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Carolyn M. Edy

The Woman War Correspondent, the U.S. Military, and the Press 1846 – 1947

New York: Lexington Books, 2017. 175 pp. ISBN 978 1 4985 3927 2

Reviewed by Sarah Lonsdale, City, University of London

Email: sarah.lonsdale.1@city.ac.uk

Journalism history, following the recent pattern in historical and literary studies, has belatedly woken up to the presence of women in the industry. Despite their contested and circumscribed place in journalism, particularly mainstream newspapers, women were always present, if on the margins of journalism production. Often writing anonymously, or, equally frequently, pseudonymously, their participation stretches far back into the nineteenth century radical and literary press. Much of the women's suffrage movement was driven by campaigning independent newspapers and magazines, giving women a voice even though their lack of citizenship rights had effectively gagged them from speaking out in the public sphere of politics.

There is now a growing body of scholarly work focusing on women's historical participation in journalism, from Barbara Onslow's ground-breaking work *Women of the Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2000) to Catherine Clay's *Time and Tide: The Feminist and Cultural Politics of a Modern Magazine* (2018). Carolyn Edy's study of US women war correspondents 1846 - 1947 is a welcome addition to the field particularly in its analysis of the attitude towards this small band of pioneering and determined women, by the US military and by male correspondents.

The book is structured chronologically, from the American Civil War and the Spanish-American war, through the First World War, and reserves the bulk of its contents to examining the role of the 181 women correspondents accredited by the US Military to cover the Second World War. The first chapters provide historical context and describe the rather haphazard participation of women in earlier conflicts. They often accompanied their husbands or fathers who were accredited by their papers, and took advantage of the lack of regulation of journalists before the First World War to participate, although they usually only wrote about soldiers' medical care, and rarely competed with the male correspondents for 'front page' stories (27). Valued by their editors as something of a novelty, by-lines boasting a report by the 'first-ever woman war correspondent' were regularly used between 1880 and 1920 (40).

Scholars interested in detailed biographies of US women war correspondents will only find thumb-nail sketches of the women's often difficult and embattled lives. This is not however the aim of Edy's study, and she directs readers interested to know more, to the memoirs written by several of the women mentioned in the book. The study's chief questions examine the attitude of the US Military to women war correspondents and how the services provided facilities to women and how established male correspondents responded to the presence of women in war zones. The hostility of both groups provides insights into why women were so slow to gain a foothold in war correspondence during the early years of the twentieth century.

The Navy, particularly, was very resistant to accommodating women, citing the cramped conditions on ships and in north Africa, Field Marshall Montgomery was famously opposed to women reporters, stating: "I'll have no women correspondents in my army." (89).

The US Military Press Bureau however, was keen to facilitate women's participation, understanding that if the US was to win the war, then the public needed news on all aspects of the fight. This included promoting the war effort domestically and coverage of the overseas posting of the first Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs) after 1942. Despite the emphasis on women correspondents covering women's activities, Edy concludes that even in this restricted area, women's presence in the theatre of war was too much of a challenge to traditional gender roles (118). This ambivalent and hostile attitude to women resulted in a much tighter accreditation process for women from early 1944, with women specifically denied access and equipment they had enjoyed in 1942 and 1943 (97). If women were to see more than the inside of military HQ, they needed to be 'hardworking and resourceful' and 'found new ways to work around the flawed directives', employing charm and subterfuge to get where they needed (124). These women included Ann Stringer, Lee Carson, Iris Carpenter and Helen Kirkpatrick, this latter becoming the only woman war correspondent to win the Freedom Medal for her coverage for the *Chicago Daily News* (112).

One of the most significant findings of the study is the virtual airbrushing out of women from memoirs written by male correspondents after the war, so obliterating virtually from the end of hostilities, women's contribution to Second World War correspondence (73).

Partly as a result of this hostility and obliteration, most women returned to women's pages and magazines after the end of the war, finding their life, as Martha Gellhorn described it, 'tiresomely superficial' and joining 'the great post-war fraternity of the psychically displaced' (125). This thorough and readable volume also contains two useful appendices of American women accredited to cover both World Wars, and the newspapers they wrote for.