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Identities, Self-determination, and the Deferral of Demian's Dream: A Centennial Perspective on the World in 1919

Donald C. Bellomy*

Abstract

In 2019 we commemorate the centennial of a year of dashed hopes and clashing identities. The conflicts were so disheartening in part because they arose from the failure of expectations ignited around the world that the end of the Great War would facilitate the creation of a new, more just and liberal world order allowing control over the future through self-determination. The focus on self-determination meant that the year's conflicts would involve a range of incarnations of identity, some assertive, including national-ethnic, anti-imperialist, and racial movements, some predominantly defensive, notably through bonds with a presumed national past to erect barriers against change. Often the most effective identities were the most narrow, as indicated by the limitations of class identity revealed in the pushback against strikes and other worker initiatives and by the repudiation by the U.S. Senate of President Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations. Many of the same identity conflicts still plague the world today, but the main lesson of 1919 for the present may simply be that whatever crises may confront humanity over the next century, it is likely that at their crux we will find questions of identity.

Keywords: *1919, Woodrow Wilson, identity, self-determination, ethnicity, nationalism*

* Email: dcbellomy@yahoo.com
Ph.D. earned at: Harvard University
Current position: Visiting Professor, Honam University

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정체성, 자기 결정, 데미안의 꿈의 연기, 1919 년 세계에서의 100 년 전망

Donald C. Bellomy

<국문요약>

2019 년에 우리는 돌진하는 희망과 충돌하는 정체성이 혼재하는 100 년을 기념했다. 갈등은 부분적으로 낙담 스러웠는데 그 이유는 1 차 세계대전의 종결로 자기 결정을 통해 미래를 통제하고 허용하며 새롭고 더 자유로운 세계의 창조를 용이하게 했던 그 시기 세계적으로 기대가 크게 일어났음에도 불구하고 갈등으로 인해 그 기대가 좌절되었기 때문이다. 자기 결정에 초점을 맞추는 것은 그 해의 갈등이 정체성을 다양하게 구체화하는 것을 포함한다는 것을 의미했다. 정체성을 구체화하는 몇몇 주장은 국가-민족적, 반 제국주의적, 인종적 운동을 포함하여 확신에 차 있고, 일부 주장은 주로 변화에 대한 장벽을 세우기 위해 당연시되는 국가의 과거와 결합하여 주로 방어적으로 나타났다. 파업 및 기타 노동자 주도권에 대한 압박안에 드러나는 계급 정체성의 한계에 의해 또한 우드로 윌슨 (Woodrow Wilson) 국제연맹 상원 의원의 거절에 의한 절연에 의해 보여진 것처럼, 종종 가장 효과적인 정체성은 가장 폭이 좁은 것이었다. 동일한 정체성 충돌의 많은 부분이 여전히 오늘날의 세계를 괴롭히고 있지만 1919 년의 주요 교훈은 다음 세기에 인류에 직면할 수 있는 위기가 무엇이든지 간에 그들의 정점에서 우리는 정체성에 대한 의문을 가질 가능성이 크다는 것이다.

주제어 : *1919 년, 우드 로우 윌슨, 정체성, 자기 결정, 민족성,*

I: Introduction

Hermann Hesse's novel *Demian* was serialized in a German literary magazine in early 1919 and appeared in book form in June, all the while without identifying the author other than as Emil Sinclair, the narrator. It was as if Hesse, an established author with four published novels to his name who had suffered a nervous breakdown in 1917 amid crises both personal and global, wanted to break with the past and, like his characters, embrace a new world of possibilities (Hesse 2013 [1919], xii-xvi). In the novel's concluding pages Sinclair, his comrade and mentor Max Demian, and Eve, his friend's portentously named mother, have become the center of a community of seekers convinced that, as Max proclaims, "The world as it is wants to die, it cries out to be destroyed – and it will be" (110). Even before the guns of August 1914 begin to roar, Demian believes that they are about to see "a big war, a gigantic war, but even that is just the beginning. The new world is coming, horrific to anyone who clings to the old" (130). For Demian, the beginning of new hope for humanity shaking loose the encumbrances of the past would matter more than the deaths a war would entail, for only then would their lives or deaths have meaning. When Demian's prophecy is fulfilled and both young men go off to war, Emil to be gravely wounded, Max to die, Emil also comes to view in the blind sacrifices of his generation "a manifestation of the self-divided soul that wanted to rampage and kill, destroy and die, in order to be reborn. A giant bird was fighting its way out of the egg, and the egg was the world, and the world had to shatter to pieces" (133).

The immediate popularity of the novel in shattered postwar Germany suggests that many of its early readers shared Demian's apocalyptic dream of a phoenix-like regeneration of hope amid the destruction. However, 1919 would, for most people around the world, come to stand only for the despoliation, delay, or betrayal of dreams. The year would be used as a title of a novel by John Dos Passos and a poem by William Butler Yeats that would paint Demian's dream as a nightmare. For Dos Passos, the themes of hopes deferred and lives derailed in the second volume of his *U.S.A.* trilogy, between *The 42nd Parallel* (1930) and *The Big Money* (1936), could be evoked simply with the title *1919* (1932). For Yeats, in "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" the "days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare / Rides upon sleep… / The night can sweat with terror as before / We pieced our thoughts into philosophy, / And planned to bring the world under a rule, / Who are but weasels fighting in a hole" (Yeats 1996 [1919a], 207). An even more famous poem written by Yeats in 1919 had lamented, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, / The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned." In "The Second Coming" Yeats seemed to accept the apocalyptic vision of

Demian, only for him its symbol was not a bird hatching from its shell but some "rough beast" that "slouches towards Bethlehem to be born" (Yeats 1996 [1919b]).

Historians have by and large concurred. When they have selected a specific year as a crucial demarcation point in twentieth century history, they usually could find some positive elements in the twelve months that they have cordoned off. Aspects of 1913, for example, might foreshadow the impending war, but the year nonetheless deserved to be considered, as the title of a book evaluating its contradictory impulses decided, "the cradle of modernism" (Rabaté 2007). Another study of the same year had described it in the title of its translation into English as, ominously, "the year before the storm," but the name originally chosen for its original publication in Germany had been *1913: Der Sommer des Jahrhunderts* – "the summer of the century" (Illies 2013 [2012].). The year after the war, though, would not receive the ambivalent accolades accorded the year preceding it, for 1919 was, as one historian recently opined, simply "the year of the crack-up" (Widmer 2018). So far two book-length chronological studies of the year have appeared in English, one focused on events in the United States, the other on occurrences across the globe. The volume depicting "hope and fear in America" during 1919 labored to find evidence for the former, but had to settle for a portrait of "a nation immersed in struggle" during "a stormy, frightening time on the path hopefully to a more progressive future" (Hagedorn 2007, 424). The subtitle of the global traversal of 1919, "The Year Our World Began," might seem more inviting, except that, as the book's first sentence made clear, its author did not have a high opinion of what "our world" entailed, for "The world broke in two in 1919." As the author went on to explain, "In one nation after another, 1919 brought nothing but disaster, discontent, and disillusionment" (Klingaman 1987, vii).

How could the arrival of peace in late 1918, after what much of the world had experienced as more than four terrible years of carnage and destruction, have turned so bitter and divisive? What made it a moment not for the fulfillment of Max Demian's dream but rather an anxious year of night-sweats and dragon-ridden days? The immediate context would have been the high expectations, symbolized for much of the world by the soaring if unrealizable rhetoric of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, that the results of the world war might be made commensurate with its costs. When that proved impossible, Demian's dream became itself part of the problem in 1919. But if the dashing of people's hopes at the war's conclusion was in many instances inevitable, the nature of those hopes, the ways in which they were dashed and the reasons why, would help shape conflicts around the globe for the next century.

II: The Triggering Traumas

As the German historian Jörn Leonhard has noted (2018, 886), "In scarcely any other period in modern times did war, death, and injury mark a postwar period so profoundly" as in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. The casualty lists were numbing in their sheer size – nearly ten million military dead, one fifth of that total in Germany alone (Stevenson 2004, xvii; Leonhard 2018, 877). Throughout European cities one might daily pass bodies broken and faces deformed by the war and the desperate, often starving innocent victims of the war now dependent on the American Relief Administration headed by Herbert Hoover. Yet these traumatic sights, however soul-searing, were only one factor in the pervasive anxiety of 1919.

Of crucial significance was the fact that the war's effects coincided so often with the process of democratization, in which decisions to fight often involved significant popular political participation, if only for financing a conflict that civilian and military leaders had set in motion, or failed to deflect, in the summer of 1914. Just as the process of war had been democratized, as signaled after 1918 by the commemoration of unknown soldiers and local plaques listing the local dead (Leonhard 2018, 880), so too did the meaning of the war have to pass muster with public opinion, and in most cases with voters. Everyone in or seeking power understood the necessity to justify actions in terms of past sacrifices, whether within the war or over several decades of indignities for the colonies and countries in Asia and Africa. The role of the public became inescapable after Wilson excited people across the globe with his vision of a peace driven by and framed for active democratic participation – not simply the "consent of the governed," but rather "self-determination" (Smith 2018, 9-13).

Unfortunately, the causes of the war had been so amorphous and its costs in blood and wealth so heavy that it was difficult both for average citizens and for decision-makers to judge what results would or should be considered worth the sacrifices. When the Paris Peace Conference met in January 1919 to begin hammering out the structure of the postwar world, a recurrent nightmare among the European allies was that Wilson, who tried to keep the negotiations open to the press and public opinion, would go over their heads to appeal directly to their voters to achieve the ideals enshrined in his Fourteen Points as announced in January 1918 (Walworth 1986, 23-39; cf. Macmillan 2002, passim). Yet often when the European leaders were working so hard to undermine Wilson's ideals, it was with an eye to the same public opinion that Wilson liked to invoke. The French premier Georges Clemenceau told a member of

the British team at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, in justification of his obstinacy regarding a French presence in Syria after the war, that, while "he personally was not particularly concerned with the Near East," he had to keep in mind "French public opinion," which "expected a settlement which was consonant with France's position" (Fromkin 2009 [1989], 396). While one might question whether the average French voter in 1919 cared very much about Syria one way or the other, leaders realized that they could pay a heavy price if the results of the peace did not appear to justify the cost of war. Emanuele Orlando, the Italian prime minister, would be forced to resign in June 1919 over his inability to get the other Allies to deliver on previously promised territorial gains in Asia Minor (Fromkin 2009 [1989], 394).

Finding a meaning and justification for the dead and maimed was only one aspect of the traumas of 1919. For example, for the first time in modern history a chaotic flood of refugees from war, repression, economic chaos, and the new boundaries being created in Paris and subsequent peace conferences became a major global problem, as would be recognized by the creation of the League of Nations' High Commission for Refugees in 1921. The Great War itself had been directly responsible for pushing 7.7 million people from their homes, especially in Eastern Europe; the civil war in Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 would add another 2.5 million displaced persons to the total (Gerwarth 2017, 94-95).

Nor was the year's trauma all tied directly to the war, at least directly, although like the war and the refugee crisis the single most salient factor of almost all the crises of 1919 was their worldwide reach: the globalizing forces at work in the early twentieth century (imperialism, trading networks, democratization, modernization, and Western-style education) insured that it would be difficult to find safe havens to escape their impact. Most notably, while the total of deaths attributable to guns and poison gas was horrific, it was only a fraction of the number of victims of the influenza pandemic that had begun in mid-1918 and, often carried around the world in troop ships, was hitting its third wave of virulence in early 1919. With most modern estimates of the worldwide toll of the influenza pandemic of 1918-20 starting at the fifty million mark, "it would kill more people than any other outbreak of disease in human history," many of them, as with the war itself, not simply the old and weak, the targets of most previous epidemics, but otherwise vigorous young adults (Barry 2005, quotation on 4).

Moreover, the war's conclusion proved an important inflection point for a wide range of theoretically unrelated issues that suddenly, en masse and at a dizzying pace, moved to the forefront of people's consciousness. Trauma could also be triggered by 1919's upsurge of immigration that had been bottled up

while the sea lanes had been closed; even before it could begin, the U.S. Congress would be besieged with proposals to limit, restrict, or even, for a period of years, suspend all immigration (Higham 1970, 304-305). It could be set off by the sudden resurgence of labor conflict, which most of the countries participating in the war, with the glaring exception of Russia, had up to November 1918 successfully tamped down in the interest of productivity for war materials (for example, Brody 1965, 45-77). It could be detonated by long-suppressed desires for independence from colonial or otherwise "foreign" masters for which the fluid situation at the war's end seemed to offer hope (for example, Roshwald 2001). It could even be provoked by fast-developing social trends that had largely escaped widespread notice, or that took on new significance in the postwar environment. The social and sexual revolutions that would become associated with the 1920s, whether among "flappers" in the U.S. or "*mogas*" in Japan, were, for example, already becoming evident by 1919 in certain circles, not least the young readers who made James Branch Cabell's sexually explicit *Jurgen* (explicit, that is, for 1919) the literary cause célèbre of the year (Cabell 2011 [1921, 1919]; compare Fass 1977, passim; Zeitz 2006, 1-38; Sato 2003).

Finally, the cessation of gunfire on November 11, 1918 often did not mean the end of fighting. In many cases, the war's end simply led to more bloody violence, or to bloodshed in areas that had been largely spared the ravages of global conflict, for, as one author pithily explained, "It seemed the Great War had upset everything, settling nothing" (McWhirter 2011, 17). Winston Churchill would airily quip, "The War of the Giants had ended; the quarrels of the pygmies have begun" (quoted in Walt 1996, 168n). Yet for those involved, the trauma was very real, and often, for the civilian population, far more devastating than during the world war, for the forces involved were often irregular in origin and discipline and driven by old antagonisms or new ideologies (Gatrell 2010).

III. The Crisis of Rising Expectations

Ironically, though, it was not the traumas themselves that would mark 1919 as a year of disillusionment, but rather the illusion that the traumas could be transcended – the soon-blighted expectation that the result would be Hesse's bird hatching rather than Yeats's rough beast slouching.

Many of the hopes would revolve around the Paris Peace Conference convened to create treaties to replace the armistices separately signed by Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire in 1918. In the recollection of Harold Nicholson, who in his early thirties had served as a junior member of the British delegation to the conference, "There was about us the halo of some divine mission.

We must be alert, stern, righteous and ascetic. For we were bent on doing great, permanent and noble things" (Nicholson 2013 [1933, 1945], 25). Whatever their seniors might feel, or the British voters who had returned an overwhelming majority for the government coalition in the mid-December 1918 election with what was interpreted as a mandate for a harsh peace (Klingaman 1987, x-xi), Nicholson believed that "we younger people… thought less about our late enemies than about the new countries which had arisen from their tired loins. Our emotions centered less around the old than around the new" (Nicholson 2013 [1933, 1945], 26). This sense of "divine mission" arose, he noted waspishly, with only minor input from "the doctrines, the arid revivals, of Woodrow Wilson" (28).

Perhaps so, but for most people, Wilson's Fourteen Points, supplemented by the Four Principles of February 1918, were not only the basis on which Germany had signed the armistice, but, more importantly, a promissory note that the rest of the world would also enter a new, fairer, freer, more liberal political universe. The key commitments of the Fourteen Points were for open diplomacy negotiated in public view, equal consideration of the claims of the colonized with their imperial masters, territorial decisions predicated on the principle of self-determination, and, as guarantors of the independence and territorial integrity of all states, a League of Nations. Fleshing out the concept of self-determination were two of the Four Principles: "Every territorial settlement must be in the interests of the populations concerned; and not as a part of any mere adjustment or compromise of claims among rival states," while, in an implicit recognition of the difficulty of the conference's task, "All well-defined national elements [a distinction that itself needed clearer definition] shall be accorded the utmost satisfaction that can be accorded them *without introducing new, or perpetuating old, elements of discord and antagonism*" (quoted in Nicholson 2013 [1933, 1945], 32-33, emphases added). As Wilson would explain in a speech delivered to an audience in Ohio in September 1919, "people have a right to live their own lives under the governments which they themselves choose to set up. That is the American principle and I was glad to fight for it" (quoted in Kramer 2011, 158).

The fight had become personal after Wilson, the first U.S. president to leave North America during his term in office, had sailed to Europe and the peace conference in December 1918. At that point, before the disillusionments of 1919 could leech away his aura, Wilson had, in the estimation of John Maynard Keynes, a contemporary of Nicholson who ultimately would resign from his position as economic advisor to the British delegation in protest of the treaty's punitive character and financial shortsightedness, "enjoyed a prestige and a moral influence throughout the world unequaled in history. His bold and

measured words carried to the peoples of Europe above and beyond the voices of their own politicians…. Never had a philosopher held such weapons wherewith to bind the princes of this world" (Keynes 1988 [1919], 38).

The hopes crashed as quickly as they had arisen. As a result, the perceived shortcomings of the treaty process commencing in January 1919 have been a major motif among diplomatic historians ever since. The Paris Conference has helped engender several major historiographical schools, not least among them the "realists" disparaging Wilson's idealism, intransigence, or both (see, for example, Smith 2018, 3-7), though definitions of the exact nature of the failure would shift over time. For many years the focus was on the role that the punitive treatment of Germany was alleged to have played as a cause of World War II. More recently the conference has been blamed for "the price we pay today" (Andelman 2014) in continuing conflicts that presumably might have avoided if greater care had been taken in Paris in 1919. For example, its treatment of the defeated Ottoman Empire had been responsible for "the creation of the modern Middle East" and therefore rendered the conclusion of "the war to end all war" an inevitable "peace to end all peace" (Fromkin 2009 [1989]).

In both cases the expectations raised by Wilson's soaring rhetoric would sour the reactions of contemporaries and historians alike to the treaty. A case could be made that, compared to the cost in land, people, and natural resources that Germany had extracted from Soviet Russia in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, the annexations and reparations imposed on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles "seem benign by comparison" (Gerwarth 2017, 39). But then, no one in authority in Berlin had offered the Bolsheviks a Wilsonian alternative to the "Carthaginian Peace" that, in Keynes's estimation (1988 [1919], 56), Clemenceau was demanding from Germany. Similarly, while the decision to cold-shoulder a supplicant like the Vietnamese patriot then known as Nguyen Ai Quoc, later as Ho Chi Minh, would have been driven by the colonizing power, in this case France, he expected to make his case personally to Wilson (he supposedly even rented a morning suit for the anticipated audience). Ho unsuccessfully sought out the U.S. president to show the relevance of Indochina to the promises of self-determination and equal weight to the concerns of the colonized enshrined in the Fourteen Points (Mishra 2012, 193-194).

Precisely because Wilson came to represent Demian's dream for so many people around the world – the belief that the war's end could open a path to a future somehow commensurate with its horrible cost – he would also become the personal symbol of its failure. That is the likeliest explanation for much of the

bad press that he has received over the past century. The best that Mao Zedong, twenty-five at the time, could muster in 1919 in appraising the U.S. president was, "I felt sorry for him for a long time. Poor Wilson!" (Mishra 2012, 199). Demonstrators in Beijing that year were less sympathetic, excoriating the creator of the Fourteen Points as a liar after they realized "we could no longer depend upon the principles of any so-called great leader like Woodrow Wilson" (Chow 1960, 93). Back on the home front, Wilson not only had to confront Henry Cabot Lodge, the Republican Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee who shared with Clemenceau a firm belief that national self-interest had to be the sole criterion for interactions with other countries, but also fellow liberals who approved of the League of Nations but rejected the Treaty because of the compromises that Wilson had had to accept in order to include it. By September 1919, while the president was on his national tour trying to drum up support for the treaty, the *Christian Century*, a major force in American liberal religion, came out against the Treaty because, while the League embodied their vision of "Thy Kingdom Come," the document's other provisions "are not redemptive, and are therefore not Christian" (Gamble 2003, 230). By March 1920, when the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, few would have been surprised at the contradictory rejection of Wilson that the vote represented: whether he was too idealistic or too realistic, he had failed.

Because Wilson dealt in messianic rhetoric, his reputation could be tarnished by any failure to live up to either his own ideals or to what later generations believe *should* have been implied by his ideals. In his treatment of "Meester Veelson" in *1919*, Dos Passos would agree that Wilson had betrayed the hopes of the Old World masses. In his depiction of the conference Dos Passos portrayed Clemenceau, David Lloyd George of Britain, and Wilson as "three old men shuffling the pack, dealing out the cards:… oil was trumps" (Dos Passos 2000 [1932], 197). But of even greater significance to the writer in 1932 was the betrayal of the aspirations of workingmen in both Europe and America, the dock workers at Brest who were beaten by the police for waving red flags to greet him and the West Coast strikers and radical "wobblies" who were jailed, beaten, and lynched in 1919 (191-198).

Over time evaluations of Wilson, especially of what he said and did, or did not do, in 1919, tended to become bifurcated between inadequate implementation of the right ideals for outside the United States and actions that seemed to deny those ideals within its borders (for example, Hagedorn 2007). Particularly for commentators who endured the McCarthyite Red Scare, Wilson's principal failure, the main evidence for his falling short of the ideals of democratic government, was his acquiescence in the curtailment of

civil liberties during the first Red Scare of 1919-20. Then historians' judgment of Wilson's principal failure shifted again, to his unwillingness to extend his ideals about democracy and self-determination to black Americans, whether out of political considerations to appease the white Southerners in his party or out of personal racism developed during his Virginia upbringing along with his distinctive drawl (Nicholson 2013 [1933, 1945], 193). Some have continued to link both aspects of Wilson's perceived moral shortfall, as in one historian's charge that "Wilson coupled his fear of militant blacks with an antipathy to leftist European immigrants" (Foley 2003, 137). Even when Wilson said the right things, as in his promise to African Americans in 1918 of "nothing less than the enjoyment of full citizenship rights – the same as are enjoyed by every other citizen," a presumption has prevailed that the statement must have been "reluctant" (Slotkin 2005, 235).

It did not help him then or with later historians, but apparently no one seems to have been more aware of the difficult position in which the expectations he had raised had placed him in 1919 than Wilson himself. Exactly three decades after the appearance of *1919*, a reflective John Dos Passos offered a more balanced, even charitable view of Wilson in his historical study *Mr. Wilson's War*. The epigraph to the section on "Mr. Wilson's Peace" used a quotation from a conversation between Wilson and George Creel aboard the ship carrying them to Europe in December 1918 in which Wilson mused, "People will endure their tyrants for years, but they tear their deliverers to pieces if a millennium is not created immediately. Yet you know and I know, that these ancient wrongs, these present unhappinesses, are not to be remedied in a day, or with the wave of a hand. What I seem to see – with all my heart I hope I am wrong – is a tragedy of disappointment" (Dos Passos 2013 (1962), 425).

Wilson may have had a massive messiah complex, but he was not wrong. The year's combination of cumulative trauma and the "tragedy of disappointment" in the deferral of Demian and Wilson's dreams would take shape in a form that would become increasingly familiar over the next century: a series of assertions and defenses of identity across the world.

IV. Assertive Identities

For all the fraught significance that the concept of identity has come to bear in the first two decades of the twenty-first century (cf. Appiah 2005; Lilla 2017; Appiah 2018; Fukuyama 2018), to note the significance of issues of identity in 1919 is not to claim that contemporaries would, or indeed could have used the term to describe their activities a century ago. As Philip Gleason argued more than a third

of a century ago (Gleason 1983), prior to the middle of the twentieth century *identity* either maintained its original meaning in human perception of an exact equivalence between things, or, as applied within human consciousness, of the persistence of some core aspect of an individual over time and circumstance. Only over the past half seventy years has it come to be associated with the close identification with groups (ethnic, religious, racial, national, or what have you) with which individuals emotionally bond. Yet even without the term, we can discern that people in 1919 were trying to express something like the modern concept, often in their discussions of nationalism (for example, Wilson's "well-defined national elements" could only have been defined as the people who thought of themselves that way, for whatever reason). We can see adumbrations of the concept and an awareness of its complexity in a number of sociological, psychological, and polemical discussions beginning around the turn of the twentieth century, for example in W. E. B. Du Bois's discussion of "the double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American" (Du Bois 1986 [1903], 502).

Linking the original sense of individual identity and the contemporary emphasis on group identities is the question of persistence of a core identity over time and circumstance – that is to say, in the context of the trauma of historical change. As the late sociologist Zygmunt Bauman observed, its relationship to history is what makes identity a peculiarly modern preoccupation, for "the thought of 'having an identity' will not occur to people as long as 'belonging' remains their fate, a condition with no alternative" (Bauman 2004, 11-12). In this sense, talking about an "identity crisis" is almost tautological, since we would not be thinking about an identity if it were not in crisis. We should therefore not be surprised that in the traumas of 1919, Demian's dream would take shape in a series of contested assertions and defenses of identity, or that only those parts of the world such as Latin America that had been largely spared both its horror and hopes could escape the year's contest of identities. The year 1919 meant something in those countries as well (the assassination of Emiliano Zapata in Mexico, a military coup and new constitution in Peru), but typically as a continuation of existing trends rather than the beginning of something new, however disappointing in terms of what people had been dreaming.

The concept of identity is about boundaries; crucially, the boundaries of self that it polices are themselves artifacts that bleed into one another, perhaps because we humans desire identities at once

tighter and more complete than history has seen fit to supply us with.[1] Whether we call the boundaries national, ethnic, racial, religious, class, gender, or any other of the multiple forms that identity can take may matter less for an understanding of events a century ago than an appreciation that the year's conflicts arose in large part because the boundaries were seldom self-evident and were perceived by many participants as being shaped by history. That was why so many people around the world were so anxious to change history in 1919.

IVa. Nation and Ethnicity

National identity has become crucial for all states, especially when its leaders are elected by its citizens. The creation and maintenance of a widespread identification with the country of one's citizenship has become one of the central responsibilities of public education systems around the world and less formal forms of education in the media. However, in 1919 a number of states were still so new to history and their national institutions of government and education so weak that the expression of what the nation might be remained an open question.

For example, because the unification of Italy in the mid-nineteenth century had been an incremental process over four decades, some adjustment of boundaries seemed a legitimate goal, as recognized by the Fourteen Points – although, Wilson stipulated, only in areas with obvious ties, presumably linguistic and ancestral, to Italy as it had existed before the war. However, the Italian government had entered the war only after haggling with both sides about how much territory it could add to its boundaries. The Allies offered a better deal, although the secret treaty that brought Italy into the war (by 1919 no longer secret after Soviet Russia published its contents) obviously contradicted the Fourteen Points on the basis of which the war had ended by including large areas without a significant Italian-speaking population. Driving Wilson's frustration with Italian nationalism in 1919 was a desire to sponsor and support the self-determination of Yugoslavia, the new state that stood to lose the most from Italy's claims, and the other new governments that were emerging from the Central Powers empires. Ultimately, and to his later embarrassed regret, Wilson compromised, with the result that it is said that even today in parts of Italy's South Tyrol province a visitor "feels one is not in Italy but in Italian-occupied Austria" (Gilmour 2011, 289-295, quotation on 292).

[1] The literature on the scholarly and political debates about the various boundaries of identity that have been employed over the past century is now massive. For a thoughtful up-to-date introduction, see Brubaker 2015.

But the addition of Trieste, South Tyrol, and other slices of the former Austrian empire did not satisfy the expansionists who, while a minority of the Italian population in 1919, were a very vocal one. Leaders of the expansionist movement were intent on creating an Italian identity of martial, indeed imperial vigor, whether the expansion made sense or not, as it did not in the Italian government's quest for a protectorate in the western Anatolian peninsula – that is, in what is now Turkey (Fromkin 2009 [1989], 391-394). In another notorious example, the poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, upset at what he called a "mutilated peace," led a "march on Fiume," currently the city of Rijeka in Croatia, in September 1919. One of his supporters was the editor of *Il Popolo d'Italia* who had switched from applauding the Fourteen Points in early 1918 to denouncing their constraints on what he called Italy's "imperial destiny." Earlier in 1919 the editor, Benito Mussolini, had founded the *fasci di combattimento*, the germ of what become the Fascist Party, as part of his movement to flesh out Italian identity (Gilmour 2011, 295-298).

Some of the other conflicts of 1919 had similarities to Italy's expansionism, notably the difficulties that the newly recreated Poland had with its neighbors. The question raised by the young Polish writer Maria Dąbrowska in a public lecture that year, "Where is Poland" (Böhler 2018, 2), would have been difficult for anyone to answer in light of the country's history of accordion-like expansion and contraction until the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was divided into non-existence in the eighteenth century, then resurrected after a declaration of independence in 1918. But what would be its boundaries? Throughout 1919 Poland would be involved in a series of conflicts with Germany, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and, most seriously, revolutionary Russia. The Polish leader Józef Piłsudski publicly proclaimed his attachment to the idea of a federated union with the Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians, but his ambitions pulled him toward a goal of domination on the best terms available. As he explained to a friend in 1919, "I want to be neither a federalist nor an imperialist until I can talk about these matters somewhat seriously – with a gun in my pocket" (Böhler 2018, quotation on 12; cf. Gerwarth 2017, 190-194).

However, most of the assertions of national identity involved peoples who were not at that point organized in effective states, whether due to the complex ethnic mixes within the central and eastern European empires, the colonial status of large swaths of Asia and Africa, or the exploitation of weak states by imperial bullies. For many of these peoples 1919 would represent a critical turning point. For example:

Ireland. In the British parliamentary election of December 1918 voters in Ireland, still riding the revolutionary momentum of the Easter Uprising in 1916, and inspired in part by campaign speeches invoking Wilson's espousal of self-determination (Townshend 2013, 63), had overwhelmingly cast their ballots for candidates of the Sinn Féin independence party. The Sinn Féin representatives (or at least those not in English prisons) took this new level of support as a signal to decline to cross over to England to take their seats, but rather to remain in Dublin as the first Dail Eirann (Irish Assembly) that would, on January 21, 1919, declare Ireland independent. However, not even the importuning of Irish leaders and prominent figures within the Irish American community, a significant factor within his Democratic Party, could persuade Wilson to actively take up the cause of the new Irish Republic, not when he had to pressure Lloyd George on so many other issues that seemed more germane to the war settlement. As violence began to flare and the British sent in troops, an Irish American delegation sailed to France to appeal for self-determination for Ireland, but, despite an initial acquiescence to Wilson's request to hear them out, Lloyd George decided to cancel the meeting. After Wilson and the Irish American delegation had all returned home, the violence worsened, culminating in the attempted assassination of the Viceroy of Ireland in December. All that Lloyd George would offer at that point was home rule with separate Irish parliaments for the Protestant majority in the north and the overwhelmingly Catholic population of the southern counties. It would take a half decade of insurrection and civil war followed by nearly a century of intermittent conflict for the parties involved to reach a modus vivendi not dissimilar to the solution offered by Lloyd George in 1919 (Townshend 2013, 3-110; Klingaman 1987, 109-112, 259-263, 495-498, 596-597).

Turkey. Most of the new states created after World War I would, as the mention of the now non-existent state of Yugoslavia suggests, have problems with mixes of ethnic and religious groups comparable to those that had bedeviled the empires from which they had emerged. Wilson and, to a degree, the other peacemakers in 1919 were aware of the problem, but once the identity genie had been loosed, no easy solutions offered themselves, and they would often only makes things worse, The question of Turkey is a case in point.

Although the Fourteen Points had called for creating from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire a state for the Turkish people of Anatolia, its boundaries would not be settled until 1923 due to conflicts with other religious and ethnic groups within the boundaries many Turks preferred and to the interference of European powers. Two long-suffering groups, Kurds and Armenians, sought to take advantage of the

defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the chaos of civil war in Soviet Russia to establish independent states of Kurdistan and Armenia, while Italy's claim for a protectorate within the western Anatolian peninsula was finessed by the other Allies, especially Great Britain, in favor of a Greek landing in Smyrna, a cosmopolitan city with a significant population of Greek Christians and other non-Turks, in May 1919. However, local Greeks eager to take revenge for their treatment during the war triggered a series of atrocities and massacres, which in turn fueled the resentment of Turks across the peninsula who responded with atrocities and massacres of their own. The leader of the ultimately victorious Turkish resistance was a young Ottoman military hero still in his late thirties, Mustafa Kemal, who as Kemal Atatürk (Kemal, Father of the Turks) would become the founder of modern Turkey. The price, though, was high. After Smyrna was again ransacked, this time by the Turks, the peace settlement would require a massive relocation of most Turks from Greece and the Balkans, where they had been living since the seventeenth century, and most Greeks from Anatolia, where they had lived since the late Bronze Age and from which they once ruled an empire. As for the other would-be nations, Armenia would become one of the "socialist republics" within the Soviet Union, while the dream of Kurdistan remains a preoccupation for Kurds across three Middle East countries and a nightmare for their rulers, especially Turkey (Gerwarth 2017, 1-5, 227-247).

India. Optimistic that Wilson's rhetoric about self-determination might be found applicable to them as well, the Indian National Congress appealed to their British overlords to be allowed to send a delegation to Paris in 1919. One hopeful sign was that while anti-colonial sentiments and activities had in past decades largely bypassed Indian Moslems, the proposal had support from both Hindu and Moslem representatives (Mishra 2012, 192). However, at least at first the political dynamics of 1919 for India drew more on British fears than Indian hopes.

About one million Indians had fought alongside the British in the Great War, and over the course of 1919 would often become the core of the occupation army, especially in the former Ottoman Empire, as the demobilization of British troops accelerated. However, in early 1919 a committee headed by Sir Sidney Rowlatt, a British judge, recommended extension of wartime emergency measures and passage of new ones to suppress the expected reemergence of an Indian independence movement. The heavy-handed preparations helped create the very emergency they were supposed to avert when Mohandas Gandhi, who since his return to India from South Africa on the eve of the war had been focused on the economic plight of Indian peasants rather than on independence, called for national demonstrations and acts of civil

disobedience against passage of the Rowlatt legislation, then, after it took effect in March, to hasten its repeal. Although the British would not leave India until the aftermath of another world war, the pattern of the next quarter of a century of Indian history was set in 1919 as the new leader called for spiritual unity through non-violent civil disobedience, upbraided the British army when it tried to suppress unrest (an action against demonstrators in the Punjab later in 1919 would lead to more than 400 deaths), laid out the arguments for his positions in the English and Hindu newspapers he established that year, invoked a mythic past of simple, self-sufficient economic and social relations as a source of spiritual resilience, and tried to foster an alliance between his Hindu followers and Moslem leaders concerned about the future of Moslem holy sites with the dissolution of Ottoman oversight. As the fate of the last two efforts indicates, some of Gandhi's projects launched in 1919 would prove more effective than others (Guha 2018, 39-56, 65-92).

Korea. The effect of the Fourteen Points on Korean politics appears more certain than in India, although the Korean situation was distinctive in certain ways compared with the year's other independence movements. First, Korea differed from most colonies in that it had been an independent state coinciding with its colonial boundaries until early in the twentieth century. Second, when it was annexed in 1910, the state assuming complete control over the destiny of the inhabitants of the Korean peninsula was not one of the Western imperial powers but rather Japan, the country's next-door neighbor in East Asia. However, while Korea's past as an independent state helped feed frustration at the loss of control to Japan, Koreans had for several centuries been having difficulties defining themselves as a unique culture and separate power, even more with regard to China than to Japan (Schmid 2002). Probably as a result, Korean nationalists had a hard time defining what made Korea a nation; only in the early decades of the twentieth century did they coalesce around the ancestral bloodline, however diluted it may have inconveniently become with Chinese, Manchurian, Mongolian, and Japanese alleles, as the basis of the Korean identity (Shin 2006, 1-57). The new consensus came just in time to facilitate the convergence of nationalist intellectuals and politicians with average Koreans upset at Japanese interference with their daily lives in the March 1 Movement of 1919.

On February 8, 1919, approximately six hundred Korean students studying in Japan who wanted to achieve Wilsonian self-determination for their countrymen convened in Tokyo to issue a declaration of Korean independence, but probably due to the setting, this first declaration has not been enshrined in

Korean mythology, unlike what would happen three weeks later.[2] The last independent ruler of Korea's Choseon dynasty, the self-styled Emperor Gojong who had been forced to abdicate by the Japanese in 1907, had died in January, with official funeral rites scheduled for the capital on March 3. To take advantage of the multitudes that would be coming to Seoul for the occasion, on March 1 nationalists promulgated a second declaration of independence while thousands of Koreans, mostly students and their teachers, marched through the city chanting "Long live independence." The demonstrations, which had been secretly prepared primarily under the auspices of religious leaders representing Christianity and Cheondoism, a "new religion" blending Confucianism and shamanism, at first were centered in Seoul and a few other cities, but after mid-March protest began to spread to the countryside. Eventually the number of participants in the protests is estimated to have comprised between three and twelve percent of the total population. By the summer most of the counties in Korea had seen often violent protests suppressed by Japanese troops, with 23,000 Korean casualties (Lee 1984, 338-345; Shin 2018, 1-4; Yonhap News Agency 2019).

Meanwhile in April 1919 a provisional republican government in exile had been created in Shanghai. In May the provisional government made Kim Kyu-sik, a Korean who had already arrived in Paris in March as an emissary of the China-based nationalists, their official delegate to the Paris Peace Conference to plead for the self-determination of Koreans. He left empty-handed from a conference with little interest in Asia east of the former Ottoman Empire, especially since Japan had been an ally, even if not allotted a position among the Big Four. But in any case Koreans today do not celebrate the formation of the Provisional Government in April; it could be argued that many still have a difficult time with Korean identity, except to agree that whatever it is, it began on March 1, 1919 (Mishra 2012, 193; Shin 2018, 1-4).

China. In China the issue was not technically independence, but rather true autonomy and territorial integrity. China, like Japan, had been on the victorious side of World War I, since it had joined the Allies in 1917. A parade sixty-thousand strong in Beijing had celebrated the armistice in November 1918, and China sent an official delegation to the conference. However, its major concern was not seriously considered – the return of Qingdao, ruled by Germany under a long-term lease, and the rest of Shandong province, considered a German sphere of interest, to direct Chinese control. Japan had seized Shandong from the Germans at the start of the war, and, based on secret agreements signed with Britain,

[2] For evidence that younger Korean historians are more willing to give prior events in Tokyo their due, see Kim 2019.

France, and Italy in February 1917, wanted to maintain control into the foreseeable future. By April 1919 it became obvious that Japan would probably get what it wanted, if only because Wilson felt that he could not argue vigorously for the Chinese position due to a treaty that China had signed with Japan in 1915 that had seemed to acquiesce to Japanese ascendency in Shandong. Chinese patriots felt betrayed by their government, by Japan, by their supposed European allies, and by Woodrow Wilson. According to the U.S. minister to China at the time, "The Chinese trusted America, they trusted the frequent declarations of principle uttered by President Wilson, whose words had reached China in its remotest parts. The more intense was their disappointment and disillusionment…" (Paul S. Reinsch, in Chow 1960, 93).

Students in Beijing began to plan a massive demonstration on May 7, the date in 1915 when Japan had laid down the ultimatum that had led to the treaty that bothered Wilson. When the news only got worse from Paris and the Chinese government tried to suppress the popular turmoil, the students moved up their protest to May 4. The three thousand participants in the meeting at the Gate of Heavenly Peace and subsequent marches through the city started peacefully, but then turned violent. More importantly, the students and intellectuals followed up after the May Fourth demonstrations by organizing and publicizing sentiment outside Beijing. As a result "they began to establish closer contacts with the masses of illiterate people, and to secure strong and effective support from the new merchants, industrialists, and urban workers. Hence the students' new ideas were spread to an unexpected extent throughout the cities of the country, the antiquated civilization began to crack up, and new sociopolitical developments were set afoot" (Chow 1960, 84-116, quotation on 116; Mishra 2012, 179-180, 204-206).

While the assertive identities of 1919 often clashed with one another, as they did with Italians and Yugoslavs or the Japanese and Chinese, they could also become mutually reinforcing. For example, the formal declaration of the students in Beijing during the May Fourth demonstrations cited approvingly as exemplars the French commitment to reclaim Alsace-Lorraine in the peace negotiations, the Italian push to expand to the other side of the Gulf of Venice in the Balkans, and "the Koreans in their struggle for independence." If China did not rise to the occasion and join them in proclaiming "Give us our wish or give us death," then the Chinese people were "indeed the worthless race of the twentieth century. They should not be regarded as human beings" (Chow 1960, 107).

IVb. Race

If the border line separating nation from ethnicity was difficult to discern in 1919, and remains so today,[3] politicians, intellectuals, and average citizens a century ago often compounded the problem by conflating both national and ethnic identity with race. For example, the Universal Races Congress meeting in London in 1911 had drawn some one thousand individuals claiming to represent fifty "races," a total suggestive to modern scholars more of ethnicities (Lewis 2009, 291). Separating them here makes sense, however, because the dominant race issues in 1919 differed in crucial ways from the assertions of ethnic and national identity. For one thing, the concept of race as a broader, arguably more permanent construct than nation or ethnicity was by then taking shape in Western culture (Gossett 1997 [1963]; Hannaford 1996). Ironically, one sign was the racism too often on display at the Paris Peace Conference, especially from Billy Hughes, the prime minister of Australia, but even David Lloyd George could casually refer to "niggers" (Mishra 2012, 199). Wilson also had racial blind spots that he brought with him to Paris. He had sought to keep the United States out of the war, he had argued at a cabinet meeting in January 1917, "to keep the white race strong against the yellow – Japan for instance" (Mishra 2012, 197).

This broad concept of race also appeared in some of the assertions of identity in 1919. The African-American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois organized the first Pan-African Congress that met in Paris for three days in February 1919 to pressure the Peace Conference to work towards an end of colonialism across Africa through "development of autonomous government along lines of native custom, with the object of inaugurating gradually an Africa for the Africans" (Lewis 2009, 371-373, 378-379, quotation on 372). A comparable concept was the Pan-Asian racial identity that facilitated cooperation among many of the proponents of independence and autonomy throughout East Asia and offered a more inclusive identity than nationality (Shin 2006, 25-40; Mishra 2012, 166-170; Neuhaus 2017). Japanese intellectuals and even politicians at times took the initiative in helping sponsor Pan-Asianism, which, when coupled with Japan's desire to act as a major regional power in Asia and its need to assert its equality as a world power in the face of the restrictions on Japanese immigration to the United States and Australia, provided the context for its futile effort to include a commitment to racial equality in the draft covenant of the League of Nations (Shimazu 1998).

[3] Indeed ethnicity arguably did not become a discrete concept until the last third of the twentieth century, with an explosion of scholarly discussion and references in the 1970s; for examples of the early work helping to lay out the term's boundaries relative to tribe and nation, see Barth 1969 and Cohen 1978.

In the United States, 1919 would come to represent a turning point in racial consciousness for black Americans. Part of this represented a local version of Demian's dream linking the anti-colonial movement in Africa and the Caribbean with a transforming sense of new possibilities at home. One aspect was the rapid spread of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association as a statement of racial pride among black Americans, capped in June 1919 by the creation of the Black Star Line to ship goods between Africa and the global black diaspora (Lewis 2018, Locations 245-439). A similar connection was made by the poet Claude McKay in his poem "Exhortation: Summer, 1919," calling out to "Sons of the seductive night, for your children's children's sake, / From the deep primeval forests where the crouching leopard's lurking, / Lift your heavy-lidded eyes, Ethiopia! Awake!" (McKay 2004 [1920], 176). But much of it derived from a convergence of events within the United States that appealed to racial identity without necessarily invoking an ancestral connection with Africa.

The two most important factors were, first, the internal migration of African Americans escaping from the South to cities in the industrial North and expanding West, recently facilitated by the demand for inexpensive labor due to the interruption of immigration from Europe during the war and to the shortfall created by the number of white workers serving in the armed forces; and second, the return of black soldiers who had also often fought in France. Garvey was only one of the two million blacks and other Americans moved by watching the parade given in New York City on February 17, 1919 for the all-black 369th Infantry Regiment – the "Harlem Hellfighters" (Hagedorn 2017, 97-101; Lewis 2018, Locations 324-337). Perhaps, too, Wilsonian tropes played their part in stimulating a demand for reality to match rhetoric. The black editor and activist William Monroe Trotter, no fan of the president's racial policies, nevertheless opined in 1919 that Wilson's "reiteration of noble sentiments and making our boys fight under their inspiration has given birth to a new spirit of manliness" among African Americans (Krugler 2015, 31). William Hayward, the white colonel of the Harlem Hellfighters regiment, quipped in May 1919 that, "In view of the sacrifices the negro [*sic*] soldiers made in this war to make the world safe for democracy it might not be a bad idea to make the United States safe for democracy" (Krugler 2015, 1).

As one author has noted, "whites in political power forgot 1919 or misremembered it as a time of radical agitation among blacks, not as a time when white mobs attacked in record numbers" (McWhirter 2011, 250). However, the sense that something unprecedented was occurring in the African American community that year was not misplaced. In what historians would come to see as a crucial element in the creation of the "New Negro" of the 1920s, many African Americans chose not to wait for someone else to

follow up on Colonel Hayward's suggestion, which had been made in the context of news stories about the lynching of black veterans. The use of lynching as a form of social control in the American South and beyond was a long-standing complaint of black leaders that would be addressed by a National Conference on Lynching in May 1919 (McWhirter 2011, 33-40). Also not new to 1919 except for their extent was the outbreak of riots to express white resentment of a black presence in the workplace and social life, like the black boys whose brief incursion into the waters of a white-only lakeside beach touched off the Chicago Race Riot that year. What was new during the Red Summer of 1919 was the degree of armed resistance by blacks and a biracial death count (Krugler 2015; cf. Tuttle 1972; Foley 2003; McWhirter 2011). As McKay would write in the second-most famous English-language poem of 1919, "Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack, / Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!" (McKay 2004 [1919], 178).

V. Defensive Identities

To a significant degree the newly assertive black identity and the explosion of lynching and white mob action in 1919 evolved together in reaction to each other. When the graduating senior Paul Robeson became the first black commencement speaker at Rutgers University in June 1919, the future singer, actor, and activist explained to the overwhelmingly white audience that recent events were forcing his race to "realize that our future lies chiefly in our own hands. On ourselves alone will depend the preservation of our liberties and the transmission of them in their integrity to those who will come after us" (quoted in McWhirter 2011, 76). But this newly assertive identity itself seems to have been a factor in the violent white attacks on blacks in 1919. As an anonymous white woman in Georgia opined late in the year, "There's no managing the neegahs now, they's got so biggety since the war" (McWhirter 2011, 236). To simplify and reify, assertive black identity met and clashed with defensive white identity.

In some ways a distinction between assertive and defensive identities can be misleading, because any awareness of identity leads both to an effort to increase others' recognition of its rightfulness – its assertive side – and to actions to protect the free exercise of that identity – its defensive posture. Yet there are practical reasons for emphasizing a division between assertive and defensive identities: in general assertions of identity have been made by individuals and groups whose legitimacy has been denied by the forces of history, while defensive identities often develop in reaction to those assertions, usually by invoking history as it existed before the assertions. Sometimes, too, the defensive identities are not countering others' assertive identities, but rather are simply trying to preserve traditions and values

considered at risk in the floodtide of modernity. The key defensive identity in the United States was the white Protestant in small-town and rural environments, a once dominant political and social force that could feel threatened by assertive identities, including blacks and immigrants, and that was committed to maintaining religious views and social practices under threat in the rapidly changing environment of the early twentieth century.

A defensive identity is therefore necessarily a shapeshifter, taking on different contours in response to changing threats real, perceived, or even invented, sometimes by interested parties. In white Protestant America in 1919, the dominant threats were not necessarily what they would be even a few years later. For example, although Henry Ford established the *Dearborn Independent* that year, not until 1920 did the paper start its campaign against the "International Jew," which with its dissemination of *The Protocols of Zion* helped to coalesce anti-Semitism in the United States. There were certainly occasional anti-Jewish sentiments sprinkled through editorials and commentaries in 1919, usually with reference to the role of "Yiddish agitators" in spreading Bolshevism, but they were not the major elements within white American identity that they would shortly become with the wide circulation of Ford's paper and the national expansion of the second Ku Klux Klan (Dinnerstein 1994, 79-83). In fact, the Klan did not begin to expand beyond its still relatively inconsequential base in the American South until it piggybacked on the anti-Semitism of the *Dearborn Independent*, and added to it a revival of old-fashioned anti-Catholicism that could link the two sources of urban immigrants and the two myths of foreign powers subverting American innocence. It would consolidate its appeal to rural and small-town Americans, including those who had brought small-town values to America's cities, by becoming an enforcement arm for Prohibition (Gordon 2017, 1-15). But it would be a mistake to assume that the defensive posture of 1923-24 already existed in 1919.

The imposition of Prohibition, imposed on the United States with ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in early 1919, was one of the clearest examples of defensive identity in America that year. After a long evolution among evangelical Christians seeking bodily perfection, prohibition had finally achieved national political success as a wartime conservation measure. The movement to suppress the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages, though, quickly became transformed into a question of what America meant in terms of class, religion, and ethnic origin. Since the saloon was associated with urban workers, often immigrants from peasant cultures, many of them Roman Catholic, the crusade against liquor reflected "a world where class cleavages closely aligned with cultural, religious, and racial

divisions" and therefore "resonated with the deepest fractures of the economic and social postwar order" (Gordon 2017, 45 and passim).

Defensive identity could be found too in all the popular manifestations of the Red Scare that began in early 1919 and would continue in fits and starts into early 1920. We tend to think of the Red Scare primarily in terms of actions by the government, especially the initiatives of U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and young J. Edgar Hoover (Hagedorn 2007, passim; Ackerman 2011). However, Palmer, who hoped to build a presidential bid in 1920 not by playing on the fear of labor radicals but by investigating corporate hoarders he considered at blame for the high cost of living, found that many Americans preferred to target the radicals, or "Bolsheviks" as they came to be called. The word's obvious foreign provenance meant more than its actual content, since within the portmanteau phrase were included anarchists and Wobblies (members of the Industrial Workers of the World), both groups outnumbering the members of the two U.S. Communist Parties founded in 1919. Neither anarchists nor Wobblies represented a new threat; the anarchist bombs mailed to industrialists or delivered to the doorstep of Attorney General Palmer in 1919, for example, differed in no significant way from the "propaganda of the deed" by earlier anarchists such as the attempted assassination of Henry Frick in 1892 or the successful assassination of President William McKinley in 1901. Yet in 1919 this expanded sense of Bolshevism including anarchism, labor radicals, and even civil rights organizations and crusaders (e.g., McWhirter 2011, 215) "came to embody all that was challenging the American status quo. Understandings of Bolshevism developed in a binary relationship with principles of Americanism, as Americans filtered their own anxieties about postwar life through the prism of these constructed Red Scare ideologies" (Ryan 2015, 18).

Popular sentiment became embodied in a series of organizations seeking to maintain what they considered the patriotic zeal and orderly unity they believed had been characteristic of wartime America. Among them was the American Legion, the association of military veterans that at its founding meeting in 1919 had pledged to "uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred per cent Americanism" (Murray 1955, 88). The Legion's definition of "Americanism" was partially refracted through its members' class ties, since at its inception the Legion drew heavily from the ranks of returned Army officers, but others were more than willing, as the saying went in 1919, to "leave the Reds to the Legion." In that spirit a Legion post in Centralia, Washington, a center of West Coast "Wobbly" labor radicalism, undertook to raid the local

I.W.W. office as part of its celebrations on the first anniversary of Armistice Day on November 11, 1919. Advised by their lawyer of their right of self-defense, the Wobblies returned fire, killing three of their attackers. The aftermath of the gunfight was even more telling: no matter who shot first, no matter the legitimacy of their claim of self-defense, only Wobblies were arrested for the "Centralia Massacre." One of the shooters was taken from jail and lynched, with his still twitching body used for target practice (Murray 1955, 82-104, 166-189; Hagedorn 2007, 400-402).

VI. Failure of Inclusive Identities

In 1919 the assertions of identity and flights to defensive identity had widely varying success rates. The movements for independence of India and Korea, for example, would only bear fruit after World War II. But in the context of 1919, they had an immediate impact on shaping the ideas, ideals, and values of a large number of people. Less effective were some of the more inclusive identities – definitions of self and group that extended far beyond nation, ethnicity, even race – that were offered to the world that year.

Gender. At first blush American women would seem obvious winners in the identity clashes of 1919, since in June of that year, after a struggle that had lasted four decades, both houses of the U.S. Congress finally passed a constitutional amendment to guarantee to women the right to vote. The ultimately successful push then began to secure ratification by enough states to allow women to vote in the next federal elections in November 1920. "The Woman's Hour has struck," Carrie Chapman Catt had announced to her fellow suffragists in 1916 (Croy 1998, 52), and it seemed in 1919 that her prophecy had come true.

However, it could hardly be expected that, at least in the context of a century ago, the result of affording women full participation in American democratic politics would create an enduring political identity. For one thing, as Rogers Brubaker has noted (2015, 22), the social organization of gender differs from most other identities in that "men and women do not constitute self-enclosed, self-sufficient, self-reproducing communities." Arguably the system of men's and women's clubs in nineteenth-century Anglo middle class culture had tended toward separate spheres of identity, but ironically this division of leisure and labor would start to diminish soon after the success of woman suffrage, a victim both of the sexual revolution and of the ascent of the nuclear family. Moreover, the other factors impinging on one's identity as a voter, including political party, class background, and religious affiliation, were typically

more significant than gender identity. Before this could change, a second wave of feminist thought would become necessary that could partially paper over the cultural and class divisions among women. This would have been impossible in 1919, if only because the implications and effects of the sexual revolutions of a century ago so sharply divided American women. One of the key elements within the defensive identity of 1919, for example, was the symbolism of the testimony to the U.S. Senate about the "Bureau of Free Love" in Russia. As one historian has noted, "Narratives about women, sex, and gender provided the most powerful arguments that Bolshevism endangered civilization" (Delegard 2012, 28; cf. Ryan 2015, 47-78).

Class. If the First World War began with what seemed the death knell of international socialism, as workers' parties across Europe put their national identity above their class identity in voting for war credits, by the time it ended it seemed that class identity was more crucial than ever due to the global implications of the Bolshevik takeover of Russia in the October revolution of 1917. As Eric Hobsbawm has argued, "The October revolution produced by far the most formidable organized revolutionary movement in modern history. Its global expansion has no parallel since the conquests of Islam in its first century" (Hobsbawm 1996, 55). Though beset by the gargantuan task of consolidating power amid internal dissension, civil and foreign war, and ethnic rebellions, Vladimir Lenin convened a "Third International" at the Kremlin in March 1919. Over a week of speeches, most of them in German (though Lenin endeavored to answer questions "in almost every European language with astonishing ease"), the "*leit motif* [sic] of the whole affair," according to an English observer, was to create a global league of revolutionary worker parties in "a new International opposed to that which had split into national groups, each supporting its own government in the prosecution of the war" (Ransome 1919, 140-147, quotations on 143, 142). The American John Reed, whose *Ten Days That Shook the World*, "a slice of intensified history" about the revolution (Reed 1977 [1919], 9), had become a bestseller in 1919 even as the Red Scare was gathering steam, would return to Russia later that year after helping found one of the two competing U.S. Communist parties to serve as a secretary for the Third International.

At different moments in 1919 the hopes of Reed and Lenin seemed within the realm of possibility. True, in January the Spartacist Uprising in Germany had been thwarted. In Berlin the socialist Friedrich Ebert, an Alexander Kerensky analogue who served as the first president of the German Republic after the resignation of the Kaiser, proved more ruthless than the Lenin figures, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg, both murdered by the end of the month (Klingaman 1987, 23-25, 29-31, 34-37). But for

several weeks in April a "council republic" governed Bavaria under Communist tutelage (Klemperer 2017), while for much of the year Béla Kun had ruled the Soviet Republic of Hungary (Klingaman 1987, 189-194, 289-290, 328-330, 465-468). Even Lloyd George's government called in troops and ships after red flags were raised in British cities from Glasgow to Luton (Webb 2016). On top of this turmoil in Europe the real appeal of the Third International would turn out to be among some of the anti-colonial patriots alienated from both Wilsonian rhetoric and the realities of power politics at the peace conference (Mazower 2012, 173-180; Mishra 2012, 195-196).

In the United States, virtually no city or state escaped the year's level of labor turmoil, but certain events drew national attention, applause, or anxiety.

- The first was the five-day general strike in Seattle in February, when workers throughout the city from 110 different unions walked off their jobs to show solidarity with shipyard workers. No one proclaimed the Soviet Republic of Seattle, but the original strike had been about the dockworkers' refusal to load ships transporting munitions to put down the Bolsheviks (Hagedorn 2007, 86-88).
- Then, in September the Boston police force went on strike over issues of pay, autonomy, and respect. For two days the city was in chaos, with students from Harvard and other volunteers desperately trying to fill the void. "To hell with football," the Harvard head coach growled, "if men are needed to protect Boston" (Russell 1975, quotation on 143).
- That same month about half the steelworkers in America went out on strike on a number of issues, led by the right of collective bargaining, imposition of an eight-hour day along with abolition of twenty-four hour shifts, and double pay for overtime. These demands were stonewalled by Judge Elbert Gary of U.S. Steel and the other steel magnates who met regularly to cooperate on prices and industry questions but were upset at workers' anti-competitive stance. Leveraging the fears unleashed among Americans by the Red Scare as well as the controversial strikes in Seattle and Boston, the owners ratcheted up the rhetoric about Bolsheviks. One of the strike leaders, William Z. Foster, did later become the head of the American Communist Party, but in 1919 he had not yet joined, and was even criticized by them for consorting with moderate union leaders – not even Wobblies, but rather the American Federation of Labor of Samuel Gompers. Although the strike would continue into 1920, its failure was already in the cards after African American strikebreakers were brought in by the steel companies (Brody 1965).
- In October John L. Lewis's mineworkers announced a strike for higher wages and better working conditions, only to face pressure not only from the coal industry but also from the Wilson administration.

When the government obtained an injunction to halt the strike in early November, Lewis surrendered. "We are Americans, we cannot fight our government" (Hagedorn 2007, 399).

For all the labor unrest of 1919, the outcome was a series of failures – suppression in Europe, and defeat and what amounted to ostracism in the United States. Obviously powerful governments and wealthy owners had advantages over unions, but it is still striking how difficult it was for workers to connect with the wider public in 1919. In the United States it is not sufficient to cite the Red Scare as a cause – it was in many respects a *result* of the year's labor conflicts, with Americans reading news about Russia with an eye to events in their own country, and vice versa. Working-class consciousness may develop in rare circumstances, but a century ago class identity capable of bonding all workers seems to have been far less significant than narrower identities of nation, ethnicity, race, or religion.

The League of Nations. The chief argument used against Lewis and the mineworkers in the fall of 1919 was whether the Great War had actually ended. The union had agreed not to press for wage increases during the war, only to be told that, since there was no treaty with Germany, the war was still continuing (Hagedorn 2007, 381). In this way the larger identity of class was thwarted on a technicality because of the failure of another larger identity – the League of Nations, the international peacekeeping institution that Wilson had made the centerpiece of his postwar vision. When he could not convince enough Senators to accept U.S. membership in the League as laid out at the Paris Peace Conference, and he proved unwilling to emasculate the League to win over enough votes to secure its passage, U.S. rejection of the Treaty of Versailles followed in 1920.

Wilson's failure has been subject to historical second-guessing ever since. Perhaps the most astute, measured, and persuasive judgment has come from Frank Ninkovich: "Wilsonianism was altogether too radical a departure for the American people to support given the traditional justifications for entering the war. Wilson's historical interpretation ran too far ahead of the store of collective experience upon which the acceptance of his views ultimately depended" (Ninkovich 1999, 77). One element of the departure involved what others have noted as Wilson's preference for covenant over contract. "The idea that peace could be achieved so long as the lawyers got the details right struck him as absurd. Words functioned to inspire, not to delimit" (Mazower 2012, 121). But Wilson was also a practicing political theorist who shrugged off international law in favor of a political dialogue in a structure more like the U.S. government than a legal tribunal. When one pieces together all its elements, the League of Nations offered an

expansive new identity for Americans in 1919 with which perhaps no one other Woodrow Wilson could be expected to bond emotionally and to identify.

VII. Conclusion

The identity assertions, defenses, and confusions of 1919 had both good and bad aspects and consequences, and are therefore similar in some respects to those of 2019. Indeed, often the same issues are fought out in many of the same countries. The assertions of religious identity in Ireland, Turkey, India, and the United States, the questions of national identity in Italy and Poland, the tensions between assertive and defensive racial identities in the United States, are still very much alive. But this is probably just another one of saying that the single most important lesson to be drawn from an overview of the world of 1919 is that whatever crises may confront humanity over the next century, it is likely that at their crux we will find questions of identity. Not every issue will involve identity, but most of the significant ones will, because, in modern democratic politics that revolve around self-assertion and thwarted self-determination, that will be how we can tell that they are significant. Yet we must not forget that, for all their importance, most identities are highly plastic and content-free. We will fight for them as essential elements in our self-awareness, our central truths, but we cannot really define or justify them. That too is a lesson of 1919.

Perhaps identities are one of the truths that Sherwood Anderson wrote about in *Winesburg, Ohio*, another novel first published in 1919 (1987 [1919], 24): “the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.”

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