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Nancy Caldwell Sorel. *The Women Who Wrote the War.* New York: Arcade Publishing, 1999. xviii + 458 pp. $15.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-06-095839-8.

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Women's War Storying: Chronicling U.S. Correspondents in World War II

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Through meticulous research from materials published by women who served as U.S. war correspondents during World War II, as well as from personal interviews conducted over almost a decade, Nancy Caldwell Sorel illuminates and preserves the contributions of these wartime journalists and photographers. Sorel briefly sketches the paths by which numerous women came to the profession, then focuses attention on about two dozen women and follows them through the course of the war. Those featured include: Dorothy Thompson, Sigrid Schultz, Janet Flanner, Helen Kirkpatrick, Josephine Herbst, Martha Gellhorn, Eleanor Packard, Frances Davis, Virgina Cowles, Margaret Bourke-White, Sonia Tomara, Betty Wason, Mary Welsh, Tania Long, Lael Tucker, Shelley Smith Mydans, Annalee Whitmore Jacoby, Ruth Cowan, Lee Miller, Virginia Irwin, Lee Carson, Dickey Chappelle, Iris Carpenter, Majorie "Dot" Avery, and Catherine Coyne. These women reported for major dailies and periodicals like *The New York Herald Tribune*, *The London Times*, *Life*, and the wire services as well as for specialized women's publications. The threads of their lives and careers are interwoven with the major events of the war in fascinating detail. This rich tapestry can be appreciated by general interest readers as well as academic researchers focused on social conditions during the war, since Sorel provides original ethnographic data for such analysis. An engaging series of black and white photographs brings their stories to life.

Sorel presents a balanced view, revealing the support as well as the hostility these correspondents encountered from colleagues and commanders. Some key supporters were First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (pp. 105, 182) and Helen Rogers Reid of the *New York Tribune* (pp. 178-9), while detractors included Wes Gallagher of the AP and General Robert McClure, USA (p. 188). Sorel's chronicle considers both professional and personal experiences and is unafraid to record sexual relationships, including same-sex relationships, which have been a taboo subject in many previously published women's war stories. Her powerful narrative identifies the obstacles and con-

straints these correspondents confronted as they challenged the gender boundaries of the day. One example is the rule that they had to remain with the women's services (WAC, WAVES, nurses) and could not, as could male correspondents, accompany troops to combat areas. In her recent book *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military*, journalist Linda Bird Francke reveals that during the Panama operation and the Gulf War, women correspondents could now accompany combat operations while U.S. servicewomen still could not.[1] Given their "behind the lines" positioning, the WWII correspondents wrote about the conditions and experiences of soldiers about to deploy, wounded soldiers in hospitals, prisoners of war, war refugees, and nurses and servicewomen. Editors assigned women to cover "the human side" of the war and instructed these correspondents to provide "a light complement to the 'important' stories" about combat life written by male correspondents (p. 216).

Sorel also documents the correspondents' resourcefulness in getting around the rules as well as the penalties some paid for such violations. For example, press credentials could be denied or revoked (p. 230) and military personnel aiding and abetting could be court-martialled, as, apparently, could the correspondents themselves (p. 234). Permission to accompany troops could be delayed or withheld entirely, as could clearance to post or publish stories from war zones. Military censors, of course, had the last word on any copy. In one case, photojournalist Dickey Chappelle was arrested and her credentials were revoked for moving forward onto Okinawa with the Sixth Marine Division without permission. While Chappelle's editor at *Life Story* complained that the Navy's decision was gender biased, as Sorel notes wryly, "No one ever pretended it was an equal opportunity war" (p. 379). Sorel notes numerous other "lessons" learned by the correspondents, viz.: "Seize any chance for a ride to the front" (p. 38); "A woman correspondent could not afford to go to pieces, no matter what she witnessed" (p. 63); and "Carry your own weight. Don't expect men to be gallant" (p. 183).

Sorel briefly acknowledges the "foremothers," such as Margaret Fuller and Henrietta Eleanor "Peggy" Hull who reported on WWI, in her prologue (pp. xvii-xviii). She then proceeds to examine the "groundbreakers" (Thompson, Schultz, and Flanner) and the "Cassandras" (Kirkpatrick, Herbst, and Gellhorn) who became foreign correspondents during the years between the wars as well as the "apprentices" (Packard, Davis, and Cowles) who reported on the Spanish Civil War in the first three chapters. Sorel then tracks the correspondents through the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, the invasion of Poland, and the "phony war" in chapters 4 through 6. Subsequent chapters detail the correspondents' wartime experiences across Europe, the Pacific, and Northern Africa. The final chapter and epilogue examine the journalists' immediate reactions to the end of the war and their professional and personal adjustments in their return to civilian life (pp. 382-398). Some, like Eleanor Packard and Helen Kirkpatrick, continued to work as journalists; others found no positions available or were relegated once again to the society pages or women's magazines, like Dorothy Thompson and Sigrid Schultz (pp. 390-92). Several, such as Betty Wason, became full-time authors or penned memoirs, which Sorel lists in her bibliography. Some married and had families; others divorced or chose to remain single. Dickey Chappelle and her husband Tony continued their work for *Life* magazine; in 1965, at age forty six, Dickey was killed by a land mine in Vietnam, and, according to Sorel, "remains the only American woman war correspondent killed in action" (p. 397).

Sorel makes a brief attempt in the introductory and concluding chapters to make some connections among the women, but her emphasis is on the diversity of their backgrounds and pre-war experiences. Clear to me, although she does not note this, is the generally elite background of the correspondents. For example, Dorothy Thompson attended Syracuse University; Helen Kirkpatrick studied at Smith College, Josephine Herbst at University of California at Berkeley, Martha Gellhorn at Bryn Mawr, and Margaret Bourke-White at Columbia, University of Michigan, and Cornell. None of the women featured in the text appear to be women of color, though Sorel does not remark upon this. This may be a product of the times, since few white women and even fewer women of color had access to higher education in the years before the war. Many of the women were married to journalists or writers and initially achieved accreditation or access to war zones by association. Their successes (and failures), of course, are their own. In her conclusion, Sorel notes that these women disavow the feminist label, although they were quite aware of their "gender-bending" positions and whose shoulders they stood on, as well as the trail they were blazing for those who would come after. Most came of age between the suffrage wave and the second wave of the US feminist movement, although some of the elder stateswomen of the group, like Thompson, were suffragists before embarking on their careers in journalism.

Sorel's presentation leaves the reader to ponder a

number of questions that would make for engaging dinner table or classroom discussion. Why don't we know these women's stories? Is it possible that wire service anonymity obscures the identity of some contributors? Or has the "official story" of the war made these women's contributions invisible? If so, what purpose does this obfuscation serve? Is this another example of the policing of gender boundaries? To what extent were women marginalized in journalism during the postwar return to "normalcy" as they were in other occupations and professions and, indeed, in the military services themselves?

This work makes a valuable original contribution to the burgeoning literature on war and gender and immediately called to mind the analyses presented in the anthology *Gendering War Talk*, in which contributors explore literature, poetry, drama, and film representations of and by women in wartime.[2] *War Talk* contends that the "official story" of war depends upon the exclusion of the feminine or the depiction of women in particular gendered roles. Anthologies like *Beyond Zero Tolerance: Discrimination in Military Culture*,[3] and *Gender Camouflage: Women and the US Military*,[4] explore these gendered roles inside and outside of the military institution. Sorel's text extends this analysis to "official" journalism, allowing the reader to unpack even further the gendered contours of war.

My criticisms are minor and few. Sorel's unconventional documentation style leaves the narrative uninterrupted but might prove somewhat difficult for use by academic readers; however, the bibliography contains many gems not usually cited in the gender and war literature. In addition, some might find the individual women's stories disjointed or hard to follow, as the organizing points for the book are the war's chronology and the correspondent's location. This, however, is precisely how most history texts organize discussion of the war, so *The Women Who Wrote the War* would be a perfect companion text to read alongside more standard fare. Additionally, Sorel's work humanizes the war and allows even readers who did not live through the war to connect with its events on a personal level, through the prism of these women's experiences.

This book is an interesting read for anyone concerned about women's roles in war in general, in WWII in particular, and in the profession of journalism. Sorel has made a valuable original contribution to the recovery of women's history. Her prose is lucid and her stories are engaging. I would recommend this text not only to WWII research specialists but also to the general public and to academics for consideration for course adoption. This would be a useful text for intermediate to advanced undergraduate courses in journalism, history, gender studies, or military sociology.

Notes

[1]. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997.

[2]. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[3]. Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Judith V. Reppy, eds. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999).

[4]. Francine D'Amico and Laurie Weinstein, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

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