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Kellen Kurschinski et al., eds. *The Great War: From Memory to History.* Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015. 438 pp. $38.99 (paper), ISBN 978-1-77112-050-0.

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This collection of papers from a 2011 conference at Western University offers a glimpse into the various ways that memory shaped the history of the First World War. Like much recent historiography, *The Great War: From Memory to History* takes a global, multidisciplinary approach, with a particular emphasis on public commemoration and its consequences for the wider understanding of the conflict and its aftermath. Overall, in consideration of the death of the last surviving veterans of the First World War, Kurschinski and the other editors compiled these various studies to âconsider the memory of the war in traditional ways, but also to reflect on how that memory has been, and will continue to be, reshaped by generations with no personal connection to the eventsâ (p. 5).

The collection is divided into three sections covering different themes, ranging from the construction of war narratives, the rediscovery of âlostâ memory, and the impact of media on shaping public remembrance. In the first section, Kimberly Licursi offers a valuable study of the United Statesâ forgotten memory of the First World War. Her history of the state archives and the obstacles–notably the silence of veterans–that arose during their creation in New York, Virginia, and Kansas will provide Americanists with important resources to tackle what might be a renewed interest in the conflict in 2017. In her literary analysis of detective fiction, Marzena Sokolowska-Paryz uncovers not just competing memories, but also a deeper discussion on the ethics of war itself through the âjuxtaposition of murder (in peacetime) and legitimate killing (in wartime)â (p. 95). Veysel ÅimÅekâs essay on the marginalization of non-Turkish groups–notably Arabs and Kurds–in the Turkish master narrative of the First World War will certainly be of interest to anyone wanting to look at memory of the conflict beyond the western front, as will Brian MacDowallâs consideration of Aboriginesâ war service and that of Africans in the former German empire by Dan Bullard.

Other chapters that stand out are Alice Kellyâs study of nursesâ First World War narratives, which adds considerably to what is often known as a âmaleâ genre, and Mark Facknitzâs look at the relationship between âkitschâ and commemoration. In these nursesâ narratives, Kelly argues that âconservative literary tropes,â notably deathbed scenes, were utilized in order to âimpose meaning and dignity on the mass deaths that were occurringâ (p. 330). Ultimately, these traditional modes of representing death became inadequate in the face of mass killing in the First World War, and nurse narratives were at the forefront of the âwartime renegotiation of deathâ

(p. 344). In his criticism of commemorative monuments from the war, Facknitz turns to what he sees as kitsch aesthetics, which compel mourners to âmorbidly repress the disorder and horror of their emotionsâ and âprefer fictitious value to real value, or shared postures of public grief to private processes of healingâ (p. 352). Turning to the Bayonet Trench at Verdun and the Canadian Memorial at Vimy Ridge as kitsch and non-kitsch forms of commemoration, respectively, Facknitz insists that âwe need to seek out those instances of successful and failed efforts to figure commemoration as a form of healing, as opposed to continuing to visit and venerate instances of repression or institutional deceitâ (p. 365).

As with most scholarship, there are some minor shortcomings. With the exceptions of Turkey, Germany, and the United States, the global approach of most of the articles is limited mostly to the memory and commemoration of Britain and its empire. Given their centrality to the understanding of the western front in particular, it seems puzzling that France and Belgium do not feature more in these discussions as more than battlefields where Britons, Canadians, and others fought and died. Additionally, while the goal of this conference was to bridge scholarly and academic interest in the conflict, some articles may be more successful at achieving this type of engagement than others. It may be easier to appeal to a popular audience with Bette Londonâs âshot at dawnâ soldiers than with Facknitzâs analysis of kitsch commemoration. These critiques, however, are not meant to take away from what are valuable studies of the memory and history of the First World War.

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