REVIEW

Alison Chand. *Masculinities on Clydeside: Men in Reserved Occupations During the Second World War*. Scottish Historical Review, Monographs Series. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. Pp. 216. ISBN: 9781474409360 (hardcover). \$85.95.

Civilian masculinities in the Second World War were long omitted from both historical investigation and cultural memory. Over the past decade or so, however, at least the academic lacuna has begun to be addressed, particularly from a Scottish perspective, in publications by Arthur McIvor and Juliette Pattinson (the supervisors of the PhD on which this monograph is based) and Linsey Robb. This contribution by Alison Chand to the Scottish Historical Review Monograph series focuses on masculinities on Clydeside, the region around the river Clyde that encompasses Dumbarton, Lanark, Renfrew, Ayr, and Argyll and Bute. As both agricultural and industrial labourers could be reserved under the Schedule of Reserved Occupations, focus on this region allows engagement with both rural and urban occupations, with shipbuilding in particular reinvigorated by rearmament. The source base for this study is oral history, including interviews conducted by the author or held in oral history archives, as well as evidence drawn from Mass Observation, parliamentary debates, official publications, newspaper articles, and a smattering of cultural representations, particularly in prose.

Chand's study is divided into four main chapters focused on ever-widening constructions of masculine subjectivities after an introduction providing context. The author asserts that such subjectivities should not be understood only through cultural materials, an argument which seems

somewhat superfluous, and that the 'lived' meaning of everyday existence is paramount to understanding subjectivities, a term Chand prefers over 'identity'. The first chapter examines masculine subjectivities at the level of the individual, the second at a local/regional level and the third examines collective influences including nationality, religion, political beliefs and social activities that widen the focus from gender. The final chapter offers a rare examination of the experiences of women in reserved occupations in Clydeside and in relationship to civilian males. The emphasis on the significance of local and regional factors offers a particularly valuable contribution to the field because of the attention it draws to specificities of context and their impact on individuals' experiences. In reserved occupations adopted by fathers and sons across generations and shared by other fit young men of service age, such as dock workers, the pull of the military and its particular version of masculinity had much stronger competition in occupational camaraderie and hierarchies of skill. For example, there is a report of men paying the foreman to make sure they continued to be reserved (p. 43). In that context it would have been interesting how civil defence (not only home defence through the Home Guard) featured in the interviews to illuminate attitudes to the war effort on the Home Front.

The author returns in the conclusion to the factors contributing to subjectivities, including not only gender, but nationality, ethnicity, class consciousness, political belief and religion, contrasting real and imagined subjectivities. While social, cultural and official discourses affected how gender identities were imagined, the author concludes 'it is in everyday life, the necessities and contingencies of day-to-day tasks and relationships' where male and female subjectivities were 'lived', 'although in fluid and inseparable alliance with their 'imagined' subjectivities' (p. 132). The fluidity of that 'alliance' is paramount: Chand's argument is least convincing

when it veers towards dichotomy (contrast, for example, the argument on p. 83 or p. 102 with the latter citation): the circuit between lived experience and cultural representation is more subtle and more resistant to disentangling than the author sometimes suggests.

The significance of the temporal context is another interesting dimension worthy of further development. Chand argues that wartime cannot be claimed as a watershed for workers of either sex, noting, for example, that many female interviewees did not distinguish between their time working in factories during the war and after it (p. 84, p. 127). Rather, continuity and everyday life were the more dominant factors, an argument significant to cultural memory –or amnesia– also. The analysis of the interviews would benefit from a more critical engagement with context, both of the Second World War and contemporary to the interview. This is particularly significant in the discussion of British/Scottish identities which were re-considered both during the war and more recently in deliberations of independence, both relevant to the interview context.

The conclusion of greatest significance to understandings of gender in the Second World War is the support this author provides to the argument that gender boundaries were fluid and ‘fuzzy’, not fixed, contingent on the exigencies of war. This monograph would thus be of greatest interest to any scholar working on gender identities in the Second World War, occupational identities and oral history. It is a particularly welcome addition to understandings of the lived experience of both masculinities and femininities in the war from a regional perspective.

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