Chapter 3

British and Commonwealth Historiography of World War I
1914–2018

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The Significance of World War I in Collective Memory as a Social and Commemorative Framework for Research

The years 1914–18 are the great divide in British history. I will elaborate on this claim with respect to the impact of the Great War first on political, then on economic, and finally on cultural life. First comes politics. The 1914–18 war transformed British politics in three ways. The first change was the enfranchisement of the entire male population and the female population of Britain over the age of thirty. The second was the replacement of the Liberal Party by the Labour Party on the left of British politics. During and after World War I, the Liberals went into a century-long decline, which, with brief flurries of activity, has meant that the Labour Party is now (2018) the only alternative to the Conservative Party in British electoral politics. The third was the outbreak of civil war in Ireland in 1916, leading by 1923 to the effective secession of all but six northern provinces of Ireland from Britain.

In economic terms, World War I divided a period of domestic and global growth before 1914 and a period of domestic and global contraction

and depression after 1920. The war crippled the old export industries—textiles, shipbuilding, and coal—and eliminated the ballast provided by export income to British gross national product. Once again, the war was a bridge between the halcyon days, when the coal industry boomed, when British shipyards serviced the world, and when British banking and investment financed the industrialization of Europe and North and South America, and the dark period of depression, which began in 1920 and was still evident twenty years later.

Culturally, the Great War has been the most powerful vector in the development of British life in the twentieth century, even greater than the experience of World War II. The reason is simple: the bloodbath of the Great War had no equivalent, before or since.

Consequently, for generations of British people, there was no event in modern British history that can match the emotive power of the Great War. The preference for the title "Great War" over the later forms of reference—the First World War or World War I—indicates the power of the 1914–18 conflict to dominate discussions of British politics and society. Only a Great War could signify a conflict that took the lives of 750,000 British men and another 250,000 men from the dominions and empire. A million-man army of the dead marched into eternity in 1918, having lost their lives in what was seen then as a very Great War; great in the sense of terrible, devastating, unforgettable. Victory was celebrated in November 1918, but quickly the word "victory" took on a taste as of ashes, leading millions to see the war as a mutual disaster, mutilating victors and vanquished alike.

The scale of casualties, including the mutilated and wounded, as much as the dead, inevitably inscribed the Great War as a disaster in family history, and this is what separated the 1914–18 conflict from all British wars before or since. The Great War democratized death in wartime. Given the fact that the bulk of British casualties were borne by the volunteer army put together in 1914–16, before conscription arrived, casualties hit every corner of Britain. No longer was it Wellington's "scum of the earth" who bore the brunt of military losses; now it was society as a whole. Indeed, the higher up a man was in the social scale, the greater were his chances of becoming a casualty of war. That was because middle- and upper-class men could pass the rudimentary medical examinations for fitness for service more frequently than working-class men, and because the social structure of the selection of the officer corps mirrored the social structure of prewar British society. Elites became officers, and officer casualties were twice as high as those of men in the ranks. Thus there was a Lost Generation of social elites, whose fate was recounted in the novels of disillusionment of the period 1928–32.

Even though casualties were socially determined, the scale of losses was so great that it makes sense to speak of the Great War spreading a cloud of grief and bereavement over the entire nation. No town in Britain was spared from the disaster, and even though only one in eight who served in the British army was killed, and one in three wounded, hundreds of thousands of families lost sons, fathers, brothers, uncles, and a host of neighbors, friends, mates, lovers, and assorted kinsmen. Nothing before in British history had cost so many lives, and no war would be so costly thereafter.

The language of loss was registered in material terms in the thirty thousand or so war memorials constructed in Britain in the interwar years. Each war memorial was the history of a town or village or neighborhood's blood sacrifice in the war. Many were ecumenical in the symbols chosen to mark the loss of life of local residents in the war. The cheapest form of stone monument was the obelisk, an Egyptian symbol that enabled those commissioning the monument to avoid offending those who believed that the Protestant Reformation had eliminated the cross as a national symbol. The obelisk was useful too in signifying the service of Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and atheists during the war. The cenotaph served the same purpose, being a Greek symbol without any Christian resonance at all. It was an empty tomb, not the empty tomb of Christian practice.

Whereas 11 November was not a state holiday in Britain as it was in France, a collective practice in the interwar years of marking the loss of life in the Great War emerged *in media res*. The two-minute silence stopped all business and communication at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of the year. Telephonists pulled the plugs on phone conversations. Buses came to a stop. Sirens wailed. In the 1930s, the early social survey organization Mass Observation asked people what they were thinking about during the two-minute silence. The answer: they were thinking about those who weren't there, the dead, the missing, the Lost Generation of the Great War.

The two-minute silence at 11:00 A.M. on 11 November came to an end in 1939, when Britain was at war again. It was simply too important for war production to go on, and authorities moved the event to the Sunday closest to 11 November. By taking it out of everyday life, they diminished its power, and by putting it into the Sunday liturgy, they tended to merge remembrance Sunday with church attendance. That was bound to mean that the ceremony lost its familial character and its immediacy, especially in the post-1945 decades when church attendance declined precipitously. In those years of austerity, in many cases, the names of the dead of World War II—one-third the number of World War I—were simply tacked on to already existent local war memorials. The Royal British Legion organized

poppy sales each year in November to fund charitable efforts on behalf of British veterans and their families. Millions wore the red paper poppy on their lapel as a miniature war memorial.

By then, too, other forms of remembrance had begun to dominate the commemorative calendar. By the 1960s, the television age turned remembrance into an activity the family did together on the living-room sofa. The BBC launched its second channel in 1964 with a twenty-six-part series on the Great War. It was the most spectacular success in televisual history. The series was scripted by two conservative historians, Correlli Barnett and John Terraine, but their words were eclipsed by film and photographs of the war. The massive public who viewed the series saw the images and forgot the script. The images had their own implicit captions: they showed that the war was an exercise in futility, that the leadership, military and political, had no idea how to control the instruments of violence they had unleashed, and that millions of men had paid with their lives and limbs for the incompetence or worse of their leaders. As the poet Ted Hughes put it, the war was a defeat around whose neck someone placed a victory medal. His father had been shell-shocked and never spoke of the war.

By the 1970s, the empire was a thing of the past, and a divided British public watched the war in Vietnam on their television sets, and their children studied World War I war poetry—written by Sassoon, Owen, Rosenberg, and others—as set texts in their O-level and A-level examinations. The war poets remained in print throughout the century, and later entered popular entertainment first on stage in 1963, through the music hall rendition of World War I songs in the pacifist play *Oh! What a Lovely War!*, which was turned into a successful film in 1968, and then on television through the spectacularly successful comic romp through British history *Blackadder Goes Forth* in 1993. Their comi-tragedy became a term with a human face: that of the British men sent over the top in the Great War by men whose lunacy showed the force of Aristotle's old dictum that comedy is tragedy just averted—or not averted in this case.

By the end of the twentieth century, the real costs of international travel had dropped sufficiently to enable a major battlefield tourism industry to emerge. This occurred elsewhere in the Commonwealth too, where Canadians came in droves to Vimy Ridge, and Australians to Gallipoli and the Somme. Many were in search of grandfathers or great-grandfathers who had fought. Family history fueled the Great War memory boom, both in terms of tourism and of a market for World War I fiction and film. Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli*, as much about the Vietnam War as about 1915, made a major impact in stimulating war remembrance in Australia.

So too did fiction set in the Great War. Most notably, there was in Britain Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy about Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and their doctor, W. H. R. Rivers, and Sebastian Faulks's account of the underground war of tunnelers, *Birdsong*, alongside Timothy Findley's *The Wars* in Canada and David Malouf's *Fly Away Peter* and Thomas Keneally's *Daughters of Mars* in Australia.

The 2014 centenary of the outbreak of the Great War reflected the ongoing tradition of seeing the war as a futile tragedy. No celebratory gestures were possible when the toll in human life was so colossal. The question as to how soldiers managed to survive the Great War has dominated public discussion, just as it has dominated historical writing, and by the early twenty-first century, a deepened sense of the traumatic memories of soldiers who fought in the Falkland Islands, Ireland, Afghanistan, and Iraq brought public attention back to their predecessors, the men of 1914–18, whose psychological wounds were and continue to be underestimated both during and long after the war.

The four years of the centenary of the Great War has produced a substantial increase in the documentary material available for future historians. This is the outcome of public appeals both at the national and the local level for families to come forward with the contents of suitcases long stored away in attics and garages containing the papers and photographs of ancestors who had served in the war. In a sense, the centenary has democratized the archive of war, by adding ordinary family papers to archives.

This focus on families has also boosted the interest in the local history of the war—of towns, villages, factories, hospitals, farms, and schools during the war. This has meant that after one hundred years, thinking about the Great War means thinking about local identities as much as about national identities.

It is too soon to see how the vote for Brexit fits in to the way Britons understand their past, including the Great War, as different from that of Europe. My sense is that the British Great War was fought in Europe primarily but was never understood as a European event. The war was defined as British in the sense that most of the men who fought and died joined up voluntarily and gave their lives to defend what they understood as the British way of life—pubs, country churches, football, the hallmarks of a British, and not a European, landscape. The relative weakness of British schoolchildren in foreign-language acquisition testifies to the long-standing and still strong British-mindedness of popular understandings of the Great War, and of twentieth-century history as a whole. Separate British and European understandings of the Great War made it easier for British men and women to stand back from the European Union, created

as a way of escaping from continental conflicts, especially those centering on France and Germany.

Finally, the Great War's significance in British popular culture is still bound up in one word—sacrifice. It is a word ripe with quasi-religious images and sentiments, which have been enhanced by and during the centenary. Britain is no longer a churchgoing nation. That does not mean that a search for the sacred has disappeared; on the contrary, the sacred has migrated to other sites. In twenty-first-century Britain, it is no longer in the churches but in front of war memorials, in war cemeteries, on the battlefields of the Somme and Ypres, and in war museums that ordinary British men and women ask sacred questions today. What does it mean to give your life for your brothers or your families? Why did so many men die for so little reason? Why so much suffering? The point here is that the focus on sacrifice adds a sacred aura to the war, one that was evident in the public response to the installation of 880,000 ceramic poppies in the moat around the Tower of London in 2014. Each one stood for a single lost soldier serving in British forces during the war. This symbolic sea of blood, coming out of British history, captured what the collective memory of the Great War is in Britain a century after the end of hostilities.

The Historiography of World War I

Over the past century, there have been three previous generations of historical writing in Britain and the dominions on the Great War. The first was what I will term "the Great War generation." These were scholars, former soldiers, and public officials who had direct knowledge of the war either through their own military service or through alternative service to their country's war effort. They wrote history from the top down, by and large through direct experience of the events they described. The central actor portrayed in these books was the national or the imperial state in its *dirigiste* forms at home or at the front. The most voluminous of these endeavors was the 133-book effort to write the economic and social history of the war, sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Most of these tomes were penned by men in essential positions, insiders who ran the war at home or at the front, and who had to deal with its aftershocks. Sir William Beveridge was chairman of the British series of this mammoth project. He was the bureaucrat's bureaucrat, responsible for food control and other facets of social policy. He was also ideally placed to organize studies of labor policy and other matters under his direct responsibility during the war.

On the military side, all the service arms engaged in retrospective analysis of their contribution to the war effort. This is evidently a literature of self-justification, a posture adopted in virtually all official histories of the armed forces, many of which were written by former soldiers for the benefit of the various national staff colleges, trying one at a time to frame "lessons" for the future. These works were frequently highly technical and so detailed that they took decades to appear. The delay diminished their usefulness in planning the next war in more efficient ways.

Alongside such publications were dozens of memoirs by the leaders of the military and the political war effort. The market for biographies was virtually unlimited, enabling men in retirement to construct their own, frequently self-serving, narratives of the war. If blame existed for failings, it was exported by these authors to their enemies. Lloyd George and Haig, Churchill, and Hamilton engaged in these prose conflicts after the war, as did, with less venom, Canadian, South African, and Australian leaders.

The second generation may be termed "fifty years on." This group of historians wrote in the 1960s, and wrote not only the history of politics and decision-making at the top but also the history of society, defined as the history of social structures and social movements. Of course, the two kinds of history, political and social, went together, but they were braided together in different ways than in the interwar years. Many of these scholars had the benefit of sources unknown or unavailable before World War II. The "fifty-year rule" enabling scholars to consult state papers meant that all kinds of documents could be exploited by those writing in the 1960s, which threw new light on the history of the war.

In the 1960s, there was much more use of film and visual evidence than in the first generation, though in the interwar years battlefield guides and collections of photographs of devastation and weaponry were produced in abundance. After World War II, the age of television history began, attracting a greater audience to historical narratives than ever before. This became evident in the size of the audience for new and powerful television documentaries of the war. In 1964, the BBC launched its second channel with the monumental twenty-six-part history of the war. As we have already noted, *The Great War* was a remarkable achievement, exhaustively researched in film archives and vetted by an impressive group of military historians. Many of the millions of people who saw this series had lived through the war. In 1964, the young men who had fought and survived were mostly above the age of seventy, but what made the series a major cultural event was that the families of the survivors, and of those who did not come back, integrated these war stories into their own family narratives. The Great War thus escaped from the academy into the much more lucrative and populous field of public history, represented by

museums, special exhibitions, films, and now television. By the 1960s, the Imperial War Museum in London had surpassed many other sites as the premier destination of visitors to London. It remains to this day a major attraction in the capital, just as the Australian War Memorial, an equally impressive museum and site of remembrance in the Australian capital of Canberra, and the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa do.

The founder of the Australian war memorial, Charles Bean, had been the official historian of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF),[1] and had landed with it at Gallipoli and served with it in France and Flanders. His voice was that of the first generation, who spoke with the authority of lived experience. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that a new generation of historians, born later, took on the task of turning heroic narrative into rigorous history, detached from the men who had lived it.

Thus, this second generation of historians added a new kind of narrative to the collective memory of war, the archivally based social history of war. This was no mean achievement. There was more than a little nostalgia in the celebration by survivors of the sheer fact that they had lived "fifty years on." By 1964, the European world that went to war in 1914 no longer existed. All the major imperial powers that joined the struggle had been radically transformed. The British Empire was (just about) a thing of the past. The Commonwealth Office merged with the Foreign Office in 1966. The nostalgia of 1964 was, therefore, for a world that had begun to fall apart in the Great War. For many people, the blemishes and ugliness of much of that world were hidden by a kind of sepia-toned reverence for the days before the conflict. "Never such innocence, / Never before or since," wrote Philip Larkin in a poem whose title referred not to 1914 but to the more archaic "MCMXIV." This poem was published in 1964.

In much historical writing, as much as in historical documentaries, the dramatic tension derived from juxtaposing this set of prelapsarian images with the devastation and horror of the Western Front, as well as with the sense of decline, a loss of greatness, that marked the post-1945 decades in Britain and France, not to mention Germany and Italy. Whatever went wrong with the world seemed to be linked to 1914, to the time when a multitude of decent men went off to fight one war and wound up fighting a much more terrible one.

Decencies were betrayed, some argued, by a blind elite prepared to sacrifice the lives of the masses for vapid generalizations like "glory" or "honor." This populist strain may be detected in much writing about the war in the 1960s, and in the study of social movements that arose out of it. The fiftieth anniversary of the Gallipoli landing provoked a surge of interest in the Great War in Australia and New Zealand, where the loss of the battle was eclipsed by the birth of these two nations. Similarly heroic

were narratives of the Bolshevik revolution, celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in 1967. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many scholars told us much more about the history of labor, of women, of ordinary people during the conflict than scholars working in the interwar years had.

The third generation may be termed the "Vietnam generation." Its practitioners started writing in the 1970s and 1980s, when a general reaction against military adventures like the war in Vietnam took place in Britain and Europe as well as in the United States. This was also the period in Europe when public opinion turned against the nuclear deterrent, and when the 1973 Middle Eastern war had dangerous effects on the economies of the developed world. The glow of the "just war" of 1939–45 had faded, and a new generation was more open to a view that war was a catastrophe to both winners and losers alike.

This was the environment in which darker histories of the Great War emerged. There were still scholars who insisted that the Great War was a noble cause, won by those who had right on their side. But there were others who came to portray the Great War as a futile exercise, a tragedy, a stupid, horrendous waste of lives, producing nothing of great value aside from the ordinary decencies and dignities thrown away by blind and arrogant leaders.

The most influential works were written by three very different scholars. Paul Fussell, a veteran of the Second World War wounded in combat, produced a classic literary study, *The Great War and Modern Memory* in 1975.[2] He was a professor of literature, a man who saw action as a combat soldier in World War II, and used that experience to fashion an interpretation of how soldiers came to understand the war they found in 1914–18 as an ironic event, one in which anticipation and outcome were wildly different. It was a time when the old romantic language of battle seemed to lose its meaning. Writers twisted older forms to suit the new world of trench warfare, one in which mass death was dominant and where, under artillery and gas bombardment, soldiers lost any sense that war was a glorious thing. Fussell termed this style the "ironic" style and challenged us to see war writing throughout the twentieth century as built upon the foundations laid by the British soldier-writers of the Great War.

John (later Sir John) Keegan produced a book a year later that paralleled Fussell's. An instructor in the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, but a man whose childhood infirmities ensured he would never go to war, Keegan asked the disarmingly simple question, "Is battle possible?" The answer, published in *The Face of Battle* in 1976,[3] was perhaps yes, long ago, but now in the twentieth century, battle presented men with terrifying challenges. The men who fought at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 could run to the next hill to save their lives. Foot soldiers converging on

Waterloo four centuries later could arrive a day late. But in 1916, at the Battle of the Somme, there was no escape. Given the industrialization of warfare, the air above the trenches on the Somme was filled with lethal projectiles from which no one could run. Mass death in that battle and in the other great conflict of 1916 at Verdun pushed soldiers beyond the limits of human endurance. Nothing like the set battles of World War I followed in the 1939–45 war, though Stalingrad came close to replicating the horror of the Somme and Verdun. Here was a military historian's book, but one whose starting point was humane and to a degree psychological. The soldiers' breaking point was Keegan's subject, and with power, subtlety, and technical authority he opened a new chapter in the study of military history as a humane discipline.

Here his work echoed that of a historian who worked outside of the academy: Martin Middlebrook. His *First Day on the Somme*, published in 1971, brought the searchlight of research down to the level of the individual soldier.[4] His pioneering work, which he repeated in subsequent years on other days of two world wars, made more vivid than ever before what may be termed the populist history of the war. Of great importance was the evidence he provided as to how well-informed families were about the fate of their men. Telephone links told loved ones in the garrison town of Bury in Lancashire not only of losses but also of the distinctions and decorations earned by their men well before the newspapers got the information.

In 1979, Eric Leed, a historian steeped in the literature of anthropology, wrote a similarly pathbreaking book. *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*[5] borrowed subtly from the work of the anthropologist Victor Turner. He had examined people in a liminal condition, no longer part of an older world from which they had come, and unable to escape from the midpoint, the no-man's land, in which they found themselves. Here is the emotional landscape of the trench soldiers of the Great War. They were men who could never come home again, for whom war was their home, and who recreated it in the years following the Armistice. Here was the world of shell-shocked men, but also that of the *Freikorps*, militarized freebooters of the immediate postwar period, who prepared the ground for the Nazis.

In all these cases, and by reference to very different sources, the subject at hand was the tragedy of the millions of men who went into the trenches and who came out, if at all, permanently marked by the experience. They bore what some observers of the survivors of Hiroshima termed the "death imprint": the knowledge that their survival was a purely arbitrary accident. Here we may see some traces of the antinuclear movement, putting Japanese civilians and Great War soldiers alongside one another.

The moral and political differences between the two cases are evident, but the wreckage of war, so these writers seemed to say, is at the heart of the civilization in which we live. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that these three books, alongside others of the time, helped create a tragic interpretation of the Great War, one in which victimhood and violence were braided together in such a way as to tell a fully European story of the war, one to which the founders of the European Union clearly reacted. From the 1970s on, European integration was an attempt to move away from the notion of the nation-state as that institution which had the right to go to war, as Raymond Aron put it. The result has been a progressive diminution of the role of the military in the political and social life of most European countries. James Sheehan asked the question in a recent book *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?*[6] The answer is, they and most (though not all) of their leaders have fled from the landscape of war so devastatingly presented in the works of Fussell, Keegan, Leed, and others.

One particularly active school of historical writing in English has been in Australia. Canadian scholars have made similar contributions, but the lead in producing pathbreaking histories of the Great War has been taken by a series of remarkable scholars in Australia. The first among them is Bill Gammage, whose *The Broken Years* was the pioneering account of the Australian Imperial Force in the Great War.[7] Gammage was the first man to consult the archives of the war outside and beyond the work of Charles Bean, the official historian of the Australian war effort. He turned official history into national history, and did so in moving and enduring ways. The very title undercut triumphalism while retaining a sense of respect for the Anzac achievement. Similarly, Ken Inglis showed how significant war memorials were in an understanding of the enduring effects of the Great War through his classic study, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*.[8] And the military history of the conflict has no finer chroniclers than Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, who, in a series of studies of British military history, completely undermined the claim that the British high command engaged in a learning curve during the war. The problem, Prior and Wilson showed, was that they did not learn at all, or learned something they then forgot, and stuck to the idea that the war would be won by a breakthrough battle.[9] British historians, like Gary Sheffield, think otherwise, but the balance of opinion stands with Prior and Wilson. Here the work of Bill Philpott on the Battle of the Somme has reinforced some elements of both Prior and Wilson's and Sheffield's points of view.[10] But of one thing we can be sure: there will be more.

The history of commemoration in Britain and the Commonwealth was another major development of the third generation of historians writing about the Great War. Jonathan Vance, writing on Canada, Bruce Scates

on Australia, and Jay Winter on Britain, France, and Germany all brought out the implications of Ken Inglis's early work on the material culture of collective remembrance.[11] Many other scholars have picked up these themes in regional, provincial, and local contexts all over the world.

Outlook on Current Research Trends:
The Transnational Generation

Now we are in a fourth generation of writing on the Great War. I would like to term it the "transnational generation." This generation has a global outlook. The term "global" describes both the tendency to write about the war in more than European terms and to see the conflict as trans-European, transatlantic, and beyond. Here was the first war among industrialized countries, reaching the Middle East and Africa, the Falkland Islands and China, drawing soldiers into the epicenter in Europe from Vancouver to Cape Town to Bombay and to Adelaide. Here was a war that gave birth to the Turkey of Ataturk and to the Soviet Union of Lenin and Stalin. Demands for decolonization arose from a war that had promised self-determination and had produced very little of the kind. Economic troubles arose directly out of the war, and these were sufficiently serious to undermine the capacity of the older imperial powers to pay for their imperial and quasi-imperial footholds around the world.

A word or two may be useful to distinguish the international approach, common to many of the older histories of the war, from what I have termed the transnational approach. For nearly a century, the Great War was framed in terms of a system of international relations in which the national and imperial levels of conflict and cooperation were taken as given. Transnational history does not start with one state and move on to others but takes multiple levels of historical experience as given, levels that are both below and above the national level.[12] Thus the history of mutiny is transnational, in that it happened in different armies for different reasons, some of which are strikingly similar to the sources of protest and refusal in other armies. So is the history of finance, technology, war economies, logistics, gender relations, and command. The history of commemoration also happened on many levels, and the national is not necessarily the most significant, not the most enduring.

The peace treaties following the Great War show the meaning of the transnational in other ways. Now we can see that the war was both the apogee and the beginning of the end of imperial power, spanning and eroding national and imperial boundaries. Erez Manela's work on "the Wilsonian moment" is a case in point. He reconfigures the meaning of

the Versailles settlement by exploring its unintended consequences in stimulating movements of national liberation in Egypt, India, Korea, and China. Instead of telling us about the interplay of Great Power politics, he shows how non-Europeans invented their own version of Wilson in their search for a kind of self-determination that he, alongside Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Orlando, was unprepared to offer to them. Who could have imagined that the decision these men took to award rights to Shandung Province, formerly held by Germany, not to China but to Japan would lead to major rioting and the formation of the Chinese Communist Party?[13] Xu Guoqi has been active in mapping the trajectory of Asian history and, in particular, the Sino-Japanese conflict through a careful study of the Great War period. And Santanu Das has vividly explored the multifaceted effects of the war on Indians and on India, through the history of emotions, material objects, and narratives.[14]

Historians of the revolutionary moment in Europe itself between 1917 and 1921 have approached their subject more and more as a transnational phenomenon. After all, both revolutionaries and the forces of order who worked to destroy them were well aware of what may be termed the cultural transfer of revolutionary (and counterrevolutionary) strategy, tactics, and violence. In recent years, these exchanges have been analyzed at the urban and regional levels, helping us to see the complexity of a story somewhat obscured by treating it solely in national terms. Comparative urban history has established the striking parallels between the challenges urban populations faced in different warring states. Now we can answer in the affirmative the question as to whether there is a metropolitan history of warfare. In important respects, the residents of Paris, London, and Berlin shared more with one another than they did with their respective rural compatriots. These experienced communities had a visceral reality somewhat lacking even in the imagined communities of the nation.

Here we must be sensitive to the way contemporaries used the language of nation and empire to describe loyalties and affiliations of a much smaller level of aggregation. A journalist asking British troops on the Western Front whether they were fighting for the empire got a "yes" from one soldier. His mates asked him what he meant. The answer was that he was fighting for the Empire Music Hall in Hackney, a working-class district of London. This attachment to the local and the familiar was utterly transnational.[15]

Another subject now understood more in transnational than in international terms is the history of women in wartime. Patriarchy, family formation, and the persistence of gender inequality were transnational realities in the period of the Great War. Furthermore, the war's massive effects on civilian life precipitated a movement of populations of stagger-

ing proportions. Refugees in France, the Netherlands, and Britain from the area occupied by the Western Front numbered in the millions. So did those fleeing the fighting in the borderlands spanning the old German, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires. One British scholar has estimated that perhaps 20 percent of the population of Russia was on the move, heading for safety wherever it could be found during the Great War.[16] And that population current turned into a torrent throughout Eastern Europe during the period of chaos surrounding the Armistice. What made it worse was that the United States closed its gates to such immigrants, ending one of the most extraordinary periods of transcontinental migration in history. Thus population transfer, forced or precipitated by war, transformed the ethnic character of many parts of Greece, Turkey, the Balkans, and the vast tract of land from the Baltic states to the Caucasus. Such movements antedated the war, but they grew exponentially after 1914. This is why it makes sense to see the Great War as having occasioned the emergence of that icon of transnational history in the twentieth century, the refugee, with his or her pitiful belongings slung over shoulders or carts. The photographic evidence of this phenomenon is immense.

The cutting-edge history of the Great War is transnational in yet another respect. We live in a world where historians born in one country have been able to migrate to follow their historical studies and either stay in their adopted homes or migrate again, when necessary, to obtain a university post. Christopher Clark was born in Sydney, studied in Berlin, and finished his studies in Cambridge, where he still teaches. John Horne grew up in Adelaide, trained at Oxford, and teaches in Dublin. Sean McMeekin studied at Berkeley and taught in Turkey for a considerable time before returning to the United States; Norman Stone was trained at Cambridge and taught at Bilken University in Turkey. Fifty of the seventy authors of the three-volume *Cambridge History of the First World War*, which I edited, are transnational scholars, practicing history far from their place of birth, and enriching the world of scholarship thereby.[17] Seeing the world in which we live at a tangent, in the words of Constantine P. Cavafy, opens up insights harder to identify from within a settled world. The world of scholarship today may be described in many ways, but the term "settled" is not one of them. This unsettledness is a major advantage, one that will enable more transnational histories to emerge alongside national histories, and for each to enrich the other.

It is important to repeat that these new initiatives in transnational history have built on the work of the three generations of scholars that preceded them. The history of the Great War that has emerged in recent years is additive, cumulative, and multifaceted. National histories have

a symbiotic relationship with transnational histories; the richer the one, the deeper the other. No cultural historian of any standing ignores the history of the nation or of the social movements that at times have overthrown it; to do so would be absurd. No military historian ignores the language in which commands turn into movements on the field of battle. War is such a protean event that it touches every facet of human life.

Thus one difficulty now is to separate Anglo-Saxon historiography from that practiced in other languages. The overlaps between them are so great now that we divide them only for heuristic purposes. In one respect, though, there is a new Anglo-Saxon agenda of research on the Great War that promises to enrich our understanding of the history of the subject in a host of ways. It may be termed the "Greater War" approach, capturing the work of scholars in Dublin led by Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, who insist on the unity of a decade of conflict, between 1912 and roughly 1923, in which the violence of the Balkan Wars, the Great War, and the postwar years forms one powerful continuum. The great advantage of this approach is that it shifts the center of gravity of war from Paris to Warsaw and points east.[18] If the Western Front observed a ceasefire on 11 November 1918, that was evidently not the case throughout Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, and beyond. Here the instability of the peace settlement of 1919 can be sketched in blood, just as it can be seen clearly in the turbulent postwar years throughout the British and French empires, and in other countries, such as China and Latin America.

There are three studies that point to new directions in the history of World War I. First, the work of Christopher Clark on the outbreak of the war has tended to reflect our contemporary concern with terrorism. His exploration of the Serb entanglement with the Black Hand and the assassination of Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914 were probably impossible before 9/11. His shift of the terms of the debate on war guilt toward Serbia has led him to break with the old Fischer thesis on unique German guilt and to generalize responsibility for the war among all the great powers. This has appealed to German readers of his book in particular, while leaving many Anglo-Saxon readers unmoved in their view that a European war was planned in Vienna and Berlin before anywhere else. If everyone was responsible for the outbreak of war, then no one was more responsible than others. Thus his contribution reinforces the general view dominant in earlier historiography that the Great War was a collective tragedy with collective authors and consequences.[19]

Secondly, the first volume of Hew Strachan's comprehensive history of World War I, *To Arms*, is the first general history of the conflict written by a British historian on the basis of a comprehensive study of European archives and historiography. Breaking out of the English-language fetters

in which most of British military history has been limited for decades, Strachan clearly points the way to the future. Strachan's important book is the beginning of a multivolume history, which, when published, will provide a landmark as the first global military history of the war.[20]

John Horne's *Our War* is important in crossing the border between Northern and Southern Ireland, and to show that the boundaries constructed after the war have falsely divided the war into two conflicts, one acknowledged and another hidden.[21] The significance of this book goes beyond that of what George Bernard Shaw called *John Bull's Other Ireland*. It points to the need to bring the violent years after 1918 back into the history of the war. In particular, this matters in the case of Eastern Europe where most historians still start their national history of Poland or Hungary or Lithuania in 1918 and speak of a century of struggle to achieve it. What Horne has done for Ireland, others in future must do for Eastern Europe. The disaster that struck Eastern Europe and Russia in 1914 did not stop in 1918. The years 1917–23 form a unity in economic history, in demographic history, indeed in the history of revolution. While recognizing the importance of chronicling the story of national movements and armies, it is time for all historians of World War I to contribute to a fully European history of the conflict that we still rightly term the Great War.

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Notes

1. Charles E. W. Bean, ed., *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 12 vols. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1921–43).
2. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

3. John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: Allen Lane, 1976).

4. Martin Middlebrook, *First Day on the Somme, 1 July 1916* (London: Allen Lane, 1971).

5. Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

6. James J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

7. Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974).

8. Ken Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1998).

9. See for example Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *The Somme* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

10. Gary Sheffield, *The Somme: A New History* (London: Cassell Military, 2003); William Philpott, *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme and the Making of the Twentieth Century* (London: Little, Brown, 2009).

11. Jonathan Vance, *Death so Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press 1997); Bruce Scates, *Return to Galipolli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jay M. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

12. For some discussions of the emergence of transnational history, see Akira Iriye, "Transnational History," in *Contemporary European History* 13 (2004): 211–22; John Heilbron et al., "Towards a Transnational History of the Social Sciences," in *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 44, no. 2 (2008): 146–60; C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (December 2006): 1441–64.

13. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

14. Xu Guoqi, *Asia and the Great War: A Shared History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Santanu Das, *India, Empire and First World War Culture: Writings, Images and Songs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

15. Jay Winter, "British Popular Culture in the First World War," in *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment and Propaganda, 1914–1918*, ed. Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 138–59.

16. Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

17. Jay M. Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

18. Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (London: Allen Lane, 2016).

19. Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

20. Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, vol. 1: *To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

21. John Horne, ed., *Our War: Ireland and the Great War* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2009).

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