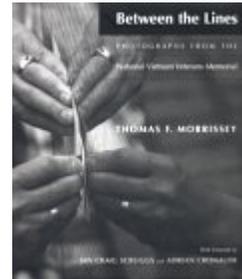


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Thomas F Morrissey. *Between the Lines: Photographs From the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial.* New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000. 116 pp. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8156-0591-1.



Reviewed by Deborah Carmichael (Oklahoma State University)

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For many Americans the Vietnam War was fought in images on the television nightly news and for a younger generation Vietnam has been fought with special effects on multiplex screens. In either case, only those who served in Vietnam can fully understand the experience. We can, however, honor those who answered the call to duty by remembering the sacrifices they made. The National Vietnam Veterans Memorial pays tribute to those who gave their lives serving their country, and at that wall, Thomas F. Morrissey has captured the images of visitors there to pay them honor and remembrance.

Morrissey, a Vietnam veteran, describes his purpose in these words, “my intent is to capture the healing process that I and every one of us who has been associated with Vietnam have shared as a result of paying homage to fallen comrades at the most visited memorial in our nation’s history” (p. xxiv).

For those who have not had an opportunity to visit this national memorial, Morrissey’s photographs offer a sense of the reverence the wall inspires. *Between The Lines* contains seventy-seven prints accompanied with only a date. Prose is used sparingly throughout the book,

not as captions but as moving, often poetic, “thought pieces.” Morrissey located each of these prose selections at the National Park Service/MARS archives; they are all messages that have been left at The Wall.

The photographs are inclusive: visitors are young and old, of every race and ethnicity. Some of the most powerful images of Morrissey’s work are the close-ups of hands gently touching someone’s name as if thoughts and emotions are being exchanged. In all of the plates which include The Wall, the black granite reflects the world surrounding the Memorial. These photographs quietly emphasize that all Americans have been touched by this chapter of history.

This artful collection is not your usual coffee-table book of photographs to be thumbed through absentmindedly. *Between the Lines* is a meditative visual essay evoking both thoughtful and emotional responses. Although not a book everyone may want to own personally, Morrissey’s work would be a valuable library acquisition. As for a practical use, *Between the Lines* would be excellent for use in composition classes as a tool to generate introspective essays.

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