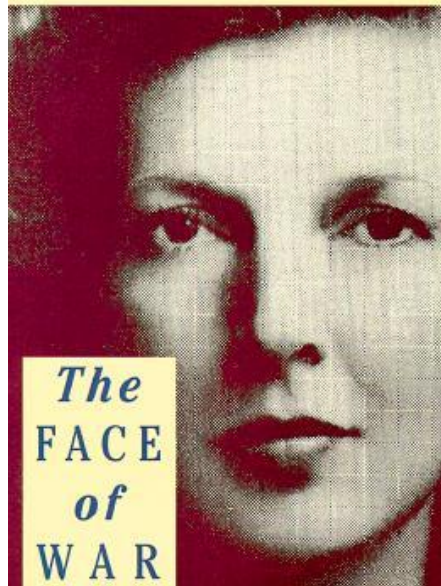


MARTHA GELLHORN



The Face of War

Martha Gellhorn

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The Face of War Martha Gellhorn

This volume collects Gellhorn's global reportage from the Spanish Civil War to the current troubles in Central America. Whether recording the smell of summer grass over Normandy beaches or the suspended daily life of the mother of a "disappeared" Salvadoran, her passionate allegiance to truth shines throughout the work.

The Face of War Details

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Author : Martha Gellhorn

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From Reader Review The Face of War for online ebook

Don Groves says

Picked up this book to compare Gellhorn's reporting with Hemingway and to see how their war coverage differed. Sorry, Poppa, Gellhorn kicks your ass. While Hemingway's boring me with chauffeurs of Madrid, Gellhorn is talking to the women and children and old men of Spain, China, Vietnam, the ones suffering without political ambition, no bravado, just ordinary people hoping to return to ordinary lives while surrounded by the horror of war.

Mary says

I desperately want to give this book five stars. It is brilliant. Gellhorn's war coverage should be required reading. Unfortunately, after getting everything else right, she fails completely in her coverage of the Middle East. There are two obvious reasons for this, and, rather poignantly, one is a result of her strength (her humanism) and the other of her humanity (mortality). Having been present at the liberation of the Nazi death camps, Gellhorn was completely and justifiably appalled and outraged by what she saw. It is no wonder that her sympathy for the victims of a horrendous genocide would predispose her to see no wrong in anything that might be done afterwards in their name. The irony is that her great sympathy for one set of victims made her totally blind and deaf to the sufferings of another people who were victimized, in their turn, by the objects of her sympathy. She writes about the Middle East as though Palestinians never existed, no real humans ever lived in the area that became Israel, and no legitimate human being was in the least bit harmed by expulsion and exile from land their family had occupied for countless generations. Apparently, the crimes committed in Europe, by Europeans, completely justify everything that was done to somebody else in atonement. The logic doesn't hold. However, it is painfully easy to see how Gellhorn missed the point after being an eyewitness to some of the most atrocious crimes in history. It seems almost inevitable that she would misread what was happening in Israel. I would hope that her humanism would have led to a change of opinion if she had lived longer, but her coverage of the Middle East came late in her life and she simply did not survive long enough to witness the ruthless suppression of the West Bank and Gaza, or to observe the deliberate and relentless ethnic cleansing of Palestine that is now abundantly evident to anyone willing and able to take an objective and humanitarian look at the situation. The pity is that an otherwise brilliant, insightful, and genuinely indispensable book - as well as a life's work - is fatally marred by her impassioned and totally biased coverage of what is now one of the most important, and still least understood, war zones in the world.

Dana DesJardins says

This is an astonishingly brave book, as it would need be, covering conflicts from the Spanish Civil War through the nuclear arms race in the 1980s. Gellhorn unerringly finds the underdog in any conflict and suspects power, propaganda, and privilege; in other words, her enemies are the right enemies. Unfailingly wry, by turns nonplussed and angry, Gellhorn never mitigates her outrage and says, oh so reasonably in 1959, "For we are led and must follow whether we want to or not; there is no place to secede to. But we need not follow in silence; we still have the right and duty, as private citizens, to keep our own records straight." She finds the human face in war, as her title asserts, chronicling the Nazi POW's tears as faithfully as the

skeletal survivors in Dachau, which she was among the first to report.

By the time she writes about the American War in Vietnam, Gellhorn no longer has to stow away in bathrooms on outbound hospital ships to be allowed access to the battlefields, but she focuses rather on refugee camps and villages, deserted town squares in El Salvador, and town meetings in Nicaragua. Her outrage has ripened into a compassion so abiding that one almost weeps to read her documentation of suffering, combining facts ("We left behind in South Vietnam six and a half million destitute refugees ...") and examples ("A girl of six had received a new arm, ending in a small steel hook to replace her left hand"). Having steeled oneself to read about the internment camps in Poland in WWII, it is nonetheless shattering to be made witness to the "small" wars waged between superpowers from the Cold War forward.

Everyone should read at least some of this book, divided as it is into short articles reported live from each horror. She ends in her conclusion, written in 1986, "We all pay for this Defense, this greatest single industry on earth. We, who do not profit from it, support it. And what do we get for our money? Security? Who feels secure?"

As upsetting and moving as this book is, I felt braced by the courage and resolution of not only Gellhorn, but the victims of war on whom she reports. And we are all victims. May we at least acknowledge what other people must endure. Thereby a hard peace might eventually be achieved.

Lucrezia Ugolini says

Ho iniziato a leggere questo libro perché mio nonno, sapendo che sto preparando l'esame di Storia Contemporanea, me lo ha prestato. Non avevo mai letto niente della Gellhorn, la conoscevo solo come "una delle mogli di Hemingway", anche se avevo visto il film del 2012 sulla loro storia non posso dire di aver mai conosciuto la Gellhorn da un punto di vista letterario.

Il libro per certi versi mi è piaciuto e per altri no. Non sono una giornalista né capisco molto di giornalismo, figuriamoci poi di corrispondenza di guerra. Anzi, direi che l'argomento stesso non è e non sarà mai il mio preferito (e non venitemi a dire che chi studia storia studia solo guerre!), tuttavia sono molto contenta di aver incrociato la Gellhorn sulla mia strada. Giudicare un testo di questo tipo non solo non è facile: non ho proprio gli strumenti per farlo. Sono anche un po' influenzata dall'immagine di donna sicura di sé che il film mi aveva fornito, quindi questa è una recensione che faccio in modo quasi istintivo: il libro mi è piaciuto e basta. Non saprei spiegare il perché, semplicemente mi è piaciuto, al punto che anche le vicende che non erano esattamente parte del mio raggio di interesse sono risultate avvincenti e interessanti. Questo è merito della Gellhorn: **se le stesse cose fossero state scritte in modo diverso, non mi sarebbe piaciuto così tanto.**

Shaun Bossio says

This was phenomenal for a number of reasons, but mostly because of how fascinating it was to see a female war reporter evolve while witnessing fifty years of horror. I stumbled onto Gellhorn because she was Hemingway's third wife, but her writing and intellect help her stand alone. I'd thoroughly recommend this to anyone remotely interested in an insider's perspective of the changing (ed) face of why we go to war.

Britt Skrabanek says

Gellhorn's eye-opening perspective on war, from Spain to Finland to Java to Vietnam, is unlike any I've ever experienced before. A bold statement coming from someone who has extensively studied World War II, but I

stand by it.

Not only was Gellhorn one of the first female war correspondents in history, she was a phenomenal writer as well. Her writing is raw and heartfelt, capturing the real moments of war, the fighters on both sides of the front and the non-fighters caught in the middle of it all.

This is what truly sets Gellhorn apart, as her historical accounts launch off the page with unapologetic feeling, like the grenades, mines, and bombs she loathes. Regardless of your interest or disdain for war history, *The Face of War* is worth a slow read. Slow, because you can't rush through this one—nor will you want to out of respect for the many souls represented here who lost their lives for their countries, lovers, and families.

This is the one book that should have been a required reading in history class. Yet somehow it didn't make it in...too honest and anti-war perhaps?

“The only way I can pay back for what fate and society have handed me is to try, in minor totally useless ways, to make an angry sound against injustice.” ? Martha Gellhorn

Britt Skrabanek
<http://brittskrabanek.com>

Adam McPhee says

The point of these articles is that they are true; they tell what I saw. Perhaps they will remind others, as they remind me, of the face of war. We can hardly be reminded too much or too often. I believe that memory and imagination, not nuclear weapons, are the great deterrents. ... Though I have long lost the innocent faith that journalism is a guiding light, I still believe it is a lot better than total darkness.

Mistakenly thought this was just about her experience reporting the Spanish Civil War, which I took an interest in after reading Adam Hochschild's *Spain in our Hearts* which has some great stories about her and Hemingway in Spain. (Also, I think Hochschild criticizes Gellhorn specifically for missing the revolutionary aspect of the war, especially in Barcelona, but praises her for getting Eleanor Roosevelt to work on getting FDR to support the war, though he never did.)

But no, the book tracks Gellhorn's whole career: from covering Spain to Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist army in China to the Winter War and WW2. Also Indonesia, Vietnam, the Six Day War and Reagan's backing of right wing death squads in El Salvador and Nicaragua, ending with a piece on Chernobyl.

Most of it's good, except for the stuff on Vietnam. Reading it, I had a sense that it sounded overly optimistic, too favourable to the American side, and sure enough: in her epilogue to that section, she admits to having self-censored, thinking that, "even liberal readers in Britain were not prepared for the full true story. The official American version of the war, as a generous effort to save the South Vietnamese people from communism, had been a public relations triumph. To dispute it, by showing what the war was actually doing to the South Vietnamese, risked the label of communist propaganda." And yet she still gets in a sad portrait of a child napalm victim, which was enough to get her blacklisted from Saigon.

Gellhorn has a great Hemingwayesque way of channeling the horrors of war by describing the dead or wounded in simple but visceral terms. Some of those images are going to stick with me. Not for the squeamish.

If you liked this, I recommend checking out Nahlah Ayed's *A Thousand Farewells*.

Kindle highlights:

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

Get the feeling she supported the Morgenthau Plan: (view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

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(view spoiler)

(1987 edition)

Anupa says

"Our government belongs to us. We are not little mice anymore." - The Face of War is a masterpiece and Martha Gellhorn is a real live SUPERHERO. She taught me that as a writer I should always use my skill for good. And that sometimes the most important writing is born out of fear and a hysteric need to be of use when the world is falling apart. Take your time reading this. Read sentences again. Reread the chapters if it feels right.

William Kirkland says

Martha Gellhorn (1908 – 1998,) wrote much and lived more. As Bill Buford, the fiction editor at “The New Yorker” is quoted in her 1998 obituary, ”Reading Martha Gellhorn for the first time is a staggering experience. She is not a travel writer or a journalist or a novelist. She is all of these, and one of the most eloquent witnesses of the 20th century.”

Martha Gellhorn

She came out of relative privilege to spend a life driven by a fierce anger at the troubles of “ordinary people trapped in conflicts created by the rich and powerful.” She was a “non-ideological radical” as Clancy Sigal described her.

Late in life, when she had finally decided she was no longer “nimble enough” to go to the Bosnian war, she revised her 1959 collection, The Face of War(1994), which Herbert Mitgang of the New York times had said of the original “a brilliant anti-war book that is as fresh as if written this morning.” It now included the “War in Vietnam,” “The Six Day War” and “Wars in Central America” — making seven wars she had personally witnessed and written about. Actually there were more: at the age of 81 she covered the 1989 United States invasion of Panama, and a few years later made her last reporting trip to Brazil to witness the lives of street people. By this time she had lost her youthful belief that truth and empathy with the suffering of others would help staunch the human hunger for war.

blockquote>It took nine years, and a great depression, and two wars ending in defeat, and one surrender without war, to break my faith in the benign power of the press. Gradually I came to realize that people will more readily swallow lies than truth, as if the taste of lies was homey, appetizing: a habit. (There were also liars in my trade, and leaders have always used facts as relative and malleable. The supply of lies was unlimited.)

For full review see All In One Boat

LeeAnn Heringer says

When I started this book, I was amazed and astounded. I flatter myself that I write this way, or maybe it's better to say that I aspire to write this way -- the poetic attention to detail, the way she notices the little things that say everything about the big things. Her reporting of the Spanish Civil War and World War II are so

incredibly spot on. I was a huge fan.

And then we get to the portion about Vietnam. And she adopts this tone that she was the only American who had problems with the Vietnam War (which is wrong) and that no American soldiers were in an danger (which is wrong) and makes a great point of not knowing or caring who Robert McNamara was. Her reports flirted around the bigger picture of all the millions of, billions of dollars that are spent on refugees without making the refugee lives any better, so where does the money go? *That* is a compelling thread for late twentieth century wars, but because she doesn't see beyond the details, she misses it. Her later writings are almost a cautionary tale of how we try to keep using the same filters on different situations, how we age ungracefully by not being flexible enough.

Susan Liston says

What a book. How incredibly brave this woman was, and at a time when women just weren't this sort of thing... a war correspondent...during the Spanish Civil War, WW2 and Vietnam. Her writing is so simple and precise and she hits the nail on the head over and over. THIS is what war is like, THIS is what is really going on and THIS is why it's so incomprehensibly stupid. It's not easy to read, I had to do it in small doses because it's often quite intense, but this is something everyone should read. In schools for sure. And every time you start thinking that going to war with anyone is a good idea, get this out and read it again.

Brian Page says

There is a reason that Martha Gellhorn is still in print; and it's not because she was once the wife of Ernest Hemingway. Read *The Face of War* -- if for nothing more than the joy of savoring beautiful prose. This is not to say that the stories are beautiful. TFW is Gellhorn's passionate antiwar manifesto. She certainly earned the right of credibility, as the book encompasses nearly every conflict beginning with the Spanish Civil War, to World War II (including the concentration camps), the American War in Vietnam, and on to the Central American fiascos in the 1980s. In all of these she was on the ground, in the action. The best sections, to me, are those from Spain and WW II, though one wonders how she would today view Israel's Six-day War now that the Israelis have practically recreated the Warsaw Ghetto in Gaza.

Gellhorn comes across as a realist and is deeply cynical about the integrity of leaders: "Politics really must be a rotten profession considering what awful moral cowards most politicians become as soon as they get a job." (p. 68) All-in-all this is a superb, witty, and informed account of war in the 20th century. Sadly, so much of what she concludes is still very relevant and shows the extent of how little our leaders have learned from history.

Nick Black says

Beautiful prose, lingering images, **and** the bravery to honor Israel, that most admirable of nations (and so often the whipping boy of the gormless). Some of the best war writing I've ever read.

Amazon 2008-10-23. Yesterday outside the Klaus Fortress of Computing, who should I run into but my old roommate and co-conspirator Vegan John (For those who know him, he and Pam are now married and living on the westside; he's a year or so from his condensed matter physics PhD, while she's finishing up hers in optical physics this semester)? Over mutual Newports, we talked Bose-Einstein condensates and quantum computing and a great deal about the Spanish Civil War. It turned out VJ also knew a good bit about the *republicanos* and *nacionales*, but from a different perspective than I'd picked up from Beevor, Hemingway and Homage to Catalonia. He recommended this strongly, and who am I to disagree with the most Vegan of Johns?

Russell Bittner says

This curt bit of advice, from the Russian writer (and wife of the poet, Osip Mandelstam) Nadezdha Mandelstam, is one that Martha Gellhorn quotes at the conclusion of the chapter titled “Rule by Terror” in the section titled **Wars in Central America** (p. 321). It was sage advice (under the then-present circumstances) in Ms. Mandelstam’s time; it was sage advice in Ms. Gellhorn’s time. It remains sage advice in our time.

On pp. 151-152, Ms. Gellhorn writes “On the night of New Year’s Day, I thought of a wonderful New Year’s resolution for the men who run the world: get to know the people who only live in it.”

This was something she wrote on the first day of January, 1945, which was over 68 years ago. Things haven’t changed much since then — as Ms. Gellhorn predicted they wouldn’t in her coverage of conflicts from the Spanish Civil War up to and through the Reagan’s interventions in both El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Before I ran across Ms. Mandelstam’s suggestion, I originally thought of titling my review “Read this book at your own risk!” — or “Read this book and weep.”

Why? Because I suspect you’ll feel a similar shame while reading it. Shame as an American, certainly. But also shame as a human being. The history of our species is not a pretty one. And *The Face of War* begins only with the Spanish Civil War!

Martha Gellhorn is no knee-jerk liberal. She’s a solid, unflinching liberal — by conviction. And her conviction is the result of first-person observation, investigation and inquiry. In other words, not of hearsay or conjecture.

At the end of May, I read and reviewed Naomi Klein’s *The Shock Doctrine*. In my opinion, that book could sit side by side with this one on the same shelf of woe. Both women are profoundly competent journalists. Both are the kind of journalist we need more of — unflinching, compassionate and, above all (for those who’d heed their prophetic words), intelligent.

I’ll risk making the same recommendation I made with *The Shock Doctrine*. Buy this book and read it cover to cover! As with Ms. Klein’s book, we’re talking history; but we’re also talking (almost) current events. And although Martha Gellhorn is now dead, I feel certain that if she were still alive, she’d be observing, investigating, inquiring and writing about similar atrocities in Afghanistan and Iraq. After all, was George W. Bush’s “shock and awe” qualitatively different from the Nazi doctrine of *Schrecklichkeit* (“frightfulness”)?

Since I assume this review will be read — if at all — by Americans, I'll conclude it with a quote from p. 281 that speaks to us most directly: "(i)t is not easy to be the citizen of a Superpower, nor is it getting easier. I would feel isolated with my shame if I were not sure that I belong, among millions of Americans, to a perennial minority of the nation (: t)he obstinate bleeding hearts who will never agree that might makes right and (who) know that if the end justifies the means, the end is worthless."

R. I. P. at last, Ms. Gellhorn. You've earned it.

RRB

07/05/13

Brooklyn, NY

Chrissie says

The Face of War by Martha Gellhorn (1908-1998), author, journalist and famed war correspondent, collects in one volume reports the author had previously written for magazines. The reports are about the wars she covered--the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, the Nuremburg Trials, the 1946 Paris Peace Conference, the Indonesian National Revolution, the Six-Day War (the Third Arab-Israeli War), the Vietnam War and finally the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran civil wars of the 1980s. Gellhorn was a journalist over a span of sixty year! The book was originally published in 1959, but successively more has been added. Both the 1959 and 1986 introductions are included in the audiobook version herewith reviewed.

The book is about war. It puts a human face on war. That is its intention—not to draw battle strategies, not to speak of those in command, not to speak of those planning wars for attainment of political goals—but of the soldiers fighting the wars and of the civilians slaughtered because they lie in war's path. We are at Dachau. We see what she saw when the concentration camp was liberated. We fly with Gellhorn in a P61 Black Widow night-flying bomber. This book puts each reader right there in the war. Not just one war, but several. Only by experiencing what war is really like does one come to understand the true horror of war.

The author wants us to perceive war as it truly is, to feel it in our guts, so united, we will raise our voices against it. Gellhorn gives us Nadezhda Mandelstam's words "If you can do nothing else, you must scream!" You ask who Nadezhda Mandelstam is? Nadezhda Mandelstam was the Russian author, educator and wife of poet Osip Mandelstam. He died in 1938 in a transit camp near Vladivostok. Gellhorn wants to bring to our attention that we each have a duty to perform. We must see that the government we elect takes action against human injustice wherever such occurs. She is telling us to make our voices be heard.

Gellhorn writes passionately. She writes to make us care. She writes to incite people to take action. Even when writing of war, she employs humor, albeit of the dark, sarcastic, ironical kind.

Quotes jotted down from the book:

"Perhaps it Is impossible to understand anything, unless it (has) happened to you."

"I do not hope for a world at peace, all of it, all the time. I do not believe in the perfectibility of man, which is what would be required for world peace; I only believe in the human race. I believe the human race must continue."

“To see a whole nation passing the buck is not an enlightening spectacle.”

Seeing the destruction in Cologne: “If you see enough of anything, you stop seeing it.”

We did not look at each other. “You are ashamed. You are ashamed for mankind.”

“Either Reagan knows he is lying, or he doesn’t know he is lying. Ominous either way!”

“On the night of New Year’s Day, I thought of a wonderful New Year’s resolution for the men who run the world: get to know the people who only live in it.”

Martha Gellhorn was an intelligent woman. She reasoned logically. She expressed herself well.

Some lines are not completely clear. I would ask myself WHO is saying this and WHERE exactly could this be happening, but confusion clears. The confusion arises because the book is a string of separate reports.

Gellhorn was the third wife of Ernest Hemingway, married to him from 1940 to 1945. This book is **not** autobiographical. She says not a word about Ernest Hemingway, as one thinks she might when speaking of that which she saw and experienced in Madrid in 1937, and in Barcelona in 1938. They were in Spain together.

Love and Ruin by Paula McLain is the book that made me interested in reading The Face of War. The books complement each other.

Bernadette Dune reads the audiobook very, very well. Steady, even and clear. The strength of the words speak for themselves.

Those interested in The Face of War will surely also be interested in War's Unwomanly Face by Svetlana Alexievich.

I want everyone to read The Face of War! It is that good. You will not regret having read it, even if you have already read a zillion books on the Second World War, even if you are already a pacifist and detest war. It should be required reading for all.
