

Webrecensie BMGN 126:1 (2011)

Vree, Frank van, Laarse, Rob van der (eds.), *De dynamiek van de herinnering.*

Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog in een internationale context

(Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2009, 327 blz., ISBN 978 90 351 3229 0).

Memory and remembrance now form major sub-disciplines of social history, especially for the Second World War in general, and for the Holocaust in particular. In the French context, the works of Henry Rousso and Pierre Nora have led the way in understanding how postwar France has tried to contextualise its Vichy past. While it could be argued that French refusal to confront the existence of the deep divisions exacerbated by the occupation period is the most marked example, it is by no means the only one. Other western European countries have also had similar difficulties in coming to terms with this problematic period. In this volume, Frank van Vree and Rob van der Laarse have attempted to piece together the dynamics of the Dutch case – dynamic because, as they point out, the process of remembrance and memorialisation has gone through a number of phases and even now, some 65 years after the liberation, has still not come to an end. Dutch engagement with the full horror of what had befallen their Jewish co-religionists took time to emerge while issues surrounding resistance in both public and academic debate took centre-stage much earlier. While these elements have become central to a national understanding of the past, new issues continue to arrive on the scene – for example the creation of an exhibition commemorating the role of the iconic transit camp at Westerbork as a site of internment for Dutch national socialists in the years after 1945. This is also evident in the chapter by Claartje Wesseling where she charts the background to the furore created when in 2009 the Rijksmuseum included in its purchases ‘De Nieuwe Mensch’, a painting by the ‘*fout*’ artist, Henri van der Velde. Wesseling outlines the career and *zuivering* of Van der Velde and how he remained isolated from the art world after 1945 and then goes on to debate whether the term ‘*fout*’, linking him with all the evils of the NSB, collaboration, treason and the persecution of the Jews, was being applied to him as a person, to his artistic production in general or to the specific work purchased. For its part, the Rijksmuseum seems to have taken the view in buying the painting that it was representative of a regrettable, but nonetheless valid part of the nation’s art historical legacy. Also of note here is the fact that ‘cultural collaboration’

only really came to public notice in the late 1970s and 1980s with the standard works of Mulder and Venema having no difficulty in labelling those artists whose conduct was seen by them as collaborationist.

Other contributions are equally informative. Bettine Siertsma takes us through an analysis of 'camp memoires' pointing out the frequency with which these were published in different periods – and by whom. For example, she cites the prevalence of texts from clergymen – and after 1991 a preponderance of books by Jewish authors. However, she fails to mention the possibility that this may be a function of decision-making by publishing houses rather than bearing a direct relationship to the number of memoirs available. Roel Hijink provides an overview of how camps, and specifically Westerbork and Vught, have been reconstructed as museums. Not only does he outline the processes by which this was done but also provides a comparative analysis of these two cases. Most of the chapters on the Netherlands seem to be self-standing but at least one holds out the promise of further and much deeper conclusions. In her work on the role of the Second World War and the occupation in postwar education, Dienne Hondius summarises findings on the Netherlands, showing how the emphasis shifted from downplaying the recent past in the immediate aftermath of war to an official stance that insisted on incorporating studies of the period in order to make sure that it was not forgotten. This is framed as part of a larger and internationally comparative work in progress and will make interesting reading when it comes to fruition.

The editors have augmented the collection of Dutch case studies with a perspective that adds in other, and different, national cases. Thus the collection includes, albeit brief, surveys of memory of the Second World War; in the classic perpetrator country Germany, in an ambivalent Austria, and in an unoccupied Britain. These are not necessarily truly comparative as the studies are in many cases very different. As the editors point out, the debates on remembrance have almost invariably taken place in a national context. Their attempt to put the Dutch experience alongside other national case-studies is laudable and will doubtless continue to inform the national debate in the Netherlands, but until the research encompassed can be found in translation, the trends they identify and criticise is set to continue. I, for one, look forward to seeing more widely disseminated results of all the researches represented here. They are important contributions to post-1945 historiography and should not be overlooked.

Bob Moore, University of Sheffield

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Vroom, Wim, ***Financing Cathedral Building in the Middle Ages: The Generosity of the Faithful*** (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010, 734 pp., ISBN 978 90 8964 035 2).

Wim Vroom's dissertation on the process of commissioning and financing the construction of cathedrals in the Middle Ages, especially the cathedral of Utrecht (*De financiering van de kathedraalbouw in de middeleeuwen, in het bijzonder van de dom van Utrecht* (Maarsse 1981)), is a key publication on the complex interactions between the society and the Church, and a brilliant exploration of a nearly unknown aspect of cathedral architecture. The present book is a revised and expanded version that integrates thirty years of international scholarship on cathedral building and results from the lifelong research of the author. The English edition makes this standard work available for the wider academic community.

Some 700 cathedrals were built in medieval Europe. As head churches of dioceses, cathedrals were much more than architectural statements of the Church's power and havens for the faithful. Their construction resulted from huge, long-term, efforts involving all components of society. According to the author, 'the financing systems were almost as monumental as the cathedrals themselves'. Until the twelfth century the bishop and his treasurer controlled the building operations (i.e. the *fabrica ecclesiae*), but from the first half of the thirteenth century the chapter, acting as a corporate body, gradually took over the fabric. The chapter appointed a fabric administrator (*magister fabricae*) whose tasks were limited to the supervision and the financial management of the works. Having a global view on the incomes and outcomes, the canon treasurer (*custos*) was the real key person within the chapter. Fabric account rolls, which were yearly audited and presented to the chapter, constitute the main historical source. Vroom has traced medieval fabric rolls at some 80