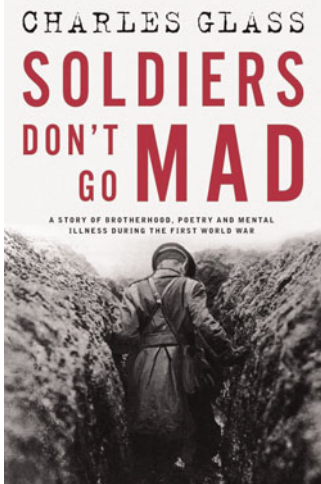


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge and Femi Oyeboode



Soldiers Don't Go Mad: A Story of Brotherhood, Poetry and Mental Illness During the First World War.

By Charles Glass. Bedford Square Publishers. 2023. £16.49 (hb). 352 pp. ISBN 978-1835010150.

The evolving relationship between Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen serves as a focus for this history of Craiglockhart Military Hospital and the treatment of shell-shocked officers. The experiences of other soldier patients, such as Max Plowman and George Bonner, are also depicted, together with the methods of their therapists, W.H.R. Rivers, Arthur Brock and William Brown. However, the subject matter is not novel as biographies have been written on both poets and Rivers. Much has been published on the nature of shell shock, its relationship to PTSD and how doctors in World War One sought to return those traumatised by combat to frontline duty. Craiglockhart Military Hospital, though small compared with the Maudsley or Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley, has attracted disproportionate attention, being the subject of two commercial films, *Regeneration* and *Benediction*.

What then does Charles Glass add to what appears to be a topic exhaustively explored? First, he provides an insightful and carefully researched narrative into the battlefield experiences of Owen and Sassoon, their breakdown, treatment and use of poetry to understand the trauma of conflict. Glass also brings to life the regime at Craiglockhart, and the challenges faced by the doctors who were subject to competing military and therapeutic imperatives.

The title of the book is a reference to the evidence given by Robert Graves to Sassoon's medical board called to assess his mental state in the light of an anti-war declaration published in *The Times*. Because of his public profile and Military Cross, the War Office could have managed his protest by finding him insane and committing him to an asylum. Swayed by Graves' testimony of mental and physical exhaustion, the board preferred a diagnosis of shell shock and sent Sassoon to Craiglockhart.

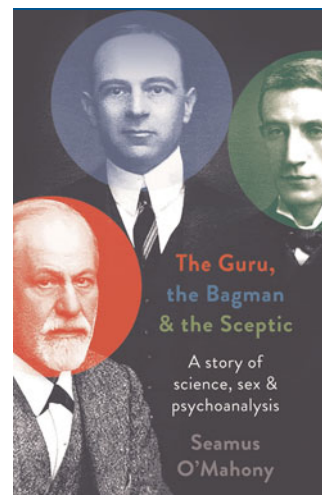
This is not a book about the representative soldier passing through the standard medical system; Glass describes exceptional patients in an experimental institution. Sassoon, a recognised poet with political connections, was given latitude, choosing to remain aloof from much of the hospital's activities apart from regular sessions with Rivers. Owen, then unknown, was fortunate to be referred to Craiglockhart. There he was allocated to Arthur Brock, whose treatment regime – derived from tuberculosis rehabilitation –

dovetailed with Owen's vulnerabilities. Glass contrasts the 758 officers (42%) returned to duty from Craiglockhart with the 7.1% from D Block at Netley. Yet this is not a like-for-like comparison as D Block was a secure unit that treated soldiers diagnosed with severe psychoses, whilst Craiglockhart admitted officers suffering from post-traumatic illnesses, some with established coping skills.

One point of detail: Rivers and Brock are both described as psychiatrists, though neither had formal qualifications in the speciality, nor had they acquired clinical experience in a mental health unit before the war. Brock was a general practitioner who had worked in a tuberculosis sanatorium and Rivers, a Cambridge academic, had research interests in neurology, experimental psychology and anthropology. Yet they undoubtedly developed expertise in the treatment of post-traumatic illnesses, earning the respect of their officer patients. This book is recommended not only to psychiatrists but also to those with an interest in the complex relationships created by war and the management of trauma.

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The Guru, the Bagman and the Sceptic: a Story of Science, Sex and Psychoanalysis

By Seamus O'Mahony
Apollo 2023. £24.03 (hb). 336 pp.
ISBN 978-1803285658.

Seamus O'Mahony's book starts by drawing parallels and contrasts between three men at the turn of the 20th century. First, there is Ernest Jones, a young hospital doctor who is quite enamoured (as all his colleagues seem to be) with his senior colleague and British surgeon, Wilfred Trotter. Their burgeoning friendship meets the hard gravity of Sigmund Freud's revolutionary writings on the unconscious, which yank Ernest Jones in one direction (he later goes on to become a psychoanalyst and President of the International Psychoanalytic Association), whilst repelling Trotter who is characterised throughout this book as more sceptic, more scientifically minded and a thoroughly 'good' man. Trotter himself made a significant contribution to psychology and group dynamics with his book *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* in which the term 'herd instinct' is famously coined, but this was enough for him, and he spent the rest of his life operating (mostly quietly, with a few royal clients here and there). Freud, as we know, went on to produce an astonishing amount of work which is still widely studied today, as is his clinical legacy which has been picked apart in various treatises and books.

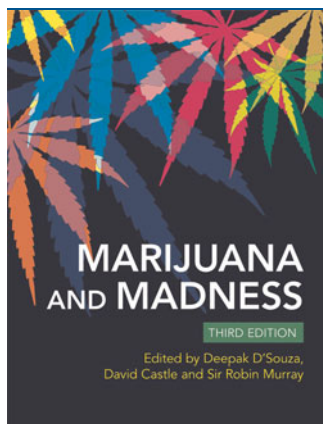
O'Mahony's work could be seen as part of this grand unpicking, as it spends many chapters focusing on the colourful and disturbing

private lives of various 20th-century analysts. There is Otto Gross who suffered an apparent drug-induced psychotic episode and whose salvo ('Repress nothing!') later tipped him into becoming an anarchist. Joan Riviere is one of many 'couch jumpers' who made the move from patient to clinician; a move which O'Mahony rightly observes was not rooted in any actual clinical experience. Melanie Klein is somewhat lambasted for analysing her children. Meanwhile, throughout, there are an array of boundary violations as Freud and his cohort are portrayed as miscreants, dreamers and, at worst, possibly dangerous. If it wasn't obvious enough, this is a book that doesn't view psychoanalysis fondly.

There is something of an enforced splitting going on, though, with Trotter continually painted as a surgeon-hero less interested in celebrity than he is in just doing the work. The split certainly makes the book entertaining and propulsive, as we are shocked and gladdened as readers by the sway of its characters over time (Jones in particular feels like someone out of a novel), but I'm less sure of its value as critique. O'Mahony writes finely in often beautiful and well researched prose, but the book as a whole feels biased, and it fails to understand the importance of psychoanalytic ideas and, indeed, their ongoing place in psychiatric practice today. It's an unfortunately skewed approach that reduces men to categories like 'guru', 'bagman' and 'sceptic' but doesn't seem to go further than this in its analysis.

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Marijuana and Madness (3rd edn).

Edited by Deepak D'Souza, David Castle and Sir Robin Murray.
Cambridge University Press. 2023.
£17.99 (pb). 353 pp. ISBN 978-1009305433.

The third edition of *Marijuana and Madness* has over twice as many chapters as the first edition, which was published 20 years ago. This field of research is still very active and increasingly topical. Much has changed over the last two decades. Access to cannabis has been decriminalised in many jurisdictions. These changes have been made against the backdrop of a growing and convergent body of evidence about the association between cannabis use and adverse mental health outcomes. The new edition of this book maps the evidence in a comprehensive fashion.

Carl Bernstein, the Watergate journalist, coined the phrase 'the best obtainable version of the truth' to describe the responsibility of the media. Science also aims to provide the best obtainable evidence to support or reject hypotheses. Sometimes, the available evidence is scant. Sometimes, the body of evidence is inconsistent. However, sometimes, the data are convergent, which allows the research community to make decisions based on the balance of probability. Rarely, science can upgrade the quality of the evidence to beyond reasonable doubt.

In their chapter, Hall and Degenhardt make a compelling case for prudence with respect to public health recommendations. They argue the need to balance the potential benefits and harms from policy decisions about restricting access to cannabis. On balance, they state '[t]here is arguably an ethical imperative to inform young people of the probable mental health risks of cannabis use' (p. 54). This evidence is also mapped out concisely by Power et al in Chapter 17.

The book provides compelling evidence that the potency of cannabis-related products has increased in many countries, and that synthetic forms of cannabis-related molecules pose a challenge with respect to potency and adverse events. These topics warrant ongoing scrutiny. Clues from genetics have also been informative in recent years – genetics variants associated with psychosis and appear bidirectional. This pattern of finding is certainly thought-provoking. Cobert and Johnson (Chapter 21) remind the reader of an underappreciated feature of genome-wide association studies (GWAS). If an exposure (e.g. cannabis use) is a true risk factor for schizophrenia, then as the GWAS sample size for schizophrenia increases, variants associated with cannabis use will be blindly and automatically included in genome-wide significant hits associated with schizophrenia. Thus, GWAS studies can provide a Rosetta Stone to identify potentially modifiable risk factors (such as cannabis use), if we were only better at deciphering which variants impacted directly versus indirectly (i.e. via environmentally mediated exposures) on phenotypes such as schizophrenia.

There are excellent chapters that summarize the (often mixed) evidence from animal models, and post-mortem brain studies. The take-home message: the neurobiology of cannabis-related neuromodulation is complicated. However, progress has been made since the first edition. There are practical chapters about the management of people with cannabis use and misuse. There are also several new chapters that describe emerging topics related to cannabis (e.g. 'medical use', links with being a victim or perpetrator of violence, prenatal exposure and offspring outcomes, etc.).

D'Souza, Castle and Murray have edited an information-rich third edition of *Marijuana and Madness* (a very catchy title). They have outlined gaps in the evidence that need more research and summarised the 'best obtainable version of the truth'.

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