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Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio, and Jay Winter, eds. *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010. Pp. ix, 223. ISBN 978-0-521-19658-1.

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In many circumstances, one learns more from what is not said than from what is said in any story being told, whether it be a child's fib or a friend's tall tale. In this collection of essays, twelve scholars cogently analyze telling instances of silence in collective tales of the chaotic and contentious actions of war. Such silences, they contend, do something—or rather many things—to and for those who participate in them, conveying much about the circumstances that precipitate them and the historical events they dismiss.

The focus here is on twentieth-century wars in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Two introductory chapters precede three sections of three essays devoted to each of the designated geographic regions. This organization is both unfortunate and advantageous. It strongly suggests a geographic unity not really present in the essays, while obscuring the theoretical and topical links among them. However, it also underscores the complexity of both the social uses of silence and the scholarly investigation of them.

Jay Winter (Yale), in chapter 1 (“Thinking about Silence,” 3–31), frames the volume as a supplement and corrective to earlier works on war and remembrance.¹ He claims that previous studies have cast remembering and forgetting as a strict dichotomy, the former being positive and the latter negative for individuals and communities. However, recent studies in anthropology, sociology, and even the neuro- and cognitive sciences have revealed that memory is not nearly as static and structured as once believed. Winter and the other contributors contend that attention to silence sheds new light on the complex social, political, and personal aspects of memory. They define silence as “a socially constructed space in which and about which subjects and words normally used in everyday life are not spoken” (4), specifically when a group explicitly or implicitly agrees not to talk about something known to its members.

Winter identifies three primary impulses for the social construction of silence: first is the managing of grief and loss in public displays of mourning through “liturgical silences” (4). The second impulse is political or strategic, that is, silence adopted to heal the wounds or lessen the impact of conflicts. (The essay on societal silences after the Spanish Civil War offers a prime example of this.) Finally, some groups create strategies of silence out of a notion of privileged knowledge and experience. (A good illustration is presented in the essay on Israeli veterans of the 1948 war for independence.) The essays in this superlative collection examine various iterations of these impulses, clarifying how groups construct memory and imagination in the shadows of war.

Before the several case studies of such silence, Eviatar Zerubavel (Rutgers), in the second introductory chapter (“The Social Sound of Silence: Toward a Sociology of Denial,” 32–44), contextualizes the effects of silence on society at large and examines how individuals and groups contribute to such silences. In regard to silence's position between memory and oblivion, he writes that:

Rather than simply failing to notice something, denial too involves an effort to actively avoid noticing it. Moreover, it involves avoiding things that actually beg for our attention, thereby reminding us that conspiracies of silence revolve not around unnoticeable matters we simply overlook but actually around highly conspicuous ones we actively avoid. That explains our choice of the proverbial “elephant in the room,” a creature of impossible stature and therefore highly noticeable presence, to represent metaphorically the object of such conspiracies.... Thus, if we ignore its presence, it can only be as a result of active avoidance, as otherwise it would be impossible not to notice it. To ignore an “elephant,” in short, is to ignore the obvious (33).

1. Notably, Emmanuel Sivan and Jay Winter, eds., *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999).

Zerubavel insightfully notes that such conspiracies of silence become stronger the longer they persist and the more people adhere to them.

Chapters 3 through 5 scrutinize issues of silence during and after European conflicts. First, historian Mary Vincent (Sheffield) examines Spain's 2007 "law of historical memory," an official attempt to recover the memory of atrocities and pain during the Spanish Civil War (chapter 3: "Breaking the Silence? Memory and Oblivion since the Spanish Civil War," 47–67). Such memories had been cloaked in a conspiracy of silence until General Francisco Franco's death in 1975. Yet even after his death, Vincent notes, Spain treated both the Civil War and Franco's brutal dictatorship as tragic periods better left in the past. The guilt that pervaded society allowed individual healing and public unity while repressing the painful past of the Spanish people. Only after 2007 have Spaniards begun to recover a new social identity and a fuller picture of their own past.

The next two chapters address German guilt and memory after the Second World War. In chapter 4 ("In the Ashes of Disgrace: Guilt versus Shame Revisited," 68–90), Jeffrey Olick (Virginia) reevaluates Ruth Benedict's classic formulation of the shame vs. guilt cultural dichotomy.² Benedict claimed that the West's culture of guilt, reliant on an internal conscience and absolute standards of morality, differed sharply from Japanese shame culture, which was far more concerned with external motivators and others' opinions of one's actions. Olick shows that most Western cultures, and Germany in particular, evince a complex mix of shame and guilt. He explores the public debates over a collective German guilt for Nazi atrocities. Karl Jaspers represents the inclination toward guilt, while Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt represent the shame impulse within the broader German culture. Olick finds that there is a sense in which guilt is a dominant motivation in society, but no clear distinction between guilt and shame as forces for German postwar unification and healing.

In chapter 5 ("On Silence, Madness, and Lassitude: Negotiating the Past in Post-War West Germany," 91–112), Svenja Goltermann (Freiburg) looks at the reactions of German soldiers after the war's end. Overcome by both the country's need to rationalize the actions of the National Socialist regime and the ardent denazification programs of the period, the soldiers concealed their past actions out of political necessity and in response to cultural pressure often applied by their own families. While, in popular psychological jargon, "trauma" came to represent Germans' experiences of war, soldiers were left in a nebulous void of denial, able to reintegrate into society only by keeping silent about their wartime experiences.

The next three chapters are devoted to Africa. Chapters 6 and 7 explore the tense interactions of colonizing powers with indigenous peoples, with stress on the French in Africa, showing how both oppressed and oppressors used silence for their own purposes. In chapter 6 ("Silences on State Violence during the Algerian War of Independence: France and Algeria, 1962–2007," 115–37), Raphaëlle Branche (Paris) and Jim House (Leeds) explain that the French, hoping to downplay the abuses of the period, have long remained silent about the events of 1961. Likewise, Algerians who endured oppression and torture kept silent as a means of coping, even within their own families. However, in the 1980s, their children broke with those patterns of behavior as a means of combating the anti-Algerian sentiment prevalent in their own day. Seeking full acceptance into the larger French culture, the young activists spoke out about public abuses and racism, but not about the torture inflicted on many of their family members.

Similarly, Ruth Ginio (Ben Gurion Univ.) explores the veil of silence surrounding France's occupation of Senegal in chapter 7 ("African Silences: Negotiating the Story of France's Colonial Soldiers, 1914–2009," 138–52). Much of the violence of the period was initiated by Africans drafted into the French forces, a co-exploitation that aroused deep discomfort in both France and Senegal in the post-colonial period. As Ginio brilliantly states,

Speech acts are selective, to be sure, but so are silences, especially those which describe the ugliness of a colonial past in which black soldiers broke the protest of black men and women struggling against their French masters. The men in uniform were therefore in a liminal position, half way between the subjugated and the

2. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), often reprinted.

subjugators. The story of their lives and fate both during the two world wars and in the years of decolonization is redolent with silences, with selective omissions and exaggerations related to the needs of today more than the events of yesterday (139).

In chapter 8 (“Now That All Is Said and Done: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC] in South Africa,” 153–70), Louise Bethlehem (Hebrew Univ.) discusses efforts to bring about reconciliation and unity in post-apartheid South Africa. Empowered to grant immunity for crimes committed under apartheid, as long as their perpetrators publically confessed them, the TRC also gave voice to the victims of such crimes, in hopes that dispelling the silence surrounding the period might heal the nation. Bethlehem masterfully notes the strengths and weaknesses of such an approach. She points out that during the public testimonies, the greatest boon to those testifying was their assigned comforters, who silently aided and strengthened them during and after their statements. Such silent aid was especially conspicuous in testimonies about rape and molestation. Bethlehem’s express purpose is to demonstrate that telling one’s story does not automatically ensure healing: “Silence itself can be powerfully resonant, especially when it concerns the frail and vulnerable human body” (170).

Conversely, in chapter 9 (“Facing History: Denial and the Turkish National Security Concept,” 173–80), Taner Akçam (Clark Univ.) calls for an end to Turkey’s formal silence about the events of 1915 and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. He maintains that Turkey did immense damage to its very identity and its people when it subsumed historical memory under issues of “national security.” He calls for an end to such silences as the only real avenue for Turkey’s entrance into the greater European society. It should be noted that Bethlehem’s essay is in many ways a counterbalance to Akçam’s, and the reader might better read them in reverse order.

The final two chapters investigate silences in the history of Israel. Chapter 10 (“Imposed Silences and Self-Censorship: *Palmach* Soldiers Remember 1948,” 181–96), by Efrat Ben-Ze’ev (Ruppin Acad. Ctr.), is the best essay in the collection. The elite soldiers of the 1948 war perpetrated many heinous acts during the conflict and would speak of them only with each other during an annual meeting called the “Party of the First.” Even the soldiers’ families were excluded until 1998, when a changed political environment and the reflection that comes with old age induced the soldiers to let their families attend the meeting, thus breaking the long-held silence.

While Ben-Ze’ev explores the personal use and dissolution of silence, in chapter 11 (“Forgetting the Lebanon War? On Silence, Denial, and the Selective Remembrance of the ‘First’ Lebanon War,” 197–216), Asher Kaufman (Notre Dame) treats the public memory of Israelis’ actions during the “First” Lebanon War of 1982. Tracing both public memory and silence through the career of Ariel Sharon, he elucidates how entire nations can drape widely known events in silence. Since the Lebanon War did not fit into any of Israel’s prevailing narratives, it was simply ignored.

As a whole, *Shadows of War* offers fascinating case studies of the many and varied ways silence serves society. While the essays are accessible to a general audience, they will be most helpful to professional historians. Both will appreciate the concise, valuable footnotes that do not overpower the text. The work is certainly not without faults, however, notably in its poor organization and sometimes tenuous links between chapters. Nonetheless, these groundbreaking essays invite readers to rethink their understanding of memory, denial, and healing after war. Military historians should read *Shadows of War* for the light it sheds on the complicated and highly problematic uses of silence.