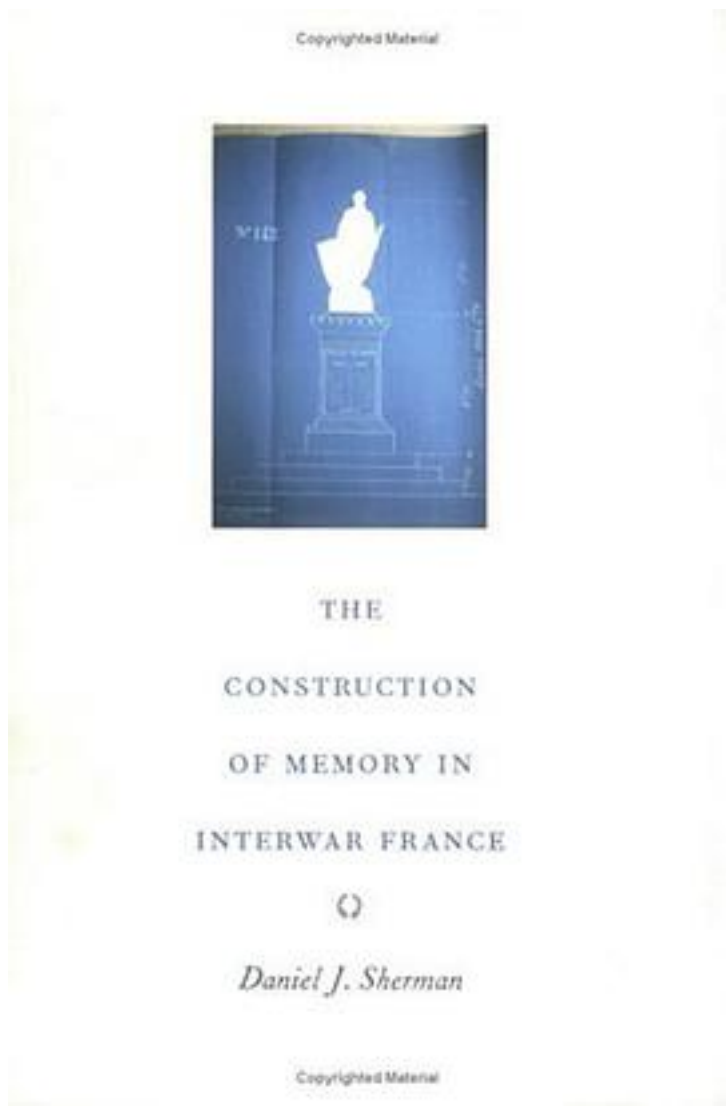


The Construction of Memory in Interwar France



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This work takes a look at the human impact of World War I by examining the ways in which the French remembered their veterans and war dead after the armistice. Arguing that memory is more than just a record of experience, this cultural history offers a perspective on how commemoration of World War I helped to shape post-war French society and politics. Daniel Sherman shows how a wartime visual culture saturated with images of ordinary foot soldiers, together with contemporary novels, memoirs and tourist literature, promoted a distinctive notion of combat experience. The contrast between battlefield and home front, soldier and civilian was the basis for memory and collective gratitude. Post-war commemoration, however, also grew directly out of the search for the remains of hundreds of thousands of missing soldiers, and the sometimes contentious debates over where to bury them. For this reason, the local monument, with its inscribed list of names and its functional resemblance to tombstones, emerged as the focal point of commemorative practice. Sherman traces every step in the process of monument building as he analyzes commemoration's competing goals - to pay tribute to the dead, to console the bereaved and to incorporate mourner's individual memories into a larger political discourse.

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