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Wien 1918: Agonie der Kaiserstadt. By Edgar Haider. Vienna: Böhlau, 2018. 418 pp.

The hundred-year anniversary of the end of World War I has witnessed the publication of a number of studies in Austria and abroad that explore the nature of the 1918 regime change in Central Europe. In the vein of his previous portrait of the imperial capital at the start of the war (*Wien 1914: Alltag am Rande des Abgrunds*, [2013]), in his latest work, Edgard Haider chronicles life in Vienna four years later, in 1918. Other recent books might offer more detailed archival research on the collapse of the Empire viewed from its capital city, but Haider's study provides a very enjoyable tour through the streets, cafés, parks, and palaces of Vienna. Based mostly on newspaper sources (as well as published diaries and memoirs), it gives an atmospheric account of the last year of the war and uncovers many distinctive aspects of urban life in wartime, such as traditional celebrations, burial customs, lighting, housecleaning, fashion, and rubbish collection.

While not organized strictly chronologically, the structure loosely follows the unfolding of the calendar year with its main festivals and seasons, starting with the celebration of New Year's Eve and ending with preparations for Christmas. The first chapters provide some context on the international and internal situation of the monarchy and on the Habsburg dynasty. The core chapters of the book, however, deal with everyday life in wartime Vienna, detailing the impact of the conflict in various areas. The hunger crisis of the last years of the war plays a major role in this narrative, as dwindling food supplies shaped new behaviours and daily rhythms, from constant queuing to trips to the countryside and changes in eating habits. Haider relates episodes which can be seen as symptoms of the crisis: the disappearance of sausages as a snack and their replacement with corn on the cob or the shooting of a polar bear in a zoo by a man who considered them not worth feeding, as humans were starving. Haider also presents the health consequences of malnutrition for children and the difficult living conditions created by the shortage of housing. Other descriptions give a sense of the transformations in street life, as Haider paints overcrowded tramways, the fate of bourgeois buildings, missing door handles, and empty shop windows. The most interesting chapter focuses on the celebration and adaptation of regular rituals (carnival, lent, Easter, summer vacations, confirmations) in times of war and penury, contrasting them with pre-war customs. In the middle of the book, a form of excursus discusses the

death of several key artists of the Viennese Modern Age, whose passing can be seen as a sign of the end of an era (for instance Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Otto Wagner, and Koloman Moser, all of whom died in 1918). This section, however, also includes artists such as Ferdinand Hodler and Peter Rosegger whose relationship to Vienna is more tenuous and feels more disconnected from the rest of the book. Finally, the volume comes to a close with two more general chapters depicting the end of the monarchy and the birth of the Austrian Republic. The political transformations are also embodied in the fabric of the city: the chaos of these few weeks is illustrated through the confusion at railway stations and the removal of imperial insignias.

The book, which has neither an introduction nor a conclusion, functions more as a series of well-chosen vignettes (without much transition from one to the next) than as a scholarly argument. Richly illustrated, it also includes many enjoyable newspaper excerpts, cited at length, which give a nice feel for contemporary humour and language. Some of them are particularly delightful, such as the *feuilleton* on the all-encompassing Ersatz products by Ludwig Hirschfeld (pp.127–130). The glossary of period and Viennese terms at the end of the book is in this respect a very useful addition to help the reader appreciate the original sources. The result is an impressionistic picture of Vienna in 1918, filtered through a slightly nostalgic lens and covering a wide range of topics related to the urban experience. It highlights the profound repercussions of the war for all of Vienna's inhabitants regardless of class, as the events and aftermath of the war left hardly any corner of urban activity untouched. However, this work does not present many new elements on the collapse of Austria–Hungary for specialists in the field. The main political and military developments of the period are probably better covered elsewhere, as are the social and economic consequences of the war for Vienna's population. Also, the specificities of the year 1918 as opposed to 1917 or 1919 (in terms of hunger levels, for example) do not appear as clearly as they should, given the focus on that particular year. Overall, *Wien 1918* gives insights into the mood on Viennese streets one century ago with an eye for improbable and revealing details. It provides more atmosphere than analysis, but it nicely complements other works on the topic.

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