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Review of *Beyond the Great Silence: The Legacy of Shell Shock in Britain and Germany, 1918-1924* by Stefanie Linden

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religious instruction. Despite these efforts, however, the women subjected to these enforcements often openly defied army authority, flirting with soldiers on their way to be examined and exhibiting disorderly behaviour when appearing in courtrooms. Meanwhile in India, brothels could mimic traditional domesticity between the sex workers and their family members who lived with them there.

Although the subject matter clamours for more analysis of the familial and professional relationships between women and soldiers – despite the title, MacKay's emphasis is overwhelmingly on the romantic, sexual, and marital relationships women had with soldiers – this is nevertheless a valuable contribution to the field of gender research and the British army. Not only does it contextualise the experiences of the nineteenth-century soldier, it also demonstrates the army's reach, able to meaningfully impact the lives of men and women across society.

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**Stefanie Linden, *Beyond the Great Silence: The Legacy of Shell Shock in Britain and Germany, 1918-1924*. Warwick: Helion & Company Limited, 2024. x + 337 pp. ISBN 978-1804514306 (hardcover). Price £35.**

As a marginalized group of combat soldiers during the Great War, the legacies of shell-shocked veterans continued to shape the politics of war in the aftermath of the First World War. Historian Stefanie Linden analyses the perception of shell shock in Britain and Germany between 1918 and 1924. In this work, Linden argues that while both British and German shell-shocked veterans experienced similar conditions of warfare on the Western Front, their experiences differed in their respective countries as Britain and Germany interpreted shell shock differently. While recognizing shell shock and its psychological symptoms as early as 1914 and 1915, British medical authorities downplayed the condition after the war as they attempted to look for a physical cause of shell shock or diagnosed shell-shocked veterans with a physical wound, they did not sustain during their service to avoid shame and stigma. In contrast, the shell shock experience in Germany for veterans was vastly different as German doctors rejected the idea of shell shock. Instead, German doctors believed that shell-shocked veterans had a 'psychopathic constitution' due to an inherited weakness (p. 311). As Linden demonstrates, British and German doctors 'cut the link between the war and the

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enduring suffering [of shell-shocked veterans' by not recognizing the correlation between their trauma and military service (p. 313).

At the centre of Linden's book is the array of challenges British and German shell-shocked veterans encountered in the years after the war. Whether in Britain or Germany, veterans struggled to reconnect with loved ones, integrate into communities, find employment, and support themselves and their families and even died by suicide. At the same time, such veterans could not overcome their war trauma. Whether admitted to the National Hospital in London or the Charite in Berlin, there was little to no avail that doctors could do to treat the ongoing symptoms for veterans. Eventually, many were discharged from both institutions, regardless of their condition, and lived on the fringes of their respective countries.

While not fighting on the frontlines of the Western Front, Linden also shows that civilians were exposed to the effects of war on the British Homefront and could experience psychological trauma. According to Linden, British civilians could not escape from the war above as German Zeppelins bombed the British Isles, and some civilians displayed shell shock symptoms including anxiety and shaking, as the British populace was fighting to survive for the first time during the war. Meanwhile, as Linden highlights, British women exhibited psychological symptoms including dizziness, fainting spells, and nervous breakdowns as they displayed extreme worry about their fighting sons and husbands. As Linden reveals, 'the traumatic experiences of the war went far beyond the Armistice-not just for the soldiers but also for their close relatives' (p. 155).

Even as shell shock was a hotly debated condition in post-war Britain and Germany, Linden demonstrates that the experience of shell shock during the war advanced the development of psychological medicine in the years after the war. Major Frederick Walker Mott, an outspoken critic of shell shock and British neurologist at Maudsley Hospital, even acknowledged that 'even strong, constitutionally sound men who would have excelled in normal life succumbed to the unimaginable horrors of war, overwhelmed by fear and anger, driven by sheer instinct to survive' (p. 108). As Linden reveals, the Great War was a learning opportunity for psychiatrists to study the inner workings of the human mind while undergoing extreme stresses and strains in war. Doctors experimented with different treatment therapies, consulted their research findings with one another, and favoured a psychological explanation for shell shock over that of an organic model. Even in the post-war years, some British doctors accepted the psychological model of shell shock while many doctors continued to favour an organic interpretation.

To conclude, Linden's text is well-written and a sad tale that explores the marginalization of British and German shell-shocked veterans. This text is highly

recommended for Great War historians, psychiatrists, graduate students, and anyone passionate about military history. Linden's book makes a great contribution to the historiography of shell shock as most of the current literature examines the relationship between combat and shell shock. While other shell-shock scholars examined charitable organizations or lunatic asylums in the post-war years, Linden's book is a great new addition to the historiography due to her extensive analysis of the medical records at the National Hospital and Charite as well as her insight into the politics and cultural aspects of shell shock in Britain and Germany. With the end of the Great War over 100 years ago, the legacies of shell shock have not completely faded from history. While it is used to represent the emotional and psychological suffering of the Great War, the symptoms of shell shock still remain and anyone can become shell-shocked, whether traumatized by war or their everyday lives.

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DOI [10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v11i1.1882](https://doi.org/10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v11i1.1882)

**John Kiszely, *General Hastings 'Pug' Ismay: Soldier, Statesman, Diplomat. A New Biography.* London: Hurst, 2024. xix + 421 pp. 28 B&W illustrations, 4 maps. ISBN 978-1911723202 (hardback). Price £35.**

John Kiszely's previous book on the 1940 Norway campaign was a case study into British management of grand strategy and its operational consequences. This fine biography of General Hastings Ismay – he acquired the nickname 'Pug' early in his military career – examines the same subject through a different lens.

For a crisp summary of why Ismay was an important historical figure before, during and after the Second World War, just read the second paragraph of Kiszely's Preface. If Ismay is known at all nowadays, it is for his role in the Second World War as principal military aide to Churchill, particularly acting as intermediary between Churchill as Minister of Defence and the Chiefs of Staff. But Kiszely devotes under half his main text to the war. This is important, because it gives him the space to explore other aspects of Ismay's life and career, as suggested in his subtitle. In particular, he shows how Ismay's early experience – his 'apprenticeship', to quote one of the chapter headings – and successive appointments in the interwar period fitted him almost uniquely for the job he did for Churchill. Two phases of his post-war career were also especially important: his short but significant role in the partition of India in 1947, which he came to see as a shameful failure; and his much more successful time as