



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

## Corinna Peniston-Bird & Emma Vickers (eds), *Gender and the Second World War: Lessons of War*

### Citation for published version:

Ugolini, W 2018, 'Corinna Peniston-Bird & Emma Vickers (eds), *Gender and the Second World War: Lessons of War*' *British Journal of Military History*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 121-122.  
<<https://www.bjmh.org.uk/index.php/bjmh/article/view/252>>

### Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

### Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

### Published In:

British Journal of Military History

### General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

### Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



## REVIEWS

Having said that *Spying Through A Glass Darkly* is a first-rate piece of writing and a fitting tribute to its authors. It will be of use not only to students of intelligence history but to anyone interested in the early Cold War.

DECLAN O'REILLY  
University of East Anglia

**Corinna Peniston-Bird & Emma Vickers (eds), *Gender and the Second World War: Lessons of War*. London: Palgrave, 2017. Index. Cloth. pp.226. ISBN 978-113-752-457-7. Paperback. Price £21.99.**

This edited volume is part of Palgrave's Gender and History series and acts as an effective companion volume to *Gender and Conflict since 1914* (2012) edited by Ana Carden-Coyne. It adopts an impressively global approach, addressing gender identities within thirteen countries and across four continents. Overall, *Gender and the Second World War* is a fascinating and highly readable collection which sets out the premise that 'the existence, definition, causes, practices, and consequences of war cannot be understood without using gender as a category of analysis' (p. 1). The first two parts of the book address gender identities in the forces and on the home front, the third explores the meeting places between military and civilian identities and the final section addresses contemporary and retrospective representations of the war. Following Corinna Peniston-Bird's 'concept of fuzzy boundaries', exploring the centre of the gender spectrum where masculinities and femininities overlap, this volume underscores the mutability of gender identities (p. 6). In the introductory chapter, the editors provide a useful synthesis of historiographical debates relating to the impact of war on gender relations, roles and identities. The subsequent chapters embrace a diverse range of topics including Italian Fascism and masculinities, contested masculinities within the front-line Red Army and a case study of a Nazi espionage agent, Hildegard Beetz, in chapters by Lorenzo Benadusi, Robert Dale and Katrin Paehler respectively. Helen Glew deftly addresses attitudes towards married women within public service in Britain and Canada whilst Katherine Jellison's examines US photographic propaganda which used female bodies, including Amish and Mennonite women, to showcase wartime American life. In a fascinating analysis of Welsh mining communities, Ariane Mak highlights how the recruitment of 'unskilled' men into munitions factories led to them earning more than the more respected, 'skilled' miners. Mak argues that this destabilisation of communal norms led to 'a crisis of respectable masculinity' which was heightened by women's participation in war work. Emma Vickers and Emma Jackson's insightful chapter on female impersonators in wartime

service entertainment extends our understanding of queer sexualities in the British armed forces, investigating the connections between 'queer identity and cross-dressing' (p. 49). Florence Tamagne also addresses the topic of same sex relations in wartime, pointing out that the question of male homosexuality within the French Resistance 'remains a blindspot in historical research' (p. 155).

In her chapter on American Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), Sarah Myers unpicks the gendered assumptions surrounding female pilots, ending with the wonderful observation that the post-war exclusion of women pilots 'left high altitudes as spaces literally for men' (p. 19). Through an examination of bigamy cases, Helen Steele beautifully illuminates the chaotic post-war world of Vienna and demonstrates the impact of the war on the citizens of the Austrian capital. She points out how defeated soldiers returning home with 'feelings of worthlessness' (p. 105) were part of a wider community of 'lost and forgotten people', displaced by war (p. 107). The final two chapters complement each other, addressing the issue of 'comfort women' in South Korea, Japan and China. Sachiyo Tsukamoto critiques the development of a transnational 'comfort women' justice movement whilst Danke Li shows how visual representations of the Second Sino-Japanese War have preserved the imagery of public memories of the war. Li points out that whilst relatively little attention has been paid to the Japanese military's sexual violence against non-comfort Chinese women, these crimes were clearly recorded in Chinese political cartoons and wood-cut prints. In turn, the latter send an important message that ordinary women were 'a significant part of China's War of Resistance' (p. 217). Kate Darian-Smith's chapter, which recovers the memories of US marines posted to Melbourne in 1943, underlines the value of oral history interviews undertaken in earlier decades which now act as a significant driver of memory work about the 'Pacific Partners' of America and Australia. Indeed, Darian Smith's observation that commemorative representations of the Second World War are 'becoming increasingly prominent in national understandings of its cultural and political impact' (p. 137) serves as a fitting justification for this engaging and thought-provoking volume.

WENDY UGOLINI  
University of Edinburgh

**Isla Forsyth, *Second World War British Military Camouflage: Designing Deception*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017. Notes, Bibliography, Index, pp.229. ISBN 978-135-008-664-7. Hardback. Price £28.99.**

*Second World War British Military Camouflage: Designing Deception* offers a cultural-historical geography of military camouflage that spans the first half of the twentieth