

suburban critiques – most famously, William H. Whyte's *Organization Man* – pointed to a suffocating sense of community as the source of 'hell'. In Nicolaidis' view, these conflicting narratives about the links between physical setting and authentic community created intellectual blind spots, obscuring the range of settings in which community might flourish, and paying insufficient attention to political power and inequality, particularly with respect to racial exclusion. Nicolaidis leaves some provocative questions for other scholars to answer: 'If the suburbs offered only social anguish and failure, why did Americans keep moving to them in ever-rising numbers? ... Why would African Americans be willing to risk vandalism, cross burnings, and violence, for the opportunity to live in these social wastelands?' (p. 96).

Ultimately, the most important difference between cities and suburbs is not cultural, but political. In the USA, thousands of autonomous, suburban governments compete for residents and businesses that will demand little from them, thus diminishing the prospects for collective solutions to social problems. (Unfortunately, this edited volume does not address the extent to which other industrialized democracies are facing and addressing similar issues.) The final essay, by Gerald Frug, enumerates the legal means by which suburbs 'cherry pick' their residents via practices such as exclusionary zoning, and separate different classes of residents within their boundaries through devices such as school tracking, and homeowners' associations acting as quasi-governments. *The New Suburban History* paints a rather sobering picture of the 'what's in it for me?' mentality prevalent in suburban politics. This is distressing not only because suburban localities hold the strongest hand in American politics, but because, as Frug notes, they are not the only municipal governments that seek to lure taxpayers and shun tax-users. They simply have more powerful tools with which to accomplish their goals.

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Patricia and Robert Malcolmson (eds.), *A Woman in Wartime London: The Diary of Kathleen Tipper 1941–1945*. London: London Record Society, 2006. xx + 202pp. 2 maps. 9 plates. £20.00.
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This is a thoroughly useful book that makes an important contribution to the historical canon of wartime London. The editors have presented a fascinating and provocative volume, which is both accessible and insightful in its approach. In particular they deserve credit for an eloquent introduction and epilogue, for fine annotations, and for well-chosen illustrations and maps. Such additions to the diary offer interpretations that engage the reader in relating to individuals, events and experiences identified within the text.

The book is organized into three main parts. Parts one and three contain diary extracts that the editors consider representative of the writer's experience. In contrast, part two offers Kathleen Tipper's complete diary from August 1942 to March 1944, apart from a few entries that might have been lost. The editors put forward the view that to publish a diary in its entirety can be impractical in terms of the large bulk of textual material. In fact they have selected extracts that bring out the essential essence of Tipper's wartime life. The problem of choosing

representative samples without imposing heavy closure on the remaining text is a topic of some debate among historians. There are those who maintain that editing personal testimony distorts the intentions of the writer and alters the tenor of their words. Others present a quantitative argument, stating that a small selection of extracts might be unrepresentative of the entire text. My view is that editors make epistemological choices that reflect how individual experience, local conditions and socio-historical processes act on lives over a period of time.

This is a very timely publication, as recent years have witnessed the emergence of a wealth of personal testimonies relating to World War II. Current interest will make the book an attractive target for general readers, who enthusiastically search out new materials through booksellers, libraries, museums and the Internet. However, the academic appeal of the book might also be strong, and it could be used for both students and lecturers of undergraduate and postgraduate modules on the social history of war, urban history, women's history, local history and the uses of personal testimony by historians. Much of the book's appeal stems from its vivid glimpse into the special circumstances of wartime London, not only of its physical conditions, but also of its feelings, emotions and attitudes.

Kathleen Tipper was born in London in 1919 and was the eldest of a family of three. After passing the eleven-plus scholarship she attended the local grammar school, where she stayed until the age of seventeen. She subsequently completed a secretarial course, obtaining her first job as a junior clerk in a city based firm. She kept her wartime diary for Mass Observation from 1941 till 1945, but the editors cannot really explain why she began writing it two years into the war. However, they suggest that reading a wartime periodical might have stimulated her interest in Mass Observation. By the time she commenced writing, Kathleen was already working as a part-time volunteer for the YMCA. From a mobile van and a static canteen she served refreshments to young men and women in uniform. Later on she also became a volunteer at the New Zealand Club in London. In her diary this young Londoner describes the ordinary people that she mixes with on a daily basis: servicemen and women, work colleagues, family members, friends and strangers. With spectacular enthusiasm she also chats about many other wartime topics: cinema, theatre, radio, sport, political rumours, social gossip and news from the battlefronts. She also reflects on private matters, including an explanation of her unsuccessful attempt to join the Women's Royal Naval Service in 1942. With her direct experience of London at war, Kathleen invites the reader to eavesdrop on its voices as she tries to make sense of its complicated world.

Finally, there is a crucial dimension to this book, which should be mentioned here. From August 1939, Mass Observation invited the British people to observe those around them and to record their own day-to-day lives in the form of a monthly diary. Approximately 480 of these writings have survived, and they are currently held in the Mass Observation Archive at the University of Sussex. However, a mere handful of them have been edited for general publication, and are greatly enjoyed by readers. Therefore, the diary of Kathleen Tipper is of huge significance and will be greatly appreciated by devotees of both Mass Observation writing and local London history. My hope is that at some time in the future the book might be produced in paperback form to make it a bit more affordable to poorer students of history. I thoroughly recommend this refreshing book.

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