

Mark J. Crowley, Sandra Trudgen Dawson (eds), *Women's Experiences of the Second World War. Exile, Occupation and Everyday Life* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2021).

Engaging with the rich literature of the last decades on the history of women's everyday life in the Second World War, this collection of essays shows how women's roles in the conflict were varied and complex, both in different countries and in differing social and cultural environments. There are thematic links between the twelve individual chapters, even though they focus on different parts of the world (Europe, New Zealand, Canada, China, Japan and the United States). They are mostly based on subjective sources such as diaries, memoirs, letters or photographic albums kept by women during the war, as well as on oral interviews. The women this volume brings to life were exiles, lived under occupation, participated in the military forces, served as missionaries, lobbied politicians, found new opportunities in their lives, or, on the contrary, returned to traditional roles after the war. The first part of the volume, devoted to exile and occupation, opens with a chapter by Beth Shalom Hessel on protestant missionary women in Japan, called back to the US in 1941, who sought to challenge American racism by supporting Japanese Americans who were imprisoned and put in camps after Pearl Harbour. Nupur Chaudhuri brings the focus on Europe, with a contribution on the experience of women in German-occupied Alsace between 1939 and 1945, largely reconstructed through the memoir of an Alsatian woman that recalls a complex history of border-crossing, refugees, camps, abandoned and looted houses, air raid alarms and shelters. Also centred on a woman's vicissitudes, the chapter by Bernice Lindner takes the story to England, to the mining community of county Durham. Drawn by poverty and family disruption to abandon her home and join a circus, the young protagonist of this case study forged a new identity as an entertainer in Nazi Germany and then in north America during the war. The author reconstructs her remarkable life using oral interviews, the press, photographs and circus ephemera. War diaries constitute the main sources for the following chapter, by Sylvie Crinquand, on two Jewish women in occupied Paris (between 1942 and 1944) and Amsterdam (between 1941 and 1942). Both women were deported to concentration camps and died before the end of the war, and both diaries were interrupted by deportation. Their diaries show how private matters were increasingly disrupted by the occupation and by the arrival of anti-Semitic legislation. The second part of the book concentrates on the experience of living with wartime occupiers and begins with an investigation of the relationship between Māori women and American servicemen stationed in New Zealand between 1942 and 1944. Drawing on an oral history project, the chapter provides an original study of indigenous women's roles and the consequences of American occupation which disrupts the commonly held view of a "friendly invasion" and looks at the consequences it had in host communities, particularly in sexual and reproductive terms. Using oral histories from Japanese wives of American servicemen, Regina F. Lark examines the question of interracial marriage in occupied Japan after the end of the Second World War, showing how issues of racial intolerance shaped official policies, public opinion and popular attitudes in both America and Japan. In the following chapter, Wai-Yin Christina Wong brings our attention to the Canton region of China, occupied by Japan since 1938. Among those who did not escape were a few American Presbyterian missionaries who worked at a school for the blind until they were interned as enemy aliens when the United States declared war on Japan. Making use of missionaries' public and private correspondence to their American audience, the author examines the everyday life of three women, two American and one Chinese, who enabled the school and its students to survive during occupation. In the study by Kelly A. Spring, on gender roles and British food rationing in a boarding house in Morecambe (England) during the war, the occupiers were military personnel as well as evacuated civil servants from London. Drawing on archival sources and oral interviews, the author shows how, through shared 'commensality', important associations were forged between the two war fronts. The third and last

part of the book focuses on daily life at both home and at the battle fronts. The opening chapter by Michael Timonin reconstructs the role played by wives of servicemen in the United States in organising a pressure movement to accelerate demobilisation between 1945 and 1946. Through an examination of the press across American states, the author sheds light on the activities, the tactics (interestingly often borrowed, in industrial cities, from labour unions) and the organisations created by women to seek and influence the War Department. Alexis Peri then takes us to a completely different environment: that of the hundreds of thousands of Soviet women who fought on the frontlines. Thanks to oral interviews, letters, diaries and Soviet military reports this chapter explores the impact of war on notions of Soviet womanhood. While wartime propaganda emphasised that women could be both martial and maternal, the sources complicate the picture, showing how the war disrupted personal practices of femininity and gender identity. Wartime scrapbooks and photograph albums represent the central source for the study of Canadian servicewomen's experience, for example as clerks, cooks and drivers, in the chapter by Sarah Hogenbirk. The volume concludes with an analysis of the vicissitudes of American military nurses who participated in the liberation of Nazi concentration camps in Europe. Examining oral interviews undertaken in the 1990s, Patricia Chappine delves into the reaction of nurses who witnessed the liberation of three camps, showing how they faced horror, death and extreme cruelty with little preparation or psychological support. The volume succeeds in creating a number of microhistories and in revealing how the war was experienced in very personal ways and provoked very individual reactions (despite the overarching governments' propaganda and policies), working as an antidote to the existing predominantly male narrative.

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