

Whether perpetrated by the state or other third parties, both violence and abuse have long been a common aspect of sex worker's lives. These chapters nevertheless demonstrate how such oppressive conditions are not innate to the trade but rather the result of stigma and lack of legal protection. The historic tendency toward increased criminalisation, along with 100 years of anti-trafficking discourses and actions against "slavery" has generally resulted in the further harassment of women by authorities, rather than any increase in rights.<sup>5</sup> While the editors are clear that this project does not view prostitution on a par with slavery, they point out that slavery has been examined from a global labour perspective for its historic function within economic systems.<sup>6</sup> Thus convincingly justifying their examination of sex work as a labour activity irrespective of ones positioning in contentious contemporary debates.

*Selling Sex in the City* gives new insights into how sex workers, like other historically stigmatised labourers, have navigated the fine lines of consent, coercion, and economic constraint.<sup>7</sup> Addressing questions around work, legislation, migration, and prostitution, this book is a must-read for labour and legal historians, lawyers, and legislators, who are interested in the rights of sex workers and trafficking victims, as well as the conditions which affected them historically. It provides a densely rich and complex look at five hundred years of social, economic, and political entanglements that will fascinate global and world historians, as well as those interested in colonial, urban, and migration history. In providing novel approaches to understanding the contested theories and practices around sold sex, *Selling Sex in*

the City is an essential, even if very large, handbook for activists and political actors engaged in debates around sex work and human trafficking.

#### Notes

- 1 See the chapters of Mechant, *The Social Profiles of Prostitutes*, and M. Turno, *Sex for Sale in Florence*.
- 2 See S. Gronewold, *Prostitution in Shanghai*, pp. 567–593; H. Hammad/E. Biancani, *Prostitution in Cairo*; M. Umoren Ekpoottu, *Sexualizing the City: Female Prostitution in Nigeria's Urban Centres in a Historical Perspective*, pp. 306–328.
- 3 Mechant, *The Social Profiles of Prostitutes*, p. 67; E. Van Nederveen Meerkerk/M. Rodríguez García/L. H. Van Voss, *Sex Sold in World Cities, 1600s–2000s. Some Conclusions to the Project*, p. 871.
- 4 Umoren Ekpoottu, *Sexualizing the City: Female Prostitution in Nigeria's Urban Centres in a Historical Perspective*, p. 314; Van Nederveen Meerkerk/Rodríguez García/Van Voss, *Sex Sold in World Cities, 1600s–2000s. Some Conclusions to the Project*, p. 872.
- 5 M. D. Wyers, *Selling Sex in Istanbul*, pp. 791–792.
- 6 Van Nederveen Meerkerk/Rodríguez García/Van Voss, *Sex Sold in World Cities, 1600s–2000s. Some Conclusions to the Project*, p. 875.
- 7 Rodríguez García/Van Nederveen Meerkerk/Van Voss, *Selling Sex in World Cities, 1600s–2000s: An Introduction*, pp. 14–17.

**Leos Müller: *Neutrality in World History (Themes in World History)*, London: Routledge 2019, 178 p.**

Reviewed by Frederik Dhondt (Antwerp/Gent)

Leos Müller's book attempts to provide a conceptual overview of neutrality "in

world history”, linking maritime history and international law with the history of empire and global history. Müller conventionally situates the “birth of maritime neutrality” in the early modern era (pp. 18–42), sees its maturity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (pp. 43–83) and its widespread practice and legal codification in the nineteenth century (pp. 84–123), to end with its decline from the League of Nations to the present day (pp. 124–164). Müller clearly indicates when and how morality and neutrality switch according to the political and economic circumstances, from the medieval negation of neutrality to neutrality’s demise in a system of collective security. His approach is pedagogical: the reader is presented with a clear and concise overview of a major theme in world history.

The concept of neutrality used by Müller is extremely large, encompassing ideology, domestic and international public opinion, economics, maritime interests, warfare, private and non-state actors and about all of foreign policy. References to classics in humanities and social sciences (Piketty, Morgenthau, Kissinger, Waltz) illustrate the intellectual and academic context. The author grants attention to the international circulation of ideas, e.g. in his treatment of Thomas Paine’s defence of the League of Armed Neutrality (pp. 74–75). The role of public opinion in representative systems is highlighted, e.g. when Sweden decided not to formally abandon neutrality in the Crimean War, under the Riksdag’s pressure (p. 167). The impact of neutral trade is made very concrete, e.g. when Danish shipping allowed to reduce the impact of famine in revolutionary France (p. 80), or when Germany’s aggres-

sive submarine campaign caused hunger in Sweden between 1916 and 1918 (p. 128). Specialists of regional or specific cases will experience the benefits of a deprovincialized, broader approach, which lives up to the de facto interlocking of maritime theatres as the Baltic, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, or of the extra-European implications of grand strategy from the seventeenth century on.

The author’s outlook was initially maritime and economical. This sometimes generates discomfort, when the old and debunked cliché of a ‘Second Hundred Years’ War’ between France and Britain (1688–1815) is used. Political science terminology, such as the “Westphalian system”, is unhelpful to understand the evolution of international law. The links with humanitarianism and pacifism are rendered explicit. This is of course wholly justified, but potentialities and actual results could have been better distinguished. When the neutralisation of the Congo Basin is cited as, as a symbolical export of Belgium’s own status to Africa (p. 7), it might be useful to add that this did not prevent Congo from being dragged into the African theatre in World War One. Moreover, the guarantee given by the Great Powers to Belgian independence in 1831 did not extend to the Congo Free State. At its absorption as a colony in 1909, Britain protested, and argued that its guarantee could only cover Belgian territory as agreed to in the 1839 Treaty of London.<sup>1</sup> One might be sceptical with regards to the utterance that ‘neutral Belgium guaranteed equal rights of access to all the engaged, even small, European states’ (p. 86). Congo would only become a Belgian colony in 1909. Leopold II, as head of state in the Congo Free State,

sabotaged the free trade-system to the advantage of a concession-system, whereby he only granted access to specific foreign corporations.

The broad approach leads to confusion, e.g. when it is stated that Alberico Gentili would have rejected neutrality (p. 35). The overview of the period 1500–1650 might have benefitted from scholarship by legal historians.<sup>2</sup> Eric Schnakenbourg's standard work ought to have been mentioned.<sup>3</sup> A similar vagueness is felt in the development of permanent neutrality in chapter 4 (pp. 84–123).<sup>4</sup> The early modern origins of neutrality explain why the author uses voluntary neutrality (p. 115) for states with a classical neutrality policy (which falls under the classical set of neutral rights and obligations in case of war). He contrasts this with 'neutralised' states. However, the variety in "neutralised" states and areas is such that further diversification would have been useful. Could one equate the status of the Ionian Islands, the Suez Canal and Belgium (p. 94)? Remarkably, the neutralisation of Chablais and Faucigny, or the failed permanent neutrality of Cracow (annexation by Austria in 1846) are not mentioned in an otherwise rather detailed overview. Is it really accurate to state that "from the point of view of international law, the status of neutralised territories or that of neutrals (long-term voluntary or occasional) is similar", and that the difference would boil down to ideology? (ibid.). Finally, the treatment of the Swiss conception of "super-neutrality" in the final chapter is described as 'legally binding', this is not explained further (p. 160).

The book often reads as a general introduction to the history of international

relations. This constitutes an achievement in so little space. There are barely any footnotes, and the author solely has to rely on the corpus to simultaneously expound developments in several geographic zones. The sections on Sweden-Norway, Denmark, and Finland were very clear and instructive. The treatment of the "new" neutral countries Ireland, Austria, and Finland after 1945 is insightful (pp. 148–149). By contrast, the discussion of the non-aligned movement (pp. 153–159) is too general. At some occasions, the synthesis appears outdated, e.g. for the US's entry into the Great War (p. 129).<sup>5</sup> Integration the novel and original work of Beatrice De Graaf on the occupation of France after 1815 stresses that France, which was militarily occupied for three years, did pay compensations to states and even private individuals.<sup>6</sup> This does not correspond with the stark contrast drawn between 1815 and 1919 (p. 131). It comes across as strange to state that the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (1814–1830) was a neutralised state (p. 92). It would have been more correct to point out that the Wellington Barrier had been built by the allies on the new state's territory, but that the United Kingdom of the Netherlands was not under an externally-imposed obligation of permanent neutrality. Only Belgium, which seceded in 1830–1831, was a permanently neutral state under the collective guarantee of the Great Powers. Likewise, recent scholarship makes it necessary to adapt the terminology used to describe the Versailles settlement (pp. 131–132).<sup>7</sup>

It is of course inevitable that such an ambitious work contains confusing or contradictory passages. This is for instance the case for the treatment of Belgian perma-

nent neutrality. On page 118, it is stated that the Fifth Hague Convention of 1907 imposed a duty on neutral powers to defend themselves in case of aggression. It is further explained that this constituted ‘a departure from the concept of pure neutralization, which put the responsibility for upholding neutrality in the hands of the guaranteeing great powers. This is certainly not correct for the Belgian case. Permanent neutrality was always read as including the duty to credibly defend oneself. The guarantors’ pledge to support Belgian independence and territorial integrity was subsidiary, and conditional on the neutralised state’s own credible military effort. This was forcefully argued in the *Essai sur la neutralité de la Belgique*, written by Wilhelm Arendt at the request of King Leopold I (1845).<sup>8</sup> The country’s defence system was furthermore the object of intense debate. The Wellington Barrier was dismantled in 1859. This did not mean that Belgium would lapse into a pacigérat integral (a term designating a neutralised state having renounced to its right of self-defence).<sup>9</sup> The Hague Conventions did not constitute an innovation from that point of view.

The author’s task was gargantuan, as the law of neutrality (which is considered here as but one of many aspects of the problem) was in a state of constant flux, and the subject of a rich and subtle literature, which is hard to summarise for the lay audience addressed by the book series. To paraphrase the Swedish diplomat Richard Kleen, in his two-volume work dedicated to neutrality in 1898: “Dans nul autre domaine, les opinions ne sont aussi diverses, les principes moins clairs, le désaccord plus evident.”<sup>10</sup> Leos Müller’s book offers

a solid introduction to the reader desiring to “visit [...] a new, unknown big city”, as the author states.

#### Notes

- 1 See the special issue of *Journal of Belgian History* 48 (2018), “Congo at War(s), ed. by E. Ngongo/B. Piret/N. Tousignant”, ###
- 2 L. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty. Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900*, Cambridge 2010.
- 3 E. Schnakenbourg, *Entre la guerre et la paix. Neutralité et relations internationales, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles*, Rennes 2013.
- 4 G. A. Frei, *Great Britain, International Law and Maritime Strategy, 1856–1914*, Oxford 2020.
- 5 J. Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War: A New History of America’s Entry into World War I*, Lexington 2014.
- 6 B. De Graaf, *Tegen de terreur. Hoe Europa veilig werd, 1815–1820*, Oxford 2018.
- 7 S. Pedersen, *The Guardians. The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*, Oxford 2015; L. V. Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, Oxford 2018.
- 8 H. Lademacher, *Die belgische Neutralität als Problem der europäischen Politik 1830–1914*, Bonn 1971.
- 9 E. Descamps, *La neutralité de la Belgique au point de vue historique, diplomatique, juridique et politique. Étude sur la constitution des États pacifiques à titre permanent*, Bruxelles 1902.
- 10 R. Kleen, *Lois et usages de la neutralité d’après le droit international conventionnel et coutumier des états civilisés*, Paris, 1898, t. 1, p. VIII.