

BOOK REVIEW

Crouthamel, Jason, Michael Geheran, Tim Grady, and Julia Barbara Köhne, eds. *Beyond Inclusion and Exclusion: Jewish Experiences of the First World War in Central Europe*

New York: Berghahn, 2019. Pp. 418.

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Beginning in the 1960s, historians of Jewish life in World War I characterized the war as a period of stigmatization that widened a divide between Jews and their Christian neighbors. For these scholars, the infamous “Jew Count” organized by German authorities in 1916 confirmed that prewar stereotypes had survived the August Days of 1914 and hindered meaningful Jewish inclusion in a nationalistic community at war. Although Jews unquestionably dealt with antisemitism in the trenches and on the home front, recent scholarship has called for a more complex interpretation of how the 1914–18 conflict affected Jewish communities. Utilizing a range of underused sources, a broader geographic and temporal scope, and an expanded methodological framework, this volume strengthens the call for reevaluation by illustrating the diversity of Jewish wartime experiences and encounters with antisemitism in Central Europe and beyond.

The first of the volume’s four sections highlights the value of balancing German-Jewish experiences against those of other marginalized groups. Christine G. Krüger compares French and German Jewish experiences in the Franco-Prussian War and World War I and contends that in republican France, where citizenship was based on service and adherence to the social contract, Jewish and French identities easily coexisted. German Jews, however, struggled to reconcile their national and religious identities among a people who understood the nation in cultural terms. Tamara Scheer’s essay shows that, like their German coreligionists, Habsburg Jews were stereotyped as unpatriotic shirkers. Antisemitism contributed to conflicts involving Jewish soldiers; and attempts to scapegoat Jews intensified as the Habsburg military effort stalled. In this respect, Habsburg Jewish veterans shared common ground with Alsatian soldiers who served in the German army. Devlin Scofield’s important contribution reveals that German authorities routinely questioned the loyalties of soldiers from Alsace-Lorraine and often deployed them to the eastern front to prevent the desertions they expected from Reichsland soldiers. In 1918, Alsatian veterans returned to a homeland under French rule and were viewed as untrustworthy warriors who could only be integrated into French war memory by accepting the role of “unwilling conscripts in the German military” (101).

The essays of the book’s second section examine how ordinary German Jews experienced the war, while stressing the diversity of encounters on both the battle and home fronts. Michael Geheran argues that religious and cultural inclinations greatly impacted how Jews responded to the war and interpreted antisemitism in the military. The Jew Count was disheartening for soldiers who hoped that the bonds forged under fire might counter the misconceptions fueled by antisemitism, but they continued to value their positive experiences in uniform. Other Jews, particularly Zionists, regarded the count as evidence that they would never be accepted as equals. As Jason Crouthamel maintains in his contribution, relationships between Jewish soldiers and their Christian comrades were in fact complex, and daily life at the front was filled with contradictions. Jewish soldiers experienced both inclusionary camaraderie and exclusionary antisemitism, and they tended to believe that the non-Jewish men alongside whom they fought saw them as comrades. German Jews faced prejudice, but their experiences

were not unique. Sarah Panter's comparative contribution shows that Jews in wartime North America and Britain were labeled "German," regardless of their origins, and were accordingly associated with the enemy and mistreated. Essays by Andrea A. Sinn and Sabine Hank reveal that the war provided Jewish women with opportunities to serve their religious organizations and the broader community. Women's work was at times made possible by their husbands' resources, but women's perspectives warrant closer scrutiny. Jewish women dealt with home front challenges rarely encountered by soldiers, and they responded in distinctive ways.

The third section's essays on cultural representation feel out of place in this volume, but Phillip Stiasny's analysis of cinematic representations of the Jewish war experiences in Galicia is nonetheless valuable. Glenda Abramson's essay on Hebrew fiction of World War I demonstrates how literary works serve as memorials to Jewish life before the tragedy of the world wars. The volume's final section fittingly analyzes the contested memories of World War I. Barbara Köhne reveals the writings of psychologist and veteran Paul Plaut to be a significant contribution to the study of the coping mechanisms employed by frontline soldiers. The soldier's mind dealt with warfare through complex processes, including surrender to the collective for the sake of survival. Köhne's examination of Plaut's experiences as a Jewish soldier and his analyses of the soldier's psyche make this essay particularly relevant. War novels, many of which were published by conservative-nationalist authors, played a significant role in shaping the collective memory of the war in Germany. Florian Brückner's survey of these works finds that antisemitism rarely appeared in the pages of the novels produced by conservative authors from 1918 to 1945. Nothing about these novels prohibited Jewish veterans from counting themselves among the members of the community of the front. Remarkably, this opportunity for inclusion remained available even through the early years of Nazi rule.

Beyond Inclusion and Exclusion realizes the editors' stated objective of demonstrating the diversity of Jewish experiences in World War I. The essays correctly identify the antisemitism of the war, most noticeably manifested in the German Jew Count of 1916, as part of a larger, complex history that likewise included moments of inclusion. Despite the volume's title, its contributions primarily evaluate the experiences of German Jews. Nonetheless, the perspectives provided in the essays that pursue other avenues are worthwhile and carry weight. Moving forward, it is imperative to recognize the range of Jewish experiences in the military and on the home front during World War I, and this volume points future scholars in an encouraging direction. As Derek Penslar notes in the volume's afterword, however, these scholars will still be forced to reckon with frightful consequences of National Socialism's distortion and simplification of the Jewish wartime experience.