

GENEVIÈVE WARLAND (ED.)
Experience and Memory of the First World War in Belgium : Comparative and Interdisciplinary Insights
 (Historische Belgienforschung, Band 6), Münster, New York, Waxmann, 2018, 227 p.

Those coming across *Experience and Memory of the First World War* may be forgiven for wondering if there is anything new or interesting to say about the conflict of 1914–18. After all, we have just seen out the centenary with its panoply of commemorations, exhibitions, documentaries, publications and other related initiatives. Thankfully, this collection repays those curious enough to return to the trenches of First World War studies in search of new approaches to old questions or, better yet, new questions that have only come to light. Key to *Experience and Memory's* originality is its interdisciplinary nature, which is the result of collaboration between specialists in history, political science, psychology and literature studies who were involved in the MEMEX WWI project. Nearly every contribution has been written by authors from different disciplinary backgrounds.

The collection is structured as a triptych and follows a somewhat chronological as well as thematic order. The first two chapters consider the experiences of Belgian soldiers and civilians as viewed through diary writing. In the first of these, Rose Spijkerman (history), Olivier Luminet (psychology) and Antoon Vrints (history) examine how maintaining diaries helped soldiers regulate emotions and cope with the stresses of war. Their analysis sheds light on the psychological processes – e.g. confrontation and detachment – at work when they put pen to paper. Geneviève Warland (history) and Luminet pick up on this thread in their chapter on the war diaries of historians Paul Fredericq and Henri Pirenne. Their focus is on the emotions the historians' displayed and how these explain their antagonistic stance towards German academics after the war. Warland and Luminet identify three main attitudes Fredericq and Pirenne display towards the Germans – avoiding, accommodating and rejecting – which are linked to their experiences of occupation, deportation

and captivity, and the postwar period. Their attitudes were not characterised by a linear increase of disdain for the invader. In fact, Fredericq and Pirenne's time in Germany saw them soften their positions and these only hardened again when they returned to Belgium where a heady atmosphere of vindictive anti-Germanism reigned.

The middle three chapters consider representations of 1914–18 after the conflict. First up, Myrthel Van Etterbeeck (literature) and Karla Vanraepenbusch (history) trace the development of local memories through the prisms of Belgian war literature and the Liège and Antwerp cityscapes. This rich chapter showcases how Liège's position within the 'brave little Belgium' narrative framed local remembrance initiatives in a way that overshadowed other experiences. The siege and then capitulation of Antwerp, however, did not fit quite so easily into dominant 'brave' or 'poor Belgium' narratives, leaving the port city with a fragmented memorial legacy. In the following chapter, Elke Brems (literature/translation), Reine Meylaerts (literature/translation), Pierre Bouchat (psychology) and Olivier Klein (psychology) analyse Tom Lanoye's Dutch translations of classic British war poems. Studying the responses of translators, critics and 'occasional' readers to Lanoye's translations through the lenses of literary studies, translation studies or psychology, the authors offer eye-opening – if somewhat disjointed – insights into the enduring emotional heft of these texts. Completing the middle section, Valérie Rosoux (political sciences), Bouchat and Klein examine the impact of official Great War narratives on individual memories. Belgium largely takes a backseat as the authors compare results from France, Germany, Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina. Where officials have invoked highly adversarial national narratives – Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina – they found participants recorded far higher levels of 'perceived current victimisation' (suffering) as a result of the Great War than their counterparts in France and Germany, where officials have emphasised rapprochement since the end of the Second World War. The implication here is that 1914–18 still has the rhetorical power to unite or divide.

The final section is dedicated to memory dynamics linked to the centenary. The first chapter analyses Belgian First World War iconography as portrayed on postage stamps. This may seem like a surprising subject given the limited role stamps play in daily life. Nevertheless, historians Chantal Kesteloot and Laurence van Ypersele demonstrate that by interrogating the imagery on these humble little pieces of paper, we can glimpse the evolution of official memory making policies and, in recent years, the societal influences that have been brought to bear on these. The volume ends with a provocative chapter on 'the paradoxical impacts' of commemoration, in which Bouchat, Klein and Rosoux scrutinise individual reactions to First World War exhibitions and documentaries. As a key tenet of Belgian war remembrance has been pacifism, the authors hypothesised that remembrance initiatives would increase pacifist attitudes. However, their results suggest the opposite in certain cases. Namely, if an exhibition or documentary focused principally on 'victims', pacifist attitudes decreased. It would appear then that there is a gap between the emphasis on pacifism underpinning Belgian memorial projects and individuals' interpretations of this message.

Experience and Memory is a thought-provoking and timely volume that reflects the varied backgrounds of its authors. The downside to this, however, is that the chapters tend to pull in a number of different directions. Whereas the first section of the volume has a clear *fil rouge* – diary analysis – the following sections are not as cohesive. That said, the authors recognise the exploratory nature of their contributions as well as their limitations. This is perhaps the collection's most exciting revelation: there is still plenty to say about the First World War and its consequences one hundred years after the fact and *Experience and Memory* sketches out a number of ways future researchers might build on its findings.

Matthew Haultain-Gall

CHRISTIAN DE BORCHGRAVE

Zalig de armen van geest. Vlaanderen 1918-1940: een kerk in de strijd tegen het moderne materialisme

Antwerpen, Vrijdag, 2019, 279 p.

Sinds de late jaren 1970 is, vooral door historici van de KULeuven, veel onderzoek verricht over de christelijke arbeidersbeweging en haar deelorganisaties tijdens het interbellum, zodat we goed weten hoe de organisaties van de katholieke werknemers zich profileerden op sociaal - economisch vlak en waar ze erin slaagden hun stempel te drukken op de ontwikkeling van de sociale politiek. Uit die literatuur blijkt dat priesters zoals de jezuïet J. Arendt daarbij soms een belangrijke rol speelden. Dit perspectief kan echter een vertekend beeld opleveren, omdat deze priesters bekeken worden in de context van een organisatie waarin ze zelf een leidende rol speelden.

Dit boek, een deel van een proefschrift dat meer dan twintig jaar geleden werd verdedigd, kiest een ander perspectief: de clerus, althans haar discours over het materiële en het sociaal - economische, is voorwerp van analyse. Dit impliceert dat niet alleen de priesters die verbonden waren met de christelijke arbeidersbeweging (of ermee sympathiseerden) bestudeerd worden. Een tweede verschil is het publiek van deze priesters. Waar de priesters actief in de christelijke arbeidersbeweging ofwel voor eigen kapel predikten of vaak vanuit hun positie als priester de christelijke arbeidersbeweging verdedigden tegen rechts-katholieke critici en linkse concurrenten, richtte de brede clerus die in dit boek bestudeerd wordt zich tot de katholieke gelovigen in het algemeen of althans buiten een georganiseerd verband. Hiermee innoveert deze publicatie. Vraag is hoe de clerus zich in haar discours verhiel tot de sociaal - economische verschuivingen van het interbellum en welke gedragslijn priesters daarbij aan de katholieke gelovigen trachtten op te leggen.

De bronnen die de auteur gebruikt zijn preken, zowel gepubliceerde als niet-gepubliceerde, herderlijke brieven en tijdschriften waarin priesters publiceerden. Bij de preken komen verschil-