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Article:
Sternberg, CR (2016) Book Review: Mark Connelly. The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London, 1916-1939. Woodbridge; Rochester, NY: The Royal Historical Society/Boydell Press, 2015. The London Journal, 41 (1). pp. 107-109. ISSN: 0305-8034

https://doi.org/10.1080/03058034.2016.1145874

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The Great War, Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London, 1916-1939. By M. CONNELLY. Pp. xii + 260, ten illustrations. Woodbridge; Rochester, NY: The Royal Historical Society/Boydell Press, 2015. £17.99. ISBN: 978-0-86193-327-3. Paperback. First published in hardback in 2002.

Commemorating the First World War has arguably been the most productive and enduring tradition in British memory culture. Mark Connelly's detailed and engaging history of memorialisation and remembrance in East London, the City and metropolitan Essex was first published in hardcover in 2002 and reflects the scholarly reorientation in First World War Studies during the 'memory boom' of the 1990s that still resonates today. The 2015 paperback edition caters to the renewed general interest in the war during the centenary years; more specifically it relates to London's continuing high profile as a location for commemorative events ranging from local initiatives to large-scale spectacles such as the Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red installation at the Tower in 2014.

Connelly achieves two important objectives with his study: Through scrupulous recovery of a host of primary sources, he takes the reader back to the first half of the 20th century, offering a lively account of communal life and localised responses to the war. Additionally, his case study exemplifies how commemorative practices evolved more generally at a time in which the 'Great War' was part of living memory. The study conveys clearly that ways of remembering and paying tribute to the dead and the living had to be negotiated by combatants and non-combatants alike against an exceptional experience and differing social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

Romford, Ilford, East and West Ham, Poplar, Stepney, Bethnal Green and the City are the book's central sites. This seemingly narrow geographical locus is more than justified by the microcosmic diversity within these parts of London and the reciprocal relationship between the local and the wider world. Events like the burial of the Unknown Warrior and the unveiling of the Cenotaph in Westminster impacted on actions in the east of the city just as some stories travelled beyond the confines of a single borough. A case in point is the fallen boy-seaman Jack Cornwell from East Ham, whose death in action at the age of 16 and subsequent family impoverishment attracted national attention (92-94).

The years 1916 to 1939 provide a logical temporal framework. Connelly starts with the first rolls of honours and street war shrines that appeared during wartime and follows the initiatives and fundraising activities that led to the erection of permanent memorials in the post-war years. In the book's second part he concentrates on the emergence of associated practices of remembrance. The author reminds us that there was still flux and innovation: A fixed date for remembrance was not a given until Armistice Day was institutionalised; the demonstrative embrace of the first Armistice silence in the City, the heart of business and finance, was a crucial moment for the ritual's overall acceptance (139-40); poppies appeared on the streets of London for the first time in 1921 (147). And while these activities became codified over the years, torchlit processions, tableaux or alternative regimental remembrance days complemented the picture.

The Great War, Memory and Ritual is an effective history because of its deep and sustained archival enquiry. Religious, civic and military practice and the interplay of education, economy, industry, politics, group identity and individual zeal are brought to life with the help of sources ranging from historiography, newspapers and parish magazines to sermons,

council minutes, memorial books, official correspondence, personal accounts and more. These sources have been carefully mined by Connelly to provide the backstories to the City's major military monument for the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and the London Troops' Memorial alongside those dedicated to residents, professionals, workers, college students, pupils and even children from Poplar killed in a Zeppelin raid (89). It is noteworthy that some communities opted for utilitarian rather than aesthetic memorials. Although not always realised, plans included residences for veterans or the bereaved, hospital extensions or sports facilities that would benefit the living (112-14).

Connelly emphasises a certain conformity and standard narrative which affirm national unity, Christian patriotism and a lasting commitment to remembrance. This assessment is built on evidence from the accessible archive. Connelly refrains from speculating about private views and the wider field of affective factors and unconscious responses. But fortunately this does not stop him from uncovering and highlighting variation and ambivalence through which the true complexity of war memory in the metropolis is revealed. Commemoration was multifunctional and at times contradictory: It aided mourning, celebrated ex-servicemen and soldierly prowess, instilled a sense of civic duty, strengthened communities and cut across social divides. It anticipated future calls to arms or served as a warning against grooming young people for war. An imperial mindset permeated many statements, but reference to colonial troops is conspicuously absent from Connelly's account. Interfaith events occurred in cosmopolitan places like Spitalsfield (39), and a separate chapter on East End Jewry describes the role that military service played for the community, especially in light of British anti-Semitism and the rise of fascism. Gender featured prominently in the construction of the allegorical figure of the grieving woman, but the female clerks of the City and women from residential East and West Ham were also active agents of commemorative activities. Voices

who distanced themselves from the glory of war became more audible from the late 1920s, which also saw an increase of visibility of the disabled, for examples at the Ilford and Dagenham services (169), or led, in 1935, to the renaming of the Bethnal Green war memorial into peace memorial (184). Domestic concerns about poverty and unemployment and hopes for international peace also accounted for shifts in the discourse of remembrance, as did generational change. Overall, however, the main thrust of commemoration remained to create a sense of presence and permanency; this found an interesting spatial expression in the words of a young man born in 1917: '[P]laces like Passchendaele and Ypres were almost as familiar to us as Stepney Green and Whitechapel.' (163)

To a considerable extent, this familiarity persists. Connelly importantly remarks at the outset that 'in many ways it was the acts of remembrance that shaped the war – an inversion of history and time.' (7) Many First World War memorials are still in place and embedded in living practices. Although the author offers only a brief concluding preview to the years following the Second World War, his book is highly valuable as an invitation to make connections, aesthetically and discursively, with today's commemorative politics, regimental memory and community-based memorialisation and to assess critically the continuity and consistency of war memory in London and beyond.

(1071 words)