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978-0-521-87494-6 - At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz

Susan R. Grayzel

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At Home and Under Fire

Although the Blitz has come to symbolize the experience of civilians under aerial attack, Germany first launched air raids on Britain at the end of 1914 and continued them during the First World War. With the advent of war in the air, civilians far removed from traditional battle zones became a direct target of war rather than a group shielded from its impact. This study examines how British civilians experienced and came to terms with aerial warfare during the two world wars. Memories of the First World War's air raids shaped British responses to the various real and imagined war threats of the 1920s and 1930s, including the bombing of civilians during the Spanish Civil War and, ultimately, the Blitz itself. The responses of the government and of many contemporary observers to the arrival of air power emphasized the significance of civilians – by which they meant the gendered category of women and children – to the waging of modern war.

Susan R. Grayzel is Professor of History at the University of Mississippi. She is the author of *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (1999), which was awarded the 2000 British Council Prize by the North American Conference on British Studies, and *Women and the First World War* (2002). Her more recent work appears in *Gender, Labour, War and Empire: Essays on Modern Britain* (2009), co-edited with Philippa Levine.

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*In memory of my mother,
and above all, for Joe*

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Acknowledgments

To some extent, I have been working on this book since I first came across accounts of bombs dropping on the streets of London while researching women during the First World War. As I began this project in earnest at the end of the 1990s and certainly after the events of 9/11 and the responses to them, I became convinced that the air raid and the new understanding of the state, the civilian, and the home at war that it produced needed a history. Along the way, I was sidetracked by two enormous sets of challenges – the arrivals of my daughters and the serious illnesses faced by my parents. The commingling of the labor of teaching, researching, and writing while attending to growing children and a dying parent definitely shaped the book that has emerged. Given the long gestation of this project, I have numerous debts to old mentors and new colleagues, to archivists and librarians, and to a variety of audiences that listened to me deliver my work-in-progress. And I offer the usual but no less sincere apologies to anyone I may have inadvertently left out and for any errors, which remain mine alone.

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