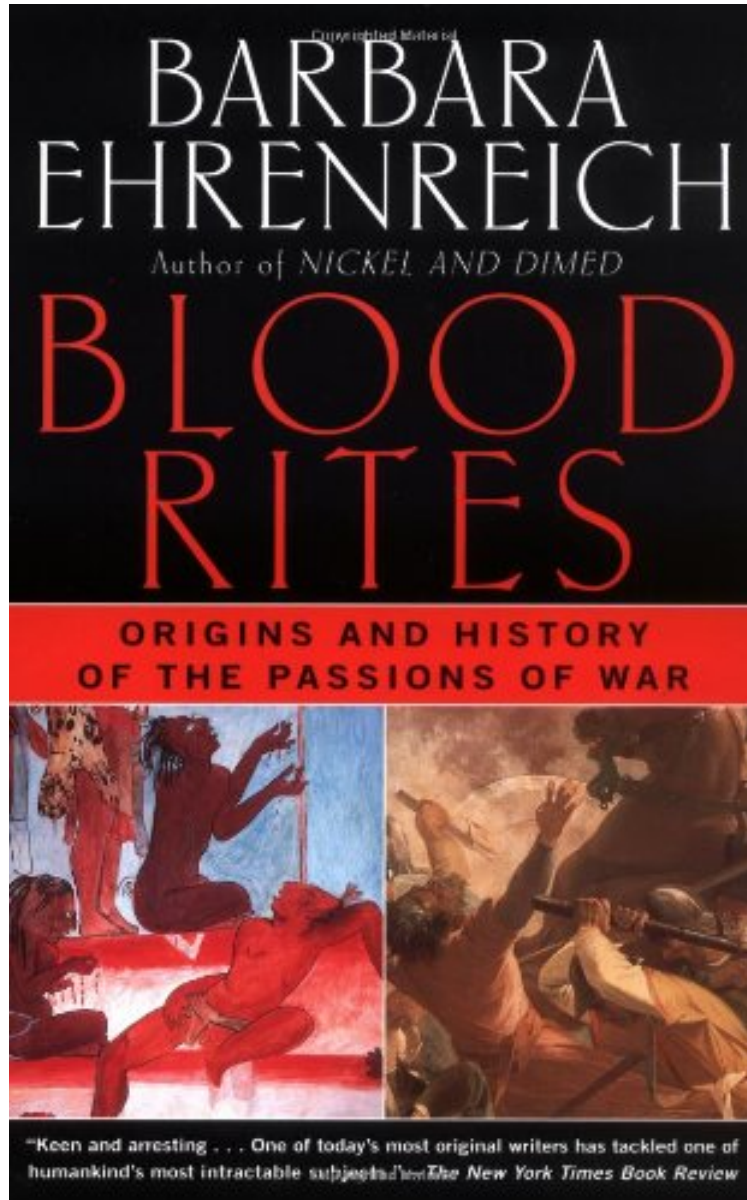


[DOWNLOAD] Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War

Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War

Barbara Ehrenreich

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Barbara Ehrenreich : Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War:

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. War, the Predator BeastBy G. Joy RobinsI loved Nickel and

Dimed but was disappointed in *For Her Own Good*. Barbara Ehrenreich is a prolific writer and, I guess, not everything can be a gem. *Blood Rites* is well researched and exciting reading. Ehrenreich attacks the nature and origins of War, a subject on which she is admittedly not an expert. She brings a fresh eye, excellent research skills and the ability to put her conclusions in clear and compelling language. Her key conclusion is that war grew out of our early experiences as prey turned predators. I don't know if that is as revolutionary an idea as she claims, but she convinced me. War is a religious experience based on the blood sacrifices of early humans to propitiate predator gods. It evolved with human society and now serves the new religion of nationalism, known in the US as patriotism. While it is a human creation, like Frankenstein's monster, it has taken on a life of its own and has become the new Beast. It is so enmeshed in our consciousness and culture that we may not be able to stop it. We find ourselves throwing young men and women into its merciless maw at a rate that makes even the bloodiest ancient rites seem tame in comparison. Ehrenreich draws us to that frightening conclusion and then, apparently in search of a happy ending, suggests that perhaps the modern anti-war movement will grow powerful enough to actually put a stop to it; the war against war serving as the new but benign secular "religion".

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good book. By Christopher R. Since I read "Blood Rites" after "War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning", comparisons are inevitable and I will make no attempt to avoid them. In "War is a Force..." Hedges speaks only of contemporary war and how it excites the passions of modern man in the late 20th and early 21st century. He draws extensively on his own personal experiences covering conflicts across the globe, which gives significant credence to the arguments that he makes. One of the shortfalls, though, of that book is that he tends to speak nearly exclusively in some parts on those personal experiences. What he lacks is a more scholarly attempt at defining the "force", or as Ehrenreich calls them, "passions" of war. This is where "Blood Rites" excels. Ehrenreich's proposal regarding the evolution of the passions of war are very compelling. Until I read her book, I was of the mind that it is a "meme" (she mentions this concept and its creator, Richard Dawkins, in her final chapter) that has persisted for many of the same reasons as religion: In those "true believers" doing the fighting, it excites group hysteria, feelings of brotherhood and kinship found nowhere else, etc. And in those who are the puppet masters, it provides them with the ability to force their will on the masses. (That is an extremely condensed version of my views.) Her proposal that war developed from ritual sacrifice, which was something early man adopted to transition and cope with its history of being prey to large predators, and then persisted as agricultural advancements eliminated the need for men to hunt/gather, is fascinating. As an explanation for the origin of conflict, this is an interesting theory. Other contemporary attempts at explaining war do, as she argues, fall short as they are tainted by our contemporary perspective. Our motivations for recent wars, which are fought over geopolitical and economic interests, are not valid historically in all cases throughout all cultures. Although her arguments are compelling, I do have some questions and think her theory has some holes. Perhaps this belief stems from the fact that I had to take a break from the book for a little over a week due to a death in the family, but perhaps not. A lot has happened in the decade since this was published, and I wonder what sort of critical review her theories have received and whether or not events have validated her theories or caused her to have to rethink them. That shall be my next endeavor, I suppose, although I think her overt sympathies to Marx and socialism that are found toward the end of this book will turn off a lot of scholars and prejudice any review they make of this work.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. War at the Heart of the Human Enterprise By Annabel Ascher In this deep and meticulously researched treatise on the origins of war Barbara Ehrenreich argues that

1. In our earliest history we were scavengers with no good defense mechanism, hardly the top of the food chain.
2. When humans developed the brain power to become an apex predator the wound inflicted by being a prey animal formed the basis of the first religious ceremonies as small bands of humans re-enacted the trauma of the predator-prey relationship in sacrificial blood rites.
3. That about 12,000 years ago at the end of the Pleistocene and the beginning of the agricultural revolution the large prey that consumed the attentions of the most violent segment of society had been all but hunted out.
4. Putting these men to work as warriors to replace their hunting niche was adaptive at the time.
5. War began as an organized human enterprise about 12,000 years ago as these new warriors captured people from other tribes to use in the blood rites and for slave labor.
6. Finally, the fact that war was and is a social construct makes it no less real and no less dangerous as this formerly adaptive behavior has become inextricably intertwined with every aspect of our human lives over the last 12 millennia. In fact it has become the center of the human enterprise. Looking at the problem of war from the above perspective should alert those of us in the peace movement to the profound psychological transformation that must take place before we can make in headway at all. The fact that this close inspection of the earliest history is so timely today just proves Ehrenreich's central thesis as to the madness and intractability of war.

An ALA Notable Book A New York Times Notable Book In *Blood Rites*, Barbara Ehrenreich confronts the mystery of the human attraction to violence: What draws our species to war and even makes us see it as a kind of sacred undertaking? *Blood Rites* takes us on an original journey from the elaborate human sacrifices of the ancient world to the carnage and holocaust of twentieth-century "total war." Sifting through the fragile records of prehistory, Ehrenreich discovers the wellspring of war in an unexpected place--not in a "killer instinct" unique to the males of our species but in the blood rites early humans performed to reenact their terrifying experience of predation by stronger

carnivores. Brilliant in conception, rich in scope, *Blood Rites* is a monumental work that will transform our understanding of the greatest single threat to human life.

.com In this ambitious work, Barbara Ehrenreich offers a daring explanation for humans' propensity to wage war. Rather than approach the subject from a physiological perspective, pinpointing instinct or innate aggressiveness as the violent culprit, she reaches back to primitive man's fear of predators and the anxieties associated with life in the food chain. To deal with the reality of living as prey, she argues that blood rites were created to dramatize and validate the life-and-death struggle. Jumping ahead to the modern age, Ehrenreich brands nationalism a more sophisticated form of blood ritual, a phenomenon that conjures similar fears of predation, whether in the form of lost territory or the more extreme ethnic cleansing. *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War* may not offer a cure for human aggression, but the author does present a convincing argument for the difficulties associated with achieving peace. From Library Journal Social critic and Time magazine essayist Ehrenreich (*The Worst Years of Our Lives*, LJ 4/15/90) turns her attention here to anthropology, delving into the causes of man's age-old interest in war. Her remarkable thesis is that primitive peoples were defined not so much by a killer predatory instinct as by their role as prey for other animals. Social constructs such as war and ritual sacrifice then developed as ways to reenact the primal emotions of being prey—the terror of facing a hungry beast. Her thesis is fascinating, and the anthropological exposition is well written and convincing, if mainly speculative. Ehrenreich's last section, which uses scattered examples from modern history to illustrate the "sacralization" of war, is also intriguing (if somewhat less convincing). Recommended for both public and academic libraries. Robert Persing, Univ. of Pennsylvania Lib., Philadelphia Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sAn iconoclastic study in which social commentator and Time essayist Ehrenreich challenges accepted notions of why human beings wage war. In her tenth book Ehrenreich (*The Worst Years of Our Lives*, 1990, etc.) takes a multidisciplinary approach in her investigation of "the feelings people invest in war and often express as their motivations for fighting." She makes a thorough examination of a wide range of historical, psychological, sociological, biological, and anthropological literature to come up with her unique theory: that the accepted view that human beings engage in wars because of an innate aggressive, warlike instinct—especially in men—is untrue. Instead, Ehrenreich persuasively argues that the "roots of the human attachment to war" can be found in feelings and emotions that are imprinted on all of us due to events that took place many millennia ago, when our earliest ancestors spent most of their waking hours in fear of being devoured by predators. What Ehrenreich calls humankind's "sacralization of war" (the tendency to invest the emotional trappings of religious fervor in war) stems from the evolution of humans from prey into predators, the feelings engendered in "a creature which has learned only 'recently,' in the last thousand or so generations, not to cower at every sound in the night." The human predilection for war, as Ehrenreich puts it, can be viewed "as a way of reenacting the primal transformation from prey to predator." Also key was "a global decline in the number of large animals, both 'game' and predators, for humans to fight against." In making these original arguments, Ehrenreich challenges long-held theories of evolution and psychology promulgated by Darwin, Freud, and other scholars. Ehrenreich's work is convincing, at least to the general reader. Her ideas likely will be challenged by those whose theories she seeks to discredit. (First printing of 30,000; author tour; radio satellite tour) -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.