

## Beyond inclusion and exclusion: Jewish experiences of the First World War in central Europe

edited by Jason Crouthamel, Michael Geheran, Tim Grady, and Julia Barbara-Köhne, New York, Berghahn Books, 2019, 407 pp., \$130.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-7892-0018-8

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Beyond inclusion and exclusion: Jewish experiences of the First World War in central Europe**, edited by Jason Crouthamel, Michael Geheran, Tim Grady, and Julia Barbara- Köhne, New York, Berghahn Books, 2019, 407 pp., \$130.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-7892-0018-8

*Beyond Inclusion and Exclusion* addresses the various experiences of Jewish men and women during the Great War. By exploring diverse narratives in various forms, including literature and film, these twelve excellent essays add nuance and complexity to the mainstream narrative of the Jewish Great War experience (p. 9). The primary goal of this collection is to go beyond the *Judenzählung* of 1916, the 'Jewish count' of war contribution, and to challenge the belief that anti-Semitism was the main ordeal dealt with among central European Jews. Four contributors are especially committed this point, as is the only non-contributing editor.

The editors place these essays into four sections: minorities (not just Jews) and their varieties of treatment; Jewish-Gentile relations both on the front and the home front; cultural legacies of the war; and the politics of memory. Part 1, 'At the Margins: Minorities and the Military,' begins with Christine Kruger's comparison of German- and French-Jewish experiences during both the Franco-Prussian War and the Great War. It does an excellent job explaining how Jewish national identity differed in France and Germany due, in large part, to the distinctly different paths of state-building taken by each country. Kruger's argument that Zionism created Jewish identity as an ethnic category seems tenuous. Ethnic nationalism was growing with imperialism and competition among European countries, and in every case it depended on the elevation of the 'other,' primarily Jews. Tamara Scheer discusses the position of Austrian Jews in the Imperial Army, without adding a lot beyond Istvan Deak's study of the Hapsburg Officer Corps. Scheer fails to note the importance of Jewish officers' connection to Yiddish speakers in Galicia, though she emphasizes that language (German) was of more importance than faith in giving Jews higher status. Devlin Schofield describes how Alsations, a second minority in Germany, came to be treated with suspicion. In important ways, central Europe was deeply divided during the war.

In Part 2, 'Relations: Contested Identities during the First World War,' five chapters address what it meant to identify as a Jew in central Europe; how Jews perceived their roles in war; and whether their identity was formed on the battlefield or at home. This section focuses heavily on the *Judenzählung*. Michael Geheran argues that all Jews who fought for Germany were not the same and that significant diversity within the Jewish communities is often overlooked. The majority of the troops sent west were from more assimilated communities of Germany, whereas many of the Jewish troops sent East were often from Orthodox families and those more closely tied to Zionism. Andrea Sinn uses war diaries to show that Jews enjoyed camaraderie with gentile soldiers out of common need for mutual acceptance and that anti-Semitism emanated largely from the officer corps. Jason Crouthamel also finds amity between Jews and gentiles on the front lines.


Two chapters diverge from the Jewish-count absorption. Sabine Hank explains how Berlin's Jewish women took on roles typically held by men, in support of relief agencies in providing labour, clothing, and food stuffs for those Jews suffering in the East. Sarah Panter

explores national character differences among Jews in England, America, and Germany. She explores how each country developed the idea of nation in different ways, thus creating distinctive Jewish identities in each country. Her essay fits thematically with the concerns of part 1.

Part 3, 'Representation: The Culture of War,' contains Phillipp Stiasny's discussion of how films depicted the continuous movement of troops through Jewish communities in Galicia during the war, thus creating the actual feel of chaos. Stiasny demonstrates that Galicia was a place of transformation and blurred borders. Film narratives were modified to reflect the current socio-political environment in Galicia. The various films also reveal the competing narratives of generations old fathers and young daughters. The second essay, by Glenda Abramson, examines Hebrew fiction and finds that novelists were allowed more leeway in expressing the true sentiments of commoners during tragic events. Abramson asserts that fiction mediates history, especially in recounting horrible events. Soldiers are seen as victims, food is always scarce, and anxiety is part of everyday life. The only positive comes from the strengthened ties between German Jews and the *Ostjuden*.

Part 4, 'Contested Memories,' includes Julia Barbara Köhne's exploration of psychoanalysts who led the way in understanding war trauma and construction of the perfect warrior ideal. Psychotechnics and psychography were creations of Louis William Stern, Otto Lipmann, and Paul Plaut. Using the front lines as their laboratory, they developed the diagnosis of suitability and the psychology of vocational aptitude. Being Jewish had little effect on their actual war experience, but their ethnic identity failed them after the war. Florian Brückner examines novels by German Jews, including the famous works by Ludwig Renn and Arnold Zweig, and places them in the context of the many war novels appearing every year up to 1941. Brückner finds little concern with anti-Semitism in the fiction, which may be true in the large outline of one of the most brilliant war novels, Zweig's *The Case of Sergeant Grischa*. This hardly meant that the novelist lacked concern for the rapid growth of Judaeophobia after 1914. Perhaps Zweig's most compelling writing *during* the war was his haunting short story 'Judenählung vor Verdun' (Jew Count at Verdun).

In a concluding comment on the book, Derek Penslar cautioned the contributors that however mutable were Jews' experience in the Great War, however contingent was the 'situational hostility' they remembered, their 'Difference' as Jews did not disappear. 'After 1933 a new situation irrevocably recast the memory of that experience and cloaked it in shadow' (p. 399).

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