History Not Yet Written: Writing the First World War in Britain
1914-1935

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ABSTRACT

History Not Yet Written: Writing the First World War in Britain 1914-1935

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Despite the level of interest in the First World War, little writing exits about the early histories of the war published in Britain during the inter-war period. The historians who do discuss this literature propose either a divide between the histories of the 1920s and 1930s, representing a shift to a tragic narrative influenced by fiction about the war, or lump together all of the inter-war histories as sharing similar characteristics. This study expands on the debate by exploring twenty-eight general, non-fiction historical texts about the war aimed at popular consumption published in Britain between 1914 and 1935, and analyzes four elements of their depictions of the war: the origins, casualties, outcome, and any over-arching meaning that they present. It argues that there are three distinct inter-war periods of writing on the war: 1914 to 1920, 1922 to 1927, and 1928 to 1935, with each period characterized by changes in these four elements. The most profound change is between the First Period (1914 to 1920) and the Second Period (1920 to 1927) during which we see a dramatic rise to prominence of impersonal, structural causes for the war, over-arching meanings of the war as a tragedy, and a heightened
emphasis on the horrors of the war. Over the entire inter-war period, we see the
narrowing of authors’ over-arching meanings of the war down to two: the war as a
tragedy, or the war as a costly national victory. This study is an addition to the
historiography of the First World War, and will contribute to future research on the topic.
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Introduction

An established narrative exists of the development and reception of histories of the First World War. Modris Eksteins claims that “the spate of official and unofficial histories that issued forth in the twenties was largely ignored by the public.”¹ Similarly, “official histories.. and regimental and service histories… went onto shelves… either unread or, if read, undiscussed.”² Leonard Smith argues that the 1930’s then featured a darker, literary rethinking of the war and its legacy resulting in the later “general acceptance as ‘true’ of a model drawn from Great War literature… the war as tragedy.”³

This paper gauges the validity of this narrative. Were the early British histories of the war inadequate and irrelevant? How did the meanings they presented of the war differ, if at all, from those produced in the later inter-war period? Expanding on these questions, how did the war depictions of popular historians and children’s historians change over this period, if at all? The goal I intend to accomplish is to discern the ways in which the causes, casualties, outcome, and over-arching meaning of the First World War were constructed in British popular, general non-fiction writing about the war between 1914 and 1935, and to identify ways in which they changed over time. By popular, general non-fiction writing, I specifically mean non-fiction writing intended for mass consumption, excluding memoirs, autobiographies, and official textbooks. For this purpose, I examine general, popular, and children’s histories referring to the First World War.

² Ibid., 255.
War published in Britain within that period and compare the relevant elements of the texts.

**Historiography**

Considering the level of interest in the topic of the First World War, there has not been an abundance of academic study of the inter-war British historical writing on the war. No study exists which comparatively addresses the changing content of inter-war histories. Most academic writing on the topic has focused on telescoping in on the more famous authors of the time. In *The First World War and British Military History*, Keith Grieves examines the writing and limitations of three early historians of the war: John Fortescue, Arthur Conan Doyle, and John Buchan. Grieves argues that these authors unintentionally “mythologized war,” and were constrained by “antiquated notions” of 19th century military historiography. Although he discusses some specific themes of their narratives, Grieves focuses on the authors’ limitations as military historians in understanding the new developments of warfare, the limited information allowed to them by the British government, and their actual experiences in the writing of the histories. He generally describes the authors as presenting an overly positive or optimistic view of the war that is challenged by later authors of a different generation. Grieves goes into greater analysis of Buchan’s writing in a later article, arguing against the view of Buchan’s

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5 Ibid., 38.
history as propaganda. In contrast, Kate Macdonald has more recently argued that Buchan’s history should indeed be studied as propaganda.

Describing the 1920’s/1930’s historiographical divide as generational, Hew Strachan writes about B.H. Liddell Hart’s and C.R.M.F. Cruttwell’s 1930’s histories in “‘The Real War’: Liddell Hart, Cruttwell, and Falls” chapter of The First World War and British Military History. Strachan discusses some of the military claims they made and broader themes of their writing. He argues that Liddell Hart and Cruttwell, both veterans of the war and members of the “lost generation,” were, along with other writers of “war books,” writing to express “the guilt of the living” and to commemorate the dead. Strachan details Cruttwell’s life and his experience writing about the war, and briefly mentions Charles Fletcher, author of a 1920 history, as well as Hart as influences for Cruttwell’s history. Hart’s life and his military thought have been extensively studied by a number of other authors, including Brian Bond, Alex Danchev, John Mearsheimer, and Robert O’Neill.

The Official History of the war, the 14-volume History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, edited by James Edmonds, has been studied and analyzed on its own. David French has investigated Edmonds’ depictions of British military performance

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9 Ibid., 57,61.
and his status as official historian. Andrew Green has more recently published an analysis of the official history, delving deeply into the Edmonds’ life and his process of writing *The Official History*. Because *The Official History* was certainly not meant for popular consumption, it will not be analyzed in this paper.

Jay Winter and Antoine Prost discuss the inter-war historiography of the First World War in *The Great War in History*. Their focus, however, is primarily the French writing about the war outside of the time period analyzed here. Histories for them are divided into three “configurations”: the “military and diplomatic,” of the inter-war period, “social history” near the middle of the twentieth century, with a turn to history from below and a focus on the soldiers, and “cultural and social,” after the collapse of Marxism and the cultural turn. Although they are generally discussing works not intended for broad popular consumption, Winter and Prost categorize all histories of the war published between the world wars as “military and diplomatic,” in that they neglect the input and perspectives of the soldiers themselves or economics in favor of a more distant and traditional view of the war as an immense political conflict. These histories were associated with witnesses, participants or leaders of the war. Winter and Prost extrapolate their analysis of inter-war French histories onto Britain and Germany: “The discussion of the Great War in interwar Germany and Britain followed the same patterns

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14 Ibid., 7.
15 Ibid., 14.
as in France.”16 British inter-war histories, they claim, were devoid of individual soldiers’ perspectives, though they single out Liddell Hart as generally pointing in the direction of a new understanding of the war focusing on the soldiers themselves.

On the subjects of leadership, strategy and command, Winter and Prost categorize the inter-war period as “heroic,” a period when “battle was conceived generally in nineteenth-century terms,”17 in sharp contrast to the much more critical 1960s and 1970. British histories featured a “learning curve”18 as Allied commanders adapted to the new form of industrialized combat, culminating in victory. Histories during the inter-war period, they argue, were highly national: they were intended for the audience of one nation only. They glorified their own national war effort, and disparaged or neglected others’. These histories often treated battle as a “lens through which readers are invited to examine the national character of their own country.”19 They note the histories of Cruttwell and Liddell Hart as exceptions to this trend, and that British historiography featured insightful debates over tactics and lessons.20

This inquiry differs from those of previous historians by asking different questions and utilizing distinct sources. It does not focus on the accuracy of accounts or the backgrounds of the writers, but instead on their depictions of the following four aspects of the war: its causes, casualties, victory, and the over-arching meaning of the war. Rather than only focusing on a single historian or a handful, this paper compares a large sample of all available texts. Further differentiating this project from others, it

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16 Ibid., 15.
17 Ibid., 59.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 62.
20 Ibid., 63-64.
includes depictions of the war designed for children as well and works by amateur historians. This paper asks whether a break between the 1920’s and 1930’s, or any periodizations of historical writing about the war during the inter-war years are accurate or possible. It argues that three inter-war periods are identifiable within the texts studied: 1914 to 1920, 1922 to 1927, and 1928 to 1935.

**Methodology**

*Inter-War Period*

Trench warfare, machine guns, and artillery killed millions of soldiers within a brief period of years. The war’s violence, death, and horrors have long since become ingrained in the war’s modern narrative as a tragedy. Its futility is remembered with special acuteness because it is the *First* World War, with an even more violent and destructive sequel following after scarcely more than two decades. During the inter-war period, that future conflict had yet to occur, and many of the tragically ironic elements of war’s legacy had yet to be realized. Knowledge of the Second World War alters completely any perception of the First: it is impossible not to regard how one failed to avert the other, that the ghastly “war to end all wars” failed to prevent its own repetition. This study focuses on the inter-war period because it was not yet entirely clear that victory in the First World War was futile. The inter-war period allows an examination of the perception of the war without the Second World War standing as an “elephant in the room.”
Four Characterizations

This paper analyzes four characterizations made by inter-war historical texts about The First World War: the causes of the war, perception of the casualties of the war, the reason for or meaning of the victory, and any over-arching meaning of the war itself. I have selected these specific characterizations for three primary reasons. First, it is indisputable that the characterization of those four elements of the First World War is now fundamentally different than it was during the inter-war period, whether because of the 1960’s and 1970’s re-thinking of the war, the events of the Second World War, or the establishment of a predominant narrative of the First World War as a tragedy. Second, these four elements of the story of The First World War made the war unique: the chaotic descent into war required explanation, the war’s unprecedented bloodshed needed to be addressed or justified, the victory and its lessons needed to be explained, and the over-arching meaning, if there was one, framed the war as it was to be understood and remembered. Third, these characterizations reveal the perception of the war, of the authors and their audiences, of those unique elements of the First World War.

The Causes

Explaining the causes of the First World War has been fundamental to its historiography since the very first histories were written. Whether it is argued that Germany premeditated the war, that the conflict was due to the immense movement of nations, or that inept actors bungled their way into the conflict, Britons certainly required an explanation for the war more relevant to them than the assassination of Franz-Ferdinand. The causes of the war, tied to its justifications, are fundamental elements of
the war’s narrative. The causes of the war in the histories studied in this inquiry are usually addressed in its first few chapters.

The Casualties

The extraordinary violence and the large number of soldiers’ deaths mark a sharp contrast between the First World War and any European conflict within contemporary living memory. Trench warfare, machine guns, and artillery killed millions of Western Europeans within a brief period of years. These casualties and the immense sacrifice of lives needed to be addressed or justified in some way by inter-war authors. Unless a text specifically address the war’s unprecedented deadliness in a designated chapter, its characterization of the casualties can be dispersed throughout the book. In those cases, this study focuses on the description of the Somme, Britain’s bloodiest battle of the war.

Victory

The Entente victory of 1918 followed the exhaustion of the German army, and a return to mobility with a series of dramatic breakthroughs. The significance of the American contribution to the war is emphasized by recent historiography. Explaining how victory was achieved, why, and the meaning of this victory was a fundamental task for inter-war historians who were living in the war’s aftermath. Victory came at such a high price that if it was something to be celebrated at all, it needed to be justified. The causes and meaning of the Entente victory, the war’s conclusion, and any lessons learned from the war, have a foundational role in any representation. The concluding chapters of a history generally address this characterization.

The Meaning of the War
An over-arching meaning of The First World War is as fundamental to the war’s narrative and indicative of perception as the preceding three characterizations, whether it was a war to defend Civilization, to end all war, or if it had another significance. In order to make the war’s gruesome costs explicable, authors needed to articulate a broad meaning. In the meaning, authors established the war’s place in British history and contextualized it within the national historical narrative. The framing chapters of a history, the introductory and concluding ones, often contain the meaning of the war.

For the purpose of this study, the four characterizations are extracted, quoted, analyzed, and chronologically contextualized.

Selection of Texts

The texts selected for this analysis fit the following six criteria. The first is that they were published between 1919 and 1938. There are the following exceptions to this rule: H.G. Wells’ *The War That Will End War*, published in 1914, *Italy, France, and Britain at War*, published in 1917, and *In The Fourth Year*, published in 1918, and *The Children’s Story of the War* by Edward Parrott, which was published in a series of volumes between 1915 and 1919. Written and published while the war was still being fought, Wells’ books are included because they provide an early base for points of comparison with the later volumes. Parrott’s series is included because its final volumes are certainly within the inter-war period, and as a children’s history, it simplifies its messages about the war for more easy consumption.

The second criterion for selection is that the texts be general. They are general in that they convey information about the entire war, not only, for example, the war at sea or in the air. This excludes published accounts of individual battles and the so-called
“regimental histories.” As a consequence, they articulate the author’s perception of the four characterizations discussed earlier: the war’s causes, casualties, victory, and overarching meaning. The works often include the word “history” in their titles, but this is not a requirement: the war was so recent that the word was often superfluous.

The third criterion is that the texts be non-fiction prose. They are non-fiction in that they claim to be telling the truth about the actual war that happened, and they were meant to be read as doing so. This criterion excludes the 1930s explosion of literary fiction about the war along with war poetry.

The fourth criterion is that the texts be intended for the mass audience of the general public. This excludes Edmonds’ official History of the Great War Based on Official Documents, along with histories written by and for the academic audience of the time. Histories written by amateur historians are the predominant texts analyzed in this study.

The fifth criterion is that the texts be published in the United Kingdom by British authors for a British audience. In order to analyze the changing perception of the First World War in Britain, it is clearly necessary to limit the texts studied to British ones.

The sixth criterion is that the texts not consist of memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, or official textbooks. Memoirs and biographical books, particularly those pertaining to wartime leadership have been studied and criticized for decades. They are their own field, and do not fit the second criterion of being general. Finally, although educational textbooks can be general, they are not meant for popular consumption and were not designed for a mass audience.

Periodization
The goal of this inquiry is to first confirm or invalidate the notions discussed in the introduction, that general non-fiction historical writing about the First World War in Britain changed over the inter-war period, and second to ask whether two or more periods are appropriate, or even none at all. This is accomplished by extracting, analyzing, and chronologically juxtaposing the four characterizations from within texts that meet the six criteria. While the four characterizations are not the same in every book, it is possible to identify a period if most or all of the books published during certain years exhibit certain features, while books published during different years exhibit different ones. A single book does not make a trend, but it can indicate a new period.

Three Periods

The texts examined in this study reveal three possible periods of non-fiction, historical writing about the war: 1914-1920, 1922-1927/28, and 1928-1935. The first period, 1914 to 1920, is characterized by an over-arching meaning for the war divided between a war to end all war and a national triumph, blaming the Germans for staging the war to make a bid for world domination, and comparatively distant presentation of justly sacrificed casualties. The second period, 1922 to 1927/28, reveals increased emphasis on the horrors of war and declining belief in the necessity of the sacrifice, and a greatly expanded range of causal explanations for the war. The final period, 1928 to 1935, is characterized by the over-arching meaning of the First World War narrowing to a choice between an immensely costly national triumph and a tragedy, along with a significantly heightened emphasis on the horrors, death, and destruction of war.
Period I: 1914-1920

H.G. Wells’ brief *The War That Will End War* is a useful starting point for this study. Wells, mostly known for his works of fiction, authored several books published during the First World War: *The War That Will End War*, published in 1914, *Italy, France and Britain at War*, published in 1917, and *In the Fourth Year*, published in 1918. These three books will all be examined here to provide context for the later works of the study. Written during the war, these books cannot reflect all four characterizations established in the Introduction, particularly the *Victory* and to different extents *The Casualties*.

In *The War That Will End War*, Wells sees the immediate cause of Britain’s involvement in the war as its pledge “to protect the integrity of Belgium.”21 The invasions of Belgium and Luxemburg necessitated the involvement of Britain, along with the defense of France, because otherwise “no power in the world would have respected our Flag or accepted our national word again if we had not fought.”22 Britain’s involvement comes down to “our honour and our pledge” in the face of “German Imperialism.” This war, in the words of Sidley Low, is “not of soldiers but of whole peoples.”23 Included in its goal is the destruction of “an evil system of government and the mental and material corruption that has got hold of the German imagination and taken possession of German life.”24 Though fought “without any hatred of the German people,” the war is against the “evil” and “physical and moral brutality” of “Prussian

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22 Ibid., 9-10.
23 Ibid., 10.
24 Ibid., 11.
Imperialism” originating at least as far back as the violence of German unification. German militarism, aggression, and decades of “Welt Politik” lay behind the march to war. Because of insidious propaganda spread by the state-controlled press and industrial war profiteers such as Krupps, Wells explains that Germans’ natural faith in authority, “docility and a belief in teachers and rulers” allowed them to be brainwashed: “the German imagination was captured and enslaved.” The meaning of this war is that it is “a war for peace… [and] disarmament,” and Wells explains that each soldier and nation opposing Germany has become “a crusader against war.” The war as a noble “war for peace” is a common theme in the in the earliest period of First World War historiography, as is moralizing the Germans’ goals and role in starting the war.

Wells purports to have few illusions about the casualties and horrors of the war that had just begun: he anticipates “slaughtering, the famine, the confusion, the panic and hatred.” The war had already led to soldiers “being torn and tormented and slaughtered and wasted beyond counting, beyond imagining.” It is the duty of British soldiers to “march, through pain, through agonies of the spirit worse than pain, through seas of blood and filth.” Indeed, it is the British acknowledgement and revulsion to the horrors of war that separates Britain from Germany. Wells’ discussion of and revulsion at the war’s horrors, is not unusual for the period, but Wells is sure to establish that the sacrifices are worthwhile.

25 Ibid.  
26 Ibid., 57.  
27 Ibid., 12.  
28 Ibid., 13.  
29 Ibid., 14.  
30 Ibid., 106.  
31 Ibid., 41.  
32 Ibid., 15.
Wells predicts victory over Germany may even lead to “disarmament and peace throughout the earth.”33 A defeated Germany will be disillusioned with militarism and imperialist aggression, and open to peaceful development. Wells proposes a redrawn and perpetually peaceful map of Europe in the aftermath of victory, in which Alsace and Loraine are liberated from Germany, Poland is united (as part of Russia), and the remainder of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is broken up into a confederation along the lines of Switzerland.34 One of Britain’s goals in joining the war is to enforce a just solution for the newly free German nation and preventing Germany’s opponents from taking unfair spoils. With remarkable prescience, Wells notes the possibility of defeated German populations in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, finding themselves “under instead of upper dogs” whose outrage would lead “a bloody and embittered Germany” to “sit down grimly to grow a new generation of soldiers and prepare for her revenge.”35

In Wells’ 1917 *Italy, France and Britain at War*, the author reveals how his knowledge and experiences of the war have qualified his earlier arguments in *The War That Will End War*. Wells reaffirms his “unshakeable belief that essentially the Allies fight for a permanent world peace” and in opposition to decades of German aggression. He is now, however, more grimly aware of the war’s toll and writes about its causes in starker terms: “this war was a tragedy and sacrifice for most of the world” caused by the “fifty years of [German] elaborate intellectual foolery” of Weltpolitik and militarism; it is a “disaster.”36

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33 Ibid., 16.
34 Ibid., 54-55.
35 Ibid., 58.
Wells uses otherworldly vocabulary to describe the war’s destruction and casualties: “this war is *Queer [sic]*,” has the characteristics of a “nightmare,” and “not like anything in a really waking world, but like something in a dream.”37 Although the Entente cause is unquestionably just, the costs and casualties of the war are now disproportionate to its potential results. This fact deepens German guilt. Unlike previous wars led by Napoleons or Caesars, “the great man of this war is the common man,”38 the millions of soldiers who were sacrificing their lives in horrific conditions to oppose the “most extravagant”39 form of imperialism, its Prussian militaristic variety. He sees the First World War as distinct from previous conflicts: it is “modern war” which must be “ended forever,” a “gigantic, dusty, muddy, weedy, bloodstained silliness.”40 Much of the book is devoted to describing new developments in warfare and their impact on men and landscape.41 Germany, which Wells hates now like “some horrible infectious disease”42 is the inventor and perpetrator of this new criminal form of modern industrial warfare. The horrors of the war, now emphasized more than before, are linked to German depravity.

The war has become “nothing more than a gigantic and heroic effort in sanitary engineering,” it is “an effort to remove German militarism from the life and regions it has invaded, and to bank it in and discredit and enfeeble it so that never more will it repeat its present preposterous and horrible efforts.”43 Although the war has become

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37 Ibid., 6.
38 Ibid., 13.
39 Ibid., 253.
40 Ibid., 9.
41 Ibid., 75-171.
42 Ibid., 9.
43 Ibid., 9-10.
“tragedy” and “disaster,” a horrible, premeditated and criminal act that could not have been avoided by Britain and its allies, the conflict remains a war for world peace.

Wells predicts that “victory in this war depends now upon three things, the aeroplane, the gun, and the Tank developments… the prime necessity for a successful offensive.”

Total victory over Germany, though, may be impossible the war dragging on into the 1920s and leading to socio-economic collapse. Indeed, he argues for the “impossibility of complete victory on either side.” Instead, Wells suggests using the United States as a third party to broker a peace settlement on Europe based on arms equipment parity, and a “League of Peace… an International Tribunal” of great powers to enforce parity, rule the seas, govern international relations, and the creation an “international boundary commission” for the purpose of freeing nations and eliminating ethnic friction. Wells argues that “a world-wide system of republican states” would be the best outcome and resolution to the conflict. The League of Nations appears much in the First Period treatments of the war’s outcome than in later ones.

His In the Fourth Year, published in May of 1918, consists primarily of Wells’ argument in favor of the creation of the League of Nations and proposals for its characteristics. He also touches upon the four characterizations that are the foci of this study. The war remains a German crime, and was caused by Germany’s “treacherous violence.” Germany’s goal in the war is “Imperial Conquest… and German

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44 ibid., 161.
45 ibid., 275.
46 ibid., 264.
47 ibid., 266.
48 ibid., 285.
hegemony”\textsuperscript{50} over all of Europe. Wells is now vehemently disgusted with the behavior of British Tories, labeling them “British reactionaries” who “blundered into this great war”\textsuperscript{51} and are terrified by republicanism more than by defeat. Indeed, their goals for British imperial aggrandizement make the British war “as mean and shameful as Germany’s attack on Belgium.”\textsuperscript{52}

The war’s goals have evolved from the destruction of German imperialism into the destruction of “the idea of imperialism,”\textsuperscript{53} including even its British species. The war had struck deeply “at the foundations of social and economic life,” ensuring that “the old [socio-economic and international] system is dead.”\textsuperscript{54} He fervently insists upon the necessity of the League of Nations. It is only through the League that the First World War’s potential of ending war and bringing about world peace can be realized. It may also be the only body capable of preventing international economic collapse.\textsuperscript{55} Wells names his precedent for the international powers of the League to be the United States’ structure of federal and state spheres of authority, though the League will not be “so close and multiplex”\textsuperscript{56} as the early United States, at least initially.

The casualties and costs of the war have been “so horrible and destructive that it is impossible to contemplate a future for mankind”\textsuperscript{57} without eliminating industrialized, modern warfare. Wells links the casualties of the war to the creation of the League: the “idea of a League of Nations making an end to war... has inspired countless brave lads to

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 80.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 75.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 74.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., vi.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 79.
face death and such pains and hardships as outdo even [sic] death itself.”58 The horrors of war necessitate that Allied war aims become the “unity of mankind… in one great world community” in “common freedom.”59 The peace that they demand will “carry the world straightaway into a new phase of human history,”60 if the allies themselves are not entangled by their own profiteers, politicians, and bureaucrats. For Wells, allied victory has the potential to transform Europe and the World, leading to a free and democratic future for all peoples. Once again, the war’s horrors demand the fulfillment of its promise to end all war, linked to the League of Nations.

Sir James Edward Parrott’s The Children’s Story of the War was published in ten volumes between 1915 and 1919. Parrott had previously written educational books for children and acted as the educational editor at Thomas Nelson & Sons. He served as a Liberal Member of Parliament from 1917 to 1918 for Edinburgh South.61

The first two pages of Parrott’s series liken the start of the war to the suddenness and destruction of the earthquake and tidal wave that hit Messina in 1908: “with almost the same startling suddenness the Great War broke upon Europe. The thunderbolt fell upon us from a sky of blue; the peace of the world was broken on a smiling day.”62 Parrott uses the language of the destructive force of nature again, likening the assassination of Franz Ferdinand to a gunshot starting an “avalanche which has swept down upon Europe, leaving death and destruction and untold misery in its train.”63 He

58 Ibid., 74.
59 Ibid., 80.
60 Ibid., 83.
63 Ibid., 1:14.
titles the second chapter “the seething whirlpool.” Parrott expresses a surprisingly sympathetic view of Britain’s enemies’ motivations, comparing the Austrian love of Franz Josef to Queen Victoria, and their anger at Franz Ferdinand’s murder. The war was unexpected, and “no one suspected for a moment that the other Powers of Europe would be dragged into the quarrel.” Kaiser Wilhelm “had been brought up to believe that he could do as he pleased without any one daring to take him to task.” He was arrogant, proud, and wanted to bring “even greater glory” to his imperial family than his predecessors had. Wilhelm “egged on Austria to fight Serbia” in order to begin the ”career of conquest on which he was now bent.” Besides the Kaiser, other Germans had thought the war to be “inevitable” because they “really do believe themselves to be the greatest, strongest, and most efficient nation of the world,” believe they need colonies, and “are specially angry with us and with France” because of the result of the Morocco Crisis. Although the war was started by the Kaiser’s Napoleonic aspirations and Germany’s ambition, Parrott explains the German point of view as well. His blaming of Kaiser Wilhelm and German aggression for the war is characteristic of the First Period.

In the sixth volume, published in 1917, Parrott recounts the Battle of the Somme. He describes a Lancashire battalion of British soldiers trapped beyond German lines as being in a “death-trap,” as “machine guns belched death at them from all directions, and those who survived were forced to withdraw to their old positions… there were no
survivors not one of them was seen again.” British soldiers were “sacrificing themselves” in the north, but in the south, they “were making glorious headway.” He concludes that “not in vain did the heroes who struggled in the northern section shed their blood that day. 72 While he grimly laments the soldiers’ deaths, their sacrifices made valuable gains. The volume’s fourth and sixth chapters, “SOLDIERS’ STORIES OF THE ‘GREAT PUSH’ and ‘MORE SOLDIERS’ STORIES FROM ‘THE GREAT PUSH’”73 contain testimony from British soldiers who fought on the Somme, and consequently grim descriptions of British casualties and death. They fought on through a “rain of death”74 of artillery and machine guns, and soldiers died while still in formation: they “saw with astonishment that their dead lay in regular lines.”75 Parrott reminds the reader that “All the ground gained had to be bought at a great price of blood and valour.”76 In the final volume of the series, Parrott lists a full chart of British casualties.77 While the bloodshed of the fighting was certainly tragic, it was all necessary for victory: “Never forget that in this long war of exhaustion no single British life has been sacrificed in vain. Every drop of British blood that was shed in the first three years of the war contributed to the final victory.”78 The horrors and the casualties, the “awful bloodshed; the horrible waste of human life; the agony and tears of those who have lost their dearest and best”79 were grim necessities in a war to end war. Like Wells’, Parrott’s surprisingly open discussion

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74 Ibid., 6:43.
75 Ibid., 6:44.
76 Ibid., 6:48.
78 Ibid., 10:267-268.
79 Ibid., 10:270.
of the war’s horrors is linked to the reminder that they have been necessary and will lead to a worthwhile outcome.

Victory in the war and “the utter and complete downfall of the enemy” was primarily due to the “leading part”\textsuperscript{80} played by Britain. In addition to fighting in the toughest battles, the British navy allowed America to send its soldiers across the Atlantic. Britain, “by ruling the waves, saved the Allied cause.” Through years of bloodshed, the British soldiers and people “convinced the German soldier that the Briton was his master,” and in 1918 “the hammer-blows of the British army” finally “cracked the anvil of German resistance.” Germany had “been beaten to her knees” and the “wretched Kaiser”\textsuperscript{81} fled. With the allied victory, the creation of the League of Nations might realize the Allied goal of ending the “greatest of all tragedies from the life of mankind…the most terrible disease that afflicts mankind…war itself.”\textsuperscript{82}

The First World War was “the greatest war that the world has ever known ; a war of such vastness and terror that men would speak of it as Armageddon.”\textsuperscript{83} The narrative of the war that Parrott articulates in the final volume is of tragedy and triumph. The sacrifice in lives had been great, but the final result was victory. Britain and the Allies had truly fought and won a war to end war. Parrott concludes hoping that “hereafter, we may see the nations setting themselves to win bloodless conquests over sin, poverty, and disease”\textsuperscript{84} in a world reliant on the League of Nations. Parrott’s war, like Wells’, is a war to end war whose victory is linked to the League of Nations.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 10:267.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 10:269.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 10:271.
\textsuperscript{83} Parrott, \textit{The Children’s Story of the War}, 1:2.
\textsuperscript{84} Parrott, \textit{The Children’s Story of the War}, 10:272.
A Short History of the Great World War by Maynard Bridge was published in May of 1919, and is an example of an early history of the First World War written in the months immediately after its conclusion clearly aimed for popular consumption. Bridge, employed by the St. George’s Primary Preparatory at Windsor Castle, explains that his work “does not profess to throw any new light on the war or contain any exclusive information,” but presents it “in a handy form at a moderate price.” He also suggests that it may prove useful for students or teachers in the future. Bridge’s book reveals a different, more laudatory direction for writing about the First World War than Wells and Parrott prominent in the First Period.

A Short History of the Great World War begins with a brief overview of European history leading up to the First World War, touching on the Napoleonic Wars and German Unification. While Bridge uses neutral language to describe Bismarck and the policies of the first Wilhelm, with Wilhelm II the narrative changes tone. The new Wilhelm’s “schemes aimed at ‘World Power’ for Germany,” with the aggressive pursuit of colonies outside of Europe and naval expansion to protect them. Bridge mockingly describes Wilhelm II as “The Great War Lord” who neglected his military while fancifully issuing militaristic proclamations such as “the mailed fist.” Wilhelm and Germany are the clear villains of Bridge’s book, a commonality it shares with Parrott and Wells. Upon the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, German and Austrian leaders calculated that “the time seemed ripe” for war: they were well prepared for war with

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86 Ibid., 6.
87 Ibid., 7.
France and Russia, and Britain was too busy sorting out “Irish troubles” 88 to get involved. The Austrian ultimatum to Serbia was intentionally unreasonable, and while British Foreign Secretary Grey tried ardently to negotiate for peace, Russia mobilized and German soldiers invaded Belgium. Germany had violated its treaty with Belgium, and the Britain was “bound by a treaty to fight for Belgium.” 89 Britain was clearly justified to fight the war to protect Belgian neutrality.

Unlike Wells’ and Parrott’s, Bridge’s treatment of casualties during the war is abstract and vague. During his description of the Battle of the Somme, “our infantry leaped from the trenches and dashed for the German lines, which had been pretty well smashed up by a final terrific bombardment… our advanced units were nearly all cut off or destroyed.” After that assault, “our losses in this district were the heaviest and our gains the least.” 90 In his summary of the battle’s results, he argues that “the Allies’ loss was heavy, but there was something to show for it.” 91 Besides generals and idealized war heroes, 92 common soldiers are anonymously swallowed by units and divisions, who act and react, taking and inflicting “losses.” On the second to last page of the history, unaccompanied by commentary, Bridge lists the total casualties of each combatant nation under the heading “Some Statistics.” 93 Bridge’s avoidance of the war’s horrors differentiates his work from Wells’ and Parrott’s, but is common to the First Period.

Bridge is unambiguously enthusiastic regarding Allied war leaders and war strategy. Ferdinand Foch is described as having issued a “master-stroke” of planning and
initiating the 1918 Allied summer counteroffensive, marking “the turning point of the War on the Western Front.”94 The Allied victory later in 1918 is described as being a total one: “never had the world seen such an overwhelming defeat of powerful armies and such a rapid downfall of mighty empires.”95 The German military was soundly defeated in the field by the better soldiers commanded by better leaders, and even Hindenburg had been convinced that “his armies were no match for the Allies in the open.”96 Bridge touts cavalry as “a deciding factor in a victory,”97 and both cavalry and tanks, poorly utilized by Germany, were instrumental in bringing about German defeat. In the end, however, “the Central Empires simply broke themselves to pieces” trying to conquer Europe militarily, “and with the collapse of their armies came the downfall of their rulers.” The Allies had been fighting for “freedom and security,” in a very different “spirit” than their enemies. Bridge concludes by arguing that in the wake of the war, “the British Empire has been knit together more firmly than ever.”98

Bridge never concisely articulates an explicit over-arching meaning for the First World War. His meaning of the war is, however, clear. Germany, along with its “accomplice,” Austria-Hungary, was making a long-planned “bid for world-power.”99 They were soundly defeated by Britain and her allies in a long, heroic struggle. The war was a story of the triumph of freedom over tyranny, in which the Allied nations revealed their greater spirit and fighting prowess. Unlike Wells and Parrott, Bridge only mentions

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94 Ibid., 215.
95 Ibid., 240.
96 Ibid., 219.
97 Ibid., 252.
98 Ibid., 253.
99 Ibid., 61.
the League of Nations briefly in the conclusion.\textsuperscript{100} The over-arching meaning of “freedom,” emphasized otherwise only by Cunnington and Fletcher in 1920 is unique to the First Period.

John Rowe’s 1919 \textit{Popular History} begins by placing the First World War within the historical context of Germanic aggression, noting how “From Frederick the Great’s time there had been a determination among the rulers of Prussia to secure the aggrandizement of that kingdom.”\textsuperscript{101} Similar to Wells, Parrott, and Bridge, Rowe blames German aggression, and similar to Parrott and Bridge, he blames the Kaiser specifically. The true cause of the war was Kaiser Wilhelm, who “dreamed of emulating and surpassing the conquests achieved by his own famous predecessor on the throne of Prussia”\textsuperscript{102} and even Napoleon and Alexander the Great. The Kaiser “devoted himself heart and soul to the discipline and education of his people as one huge war machine” and “devised means for inculcation into the hearts and minds of all his subjects of a ruthless Pan-Germanism.” Wilhelm’s German Kultur “meant German domination in everything” and “Might constituted Right.” Wilhelm was confident that his megalomaniacal and messianic aims “justified the most violent and outrageous means,” and believed German domination to be “necessary for the salvation of the world.”\textsuperscript{103} Although the assassination of Franz Ferdinand came before the Kaiser had “completed his plans for the launching of his ambitious project,”\textsuperscript{104} he decided that the time was right for war. Rowe’s argument is that the Kaiser was fundamentally the villain, planner, and perpetrator of a

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 254.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 8.
war for global domination. The German goal of world domination is also prominent in Parrott, Wells, and Bridge.

Similar to Bridge, Rowe writes little of British casualties when describing combat and focuses mainly on enemy casualties: “the Prussian Guard advancing to the east of the village, was caught by our barrage and mown down in swatches.” Indeed, “there were only thirty survivors.”\(^{105}\) He describes how “eight hundred [enemy] corpses, piled up in heaps, were found in the ruins of Ovillers.”\(^{106}\) Rowe also writes often of how many prisoners and guns were captures by the Allies in battle.\(^{107}\) The notable British casualties are the heroic or prominent ones. For example, he mentions the death of Lieutenant Garvin, “the only son of Mr. J.L. Garvin, editor of the Observer… killed while leading his men in the attack on Pozieres.”\(^{108}\) Although he never lists total casualties, he does note the total British National Debt on several occasions.\(^{109}\) On the final page of the book, Rowe describes how during Allied victory marches, “homage was rendered to the heroic dead, to whom cenotaphs had been erected.”\(^{110}\) Rowe’s avoidance of allied casualties and the war’s horrors is also similar to Bridge’s.

The Allies won the war by defeating the German army in the field. The “great victory” was “chiefly due to the way General Foch’s fine counter-stroke on July 18 was followed up.”\(^{111}\) Allied military victories in the autumn of 1918 crushed the German army, which was “completely broken in spirit and demoralized by their rapid and

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105 Ibid., 406.
106 Ibid., 408.
107 Ibid., 404,405,407,408 for example.
108 Ibid., 409.
109 Ibid., 418 and 608 for example.
110 Ibid., 647.
111 Ibid., 619.
tremendous reverses, as well as enormous losses in man-power.”¹¹² The abdication of the defeated villain, Kaiser Wilhelm, is described in detail, as is the surrender of the German fleet, about which he writes “such a bitter humiliation would never have been suffered by British seamen.”¹¹³ He describes the creation of the League of Nations and the negotiations of Versailles as the sensible gains of Allied victory. Although, like Wells and Parrott, Rowe places emphasis on the League of Nations, he does not connect it to the goal of ending war.

The central meaning of Rowe’s First World War is of Kaiser Wilhelm’s hubris and British national triumph. The world was saved from the Kaiser’s plans for domination, primarily by British heroism at sea and on land. Rowe’s concluding remarks about Wilhelm follow: “And so Nemesis overtook the great War Lord- Germany’s All Highest, the ruthless, the unscrupulous, and ambitious would-be conqueror of the world.”¹¹⁴ The Kaiser and his Germany met a fitting end for their hubris and violence, while Britain revealed its prowess. The over-arching meaning of British national victory, first appearing earliest here, is much more common in the Second and Third Periods, 1920 to 1927/28, and 1928 to 1935.

Susan Cunnington’s World In Arms, 1914-1918, published in 1920 and aimed at school children, has features in common with Wells’ and Parrott’s texts and with Rowe’s and Bridge’s. Cunnington explains in her preface that befitting an account of the First World War for “young readers,” “political details” such as “changes of government” and “differences of theory and opinion,” are not included. “Official mistakes and

¹¹² Ibid., 629.
¹¹³ Ibid., 635.
¹¹⁴ Ibid., 618.
shortcomings, with criticism of methods and strategy” are additionally neglected, and “the stress is laid upon the real unity of will and purpose which bound together all classes and individuals in a common effort.” Her account is consciously a “sympathetic description” designed to give young readers a picture of the war.  

Cunnington’s chapter on the causes of the First World War begins with the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and the July crisis. Austria issued “extravagant demands” upon the “little country” of Serbia, leading it to seek support in Russia. Germany’s union under Bismarck had ingeniously created a military, economic and political juggernaut led by “ruling and military classes” who “imposed upon the national mind an ideal of German progress and power” and the superiority of German Kultur. Germany had been “late in acquiring European civilization” and was consequently lacking colonial territories for its excess population and national growth. Germany, led by “war lords” and a “restless and vain-glorious” Kaiser Wilhelm, was plotting territorial expansion. The war was also a clash of civilizations: Germany “hated” France because it was “the representative of an older, and the Latin [sic], civilization with whose spirit that of Prussian Kultur was instinctively at war.” France needed to be eliminated for Germany to reign supreme in Europe. Germany’s leaders did not anticipate Britain joining the war because of tension in Ireland, the suffragette agitation, and the natural British “love of peace.” Germanic shock at Britain’s involvement in the war over the invasion of Belgium truly revealed how the “the German mind… combined

116 Ibid., 3.
117 Ibid., 4.
118 Ibid., 5.
119 Ibid., 6.
sentimentality with barbarism, and held no scruples as to dictates of honour.”120 As we have seen, Kaiser Wilhelm and German aggression with the goal of European and global hegemony are common explanations of the First World War’s causes at this time.

In her treatment of combat, Cunnington consciously attempts to “link up the story of active heroism in the field with the undaunted spirit of the homelands of which those gallant deeds were the outcome.”121 Like Bridge and Rowe, Cunnington barely discusses death toll and casualties of the war at all, and in The World in Arms, the total numbers are never listed. Similar to Bridge’s evaluation, for Cunnington, the Battle of the Somme is deemed a “well-judged and resolute attack,” a contest between anonymous, though “daring” soldiers and their “foes” over terrain and barricades.122 The number of prisoners captured in a battle is often listed, never the casualties.123 Cunnington’s conclusion, however, is distinct: she proposes in that the sacrifice of the “Glorious Dead,”124 will have been in vain without the creation of a “better Britain”125 with less inequality and greater opportunity, as the legacy of the war.

In the end, Allied armies “broke”126 the Germans, whose 1918 Spring offensive had only revealed “their desperate condition.”127 Germany had been defeated soundly at sea by the British navy and on land by the combined might, heroism, and “valour”128 of the Allied soldiers, whose advance amounted to a “culmination of the immense and

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120 Ibid., 7.
121 Ibid., 9.
122 Ibid., 64.
123 Ibid., 66, 161.
124 Ibid., 177.
125 Ibid., 176.
126 Ibid., 159.
127 Ibid., 157.
128 Ibid., 160.
inspired effort in the West."\textsuperscript{129} The German quest for “world-domination”\textsuperscript{130} was thwarted, and Germany collapsed as its disillusioned citizens turned on their leaders. Cunnington touches on Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, describes the surrender of Germany’s fleet and the occupation of the Rhineland, and asserts that “the secret to” Allied forces’ strength “lay in the spirit of the peoples behind them whose Will to Victory held without faltering through the justice of their cause.”\textsuperscript{131} The fruits of victory included liberation and self-determination of European nations from “dynastic tyranny,” the addition of new territories “freed”\textsuperscript{132} into British rule, and the establishment of the League of Nations to negotiate a just future.

The over-arching meaning of Cunnington’s war is articulated within the four preceding characterizations: German aggression and ambition for global domination brought the war on, and Allied heroism and strenuous effort brought the war to a fitting conclusion. In addition to a war between Germanic and non-Germanic civilization, it was a battle between Allied freedoms and German tyranny. The struggle revealed the true unity of the British people and part of its legacy should be the building of a “better Britain.”\textsuperscript{133} Cunnington’s emphasis on freedom, like Bridge’s and Fletcher’s, is unique to the First Period.

Although A.F. Pollard wrote \textit{A Short History of the Great War} while a professor of English History at Oxford University, he specifically indicates that his history is intended for “public” consumption, fitting it clearly within the boundaries of this study.

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\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 161.  
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 165.  
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 171.  
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 172.  
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 176.  
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He places his work outside the “apologetic deluge [of war writing] which followed on the peace,” 134 and notes that its manuscript was completed in October of 1919. It bears many similarities with other works of this period.

Pollard’s history begins with the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, placing it briefly within the context of Balkan and Austro-Hungarian politics. The Germans decided to support the Austrian move against Serbia because Austrian “domination of the Balkans” suited their aims, as did provoking “a war by which alone the German militarists thought that German aims could be achieved.”135 Pollard establishes German guidance by “militarist philosophy” which led its leaders to understand that “the best defence was to get her blow in first.” German “ambition” was guided by the “antithesis Weltmacht oder Niedergang” since its founding by Bismarck.136 Indeed, “the Serbian plot was merely the lever to set the whole machinery working,” and “raise Germany to a similar predominance in the world” that one to which Bismarck had raised Germany in Europe. However, “the cause of the war was not the Serbian imbroglio nor even German imperial rivalry… these were the occasions of its outbreak and extension.” The true cause of the First World War, then, was the “Prussian will-to-war… due to the domestic situation of a Prussian government which had been made by the sword and had realized before 1914 that it could not be maintained without further use of the sword.”137 The failure of a democratic German unification and the reliance on domestic military rule made German governments reliant on dramatic economic growth to maintain stability and support. It became clear by 1914 that “it could only purchase renewed leases of

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135 Ibid., 2.
136 Ibid., 3.
137 Ibid., 4.
autocratic power at home… by feeding the minds of the people with diplomatic triumphs and their bodies with new markets for commercial and industrial expansion.” The success of German Social Democrats and growing friction against military rule during the early part of the decade meant “the ground was slipping from under the feet of Prussian militarism; it must either fortify its position by fresh victories or take the risk of revolution.” Unlike Parrott, Bridge, Rowe, and Cunnington, Pollard minimizes the Kaiser’s responsibility for the war, but similar to them, and Wells, expounds German guilt. The Kaiser, “barbaric” in his “love of pomp,” only “played but a secondary part in these transactions.” Wilhelm was “a little man in a great position, he was powerless to ride the whirlwind or direct the storm,” and “by the winter of 1913-14 the Kaiser had gone over to the party which had resolved upon war and was seeking an occasion to palliate the cause.” British involvement in the war was unanticipated due, among other things, to unrest in Ireland. After the invasion of Belgium, Britain “was not literally bound to intervene; but if ever there was a moral obligation on a country, it lay on her now.” Great Britain’s entrance into the war was the just response to German aggression.

Similar to the works of Parrott and Wells, casualties are treated bluntly by Pollard. However, he expresses recriminations towards the British government keeping many “realities of the war… hidden from the public.” British soldiers, mostly anonymous, “advanced with the utmost dash and determination” in the Somme, while

138 Ibid., 5.
139 Ibid., 6.
140 Ibid., 7.
141 Ibid., 8.
142 Ibid., 14.
143 Ibid., 211.
suffering significant “losses.”\textsuperscript{144} Losses are generally mentioned in terms of addressing the success of a battle or the outcome of a movement of soldiers. The total casualties of the Somme are discussed, and compared to the German performance at Verdun. Pollard is the first writer examined who is highly critical of the performance of military leaders, commenting that “each side contended in turn that the offensive was the more costly form of warfare, and then repudiated the contention when it came to attack itself.”\textsuperscript{145} The human price of the war was high, and Pollard concludes that “if during the war for its common weal the world paid, in flesh and in spirit, a price greater than ever paid before, it purchased a larger heritage of hope and laid a surer foundation for its faith.”\textsuperscript{146} Unlike Wells and Parrott, Pollard questions the necessity of the war’s sacrifices.

Pollard, refuting Ludendorff’s blame on revolution, explains that Entente victory came because in 1918 Germany had finally exhausted its resources, which were “vastly inferior”\textsuperscript{147} to those of its opponents. The allies had many more men and resources, allowing them greater flexibility in action; Germany was overwhelmed as its allies were defeated. Pollard does posit, however, that “the ultimate factor in war consists in a people’s spirit and not in its iron shards.”\textsuperscript{148} Pollard describes the Treaty of Versailles as a “punishment of war… an idealistic scheme of government by consent started by imposing on the weaker party conditions which it could not but violently disagree.”\textsuperscript{149} The peace imposed is problematic, and the League of Nations’ establishment is paradoxical because it severs German populations from Germany, and sacrifices German

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 213.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 219.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 388.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 341.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 364.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 377.
self-determination. At the same time, the League indicates the “introduction to a new era” of peace and international law. Pollard’s dismay at the failures of the League and Versailles is more common in the Second and Third Periods. Pollard remains optimistic, however, arguing that “Versailles achieved higher ideals than those attained by any preceding congress of peace.”

One over-arching narrative of the war between Britain and Germany was, for Pollard, “a civil war of mankind to determine the principle upon which international relations should repose”: through peace or violence. Had the struggle not been so fundamental, it would not “have enlisted the united sympathies and whole-hearted devotion of the British realms, still less those of the United States, and in it we might well have been defeated.”

Germany’s invasion of Belgium and Luxemburg violated international morality and “guaranteed international contract,” meaning “if such a peace was insecure there could be no security for the world and nothing but subservience for little nations.”

The war was a fundamental struggle over the nature of international relations, a defensive battle against premeditated German aggression, and one whose fruits will hopefully be a new, peaceful era governed by the League of Nations. The First World War for Pollard, like for Wells and Parrott, is a war for peace.

C.R.L. Fletcher’s The Great War, 1914-1918 (1920) is, by the author’s estimation, a “little book” which was mostly written six weeks after the armistice. Fletcher had in 1911, along with Rudyard Kipling, authored A School History of England,

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150 Ibid., 388.
151 Ibid., 15.
152 Ibid., 14.
to which The Great War is intended “as a sort of sequel,” adding that his call for national service in the earlier book had certainly been vindicated. Fletcher’s distaste for parliamentary politics and the British government is a theme throughout the work.

Fletcher’s The Great War shares the most features with Bridge, Rowe, and Cunnington.

When explaining the causes of the First World War, Fletcher brings the reader to the Balkans, former territories of the Ottoman Empire, where he argues that “we ought not to think of these peoples as ‘civilized.’” Serbia was understandably anxious because Germany was planning to use Austria-Hungary, now a German “satellite,” to “further her own ambitions.” These ambitions “had swollen until they had become nothing less than the dominion of the world,” and planned to build a railway from Berlin to Baghdad in order to threaten India. German ambition for global domination, in this case without the Kaiser as catalyst, has been explained by every author so far. Serbia stood in the way of this plan, and Germany consequently planned its elimination.

Germany, inspired by the Pan-Germanic Movement, desired “a strip of territory reaching from the mouth of the Somme to the sources of the Saône and from that point to the mouth of the Rhône,” meaning the most wealthy portion of France, and then to envelop the Netherlands and Belgium. Upon the invasion of France and Belgium, British leaders reluctantly “chose the path of honour… [and] the only path of ultimate safety.”

German leaders believed “that nothing would ever provoke our rulers to stand in earnest

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154 Ibid., 2.
155 Ibid., 3.
156 Ibid., 4.
157 Ibid., 8.
158 Ibid., 10.
by their French friends, “distracted by German-incited troubles in Ireland, and resistant to the author’s call for national military service, which might have discouraged them.

Much like Bridge, Rowe, and Cunnington, Fletcher addresses casualties briefly, fitting mention of them between praise of Allied strategy and performance. Fletcher calls the Somme one of the “great, though costly, victories” of the war, and champions the names of several British units. He laments that “best and bravest had been killed in the Battle of the Somme,” but does not doubt the value of its achievements. A figure for the total British casualties, which he cites Douglas Haig as estimating at “just over 3 millions” is cited under the heading “Some Statistics” alongside the numbers of boots, jam, and socks required by the military. Fletcher also cites the “seven hundred thousand dead” as grounds to blame British politicians of “1906-14… who wouldn’t let us have an army,” and he laments the losses the British regular army took in 1914 because their numbers were too small. Fletcher uses the word “slaughter” several times to describe Allied infliction of German casualties.

Fletcher discusses Germany defeat and Allied victory in terms of a “machine... cracking.” The British blockade, combined with the increased difficulty of supplying the German army turned the German civilians’ “patience” into “sullen discontent,” as the promised victory was inexorably postponed. While Allied command achieved “real

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159 Ibid., 11.
160 Ibid., 149.
161 Ibid., 152.
162 Ibid., 184.
163 Ibid., 183.
164 Ibid., 171,177 for example.
165 Ibid., 171.
unity,” on the German side, “there was no real united policy”¹⁶⁶ by the last months of the war. The autumn push by the united British, French, and American force cracked the exhausted, beleaguered German army, and the Central Powers descended into “a whirlpool of anarchy.”¹⁶⁷ Unlike the other works reviewed so far, no mention is made anywhere of the League of Nations, or Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points. The primary lesson learned from the war is the need to maintain a national army through conscription.

The First World War was “the most dreadful war in human history.”¹⁶⁸ The war revealed the greatness of British “national character” and brought “immense good feeling” between British classes. Describing the notion of “a great struggle to make the world safe for democracy” as “hot air,” Fletcher prefers thinking of the war as a struggle for “freedom” because he has “no greater opinion of democracy as a form of government than Aristotle had.” It was won, not by the Entente’s governments, but by the “national character of their peoples” in the “spirit of true freedom” when both in Britain and France, “the nation took charge.”¹⁶⁹ It was the supreme triumph of the British people: “so ended the greatest war in history; the only war in which the same nation has been able to sustain at once the burden of a gigantic Army and a gigantic Navy.”¹⁷⁰ In this way, Fletcher is describing the war as a great British national triumph, with similarities to the one described by Rowe, and one linked to freedom, emphasized by Bridge and Cunnington.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 172.
¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 181.
¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 2.
¹⁶⁹ Ibid., xii.
¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 182.
Shock and Disillusioned by C.F. Mullins is a 68 page polemic published in 1920 which consists of the observations, suggestions, opinions, and experiences of the author, most of which he claims were written in 1918. Mullins’ is the first author appearing in this study who sees the war as irredeemably negative. The narrative of the war as a tragedy, though uncommon in the First Period, becomes increasingly common in the Second and Third. He is highly critical of the British government before and during the war, more so than Fletcher and Pollard. Although Mullins does not discuss the causes, he does touch on the casualties, victory, and over-arching meaning of the war.

Mullins bemoans the horrors of the war and the loss of life throughout the booklet. Unlike Wells and Parrott, who also emphasize the war’s horrors, for Mullins they have been endured in vain. He argues that “neither the future of Great Britain, nor the upbuilding of the Empire, will be benefited in any way.”

171 His “greatest shock” is how “criminally negligent” the pre-war government had been in ignoring the German military buildup and instead cutting the British defense budget. Their other biggest pre-war mistake was the complete mismanagement of Ireland. Indeed, “the main credit due to these men is that they have learned something at frightful cost to the country in lives, suffering, and money.”

172 The wartime mistakes he blames on the government include “The Dardanelles Tragedy,” failing to supply British soldiers with adequate ammunition and artillery, and neglecting prisoners of war, among others.

173 Mullins shares Pollard’s doubts about the necessity of the war’s casualties: while the war may have been

172 Ibid., 6.
173 Ibid., 11.
174 Ibid., 13.
inevitable, the British Government’s incompetence and mismanagement made many of the soldiers’ “acts of sacrifice and heroism” tragic and unnecessary.

In discussing the victory in the war, Mullins emphasizes that “the War was not won by Downing Street. It was won 1st. By the everlasting pressure of the Navy; 2nd. By the preponderance of wealth and the final reserves of the Allies; 3rd. By the arrogance of Germany forcing the United States into declaring war.” The British Government is due no credit for victory, as it had almost lost the war before it even began. Mullins’ suggestions for the future are remarkably reminiscent of continental fascism. He proposes the modification of “universal suffrage” as a response to some of the events of the war. He wants suffrage to be limited to people who “have qualified under some given standard to defend their country,” which he believes would have disqualified most voters or participants in the government of the time. The main lesson, he extracts from the war, quite ominous in hindsight, is the need for competent government, strong military, and a people with “a sound mind in a sound body.”

The over-arching meaning Mullins hints at during his booklet is one of a massive disaster and tragedy primarily a result of government incompetence out of which no benefit was gained. While the war may not have been avoidable, Government incompetence greatly prolonged and worsened its outcome. At the same time, he clearly opposes German aims, describing British and French victory during the First Battle of the Marne and implicitly the war, as the “salvation.. of world-freedom, most likely.”

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175 Ibid., 67.
176 Ibid., 64.
177 Ibid., 50.
178 Ibid., 64.
179 Ibid., 66.
over-arching meaning of the war as a tragedy is seen in only one other First Period text, Thomson’s *Old Europe’s Suicide*.

*Old Europe’s Suicide*, published in 1920, was written by Christopher Birdwood Thomson, a former officer in the Royal Engineers who had fought during the Boer War. His roles during the First World War as Brigadier-General included serving as interpreter between Sir John French and Ferdinand Joffre, and acting as a member of the British delegation to Versailles. After Versailles, Thomson became a Labour politician, and served as Secretary of State for Air under two Macdonald governments, before dying in the 1930 Airship R101 crash.180

Thomson begins his book by arguing that the period of 1912 to 1914 was one where “forces, at first diffused and without direct reaction on one another, as the issues narrowed were ranged in two hostile camps, and finally chased in the Great World War,” leading to a “transition… from the old order to the new.”181 The “autocratic Empires” of Germany and Austria-Hungary, “perished prematurely” due to their “unscrupulous ambition, greed and false conceptions.” They “committed suicide,”182 hence the title of the book. The first seven chapters of the book are devoted to the Second Balkan War, which he recounts by interspersing observations from his personal experiences with a broader explanatory narrative. Although murder of Franz Ferdinand allowed Austria-Hungary to act as a “bully bent on the destruction of a weak antagonist,”183 its behavior was far from unusual. Its behavior was in “strict conformity with moral standards which

182 Ibid.
183 Ibid., 77.
the Great Powers themselves had set.” Indeed, “Junkers in Germany, Cosmopolitan financiers in Paris, Reactionaries in England, and the Czar’s Ministers in Russia” had acted and were willing to act in exactly the same manner within their own spheres of interest. He ironically recounts how “civilization stood aghast and feigned a moral indignation which was far from being sincere”\textsuperscript{184} during the July crisis, comparing the behavior of the Great Powers to “carnivores” Although the “Junkers, capitalists, journalists and soldiers”\textsuperscript{185} responsible for the war hesitated as it approached, Russia’s “weak and obstinate” autocrat was incapable of resisting the “dangerously excited” Russian people, drawing France (which had overly invested in Russia) into the war. Thomson describes Kaiser Wilhelm as a “war-lord, the apex of a social pyramid which recognized no law but force,” and Franz Josef of Austria as “senile, embittered, selfish, surrounded by a medieval court,” and notes that with leaders like these the wonder is not why the war occurred, by “why it had not come before.”\textsuperscript{186} Ultimately the responsibility for the war lay with Germany. “Pan-Germanism,” Thomson notes later, was a “real menace to the British Empire.”\textsuperscript{187} The German “military system… became an instrument of conquest, pride and insolence, a menace to the world.”\textsuperscript{188} However, it is clear that Thomson, unique in the First Period, is making a structural argument for the causes of the First World War; the fundamentally flawed international system was doomed to failure. Structural arguments become more prominent in the Second and Third periods.

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 76.  
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid., 78.  
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 147.  
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 155.
In combat, British troops acted with “heroic valour.”\textsuperscript{189} However, the allied offensives of 1915 resulted in an “immense” “slaughter on both sides… but no appreciable results were achieved.”\textsuperscript{190} The battles of 1916 similarly “exacted a ghastly toll.” During the conflict, Thomson argues, “lives had been sacrificed ruthlessly”\textsuperscript{191} on both sides without much strategic result. The scale of French losses had been “appalling.”\textsuperscript{192} German leaders were “undeterred” by the “dreadful and unavailing slaughter.”\textsuperscript{193} Although he does not list the total casualties, Thomson clearly condemns the war’s loss of life as a colossal and tragic waste, whose soldiers’ sacrifice was squandered by the fruitless victory. Much like Wells and Parrott, he emphasizes the war’s horrors, but similar to Mullins, they have been endured in vain.

Allied victory was in part due to Foch’s strategy of “hammer blows” depriving the German military of opportunities for initiative, but the more “fundamental factors”\textsuperscript{194} were the growing unrest among the German population and the change in the “spirit” of the German armies after the failure of the 1918 offensive and encountering American troops. As in Russia, Germany suffered from “misgovernment by a selfish upper class…and homicidal militarists.”\textsuperscript{195} Germany’s “crash… came from within” due to the “misery and starvation” at the front, resentment of “useless massacre of thousands of soldiers,”\textsuperscript{196} while inequality and injustice reigned at home. Thomson’s greatest tragedy is the peace conference in Paris, and the failure of Woodrow Wilson’s promise to cement

\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., 122.  
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., 144.  
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 145.  
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid., 151.  
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 153.  
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 154.  
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 155.
“the victory of democracy”\textsuperscript{197} who would “lay the foundations of a cleaner, better world.”\textsuperscript{198} Thomson had similar hopes for the League of Nations to Wells, Parrott, and Pollard. Sadly, although a League of Nations would “undoubtedly” be the “ideal instrument for achieving a just settlement,”\textsuperscript{199} its creation as a body with “colourless and non-committal character”\textsuperscript{200} was an immense failure. During the peace conference, “petty militarists and reactionaries… selfish and ambitious men”\textsuperscript{201} proved incapable of creating a lasting, democratic peace, merely enraging and humiliating the defeated powers. Thomson predicts that such cynical use of an international body as the League of Nations will undermine the creation of any such body in the future.

Thomson stresses that the war marked “a turning point in history.” He calls for the creation of a new international system, describing the “balance of power” as one that “was powerless to do good” by its very nature, under which “the strong imposed their will upon the weak.” Thomson denounces the Treaty of Versailles as the “apex” of this folly, which “sowed the seeds of future wars,”\textsuperscript{202} and is the tip of the “pyramid of errors” of the book’s title. His stated goal in writing the book is to pose a “plea for the application of an Anglo-Saxon Policy to the problems arising from the war,”\textsuperscript{203} by which he means one that is “liberal and just.”\textsuperscript{204} The First World War, “the greatest war in history… has been fought in vain.”\textsuperscript{205} While the war defended “civilization”\textsuperscript{206} from the

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 158.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 159.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., 161.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 164.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{202} Ibid., vii.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., viii.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., ix.
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 187.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 151.
murderous greed of the old autocracies, its failure to create a just peace made it an immense tragedy. Using language tinged with Marx, Thomson calls for the creation of a Britain and America, “free from social and capitalistic shackles,”207 able to pursue a policy grounded in democracy and justice. Thomson’s explanation of the war as a tragedy primarily because of the failed peace is unique in the First Period, but appears again in later works.

*A History of the War* by H.C. O’Neill is a large (1041 page) history of the First World War, published in 1920. The author claims that most of its content was written within a “few months”208 of the described events, with some modifications as new information came to light.

O’Neill summarizes the cause of the war as the “headlong temper”209 which had been building up to the events of 1914. He begins by walking the reader through the assassination of Franz-Ferdinand, briefly overviews the Balkan conflicts earlier in the century, and the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia. O’Neill attempts to extract the logic behind Austria’s action, noting that “the Power behind Austria was Germany,”210 and details the diplomatic machinations of the July Crisis. The German government’s interactions with Sir Edward Grey, British Foreign Secretary, are described as “cynical,” and the repudiation of bargaining over British participation averted a “disgraceful” agreement from which “Britain’s good name would never recover.”211 Grey made it clear

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207 Ibid., 186.
209 Ibid., 1.
210 Ibid., 4.
211 Ibid., 5.
that Britain was “deeply concerned”\textsuperscript{212} over Belgian neutrality, and would not remain neutral in the event of its violation. German leaders, owing to their “characteristically crude misconception of the state of Great Britain, presumably thought” that Britain’s “pacific intentions and... political divisions”\textsuperscript{213} made involvement unlikely. O’Neill is outraged by Bethmann-Hollweg’s dismissive reference to the “scrap of paper,” noting that such a piece of paper too was the reason for Austria’s war with Serbia. The violation of “the sacredness of a pledged word and the inviolability of a bond” more than justify Britain’s involvement, and are “splendid and perhaps the noblest things to fight for.”

After concluding the buildup to Britain’s involvement, O’Neill notes that Russia, France, and Britain clearly “did not wish for war.” Putting his accusation delicately, he concludes “if Germany did not wish for war, she dissembled her aims in so summate a fashion that Russia France, and Italy were convinced she wished it... if she did not wish for war, at least there was within her borders a party which would not be denied, and in the end had its way.”\textsuperscript{214} The blame for the war lies squarely on Germany as it does in all First Period texts examined, with Thomson as the only possible exemption. Unlike other authors reviewed, O’Neill does not discuss Germany’s war goals.

In emphasizing the war’s casualties and horrors, O’Neill shows similarities to Wells, Parrott, Thomson, and Mullins, and is clearly saddened by “the hideous toll of life in the most terrible of wars.”\textsuperscript{215} He describes the period of the Battle of the Somme as “the bloodiest of the whole war,” and one during which the Germans proved “their

\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{214} O’Neill, \textit{A History of the War}, 10.
\textsuperscript{215} Ibid.
training, their courage, and their skill.”216 July through December of 1916 must have cost “between three and four million [casualties]- a terrible purge of the world’s best blood,”217 including both the Allies and the Central Powers in that calculation. The Battle of the Somme is described as “a great offensive” that allowed the Allies to “strike their blow for civilization,” noting Ferdinand Foch to be “the finest general in the world.”218 O’Neill starkly pictures a battlefield where “debris of their own men… were flung upon them” and “men’s souls sickened,” “troops were… smashed to bits; troop trains were blown to atoms” and wonders how “men could stand such hellish conditions” as the British bombardment created the Germans. During the Allied assault, British soldiers were “mowed [sic] down” and the “gallantry of the assault was wasted,” even though there was much “heroic fighting.”219 Combat was a “ghastly struggle.”220 In the end, the Germans were significantly bloodied, and the fruits of the battle were the “demoralization that spasmodically appeared”221 in the German army. In his preface, O’Neill expresses regret that he cannot “do justice” to “the private soldier.” “It was he who won the war,”222 O’Neill argues, even though he has been obscured by broader troop movements and the plans made by generals. In the concluding chapter, O’Neill places a table listing the declared casualties of all participants in the First World War, sadly noting the “tragedy” of “losses so vast that even now we can hardly realize them.”223 Although tragic,
O’Neill’s treatment of casualties and horrors has more in common with Wells’ and Parrott’s because, though horrible, they are justified and have not been in vain.

Allied victory was due to the triumph of allied “spirit” over its German equivalent after years of war. By the summer of 1918, “the German spirit… failed.” It was “spirit which won the war… it is on human spirit that victory at length turns.”224 The Allies were increasing in strength and the Germans could not: “their superiority in matériel and tanks was assured; their superiority in artillery was increasing; and their reservoir of reserves, by the help of the United States, was illimitable.”225 Yet in mid-1918, “with only an equality of forces,” Foch managed to “turn the tables.”226 In contrast, Ludendorff had needed to attack with overwhelming numerical advantages. The allies’ superior spirit was the decisive factor in achieving victory. In his conclusion, O’Neill summarizes how “Germany much overrated her power and underrated the power and will of her enemies.”227 An important lesson to take from the war is that “the war dragged on longer than it need have” because the Allies, as democracies, were reluctant to invest “full national energy” into the conflict. He also notes the importance of the development of tanks in overcoming German defenses, and heaps praise on Ferdinand Foch’s military prowess while disparaging Ludendorff’s vaunted “unity of command.”228 In the end, describing Versailles, “the peace was in fact the most crushing in history; but Germany was irretrievably beaten.”229 Although he briefly discusses Wilson’s Fourteen Points and

[224 Ibid., 948.]
[225 Ibid., 949.]
[226 Ibid., 948.]
[227 Ibid., 1097.]
[228 Ibid., 1038.]
[229 Ibid., 1037.]
the proposed League of Nations in an earlier chapter, he makes no mention of them in concluding.  

The war, O’Neill writes, was “the most critical episode in the history of civilization,” and “the greatest war in history.” The war was a tragedy because of the lives that were lost, and Germany was most certainly to blame for starting the war. Its lessons include a repudiation of “militarist” sentiment and “anti-social” behavior by nations. In the conclusion, O’Neill hypothesizes that Allied defeat would have been “the downfall of civilization,” and victory meant “a precarious bridgehead… over the sway of barbarism.” The First World War was a terrible, bloody, epochal conflict to save civilization. O’Neill’s over-arching meaning that the First World War was a war primarily for “civilization” is unique among all the works examined in this study.

1914-1920: First Period Conclusions

In the First Period, we have seen a number of commonalities emerge between texts in terms of the four characteristics of over-arching meaning, causes, casualties, and victory. During this period, the over-arching meanings of the First World War are primarily idealistic ones: Wells, Parrott, and Pollard see the war as a “war to end war,” or a war for perpetual peace. Cunnington, Bridge, and Fletcher, to a certain extent, see the war as one that has been for “freedom,” while O’Neill emphasizes “civilization.” At the same time we see the emergence of diverging over-arching meanings: Rowe and Fletcher emphasize the war as a great national triumph, while Mullins and Thomson depict the

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230 Ibid., 880-890.
231 Ibid., vi.
232 Ibid., 1.
233 Ibid., 1041.
war as a horrible tragedy. All of these over-arching meanings appear again in texts examined in later periods (with the exception of O’Neill’s emphasis on “civilization”), though in greatly altered proportions: after 1920, the prominence of idealistic meanings for the war of peace and freedom decline dramatically.

All of the texts’ explanations for the causes of the First World War during the First Period, with the plausible exemption of Thomson, primarily blame Germany. Additionally, all of the authors who discuss the causes of the war other than Thomson and O’Neill argue that Germany’s ambition in the war was to achieve world conquest. Parrott, Bridge, Rowe, and Cunnington argue that Kaiser Wilhelm himself is responsible for the war, while the other authors are more skeptical of his personal responsibility. After 1920, the argument that Germany had been making a bid at world domination in the First World War nearly disappears from writing about the war, as do the presentations of Wilhelm’s total guilt as its mastermind. Later on, German responsibility for the war remains a common theme in causal explanations for the war, but it is far from the universal blame we see in the First Period.

The First Period texts’ treatment of casualties and horrors, by all authors other than Mullins and Thomson, explain them as having not been endured in vain or having at the very least achieved valuable gains. At the same time there is a wide disparity between levels of emphasis on the horrors of the war or its casualties between different authors. Wells, Parrott, and O’Neill emphasize the horrors while justifying them, but Thomson and Mullins emphasize the horrors in explaining the war’s tragic futility. Five out of the nine authors: Bridge, Rowe, Cunnington, Pollard, and Fletcher avoid emphasis on the war’s horrors and generally use abstract or panegyric language to describe the
allied losses. After 1920, the more authors place greater emphasis on the war’s casualties and horrors, while increasingly doubting the necessity of the sacrifice.

First Period authors’ explanations for the allied victory are mixed, ranging from new technology and strategies to the British naval blockade, the over-all superiority of individual allied soldiers, and the final cracking of German will. Wells, Parrott, Rowe, Cunnington, and Pollard all emphasize the League of Nations to be a valuable achievement of allied victory. After 1920, the League of Nations all but disappears from the explanations of allied achievements in victory.

Period II: 1922 to 1927

*Disenchantment*, the first Second Period work examined in this study, was first published in 1922. It was written by Charles Montague, a middle aged journalist who had volunteered to fight in 1914. It recounts the war and its immediate aftermath, interspersing observations from Montague’s personal experience while drawing and extrapolating conclusions. Montague’s work is the first tragic narrative of the Second Period, with parallels to Thomson and Mullins in the degrees to which he is critical of the allied military and political leadership. Montague’s denunciations are, however, more extreme than any of the First Period.

Montague does not recount the buildup to the war, but suggests that Germany “had called the world’s bluff,” by starting the war. Similar to the authors of the First Period, he blames Germany. Much of the book is a grim account of the war’s horrors and immense destruction, worsened by the lies of politicians and military leaders. Beginning

with the creation of Kitchener’s New Army, Montague describes the war as exposing the failures of military leadership, emphasizing the death of soldiers (for example, against the wisdom of his men, an officer orders a cavalry charge, and “no horse or man either got to the wood or came back… they were all in a few seconds lying in the white dust.”)

Combat was an unparalleled slaughter as “herds of the English ‘common people’ ushered down narrowing corridors of barbed wire into some gap that had all the German machine guns raking its exit.” Montague describes how the common fighting soldiers became increasingly disillusioned with the poor military leadership: “the lions felt they had found out the asses.” The themes of disillusionment and disappointment with the war and with political and military leadership become more pronounced during the Second Period, as does the emphasis placed by authors on the war’s horrors.

For Montague, casualties, victory, and the over-arching meaning of the war are all linked as one immense tragedy. Victory in the war meant “our ruling classes… were saved from utter disaster by clutching at aid from French brains and American numbers.” He describes how even before the war, there was a growing “disquieting notion that civilization… was only a bluff.” He expresses disgust with the British Empire’s treatment of its own subjects, particularly suffragettes and the Irish. “The greatest of all bluffs… a high moral bluff” Montague argues, was world peace and united European civilization. Germany had “lost… but not called [the bluff] wholly in vain.”

Germany’s war revealed the fragility of existing society, the ease with which chaos and

235 Ibid., 39.
236 Ibid., 119.
237 Ibid., 41.
238 Ibid., 120.
239 Ibid., 145.
240 Ibid., 146.
violence can emerge, and completely discredited “the old order.” By the end of the war, causes like “‘The freedom of Europe,’ ‘The war to end war,’ ‘The overthrow of militarism,’ ‘The cause of civilization,’” all rang hollow. Most of those who did believe in them are dead: “hundreds of thousands of men who are now dead that if they were killed their monument would be a new Europe not soured or soiled with the hates and greeds of the old.” Now that Germany has been defeated, “the old spirit of Prussia was blowing anew, from strange mouths.” The British leaders were calling for the “outdoing of all the base folly committed by Prussia when drunk with her old conquest of France.” He concludes that “we had failed- we had won the fight and lost the prize.”

To a degree not seen in the First Period, Montague’s First World War is a pointless, bloody tragedy with a fruitless victory. Millions have died entirely in vain, and the war has discredited nearly everything about pre-war society and all civilization. Montague’s only hope for the future is in ex-soldiers pacifism and the League of Nations.

Other texts published during the Second Period are vastly different to Disenchantment. The World War and After, published in 1924, was written by Sir Halford Mackinder, a figure most famous for his work in the field of geography and in developing the Heartland Theory of geopolitics ironed out in “The Geographical Pivot of History.” In addition to his work in academia and in being a founding member of the London School of Economics, Mackinder served as a Unionist Member of Parliament from 1910 until 1920. Despite his academic credentials, Mackinder insists that The World

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241 Ibid., 147.
242 Ibid., 135.
243 Ibid., 136.
244 Ibid., 163.
*War and After* is intended “for the general reader,” and notes that his account of the buildup to the war is in a previously published book.

Mackinder’s narrative begins with the start of combat, and he notes that “Britain declared war on Germany because the German army had entered Belgium.”

Germany’s attack on France through Belgium was based on its need to defeat France as quickly as possible before facing Russia. Although the war may have been started by Germany, its causes were structural: in the final chapters of the book, Mackinder proposes geographical and historical roots of the conflict. He describes the political geography of historical German lands, all of which lay outside of the realm of “ancient civilization,” and whose “aggressive” leaders ruled through force. He notes that a victorious Germany would have “dealt summarily with Dutch independence.” During the Second Period, structural explanations for the outbreak of the First World War become more common.

Mackinder is sparse in describing the casualties of the war and avoids its horrors, like many of the authors of the First Period. When describing the Battle of the Somme, he describes “a great struggle… with small result” in its northern half and how Allied soldiers “carried the trenches before them and made good their gain.” After the battle, he argues that “both sides lost heavily, but the British nation felt that it had taken the measure of its enemy. We know now… that the German morale had been so seriously shaken by the disastrous events of 1916, that it would have taken but a little more effort

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246 Ibid., 4.
247 Ibid., 210.
248 Ibid., 215.
249 Ibid., 121.
to have brought Berlin to the point of acknowledging defeat.” Britain and France, “though spent with their losses,”\textsuperscript{250} were hopeful of victory in 1917. The final tally of British dead is given after the victory, when “the rejoicing of the nation was subdued by the remembrance of the six hundred thousand lives which had been given to win the victory.”\textsuperscript{251} The casualties, though great, achieved valuable goals.

The Allied victory of 1918 was due to the use of tanks and the development of “new strategy and new tactics” learned from years of combat. In autumn of 1918, Foch planned to “strike silently, suddenly, and on a broad front, but as soon as opposition began to strengthen he would stop and strike immediately… upon some other portion of the front.”\textsuperscript{252} Allied victories using this strategy convinced German leadership that “the game was up,” and “the outcome of the war was to be utter defeat.”\textsuperscript{253} By October, “German morale was broken”\textsuperscript{254} and the country slid into chaos. Mackinder also comments on the importance of the British Fleet’s blockade, arguing that “without the British Fleet the War could not have been won.”\textsuperscript{255} After dispassionately summarizing the creation of the League of Nations and the penalties imposed on the Central Powers, Mackinder overviews some lessons potential threats to the new order. The first are the need for the Allies to defend Belgium, the “natural thoroughfare” between France and Germany, and the historically contested and valuable nature of the Rhine region. He hopes that Britain and Italy will be “able to mediate” between France and Germany over

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., 123.
\item\textsuperscript{251} Ibid., 188.
\item\textsuperscript{252} Ibid., 168.
\item\textsuperscript{253} Ibid., 169.
\item\textsuperscript{254} Ibid., 173.
\item\textsuperscript{255} Ibid., 189.
\end{footnotes}
this region, and “a recognition of the necessity of peace.” Mackinder is already anticipating future conflicts in the region and places little hope in the League of Nations.

The First World War was “a storm of passions” which “swept through the world of men. It cost ten million lives. It tested all the results of history. Those institutions which were well rooted survived and those whose roots had decayed fell.” In this way the First World War revealed the superiority of British and Allied institutions over those of the Central Powers. Mackinder likens the war’s place in history to “a stormy winter and a growing tree: when the spring returns the tree resumes its secular growth though scarred by the loss of a limb or two, and thus presenting a new shape.” Mackinder’s First World War has no vestiges of the idealistic themes prominent in the First Period: civilization, peace, or freedom. Indeed, it is not even an exceptional conflict in that it fits firmly into his theories of geopolitical behavior. Mackinder’s over-arching meaning of the First World War is of a national triumph, bloody though it may be, that needs to be seen within the context of the wider history and human geography.

*These Eventful Years*, published in 1924, is a two-volume compilation of articles on the topic of the First World War and the periods immediately before and after. Its total page count is 1354, it has 84 chapters, and it contains contributions by over 80 authors. In the preface, editor Franklin Hooper explains that his goal in compiling *These Eventful Years* is to provide the public with “an authoritative, impartial history of recent times,”

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256 Ibid., 217.
257 Ibid., 193.
258 Ibid., 202.
259 Franklin Henry Hooper, ed., *These Eventful Years; the Twentieth Century in the Making, as Told by Many of Its Makers; Being the Dramatic Story of All That Has Happened Throughout the World During the Most Momentous Period in All History*, vol. 1 (London, The Encyclopedia Britannica Company, ltd.; New York, Encyclopedia Britannica, inc., 1924), vi.
which is especially needed because of the vast quantity of wartime propaganda. This study only examines three authors’ contributions which address the four characteristics.

The first chapter, “History of Our Own Times,” was written by J.L. Garvin, editor of The Observer. His son died during the war in an attack on Pozières, an event which is mentioned in Rowe’s Popular History. Garvin overviews late nineteenth century in order to explain the causes of the First World War, beginning with the “fall of Bismarck,” which was a “world-event” and a “far-reaching disaster.” Bismarck’s fall destroyed the international equilibrium which had been guaranteeing peace. Distinct from the malevolent Wilhelm prominent in the First Period, the goals of the “vain Kaiser” and the “weak autocrat,” Tsar Nicholas, were not “evil.” The persistence of “mediaevalism in government,” in the forms of those two rulers, meant in Germany and Russia “advanced civilization was fatally perverted.” Wilhelm’s diplomacy was fundamentally flawed: he attempted to isolate his enemies, but “he consolidated what he thought to disrupt,” and united them against him. This was compounded by the German inability to understand peoples outside of authoritarian systems due to their “blind belief in the unchanged efficacy of Prussian tradition in modern circumstances.” German diplomatic bullying drove Britain into a closer relationship with France and Russia. During the July Crisis, Austria-Hungary was not moved by anger and grief at the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, but was trying to exploit the wide-spread feelings of

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260 Rowe, A Popular History of the Great War, 409.
262 Ibid., 29.
263 Ibid., 31.
264 Ibid., 46-47.
sympathy and horror at the assassination as a “pretext” to carry out a pre-formed plan against Serbia. Austro-Hungarian and German leaders thought that Tsar Nicholas would not support Serbia, and instead be “repelled” by the assassination. While the crisis was escalating, Britain’s diplomatic ambiguity only made things worse: a “firm declaration that in case of war it would stand… by the side of France and Russia, could probably have saved the world’s peace.” The crisis had aroused “National fears, passions, and resolves” and war could not be avoided. Garvin blames Kaiser Wilhelm for destroying the “Bismarckian system of alliances,” challenging Britain on the sea, and his method of “humiliating menace,” such as during the Morocco crisis. The Kaiser’s diplomacy was “certain to lead to an end of peace.” The Kaiser’s incompetence, not his megalomaniacal goals are at the root of the conflict. This is the first appearance in this study of the explanation that the war was brought about by mistakes or incompetence. There are parallels later: in the Third Period, Liddell Hart famously places incompetence and mistakes prominently in his history of the First World War.

Garvin, like Montague, emphasizes the horrors of the immensity of the war’s casualties. When describing the Battle of the Somme, Garvin notes the “50,000 casualties on the first day alone.” The ground gained in the battle “was very limited and disappointing by comparison with the human sacrifice.” The war became a “war of exhaustion,” between the Allies and Germany, and the casualties shouldn’t be measured by the amount of ground gained, but rather in how “for the first time Germany was

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265 Ibid., 51.
268 Ibid., 56.
desperately strained.” 269 Garvin describes the Battle of Passchendaele as “a slough of despond,” as “hopes were stifled in mud.” The men who suffered through the awful conditions of battle “were obscurely great… never did so vast a mass of brave manhood drag itself to death or wounds through a gulf so squalid.” 270 When describing the war’s toll later, the losses on both sides are tragic. He claims that “the desolation of human hearts and homes was a tale of sorrows beyond compute.” Indeed, “the human mind can no more realize the extent of death and pain and loss resulting directly and indirectly from the World War than it can attain to any real imaginative grasp of astronomical figures.” 271 The enormousness of the loss of life during the First World War, its horrors and its sorrows are emphasized increasingly during the Second Period.

Victory in the First World War was due to the Allies finally achieving a “grim triumph in the war of exhaustion.” 272 By 1918, the German forces were exhausted. Foch’s autumn offensive “was the knell of doom,” 273 and the German command realized that victory was impossible against the Allies, especially with the influx of American troops. After the armistice, there was “peace without victory,” due to the economic and human costs of the war. There could be “no victory for the victors” because the “economic interdependence of the nations of the world… had come to chaos.” 274 Garvin describes the Versailles Conferences as the start of “the tragedy of the peace.” 275 The creation of the League of Nations had the aspiration and potential to be the “highest

269 Ibid., 70.
270 Ibid., 80.
271 Ibid., 103.
272 Ibid., 98.
273 Ibid., 93.
274 Ibid., 1.
275 Ibid., 105.
political achievement that civilization had yet known,”276 and end war. The League failed because Germany was not immediately included, and the United States withdrew, leaving the League “devoid of moral and practical authority.”277 Garvin concludes his chapters with an overview of the post-war political and economic chaos of the early 1920s. Garvin, like Thomson in 1920, finds the war’s largest tragedy to be the squandered peace.

For Garvin, the First World War is entirely a tragedy. Brought on by a buffoon in command of an empire, the Allies won an exhausting victory. Although the Allies managed to destroy the old empires of Central Europe, the victory was squandered and the costs, both human and economic, vastly outweigh any questionable gains. He wonders, sadly, if “the whole development of industrial countries of Europe throughout the machine-age” was “a gigantic mistake?”278 The tragedy of Garvin’s war, initiated by mistakes and characterized by horror, approaches the level of Montague’s. With horrors, casualties, and disappointments increasing in emphasis, the tragedies of the Second Period are more extreme than those of the First Period.

Another author in These Eventful Years, Carlton Hayes, explains the origins of the First World War in the fifth chapter, “The Causes of the Great War.” He argues that the forces that led to the war originated during the rise of nationalism. Nationalism “gave to the masses in each country an unquestioning faith in their own collective virtue and wisdom and an equally unquestioning faith in the collective vice and depravity of their neighbours.” Hayes argues that nationalism “psychologically… paved the way to war.”279

276 Ibid., 106.
277 Ibid., 108.
278 Ibid., 103.
279 Carlton J. H. Hayes, “The Causes of the Great War,” in These Eventful Years; the Twentieth Century in the Making, as Told by Many of Its Makers; Being the Dramatic Story of All That Has Happened
In addition to the tension created within and between states caused by nationalism, economic factors were also at play. Industrialization and the need for materials pushed Europeans into Africa and Asia, leading to conflicts over territory.\(^{280}\) The “profiting classes in every country demanded commercial, diplomatic, and finally military support,”\(^{281}\) and the masses, inspired by nationalism, gave it to them, resulting in immense military buildups. Hayes’ explanation of the war’s causes, like Mackinder’s, is a structural one rooted in history and impersonal forces.

Major General Sir Frederick Maurice authored the sixth and seventh chapters of *These Eventful Years*, titled “How the War was Fought and Won.” He describes the Battle of the Somme as “exhausting their [German] troops,”\(^{282}\) and notes the capture of “38,000 Germans at a tremendous price.”\(^{283}\) The Allies won the war owing to Foch’s strategy of “limited attacks,”\(^{284}\) which, combined with the use of tanks, crushed German morale. The high human costs of the war weigh heavily on Maurice, and in describing victory, he argues that “the sacrifices… were so colossal that no rapid recovery from them would in any circumstances have been possible.”\(^{285}\) Victory “has been achieved, but at a price which has left the victors only less crippled than the vanquished.”\(^{286}\)

Exhaustion, frustration and futility, also emphasized in Garvin and Montague, are

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\(^{280}\) Ibid., 199.

\(^{281}\) Ibid., 200.

\(^{282}\) Frederick Maurice, “How the War was Fought and Won,” in *These Eventful Years; the Twentieth Century in the Making, as Told by Many of its Makers; Being the Dramatic Story of All That Has Happened Throughout the World During the Most Momentous Period in All History*, ed. Franklin Henry Hooper, vol. 1 (London, The Encyclopedia Britannica Company, ltd.; New York, Encyclopedia Britannica, inc., 1924), 249.

\(^{283}\) Ibid., 250.

\(^{284}\) Ibid., 264.

\(^{285}\) Ibid., 268.

\(^{286}\) Ibid.
prominent in Maurice’s war. Even though he does not describe the horrors of the First World War in detail, the war’s immense death toll and casualties give it the over-arching meaning, also similar to Garvin’s and Montague’s, of a tragedy.

*The Story of the World at War* by Margaret Synge, published in 1926, has some characteristics which make it an outlier of the Second Period, particularly its explanation for the causes of the war and the war’s over-arching meaning. At the same time, Synge’s presentation of casualties and the horrors of war belong in the Second Period. Synge is the author of other history books similarly aimed at juvenile audiences, including *Life of Gladstone: a Book for Boys* in 1899, and *The Discovery of New Worlds* in 1910.

Synge’s narrative begins by noting the war to be “one of the greatest tragedies in European history,” and that the “period of triumph and achievement”\(^{287}\) of the late nineteenth century and the Victorian age had ended with the First World War. She recounts European history after German unification until the ascension of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the progress made by Germany under the guidance of Bismarck. Then, Wilhelm, “inspired by self-confidence and a firm belief in his own ability to rule”\(^ {288}\) drove Bismarck away. Now Wilhelm, “with tremendous energy, personal charm and dominating will… set himself to the colossal task of making Germany a world power.”\(^ {289}\)

Synge describes the new Kaiser’s aggressive foreign policy and explains how his antagonism drove Britain to form an alliance with France and Russia, which he perceived as an attempt to “encircle and provoke” him.\(^ {290}\)

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\(^{288}\) Ibid., 7.

\(^{289}\) Ibid., 8.

\(^{290}\) Ibid., 30.
Ferdinand, Germany had experienced unprecedented growth, “unequalled in the world’s history.” However, “the people hungered for more- a world-empire was their dream- if not in the West, why then in the East.” Germany wanted to “preserve peace on their own terms- holding that the German should be so strong by land and sea that he could ‘swagger down the High Street of the World, making his will prevail at every turn.’” The Germans and their Kaiser were hungry for conquest, and had been secretly preparing for war “for years,” and their support for Austria led to the events of the July crisis. In the end, Germany’s decision to invade Belgium meant Britain’s “honour was at stake.” There was no other choice, because “if a solemn compact was to be treated as a scrap of paper, who could ever believe in the honour of England again?” The First World War was brought about by an aggressive and ambitious German leader, representing the desires of his people. Synge’s text is chronologically the latest one examined in this study which repeats the common First Period theme of Kaiser Wilhelm and Germany’s ambition to world domination. No other work of the Second or Third Periods revisits it.

When Synge’s narrative reaches the Battle of the Somme, she makes note of the “50,000 casualties” on the first day. British troops “fought magnificently, and continued to make small gains of ground almost daily, but at a terrible cost of human lives.” The battle continued without reaching a breakthrough until it “died away in rain and mud” in November of 1916. She suggests that at the very least, the Somme proved that the British and Empire troops “were the equal to any troops in the world in heroism and

291 Ibid., 45.
292 Ibid., 50.
293 Ibid., 52.
294 Ibid., 52.
295 Ibid., 122.

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powers of endurance.”296 Synge lists the total casualties of the war in the book’s final chapter,297 and frequently counts the numbers of Allied casualties rather than the German ones after describing a battle.298 One exception is Verdun, a “mad holocaust,” which was “continued beyond all limits of common-sense, in order to try and save the name of the Emperor and his son, nearly half a million Germans became casualties.”299 After Gallipoli, Synge laments how “no less than 30,000 casualties were reported, a quarter of the whole army” and that the Dardanelles Campaign “failed, failed tragically, hopelessly.”300 Synge writes with sympathy when describing the failures and suffering of British soldiers. In fact, both sides’ soldiers fought “grimly and magnificently… doing their duty and laying down their lives in silence.”301 The horrors of the First World War, the atmosphere of futility and frustration, and its immense death toll are becoming unavoidable elements in the war’s narrative. More than the First Period works of Wells, Parrott, and O’Neill, Synge’s description of the war’s horrors and casualties has much in common with the tragic Second Period descriptions of Montague and Garvin.

In the autumn of 1918, led by Ferdinand Foch, the Allies counterattacked and defeated the Germans, using “new tactics.”302 With “sheer courage and indomitable will,”303 and masterfully planning, the Allies beat the Germans back in a series of victories as Germany’s allies collapsed. The Western Front was broken by the “hammer-

296 Ibid., 123-124.
297 Ibid., 210.
298 Ibid., 70 after the Dardanelles, and 169 after Aisne for example.
299 Ibid., 121.
300 Ibid., 95.
301 Ibid., 200.
302 Ibid., 196.
303 Ibid., 106.
strokes of the Allies.”304 When defeat became clear, “the Germans themselves saw that the war must end.”305 The Kaiser abdicated and Germany slid into anarchy. Synge recounts the Armistice and the Paris Conference, along with the harsh terms of peace, which she describes as producing “mixed feelings.”306 She quotes a lament by General Smuts for greater understanding and sympathy between nations in the wake of the treaty’s harshness. The period after Versailles is described briefly, and Synge notes the death of President Wilson and America’s refusal to join the League of Nations.

The war’s over-arching narrative is of a difficult triumph containing promise for a better future. The First World War was planned and started by Kaiser Wilhelm, and he was defeated by the combined strength of the Allies. The ultimate lesson and meaning of the war is the need for peace, and Synge writes hopefully of the League of Nation’s “charge to end war.”307 The Allies had fought a war to end war, and although reaching this goal remains far off, the sacrifice made by Allied soldiers is the “very sacrament of brotherhood that must make the new peace.”308 Synge remains optimistic that this may become a reality. Her book is the last text examined here which explains the First World War’s over-arching meaning to be of war for peace or places hope in the League of Nations in realizing it, and is the only one which does so in the Second or Third Periods.

*Lions Led by Donkeys* by Peter Thompson was published in 1927 and is the final text included in the Second Period. Thompson’s goal is to analyze the “psychology of
the War,” and to provide an “indictment” against Germany, accusing them of deliberately preparing for a war of aggressing” and “in forcing the actual outbreak of war.” Thompson also wants to clearly explain the “mistakes and blunders” on the side of the Allies that are overlooked in schoolbooks.

Thompson, like most authors we’ve seen, argues that the war was started by Germany. By preparing for an aggressive war, Germany “transgressed every law of civilization and humanity.” Thompson discusses the writings of Friedrich von Bernhardi, who “preached” to an “attuned” nation aspirations to global power. Germany was guided by a “war party,” consisting of financiers, armament firms, Junkers, and headed by the Crown Prince, “the most repellent figure in the war.” He terms government by the war party, “militarism.” Each of these constituents saw something to gain in the event of war. The war coalition exploited the people’s patriotism and told them that Germany was being attacked from all sides. The Kaiser was “the tool of his entourage.” In the end, the German people “must share the guilt of accepting” the rule of the war party. Germany’s “final dream” was to surpass and dominate England, and Germany had prepared to achieve this goal with ten years planning. The Germans came to see “themselves as supermen whose mission it was to elevate the world; who must therefore make for themselves a place in the world commensurate with

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310 Ibid., 3.
311 Ibid., 1.
312 Ibid., 3.
313 Ibid., 22.
314 Ibid., 23.
315 Ibid., 24.
316 Ibid., 23.
317 Ibid.
their strength. After the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Germany believed that Britain would seek “peace at any price,” and avoid war under a Liberal Government, but notes that Germany would have refrained from starting the war had Britain declared its allegiance with France and Russia. Britain needed to be involved in the war in order to maintain a “balance of power” within Europe and to prevent the entire coast of Europe from falling into the hands one power. This made war “a matter of self-preservation.” The invasion of Belgium was a challenge to Britain’s “honour” and “pledged word.”

Although, for Thompson, Germany’s goals are below the level of world domination, German leaders had initiated a premeditated, aggressive war aiming at great power status. Thompson’s causes of the war, like Synge’s, are reminiscent of Wells, Parrott, Bridge, Rowe, Pollard, and Fletcher of the First Period.

When describing casualties, Thompson lists and laments the numbers of British dead. On the Battle of the Somme, Thompson writes “On the left we failed badly, our attack being made with insufficient foresight and our organization being faulty… we had lost nearly 60,000 men, killed, wounded, or prisoners.” The casualties were the “greatest loss and slaughter sustained in a single day in the whole history of the British Army.”

After describing the battle, Thompson describes how “we had pushed the Germans back for about seven miles… it had cost us 23,000 officers and nearly half a million men. Was it worth it?” He notes that the British Army was taking “terrible losses,” casualties at a rate of three British soldiers for every German killed. However, the Somme pushed the

318 Ibid., 28.
319 Ibid., 71.
320 Ibid., 79.
321 Ibid., 228.
322 Ibid., 229.
German Army into “a state of complete exhaustion,” and “our policy of attrition... bore more fruit towards the end of Allied victory than we believed at the time.”323 Similar to Synge and Mackinder, Thompson’s casualties are justified and have achieved valuable results.

By 1918, attrition had exhausted the German Army, and battles like the Somme drained Germany of manpower and morale. Foch’s “genius”324 in masterminding the 1918 counteroffensive put the Allies in an excellent position to conclude the conflict. During the Allied advance in the autumn of 1918, “German resistance had been broken,”325 and German morale cracked as tired Germans came up against enthusiastic Allied armies, bolstered by fresh British and American troops. The Armistice marked one of “the most tremendous days in history.”326 The peace, however, leaves much to be desired. At Versailles, the Germans were “unrepentant,” anticipating greater strength in “fifteen or twenty years.”327 Wilson’s League of Nations was “disowned”328 at home, and “Peace with a Vengeance,” turned into “Peace with terms that have proved impossible of fulfillment”329 due to economic crisis and German evasion. In a reverse image of Synge, Garvin, and Thomson’s disappointment with the harshness of the peace, Thompson is angered that the peace has not been harsh enough.

Thompson expresses the over-arching meaning of the war in terms of national character. The German national character is fundamentally flawed, a fact that had become

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323 Ibid., 285.
324 Ibid., 279.
325 Ibid., 285.
326 Ibid., 301.
327 Ibid., 303.
328 Ibid., 304.
329 Ibid., 305.
clear before, during, and after the war. When describing the German retreat, Thompson reminds the reader how “unlike the armies of other nations,” the German army “committed numberless acts of looting and wanton destruction.”\textsuperscript{330} After the war, the Germans “returned to their old [militaristic] instinct.”\textsuperscript{331} The Germans’ army “had always been interwoven with their lives.” Britain, on the other hand, needed to save Europe from the “Germanic tribes.”\textsuperscript{332} The British were forced to create the great fighting force that saved Europe, and which took the brunt of the fighting in France. He concludes by explaining that the “unknown soldier” was “the greatest man in the Great War.”\textsuperscript{333} The First World War’s over-arching meaning is of a national triumph, and “at the end we need have no feeling but one of intense pride.”\textsuperscript{334} Thompson shares his vision of national triumph with Mackinder, and the First Period’s Fletcher and Rowe.

\textbf{1922 to 1927: Second Period Conclusions}

The Second Period is distinguished from the First by changes in all four characteristics: over-arching meaning, causes, casualties, and victory. The over-arching meanings of the Second Period are more negative than those the first. Out of six texts, three depict the war to be a tragedy: Montague, Garvin, and Maurice. The idealistic meanings of the First Period, of a war for peace, civilization, or freedom have disappeared, with only Synge maintaining that the war was fought for and will achieve world peace. The remaining authors, Mackinder and Thompson, argue that the war was a

\textsuperscript{330} Ibid., 287.
\textsuperscript{331} Ibid., 290.
\textsuperscript{332} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{333} Ibid., 306.
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid., 2.
national victory. In the Third Period, all but one of the authors’ over-arching meanings for the First World War is of a costly national victory or a tragedy. During the Second Period, we see the narrowing of possible meanings of the war.

Structural causes become much more prominent causal explanations for the First World War during the Second Period. Only one author out of the ten of the First Period, Thomson, uses structural causes to explain the First World War. We see two in the Second Period, Mackinder and Hayes, and out of only six. Garvin, Montague, Synge and Thompson all blame Germany for the war, but only Synge and Thomson do so with the accusation that the war was premeditated German aggression. There is also a dramatic decline in blaming Kaiser Wilhem’s or Germans’ ambition to world conquest for the war, which is only expressed by Synge. Garvin’s theory that the war was a result of Kaiser Wilhelm’s incompetence and failed diplomacy and not his wicked scheming is a prominent departure from the older narrative, one revisited later by Liddell Hart. In the Third Period, the most prominent First Period’s explanations for the war disappear entirely.

The Second Period’s higher proportion of tragedies means that in the Second Period, more authors argue that the dead of the First World War have died in vain. The horrors and the casualties of the war also receive greater attention and emphasis than in the First. In the Second Period, only Mackinder avoids addressing the horrors of the war, and even he notes the sadness associated with the death toll of the war. Sadness is becoming an increasingly pronounced in the writing about the war’s casualties. Montague and Garvin describe the horrors of the battlefield and the senseless deaths with extensive sorrow. However, even Synge and Thompson, who argue that the dead have not died in
vain, describe the war’s climate of exhaustion, futility and frustration, and need to justify its immense death toll. During the Second Period, the horrors of the war, and the immensity and the futility of the death are much more prominent than during the First Period. During the Third Period, nearly all authors emphasize the horrors of the war, as it becomes an inescapable element in the narrative of the First World War.

Similar to the First Period, explanations for the allied victory are diverse in the Second. If anything, we see an increase in emphasis on new strategies being responsible for bringing about victory, such as in Mackinder, Maurice, Synge, and Thompson. Other factors are usually discussed as well, such as Mackinder’s reference to the blockade and technological advances. There is no clear trend or distinction between these explanations and those in the First or Third Periods. The most prominent change from the First Period is the abandonment of the significance of the League of Nations as a fruit of victory by all authors other than Synge.

Period III: 1928 to 1934

The distinctions between the Second and Third Periods are not quite as clear-cut as between the First and Second. An Outline History of the Great War (1928) was written by C.V. Carey and H.S. Scott, who both were officers who fought in the First World War. In the Preface, the authors establish that the Outline History is “a concise narrative of the War in outline, for the benefit of readers who prefer short books to bulky ones.”335 Carey and Scott’s history marks the division to the Third Period because of the authors’ presentation of the war’s causes, casualties, and over-arching meaning.

Carey and Scott begin the narrative by briefly explaining the Germans’ frustration with their lack of colonies, desire for “a place in the sun,” and their fear of “encirclement” by their neighbors. The narrative jumps immediately into the July crisis and the outbreak of war, explaining Britain’s involvement being due to the violation of Belgian neutrality, which Germany had failed to honor after the British ultimatum. The humanizing explanation of German fear as a cause for the war makes its first appearance here, and it appears again in Playne’s *Britain Holds On*.

Carey and Scott highlight the horrors of the First World War and its casualties more than any earlier authors other than those who see the war as a tragedy. When describing the Battle of the Somme, Carey and Scott describe how “during little more than two weeks’ fighting the casualties exceeded 80,000.” This shockingly high cost “seems utterly lacking in proportion” to the military objectives accomplished. The tragically small gain “weighs hardly at all against the expense of the heroic spirit of the nation, the blood of its best youth, the tears of their beloved.” Carey and Scott describe the horrors of battle, how soldiers marched “slipping and floundering for hours at a snail’s pace through mud and slime.” The “obscene” state of the trenches and the “world of foulness” of the battlefield are described in detail, which emphasizes the greatness of the “men who gave all for their country of their own free will.” In the trenches, “sometimes… only death could release men gripped by the devouring mud.” The Somme was a “blood-bath” for the Germans as well, who were being continually pushed back. Far reaching gains were sabotaged by weather. Carey and Scott describe the “Somme

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336 Ibid., 2.
337 Ibid., 108.
338 Ibid., 109.
339 Ibid., 115.
Dispatch” of December 1916 as expressing “in language of perfect restraint…praise to
the Somme Army’s deeds and sufferings which reveals the devotion of all to a praise-
worthy ideal through great tribulation.”

The Somme, though hugely bloody, was an “achievement,” that improved the British Army’s fighting ability, inflicted punishing losses on the Germans, and ensured Allied victory at Verdun. Although the authors never give a tally of the total casualties of the war, the language of war’s horrors and human costs permeates the book, more so than Thompson and Synge in the Second Period, or O’Neill, Parrott or Wells in the First.

In 1918, the German offensive resembled “nothing so much as the flurry of a grounded whale.” The Allies, reinforced by the Americans, were increasing in strength and adapting from their earlier mistakes. The Allied summer counter-offensive culminated in the British capture of Amiens, Ludendorff’s “black day.” Tanks were particularly crucial to allied victory, and “the hopelessness of facing tanks had taken a deep hold in the mind of the German soldier.”

During the autumn counter-offensive, the “German spirit was breaking,” and by the time of the Armistice, the German army was “no longer controllable as a military organization.” Although the Armistice was a time of celebration, “the nation’s heart was heavy with the emotion which is now uppermost on Armistice Day- the sense of grievous loss.” Victory was achieved, and

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340 Ibid., 116.
341 Ibid., 211.
342 Ibid., 220.
343 Ibid., 228.
344 Ibid., 254.
345 Ibid., 256.
346 Ibid., 258.
meant “the end of a long nightmare.”\textsuperscript{347} The League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles are not discussed in this book.

Carey and Scott conclude \textit{Outline History} with a description of the war-time experience. They describe how the “average soldier” faced “imminent peril of death or mutilation at almost any moment,” living in “mud, monotony, and deadly fatigue… varied only by occasional periods of intense fear.”\textsuperscript{348} In the end, although the wartime experience was not entirely awful, “not one of those who felt the scorch of war would willingly live through all his or her experiences again.” Carey and Scott hope for a future without war, and conclude on the ominous note that “in the next war there will be no non-combatants.”\textsuperscript{349} The over-arching meaning of the war for Carey and Scott is of a tragic, costly national victory. British soldiers fought heroically and achieved victory while suffering appallingly. The over-arching meaning of a hugely costly national triumph with an emphasis on soldiers’ suffering, first seen in this study in Carey and Scott, is a prominent one of the Third Period.

Douglas Jerrold’s \textit{The War on Land}, published in 1928, is a brief, 80 page history of the First World War. Jerrold does not discuss the causes of the war at all, and the narrative begins with the opening of combat.

Germany had counted on a swift and decisive victory against France, one Britain would be fearful to go up against. This plan contributed to Germany’s ultimate defeat. From the very beginning all players underestimated their enemies and failed to secure

\textsuperscript{347} Ibid., 259.
\textsuperscript{348} Ibid., 260.
\textsuperscript{349} Ibid., 262.
initial decisive victories which prolonged and exacerbated the war.\textsuperscript{350} When describing
the Battle of the Somme, Jerrold argues that the battle at Verdun had taken away too
many French troops to be carried out as it had originally been planned. “The burden of
the attack,” then, “was to be borne by the British.”\textsuperscript{351} “The first day of the Battle of the
Somme “was one of the most disastrous in the history of the British army,” commenting
that “two small villages had cost us 60,000 men.”\textsuperscript{352} Jerrold gives the immense scale of
the carnage at the Somme, describing how “we lost 20,000 officers and 460,000 men
(more than nine times the strength of our original Expeditionary Force),” all while
“merely wrestling in the mud for featureless ruins and desolate hillocks.” The Somme,
however, was a triumph in that the British performance was “astounding,” and that it
established “a definite moral ascendency over the enemy.”\textsuperscript{353} Jerrold’s emphasis on the
horrors of the war and the scale of the casualties is reminiscent of Synge and Maurice,
although his description of British success at the Somme has more parallels in First
Period authors like Bridge or Rowe. Jerrold’s pronounced treatment of the war’s
casualties and horrors is similar to those of Garvin, Synge, and Carey and Scott who all
note the mud of the battlefield.

Jerrold accentuates the importance of the Americans’ contribution to the Allied
victory. Ludendorff had failed to achieve victory in early 1918, “and the Americans had
arrived.” Indeed, “had the Americans proved themselves indifferent soldiers, history

\textsuperscript{350} Douglas Jerrold, \textit{The War on Land in the Main Theatres of War, 1914-1918. Comprising the Western
Front, the Eastern Front, the Italian Front, the Balkans, and the Campaigns Against Turkey}, Benn’s
sixpenny library ;; no.25; (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1928), 4-5.
\textsuperscript{351} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{352} Ibid., 39.
\textsuperscript{353} Ibid., 41.
might have to be written differently.”

Allied advances then brought about the political collapse of Germany. Jerrold expresses a remarkable level of sympathy with Germany’s plight, writing that Germany “failed, but she failed bravely” to hold back the tide of Allied soldiers. The German army had fought with “gallantry.” The war ended, and the Allied victory was bittersweet: “military victory is not equivalent to success in war.” Bolshevik Russia was now “menacing the security of victory and vanquished alike,” and the costs of the war will put “the present and future generations under the burden of impoverishment [sic].” It was largely due to “mistakes, miscalculations, and mischances” that the war didn’t come to an earlier end.

Jerrold’s war is a costly fight, well fought by both sides, but characterized by mistakes and miscalculations that cost many lives. It saw the remarkable transformation of Britain from a “third-class military power in 1914,” to “a first-class” military power by the end of the war. The chaos and danger that followed the war makes a mixed legacy for the war. Its over-arching meaning is of a national triumph, though one, like Carey and Scott’s, that has been costly almost to the point of becoming a tragedy.

Major General George Aston’s 1930 *The Great War of 1914-1918* was published as part of “The Home University Library of Modern Knowledge,” intended to be a “short summary of the greatest of wars.” Aston was the Director of Mine-sweeping at the

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354 Ibid., 79.
355 Ibid., 80.
356 Ibid.
357 Ibid., 3.
British Admiralty from 1917 to 1919.\textsuperscript{359} \textit{The Great War of 1914-1918} does not discuss the causes of the war, and the narrative begins with the outbreak of hostilities. Aston’s book is an outlier in the Third Period: his description of casualties has more in common with earlier Periods, as does his over-arching meaning of the war.

Aston places considerable emphasis on the naval element of the war. He argues that “the army operations …depended almost entirely upon the safety of sea-traffic. All troop-transports required naval escorts.”\textsuperscript{360} Aston generally avoids writing about casualties when discussing battles, speaking generally about battles in abstract terms like “offensive,” “defensive” and “successes” and “failure.”\textsuperscript{361} When describing The Somme, Aston describes the British Army as having “endured so great a sacrifice” that they “had contributed in no mean measure” to Allied victory. Although it wasn’t realized at the time, the British “sacrifice was one of the main factors that sapped the enemy’s strength and led to the ultimate collapse of 1918”\textsuperscript{362} Aston include the actual numbers of British losses in battle very infrequently, two examples being the Second Battle of Ypres, and the total losses maritime personnel.\textsuperscript{363} When Aston’s narrative reaches the Armistice, he notes the total casualties, writing that they “represented the sacrifice offered by the British Army to the victory that was gained.”\textsuperscript{364} Strangely, he later describes the war as “the great Armageddon with its holocaust of slaughter.”\textsuperscript{365} Aston’s anachronistic

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\item \textsuperscript{359} Jerrold, \textit{The War on Land in the Main Theatres of War, 1914-1918. Comprising the Western Front, the Eastern Front, the Italian Front, the Balkans, and the Campaigns Against Turkey}, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{360} Aston, \textit{The Great War of 1914-1918}, 33.
\item \textsuperscript{361} Ibid., 118.
\item \textsuperscript{362} Ibid., 33.
\item \textsuperscript{363} Ibid., 79, 243.
\item \textsuperscript{364} Ibid., 217.
\item \textsuperscript{365} Ibid., 218.
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treatment of casualties is reminiscent of Bridge, Rowe, Cunnington, and Fletcher in the First Period and Mackinder in the Second: abstract, with the horrors avoided.

The First World War was “finished” by “the success of the British Empire Army… in piercing the Hindenburg line,”366 which was followed by a series of Allied advances. Victory was fought for and won on land, but Britain’s maritime and economic power were essential to bring it about. Aston discusses arms production, shipping statistics, and food supplies, arguing that these were “matters affecting directly the spirit of the peoples and of the fighting services.”367 Overall, the “ordeal proved the strength of the ‘silken bonds’ of sympathy with the same ideals and of loyalty to the Sovereign,” and the Empire was re-affirmed on more solid ground. Aston does not discuss the League of Nations and only briefly mentions the Paris Conference, only noting the dates that the Versailles treaty was signed.368 In the Preface, Aston explains that he is convinced “of the futility of force” for “settling issues between nations.” He cautions against disarmament, however, until a “substitute for war”369 has been found and proved effective.

The over-arching meaning of the war, for Aston, is of a British national triumph. Though somewhat costly, the war affirmed the strength of the British army, navy, economy, and empire. Aston’s national triumph is more akin to the First Period’s Rowe, Pollard, and Fletcher than the Third Period’s Carey and Scott, and Jerrold. Aston’s Britain emerged stronger, not weaker from the war.

366 Ibid., 212.
367 Ibid., 239.
368 Ibid., 248.
369 Ibid., 5.
Society At War (1931), by Elisabeth Playne, spans the period 1914 to 1916 on the British “home front.” Her book is more typical of the Third Period than Aston’s. Playne had previously authored The Neuroses of Nations in 1925, and had taken part in pacifist movements in Britain before and during the First World War. In the book’s Preface, Playne describes her goal to be “to get at the background of the actual fighting mania... the period of incubation of war-fever.”

Playne describes the causes of the war in abstract terms of “state of mind.” Before the war, “the state of mind everywhere in Europe was troubled, fevered, excited.” She explains the mentalities of the participating nations, noting the Germans to be “mad with jealousy combined with fear, played an absurd game of ‘defensive militarism.’” Nationalism was certainly a causal factor of war, and the “poison of nationalist passion began to work in the minds of the people of Europe.” The industrial revolution and the economic changes transforming Europe may have made Europeans psychologically unbalanced: “the temper of Europe was, we have seen, neurotic.” Britain’s conflict with Germany was based in the “neurotic, fixed belief that Germany was a delinquent nation, that Germany aimed at the domination of the world.” The First World War was, essentially, caused by the irrational madness of European nations who “glided into a suicidal attitude” and fought one another. She notes an origin of the

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370 Caroline Playne, Society at War (Boston ; New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1931), 11.
372 Playne, Society at War, 7.
373 Ibid., 13.
374 Ibid., 13-14.
375 Ibid., 14.
376 Ibid., 15.
377 Ibid., 17.
378 Ibid., 21.
conflict as “long-brewing jealousy between France and Germany,” and describes the British attitude toward Belgian neutrality as farcical: “although nothing of the sort had entered their imagination till that hour, it now dominated everything,”379 as enthusiasm for war exploded. For the purpose of this study, I am classifying Playne’s psychological explanation for the war as structural, like Hayes’s and Mackinder’s in the Second Period, because it is a systemic explanation and not one which blames individuals, countries, or specific events.

Although Society at War’s focus is England itself, Playne does describe the casualties at various instances. She refers to the Somme as “the terrible battles… the dreadful slaughterings,” as information made its way back to the home front. The casualties made the war “the most tragic drama,” its “senselessness”380 becoming more and more apparent. Even though the Allies’ original war aims had been achieved by the end of 1916, they insisted on “fighting till some vague, undefined aim was obtained.”381 Playne concludes by wondering “what might have been saved”382 had peace come earlier. It is clear that Playne sees all of these deaths as senseless, pointless tragedies. She describes the cost of the war: “the pick of the human race and a large part of the world’s energy and wealth had been squandered.”383

The over-arching meaning of the war for Playne is of a senseless tragedy and waste. It represented a reversal of civilization, “a rolling backwards” of progress in the world. The war “constituted a grave crisis, one of the gravest that human society had

379 Ibid., 33.
380 Ibid., 356.
381 Ibid., 356-357.
382 Ibid., 376.
383 Ibid., 13.
experienced.”384 The irrational squandering of vast numbers of human lives and resources reveals a civilization with severe psychological problems. The tragedy of Playne’s war has interesting similarities with Montague’s in the Second Period: they both highlight the war’s destruction of civilization. Similar to Maurice and Garvin of the Second Period, Playne’s expresses disgust at the waste of lives and wealth with nothing gained.

Caroline Playne’s next book, *Britain Holds On*, published in 1933, contains her observations and psychological theories on the topic of the British home front from 1917 to 1918 and immediately after. It consequently does not extensively cover the war’s causes, although in the preface and conclusion, she discusses them briefly.

In the preface, Playne describes the entire period of the war to be one when “the false cult of nationalism was an all-pervading religion.” The “insanity” of nationalism led to the “disaster and ruin,” of the war, all originating psychologically in “men’s disordered minds.”385 In the conclusion, Playne discusses the “pre-war mind” in Germany, explaining the existence of groups of individuals for whom “militarism” was “the be-all and end-all of national life.” Some of these militarists did “speak sometimes” of territorial expansion or conquest. However, “the mass of German people suffered more from fear than from wild ambition and a good deal from an inferiority complex.” In 1914, the Germans went to war “because they believed themselves in danger… rather than as a step towards conquests.”386 The Allies, on the other hand, had “an inflated conception” of German militarism. Then, during the July Crisis, “the nations were hurled into the war in 1914 because the men in power in different European countries were too strung up

384 Ibid., 12.
386 Ibid., 402.
387 Ibid., 401.
and nervously stimulated to be able to stop the designs of the few amongst them”388 who truly desired war. Playne, now like Carey and Scott, argues that Germany’s fear was a primary cause for the First World War, though her structural causes of nationalism and psychology remain.

Again, Playne laments the loss of life in the war as needless and tragic. She provides the total British casualties on all fronts and notes that the since the war, the “horror, the pity of the sacrifice have haunted the generation” who fought. Returning men who survived the combat were often “turned to maniacs,” or suffered the “general atrophy of mind and soul.”389 She describes the wounded men who returned as “shattered ex-service men… human wreckage.”390 Playne writes sadly about the human suffering on both sides of the war. The loss of life was a senseless waste. As time as has passed after the war’s conclusion, the legacy of the war has proved to be a negative one.

Although Playne does not discuss the details of battles, she sees the Allied victory as coming when “German confidence collapsed.”391 The Germans believed Woodrow Wilson’s overtures for conciliatory peace and his “pronouncements” to be a “base for armistice terms.” Instead, the terms of the Armistice were so harsh that they begged him to “mitigate” the “fearful conditions,” which caused “the starvation of millions.”392 Rather than reconciliation, the Allies forced “peace with vengeance”393 based in the nonsense of Germany’s “sole guilt”394 and barbarism. The new government in Germany

388 Ibid., 402.
389 Ibid., 413.
390 Ibid., 433.
391 Ibid., 386.
392 Ibid., 309.
393 Ibid., 390-391.
394 Ibid., 391.
represented “the collapse of German militarism.”\textsuperscript{395} The peace terms the allies demanded were “harsh,” due to the “sadistic temper of belligerency.” It was a “dastardly crime”\textsuperscript{396} to continue the blockade of Germany until August of 1919, which punished even the German statesmen with famine. Although the League of Nations may have had promise, it was “a great tragedy” that it was “yoked with a treaty which perpetuated belligerency of spirit.” Even at the time of writing, the “nations are not healed,” and “are still as self-centred as ever.”\textsuperscript{397} The years following the war formed an “anticlimax”\textsuperscript{398} to all of the war-time hopes. Playne’s disappointment with the peace parallels Thomson’s in the First Period and Garvin’s in the Second.

The over-arching meaning of the First World War for Playne remains one of an immense and senseless tragedy. The tragedy is made only more profound by the war’s horrible costs, and the disappointment and selfishness of the years which followed the war’s conclusion. Her only hope is that future generations will learn from the “anguish of its futility,” and learn to recognize “our common humanity.”\textsuperscript{399} In Playne, we can see how by the Third Period the war’s tragic costs and questionable legacy have become nearly impossible to avoid: they either make the First World War a tragedy, or they deeply sadden a national triumph.

The next book of the Third Period is a complex example of the latter. Winston Churchill served as the First Lord of the Admiralty during the first half of the First World War, before being heavily criticized for his part in planning the failed Dardanelles
campaign. He later served as Minister of Munitions under Prime Minister Lloyd George.

The World Crisis by Winston Churchill was originally published in four parts in 1923, 1927, 1929, and 1931, meaning only the last two volumes were originally published during the time frame of the Third Period. The compiled version, which this study examines, was published in 1931 and contains additional edits, content, and responses to criticism of the earlier works. One explanation Churchill provides for his new compilation is to “bring them together in a form acceptable to a wider public,” fitting this edition perfectly within the guidelines of this study. He also notes that although he has changed some “technical detail and personal justifications,” he has not altered the “foundations of the story, nor the conclusions” he draws.400

Churchill devotes the first book and first quarter of his history to the period from 1911 to 1914. He begins his history by placing the First World War within the context of British history and the economic, cultural, and scientific advances of the nineteenth century. Churchill blames the “virtues of nations ill-directed or mis-directed by their rulers” for “their own undoing and… the general catastrophe.” Specifically, “Germany clanked obstinately, recklessly, awkwardly towards the crater and dragged us all in with her.”401 He then reviews Franco-German antagonism from German Unification, and explains the “genius” Bismarck’s need to create a system of international alliances in order to defend against the “irreconcilable”402 conflict with France. During the remainder of the nineteenth century, France “never abandoned the dream of recovering the lost

401 Ibid., 6.
402 Ibid., 7.
provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, but was restrained in acting against Germany because of uncertainty about Russia’s commitment to their alliance, and Britain’s ambiguous status outside the alliance system. Germany and Britain were “each other’s best customers,” and in 1901, Britain “stood equally clear of the Triple and of the Dual Alliance.” However, the German decision under Moltke (as stated in his Military Testament) to expand the German Navy to threaten Britain “was an event of first magnitude in world affairs,” that formed “a menace to the very life of the British nation.” This new German threat drove Britain into a closer relationship with France, culminating in the Anglo-French Agreement of 1904. Then, German leaders engaged in “many acts of supreme unwisdom,” leading up to the war, including building hostility with Britain by continually challenging British naval power. This period ended with “an act of aggression” that brought Britain into the war. Britain was sympathetic to “thoroughly democratic” France, and bound “indisputably” “in an obligation of honour” to defend the neutrality of Belgium. He argues, in opposition to those who believe that Germany would have avoided war if Britain had plainly stated its intentions to militarily defend Belgian neutrality, that “the German Government” was “too deeply committed” to their plans to turn back. Germany “had rushed with head down and settled resolve into the war. Churchill, like Hammerton later in the Third Period,

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403 Ibid., 9.  
404 Ibid., 10.  
405 Ibid., 10-11.  
406 Ibid., 11.  
407 Ibid., 12.  
408 Ibid., 14.  
409 Ibid., 108.  
410 Ibid., 109.  
411 Ibid., 127.
places the blame for the war squarely on Germany, whose leaders had foolishly chosen to force Britain into an alliance with France.

Most of Churchill’s history focuses on the naval side of the conflict, which befits his personal role in the war. When discussing casualties, Churchill does not shy from the numbers of dead. Although he laments the “losses and… heart-breaking failure” of the Dardanelles campaign, Churchill argues that it was justified in that it destroyed “the flower of the Turkish army,” and ensured Italian entry into the war. At Gallipoli, he describes the Battle of the Beaches, where the beach’s edge was “heaped or crowded with dead and dying.” At V beach, “undaunted by their losses and experiences… these heroic troops” advanced, and in “in their persistency, their will power, their physical endurance, achieved a feat of arms certainly in these respects not often, if ever surpassed in the history of either island race.” Later, Churchill tallies the anonymous “15,000 killed and wounded.” When he describes the Battle of the Somme, he writes of the “failed” initial attack in June, and the “60,000… fallen, killed, or wounded” which was “the greatest loss and slaughter sustained in a single day in the whole history of the British Army.” Churchill is critical of Field Marshall Haig’s goals and planning, and the allied campaign of 1916 had been “a welter of slaughter, which after the issue was determined left the British and French armies weaker in relation to the Germans than when it opened.” However, “this somber verdict… in no way diminishes the true

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412 Ibid., 363.
413 Ibid., 438.
414 Ibid., 442.
415 Ibid., 443.
416 Ibid., 664.
417 Ibid., 667.
418 Ibid., 674.
glory of the British Army.” British soldiers fought on under the “conviction that human freedom was challenged by military and Imperial tyranny,” and “struggling forward through the mire and filth of the trenches, across the corpse-strewn crater fields.” They were “martyrs not less than soldiers.” The immensity of the war’s casualties requires Churchill to justify them again and again. Their deaths “have set up a monument of native virtue which will command the wonder, the reverence and the gratitude of our island people as long as we endure as a nation among men.” In addition to eulogizing the dead after recounting battles, Churchill lists the total losses month-by-month in the Appendix. For Churchill, the casualties of the war are terrible sacrifices that have revealed the essential virtues of British character. The soldiers from both sides “met the awful and self-inflicted agony with new reserves of fortitude.” and “marched to death with somber dignity.” Churchill’s recognition of the terrible toll of the First World War and the value of the soldiers’ sacrifice has parallels with the Third Period’s Carey and Scott, and Jerrold.

In 1918 “the German nation had begun to despair” as Germany’s allies collapsed and “a growing sense of the inevitable began to chill all hearts,” while the Allies renewed their strength and “the Americans were pouring in.” In August of 1918, Churchill argues that had the German military withdrawn to the German borders to prepare a strenuous defense, the German government could have negotiated for peace from a position superior to “the appalling position of yielding to the discretion of those upon

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419 Ibid.
420 Ibid., 675.
421 Ibid., Appendix I.
422 Ibid., 4.
423 Ibid., 813.
whom she had inflicted the utmost injuries of hate.” However, the German “supreme policy of the State was paralysed, and the hard-strained fighting front began to quiver and rock and crack.” After the autumn counteroffensive, the German “armies were beaten at the front and demoralized from the rear.” The British Navy and its blockade played a huge role as well. Allied “victory had come after all the hazards and heartbreaks in an absolute and unlimited form,” as the enemy regimes collapsed and the German navy mutinied. Britain, along with the Allies, had achieved “safety, freedom, peace” and emerged from the conflict intact. Wilson’s fourteen points, the League of Nations, and the Treaty of Versailles are not discussed in this book. In the end, Churchill hopes that if the war is not to be “a chapter in a cruel and senseless story,” there will be “reconciliation” between the main combatants, which will allow them “secure… in safety and freedom a share in rebuilding the glory of Europe.”

Churchill’s *World Crisis* describes a titanic struggle between the great nations of Europe, an immense battle between peoples. Although he is unsympathetic towards the German leadership that provoked the war, he expresses admiration for the German resolve and the strength with which the Germans fought. He admires the “majestic war machine… [the] valiant German Army” and the immensity of the “eruption of the German volcano.” For Britain, Churchill argues, the First World War needs to be seen within the context of British intervention on the continent, specifically the “prodigious

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424 Ibid., 829.
425 Ibid., 845.
426 Ibid., 846.
427 Ibid., 847.
428 Ibid., 849.
429 Ibid., 849.
430 Ibid., 814.
431 Ibid., 848.
victories” over Spain, and France, which “rescued Europe from a military domination… three separate times in three different centuries.” The First World War was the “fourth time and on an immeasurably larger scale.”\textsuperscript{431} The British war effort and the fight against tyranny were synonymous: “once more now in the march of centuries Old England was to stand forth in battle against the mightiest thrones and dominations. Once more in defence of the liberties of Europe and the common right must she enter upon a voyage of great toil and hazard.”\textsuperscript{432} The British nation, at great cost, reaffirmed the strength of its people and empire. The over-arching meaning of the war is of a costly national triumph, one rooted in the British history and British character. Churchill’s triumph, like Aston’s, is one from which Britain has emerged stronger. At the same time, Churchill’s emphasis on the victory’s immense costs makes it closer to of Carey and Scott, and Jerrold.

Sir John Alexander Hammerton’s \textit{Popular History of the Great War} was published in six volumes between 1933 and 1934. Hammerton too accentuates the costliness of the victory. He had previously, with Herbert Wilson, edited \textit{The Great War: The Standard History of the All-Europe Conflict} which had been published in 13 volumes during the war. The \textit{Oxford Dictionary of National Biography} calls Hammerton “the most successful creator of large-scale works of reference that Britain has known”\textsuperscript{433} for his contributions to encyclopedias and research on the First World War. At the start of Hammerton’s work, he states his goal to be to follow up on the \textit{Standard History} published during the war, and to take into account “post-war revelations.” He is writing for “two classes of the reading public”: the middle aged people who “played a personal

\textsuperscript{431} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{432} Ibid., 127.
part” and “refresh their memories,” and for “those who were schoolboys or schoolgirls… whose knowledge of it is for the most part fragmentary.”

Hammerton explains that he takes “the point of view” of Great Britain during the conflict, and wants to avoid the assumption that “Great Britain was always in the wrong” or to “minimize in any way the wonderful heroism” of British soldiers. He wants to avoid “overheated rhetoric” of “many of the early descriptions of the events of the war.” However, he “has been unable to accept the view that all the warring nations were equally responsible for the conflict, or that the Germans, having lost the war, should escape the just penalty of their folly or their crime.”

For Hammerton, the causes of the war stretch into the distant past, and he disparages the approach of merely looking back to 1870. Indeed, “in 1914, the rivalry of France and Germany had been for over 1,000 years a main issue in European politics,” and in Alsace-Loraine the conflict stretches back to 842. After briefly reviewing Franco-German conflict through the nineteenth century, Hammerton describes the Franco-Prussian War. Manipulated into war by Bismarck, doomed French troops “fought with heroic devotion,” but “Bismarck’s grand objective was achieved.” France was “shorn of her Rhine provinces.” Hammerton reviews Bismarck’s diplomacy during the remainder of the nineteenth century, while “jealousy was growing in Germany,” where German leaders were secretly searching for their “place in the sun.”

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435 Ibid., 1:4.
436 Ibid., 1:9.
437 Ibid., 1:12.
438 Ibid., 1:13.
settled their differences and became allies, which, in conjunction with the French alliance with Russia, the German people perceived as “a grand conspiracy, born of political vindictiveness and begotten of commercial jealousy, for the overthrow of Germany.” The German government, however, “aiming at a world domination… chose its own moment” believing that they would only need to fight France and Russia because Britain was busy in Ireland. Then came “the hour… for striking.” The tradition of Bismarck “required that an occasion should be manufactured,” and Hammerton suggests that “an entirely different origin for the crime” of assassination of Franz Ferdinand is entirely plausible. He disagrees with A.F. Pollard’s argument that Britain was not “not literally bound to intervene,” arguing that this would have made the 1839 Belgian treaty pointless. In summing up the causes of the war, Hammerton concludes by quoting Sir Edward Grey’s August 3rd Speech to the House of Commons. Britain went to war “to prevent the whole of the west of Europe opposite us … falling under the domination of a single power” and “those obligations of honour and interests as regards to the Belgian threat.” Hammerton explanation of the war as a German bid for world domination is unique in the Third Period, but he is similar to Churchill in blaming Germany for the war.

Hammerton does not avoid writing in detail about the casualties or horrors of the war. He describes how in the Somme, “the men advanced, six paces between each with smoke clouds in front, with splendid steadiness, and reached the German trenches.” However, the Germans had survived the artillery barrage, and “the few un-wounded

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440 Ibid., 1:40.
441 Ibid., 1:41.
442 Hammerton, A Popular History of the Great War, 1:56; Pollard, A Short History of the Great War, 14.
Englishmen were too few to hold them.”444 He affirms that the Battle of the Somme “had important results. It wore down the German forces. It enabled the British staff to improve its methods, though the price paid- 412,000 British casualties- was grievously high.”445 The casualties suffered in the First World War were immensely tragic. For Hammerton, “no tragedy was ever mounted on such a stage” when “one after another her noblest and her best were taken- men who were the hope of the rising generation.”446 The British soldiers’ sacrifices achieved victory, but the immensity of the war’s costs permeates the book, like Jerrold’s, and Carey and Scott’s.

By September of 1918, there were “ominous signs that the strain on the German soldiery had at last reached breaking point.” The British took the Hindenburg line, and the German “army was breaking up.”447 As the crisis escalated, the Germans “brought complete disaster upon their country by trying to use the fleet to save the army,”448 leading to the sailors’ mutiny. The 1918 “brilliantly directed” counteroffensive of American and British soldiers, tanks, and aircraft achieved “such a complete and overwhelming victory that the armed strength of Germany was pulverized in a long series of battles.”449 Germany was thoroughly defeated, and it was a “stroke of genius” to use “the menace of a Bolshevist Germany”450 to avoid unconditional surrender. At Versailles, “the terms of peace were harsh,” 451 but some of the reparations demanded were

445 Ibid., 6:381.
446 Ibid., 6:496.
447 Ibid., 6:18.
448 Ibid., 6:22.
449 Ibid., 6:367.
450 Ibid., 6:33.
451 Ibid., 6:115.
impossible to fulfill. Germany was unable “by any ordinary means” to “pay the general costs of the war they had prepared and launched.” Fighting between Wilson and Clemenceau at the Paris Conference allowed Germany to escape “disruption,” and the German “Reactionary party” planned for a century-long conflict with the rest of Europe. Britain “had permanently suffered the most” out of all of the war’s victors. While France gained back French land, Britain acquired “more tropic land in which white men could not breed.”

Hammerton later compares the war to “a well-to-do middle aged man… if, suddenly assailed by a foot-pad, he succeeded in killing his enemy at the cost of being incapacitated for a year.” Britain had “escaped with her life,” but was “bruised, tired, and impoverished” and “could not equal her productiveness of 1913.” In the end, Britain had earned, in the words of William Pitt, “security against a danger the greatest that ever threatened the world.” German disarmament is one of the most valuable gains from the war. Hammerton is uneasy about the new regime in Germany, which is “indistinguishable from a ruthless tyranny,” with behavior that is “militant and aggressive.” For Hammerton, the over-arching meaning of the war is an amalgam of several. It was an achievement of British and Allied arms over Germany. He argues that the British people “fought for two great ends,” the first being the liberation of Belgium, and the second being “security… against a danger which threatened all the nations of the earth.” Through immense sacrifice, they achieved their goals. The war was a battle for the “the

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452 Ibid., 6:101.
453 Ibid., 6:92.
454 Ibid., 6:91.
455 Ibid., 6:496.
456 Ibid., 6:264.
457 Ibid., 6:496.
saving of civilisation,”458 and also “to end all war”459 through German disarmament. It represented the triumph of democracy over autocracy. Primarily, however, it displayed the “valour and steadfastness of the British race”460 in a very costly triumph. More than for Churchill, Hammerton’s First World War was an immensely costly and dismal national triumph, one from which Britain emerged weaker than before.

B. H. Liddell Hart’s History of the World War, published in 1934 and 1935, is an edited and expanded version of The Real War, published in 1930. Hart fought on the Western Front during the First World War as an officer for a period of approximately seven weeks, during which he experienced a gas attack.461 Liddell Hart’s history is extremely critical of the way the war was fought by both sides.

To explain the causes of the First World War, Hart goes back to the late nineteenth century and the diplomatic environment of Europe. He argues that the “three fundamental causes of the conflict can be epitomized in three words- fear, hunger, pride,” which were all more important than individual diplomatic incidents. The alliance structure created by Bismarck became “a magazine for explosives.”462 After Bismarck had perfected the alliances, designed to keep Germany safe and France weak, Wilhelm II upset the careful balance. His diplomacy “gained insecurity through spasmodic honesty.” He did this first by alienating Russia, which allowed it to gravitate towards France.463

458 Ibid., 6:245.
459 Ibid., 6:481.
460 Ibid., 6:496.
461 Danchev, Alchemist of War, 64.
463 Ibid., 21.
Then, Wilhelm created “friction”\textsuperscript{464} with Britain by encouraging the Boers, embarking on a naval expansion, and proclaiming himself “protector of all Mahommedans.” Wilhelm’s diplomacy failed because while Bismarck had manipulated the powers of Europe, he “forced the other powers… to see one thing- the first of Germany- wherever they looked.”\textsuperscript{465} When Britain offered him an alliance, he declined, hopeful of “wringing concessions from her.”\textsuperscript{466} German aggressive behavior continued to alienate Britain during the first decade of the twentieth century. The “mailed fist” in Morocco “had driven Britain and France closer together.”\textsuperscript{467} After the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Hart argues that “the blank cheque, endorsed by the Chancellor and given with full recognition of the consequences, stands out predominant among the immediate causes of the war.”\textsuperscript{468} Leopold Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, issued Serbia impossible demands, fearing that “Austria might forfeit her partnership with Germany if she showed weakness.”\textsuperscript{469} Then, even though Serbia’s response adequately satisfied Wilhelm as another successful aggressive gamble, Berchtold and Conrad von Hotzendorf, “feared to lose her [Germany’s] support and the chance of war if they dallied.”\textsuperscript{470} Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and in the days that followed, “desire, for war, and fear, of being caught at a disadvantage, reacted on each other.”\textsuperscript{471} Once mobilizations began, “statesmen’ may continue to send telegrams, but they are merely waste paper,” as

\textsuperscript{464} Ibid., 22.  
\textsuperscript{465} Ibid., 24.  
\textsuperscript{466} Ibid., 25.  
\textsuperscript{467} Ibid., 29.  
\textsuperscript{468} Ibid., 39.  
\textsuperscript{469} Ibid., 40.  
\textsuperscript{470} Ibid., 43.  
\textsuperscript{471} Ibid., 44.
“the military machine has completely taken charge.” The Germans stumbled into war, due to “fear, among the Austrian General Staff, of the doubling of the Serbian Army… [German fear] of the Russian Army’s unexpectedly rapid recovery.” At this point, Von Moltke decided that it was an “unusually favourable situation… to strike” and the Kaiser, “frightened, and willing, could not stop his own military machine.” The German invasion of Belgium, as required by all of their military planning, then brought Britain into the war. Liddell Hart’s explanation of a bumbling, mistaken descent into war has parallels with Garvin in the Second Period, who makes a similar, though less detailed, argument about Kaiser Wilhelm’s behavior.

Hart’s account of the war’s combat and casualties is interspersed with his criticism of the military judgment of the war’s participants. Although he acknowledges the scale of the death and some of the war’s horrors, his theories, not the war’s costs, are the focus of the book. Hart places a significant emphasis on “elasticity of mind” in contrast with rigidness or inflexibility. He generally lists the total casualties of a campaign at its conclusion. At the Somme, “the unconcealed preparations and the long bombardment had given away any chance of surprise… the attack failed.” “Losses” were “appalling heavy.” The Battle of the Somme was “the glory and the graveyard of ‘Kitchener’s Army’… the first national army of Britain.” Haig and the British Command were convinced that “nothing could exist at the conclusion of the

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472 Ibid., 47.
473 Ibid., 48.
474 Ibid., 280.
475 Ibid., 277, for example.
476 Ibid., 275.
477 Ibid., 303.
bombardment.” This “fantastic optimism” had “disastrous effects.”\textsuperscript{478} Hart argues that it appears “to have been genuine self-delusion.” The origin of the “fatal optimism among the higher command” may have been “an astounding failure to grasp the main lesson of previous experience.”\textsuperscript{479} On July 1\textsuperscript{st}, “the infantry advanced from their trenches- and thousands fell, strewing no-man’s land with their bodies, before the German front trench was even reached.”\textsuperscript{480} This disaster was due to poor instructions from ignorant commanders, who trained the soldiers to fight in symmetrical formations and to march “at a slow walk with their rifles held aslant in front of them, bayonets upwards- so as to catch the eye of the observant enemy.”\textsuperscript{481} Unique among authors examined in this study, Liddell Hart appears to use casualties and deaths mainly to buttress his accusations against the military leaders, and argues that the delayed use of tanks, among other mistakes, cost thousands of lives. For example, he blames Haig for needlessly advancing into a valley and forcing soldiers to spend a winter in the “Somme mud.”\textsuperscript{482} The horrors and casualties of the First World War are, in an argument unique to Liddell Hart, mostly due to poor leadership.

Hart places emphasis on the use of tanks in achieving victory: he quotes a German general saying “It was not the genius of Marshal Foch that beat us, but ‘General Tank.’”\textsuperscript{483} After the 1918 advances of the German army, Ludendorff “pressed… too far and too long… leaving the Germans with an indented front.”\textsuperscript{484} The Allies

\textsuperscript{478} Ibid., 311.
\textsuperscript{479} Ibid., 312.
\textsuperscript{480} Ibid., 315.
\textsuperscript{481} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{482} Ibid., 331.
\textsuperscript{483} Ibid., 333.
\textsuperscript{484} Ibid., 478.
counterattacked, and “the combined pressure of the allied armies, and their steady advance, were loosening the will-power of the German Government and people.” The Germans became convinced of their “ultimate defeat.” In the end, Hart is convinced of the “all-pervading factor of the blockade” on German defeat. The “stranglehold of the British Navy,” forced “Germany to carry out” the fatal 1918 offensive. The Allies all played a part in fighting the Germans, and were all necessary for victory. Victory was the “cumulative effect” of “all weapons- military, economic, and psychological.” The war was finally lost to Germany when, in September, the German Command “cracked.”

Hart does not discuss the League of Nations or the Versailles Treaty in his history.

Liddell Hart’s epilogue articulates several trends of the Third Period. He explains how in the years following victory, Armistice Day has “become a commemoration instead of celebration.” In the Third Period, all of the authors write about the war with a certain degree of sadness. As time has passed, it has become more possible to “recognize both the achievements and point of view of our late enemies, and perhaps all the more because we realize that both the cause and the course of war are determined by the folly and the frailty rather than by the deliberate evil of human nature.” The humanization of the enemy in the complements of Churchill and Jerrold, the fear that Playne, and Carey and Scott see in German motivation, and now in Liddell Hart’s accentuation common human folly. Hart’s over-arching narrative is that the First Word War was a senseless tragedy of political military errors.

485 Ibid., 485.
486 Ibid., 588.
487 Ibid., 589.
488 Ibid., 592.
489 Ibid., 586.
C.R.M.F. Cruttwell’s *History of the Great War*, published in 1934, is the final work examined in this study. In the preface, Cruttwell argues that his book is intended for “the general reader,” and intends to provide “an accurate, intelligible, and interesting account of the greatest conflict between civilized states.” Cruttwell notes that his book “owes much” to C.R.L. Fletcher’s work.

Cruttwell begins the book by briefly over viewing the causes of the First World War. By 1914, “the greatest states of Europe had never been so powerfully prepared for war in human and material resources.” Each country “tended… to organize itself upon a basis of absolute power, and to worship its own collective image.” European states were motivated not by “hatred of other states” but by “determination to be as strong as possible without regard” to the effect this would have elsewhere. Colonial expansion “increased the points of envy and hostile contact between nations.” However, “the greatest of all problems” was learning how to use the advances of the industrial revolution “to provide greater happiness” for the booming populations. This process led the average citizen “to exalt the power of the state, and to demand that it should perform more and more tasks for his benefit.” In the nineteenth century, the nation became identified with the state “to a degree hitherto unknown.” Consequently, “the nation as a whole was prepared to make unprecedented sacrifices.” To explain the rise of universal service, Cruttwell argues that “the working class… believed more and more in the power of the state, and identified the state with themselves.” Europeans suffered from a kind of insecurity: they accumulated arms not to “provoke war at a favourable moment, yet

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491 Ibid., viii.
492 Ibid., 1.
493 Ibid., 2.
because they felt continually insecure they did not shrink from the idea of war.” Living within “the unrestricted sovereignty of the state-system,” peoples desired an impossible “security.” Desiring security, peoples handed over incredible power over foreign affairs to their leaders, whose “secret search for security” led to the formation of alliances, which only “heightened the insecurity.” Heightened insecurity led nations to “intensify military preparation,” forming a “vicious circle.” Cruttwell argues that this is the only way to explain how “the peoples of Europe, claiming to be more reasonable and more civilized than at any time in history, were prepared to make war on one another à outrance with all their strength.” The answer must be the “deep-rooted and ineradicable conviction of insecurity.” 494 Cruttwell condemns the “enthusiasm” that appeared “almost everywhere” at the war’s start. After this explanation, he describes the structure of the alliances on the eve of war, noting that the “diplomatists” of the Central Powers gave their soldiers “the instructions to organize decisive violence.” 495 The July Crisis is not discussed; the First World War was natural outgrowth of the alliance system and European insecurity. Cruttwell’s causes, like Playne’s, and Carey and Scott’s are structural.

Similar to all of the Third Period authors other than Aston, Cruttwell emphasizes the horrors and casualties of the First World War. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, after the bombardment had concluded for several hours, soldiers marched “shoulder to shoulder.” The British “advance was painfully slow, for the men were laden likes beasts of burden.” 496 By the end of the day, “the British losses were stupendous, and

494 Ibid., 3.  
495 Ibid., 4.  
496 Ibid., 266.
never approached on any other single day of the war… probably the highest proportion in
any great battle recorded in history.” In sum, “the situation was depressing.” 497 Cruttwell
criticizes Haig’s strategy, and cites accounts by the battle’s participants explaining the
flawed tactics British soldiers initially used. Cruttwell lists the “enormous price of
600,000” allied casualties after the battle. The gains do “not look very impressive in
relation to the vast numerical scales of the war.” However, by the end of the battle,
“German losses kept mounting, while those of the Allies diminished.” 498 Cruttwell argues
that “it is impossible to deny that the German army had seriously deteriorated.” 499 The
Somme, “in spite of the grave tactical mistakes… rendered… a serious service to the
Allies,” and “in spite of the slaughter, the British army gained experience.” 500 He writes
that, in 1918, “it is a melancholy reflection that… at least half a million men must have
been killed or wounded” 501 while the suspension of hostilities was negotiated. Cruttwell
lists the total casualties from all sides in the book’s appendices. In the epilogue, he notes
that “the actual losses in battle far exceeded any proportion known to modern warfare.”
Similar to Carey and Scott, Cruttwell describes the horror of the lives of common
soldiers, who would “live for long spells under conditions fouler and more horrible than
the beasts that perish,” 502 Cruttwell quotes Sophocles’ “nothing is more marvelous than
man.” 503

497 Ibid., 268.
498 Ibid., 276.
499 Ibid., 277.
500 Ibid.
501 Ibid., 577.
502 Ibid., 628.
503 Ibid., 629.
During the 1918 Allied counteroffensive, Foch and Haig “were swift to recognize the widening cracks in the enemy’s resistance,” and push to onward. The British had “forged the co-operation of infantry and tanks into an offensive weapon of incomparable power and terror.” The British had the most difficult piece of the Allied advance. After a series of great victories over the Germans, Ludendorff hoped to use the request for armistice to give the German military a chance to recover and then to either negotiate equitable terms or withdraw to further defenses to fight on. Cruttwell argues that the “two decisive factors” forcing the Germans to plead for peace were “the tanks and the state of the German reserves.” The Allies pressed onward in the autumn, refusing to agree to lenient terms, and the German government collapsed. Cruttwell concludes that “the simple truth is that Germany ended the war because she had come to the end of her endurance.” Cruttwell is ambiguous as to what the Allies actually won in the war, and makes little mention of the League of Nations or Wilson’s Fourteen Points. What the war has demonstrated, he argues, is that “war between great states… becomes inevitably a struggle for existence.” During this struggle, there can be no limits “on the expenditure of men and money, no objective can be clearly defined and no peace by an agreed compromise attained.” The war proved that “defenceless neutrality” was meaningless. Finally, the war “exalted the power of the state beyond all modern precedent by its destruction of the liberty of individuals.”

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504 Ibid., 547.
505 Ibid., 547-548.
506 Ibid., 571.
507 Ibid., 573.
508 Ibid., 597.
509 Ibid., 624.
510 Ibid.
The over-arching meaning of Cruttwell’s war is a pessimistic one. For him, the war represents the culmination and acceleration of the process state power expansion. It reveals the terrible destructive potential of modern warfare, and predicts war with no differentiation between civilian and combatant: “in the latter stages of the war the desire to make intolerable the lives of all enemies, without distinction of age and sex, was limited only by the capacity of fulfillment.”\textsuperscript{511} Cruttwell’s war is a tragedy, but a unique one in this study: no other author examined shares his perspective of the state’s new and unwanted intrusion.

1928 to 1935: Third Period Conclusions

The Third Period, though similar to the Second, reveals distinct trends in the texts examined in terms of the war’s over-arching meaning, its causes, its casualties, and its victory. The idealistic over-arching meanings of the First World War prominent in the First Period have now disappeared entirely, and the over-arching meanings of the Third Period have now narrowed to two choices: national victory or tragedy. Additionally, among the authors who depict the war as a national victory, all but Aston place a new emphasis on the costliness of the victory. Carey and Scott, and Hammerton particularly accentuate the costliness and sadness of the victory, more so than any earlier authors. Three of the eight authors: Playne, Liddell Hart, and Cruttwell, establish the war’s over-arching meaning to be a tragedy, and the remaining five authors describe it as a triumph. The tragedies they describe are distinct from earlier ones: Liddell Hart’s war is a tragedy because of deadly incompetence, Playne’s is a tragedy because she opposes war, and

\textsuperscript{511} Ibid.
Cruttwell’s is a tragedy because of the war’s redefinition of state and society. In the Second Period, the proportion of tragedies is slightly higher, with three tragedies and three non-tragedies, but it would be difficult to draw conclusions from such a minor change.

The causes of the war in the Third Period are less diverse than in the Second or the First. Out of the six authors who discuss the war’s causes, half blame structural factors: Carey and Scott, Playne, and Cruttwell. This is a higher proportion than the one third who the war structural causes during the Second Period. Explanations for the war have become more sympathetic to Germany: Synge, and Carey and Scott, along with structural causes, explain that Germans started the war because they were afraid, not because they were hoping to take over the world. At the same time, one author, Hammerton, repeats the familiar argument that Germany planned and started the war with the goal of global domination. Other than with Hammerton, the trend toward humanizing the Germans and sympathizing with them is apparent even in Churchill. He blames the German leadership for starting the war, but he expresses admiration at their military might and achievements in battle. Liddell Hart, in his conclusion, remarks how as time has passed after the war, the common humanity and achievements of former enemies have become easier to acknowledge.

The casualties and horrors of the First World War in the Third Period are described with greater grief and with more emphasis than in the earlier Periods. The horrors described by Carey and Scott, Hammerton, and Cruttwell are darker and more detailed than many earlier ones. Additionally, the horrors are universally emphasized by the authors of the Third Period other than Aston. Similar to during the Second Period, we
frequently see the argument that many soldiers have died pointlessly. In the Third Period, however, even authors who see the war as a triumph increasingly believe that many of their own soldiers died needlessly, and feel the need to address the allies’ wartime mistakes.

The explanations authors give for the war’s outcome remain diverse in the Third Period, with perhaps slightly more of an emphasis on the blockade than in previous Periods (three out of seven authors). This reveals that by the Third Period, explanations for allied victory remained debatable, with nothing definitively accepted by all. The biggest distinction between the Third Period’s discussion of victory and the Second’s and First’s is that no authors in the Third place any faith in the League of Nations.

**General Conclusions**

The greatest divide between the texts reviewed in this study is in the year 1922. Before 1922, we see authors idealistically defining the First World War as a war for freedom or to one to end war. After 1922, these over-arching meanings disappear. Before 1922, few authors describe the war as a tragedy, while after 1922 it becomes one of the dominant narratives of the war. Before 1922, authors commonly blame Kaiser Wilhelm and German schemes for world domination for the outbreak of war, and afterwards this explanation declines in popularity. While some First Period authors do describe and highlight the war’s horrors, after 1922 the horrors become increasingly unavoidable. The reverse is true with the League of Nations: the importance of the League of Nations in prominently placed by authors before 1922, but nearly disappears afterwards.
The changes between 1922 and 1935 are more subtle. Over the Second and Third Periods, we see the narrowing down of over-arching meanings for the First World War to two groups of nearly equal prominence: a tragedy, or a costly national triumph. Some of these triumphs are so costly as to approach the status of tragedy. Although the blaming of Germany or the Kaiser for the war persists, there is a definite rise in broader, structural explanations for the war during the Second and Third Periods. We also see explanations that blame human failings or mistakes for the war’s outbreak. In the Third Period, we see explanations for the war emerge which are more compassionate towards Germany, and a general increase in empathy towards the former enemy. Between the Second and Third Periods, the war’s casualties and horrors are increasingly emphasized and regretted, with even the most positive authors needing to address them. Even in the national triumphs of the Third Period, the horror, frustration, and futility of the First World War are prominently featured. Beyond the decreasing significance placed by authors on the League of Nations, there are few commonalities or trends in explanations of the war’s outcome.

The three periods and the trends identified in this study have significant implications for the historiography of the First World War. They appear to contradict Leonard Smith’s argument presented in the introduction, that the 1930s featured a “general acceptance as ‘true’ of a model drawn from Great War literature… the war as tragedy,”512 in contrast with the period after the war and the 1920s. This study has revealed that non-fiction authors have described the First World War as a tragedy from at

512 Smith, The Embattled Self, 8.
least as early as Mullins and Thomson in 1920, and the war’s model as a tragedy was just as prominent, if not more so, between 1922 and 1927 as between 1928 and 1934.

In his chapter in *The First World War and British Military History*, Hew Strachan describes a generational divide between British historians of the First World War of the 1920s and 1930s. He argues that Liddell Hart and Cruttwell, both members of the “lost generation,”513 were, along with other authors of the 1930s, expressing a kind of survivor’s guilt and mourning for the dead. While this motivation may be accurate for Liddell Hart and Cruttwell, a divide between 1920s and 1930s British historical writing about the war is far from clear-cut. For instance, Carey and Scott, both veterans of the First World War, published their grim *Outline History* in 1928, and the veteran Montague’s iconoclastic *Disenchantment* was published even earlier, in 1922. Hammerton, Aston, and Churchill, all members of all older generation, published in 1930 or later. If there is a generational shift around 1930 explaining the general darkening between Periods Two and Three, it is not a dramatic one. The younger generation did not mourn the war to an immensely greater degree than, for example, Garvin in 1924, the father who lost his son in the war.

Also mentioned in the introduction, Winter and Prost categorize all histories of the war published in the inter-war period as “military and diplomatic,”514 in that they eschew the input or the individual perspectives of the soldiers themselves, along with economic causes, in favor of a more distant and traditional view of the war as an immense political conflict. Liddell Hart, they claim, was at the forefront of a movement to bring attention to soldiers’ perspectives. This study does not support the categorization

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513 Strachan, “’The Real War’: Liddell Hart, Cruttwell, and Falls,” 42.
of all inter-war histories as “military and diplomatic,” or the argument that inter-war British histories prior to Liddell Hart neglected individual soldiers’ perspectives. Inter-war British histories included individual soldiers’ perspectives at the same or greater levels than Liddell Hart before his 1930 publication of *The Real War*. Indeed, Parrott’s *Children’s History of the War*, published between 1915 and 1919, includes significant contributions of soldiers’ testimony of their experiences fighting the war, including first-hand accounts of the Battle of the Somme, although they are presumably edited.515 Montague’s *Disenchantment* is another clear exception to the trend because its author was a former soldier who cared little for the diplomatic or military minutia of the conflict. Other authors expressed interest in the individual perspectives of soldiers, particularly 1922 and later. Garvin in 1924 and Synge in 1926 both attempt to see the war through the eyes of its participants. The largest complication for Winter and Prost’s argument that inter-war histories neglected individual soldiers’ perspectives is Carey and Scott’s 1928 *Outline History*. These two veterans conclude their book with a section specifically focusing on the experiences of individual soldiers.516

Winter and Prost also broadly categorize typical inter-war histories, other than those by Cruttwell, Liddell Hart, and other British exceptions as “heroic,”517 ones which focused on the national perspective and national character. While some British authors certainly emphasize the war in terms of national character, there are others who do not. This study supports Winter and Prost’s claim that British inter-war histories exhibited

lively debate over the lessons of the First World War: explanations for the war’s outcome
shifted constantly throughout the inter-war period, with little discernable pattern.

The final question needing to be addressed is the one introduced by Modris
Eksteins, who argues that the early histories, both official and official, were “largely
ignored by the public.”\footnote{Eksteins, Rites of Spring, 291.} To what extent did inter-war British histories lead or follow
popular opinion? It is difficult to evaluate the popularity of a book in a time before
opinion polls or best seller lists. One method to gauge popularity is to count the number
of editions published of a book. The WorldCat survey included as the Appendix to this
study lists the numbers of editions published in inter-war Britain for each of the books
analyzed. While most books only have one or two editions, Thomson’s Old Europe’s
Suicide (1920), Montague’s Disenchantment (1922), and Churchill’s World Crisis series
(1923, 1927, 1929, 1931) all have at least three published editions from the inter-war
period, possibly indicating exceptional popularity. Thomson’s and Montague’s books
were both initially published when the over-arching narrative of the First World War as a
tragedy was a rarity: at the end of the First Period and the start of the Second Period. The
popularity of their books may indicate that the British public was, from the beginning of
the inter-war period, very receptive to the narrative of the First World War as a tragedy.
Later books which depict the war tragically, then, may have followed popular opinion.
Churchill’s World Crisis series’ success may indicate the persistence and popularity of
the alternative narrative to the war as a tragedy: the war as a national triumph. A
valuable direction for future study, building upon the work of this paper, will be the
reception of these twenty-eight texts and their impact, if any, on British popular opinion. Period book reviews may be the best place to begin the next analysis.
## Appendix

Source: WorldCat

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