H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Jenny Matthews. *Women and War.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003. 192 pp. $29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-472-08964-2.

Reviewed by Rebel Mary Reavis (Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work and Criminal Justice, The University of Tennessee at Martin)
Published on H-Minerva (November, 2004)

Mementos

Many scholars, including Linda Grant DePauw, Melissa S. Herbert, and Emily Yellin, document the experience of women in war as warriors and victims using eloquent words. [1] DePauw presents a long chain of historical evidence that women participate in war making. DePauw, along with Herbert and Yellin, question the perception that women are protected from the horrors of war. Jenny Matthews joins the ranks of those who doubt that war is a predominately masculine activity. Matthews exposes the fraud that women are the gentle sex and that men shield women and children from harm in war.

Matthews shares a vast collection of gut-wrenching photographs taken on her camera-carrying journey through war torn areas such as Iraq, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Vietnam over the past twenty years. *Women and War* is a visual essay of over one hundred black and white photographs of women and children living in war. The location, date, and a brief description of the circumstances surrounding the images are placed near each photograph. In addition, the book presents several two- to three-page first-person accounts of war experiences from the women photographed. One phenomenal photograph shows nineteen-year-old Zaina Jose resting her six-month-old son on her left leg as the baby's feet dangle over Jose's primitively assembled wooden right leg. The story is not in the prosthesis nor in the fact that Jose lost her leg to a land mine. The story is in the haunted and stern expression of Jose's eyes.

Matthews's narrative is in the eyes of all her subjects. The book begins with a poignant photograph of an "Agent Orange" child born without eyes. Photographs of triumph are present in this collection as well. The images of women and children missing arms, legs, or eyes; women carrying weapons; and women and children smiling are symbolic of the world's failure to repair the people and places following hostilities and of the resilience of those repressed. The images are of poverty and pain that persist in the aftermath of wars. Jenny Matthews appeals to our visual consciousness and asks us to remember and respect the people wartime governments see as disposable.

Note

[1]. Linda Grant DePauw, *Battle Cries and Lullabies: Women in War from Prehistory to the Present* (Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1998); Melissa S. Herbert, *Camouflage Isn't Only for Combat: Gender, Sexuality, and Women in the Military* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); and, Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the list discussion logs at:
http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl.

Citation: Rebel Mary Reavis. Review of Matthews, Jenny, *Women and War.* H-Minerva, H-Net Reviews. November, 2004.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=9914

Copyright © 2004 by H-Net and MINERVA: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact MinervaCen@aol.com or the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.