aux choses les plus éloignées d'elle.)

— JEAN RICHEPIN, *PROSES DE GUERRE*, 1915

In the winter of 1914, the French photographers and brothers Jules Séeberger, Louis Séeberger, and Henri Séeberger set out to photograph society women in the latest fashions. In one of the images from this series, two women pose for the camera wearing smart walking suits—their long jackets, closed with decorative buttons, are worn over crisp white blouses.

FIG. 1-1

They both wear fashionable hobble skirts, whose narrow circumference altered their gait and forced them to walk in small, mincing steps. Large fur coats, elaborate feathered hats, and a large fur muff for the woman on the left complete the look. If there were hints of an impending war on the horizon, they are not visible in this photograph, which reveals the absence of such concerns in high society.

Four and a half years later, with the Great War over and Henri and Louis safely back from the trenches (Jules was not mobilized), the brothers took up fashion photography once again. In the first postwar photographic series, the Séebergers captured two women strolling in the woods.

FIG. 1-2

The season is the same, but the style has noticeably changed: the women's suits are plain, the skirts are cut to the calf, and the jackets are belted at the waist. The jackets no longer fit closely to the women's bodies but hang away from them like men's suits. The women carry nothing in their hands, save a walking stick for the woman on the right. Their clothing, shoes, and hats are simpler, with fewer embellishments and trimmings. When viewed next to each other, these two photographs make it clear that one era has ended and a new era has begun. The contrast in these images raises a central question that drives this book: What happened during the four years of the Great War to create such a vivid shift in the fashions, and what kind of impact did this shift have on the women themselves? Through print and visual culture, as well as garments, textiles, and accessories, this volume seeks to raise questions and to propose answers by exploring the relationship between fashion and war and the ways in which women, as well as the fashion and textile industries, negotiated both at the same time.

French Fashion, Women, and the First World

War goes beyond a mere examination of the economic system in which fashion and textiles were produced between 1914 and 1918. At its core, it looks at how women negotiated the tensions between fashion and war, and also how ideas, attitudes, and social mores

were projected onto clothed women. Society held women to double standards when it came to getting dressed during the war: they were told to be elegant, yet were disparaged for appearing frivolous; they were encouraged to consume, yet were criticized for the financial independence their purchases suggested; they were told to look seductive in order to appeal to soldiers on leave, yet were castigated for unfaithfulness or, worse, prostitution. Few women escaped criticism about how they dressed—not the nurse, charity worker, factory worker or *remplaçantes* (women who replaced men who had been mobilized), and not even the widow. Wartime newspapers and satirical magazines abounded with endless critical discourse about what women wore, how they wore it, and what their clothes meant. Representations of women wearing “questionable” clothing—too elegant, too extravagant, too feminine, too masculine, too ugly, too shoddy—permeated wartime visual culture in France.

Unfortunately, women's voices about what clothing meant to them in their wartime lives are hard to come by. We can assume that most working- and middle-class women purchased what was necessary for daily life, adding a few relatively inexpensive new things from time to time. Food, coal or firewood, and other household necessities undoubtedly came first. Women of means may have purchased new garments during the war, but they also might have mended and reused older garments more than in their prewar lives. Nurses, factory workers, and some *remplaçantes* were obliged to purchase specialized clothes or accessories for their new jobs. Uniforms and work wear could be bought ready-made at department stores or fashioned from widely available patterns. Widows were supposed to purchase several sets of appropriate black mourning garb from specialty stores, department stores, or their local seamstress, but some women simply wore black armbands to indicate their bereaved status—a more economical way of signaling their grief. In all cases, the criticism and anxious rhetoric that was projected onto clothed women was likely far removed from the actual experience these garments engendered in the women wearing them. The study of fashion during the war offers a new understanding of the ways in which French women, like the French textile and fashion system, were tasked with negotiating these new wartime realities.

There is nothing contradictory about uniting the terms *fashion* and *war*. This publication shows that this is particularly true in France. French fashion survived, and even thrived during the First World War. And this despite the massive destruction of the



FIG. I-1 Séeberger Frères. Two women at the races wearing tailored suits with hobble silhouettes, January 1914. Silver gelatin print. © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, OA 38 boîte 2 (janvier 1914, n°1, photo n°22).



FIG. I-2 Séeberger Frères. Two women wearing tailored suits with short skirts, January–February 1919. Silver gelatin print. © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la photographie, OA 38 boîte 2 (janvier - février 1919, n°1, photo n°39).

textile industries in the north of France; the general mobilization of French male textile and garment workers; a surfeit of problems relating to wartime exports, customs, and transport; economic inflation; and the devastation of caring for 4.2 million wounded French soldiers and mourning France's 1.3 million dead.

During the four years between 1914 and 1918, the French couture industry was the only luxury industry that the French government allowed to function without forcing it to close. The economics of the garment and textile trades were far too important for France's financial security for the government to impose undue constraints and regulations. Likewise, a robust and respected couture industry was essential for French morale. The French had dominated the global fashion scene before the war, and Parisian couturiers were concerned about the need to maintain this position despite the conflict.

At the start of the war, workers, employees, and consumers formed alliances in order to stem the initial losses. However, as the war ground on, certain cracks began to appear: discontent among the workers, which ultimately led to the 1917 strike, and government plans for fixed-price clothing, textiles, and accessories as a way to address growing desperation caused by consumer price inflation. Women were central to this narrative: Jeanne Lanvin led the fight against counterfeiting; Jeanne Paquin helped negotiate the end of the strike by the *midinettes* (French couture seamstresses) in 1917 and was subsequently elected president of the *Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne*; Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel forged the foundations for her clothing business during the war. Female journalist Camille Duguet was an important voice in promoting fashion to French women during the war. Female workers were the beating heart of the fashion and textile industries during the war, stepping in to replace mobilized men in the male-dominated tailoring departments, leading the fight for better wages and hours during the 1917 strike, and working valiantly despite experiencing deep loss and grief.

New fashion magazines, styles, and textiles were created and launched. Wartime designers did not, however, "liberate" women through their garments, as some historians have suggested. Wartime fashions followed the general tendency of the fashion cycle to renew itself every few years, war or no war; wartime styles were no more freeing than the prewar ones. The biggest change was the designation of the tailored suit as the "uniform of the home front," particularly for upper-class women.

FIGS. 1-3-1-5

Working women had worn skirts,

blouses, and jackets throughout the day for a long time, and this did not change in wartime. Upper-class women, accustomed to changing outfits as often as five times a day before the war, began to simplify their wardrobes, adopting the tailored suit in the morning and afternoon as the most practical garment for helping the war effort through charity work.

FIG. 1-6

The simplification of the silhouette that occurred between 1914 and 1918 helped usher in the new postwar look.

The essays in this book examine representations of nurses, widows, elegant Parisiennes, humble *midinettes*, and hard-working women in order to understand how, during the First World War, they used fashion to shape their identities, but also how fashion was often used against them as a reflection of larger social anxieties. Women who went into nursing during the war often stemmed from the upper classes and were frequently featured in fashion magazines in their uniforms; this engendered disdain from the general public, who accused them of seducing soldiers for pleasure or of using their uniforms as a fashion statement. Widows, especially young ones, were also accused of appearing too fashionable in their black dresses; the most violent public rhetoric condemned young widows as prostitutes, their black dresses signaling to men that they were newly "available." Elegant Parisiennes were advised to purchase Parisian couture as a patriotic duty to the industry and were then attacked for their frivolity when they did so. Working women and *remplaçantes* were accused of "interfering" with gender norms when they donned work-issued outfits and coveralls. Fashion was a vital component of the French wartime economy and a lightning rod for male discourse; as the war progressed, men were increasingly anxious about the changes that were happening in front of their eyes.

FIGS. 1-7, 1-8

This book is the first comprehensive study of French fashion during the First World War. Historians have written rich accounts of French war culture and French wartime gender relations, but very little on fashion. Although several articles on French wartime fashion exist, no volume has been devoted to the subject. This book is the first to weave an analysis of French fashion through the existing wartime historiography. Sources that had been overlooked for what they might say about fashion were reviewed, and new sources were found.

The agenda of French historiography of the Great War has been irrefutably set by the research on "war culture" conducted by Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, former directors of the *Historial de la Grande Guerre* in Péronne. Defining war culture



FIG. I-3 A woman speaks to one of the marine riflemen who replaced the police in Paris, September 1914. Silver gelatin print. © Préfecture de Police, Service de l'Identité judiciaire / BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-76463-22.



FIG. I-4 Three women wearing blouses and tailored skirts, September 19, 1915. The woman seated in the middle wears a red, white, and blue ribbon fastened to her blouse. Silver gelatin print. Private collection.



FIG. I-5 A group of women wearing different versions of the ubiquitous tailored suit, date unknown. Silver gelatin print. Private collection.



FIG. I-6 Charles Lansiaux. An *ouvroir*, or charity sewing workshop, organized by Madame the Comtesse de Ricci within the rooms of the Musée de Sculpture Comparée, Palais du Trocadéro in Paris, October 7, 1914. © Charles Lansiaux / BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-73697-18.



LEROY. — La Receveuse de Tramway. — The Guard.

FIG. 17 Maurice Leroy. A female tramway conductress, from a series of postcards featuring women in different wartime roles (adoptive mother, letter writer, farmer, nurse, etc.), Paris: P.J. Gallais, ca. 1914-18. © BHPV / Roger-Viollet, CP 1328 a.

	France	et Colonies	Étranger
Trois mois.....	3. »	4. »	
Six mois.....	5.50	7.50	
Un an.....	10. »	14. »	

Le Rire

ROUGE

Les abonnements partent du 1^{er} de chaque mois

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PARIS

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❖ CONDUCTRICE ❖



— J'avais dit de m'écouler à la gare de l'Est, mais c'est pas une raison pour m'secouer comme ça !
— Non, mais des fois?... Qu'est-ce que vous espérez?... Que j'allais vous embrasser dans le cou ?
Dessin d'Albert GUILLAUME.

FIG. 1-8 Albert Guillaume. Cartoon reflecting the underlying anxiety that men felt about women replacing them in their jobs and becoming more "masculine" in doing so. "I told you to wake me up at the Gare de l'Est, but that isn't a reason to shake me around like that!" exclaims the male passenger. "No, but really? . . . What did you expect? . . . That I was going to kiss you on the neck?" "Conductrice," *Le Rire Rouge*, November 27, 1915. Private collection.

as “many varieties of representation through which the French understood the war and their commitment to winning it,” Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker’s publications on the war methodically studied war violence and bodily damage, propaganda and popular culture, mourning, and private practices of memory and commemoration.¹ Excellent work by Antoine Prost and Jay Winter on civil society, identity and war, and sites of memory has greatly enriched the field as well.² These historians rely heavily on government war archives, war journals, police archives, trench journals, and printed ephemera and do not specifically address sources relating to the clothing or the fashion industry. Yet, when these same sources are examined for information about fashion, they yield rich results.

A variety of excellent publications on the male and female experiences of war have also come out of gender studies, some of them to coincide with the centenary. The collected essays in *Gender and the Great War*, edited by Susan Grayzel and Tammy Proctor, offer a transnational perspective to the gendered experiences faced by both men and women during the conflict.³ Adding to the conversation, Tammy Proctor’s *Civilians in a World at War, 1914–1918* explores the tension between how civilians “became central to the conflict as real targets and as justification for war” while also becoming marginalized.⁴ Kimberly Jensen’s *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* illuminates the American side of the story.⁵

Several collections of essays contain brief discussions about French fashion and clothing. These include Françoise Thébaud’s groundbreaking *Les femmes au temps de la guerre de 14* (1986), followed by Susan Grayzel’s *Women’s Identities at War* (1999), Jean-Yves le Naour’s *Misères et tourments de la chair: les moeurs sexuelles des Français, 1914–1918* (2002), and *Hommes et femmes dans la France en guerre* (2003) by Luc Capdevila, François Rouquet, Fabrice Virgili, and Danièle Voldman.⁶ The first chapter of Mary Louise Roberts’s *Civilization without Sexes* (1994) is instrumental in framing how fashion can be used to study the “reconstruction” of gender in interwar France.⁷ Florence Brachet-Champsaur’s essay “De l’odalisque de Poiret à la femme nouvelle de Chanel: une victoire de la femme,” in the book *1914–1918: Combats de femmes* (2004), edited by Evelyne Morin-Rotureau, provides a contained study of fashion during the First World War.⁸

New scholarship from fashion historians in Britain has enriched the historiography of World War I fashion studies. Nina Edwards and Lucy Adlington, a cultural critic and a dress historian, respectively, have published two helpful general-interest

books on fashion during the war: *Dressed for War: Uniform, Civilian Clothing and Trappings, 1914 to 1918*, which examines military and civilian clothing in England, France, and Germany, and *Great War Fashion: Tales from the History Wardrobe*, which explores the lives and clothing of British women during the conflict. These works provide important leads on sources relating to women and World War I, including fashion magazines, postcards, published diaries, photographs, and archives relating to women’s wartime work.⁹

The surprising lack of work on French wartime fashion cannot be attributed to the paucity of sources. The Archives Départementales de Paris has precious photographs and textile swatches for copyright deposit from the designers Worth (1917–30), Rodier (1917–34), Paquin (1917–34), and Callot Sœurs (1917–36).¹⁰ The Archives Nationales houses police reports on *habillement* (clothing) in the series F7 and records of commerce and industry in the series F12.¹¹ The Archives de Police reveal records of employment and activity within the couture houses, as well as a rich trove of documents related to women who stole garments from department stores during the war.¹² Documents held at the Bibliothèque Forney in Paris prove to be some of the most useful for research, from department store catalogues (Le Bon Marché, Le Printemps, Les Galeries Lafayette, Le Louvre, La Samaritaine) to the archive of postcards and fashion magazines. The Centre des Documentation des Musées—Musée des Arts Décoratifs (MAD) has documents on designers, and the Historial de la Grande Guerre in Péronne has archives on women and the war, fashion, postcards, iconography, and some working-class women’s clothing.

French libraries and archives hold wartime issues of *Les Arts Français* (1918), *La Baïonnette* (1914–18), *Le Bon Ange du Foyer* (April–June 1917), *Chiffons* (October 1916–December 1917), *Les Élégances Parisiennes* (1916–19), *Femina* (July 1914; May 1917–December 1918), *La Femme de France* (1915–19), *Le Figaro* (1914–18), *La France Universelle* (July 1916–July 1918), *La Gazette du Bon Ton* (summer 1915), *La Gazette du Bon Ton: 1915 Mode as Shown by Paris* (1915), *L’Illustration* (1914–18), *J’ai Vu* (1915–18), *The New York Times* (1914–18), *La Midinette* (February 1914–April 1915), *La Mode Illustrée* (1914–18), *La Mode Pratique* (1914–18), *Les Modes* (1915–17), *L’Oeuvre Française* (December 1918), *L’Opinion: Journal de la Semaine* (1914–18), *Le Sourire de France*, 1914–18), and *Le Style Parisien* (July 1915–July 1916).

Finally, the wartime registers of the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne, held



FIG. I-9 House of Worth. "Grenadier" coat, named after a specialized soldier known for his red uniform, with textile sample for copyright deposit, February 21, 1918. Coat: wool, mousseline, silk embroidery; sample: paper, ink, wool swatch, mousseline swatch. © Carole Rabourdin / Archives de Paris / Roger-Viollet, RV-157094-4.



FIG. I-10 Paquin. "Marmouset" afternoon dress in blue poplin for copyright deposit, August 13, 1917. Silver gelatin print. © Archives de Paris / Roger-Viollet, RV-101320-1.

COSTUMES TAILLEUR



65801.



65801. **COSTUME** tailleur en drapierie fantaisie et damier noir et blanc, jaquette doublée serge mi-soie.

Le costume . . . 79. »
En galardine, jaquette doublée soie. Le costume . . . 95. »



65802. **COSTUME** tailleur en flanelle noir et blanc, serge et drapierie fantaisie, jaquette doublée soie.

Le costume . . . 89. »
Le costume . . . 95. »



65803. **COSTUME** tailleur en dandier noir et blanc et serge marine et noire, jaquette doublée soie.

Le costume . . . 98. »
Le même, en toile blanche et galure. Le costume . . . 49. »



65805.



65708. **COSTUME** tailleur en serge marine et noire, et très beau damier noir et blanc, jaquette doublée soie. En gabardine. Le costume . . . 110. »

COSTUMES TAILLEUR



65701.



65701. **COSTUME** tailleur en serge et très beau damier, noir et blanc, passepoils couleur, gilet piqué blanc, jaquette soie soie.

Le costume . . . 145. »



65702. **COSTUME** tailleur en drapierie fantaisie et serge marine et noire, jaquette doublée soie. Le costume . . . 135. »



65703. **COSTUME** tailleur en belle serge marine et noire et gabardine, bordé tressé Real.

Le costume . . . 175. »



65705.



65705. **COSTUME** tailleur en gabardine et serge marine et noire, gilet soie fantaisie, jupe haute nouveauté, jaquette doublée soie. Le costume . . . 215. »

Tous nos Articles confectionnés se recommandent par leur bon goût et leur exécution.

at the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode, are a particularly rich resource for the study of the structure of the French couture industry during the war. The findings from these registers are published for the very first time in this book.

The two main sections of this book, although interconnected, constitute a specific area that provides larger contextualization for the contributing essays and case studies. Case studies of specific garments or designers complement and enrich several of the essays.

Margaret Darrow, in “French Women and the First World War,” provides the book with a central narrative for the roles that French women took on during the war and the response that they engendered in doing so.

CHAPTER 1

Asked to “embody the nation that French men defended,” women were expected to fulfill conflicting desires: to be frivolous yet defiant, fashionable while upholding traditions, family oriented but sensual. Darrow’s essay provides an important overview of how female factory workers, peasants, remplaçantes, midinettes, war charity volunteers, and nurses engaged in the war effort. For some women the war opened up new social, economic, or political opportunities, Darrow concludes, whereas for others, “war service seemed a parenthesis rather than a life-changing experience.”

FIG. I-13

Johanne Berlemont and Anaïs Raynaud, curators at the Musée de la Grande Guerre, in Meaux, France, examine two nurse’s uniforms from their collection through the lens of the history of French female nursing in the first case study.

CHAPTER 1a

Berlemont and Raynaud, like Darrow, reveal the tension between the sacrifice and selflessness of these “white angels” and the criticism they received for appearing too “frivolous,” “fashionable,” or “seductive” in their pristine white uniforms.

Susan Grayzel’s essay, “Needles En Avant!: The Militarization of Women’s Sewing and Knitting during the First World War in France, Great Britain, and America,” examines how the militarization of women’s domestic labor—especially sewing and knitting—became one of the more ubiquitous and significant ways in which women contributed to the war and by which the war came home.

CHAPTER 2

Postcards depicting women knitting reinforced gender roles, in which they were expected to provide material and emotional support. Grayzel, who enlarges the scope of this book with an important transnational perspective, also writes of the failure and futility of such work in preventing suffering and loss.

In “Fashion, Gender, and Anxiety,” I look at how caricatures, postcards, and

writing about wartime fashion reveal deep unease about what women were doing while men were at war.

CHAPTER 3

Commentary on fashionable women and fashionable dress masked anxiety about women who no longer “needed” men, had forgotten them, or else were enamored with officers and foreign soldiers rather than the common French infantryman, or poilu. Fashion, when refracted through the lens of war, bore the brunt of wartime anxiety around reconfigured gender roles.

FIG. I-14

The problem with women’s clothed bodies extended to mourning garments as well, which I examine in a case study that charts the simplification of wartime mourning fashion and the critical discourse it raised in light of male anxiety about being forgotten or replaced.

CHAPTER 3a

Mourning clothes, like nurse’s uniforms and female work wear, were imbued with complex and often contradictory ideas about female emancipation, frivolity, and sexuality.

FIG. I-15

This section concludes with two essays on clothing for the working woman. Kurkdjian’s essay on the representation of working women in the photographic archive of the *Excelsior* newspaper argues that the mise-en-scène of these remplaçantes was intended to feminize their appearance, to appease male anxiety about working women, or to encourage more women to apply for these jobs.

CHAPTER 4

Jérémie Brucker’s case study on female work overalls, or *combinaisons de travail*, charts the history of how this garment was used by women during the war against its perceived “masculinization” of the female body.

CHAPTER 4a

Like Kurkdjian, Brucker notes the prevalent “feminization” of women wearing work overalls, both through photographic techniques and the manufacture of a new, more shapely pair of overalls designed specifically for the female body.

In the alternating essays in the section entitled “French Fashion: Adapting to Crises,” Kurkdjian and I examine the development of the fashion industry and the fashion press from the first “war crinoline” collection in August 1914 to the midinette strike in 1917 and its aftermath. The first chapter of this section traces the French wartime fashion industry from the chaotic first months of the war, during which nearly half of the French textile industry was destroyed by the German occupation of northeastern France, to the slow rebuilding of the textile and garment trades, thanks to Lyon-based silk manufacturing, new “war crinoline” and “barrel” silhouette collections, and the collective efforts by couturiers and manufacturers to market their styles abroad.

CHAPTER 5 AND FIG. I-16

In “Jeanne

DIRECTION ET RÉDACTION
15, rue de la Ville-l'Évêque, Paris

ABONNEMENT ET VENTE
24, boulevard des Capucines, Paris

ADMINISTRATION
15, rue de la Ville-l'Évêque, Paris



Photo Henri Marnet.

LA BOUTIQUE DE « ROSE BERTIN »

L'EXPOSITION DU SYNDICAT DE LA PRESSE PARISIENNE EN FAVEUR DES ÉPROUVÉS DE LA GUERRE
AU PETIT PALAIS

FIG. I-12 Front cover of the fashion magazine *Les Modes* from 1917, featuring a photograph from a charity exhibition organized by the Syndicat de la Presse Parisienne (Union of Parisian Press) to donate money to those affected by war. *Les Modes*: revue mensuelle illustrée des Arts décoratifs appliqués à la femme, 1917, no. 172. © Bibliothèque nationale de France, FOL-V-4312 - 1917 (N172).



FIG. I-13 Satirical postcard entitled "Women's Place" mocking the new jobs for women: "Make Way for Women: We already have women doctors and lawyers, conductors, postal workers, drivers, etc. Tomorrow we'll have female Ministers. Minister of Supply: Will lead by example and guarantee milk. Minister of Finance: Unmatched in making the taxpayer settle up. Minister of War: Knows better than anyone else how to reduce bulges and protect lines. Minister of the Navy: Has a gift for getting ships quickly out to sea and the masts up." Paris: A.H. Katz, ca. 1914-18. © BHVP / Roger Viollet, CP 1720 a.



(Dessin d'Armengol.)

SOUHAIT IMPRÉVU

- Je voudrais bien que mon mari revienne.
- Pour vous remplacer ?
- Non, pour garder les gosses !

— 334 —

FIG. I-14 Henri Armengol. "Souhait Imprévu," a cartoon published in the satirical magazine *La Baïonnette*, which was founded during the war (1915–20) and published thematic issues. Women workers were often satirized for their supposedly masculine behavior, as in this example, entitled "Unexpected Wish: 'I would like my husband to return.' 'To replace you?' 'No, to babysit the kids!'" *La Baïonnette*, November 18, 1915. Private collection.

FIG. I-15 Mourning ensemble, 1916–17. Jacket: silk, wool beads; dress: cashmere, silk, wood beads. Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, UF 70.45.4 a,b.



FIG. I-15



FIG. I-16a, b. Front and back view a suit of tailored wool twill, probably French, 1915. Wool twill. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mme. Louis Cerlian, 1940, C.I.40.90.7a,b.



Paquin, Jeanne Lanvin, Jenny, and Gabrielle Chanel, 1914–18” Kurkdjian provides an overview of the businesses and designs of the leading female designers in Paris—Jeanne Paquin, Jeanne Lanvin, Jenny Sacerdote, and Gabrielle Chanel. **CHAPTER 5c** Paquin, Lanvin, and Sacerdote were already smart businesswomen before the war, and the four years of hostilities did nothing to diminish their dominance on the international scene. Chanel rose to prominence as a couturier during the war, as her simple jersey suits were emblematic of the new era.

Michele Majer’s essay on the wartime suit distinguishes between the simple *tailleur classique* and the more complex *tailleur couturier*, both of which adapted themselves to the war through their use of textiles (silk and jersey), silhouettes (larger pockets), and trimmings (patriotically named colors and detailing).

CHAPTER 5d AND FIGS. 1-17, 1-18 The garment’s appropriateness to wartime realities made its influence ubiquitous throughout the war and into the interwar period. Kurkdjian’s former position as archivist at the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode in Paris, where the wartime archives for the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture Parisienne are held, allowed her to expand upon the work I had done in the archives as a master’s student, adding a new storyline with the Syndicat de Défense de la Grande Couture Française. She looks at how both the Chambre Syndicale and the Syndicat were restructured during the war and how they concentrated on promoting French fashion overseas. **CHAPTER 6**

Kurkdjian’s expertise in the twentieth-century fashion press provides the basis for her chapter “Copying is Stealing!” in which she examines the phenomenon of German fashion magazines and fashions that marketed themselves as French. **CHAPTER 7**

She also charts the history of how two new magazines were launched during the war: *Le Style Parisien*, which had a print run of seven issues between July 1915 and February 1916, and *Les Élégances Parisiennes*, published between April 1916 and February 1924. The two following chapters outline the economic strain of the war, which forced the French government to plan a fixed-price “national fashion,” and the hardships faced by female workers during the war, which led to the 1917 seamstress-led general strikes.

CHAPTERS 8 AND 9 The demands of 180 midinettes from the Jenny couture house for better wages and working hours inspired more than 133,000 women from all industries to go on strike during May and June of 1917. **FIG. 1-19** I argue that although this strike was instrumental in helping the midinettes achieve better

working conditions, it also created resentment between women of different classes once the strike was over, particularly between the wealthy Jeanne Paquin and her working-class employees.

Finally, “Returning to the Gender Question” revisits the question of female emancipation in light of wartime fashion.

CHAPTER 10 The wartime fashions were not emancipatory per se, but they signaled female emancipation for contemporary commentators. Did the shifting silhouette reflect the social changes engendered by the war, or did women actively seek out certain fashions in order to claim new freedoms? In conclusion, Sophie and I argue that any perceived liberating effects of wartime fashion were not only offset by other sartorial or corporal constraints (heavy styles, high boots, makeup, dieting), but were also tempered by the larger socioeconomic reality of postwar France: the rights women gained during the war were revoked as soon as the Armistice was signed. Repopulating the country was more important than female suffrage in the interwar period—French women had to wait until 1945 to have the right to vote for the first time. The politics of fashion during the wartime period suggests that women’s clothing had great power to incite public discussion, generate apprehension and unease, and perhaps even foster individual feelings of independence.



FIG. I-17 Grands Magasins du Louvre. Tailored suit with sailor-style collar, ca. 1915. Linen, cotton, metal buttons and buckles. Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 2012.115.18.1,2.



FIG. I-18 Tailored suit with sailor-style collar, 1915–16. Cotton, organdy. Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, UF 90.52.28.AB.

APRÈS LES COUTURIÈRES. LES MODISTES SE SONT MISES EN GRÈVE



RUE RICHAISE. DES MODISTES BARRENT GAIEMENT LE CHEMIN À L'UNE DE LEURS CAMARADES QUI SE RENDAIT À SON TRAVAIL. — Le mouvement s'étend : après les ouvrières de la couture — dont le conflit avec leurs patrons continue, bien qu'on s'attendait hier à une solution définitive — celles de la mode, présentant des revendications identiques, se sont mises en grève. Ayant quitté leurs ateliers, elles ont manifesté dans la rue hier, cherchant à débarrasser celles de leurs camarades qui travaillaient encore. Pour pénétrer dans les maisons de mode fermées, l'une d'elles sonnait, s'introduisait prestement et montait aux ateliers faire de la propagande.

LE ROI D'ITALIE INTERROGEANT UN SOLDAT PENDANT L'OFFENSIVE



ENTOURÉ D'OFFICIERS ANGLAIS ET ITALIENS, LE SOUVERAIN CAUSE FAMILIÈREMENT AVEC UN COMBATTANT. — A DROITE, LE GÉNÉRAL PORRO le roi Victor-Emmanuel a suivi de très près les différentes phases de l'offensive déclenchée contre les Autrichiens, de Tolmino à l'Adriatique, et qui, à l'heure actuelle, coûte à l'ennemi plus de 30.000 hommes en morts, blessés et prisonniers. On le voit ici devant son quartier général, demandant des renseignements sur la bataille à un combattant qui revient des premières lignes. Derrière lui se tiennent des officiers de sa suite et des officiers d'une mission britannique. A droite, le général Porro, chef d'état-major général.

FIG. 1-19 Front cover of the newspaper Excelsior, May 22, 1917, showing female hat makers on strike. "After The Seamstresses, The Hat-Makers Have Gone On Strike." Private collection.

- 1 The original French definition of *culture de guerre* proposed by Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker was "Le champ de toutes les représentations de la guerre forgées par les contemporains: de toutes les représentations qu'ils se sont données de l'immense épreuve, pendant celle-ci d'abord, après celle-ci ensuite." Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, "Violence et consentement: la 'culture de guerre' du premier conflit mondial," in *Pour une histoire culturelle*, ed. Jean-Paul Rioux and Jean-François Sirinelli (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 252. The translated definition comes from the introduction of Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, *France and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3. Both Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker have extensive bibliographies of books on the First World War.
- 2 Notably, Antoine Prost and Jay Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre: un essai d'historiographie* (Paris: Seuil, 2004).
- 3 Susan Grayzel and Tammy Proctor, ed., *Gender and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- 4 Tammy Proctor, *Civilians in a World at War* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 268.
- 5 Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008).
- 6 Françoise Thébaud, *Les femmes au temps de la guerre de 14* (Paris: Stock, 1986); and subsequent re-edition Françoise Thébaud, *Les femmes au temps de la guerre de 14* (Paris: Payot, 2013); Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Jean-Yves Le Naour, *Misères et tourments de la chair durant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Aubier, 2002); *Hommes et Femmes dans la France en Guerre, 1914-1945*, ed. Luc Capdevila, François Rouquet, and Fabrice Virgili (Paris: Payot, 2003).
- 7 Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- 8 Evelyne Morin-Rotureau, *1914-1918: Combats de Femmes: Les Femmes, Pilier de l'Effort de Guerre* (Paris: Autrement, 2004).
- 9 Nina Edwards, *Dressed for War: Uniform, Civilian Clothing and Trappings, 1914 to 1918* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), and Lucy Adlington, *Great War Fashion, Tales from the History Wardrobe* (London: The History Press, 2014).
- 10 Archives Départementales de Paris. The Worth archives contain 332 models from 1917 and 1918 and are located under DEM 397/4439-4580, DEM 398/4587-4694, DEM 399/4707-4850. The Rodier archives contain four drawings of scarves from 1917, DEM 326/4529. The Paquin archives contain 154 photographs from 1917 and 1918, DEM 249/4540-4551 and DEM 250/4693. The Callot Sœurs archives contain 656 models from 1917 and 1918, under DEM 48/4546, DEM 50-55/4684-4698, DEM 56/4710, DEM 57-61/4774-4775, DEM 62-62/4792.

- 11 Archives Nationales, F7/13.740/1-3 for notes on the Congrès National de la Fédération de la Chapellerie; F7/13.741/4-6 for the Syndicat de la Chapellerie; F7/13.880/1-3, F7/13.881/4-7, F7/13.882/8-12 for the Grève des ouvriers: chemisiers, chapellerie, coupeure, bonnetière, tailleurs, lingères, etc. F12/7684-7697 had helpful documents on all branches of the textile industry during the war.
- 12 Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris, BA 1376 (Habillement, 1917-1918), BA 1423 (Les Syndicats de l'Alimentation et de l'Habillement), BA 1564 (Vols dans les magasins, jusqu'à 1915).

Les Corsets de A. Clavierie
 QUO VADIS ?
 TABLEAUX MODERNES
ASTHME
ROYAL BANYULS
ARTRITQUES
Vichy Célestins

3

Fashion, Gender, and Anxiety

MAUDE BASS-KRUEGER

A woman preens in her new crinoline-style dress while her husband, a uniformed officer with a bandaged head, wonders if there is still room in the car for him to come along.

FIG. 3.1a,b

A soldier returning home on leave, his coat and shoes still muddy from the trenches, asks his girlfriend if “she’s happy?” The woman responds that she’s very happy indeed—on her way over, she spotted a darling little blue dress in the windows of the Galeries Lafayette department store.

FIG. 3.2

These humorous cartoons, published in the satirical magazine *La Baïonnette*, used clothing to unmask deep-seated anxiety about what was perceived as a widening rift between men and women over the course of the war. Caricatures published in popular satirical magazines, articles published in the daily press, diaries written by soldiers and their loved ones, and postcards sent back and forth from the home to the trenches reveal a range of attitudes around fashion and war. Fashion was an ongoing topic of conversation throughout the war and a barometer of social tension. For some, fashion had a crucial role to play in the reunion of men and women during a soldier’s leave, while for others clothing choices drove a wedge between the sexes and reinforced the growing divide between the front and the home. For both men and women, wartime fashion represented something greater than its material and aesthetic aspects—it symbolized the changes and challenges of new wartime realities.

The Problem of Fashion in Wartime France

*Despite the war we still get dressed? Amidst the blood spilled over the earth and the howls of pain unleashed into the thin air, fashion continues to evolve with the most surprising silhouettes of its imagination! To the horror of the most recent massacres, fashion opposes the grace of its latest creations. The women compete with coquetry while the men do battle with heroism!*¹

—GUSTAVE GUICHE, 1917

The sheer horror of trench warfare exacerbated soldiers’ reactions to domestic life when they returned home on leave.

FIGS. 3.3–3.5

Men were alarmed to see that life continued on as normal and that women were buying new clothes. A soldier’s letter published by the trench journal *Le Cri du Boyau* (The Cry of the Gut) tells the story of an infantryman “finally returning home . . . and finding his countrywomen. Ah! But how they’ve changed! No more clogs, no more aprons: shiny boots and jewels! The soldier asks himself: Are there still men behind the lines who can pay for all these pretty things?”² The shock of the new betrayed the soldier’s larger fear of being forgotten or replaced by men whose wartime conditions were better

than his own. And while his unease appeared to focus on non-combatant men—wartime profiteers perhaps—the “shiny boots and jewels” could also have been purchased by the women themselves.

Battle-scarred, traumatized, dirty, and bone-tired, male soldiers lived a different life from women, who were largely kept away from the front lines in France. While weary and anxious in their own right, women were told that their work contributed valiantly to the national war effort. They were praised for their collective spirit and selfless sacrifice. And although male soldiers were portrayed as valiant and heroic, daily life in the trenches felt terrifying, deadly, and, as the years dragged on, increasingly inhumane. As one soldier from the front in Verdun wrote:

*My dear Edith, Life here is very hard. The smell of death reigns over us in the trenches. Rats attack us and parasites eat away at our skin; we live in the mud, they invade us, slow us down, and eat away at our shoes. The cold adds to our suffering. This glacial cold that chills our bones and pursues us every day. At night, it’s impossible for us to sleep. At the ready, at every moment, ready to attack, ready to kill. Killing, that is at the heart of our story. They repeat to us that we must kill to survive, but I would say that we live to kill. This is how I live every minute in this hell. Without hygiene. Without rest. Without joy. Without life . . .*³

—PIERRE, SEPTEMBER

22, 1916, VERDUN

The perceived normalcy of the home front, compounded with the visible changes taking place in the female sphere—women working men’s jobs, changing fashions, increased female salaries—magnified the tensions produced by the dragging war and the staggering death toll. In 1916, the journalist Louis Latzarus published an article on the front page of the newspaper *Le Figaro* (he would later become editor-in-chief) in which he attempted to reconcile gender disputes. Men and women were increasingly divided over issues such as luxury and fashion:

*I was told that a soldier, returning home on leave, was surprised to find, on his own table, an embroidered tablecloth. He looked at it, then turned to his wife with hostility: Well, he said, you deprive yourself of nothing here! She could have responded in any number of ways, but she couldn’t think clearly and began to cry. I wasn’t told if her heroic husband was moved by her tears, and, to tell the truth, I don’t think he considered himself to have behaved badly. What had he done, except for formulating one of the countless tropes of the great quarrel between the front and the home front, quarrel that has won over the half-front and the half-home front and has finished by dividing the home front itself?*⁴

For Latzarus, women were not to be blamed for their “frivolities” but



FIG. 3.1a Louis Icart. Caricature showing a woman trying on a new dress while her soldier husband yawns in the background: "How long the war is." "Oh! . . . much shorter than a fitting." *La Baïonnette*, April 20, 1916, 252. Private collection.



FIG. 3.1b Edouard Tournaine, pseudonym of André Bonnafond. A uniformed soldier with a bandaged head looks on as a woman models a crinoline-style dress, noting: "Your dress is exquisite, dear lover; but, tell me, when you are in the car, is there still a small space for your husband?" *La Baïonnette*, April 20, 1916, 253. Private collection.

❖ L'ARRIVÉE DU PERMISSIONNAIRE ❖



— Alors, tu es contente?
 — Oh! oui! Tu sais, en venant, j'ai vu aux Galeries un amour de petite robe en taffetas bleu horizon...
 Dessin de G. PAVIS.

FIG. 3.2 George-Alfred Pavis. Upon returning from the front, a uniformed soldier asks his fashionably dressed sweetheart: "So, are you happy?" and she replies, "Oh! Yes! You know, on the way over, I saw at the Galeries [Lafayette] a love of a little dress in horizon blue taffeta." "The Arrival of the Soldier on Leave," *Le Rire Rouge*, March 24, 1917. Private collection.



FIG. 3.3 Charles Lansiaux. "Gare de Lyon. Last Kisses Before Departure," Paris, August 10-20, 1914. Silver gelatin print.
 © Charles Lansiaux / BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-73719-17.



FIG. 3.4 Charles Lansiaux. "At the Tuilleries. The convalescent father walks with his wife and baby," Paris, April 1915. Silver gelatin print. © Charles Lansiaux / BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-73732-30.



FIG. 3.5 Charles Lansiaux. "A soldier on leave visiting his family," Paris, June 1915. Silver gelatin print. © Charles Lansiaux / BHVP / Roger-Viollet RV-73732-28.

rather to be commended for their relative restraint: “rarely have we seen fashions as modest and moderate as during this war,” Latzarus declared, while noting that displays of finery had not lost France its battles of the past. Everyday matters such as the choice of tablecloths, shoes, or clothes, when refracted through the lens of war, were fraught with tension.

Yet women were caught between two irreconcilable imperatives: while being condemned by the society at large for wartime “frivolity,” they were also actively encouraged to consume fashion as part of economic nationalism and for the pleasure of the war-weary men. “I believe,” wrote the female fashion journalist Camille Duguet in 1917, “that we must dress even better now, if not only for the joyful eyes of the soldiers on leave who, home from the front, relish seeing pretty things; wherever glorious uniforms are worn, there should be pretty dresses to augment them.”⁵ Women, the “reverse image of the war,” in the words of historian Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, were expected to maintain a certain elegance as part of their patriotic and female duty. In other words, fashionability was good for the economy and good for natality rates.

FIGS. 3.6, 3.7

In fashion magazines, newspapers, and public discourse, the argument was the same: war or no war, a French woman must remain elegant for her country and for her countrymen. Fashion exacerbated what the historian Pierre Darmon has called the “great misunderstanding” between soldiers and civilians.⁶ The rhetoric provided in fashion magazines about the need for women to dress up for the pleasure of the men on leave was received by the female readership as heartfelt, but perceived by the soldiers as treasonous.

Social rhetoric around inappropriate frivolity and wartime fashion was fierce and prevalent. The feminist weekly *La Française* railed against the “silliness” of fashion, a “folly” and a “shame” for France.⁷ “The Orgy Continues” exclaimed the Catholic monthly *La Libre Parole* as theaters, cabarets, and playhouses reopened their doors in the early months of 1915.⁸ As events reappeared on the society calendar and women ordered new dresses to attend them, public anger rose steadily. A ministerial decree imposed in the first days of the war banned evening theatrical shows, so theaters began showing matinées instead. These daytime performances proved so popular that two of the main boulevard theaters, the Olympia and the Petit Casino, began to open daily.⁹ Women’s magazines documented popular social activities, such as afternoon teas and ice skating. “Paris is going through a singular time,” the writer Maurice Donnay wrote in his wartime journal

in February 1916,

*Someone who had fallen from the sky could ask: Is this peace? Is this war? There is theater, concert-café, cinema; restaurants and teas; but everywhere there are soldiers in blue, helmeted soldiers on leave; we see more than one wounded soldier in the streets, on the boulevards, and the city is very dark at night.*¹⁰

FIG. 3.8

By 1917, with mutinies on the front, revolution in Russia, and strikes threatening to halt the war effort, the government felt forced to intervene in sartorial matters in order to bring the damning social rhetoric under control: low-cut dresses were banned at the Opéra, which had reopened in November 1915.¹¹ “Frivolity” and seemingly scandalous dresses may have raised eyebrows and drawn occasional criticism before the war, but during the war, these problems took on serious overtones: fashion had the potential to endanger morale and disturb social order. Men blamed women for being inappropriately attentive to fashion. Gendered concerns about bad female behavior and male demoralization simmered beneath the surface of the caustic public rhetoric.

The Parisienne and the Poilu: Two Archetypes Divided by War

A reoccurring visual trope during the war was that of the bedraggled foot soldier, or poilu, staring wide-eyed at an elegant Parisienne. The joke lay in the disconnect between their two worlds, made deeper by the soldier’s naive incomprehension over the new fashions of the day. A caricature by Louis Icart for *Le Rire Rouge* in 1916 depicts two elegantly dressed women walking down the street, completely unaware of the effect that they have on two beleaguered poilus, who stutter in bewilderment.

FIG. 3.9

The gulf between the Parisiennes and the poilus was too great to be bridged, and misunderstandings prevailed on both sides.

Initially, women commended the poilus for their bravery and heroism, but this positive image deteriorated over the four years of the war.

The poilu is the person that everyone admires but pulls away from when they see him boarding a train, entering a café a restaurant, or a store, for fear that that his boots will sully pretty shoes, that his sleeves will brush up against stylish jackets, that his hands will touch bell-shaped skirts, and that his words will be too crude,

a soldier wrote from the trenches.¹² Feeling as if he had lost his status as the symbol of French resistance, the poilu felt increasingly out of touch with women on the home front as the war progressed. *L’Argonnaute*, an internal trench magazine created by the soldiers of the 25th infantry division, captured this sentiment well:

As the war



FIG. 3.6 "The Soldier on Leave." Postcard featuring scenes of a soldier and his lover: The Departure; The Arrival; Ardent Love; Crazy Love; Calm Love; Temperate Love; Love of Yesteryear; Love Finished. Correspondence dated April 13, 1917. Paris: E.M.; Boulogne-sur-Seine: G. Piprot, 1917. © Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand, Collection Carte Postale, CP 1811 a.



FIG. 3.7 Postcard of a woman holding two children entitled "The Results of a Soldier's Leave," ca. 1914–18. Paris: Patriotic-G.Morinet [A. Noyer], 1914. © Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand, Collection Carte Postale, CP 1813 a.



FIG. 3.8 Charles Lansiaux. Street scene of Paris, September 20, 1914. "The appearance of our Grand Boulevards has suddenly changed, Parisians have regained their confidence." Silver gelatin print. © Charles Lansiaux / BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-73738-30.



FIG. 3.9 Louis Icart. In this caricature, "Soldiers on Leave," two soldiers stutter and stare wide-eyed as two fashionable women walk down the street. *Le Rire Rouge*, March 11, 1916. Private collection.

drags on, the kindness granted to the *poilu* by women for his lack of clothing has decreased miserably. After the [battle of] Labyrinth, a woman would rush up to a shaggy, filthy *poilu* and call him “my hero.” After the Argonne, she kindly welcomed and empathized with all her heart. Now, the gentleman who presents himself to her in trench garb only hears: Ugh! How dirty they are!¹³

The tropes of the Parisienne and the *poilu* were powerful indicators of society at large. That the two genders and social classes could no longer engage with each other was not a negligible state of affairs. “We’ll get them!” a *poilu* claims in an illustrated postcard, repeating the classic battle cry about winning over the Germans, as he attempts, in vain, to win over an elegant Parisienne.¹⁴ “Sometimes you have to walk a long time before arriving at your goal,” a lone *poilu* states hopefully as he walks behind a fashionable woman on another postcard.¹⁵ But on both postcards, the upper-class Parisiennes have their back turned and they are completely oblivious to the soldiers’ presence. The message behind these caricatures is far from trivial—the *poilu*’s despair was a threat to wartime order and national morale.

When social contact was made, as in a scene between two soldiers and an elegant woman from *Le Feu*, a novel by the soldier and writer Henri Barbusse, the interaction between the two worlds was filled with vapid curiosity on one side, and shame on the other:

Now a very elegant lady, who rustles and glows in purple and black silk and is enveloped in perfume, catches sight of our group and, extending her small gloved hand, she touches Volpatte’s sleeve and then Blaire’s shoulder. They immediately freeze, dumbfounded by this contact with such a vision. “Tell me, sirs, you who are true soldiers on the front line, you have seen such things in the trenches, have you not? . . . Even so, it is a terrible existence and the suffering,” she murmurs as she leafs through an illustrated magazine that contains a few sinister views of devastated terrain. “Such things should not be published, Adolphe . . . The filth, the lice, the fatigues . . . As brave as you are, you must be unhappy!” Volpatte, whom she was addressing, turns red. He is ashamed of the misery from which he comes and to which he will return. He lowers his head and he lies, without perhaps realizing the extent of his lie: “No, after all, we are not so unhappy. It is not as terrible as that.”¹⁶

Military Fashion

Reinforcing the diminished status of the *poilu*, female fashions were often inspired by the military trappings of foreign officers and soldiers rather than those of the common French foot soldier. The dashing aviator, the exotic Scot or American, the elegant officer—these were the

FIG. 3.10

heroes the Parisienne eagerly sought out, and whose uniforms she copied. In a series of articles about life on the home front, the theater critic Gustave Fréjaville wrote of the “aviator insignia,” “braids,” and “officer’s coat” popular among the “little Amazons” at home:

The greatest success was shared between the silk pompom beret of the Dixmude riflemen and the soft beret of the alpine hunter . . . The round cap of our English friends, finally the dented felt hat from across the Atlantic had their turn. As soon as the first American contingents arrived, many of Paris’ prettiest girls enthusiastically adopted the flat-rimmed hat of the ‘Sammies.’¹⁷

Yet wearing fashions that were too closely linked to the military style of French soldiers was problematic in more ways than one. According to Fréjaville, the fad for wearing police caps went out of style as soon as it became part of the uniform for female tram ticket takers—fashionable women did not want to be linked to working women any more than they wanted to be associated with common foot soldiers. In truth, creating a fashion out of the foot soldier’s uniform may have been too great a challenge to wartime decency. There was a brief vogue for the *poilu*’s metal helmet, a *casque Adrian*—a few cartoons and images in fashion magazines feature women wearing the helmet—but the protective covering was too symbolic of heroic sacrifice to be appropriated for “frivolous” use: “This was understood from the very first tries and the attempt not renewed,” Fréjaville wrote.¹⁸

FIG. 3.12, 3.13

On July 4, 1915 the *New York Times* reported back from Paris that “Military Models Rule Paris Styles.” Hats were inspired by those worn by the Italian army, the correspondent noted, recent allies to the French in the war, while “outside coats are all military in style, with high, close-buttoned neck[s] and buttoned down the front.”¹⁹ In *Le Temps Retrouvé*, Proust writes of wartime women who wore thonged footwear recalling the buskin as worn by Talma, or else long gaiters recalling those of our dear boys at the front; it was, so they said, because they did not forget that it was their duty to rejoice the eyes of these ‘boys at the front,’ that they still decked themselves of an evening not only in flowing dresses, but also in jewelry which suggested the army by its choice of decorative themes . . . rings or bracelets made out of fragments of exploded shells or copper bands from 75 millimeter ammunition.²⁰

The tradition of prewar female fashion—particularly female riding habits, tailored suits, and buttoned jackets—taking its cues from men’s tailoring was made more visible and political by the war. As the fashionable wartime female wardrobe began to adopt military features such as



— Eh bien! on ne salue plus, ma lieutenant!

F. Fabiano 16.
Dessin de F. FABIANO.

FIG. 3.10 Fabien Fabiano. Caricature showing a woman dressed in a tailored suit and soldier's helmet walking by two uniformed officers, who say "Well! Don't we salute any more, my lieutenant?" *Le Rire Rouge*, April 8, 1916. Private collection.



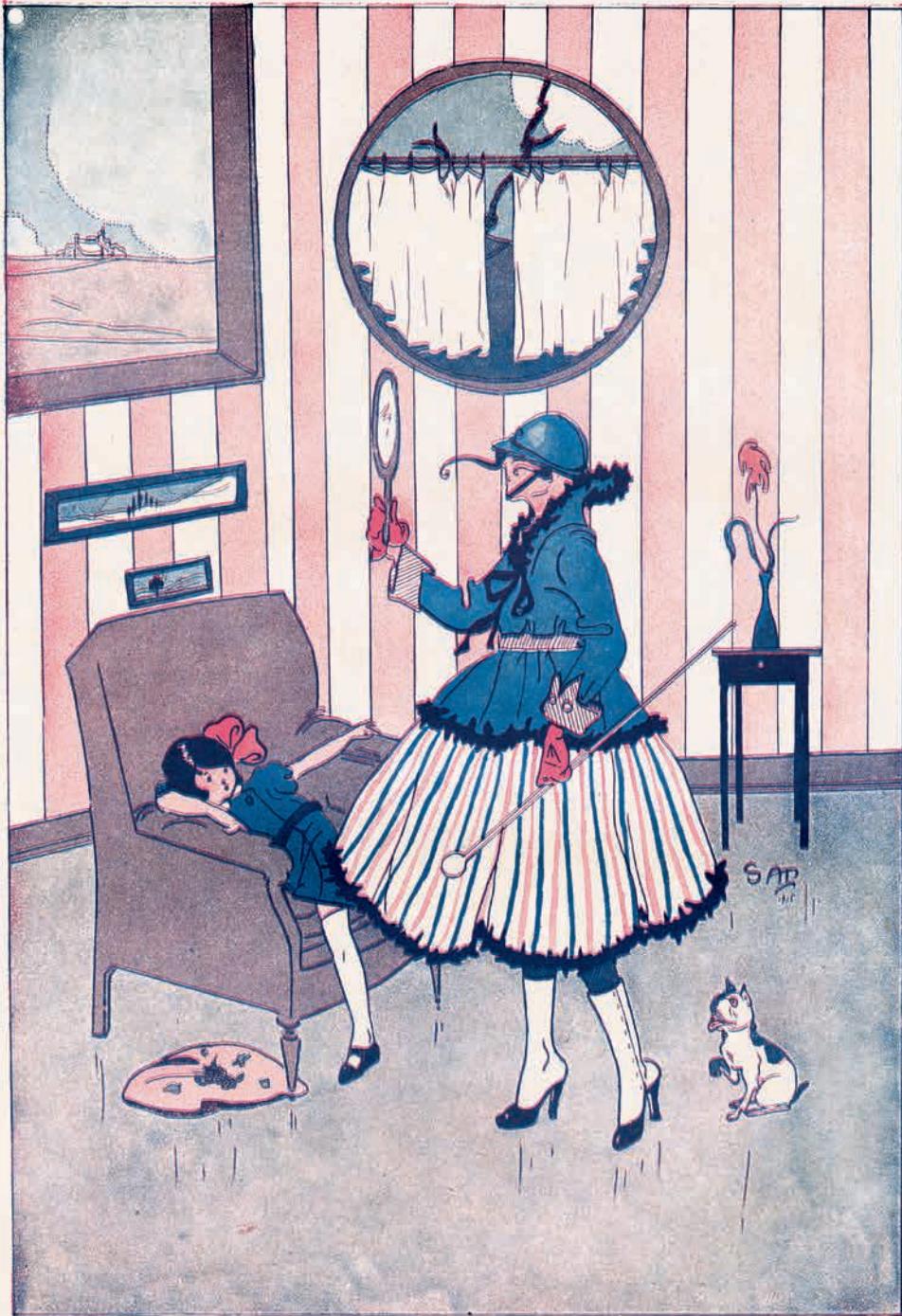
all Jarach

(Dessin de Jarach.)

AU BAR
— Mince, c'qu'il est chic, il a de petites ailes!
— Mon Dieu oui, tout comme l'Amour...

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FIG. 3.11 Albert Jarach. In this caricature, "At the Bar," two women admire a foreign officer's uniform, exclaiming, "Damn, he's chic, he's got little wings!" "My God yes, just like Love . . ." *La Baionnette*, December 16, 1915. Private collection.



Le Casque

Dessin de SAT

FIG. 3.12
Private collection.

SAT. The woman in this illustration, "The Helmet," wears a poilu's metal helmet and admires herself in the mirror. *Fantasio*, March, 1, 1916.



(Phot. Reutlinger).

UNE HÉROÏNE. M^{lle} YOLANDE DE BAYE



M^{lle} Yolande de Baye, chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, à titre militaire, deux fois décorée de la Croix de guerre, est un vivant exemple de la bravoure et du dévouement dont sont capables les jeunes filles de France. Cette charmante héroïne, blessée au front où elle est infirmière, porte le casque avec une crânerie et une élégance dont nous offrons l'image à nos lectrices. Quel est le chapeau qui aurait cette allure ?...

FIG. 3.13 Reutlinger. "Une héroïne, Mlle. Yolande de Baye," *Femina*, December 1917. Bibliothèque Forney / Roger-Viollet.

front pockets, neckties, and tricorne hats, men became increasingly anxious about women playing “dress-up” as soldiers.

FIGS. 3.14, 3.15

A caricature by Marco de Gastyone, published in September 1915 in *La Baïonnette* features two women wearing military-inspired tailored suits talking about the war strategy: “In the place of Joffre, I would have . . .”

FIG. 3.16

The joke plays on the women’s naivete—played up by the elegant fashions—in the face of the gravity of war. A journalist writing for the magazine *La Femme de France* understood that women “admired” the “glorious uniforms” of French soldiers but reprimanded them for “wearing a general’s jacket in order to go play dominos.”²¹ Women in militarized dress had the potential to undermine the seriousness of war.

Postcards and Representations of the Feminine Ideal

A caricature by Raymond de la Nezière, published in *La Baïonnette*, shows four “parakeets,” the name given to women who gossiped about wartime secrets, dressed in the latest war crinoline styles and military-inspired hats whispering to each other about wartime confidences “of the highest importance.”

FIG. 3.17

Behind them, a soldier strolls arm in arm with his young daughter and wife, who is dressed in a simple skirt suit and small cap. The image plays on the opposition between the two groups: the elegant women betray France by gossiping about important war tactics while the common soldier and his family—the true heroes—stroll innocently in the background. The face-off between two opposing worlds pits the fashionable, treasonous women in the foreground against the patriotically and simply garbed model wartime family in the back.

Postcards sent back and forth from the home front to the trenches heightened the contrast between the two worlds.

FIGS. 3.18–3.35

Unlike the caricatures discussed above, which contrast the fashionability of women at home against the misery of the poilu, one of the most popular genres of postcards sent between the trenches and the home depicted a very different kind of woman: simply dressed and patiently waiting for her soldier to arrive, the “good” woman wrote letters and dreamt about her absent husband. These postcards, sent by the thousands, flooded the market. Today, they abound in archives and online. Hundreds of different editors, recognized by the initials stamped on the postcards (ELP, REX, WD, JK) printed these *fantaisies patriotiques*, or patriotic fantasy postcards, which had print runs of as many as 100,000 per image.²²

FIG. 3.36

The messages written on the back of these cards reveal messages about friendship, love, and wartime anxiety.

Presented as the opposite of the fashionable Parisienne, these “fantasy” women are all represented inside their homes in pretty but modest day dresses which are hand colored on the cards in pale shades of pastel green, pink, and yellow. They do not wear the latest bell silhouette or the barrel-skirt; in fact, their dresses are hard to date, since the silhouette that appears on the postcards remained constant over the four years of the war. The unchanging dresses the women wear signify their steadfastness and the fact that they were impervious to the whims of fashion. Soldiers were perhaps reassured by the unchanging women on the postcards, but one wonders if these images only served to make the shock of reality more pronounced when the soldier returned home?

Magazines, aiming to spur consumption, informed women that it was their patriotic duty to appear fashionable and attractive to soldiers on leave. Hoping to please their loved ones, many women dressed in their best outfits to celebrate the soldiers’ return. A vast majority of French women probably bought some new clothes, or at least ribbons or accessories, with the money they earned at work or from military pensions over the course of the war years. While some soldiers may have been heartened to see women attractively dressed after life in the trenches, others read these garments as an example of the disjunction between the priorities of the front and home front and as evidence of a growing gap between the sexes.

Moreover, the fashion for the insignia of foreign officers or soldiers did nothing to elevate the status of common soldiers within the sartorial and visual culture of the home front. Drawings and postcards caricatured the ease with which foreign aviators and soldiers courted women while depicting the poilu as a pariah in vain pursuit of the object of his desire. Yet the thousands of postcards sent between the trenches and the home depicted a very different kind of reunion. In the saccharine “fantasy” postcards, the soldiers and the women long for each other; in the caricatures, the desire is unrequited and impossible. Young and nicely dressed, the “ideal” woman depicted on the postcards was not fashionable: her chest may have been slightly uncovered, but she did not show her ankles; her clothes were nice but certainly not in the latest styles; she chose patriotic trimmings but never wore any military-inspired garments; her shoes were practical. Yet, like the flighty Parisienne, she too was a fiction invented by postcard publishers—an exaggerated representation of a demure and devoted woman.

The relationship between the war front and the home front was complex and multiform. It is easy to want



FIG. 3.14 Woman wearing a tricorn hat and tailored suit in Nantes, July 1918. Silver gelatin print. Private collection.



FIG. 3.15 Madame l'Hermitte. Tricorne hat, 1914–17. Silk satin, velvet. Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 70 45 22.

Comme nous le disions la semaine dernière, le succès remporté par nos numéros spéciaux nous a décidé à conserver cette formule.

Nos deux prochains numéros étudieront deux des faces éternelles de l'âme humaine, Jean qui pleure et Jean qui rit. Le premier, qui sera mis en vente le 28 septembre, sera réservé aux FESSIMISTES — il en reste encore quelques-uns comprendra, sous une saisissante couverture de Weiltic, une double page de L'Alexandre qui a traité de main de maître, d'une main cruelle, tous ces broyeurs de noir, des planches en couleur de Falke, Cheval, Robida, des dessins de Huard, Benjamin Rabier, Gallo, Henriot, Hautôt, etc.

Le second glorifiera comme il convient les OPTIMISTES, ces braves gens, chez qui les coups mêmes de la fortune adverse augmentent la confiance en la victoire inéluctable.

Le joyeux humoriste Widheppf le présente au public. On y trouvera des planches en couleurs d'Albert Guillaume, Méliet, Legrain, Gerda Wegener, des dessins en noir de Huard, Maurice Neumont, Henriot, Weal, Leroy, etc., soit seize pages pleines de dessins, dont six en couleurs.

Quelques-uns de nos numéros antérieurs ayant été épuisés, nous avons fait procéder à un second tirage et nous sommes en mesure de fournir dès à présent notre collection complète : 1, Le Kaiser Rouge; 2, Têtes de Turcs; 3, Le Clown-Prince; 4, Bouillon de Kultur; 5, Impérial Gaga; 6, élégances Berlinoises; 7, Leurs Espions; 8, Nos Poilus; 9, Nos Civils; 10, Les Naturalistes.

Adresser les demandes, accompagnées de 20 centimes par exemplaire, à l'Édition Française Illustrée, 8, Boulevard des Capucines, Paris (Tél. Gut. 04.58.)



AU BOIS, PAR MARCO DE GASTYNE.
— Moi, à la place de Joffre, j'aurais... —

FIG. 3.16 Marco de Gastyne. Caricature of two women in crinolines discussing war strategy: "In the place of Joffre, I would have . . ." *La Baïonnette*, September 16, 1915. © Bibliothèque nationale de France.



LE SECRET SERA-T-IL BIEN GARDÉ? PAR R. DE LA NÉZIÈRE.
... De la plus haute importance; et surtout, ne le répétez à personne!...

FIG. 3.17 Raymond de la Nézière. Caricature entitled "Is the secret well kept?" showing fashionable women gossiping about treasonous secrets while a uniformed soldier and his family stroll in the background: "Of the utmost importance; and above all, do not repeat it to anyone! . . ." *La Baïonnette*, September 16, 1915. Private collection.



FIG. 3.18 "Nothing beats a leave to exalt love / On which the soul feeds both night and day." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.19 "For you our beautiful flowers / We give them to you with our heart." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.20 "The barometer is a beautiful device / Only one kiss brings the sun!" Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.24 "We were separated! We are reunited! / We will be one for eternity." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.25 "Festival of Love: Champagne and flowers, warm and floating shade, experience the thrill of our singing soul!" Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.26 "Happy Easter: A cry of love rises from the bronze bell / Whose flight passes in a dream, among the serene sky!" Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.21 "Your lips have such sweet flavors for me / That I can only love them and our three [French] colors." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.22 "Two hearts united." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.23 "Vision of love: It's not too expensive to pay with a heart / The gift of love that comes with a flower." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.27 "Promise to love me always!" Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.28 "The dawn of love by lighting our eyes / A thousand radiant hopes arise." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.29 "My heart is always with you." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.30 "From the dear home, the sweet image / Is engraved on the heart when the gun rages." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.31 "This kiss will give me the strength to win." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.32 "Do you love me? Everything makes me believe in this hope, your confusion, your eyes, even your silence!" Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.33 "The gift of a flower is a precious pledge, but know what it entails." Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.34 "Stay hopeful: France first! It is our duty, to be cherished brings hope!" Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.35 "Who cares about the sad hour / Only our love exists!" Hand-colored photographic postcard. Private collection.



FIG. 3.36 Charles Lansiaux. "Avenue d'Orléans." A young woman selling patriotic images under the protection of her faithful companion, Paris, September 16, 1914. Silver gelatin print. © Charles Lansiaux / BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-73736-20.

to see them as dichotomous spheres, where gender differences were polarized and amplified by wartime propaganda: men were represented as masculine and heroic warriors on the front, while discourse about motherhood, devotion, and love was emphasized for women at home.²³ The postcards of the “ideal” woman, lovingly writing and waiting for her husband to return to the hearth, seem to reaffirm this structure. However, the anxiety and tension that women’s fashion generated for men during the war shows that there was fear that the separation between the two spheres could too easily be dissolved. Profoundly shaken by their experiences at war, men were all the more afraid of feeling fragilized in their masculinity. Wartime fashion was a topic that helped men vocalize this fear: satirical cartoons drawn by men denounced frivolous women who “forgot” or did not properly address the brave men in their lives; the same cartoonists also condemned the stylish Parisienne for her admiration of the foreign soldier and disdain of the poilu and mocked the working woman whose attire was deemed too “masculine.” As violent as these cartoons were toward women, they may have been cathartic for the soldiers in the trenches. By observing and commenting on fashion during the war, men were able to vocalize the fear they felt over shifting wartime norms.

- 1 Gustave Guiche, *Les deux soldats* (Paris: Faquelle, 1917), 277–79.
- 2 *Le Cri du boyau* (September–October 1916) cited in Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *A travers leurs journaux: 14–18 les combattants des tranchées* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1986), 149.
- 3 Letter from Pierre to Edith, September 22, 1916, Verdun. Online at: http://www2.ac-lyon.fr/etab/colleges/col-01/jean-moulin/IMG/pdf/Lettres_de_poilus.pdf.
- 4 “On m’a raconté qu’un soldat, venant l’autre jour en permission, s’étonna de voir, sur sa propre table, une nappe brodée. Il la regarda, et puis tourna vers sa femme un visage hostile: —Eh ! bien, dit-il, vous ne vous privez de rien, ici ! Elle eût pu lui répondre bien des choses, mais elle n’y pensa point, et se contenta de pleurer. On ne m’a pas dit si son héroïque époux en fut touché, et, pour dire vrai, je ne crois pas qu’il se soit attribué le moindre tort. Qu’avait-il fait, sinon formuler une des innombrables répliques de la grande querelle entre l’avant et l’arrière, querelle qui a gagné le demi-avant et le demi-arrière, et a fini par diviser l’arrière même ?” Louis Latzarus, “Frivolités,” *Le Figaro*, May 22, 1917.
- 5 Camille Duguet, “Visons Élégantes,” *Chiffons*, November 5, 1917.
- 6 Pierre Darmon, *Vivre à Paris pendant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Fayard, 2002).
- 7 “Les bêtises recommencent,” *La Française* (March 20, 1915), cited in Jean-Yves Le Naour, *Misères et tourments de la chair durant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Aubier, 2002), 64.
- 8 Cited in Yves Pourcher, *Les jours de guerre: la vie des Français au jour le jour entre 1914 et 1918* (Paris: Plon, 1995), 170.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 169.
- 10 Maurice Donnay, *Lettre à une Dame Blanche* (Paris: Société Littéraire de France, 1917), 121.
- 11 Françoise Thébaud, *Les femmes au temps de la guerre de 14* (Paris: Éditions de la Seine, 1986), 228.
- 12 Jean-Pierre Gueno, *Paroles de poilus: Lettres et carnets du front (1914–1918)* (Paris: J’ai Lu, 2013), 120.
- 13 *L’Argonnette*, June 1917, cited in Audoin-Rouzeau, *A travers leurs journaux*, 150.
- 14 Postcard archived at the Centre historique de la Grande Guerre in Peronne. The front features two poilus walking behind two elegant women. The text states: “Nos Poilus. Tu parles si all’gazent! T’en fais pas... on les aura!”
- 15 Postcard archived at the Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris. The front features a soldier walking behind a very fashionable woman wearing a red hat, red jacket, war crinoline, purple stockings, and red high heels. The text states: “Il faut quelquefois marcher assez longtemps pour arriver à son but, mais bah! quand on est sûr du succès de la campagne on n’hésite pas, et d’ailleurs comme a compte, on a le plaisir de relouer la cheville fine, et ça fait patienter pour... Le reste.”
- 16 “Or, une dame très élégante, qui froufroute, rayonne de soie violette et noire, et est enveloppée de parfums, avise notre groupe et,

avançât sa petite main gantée, elle touche la manche de Volpatte puis l’épaule de Blaire. Ceux-ci s’immobilisent instantanément, médusés par le contact de cette fée. -- Dites-moi, vous, messieurs, qui êtes de vrais soldats du front, vous avez vu cela dans les tranchées, n’est-ce pas ?... -- C’est tout de même une existence terrible et des souffrances, murmure la dame en feuilletant un journal illustré qui contient quelques sinistres vues de terrains bouleversés. On ne devrait pas publier ces choses-là, Adolphe... Il y a la saleté, les poux, les corvées... Si braves que vous soyez, vous devez être malheureux ! Volpatte, à qui elle s’adresse, rougit. Il a honte de la misère d’où il sort et où il va rentrer. Il baisse la tête et il ment, sans peut-être se rendre compte de tout son mensonge: -- Non, après tout, on n’est pas si malheureux. C’est pas si terrible que ça.” Henri Barbusse, *Le Feu* (Paris: Flammarion, 1916), 215–17.

- 17 Gustave Fréjaville, “Les petites amazones,” *L’Opinion: Journal de la Semaine*, September 8, 1917.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 “Military Models Rule Paris Style,” *New York Times*, July 4, 1915.
- 20 “[...] chaussettes des lanières rappelant le cothurne selon Talma, ou de hautes guêtres rappelant celles de nos chers combattants ; c’est, disaient-elles, parce qu’elles ne devaient pas oublier qu’elles devaient réjouir les yeux de ces combattants, qu’elles se paraient encore, non seulement de toilettes ‘floues’ mais aussi de bijoux évoquant les armées... Bagues ou bracelets faits avec des fragments d’obus ou des ceintures de 75.” Marcel Proust, *Le Temps Retrouvé*, vol. 14 (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), 41–42.
- 21 J. Colines, “Élégances Parisiennes,” *La Femme de France*, December 24, 1917.
- 22 Marie-Monique Huss, *Histoires de famille 1914/1918: cartes postales et culture de guerre* (Paris: Noesis, 2000), 72. Huss notes 147 different editors for the unique genre of “patriotic fantasy” postcards.
- 23 The influential theory of the “double helix” advanced by Margaret and Patrice Higonnet promotes the notion that women were always subordinate to men within this polarized system. Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.R. Higonnet, “The Double Helix,” in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Higonnet, Jenson, Michel, and Weitz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 34.

3a Mourning

MAUDE BASS-KRUEGER

In France, 1.3 million men lost their lives on the battlefield during the First World War: 301,000 died between August and December 1914; 349,000 in 1915; 252,000 in 1916; 164,000 in 1917; and 235,000 in 1918.¹

In all at least 600,000 French women were made wartime widows. The scale of loss was unprecedented in French history. The entire nation grieved, but gender roles were assigned differently within the cultural practice of mourning. Public discourse emphasized women as mourners and men as warriors, stereotypes reinforced through fashion as sartorial displays of bereavement were chiefly assumed by women.

FIG. 3a.1

Although the experience and reality of mourning challenged these gender codes in private—men deeply grieved the deceased and women endured great pain with remarkable stoicism—women were the “public embodiment” of wartime grief.²

FIG. 3a.2

Fashion played a central role in how women were seen as enacting public mourning practices and rituals during the war. Female mourning came with its own complex sets of codes: periods of mourning were marked by changes in colors, fabrics, and accessories. Each sartorial mourning period corresponded to sets of rules concerning social life that regulated how soon after a death a woman could suitably resume her activities outside of the home. In addition to signaling grief, female mourning garments marked a family’s social status, economic standing, and level of respectability.

The correspondence between mourning practices and mourning fashion was dictated by societal norms. Women were expected to signal their bereavement through their clothing, and they were vilified by the press if they disregarded the rules; however, they were also criticized if they gave the appearance of treating their mourning wardrobe as yet another fashionable folly. Mourning garments followed the silhouette of fashionable garments closely and were subject to the same life cycle of trends and conspicuous consumption as high fashion. Fashion magazines included fashion plates for mourning dresses alongside those for daywear, blurring the line between the two.

FIG. 3a.3

Women who disregarded sartorial mourning practices or, to the contrary, paid too much attention to them, were scorned as “bad widows” or “merry widows”—epitaphs that hid the anxiety of men who feared being forgotten or replaced. The war exacerbated these underlying tensions, which came to the fore in discussions of simplified mourning codes that were adopted during the war.

The Simplification of Wartime Mourning Practices

The streamlining of mourning practices was already under way at the turn of the century, but the mass mourning imposed by the war greatly accelerated the process. Nineteenth-century mourning adhered to three strictly prescribed periods: full mourning, mourning, and half mourning. Specific fabrics, colorways, and accessories were prescribed for each period. As the century progressed, the etiquette around mourning became more complex, the social pitfalls more numerous, the mourning periods longer, and the circle of mourning wider.³ Fashion magazines and etiquette advisors offered rigid advice about “correct” mourning, and women were expected to adhere to the guidelines.⁴ Yet, however strict the rules for mourning wear appeared on paper, in practice individuals adapted and interpreted the rules to suit their needs and circumstances. Those who could not afford new clothes for each stage of mourning dyed their old dresses black or else found other ways to incorporate black into their wardrobes; working women went back to their jobs as needed, regardless of the imposed time frame. As the twentieth century dawned, mourning etiquette slowly relaxed, particularly for working middle-class women who needed to combine the constraints imposed by mourning with their employment. The First World War hastened this changing dynamic; upper-class women began to adopt the same exceptions previously limited to middle-class women. The sheer number of deaths—and the deep mourning that the previous century’s strict mourning rituals would have required for half of the French population—made lavish displays of bereavement seem ostentatious and inappropriate. For such large-scale social mourning, it seemed more appropriate to mourn simply so as not to hamper the war effort.

FIG. 3a.4

Mourning codes have never been as strictly disregarded as during this time of anguish when even the most pained women cannot always manifest by external signs, by the way in which she dresses or by the life that she leads, the pain that constricts her and her detachment from all things,

a journalist wrote in the middle-class women’s magazine *La Mode Illustrée* in 1916. The magazine reassured its female readers that they would not be judged for wearing a simple black armband or basic black crepe. Women should not impoverish themselves by buying costly and fragile mourning fabrics, the article warned, as this would be deemed ostentatious in a time of war. Here, the most widely read fashion magazine in France reassured women that returning to work was a way for them to “make abstraction from their pain” and find “the only consolation that they might have in this world.”⁵



FIG. 3a.1 A widow wearing a mourning veil stands in front of posters on the base of the Lion of Belfort statue, place Denfert-Rochereau, Paris, 1914–18. Silver gelatin print. © BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-77106-24.



FIG. 3a.2 Charles Lansiaux. Young communicant whose father died at the front escorted by her grandfather and her widowed mother, Paris, May 1915. © Charles Lansiaux / BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-73739-30.



DEUIL ET DEMI-DEUIL

La simplicité des robes de deuil s'accorde fort bien avec la mode actuelle. — Fig. 792. Robe de veuve noir ciselée de bandes en crêpe plissé. — Fig. 793. Tailleur de drap noir de crêpe. — Fig. 794. Tailleur en gabardine bordé de bandes de crêpe.



FIG. 3a.3 Fashion plate showing mourning and half-mourning ensembles. "Deuil et demi-deuil," Les Éléances Parisiennes, February 1917, n°11, plate XX. © Bibliothèque Forney / Roger-Viollet, RV-157622-24.



1^{re} Robe en voile ornée crêpe. Jupon français. Corsage kimono à manches longues. Ceinture avec queue derrière. Collet plissé, col de crêpe. Mat. : 3⁵⁰ tissu en 120.
2^{de} Robe en vigogne ornée crêpe. Jupon simple voile. Corsage kimono ornés sur un plis de crêpe. Collet de crêpe terminée par un noué, poignets de crêpe. Mat. : 3⁵⁰ tissu en 120.
3^{de} Robe en drap ornée crêpe. Jupon orné d'une haute bande de crêpe. Corsage crêpe, décolleté sur un plastron plissé en crêpe, manches longues ornées crêpe. Mat. : 3⁵⁰ tissu en 120.

Prix des patrons en papier par maille faits uniquement sur mesures, payables maille en bois, maille en cailloux ou tout en cailloux. Jupon 1 fr. 70, corsage 2 fr. 20, pant 9 fr. 15. Donner l'adresse complète.

FIG. 3a.4 Cover illustration showing three women in mourning dress. The two women on the left wear nurse's armbands and simplified mourning garments without veils. Le Petit Écho de la Mode, October 25, 1914. © Bibliothèque Forney / Roger-Viollet, RV-157622-2.

The Complexities of “Fashionable” Mourning

Nevertheless, certain mourning rules still applied, and it was the fashion magazine’s job to inform women what they were. According to the 1916 *La Mode Illustrée* article, wartime bereavement lasted two years: during the deep mourning of the first year, women could wear black wool and crêpe fabrics, followed by six months in textured black wool and silk, three months in black and white, and the last three months in gray, mauve, purple, and mixed-black fabrics. The rules were different for women mourning their parents, stepparents, or a husband. In these cases, the strictest mourning applied: eighteen months of bereavement were required in total, beginning with six months of deep mourning in black wool and crêpe, followed by six months of regular mourning in lustrous black wool and silk, and six months of half-mourning.⁶

FIG. 3a.5

A mourning dress made from artificial silk was worn by a woman who lost her two sons in battle, the first in May 1915 and the second in August of the same year.

FIG. 3a.6

Uneven hand stitches reveal the homemade quality of the dress, which features a shawl collar and black lace cuffs that may have been added during the half-mourning phase. Likewise, the simple white lace collar adorning the mourning dress from the Musée de la Grande Guerre in Meaux may also be a later addition, following the half-mourning phase.

FIG. 3a.7

The slim tubular cut, fashionable in the early 1920s, dates this dress as an example of postwar mourning practices. However, the large silk crepe mourning veil was typical of wartime mourning for women of all ages, as can be seen in photographs from the period.

FIG. 3a.8

Mourning clothes, like everyday fashion, followed trends, and certain practices that may have not been acceptable before the war became permissible because of the special circumstances. *La Mode Illustrée* informed its readership that mourning shawls were no longer worn in Paris and in the big cities because they prevented movement and did not look fetching with the new short skirts; old shawls could be turned into tailored suits or mourning coats; short skirts were acceptable for mourning as long as boots covered the calf; mourning veils were to be pushed to the side instead of being “thrown back as before”; boots with patent-leather tips were now acceptable for mourning, but full patent-leather boots worn over black chiffon stockings were in “the worst taste”; women could purchase black fabric gloves instead of the more expensive leather suede gloves, which were easily damaged. For *Femina*, a tonier fashion magazine, “proper mourning” required that women purchase mour-

ning garb that was “correct but nevertheless in fashion.”⁷

FIG. 3a.9

While *Femina* assured its readers that touches of white could be worn even in the deepest mourning, *La Mode Illustrée* declared that this was “incompatible with deep mourning”; on this issue, the journalist wrote, the magazine “sided with our readers against fashion.”⁸

The profusion of articles about mourning, fashion plates for mourning dresses, advertisements for specialized mourning boutiques, and patterns for mourning clothing in wartime fashion magazines was a change from the light tone the prewar fashion magazines had adopted.

FIG. 3a.10

The mix between fashion and mourning could be jarring. An article from *La Femme de France* titled “Frivolities: Mourning jewelry [*fantaisies*],” in which “naturally elegant widows” were “seduced by a thousand pretty things,” played into the hands of public criticism that women were desacralizing the mourning process.⁹ Fashionable mourners ran the risk of being perceived as less grief-stricken than their peers, particularly if the widows were young and attractive.

FIG. 3a.11

“No, these are not our widows,” exclaimed the *Écho de Paris* in response to women who wore tight black dresses, silk stockings, and patent-leather shoes.¹⁰ Fashion-conscious women were decried as “fake widows” or “bad widows,” or, even worse, prostitutes. Young widows were particularly susceptible to this misogynistic portrayal of the emotionally fragile, economically vulnerable, and sexually experienced mourner: “These women are young and wear austere black mourning crepe from head to foot . . . and for a louis [coin]—wartime pricing—they let their veils drop: black is not always dressed.”¹¹

Femina’s June 1917 article “Can A War Widow Remarry?” reflected deep-seated unease around mourning and remarriage.¹² Article 228 of the French Civil Code mandated a period of widowhood of ten months, after which a woman was legally free to remarry. However, the laws of morality were not always those of the law, the magazine warned its female readers. *Femina* reassured a fictional young widow who “doubted her moral right” to remarry—not for love, the character assured the reader, but to ensure a better life for her children—that a second marriage was “advisable.” The article, written as a debate between the writer and the young widow, concludes when they both agree that a second marriage could reinforce and honor the memory of the dead husband while also paving the way for a future with another “fundamentally good” man. “I encourage you to do it,” the columnist wrote, “Remarry! It’s life, as they say . . . and life will always be right against death.”

The First World War had a profound

impact on changing mourning practices in France. The sheer volume of loss sustained during the war, as well as the horrifying way in which soldiers were killed—death by artillery meant dismembered bodies that were unrecognizable—exacerbated grief and deeply affected societal views toward bereavement. Private mourning took many forms, including prayer, displaying photographs and reliquaries, and collecting objects related to the deceased; public mourning was practiced through commemorative sites and community rituals, one of which was the display of mourning through clothing. Because black-clad widows played such an integral role in the public display of mourning, their clothes and etiquette were all the more commented on. The tension between the fashionable aspects of mourning dress and the expected behavior of women in mourning was aggravated by the war.

In the postwar period, as the black dress evolved into a fashion statement in its own right, the seductive undertones of the widow's dress, which had been remarked on and vehemently criticized by the wartime press, became its main selling point. By the mid-twenties the fashion world appeared ready to divest the color black of its wartime connotations of mourning and reintegrate it into the world of stylish dress. In 1926, less than eight years after the end of the conflict, American *Vogue* marketed a black crêpe de chine dress designed by Gabrielle Chanel as “the Chanel ‘Ford’ dress, the frock that all the world will wear”—in other words, a standard garment for every elegant woman's wardrobe.¹³ “It is paradoxical that in the most colourful of all seasons, black should predominate,” *Vogue* wrote, yet “it is extremely chic.” Indeed, it was this very contradiction, picked up by the magazine and by postwar designers, that lies at the heart of the complexities of wartime attitudes toward female mourners and their clothing.



FIG. 3a.5 Twin sisters in mourning, Saint-Lizier, Ariège, ca. 1915. © Roger-Viollet, RV-5509-16.

1 Françoise Thébaud, *Les femmes au temps de la guerre de 14* (Paris: Stock, 1986), 201.

2 See “Gender and Mourning,” in Susan R. Grayzel and Tammy M. Proctor, ed., *Gender and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 212.

3 Lou Taylor's seminal work on mourning dress outlines the changes in mourning practice from its origins in the Middle Ages until 1980. Lou Taylor, *Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 133.

4 Taylor briefly covers the First World War, noting that “it was the terrible slaughter of the First World War that undoubtedly caused the major breakdown in funeral and mourning etiquette.” Taylor, *Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History*, 266.

5 “À travers la mode: le deuil,” *La Mode Illustrée*, October 29, 1916.

6 Ibid.

7 “Le Deuil Correct,” *Femina*, March 1917.

8 M. Thevenot, “À travers la mode,” *La Mode Illustrée*, August 22, 1915.

9 “Frvolités: les fantaisies du deuil,” *La Femme de France*, September 12, 1915.

10 Frédéric Masson, “À l'arrière,” *Écho de Paris*, April 12, 1915, cited in Jean-Yves Le Naour, *Misères et tourments de la chair durant la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Aubier, 2002), 81.

11 “Eros en deuil,” *Le Cri de Paris*, November 22, 1914, cited in Le Naour, *Misères et tourments de la chair*, 82.

12 Maurice de Waleffe, “Une veuve de la guerre peut-elle se remarier?,” *Femina*, June 1917.

13 “The Début of the Winter Mode,” *Vogue*, October 1, 1926, 69.



FIG. 3a.6

Mourning dress, 1915. Artificial silk. Private collection.



FIG. 3a.7

Mourning dress, ca. 1920. Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux, 2006. I.12099.



FIG. 3a.8 Charles Lansiaux. Women, mostly in mourning dress, meet to discuss their wartime experiences in front of the restaurant Marguery, Paris, September 23, 1915. The woman in the center wears a crepe mourning veil that was typical for widows of all ages. Silver gelatin print. © Charles Lansiaux / BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-73734-29.

Femina 41

LE DEUIL CORRECT

UNE NOTE BLANCHE AU CHAPEAU, A L'ENCOLURE OU AUX POIGNETS, EST PERMISE PENDANT TOUTE LA DURÉE DU DEUIL



Sur la petite toque on pose le voile de différentes manières: celle-ci, dont les côtés tombent droits, rappelle la coiffe de certains ordres religieux. Le voile est posé en travers; la toque à petit bord de crêpe blanc est bordée de perles mates en bandeaux et piquée de deux épingles également en perles.



Sur une toque de crêpe blanc est enroulé une sorte de turban. Le voile, d'une originalité nouvelle, est froncé et croisé derrière. Devant, il semble descendre du chapeau pour laisser apercevoir le visage et esquisser un mouvement drapé. Un ourlet de crêpe blanc borde cette partie du voile.

ELLES sont nombreuses hélas, les femmes, les mères, les sœurs, les filles dont la toilette de deuil est le sombre uniforme. Il est parfaitement odieux, alors que le chagrin vous anéantit, de s'occuper de puériles questions de vêtements, mais le deuil obéit à certains rites auxquels il faut se plier. Quant à sa durée, elle varie suivant les villes et les milieux. Si le costume de deuil a le souci avant tout d'être correct il doit cependant être à la mode et la suivre dans ses grandes lignes. Les tissus sont toujours à peu près les mêmes. La gabardine, la serge fine, la vigogne, le cachemire, les voiles et les grenadines sont les lainages les plus généralement adoptés et comme tissus de soie le crêpe de Chine mat, le pout de soie, le satin grenadine, la faille, la mousseline de soie et le crêpe Georgette. On n'emploie pas actuellement la grenadine comme voile, mais le crêpe français et les crépons remplacent le crêpe anglais après la première période de deuil; très mats et très souples ils ont l'avantage d'être très légers. Les voiles se posent en général en travers, recouvrant le plus souvent la calotte du chapeau et quelquefois le chapeau tout entier. Ils sont bordés d'un ourlet de dix centimètres de haut et parfois, pour les deuils moins stricts, d'un picot de jais ou de broderie ou d'un biais de tulle. Les encolures de linon ou de crêpe blanc sont permises durant toutes les périodes du deuil même le plus sérieux.



Blouse russe en crêpe et cachemire de soie. L'empilement, découpé en pattes carrées, est bordé d'une grosse pigûre. Les longues manches bouffantes sont resserrées dans un haut poignet ajusté et ourlé d'un biais de crêpe blanc comme celui qui rabat sur le col. Le corps de la blouse et la basque sont faits séparément et réunis sous une double ceinture en cachemire.



Ce grand manteau de vigogne remplace le châle pour la période de grand deuil, il est bordé d'un grand biais qui arrive en diminuant jusqu'au bord des manches. Le devant est resserré par une ceinture de crêpe. Le grand col est en crêpe, ainsi que la bande qui entoure les épaules et semble fixer l'effet de châle. La toque avec voile la couvrant presque complètement reste le chapeau du grand deuil.



Robe de grenadine de laine dont la jupe froncée s'ouvre sur deux panneaux de crêpe. Le corsage se découpe en longues pointes qui remontent jusqu'au col également en grenadine; il laisse apercevoir une blouse tout unie en crêpe. La ceinture, servie dans une boucle de passementerie mate, se termine par un gland de même passementerie. Petit rabat de crêpe lisse au bord du col.



Deux parapluies pour le deuil, l'un avec manche en ébène et ivoire, l'autre en perles de jais, et un sac en soie brodé de perles de jais.

FIG. 3a.9 Article instructing women on how to remain fashionable while grieving. "Proper Mourning," *Femina*, March 1917. © Bibliothèque Forney / Roger-Viollet, RV-157622-7.



FIG. 3a.10 Pol de Czernichowski. Advertising poster for Maison Debray where women could purchase mourning garments, "À la religieuse," 1896. © Bibliothèque Forney / Roger-Viollet, RV-86435-8.



FIG. 3a.11 Two widows in mourning dress at the zoo in the Jardin des Plantes, Toulouse, Upper Garonne. © Roger-Viollet, RV-5509-4.