



A Darkling Plain: Stories of Conflict and Humanity during War

By Kristen Renwick Monroe



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How do people maintain their humanity during wars? Despite its importance, this question receives scant scholarly attention, perhaps because war is overwhelming. The generally accepted belief is that wars bring out the worst in us, pitting one against another. "War is hell," William Tecumseh Sherman famously noted, and even "just" wars are massively destructive and inhumane. Since ethics is concerned with discovering what takes us to a morally superior place, one conducive to betterment and happiness- studying what helps people survive wartime trauma thus becomes an extremely valuable enterprise. A Darkling Plain fills an important scholarly void, analyzing wartime stories that reveal much about our capacity to process trauma, heal wounds, reclaim lost spirits, and derive meaning and purpose from the most horrific of personal events.



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Editorial Review

Review

"A Darkling Plain: Stories of Conflict and Humanity during War provides a fresh interdisciplinary perspective to address an important understudied topic: how do individuals maintain their humanity in war and its aftermath? This is one of those rare non-fiction books that is hard to put aside once you start reading it. In spite of the harrowing nature of the wartime stories of suffering that are described in first-person accounts, this material is also rich in conveying courage, emotional connectedness, and personal growth and healing. Moreover, A Darkling Plain uses these poignant interviews as well as drawing from others to test a variety of theories about resilience in the face of suffering - theories ranging from the situational/environmental, to the existential/psychoanalytic, and to the literature on post-traumatic stress disorder. There is much in A Darkling Plain to stimulate further thinking and insight about this understudied topic of resilience and humanity in war."

Cheryl Koopman, Stanford University

"Making the unconscious conscious, giving voice to the unspeakable, Kristen Monroe makes intimate the horrors of war, persecution, and genocide. From Armenia to the Holocaust, from Iwo Jima to the Japanese internment camps in the United States, memories of resilience and despair are restored to the sleeping world. Monroe has collected the voices that, as in Joyce's aspiration, "forge the uncreated conscience of [our time]".

Robert E. Lane, Emeritus Professor, Yale University, Connecticut

"A Darkling Plain presents a timely and deeply affecting series of narrative interviews with individuals who not only survived, but eventually thrived, in the wake of horrific experiences in war, ranging from the Armenian genocide through World War II to current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. These survivors demonstrate how acceptance of our interconnectedness and humility in the face of horror can allow hope and humanity to exist side by side in the face of hate and destruction. Monroe's magisterial work synthesizing the lessons their experiences glean provides insight into the factors that help promote both resilience and recovery in face of trauma and torture."

Rose McDermott, Brown University

"With her characteristic wisdom, empathy, and superb interviewing skills, Kristen Monroe has written a book that everyone connected with wars should read. She has an unusual talent for identifying questions as difficult as they are important, and the book provides not the answer - which is not possible - but many answers that resonate widely and deeply. This is a moving and provocative book."

Jennifer L. Hochschild, Henry LaBarre Jayne Professor of Government and Professor of African and African American Studies, Harvard University

About the Author

Kristen Monroe is an American political scientist specializing in political psychology and the scientific study of ethics. Her work on altruism and moral choice is presented in three award-winning books: *The Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a Common Humanity* (1994), *The Hand of Compassion: Portraits of Moral Choice during the Holocaust* (2004) and *Ethics in an Age of Terror and Genocide: Identity and Moral Choice* (2012). Monroe's other work explores issues of gender equality within academia, ethics and stem-cell research, the development of empirical political theory, interdisciplinary work in social science, and how people keep their humanity during war. Monroe is the author or co-editor of fifteen books and nearly 100

journal articles and book chapters. She is a past president of the International Society of Political Psychology, vice president of the American Political Science Association, and book review editor for Political Psychology. Monroe received the 2013 Nevitt Sanford Award for Professional Contributions to Psychology and was a 2012-13 Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University. In 2010, the American Political Science Association gave Monroe the Ithiel De Sola Pool Award and Lectureship for outstanding work in political science and the Frank Johnson Goodnow Award for service to the profession. The University of California, Irvine, awarded Monroe the 2010 Paul H. Silverman Award for distinguished work in ethics and the 2008 Faculty Senate Award for distinguished research.

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