A Dashing, Positively Smashing, Spectacle...: Female Spectators and Dress at Equestrian Events in the United States During the 1930s

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Introduction

Little is known of the life of Miss Boopie Jenkins (see figures one and two) other than that she was part of an elite social set of wealthy, white, American men and women (note one) who enjoyed fulsome participation in a leisured lifestyle during the interwar years. Jenkins features in just a handful of black and white photographs held within the 'Gerald B Webb Jr' album collection (see note two), a photographic archive of the life and work of equestrian journalist and founder of the specialist newspaper (established 17th September 1937) *The Chronicle of the Horse*. These few glimpses of Jenkins captured in 1938 as a young woman of twenty-one years are instructive. They offer a visual entrée into the nuances of dress and dressing in – and for – a contemporary high class lifestyle, one punctuated by equestrian occasions both sporting and social.

Amateur snapshots and family albums are endorsed by Taylor as being an 'immensely useful...source of clothing detail' (2002: 169-70) offering 'significant tools in the dress historian's search for the coded cultural meanings that lie within clothing'. The two photographs of Boopie Jenkins forwarded here are indeed richly encoded clothing texts. Both images are taken in the geographical setting of her home locale - Warrenton, Virginia - itself an area synonymous with equestrian activity of all kinds but particularly foxhunting and horse trialling. In figure one, Jenkins is positioned centre, following the action at the Warrenton Hunter Trials (see note three) from a makeshift vantage point: the back of a horse-drawn wagon. In figure two, from the same photograph album, Jenkins is shown riding out with the Warrenton Hunt. Viewed in juxtaposition, these two images capture the remarkable contrast in dress and the associated 'techniques' (Mauss 1973) of dressing and appearance management engaged by Jenkins (and, indeed, many of her social peers). The contrast in hairstyles between each image is noteworthy: hanging loose and curling naturally under a jaunty peaked cap in the group shot, the appearance presented in this first photograph is one of informality. Rugged up in a knee-length fur topcoat, Jenkins is shown here wearing what is a staple item among the equestrian set of the day. Fur is a material, writes Bolton (2004: 43), charged 'potently and profoundly with symbolic meaning', and its meaning becomes far heightened in this particular context of hunt-related sport. Made of animal pelt the coat

signals a deferred engagement with the quarry itself, a transposed symbol of the hunt. Also connoting luxury, wealth, status – and even, perhaps, sexualised, animalistic connotations - the fur coat is imbued with symbolism *but also* fulfils important serviceable requirements, offering warmth and cosiness against prolonged periods spent outdoors in the wintery Virginian elements. The second portrait of Jenkins, mounted side-saddle with both rider and horse groomed to perfection, demonstrates an alternative dress code, one based around formal sanctions and the cultivation of a highly maintained and disciplined body. Jenkins appears as the embodiment of the interwar equestrienne, a persona governed by its 'fervour of sobriety' (Matthews David 2002: 182) and 'severity of plainness' (Goodrum 2012: 87). In this photograph her hair is tamed, being scraped smoothly and tidily under her formal hunting topper as dictated in foxhunting etiquette and policed by the officiating Hunt Club Master and Secretary. Writing in their treatise on equitation of 1932, Lady Diana Shedden and Lady Viola Apsley (see note four) forged a determined campaign against what they condemned as the disorderly and undesirable trait of 'wispiness'. In their words, 'a tidy head is one of the two hall-marks [the other was the stock tie] of a good woman to hounds' (Shedden and Apsley 1932: 136). This in turn suggests that, in the hunting field, appearance management was guided as much by socio-cultural codes of respectability than by purely functional concerns. Keeping up appearances was a matter of great import, reflective of individual self-worth and Hunt Club honour.

Insert figures 1 and 2 about here

Figure One: Boopie Jenkins (centre) at Warrenton Hunter Trials, 1938. A handwritten caption identifies 'Mrs Carhart' (sitting) on the left of the frame.
Webb archive, National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

Figure Two: Boopie Jenkins in side-saddle habit dress, Warrenton 1938.
Webb archive, National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

The case of Boopie Jenkins detailed here foreshadows some of the overarching themes to be presented in this chapter: the identity politics surrounding wearers and the wearing of both sporting and spectator dress during the 1930s; the centrality of the practice of dressing to equestrian events; the commodity, commercial and design cultures surrounding spectatorship at them; as well as an exploration of the broader socio-economic conditions - related to the American national project and Depression era - that contemporary sportswear mobilised,

reflected and reproduced. Dant (1999: 107) suggests that 'there is a system of relationships between ideas and values, material things (clothes) and people'. This chapter seeks to unpack and understand these sartorial and social relationships, using equestrian events in the historical context of thirties America (note five) as a richly textured field of enquiry through which to do so. First, however, some notes on previous studies pertinent to the historical relationship between dress, female spectators and equestrian events.

Dress and Equestrian Events: Reviewing Fashion History and Theory

Foremost, perhaps, the case of Boopie Jenkins complicates definitions and understandings of contemporary female spectatorship and, indeed, contemporary sporting females. Arnold (2009) suggests that the 1930s saw a rise in women's interest in, and engagement with, sports as part of a modern, fashionable lifestyle. Similarly, Campbell Warner (2005: 82) argues that 'by the 1930s, playing sports suggested leisure, money, and success in the larger sense of living well'. Allied practices around personal hygiene, diet and a growing consumer culture promoting female cosmetics, beauty rituals and health salons also flourished (note six). Wealthy, white, athletic, young and fashionable American women – such as Jenkins - were multi-dimensional and accomplished characters, and thereby able to inhabit a variety of identities in equestrian culture as both knowledgeable onlookers *and* as active participants. Furthermore, they were able to move between these varied roles with relative ease and frequency, and in some instances were able to inhabit authoritative and influential positions such as owners, trainers and/or hunt masters. Dress assumed an important part of this process, being part of Goffman's (1961) 'identity toolkit', and enabling the material construction and bodily enactment of each social and sporting role. Women required an encyclopaedic knowledge of specialist dress codes since each equestrian discipline (be it dressage, showing, point-to-point racing, fox hunting, coaching and driving or even hacking) was regulated by esoteric rules concerning appearance, dress and bodily presentation known as 'appointments'. As a spectator in the grandstand, terrace or the assembled ranks of the crowd, dress was equally prescribed, surveilled and regulated. Particularly in the more structured setting of the man-made race track (rather than, perhaps, the natural environs of the field event), both men and women were held to status-related edicts whereby entry to certain areas of the concourse required sumptuary compliance, with a debarring if one was deemed in breach of protocol. More subtly, however, the sanctioning of spectator dress was also guided by acquired, tacit, skills of taste and discernment: a precariously balanced combination of peer-group consensus, media commentary, social convention and

Bourdieuian 'cultural capital'. Dressing appropriately as a spectator was an art form and was steeped in social skill, fashion sensibility as well as economic privilege.

MacAloon's (1984) work, albeit related to the Olympic 'mega-event' rather than regional scale equestrian sports of yesteryear, offers theoretical insight here. Drawing on Goffmanian concepts of social framing, the sporting event is understood as a culturally and spatially ordered experience, organised around three concentric frames of 'game-festival-spectacle'. At the core is the field of action (the 'game'), surrounded by a literal and metaphorical frame comprising spectators, track, ring and/or stadium (namely, the 'festival') that is, in turn, encompassed by a discursive structure of mass-media representations, narratives and imagery (the 'spectacle') stretching well beyond the geo-temporal limits of the game-play itself. This sporting frame model is useful in identifying and considering the social order constructed within, and through, equestrian events (and the spaces and behaviours of the race ground in particular – note seven). MacAloon (1984: 250) reminds us that 'frames have histories', and the history of 1930s sport and spectators forwarded here makes a case for the agency of dress in the construction and maintenance of social ordering. In the framing process, the performative qualities of dress along with the ability to dress 'the part' (or, indeed, to subvert and/or transgress it), assume a powerful visual and material signifying device: of belonging, status and role. Dressing appropriately for a day at the races – and for one's chosen or acquired role(s) whilst there - was a highly mediated practice. The spaces of the stable block, paddock, open air 'bleachers', covered pavilions and winner's enclosure were each framed by particular codes of dress. As Crane (2000: 1) explains 'one of the most visible markers of social status and gender and therefore useful in maintaining or subverting symbolic boundaries, clothing is an indication of how people in different eras have perceived their positions in social structures and negotiated status boundaries.'

Far from being consigned to the literal and metaphorical sidelines of the 'cheering section' (*Spur* 1930: 19), then, the female spectator has long been a key agent in the pageantry of equestrian sport. Referring to the example of the Longchamp racetrack in Paris, the importance of the crowd and, specifically, the stylish modes of dress of the females within it, is noted by Brevik-Zender (2009). Although both the historical and geographical setting of this example (late nineteenth century France) fall outside of the direct focus of this chapter, it nonetheless offers insight as to the root (and, indeed, route – note eight) of the abiding connection between high fashion, its display and the site of the horse-racing track, a connection which remained pertinent during the 1930s and still endures today. At least once a year, the Hippodrome de Longchamp became

> ...an incomparable site of fashionable pageantry... The Grand Prix de Paris, held every Spring starting in 1863, was a daylong affair that attracted thousands of spectators, as much for the chance to observe the well-dressed attendees and to witness the new clothing styles that inevitably made their debut as for the high-stakes horse race.
>
> (Brevik-Zender 2009: 19)

The legendary Parisian-based designer, Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895) and, later, Madeleine Vionnet (1876-1975) and Paul Poiret (1879-1944) identified and exploited the potential of these race meets as high-profile showcases for their most fashionable, and newest, creations. Using (in)famous female muses, including members of Royalty, actresses and courtesans, to model fashionable designs on race day, Longchamp served various interrelated purposes, it: engaged a suitably elite physical and cultural backdrop; provided a ready supply of wealthy patrons; and, was a favoured site with illustrators and photographers (such as the Seeberger Brothers during the early 1900s), which ensured the wide dissemination of designs via the burgeoning fashion press (see Aubenas and Demange 2007, Rocamora 2009). The fashionable crowds at Longchamp have also formed the subject of fine art - notably Manet's *Races at Longchamp*, 1864 – and of literary texts. Émile Zola's (1840-1902) novel of 1880, *Nana*, offers a compelling and much vaunted account of the eponymous heroine's emboldened sartorial display at the Grand Prix de Paris. As Nana makes her entrance, all attention turns from the actual race (the 'game', in MacAloon's terminology) to the courtesan, who is dressed in a daring, provocative, outfit with an added 'touch of jockey...a jaunty little blue toque with a white feather above her curly blonde hair, which was gathered in the nape of her neck and then allowed to stream down her back like an enormous red horse-tail' (Zola 1880 [2009]: 311). Zola's characteristic layering of sartorial and social metaphor here suggests an understanding of the racecourse as a site of display – wherein the fashion 'festival' and 'spectacle' (to invoke, again, the language of sporting frames) may become blurred (Hardy *et al* 2009). From Second Empire Paris onwards, the racecourse as a spectacular site of *and because of* fashion is undisputed. However, curiously, few *sustained* academic studies have been made on the many connections between equestrian sport and its fashionably dressed (female) attendees. This chapter begins to redress this oversight and, in so doing, extends the existing discussion to an alternative place and time: that of the United States during the 1930s.

Framing the Field of 1930s Sportswear: New York Versus Paris

Dress historians Mendes and de la Haye (1999: 76) note that the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the ensuing Depression signalled an 'inauspicious' start to the Thirties. However, the contemporary equestrian and sporting press made only few, and somewhat oblique, references to the wider travails that beset the contemporary American economy (note nine). Writing under the *nom de plume* of 'Amory', the female fashion correspondent for *The Sportsman* opened her July 1933 column with the observation that: 'one has only to walk down Fifth Avenue this June to realize that, in spite of gloomy prediction, grass is not growing in our city streets. It is a pleasure to report that I did not see a single lawn mower anywhere this month between Thirty-fourth and Fifty-seventh Streets' (Amory 1933:44). Amory's passage here is, however, an exception. Largely, it appeared that a 'fiction of stability' (Arnold 2002: 46) prevailed in the rarefied circles of equestrian society and its hobbyist press, which omitted discussions of Depression era political-economy from its esoteric concerns. American Socialites, so Madgison (2008: 108) suggests, were often 'cushioned' from the financial strife of the 1930s due to factors such as marriage or personal wealth. Certainly the readership (both male and female) of monthly specialist periodicals such as *Spur* and *Polo* magazines was addressed as athletes and sports fans *but also* as consumers with a significant expendable income with which to purchase high-end luxuries and status-bestowing items. Alongside advertisements for technical equipment, sports kit and associated paraphernalia were those for European sailings of the Red and White Star lines, Oldsmobiles and Cadillacs, luxury hotels and apartments in fashionable metropolitan centres. Importantly for the purposes of this chapter, fashionable female (and, on occasion, male) dress was also featured heavily and extensively across the pages of these sporting titles, and several different media devices (mobilising the frame of 'spectacle') were employed to accomplish this: the advertisement, the fashion-columnist-cum-style-commentator, and the photo montage. Yet, given the recurrence of (spectator) fashion coverage in these sporting titles the paucity of scholarship on its significance is remarkable. Dress historians specialising in 1930s fashion have mined the archives of well-known style publications – for example Arnold's body of work (2002, 2009) on New York fashion in the 1930s and 1940s concentrates on representations in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* - but have yet to harness the rich and fulsome promise of sports, and especially equestrian, journalism as conduit, mediator and repository of contemporary fashion.

According to Reynolds Milbank (1989: 98) 'the 1930s was the only decade in which a new look was immediately perceptible'. With the abandonment of the vogue for girlish pertness, as personified in the Twenties by the chemise-clad Flapper, the 1930s heralded a decade

synonymous with a sleeker, leaner, female body adorned in athletic-inspired clothing known as 'sportswear' (see figure 3). This was a novel mode of dress based on smart, yet casual, clothing (separates, dresses and coats) aimed at active, modern, young women. It is useful to provide a note of explication regarding terminology here as 'sportswear' is an ambiguous term, with several applications. *Active* sportswear, for example, referred to the very specific outfits required for, and worn during, sporting activities (such as riding habit dress, golfing costume and tennis attire). Sportswear in its permutation as one of the defining fashion statements of the 1930s, on the other hand, drew design influence from the field of, often traditional Anglo-British, rural pursuits but met the needs of a contemporary American (sub)urban lifestyle rather than the requirements of actual sporting play. These garments 'emerged directly from the radically simple clothing that was free of linings, understructures, confining fit and unnecessary decoration that sport and athletic activity demanded' (Campbell Warner 2005: 80). Also referred to as 'passive sportswear', 'semi-sports' and 'spectator sports' dress, they (and the wearing of them) engaged desirable, nationalised, discourses of dynamism, vitality, functionalism and adaptability so enabled by their athletic invocations (Arnold 2009: 24). Sportswear, explains Campbell Warner (2005: 95) 'answered the needs of a casual American way of life, of lean athletic bodies and their loose-jointed mannerisms. Sportswear was about practicality and comfort; mass-manufacture and mix-and-match, and menswear was transformed into a feminine form'. Martin (1985: 10), too, underscores the informal essence of sportswear, writing that contemporary American style 'was fundamentally one of recreation.' The belted cardigan or pullover, worn over a tweedy (see note ten) skirt was widely adopted as a fashionable look (refer to the female dress in figure three for illustration). It not only emphasised the natural, trim, waist (a departure from the dropped waist of 1920s fashions) but was a versatile design solution, enabling women to adjust the fit of their clothing. Versatility was, indeed, a watchword of 1930s sportswear not least because of its 'syntax of separates' (Martin 1985: 20). This bestowed American women with a wider range of choice and freedom within their wardrobes as they combined individual garments into an almost limitless array of fashionable outfits.

Insert figure 3 about here

Figure Three: Female spectators in contemporary sportswear at the (Middleburg or Warrenton) races, Virginia, 1937. Captioned 'Mrs. Wm. Miller - Jim Blackwell - Judy Molton - and etc'.

Webb archive, National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

Modern and progressive, sportswear mobilised the American national character and an inherent sense of American-ness in numerous ways. For example, sportswear was often constructed from technologically innovative synthetic materials such as rayon, artificial silk and a newly invented elastic substance called Lastex, which was woven into wool and other knits. It was also promoted for its easy-care properties and washable fabrics, assisted by the process of Sanforization, an anti-shrinking measure patented in 1930 - all of which were value-adding factors in the busy lifestyle of the contemporary female fashion consumer. These advances placed American sportswear at the leading edge of mass manufacturing. Its simplicity of design called for minimal pattern pieces which followed Taylor-ist principles, producing cheaper garments that made fashion accessible to greater numbers – a fact in itself that was viewed as symptomatic of the American democratic character. Sportswear was, then, a particularly 'American Look', a phrase coined in 1945 by Dorothy Shaver, Vice President of the New York department store Lord and Taylor and prominent member of the Fashion Group, a trade association founded in 1931 (Arnold 2009, Rantisi 2006, Webber-Hanchett 2003). And, crucially, it was a look that was developed, through careful curation by key cultural intermediaries such as Shaver, in marked opposition to the perceived snobberies and stuffiness of its high class 'rival' - the French couture fashion system centred on the city of Paris. Doubtless, throughout the 1930s Parisian high fashion continued to be acclaimed and reified: 'to be sure' writes Rantisi (2006: 118) 'Paris still had the cachet of world fashion capital.' But the domestic American fashion industry - clustered around sportswear designers such as Claire McCardell, Clare Potter, Jo Copeland, Dorothy Cox, Tina Leser, Vera Maxwell and Elizabeth Hawes - underwent an exceptional period of strategic growth and development. New York emerged as a force in the manufacturing and retailing of domestic design talents so that, by 1930, the wholesale garment trade was the country's fourth major industry and the city's largest (Mendes and de la Haye 1999: 78). Shaver was an instrumental figure, using the merchandising platform of Lord and Taylor on Fifth Avenue to develop a seminal in-store campaign of April 1932 titled 'American Fashion for American Women'. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, then, it was against a backdrop of Depression-era austerity that fashionable sportswear flourished. Parisian originals became expensive to import and to purchase, and therefore the American fashion industry was forced to become more self-reliant, de-coupling both trade and creative dependency from the long held influence of France. As Scheips (2007: 37) observes 'the grim economic truths of 1930s America...afforded designers an unexpected benefit – a great demand for domestic clothing'.

The Style Stakes: Spectacular Sportswear On Show

The shirt-dress was one such item of sportswear that became recognised as a symbol of the transformation in American women's dress during the 1930s. 'As a straightforward dress, simple in line and design, it became a basic of American women's wardrobes' (Campbell Warner 2005: 95 note eleven). Equestrian events offered an ideal venue for the wearing and display of the latest seasonal fashions. Content analysis of the Gerald B Webb Jr scrapbook collection - and a notable clutch of photographs within it - shows 'Society' at the National Cup Steeplechase (Fair Hill, Maryland). These images, attributed to 1938 or 1939, confirm that the sporty yet stylish shirt-dress prevailed among the smart set in attendance (see figures four and five). Allowing ease of movement around the rambling precinct of the racetrack it was well-suited to the outdoorsy setting and offered its wearer comfort, practicality *and* fashion credence. The shirt-dress combined function with fashion, making it an ideal garment for a day at the races. Functionality was indeed an important property in equestrian spectator dress. Foxhunting, for example, was part of the winter sporting calendar and took place in the bitter cold, and even snow, with little regard for the comfort of onlookers (indeed, hunting may not be regarded as a spectator sport *per se*). The demands of the physical environment required spectators to take care in clothing selection and functional adaptations were made, or conceded, to accommodate the landscape (such as slip-on overshoes and steamer rugs to guard against the mud and chill respectively). It was, it seems, necessary for the spectator to anticipate all manner of climatic and physical conditions and to adapt dress accordingly. A *Boston Evening Transcript* (13th June 1933) report of racing from Brookline, Massachusetts, offers the following vignette:

> ...even a sudden heavy shower couldn't drive them [the spectators] away. They merely raised their umbrellas, as Mrs Winthrop Pyemont did, shielding her brown straw with the red feather or donned raincoats like Mrs George S West who also changed her brimmed hat matching a pink wool suit, to a more serviceable brown... Mrs Bird was costumed for any weather. Her high boots were perfect for the wet grass: she wore a brimmed white pique hat, a beige sweater, which kept the rain off and could easily be removed, leaving a brown gingham dress in case the sun came out. She brought her 'sit-stick', prepared for a long stay.

Insert figures 4 and 5 about here

Figure Four: 'Society at the National Cup Steeplechase', dated as 1938 or 1939. Mrs Morris H Dixon (centre) pictured with Mrs William Griscom Coxe (left) and Mrs William du Pont Jr (right) wears fashionable thirties attire from head to toe. This comprises distinctive hat, shirt-dress and two-tone 'spectator' shoes (known as co-respondents in the UK), a vogue in footwear 'undoubtedly boosted by their association with Fred Astaire' (Mendes and de la Haye 1999: 90).
Webb archive, National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

Figure Five: Miss Wilhemine S Kirby as she attended the National Cup Steeplechase, Fair Hill, Md, c. 1938/9. Miss Kirby wears shirt-dress and a platter-type beret.
Webb archive, National Sporting Library and Museum, Virginia.

No discussion of female race-goers would be complete without mention of headgear, hats and millinery. In the 1930s, of course, it remained customary for women to don a hat for outdoor wear (in the multiple interests of propriety, protection and aesthetics). However, the racecourse offered a heightened opportunity for the exhibition of high fashion styles and statement pieces. Headgear for women was diverse during the era and by the mid-1930s surrealist affectations, pioneered in the artistic design work of couturier Elsa Schiaperelli (1890-1973), blazed a trail. Referring, again, to figure four, Mrs Dixon's distinctive cap is at the apex of contemporary spectator fashion (a number of photographs lodged in the Webb archive show female spectators at the same event in Fair Hill, and also at the Rolling Rock races of 1938/9 in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, sporting almost identical styles). Although the actual provenance of Dixon's cap is unknown its impish styling is reminiscent of Schiaperelli's Mad Cap concept and her customarily witty designs such as the 'Napoleon' tri-corn (Evans 1998). The 'Robin Hood' style of the hat does, however, lend itself readily to another, filmic, interpretation and channels the dashing figure of Errol Flynn in his swashbuckling performance as the lead in the 1938 'hit' *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. There is a suggestion, then, of Hollywood's impact on trends and micro-trends in fashionable accessories of the period, as evidenced in the spectacular spaces of the steeplechase event. As Scheips puts it (2007: 41) the 'silver screen' and its glamorous movie celebrities 'could sell clothes'. And the dramaturgical metaphor may be extended here with the race course posited as a stage in the life-as-theatre performance of identity and dress.
In figure five, Wilhemine Kirby is snapped wearing an equally popular 1930s style of hat: a round, saucer-like beret, perched at a rakish, and fashionably asymmetrical, angle. Although

widely adopted by 1930s spectators as a modish flourish, these angled caps were neither always well-executed nor well-received. Reporting in *Polo* from the Paris races during the Grande Semaine of 1931, 'Parasite' (the pseudonym used by American sportswear designer and sometime journalist/author, Elizabeth Hawes) forwarded the following pithy critique:

> Most people want to be dignified, or impressive in some way, and one can't possibly be impressive with a small, round felt platter held to the side of one's head by a velvet ribbon. These hats, which are doubtless in America by now, are a fad, but surely not a fashion. Women really have to enjoy wearing anything which becomes a fashion, and women can't enjoy having their usually-not-too-beautiful faces openly exposed to the public gaze.
>
> (Parasite 1931: 61)

Parasite's acerbic observations invoke, once more, the notion of the sporting frame and offer an historical case of the journalistic influence in constructing the spectacle. What was worn, and who wore it, was scrutinised by other attendees but also by a burgeoning fashion press that stood in (often harsh) judgement on the winners and losers of the style stakes at a particular event. This process of looking and being looked at was also harnessed for commercial effect and used to sell consumer products in the pages of equestrian periodicals. In some knowing advertising copy for (none other than) Elizabeth Hawes' made-to-measure dresses in *Polo* (1931: 39) the marketing play on peer surveillance was fully apparent. 'Who goes to a horse race to see horses?' went the strapline, '...the majority of women who attend horse races are really smart. Ninety-nine percent of the time spent at any race is consumed looking at them.' Fashionable female spectators were ambiguously positioned at, and within, equestrian activity, as both subject and object of the gaze: complicit in this sense with Melchior-Bonnett's (2002: 145) 'self dialogue with itself' and simultaneous 'confirmation of the gaze of others.'

Contemporary advances in print media also played a significant role in recruiting the gaze. Grundberg (1989: 17) explains that the 1930s were a time of 'increasing ease, economy and sophistication in printing, and the development of better halftone reproduction technology fuelled the demand for images of all sorts.' The increasing portability of handheld cameras enabled photographers (both professional and amateur) to capture fleeting moments and action shots with greater ease and effect (Arnold 2009). Equestrian publications certainly made extensive use of photo montage as part of these emerging documentary techniques, using this as a vehicle through which to record horse-related events and, importantly, the people at them (as seen, for example, in *Polo*, *Spur* and *The Sportsman*, throughout the

1930s). This point, to do with the mediation of spectator dress by multiple authors and audiences is made particularly manifest in the chinagraph pencil markings - imposed by a contemporary professional editor, perhaps Gerald B Webb Jr himself – that are inflected across the image of Wilhemine Kirby at Fair Hill (figure five). The 'marking up' of this photograph for publication betrays both substantive and conceptual processes of image construction and of social framing. Style arbiters and/or those with cultural and social capital were sanctioned and appointed in the stroke of a pencil, their mediated images disseminated to a critical readership as 'part of a wider revolution in visual consciousness' (Grundberg 1989: 117).

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion makes a case for the potency of the relationship between fashion, females and equestrian sporting events in the United States during the 1930s. The outfits worn at horse trials and race meets by such fashionable characters as Boopie Jenkins, Mrs Morris Dixon and Miss Wilhemine Kirby provide rich narratives on the lifestyle and mores of contemporary American Society. Theirs was a changing wardrobe, fit for a modern existence, and one in which taste, dress and behaviour were agents in a socially charged sporting frame. Required to maintain a balance between the sometimes conflicting needs of decorum, decoration, practicality and fashionability, these women were skilled in the art of dressing for spectatorship. The management of the female body – how it was dressed, groomed and appeared - when displayed in these public spaces came under intense scrutiny, instruction and framing. The power of press surveillance, be it through words or pictures, made its own particular, new, demands, as did the growing consumer culture of the period that played, and preyed, on fashions for svelte, toned, youthful and athletic bodies on which to display the most current trends in sportswear. If, as Entwistle (2000: 73) puts it, 'the modern individual is one who is aware of being read by his or her appearance', the contemporary female spectator, adorned in her modish mix-and-match separates, was subject and object of that reading: a multi-dimensional character inhabiting a mix of social identities and athletic roles. The equestrian field of sport as a site of 1930s fashionable sportswear offers ripe opportunities as a scholarly repository for the dress historian. But, importantly, the study of sportswear as worn, performed and consumed at, and for, these equestrian events also mobilises a broader history of American industry, politics and economy – a history charged with stories of trans-Atlantic rivalry, of national austerity and Depression, of a

Made-in-America patriotic project, and a design revolution that crystallised the 'American Look'.

Endnotes

1. The parameters of this paper are such that its primary concern is with female dress and female spectators. However male spectator dress and sportswear of the 1930s is a topic ripe for scholarly development and offers a fascinating reservoir for future study.
2. The Gerald B Webb Jr archive (accession number: MC 0010) is held at the National Sporting Library and Museum (NSLM), Middleburg, Virginia and comprises some 16 scrapbooks of photographs, many published in Webb's journal *The Chronicle of the Horse*. Dating from between 1935 to 1961 (post-dating Webb's death in 1947), the bulk of photographs are from 1937 to 1941. Subjects are mainly, but not exclusively, confined to the Virginian countryside around Middleburg and include hunts, horse shows, steeplechase and point-to-point races as well as individual portraits of owners, trainers, jockeys and spectators. Much of the research for this chapter was undertaken at the NSLM under the auspices of its annual John H Daniels Fellowship programme (January-April 2011). I extend my thanks and appreciation here to the fellowship committee and NSLM staff for their enthusiastic and generous support of my work.
3. Hunter trials are a form of cross-country equestrian event, usually taking place in open parkland. The course is laid out over several kilometres and comprises both permanent and temporary obstacles designed to simulate the jumps and tests typically found in the hunting field (such as logs, rails, gates and water features). The competition is scored against the clock with time and fault penalties.
4. Lady Shedden and Lady Aspley were members of the Anglo-British nobility and their volume on hunting and riding is presented, essentially, from an Anglo-British perspective. However, their written observations and advisories on equestrian pursuits transposed readily to a North American context, which looked to, and admired, Anglo-European traditions for authentication of practice (see Goodrum 2012 for further discussion).
5. 'America' may be qualified here as an abbreviation of the United States of America (USA). Equestrian activity differed in form and popularity across the USA. Western riding emerged as part of Frontier life, and had an Hispanic heritage whereas steeplechasing and hunting developed from an Anglo-European tradition and was practiced in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast.

6. Indeed, an almost disproportionate amount of column inches was given over to the promotion of female beauty products in the contemporary specialist equestrian press. Marketers, perhaps, realised the commercial potential in forcing a link between consumer culture and the cultivation of athletic appearance. Monthly periodicals such as *Spur* and *Polo* carried regular full page advertisements for cosmetic brands such as Helena Rubenstein and Elizabeth Arden. The copy used to sell these products fully exploited fashionable anxieties about the maintenance of youth and beauty. For example, advertising for Dorothy Gray cosmetics read: 'A droopy chinline has a way of suggesting stodginess and middle age, in the unkind sense of the word' (*Spur* 1931: 77).
7. For a populist account of the various social 'tribes' at present day racetracks in Britain, see Fox (2005). The thesis forwarded is consistent with that of this chapter: that the racing crowd is far from amorphous and comprised, instead, of its own distinctive customs, rituals and sub-cultural groupings.
8. Horse-racing in the English national context also has firm, and historic, connections to fashionable dress, assisted by courtly patronage of the sport. The Ascot festival of racing (Berkshire, England) has a reputation as a fashion spectacle. Sherwood (2011: 17) traces its history from Queen Anne in 1711 to the present day, stating that: 'in those three hundred years, the world's most influential, fashionable and, perhaps, hedonistic ladies and gentlemen have gathered annually for Royal Ascot in the Royal Enclosure as guests of the monarch to observe superlative flat racing and, of course, each other.'
9. Nor, towards the end of the decade, was any suggestion made of impending World War.
10. Tweed was, indeed, a popular material in the making of fashionable sportswear and Reynolds Milbank (1989: 83) argues that it was 'all the rage' in spectator dress on both sides of the Atlantic during the 1930s. Durable and practical, it also mobilised aspirational connections to British royalty, being favoured (along with tartans and checks) by the stylish, and increasingly notorious, Duke of Windsor (married in 1937 to American divorcée, Wallis Simpson, herself one of the most influential fashion mannequins of the era).
11. For an extended discussion of the design provenance, gender politics and social history of the shirt-dress see Campbell Warner (2005).

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