“Ethel,” the queen of the Bowery who usually sports a pair of black eyes that nature did not give her, a man with a long white beard who oldtimers say is looking all over the Bowery for the man who forty years ago stole his wife. They wonder when the two meet whether the wife-stealer will get beat up or thanked.\(^\text{192}\)

Weegee and Model both photographed the dwarf Shorty (whom Weegee dubs the “Bowery Cherub”) and other characters from Sammy’s: in some of Weegee’s images it is impossible not to see a direct inspiration for Model, who was working at the same location.

In 1943 Weegee and Model also both photographed Mrs. Cavanaugh, a New York society lady who attended openings of the Metropolitan Opera.\(^\text{193}\) Weegee’s picture of her with another dressily garbed lady, both eyed skeptically as they alight from their limousine by a shabby female onlooker, appeared in Life, captioned “The Critic.” It became one of his most famous images, of which he said:

[It] made possible the book Naked City: \ldots At the next opening of the opera house Mrs. Cavanaugh arrived and I asked her, “How did you like the picture of yourself in my book, Naked City?” She stopped dead on her tracks, pointed a finger at me and said, “Naughty boy, why didn’t you put my name after it?” Actually the publishers were afraid to put her name under it. I says, “What do you think of those people standing out in the cold?” She says, “Oh, I hate them. If I had my way I’d take them all inside the opera house with me.”\(^\text{194}\)

Weegee’s ability to work prodigiously, cultivating many sources and maintaining for many years the will to keep performing his high-wire act, sets him apart from some of the other New York School photographers whose greatest work flourished in a much briefer time span, and under a more provisional set of conditions. Ted Croner, Saul Leiter, and Leon Levinstein can all be said to have shared a single characteristic: in their best, most intense and centered moments, the level of their photographic achievement soared as high as any pinnacles in the medium of photography. For Croner and Leiter in particular, so poignant are some of their toughest images, with their strange coexisting qualities of a wrenching delicacy and intentionally nonpicturesque subjects, so incredibly subtle and mysteriously sensitive are they in capturing the poetics of ordinary life in New York City, that one can hardly imagine any artist sustaining these emotional levels over many years. In contrast, Weegee, with his seemingly bullet-proof style and personality, produced many of his best images virtually simultaneously with his most uninteresting ones, working at a greater level of output than many of his more consciously artful peers, producing his greatest gems in the everyday process of his journalistic labors.