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au présent. Les études qui y sont réunies éclairent les thèmes oubliés de la mémoire collective, notamment les épisodes les plus violents de l'histoire des États européens, et marque l'existence de plusieurs histoires de l'Europe. Cet ouvrage rassemble également les dernières réflexions sur l'unification culturelle de l'Europe et, malgré certaines insistances ou répétitions normatives – en raison du caractère collectif de l'ouvrage –, propose une véritable discussion interdisciplinaire sur la pratique mémorielle. Un ouvrage utile pour toute personne qui souhaite avoir une vue d'ensemble des questions relatives au travail d'internationalisation des mémoires nationales et réfléchir au rôle de l'historien dans un contexte de multiplication des discours sur le passé.

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PITTS, Vincent J. — *Henri IV of France: His Reign and Age*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. Pp. 477.

The four-hundredth anniversary of the assassination of Henri IV in 1610 generated a renewed interest in a reign which has often been celebrated and upheld as a key moment in the development of the French monarchy and of the nation. This is as true of popular culture as of academic endeavours: from the dramatisation of his life in film to the possible identification of his partly-preserved head. The emergence of France from the devastation wrought by the religious wars of the second half of the sixteenth century, and the foundations of the Bourbon rise to power in Europe in the seventeenth, have both been attributed to Henry's astute leadership. As a consequence, traditional and historiographical analyses of the man and his reign have lauded his personal abilities and charm. He is attributed with having both an authoritarian manner and a popular touch. Key traits in his character reinforce the legend: his courage and skill on the battlefield; his love of the ladies; his straight-talking and direct manner; his elusive religious stance.

Vincent J. Pitts' biography does not attempt to separate the man from the myth by deconstructing Henri's image, but rather provides a detailed reconstruction of the king's life and times. Thus, he remains very much an admirable and likeable as well as important figure; shaped by, but also shaping his age. Pitts has been careful to incorporate the most recent scholarship and is quite comprehensive in his coverage in this regard, while ensuring that it does not unduly encumber the text. However, while the footnotes rehearse various historians' opinions and where they differ from one another, they do so without offering a new interpretation or major point of disagreement. Yet this is in keeping with Pitts' aim to appeal to a popular as well as scholarly readership. In this he undoubtedly succeeds; the book is both knowledgeable and eminently readable. His prose is clear and engaging; the subject matter seamlessly presented; the quotations which begin each chapter are judiciously selected.

As might be expected, the book is organised chronologically, but the coverage is not evenly spread. The first five chapters deal with the thirty-six years from Henri's birth to his accession in 1589. The seven chapters which follow, on his twenty-one year reign, focus in particular on the period after 1597, when Henri began to consolidate his position and that of his kingdom and, ultimately, established his legacy. Reading about his life in such depth, this reader was particularly struck by the important role played throughout by women. First, his formidable mother Jeanne d'Albret, committed Protestant and leader of the Huguenot cause; the queen mother and influential political figure throughout the wars, Catherine de Medici; Henri's only surviving sibling, his sister Catherine; his wives Marguerite de Valois and Marie de Medici; as well as his key mistresses, Gabrielle d'Estrées and Henriette d'Entraques. This is a sympathetic portrait in which Henri is presented as the man of action, but also very much the family man, ensuring that both his legitimate and illegitimate children were well provided for. Influential male figures are far less evident, but the importance of the duke de Sully in the later part of Henri's reign is given due prominence.

Although there is little in this book which will surprise or challenge the academic specialist, the text is meticulously researched and elegantly written. It does little to dispel Henri IV's legend, but it does explore the strengths and flaws in the king's character which may provide the general reader and the student of history alike with a better and deeper understanding of the challenges he faced and his responses to them during a turbulent age.

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VAN BERGEN, Leo — *Before My Helpless Sight: Suffering, Dying and Military Medicine on the Western Front, 1914-1918*. Farnham (U.K.), Ashgate, 2009. Pp. 528.

In *Before My Helpless Sight*, Leo van Bergen attempts to answer the question "what can happen to a soldier between the moment he steps onto a train or ship bound for the theatre of battle and the point at which he is evacuated, wounded or...buried in the ground" (1). Divided into five chapters – Battle, Body, Mind, Aid, and Death – the result is a powerful and humane exploration of how the Great War impacted the bodies and minds of those who served on both sides of the Western Front as combatants and healers. As unpleasant as it is powerful, *Before My Helpless Sight* forcefully illuminates a world of almost constant fear, fatigue, cold and hunger; a world of unbearable noise and overpowering stench; a world where death, disease, disfigurement, and distress – both mental and physical – were ever present.

The study is not based on new, original research. Rather, it brings together primary and secondary material from a wide variety of countries and languages. Far from detracting from the work, this is one of its great strengths. By