

gustus 1914 naar het front. Van dat optimisme en van henzelf was een paar maanden later weinig meer over. Zoals de Britse minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Edward Grey tegen een vriend verzuchtte: 'The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime' (p. 704).

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Vera Hajtó, *Milk Sauce and Paprika. Migration, Childhood and Memories of the Interwar Belgian-Hungarian Child Relief Project*. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016). 298 p. ISBN 9789462700789.

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Vera Hajtó's *Milk sauce and Paprika* is not only an account of the history of the Hungarian Children Relief Project in Belgium; it is also a theoretical contribution to the field of children's migration and memory. Hajtó starts with the question of structure versus agency and the degree to which children could play an active role in shaping their destiny. In the introduction, she suggests that – contrary to recent arguments about children's social leverage in migratory decisions – her research provided important evidence for the 'lack of individual agency' (p. 30). Her historical-ethnographic method allows her to investigate the narrative of an impressive body of sources, ranging from oral histories with participants, letters in both Hungarian and Dutch, photographs, and archival sources.

The monograph is divided in three parts with two or three chapters each. The first part elaborates on the role of institutions: the state, the Catholic Church, and the organising bodies that provided 'holidays' for over 20,000 Hungarian children in Belgium. Particularly striking is the omnipresence of the Catholic Church, though its role in Hungary and Belgium differed. In Hungary, the church collaborated with the state, but the project was the initiative of some hard-working individuals. In Belgium, the church operated independently – initially even without informing the state about the arrival of Hungarian children – but the project got much more popular support from the Catholic population. Nevertheless, in both countries the church was heavily involved politically. In Hungary, the church supported the state's demands to revoke the Trianon Treaty. The children relief project was an attempt at re-establishing international relations with former enemies. Meanwhile, Catholic rhetoric featured prominently in Belgian anticommunist propaganda. The Catholic character of all institutions provided a supranational network, to which Hajtó attributes the ultimate success of the project.

The second part deals with family networks and the question of the 'best interest of the child'. Interestingly, Hajtó draws a parallel between the 'imagining' of nations and the 'imagining' of families through concepts of childhood. She states that the idea that the 'bodily well-being of children' equalled the 'territorial intactness of the nation' characterized the beginning of the twentieth century (p. 91). The position of the children relief project in the 1920s was rather particular because, for Hungary it meant losing potential citizens (especially after it became apparent that the 'holidays' would take much longer than the foreseen six months). On the other hand, for Hungarian families the project was necessary to recover economically and morally from the hardship of war. For them, the reassurance that Catholic families (in the widest sense of the word, including singles, religious orders, and co-housing siblings) hosted their children was crucial. Belgian families offered also explicit reassurances to Hungarian parents, who responded with gratitude. In the last chapter of part two, Hajtó also shows very nicely how the families in both countries became part of larger transnational families, connected by letters, pictures, and travels. The process in which families reinvented themselves (always within a common Christian cultural identity) brought out 'the flexibility of family ties' (p. 151).

In the third part, Hajtó looks at the memories of the Hungarian children and the formation of their identity through their migratory experience. Her description of this experience is very subtle and her cautiousness with concepts such as migration, fostering, and adoption adds to the value of her work. However, she convincingly shows that the holiday experiences were truly a migration, for those who returned to Hungary, those who remained in Belgium, and transmigrants who re-migrated to Belgium after their initial return to Hungary, because the encounter influenced their identity deeply. In this part, the author's ethnographic skills come really to the fore, not only in cataloguing people's memories and self-representations, but also in describing different realities of class and gender, as well as stories of trauma and abuse.

In the conclusion, Hajtó returns to her original question of agency to argue that the passive role apparent in children's narratives about their migratory experience was 'a purposeful strategy [as] [t]hey form their memories in order to achieve an emotionally more satisfying or balanced life-story' (p. 225). Hence, according to Hajtó, their passivity was a form of closure that justifies their decision to abandon either their birth or their host family. The focus on structure versus agency probably led to a somewhat rigid structure of the book with quite some overlap between the parts that could have been avoided. More importantly, Hajtó's argument about how identities are negotiated through and in concepts of childhood and migration (and memories thereof) is actually more interesting than the agency versus structure debate. While she focuses on the human actors, a closer reading

reveals that these negotiations (or ‘imagnations’) also took place at the level of institutions like the nation-state, the family, and the church both in Belgium and in Hungary, which makes this history even more fascinating.

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Jan van den Berghe, *Vergeten Vrouwen. Een tegendraadse kroniek van België*. (Antwerpen: Polis, 2016). 463 p. ISBN 9789463101394.

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Jan van den Berghe wil met dit werk een ‘tegendraadse’ – vrouwelijke – kroniek van België schrijven op basis van journalistieke portretten van tientallen vrouwen, die in hun eigen tijd in verschillende maatschappelijke domeinen – kunst, wetenschap, politiek, enz. – een belangrijke rol hebben gespeeld, maar tijdens het verdere verloop van de geschiedenis in de vergetelheid zijn geraakt. Het boek is thematisch georganiseerd in vijftien hoofdstukken, telkens opgebouwd rond het type activiteit waarin de vrouwen excelleerden. Zo zijn er hoofdstukken gewijd aan oorlogsheldinnen, avonturiersters, zakenvrouwen, schrijfsters, enz.

Dat het boek zich naar een ruime doelgroep richt, biedt een unieke kans om een lekenpubliek kennis te laten maken met een meer vrouwelijke Belgische geschiedenis. In het boek komen inderdaad heel wat vrouwen aan bod die bij een breed publiek wellicht niet meteen een belletje doen rinkelen, zoals Marie Moke, Caroline Popp-Boussart, Maria Doolaeghe, enz. Alleen al door deze vrouwen in het middelpunt te plaatsen, en dat in het aantrekkelijke, bloemrijke taalgebruik dat we van Van den Berghe gewend zijn, levert *Vergeten Vrouwen* een belangrijke bijdrage aan de populaire historische literatuur.

Voor wie op zoek is naar een onderhoudende *petite histoire* en kennis wil maken met enkele prominente vrouwen uit de vaderlandse geschiedenis, biedt dit boek dus ruim leesplezier. Maar een meer kritische lezer, die geïnteresseerd is in een inzichtelijk werk over het historisch en maatschappelijk belang van de vrouwelijke protagonisten, blijft op zijn honger zitten.

Ten eerste ontbreekt een overkoepelend, duidend kader. Het boek is, zoals de auteur het zelf aangeeft, een ‘mozaïek van verhalen’ (p. 12) dat doorheen de geschiedenis ‘meandert’ en een ‘zo geschakeerd mogelijke verzameling persoonlijke en maatschappelijke componenten’ biedt. Dat leidt ertoe dat het boek aangenaam wegleeft, maar ook dat na de lectuur weinig blijft. Via enkele ingrepen zou de auteur nochtans kunnen tegemoetkomen aan de meerwaardezoeker: een bondige inleiding met toelichting van de thematische indeling, zou de lezer een structu-