

Memories and Silences is an important book that is part of a wider trend in recent Italian historiography, led by young historians. It thus finds itself in good company (see, for example, the themed issue of the journal *Zapruder*, 'Brava gente. Memoria e rappresentazioni del colonialismo italiano', also published in 2010). Both Baratieri's book and the *Zapruder* articles shed valuable light on a forgotten page of Italian history, that is, the continuity between Fascist and Republican Italy regarding colonialism, especially in terms of the discourse and stereotypes that history books and popular culture (movies, cartoons, and illustrated press) continued to employ until the 1970s.

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La Grande Guerra nel Ravennate (1915–1918), edited by Alessandro Luparini, Ravenna, Longo Editore, 2010, 334 pp., 25.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-8063-661-8

As the centenary of the First World War approaches, there has been a boom in the cultural and social history of the conflict, in Italy as elsewhere. This edited volume, the proceedings of a conference held in Lugo (Ravenna) in 2008 and hosted by the *Istituto Storico della Resistenza e dell'Età Contemporanea in Ravenna e Provincia*, showcases a good cross-section of current research in Italy and more specifically in the Romagna area. Despite its local focus, this work has much to offer to scholars not only of the war but also of many other aspects of early twentieth-century Italy.

While most local studies of the conflict have tended to focus on the areas directly affected by the fighting, such as Trentino or Venezia-Giulia, or else on big cities like Rome and Milan, Romagna makes an excellent case study thanks to its distinctive political culture and social structures in this period. As Massimo Baioni notes in his introduction to this collection, the Ravenna area experienced particularly dramatic turmoil both during the *settimana rossa* in 1914 and during the rise of Fascism, and its republican and socialist traditions meant that popular responses to the war were both complex and unusual. The best contributions here successfully highlight these distinctive local features of the Ravenna area, although it would have been interesting to see this idea engaged with more effectively throughout the whole volume.

The work begins with a useful review essay from Antonio Gibelli exploring current research themes in the Italian historiography with reference to some other European, and in particular French, trends and debates. It is a shame that this awareness of international scholarship is not mirrored by other contributions since many of the arguments advanced here show stimulating points of similarity and difference with other local and national studies. Most of the essays in this collection argue implicitly for the Great War as a moment of rupture in the political development of Italy and a radical turning point in social and cultural trends, an argument that perhaps deserves more explicit and nuanced consideration in light of recent work on other combatant societies.

The volume's editor Alessandro Luparini addresses what is perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the Ravenna province's war experience: the political role of left-wing parties and their reactions to the period of neutrality and the debate over intervention. Luparini illustrates the way in which the outbreak of war highlighted the deep divisions and uncertainties within the Romagna Left, which were to be so significant in the immediate post-war era. Another important and original contribution comes from Andrea Bavarelli, who analyses the role of the state and of local administration, offering some interesting insights into the always complex two-way relationship between centre and periphery. While the war served as a powerful stimulus to nationalising, centralising forces in Italy as elsewhere, it also witnessed a remarkable and often creative flowering of autonomous local initiatives, as Bavarelli here outlines. This is an area well worthy of further research, with obvious implications for the wider history of liberal Italy.

Two detailed analyses of the process of civil mobilisation come from Paolo Cavassini on the role of local patriotic organisations and Claudia Bassi Angelini on civilian activism, focusing mainly on women's associations. The latter would benefit from greater contextualisation: much of what Bassi Angelini describes – from the upper-class origins of prominent local organisers to links with feminist circles – is similar to patterns of civilian mobilisation across Europe. By contrast, the much more unusual phenomenon of post-war assistance by local women's groups in support of Viennese children deserves further comment. However, both these essays effectively illustrate the vitality of local civic culture and the considerable range of civilian responses to the challenges of the war.

A strength of this volume is its inclusion of original unpublished or hard-to-find primary materials. Giancarlo Cerasoli's detailed and interesting study of the Spanish 'flu epidemic incorporates the reproduction of a 1919 short story on the subject by Marino Moretti, while Giuseppe Bellosi offers a few pages of transcribed letters and diary entries from local men, preserving the original dialect in which they were written. Most notable is the collection of over 110 photographs, mainly images of life at the front, which range from posed scenes of men around artillery pieces through to snapshots of soldiers drinking, sledding or taking part in amateur dramatics. Other interesting contributions include Melandri on the attitudes of Catholics in the province, analysing the diaries of Don Giovanni Minzoni and other local clerical figures, and Giuseppe Masetti on local commemoration, amply illustrated with images of memorials. Romagna was, of course, not only part of the home front but, like all the Adriatic coast, the site of active military operations, as Mauro Antonellini reminds us in his short summary of Adriatic naval and coastal operations.

As often happens with conference proceedings, the volume is uneven in quality and format. Eight of the 12 contributions are very short papers, just 10–12 pages long, offering brief introductions and stimuli for further research and debate rather than in-depth detailed analysis. Some essays are the result of original archival work; others are rather general and devoid of any footnotes or references. The final piece in the volume, by Serena Sandri, is a detailed annotated research guide to photographic archives rather than a conventional essay. While the production standards of this volume are generally high and the photographic reproductions are of a good quality, there are typographical errors,

especially in the use of foreign words and titles of foreign publications. Nonetheless, despite some inconsistency, this is a worthwhile contribution to the rapidly growing historiography of the First World War in Italy with an impressively broad scope and a fascinating collection of original images, which alone would be worth the cover price.

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