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Sonya Rose's initial interest in national identity was sparked by the patriotic fervor that burst forth following the declaration of the first Iraq War (1990–1). 'I wondered at how easily patriotic sentiment and the sense of belonging to a nation under threat – even if that threat was so far away – could be aroused' (p. 285). This interest informed her research for *Which People's War?* and its development from an initial investigation of women's sexual activity on the home front during the Second World War into a broader exploration of the contested and often contradictory articulations of Britishness and citizenship that emerged during the conflict. Rose finished working on the book shortly after 11 September 2001, and, as she writes in her conclusion, the book went into production just as 'the US, abetted by Britain, threatens a new war with Iraq and again the drums of patriotism are beating loudly and persistently' (p. 285).

More than 13 years later, both Americans and Britons are again confronted with an upsurge in nationalist rhetoric in the form of Donald Trump's calls to 'Make America Great Again' and Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage's appeals for referendum voters to make June 23rd 'Britain's Independence Day'. This latest surge of nationalism draws its strength as much from its emphasis on who is excluded – in America, Mexicans and Muslims; in Britain, Polish immigrants and Syrian refugees – as from a sense of the commonality of heritage and identity that draws its supporters together. That these national identities are as much about exclusion as inclusion should come as no surprise. Benedict Anderson's seminal 1982 study *Imagined Communities* (1) highlighted the importance of 'othering' in the formation of national identities – a truth brought home in a British historical context a decade later by Linda Colley in *Britons* (2), which explored the formation of British national identity over the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Yet, in popular histories of the 20th century, and particularly in histories of the Second World War, the central role of exclusions and othering in defining national identity has been largely swept under the rug. The Spirit of Dunkirk, the heroic memory of fortitude during the Blitz, and the narrative of Britons coming together as a united nation to defend their islands against the fascist threat in the quintessential 'People's War' have proved remarkably resilient, notwithstanding Angus Calder's efforts to interrogate the construction of such narratives in *The Myth of the Blitz*.(3)

While Calder focused on the historical memory of the war, Rose confined herself to sources from the period between 1939 and 1945, including 'periodic reports from Regional Commissioners under the direction of the Ministry of Home Security, and reports on the public mood from officials working under the auspices of the Home Intelligence division of the Ministry of Information, diaries, and occasional memoirs, private letters and the letters-to-the-editors of newspapers' (p. 27). She used these sources to identify and contextualize key aspects wartime Britons' attitudes towards class, gender, regional and imperial identities and race. While she cautiously 'ma[de] no claim that these sources are representative', Rose argues that they 'allow us some insight into some peoples' concerns, anxieties, and hopes. In other words, they shine some light onto wartime subjectivities' (p. 27).

Which People's War? illuminated both the rich potentialities and the pitfalls of such an approach. Since the book's publication, the Mass-Observation archive at the University of Sussex has been substantially digitized, and a breadth of new scholarship has opened up making use of, not only the file reports and directive replies used by Rose, but also the rich pages of observers' diaries. (Rose's book makes use of diaries held at the Imperial War Museum, not those in the M-O collection.) While the easy availability of such sources, and the digitization of numerous national and local papers by websites such as britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk has opened up new avenues for exploring the social and cultural history of the war, there has occasionally been a tendency to assume that the voices uncovered are more representative than may in fact be the case, or a failure to read against the grain to interrogate the biases and assumptions behind sources. Unlike economic and some forms of social history, which involve the enumeration and analysis of concrete facts and

figures, cultural history requires a subtle assessment of the 'throw' or relative weight to be attributed to sources in assessing their significance.

The cultural history that stands the test of time tends to be that which offers the most plausible and compelling interpretation of the surviving cultural artifacts. On this measure, *Which People's War?* has proved remarkably successful. Rose's overarching argument is that, 'Citizenship, during this period, then, was predominantly understood to be a moral or ethical practice that was deemed crucial for national survival. ... Because the nation was believed to be a moral community of good citizens, it would emerge victorious from the war and a new Britain would follow in its wake' (p. 20). Following the introductory chapter on the theoretical bases of nationalism and citizenship, chapter two begins by exploring a contradiction: in emphasizing the unity of the British nation, the government and employers exposed themselves to unprecedented criticism of the class biases and inequalities that rent through British society. Rose highlights unofficial strike actions, attitudes towards the evacuation of working-class urban children to the more affluent countryside, and responses to the Soviet Union to underscore the ways in which 'class in the classical Marxian sense' (p. 44) intruded itself into the conflict, and argues that the war inspired an 'almost millenarian' desire to (p. 62) remake postwar Britain in a more just image. While she makes clear in her introduction that *Which People's War?* is not meant as a contribution to political history, Rose concludes the chapter with a broadside against the so-called 'apathy school', arguing that it was wrong to say 'the British simply "didn't care" about social reform ... Instead of interpreting cynicism as a sign of apathy, I have argued that it was a symptom of the fear of unfulfilled desire' (p. 69). Anti-apathy scholars, including myself, continue to look to *Which People's War?* as a useful source on wartime political culture.

The next two chapters focus on defining a 'moral and ethical' femininity within a wartime context – a femininity which was physically alluring, but not promiscuous, which allowed women to step into workplace and social roles previously filled by men, but did not challenge men's hegemony or the ideal of the British wife and mother. In an example of the messy ways in which race, gender and class overlap, the key focus of chapter 3 is the social stigma attached to interracial relationships between white British women and African-American soldiers – a discussion that would have fitted in as neatly into Rose's later the chapter on race. This discussion, which also formed the focus of Rose's 1998 article in the *American Historical Review* (4) is substantiated by rich material on observers' attitudes towards such relationships, but frustratingly offers little insight into the subjectivities of the black soldiers who consorted with British women, and no insight into the feelings and motives of the women themselves.

Chapter five, on femininity, also speaks to themes that cross boundaries of gender and class, and harkens back to the discussion of attitudes towards Soviet women discussed in chapter two. Chapter two analyzed the iconic poster 'Women of Britain Come into the Factories' which is used as the cover image for the book, which Rose argues 'could easily have been read at the time as depicting a Soviet woman issuing a call to the women of England "over the oceans and mountains and steppes"' (p. 54). Yet, while chapter four emphasizes the importance of British women maintaining their femininity, even in the factory, the poster's ambiguity owes much to the fact that the central female figure, like Russian women, is 'depicted admiringly as masculine' (p. 52). Recently, Chloe Ward picked up on this tension in work on the depiction of Soviet women in British wartime propaganda, a project inspired by Rose's work.(5)

One question raised by chapter four was the extent to which women were complicit in constructing a definition of femininity that emphasized women's domestic role and their fragility and need for protection. Feminist politicians are shown to reject such constructions, particularly in their crusade against unequal compensation for civilians injured on the home front. However, most of the evidence for the chapter comes from men, whether they be male officials at the Ministry of Information commissioning posters which emphasized women's

beauty and domesticity, or men writing into the newspapers to protest the government's imposition of fire-watching duties on women. While such sources highlight male insecurities about the destabilization of the gender order, they largely obscure women's own views. It is noteworthy, for example, that in the case of the fire-watching order, Ellen Wilkinson, who oversaw the fire-watching scheme at the Department of Home Security, received as much if not more criticism from women as from men over her decision to make the scheme mandatory for women. For Wilkinson, the decision was ideological – she was determined to assert that women, as equal citizens, were liable to the state on the same terms as men. However, many of her female compatriots did not agree. It was only her personal determination to make a political point that discouraged her boss at Home Security, Herbert Morrison, from scrapping the program as too unpopular to be worth the hassle.(6)

Chapter five, on 'Temperate heroes', considers how men in reserved occupations or otherwise unable or unwilling to serve in combat were able to assert their own manliness outside of the armed forces. It was, Rose acknowledges, a difficult balancing act, and one which helps to explain why so many men on the home front enlisted in the Home Guard, whose uniform helped to legitimize their commitment to the war effort.

Chapter six, on 'Geographies of the nation', explores both the enduring role of the English pastoral in the imagination of industrialized Britain, and the emergence of cultural nationalism in 'the principalities' – a theme that resonates strongly with post-Brexit debates about the place of Scotland and Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom. The final chapter on 'Race, empire and nation' is both the most fascinating and, at times, the most frustrating chapter in the book. Rose explores Britons' contradictory attitudes towards 'others' within their borders, including both Black imperial pilots and soldiers and African-American troops. As with Britons' attitudes towards Jewish refugees discussed earlier in the book, the tensions between engrained racial prejudices and Britons' self-conception as a tolerant and democratic nation are clearly and uneasily manifest.

More than a decade after its publication, *Which People's War?* remains a model for students interested in contemporary cultural history, as well as a salutary reminder of the implicit exclusions inherent in any nationalist project. While the book occasionally raises questions about individual or collective subjectivities that it proves unable to answer, the questions themselves suggest profitable areas for future research. In addition to Ward's work on attitudes towards Soviet women, Rose's impact is visible in the work of scholars including Alan Allport, Geoffrey Field, Martin Francis and others (7), and will doubtless continue to inspire researchers in the years to come.

Notes

1. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1982).
2. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT).
3. Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London, 1991).
4. Sonya O. Rose, 'Sex, citizenship, and the nation in World War II Britain', *American Historical Review*, 103, 4 (October 1998), 1147–76.
5. Chloe Ward, 'Something of the Spirit of Stalingrad': British women, their Soviet sisters, propaganda and politics in the Second World War', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25, 3 (2014), 435–60.
6. Laura Beers, *Red Ellen: The Life of Ellen Wilkinson, Socialist, Feminist, Internationalist* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 392–5.
7. Alan Allport, *Demobbed: Coming Home After World War Two* (New Haven, CT, 2010); Geoffrey Field, *Blood, Sweat, and Toil: Remaking the British Working Class, 1939–1945*

(Oxford, 2014); Martin Francis, *The Flyer: British Culture and the Royal Air Force, 1939–1945* (Oxford, 2009).

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