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<RT>Marysa Demoor, Cedric Van Dijck, and Birgit Van Puymbroeck, eds. *The Edinburgh Companion to First World War Periodicals*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023.

<RA>Reviewed by Adrian Bingham

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World War I broke out during a period of unprecedented expansion and innovation in the publishing industry. New technologies to collect, capture, reproduce, and disseminate text and images—from the telegraph and the camera to steam-powered presses and the rail network—combined with rising literacy rates and growing consumer spending power to expand the realm of print culture. There were higher expectations than ever before of being able to obtain accurate and up-to-date knowledge of the world. In this context, it is no surprise that the global warfare of 1914–18 generated both an insatiable demand for news and information and an endless supply of narratives, images, and self-reflections. Audiences distant from the military front lines yearned for updates about the progress of the war and sought to understand what their family, friends, and relations were being subjected to in far-off places. Those in trenches, hospitals, or prison camps tried to process the intense, chaotic, and often unfathomably painful events they had experienced and communicate the almost incommunicable to those back home. But while there was a powerful individual desire to read, write, and record, the various state apparatuses of the participant nations had equally strong imperatives to protect information and ensure the circulation of approved accounts of the war. Censorship regimes were established to prevent usable knowledge about military maneuvers from falling into enemy hands, and propagandists were employed to produce patriotic reports and messages that would encourage volunteering and maintain morale. Critical voices were attacked and often silenced. Precious supplies of paper were rationed and

repurposed. Text and art became battlegrounds as keenly contested as the terrain between combatant forces.

The Edinburgh Companion to First World War Periodicals, edited by three scholars from the highly symbolic Western front location of Flanders, examines how a broad range of newspapers and periodicals navigated these countervailing pressures. As the editors are the first to admit, there has been a significant amount of research into various aspects of the print culture of the war. Even those without specialized research interests in this area are familiar with many of the broad lines of interpretation, including how the obfuscations and omissions forced on war correspondents created breakdowns in communication between those at the front and those at home, how an efflorescence of poetry written in the “high diction” of traditional patriotism was increasingly challenged by verse of bitter disillusionment at the lies and incompetence of war leaders and generals, and how modernist magazines incubated new forms of cultural experimentation and political radicalism. Nevertheless, the volume’s introduction argues, “Neither the growing awareness of periodicals as cultural artefacts and unique sources for the daily life of the war nor the abundance of scholarly publications prompted by the 2014–18 centennial has hitherto resulted in a large-scale, in-depth discussion of the wartime press” (1). The purpose of this collection is to move beyond works focusing on specific sections of the press, such as trench journals or mainstream newspapers, to provide a wide-ranging overview that breaks down the distinctions between the combatant and noncombatant spaces, incorporates the period of the so-called “Greater War” (namely, the years 1912 to 1923), and is truly global in its coverage. This is an ambitious goal, but one that the editors broadly fulfill.

After the introduction, the volume, written by more than forty contributors, is divided into thirty chapters in five separate parts. The first part considers a range of different critical approaches. In an era of digitization, it is refreshing to see the opening chapter, by Jane

Potter, focus on materiality. Any analysis of the social and cultural impact of periodicals needs to remember that they were material products read in varied circumstances, touched, passed around, perhaps gazed at over the shoulders of others—indeed, during wartime, opportunities for reading often had to be snatched whenever they arose, often in difficult and unsettling conditions. At the same time, as Jeffrey Drouin observes in his thoughtful contribution, titled “(Digital) Archives,” our ability to access, study and compare different publications has been transformed by digitization. Drouin makes a powerful, if rather idealistic, rallying cry for “a comprehensive, fully realized, freely available digital thematic research collection” (61) as a resource for scholars and the public alike, as well as a fitting memorial to the untimely deaths of so many victims of the conflict.

Other chapters in this opening part outline some of the perspectives that have opened up the study of wartime publications in recent years. Edmund King starts from the premise that the First World War “was a conflict underpinned by vast global supply chains and communication networks” (32) and draws on Robert Darnton’s concept of “communication circuits” to interrogate the “networked logics of production, distribution, contingency and association” of trench journals (33). Fionnuala Dillane uses the vibrant field of the history of emotions to consider the periodical as an “affective object,” arguing suggestively that the “editorial curation of the content of war journals presents a form of structuring the chaotic intimacies of war” (66). Hanna Teichler uses memory studies to present the periodical as a “memory medium,” organizing time and creating meaning by its very presence in a series stretching back into the past and (potentially) forward into the future. Maaheen Ahmed, meanwhile, uses the example of children’s magazines to situate wartime periodicals in the broader landscape of European popular culture. Readers whose primary interest is in periodicals rather than the First World War are likely to find this initial “Critical Approaches” part the most stimulating and rewarding.

Subsequent sections of the collection focus more specifically on different aspects of production, forms of writing, types of coverage, or regional case studies. Part 2 is titled “Contributors” and addresses in turn authors, artists, editors, journalists, war correspondents, and photographers. These chapters are generally based on one or two defined examples. For instance, Sara Prieto uses the influential US magazine the *Saturday Evening Post* to examine the opportunities and challenges facing journalists in this period, while Jan Baetens studies war photography through the prism of the French weekly *Le Miroir*. This editorial approach certainly has benefits, particularly in ensuring that the writing is fresh and distinctive, but authors don’t really have the space to situate these very firmly in the wider field, and readers coming to the volume expecting a broad overview of a particular topic might, at times, be disappointed.

Part 3 takes a similar approach to events, using specific case studies to explore such topics as beginnings, battles, alliances, and revolutions. Two of the richest chapters are those that focus on two areas sometimes marginalized in accounts of the war—namely, the Armenian genocide and the influenza pandemic. Claire Mouradian shows that “media coverage of the Armenian genocide was extensive, almost universal, both throughout the war years and beyond,” but knowledge of events did not lead to international action (267). Jane Fisher’s insightful discussion of the flu pandemic is as attuned to what wasn’t reported as to what was; she observes that the crisis “did not provide the press with an ongoing narrative to report,” leaving the media “complicit” in the “relative invisibility” and “misunderstood status” of the pandemic (287).

Part 4 covers a broad range of different types of periodical, from the relatively familiar (trench journals, avant-garde periodicals, and women’s suffrage and labor journals) to the less well studied (prisoner-of-war camp journals, hospital journals, pacifist journals). Some authors focus their attention on a particular publication or place (such as Anne

Schwan's fascinating study of *Stobsiade*, a German-language publication produced by internees at the Stobs detention camp near Hawick in the Scottish Borders), while others, such as Grace Brockington, Sarah Hellawell, and Daniel Laqua for the chapter on pacifist publications, combine their expertise to compare publications operating in different countries and written in different languages. The chapters in this section tend to emphasize the multiplicity, diversity, and complexity of the voices in these publications rather than generalize about them; the bold statements of an earlier generation of literary scholars, such as Paul Fussell, about the war marking a clear break with the past are conspicuous by their absence. Jessica Meyer's concluding description of the varied functions of hospital journals helpfully highlights the variety that contemporary scholars are seeking to interpret. The journals combined, she writes, "the roles of organ of communication, rehabilitative tool, psychological pressure valve, historical record and site of social negotiation" (349). The balance of roles varied between different journals, of course, but they all need to be read and analyzed in a similarly sophisticated way if we are to understand their breadth of meaning.

The chapters in the first four parts of the volume focus, in the main, on examples from Britain, Europe, and the United States. The final section offers a series of global perspectives with chapters focusing on German colonial Africa, India, Australia and New Zealand, China, Canada, and the Ottoman Empire. As the editors note in the introduction, this allows the volume to engage and contribute to the global turn in the study of both World War I and periodicals more broadly. The range of publications covered in these chapters is truly impressive—the chapter on the Ottoman Empire brings together no fewer than seven authors to cater to the linguistic variety of the relevant territories—and it is in these pages that many of those familiar only with the scholarship on the West will find some of the richest and most distinctive material.

Editing volumes of this scale is a demanding undertaking, and it inevitably involves compromises. It is sometimes difficult to get authors to stick to core analytical themes, and the various decisions taken—whether to focus on specific case studies or range more broadly—can make it hard to achieve thematic and geographic balance. The chapters in this volume are relatively short; authors do not really have the space to develop their more sophisticated and original interpretations. It is, perhaps, a shame that there are not a couple of longer synoptic chapters at the start or end to set out a research agenda or pull together some of the analytical threads. A combined bibliography also would have been useful. Overall, though, this is an impressive volume that brings together a considerable amount of up-to-date scholarship, showcases some of the newer approaches that are transforming the field, and is truly global in reach. It is clearly structured, well presented—with plenty of nice illustrations, including some in color—and carefully edited. Its price will likely deter most individuals, but anyone interested in the print culture of World War I will want to encourage their library to buy a copy.

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