

## Engaging Presentism in World History as Concept and in the Classroom

World historical studies often challenges us to address events seemingly remote from our daily lives. Teachers of world history have long struggled to take their students beyond their immediate environment into that other country, the past, while keeping them fully connected and engaged, a task made more difficult by the evolution of the “culture of distraction,” digital or otherwise, and a political context in which fact-based discourse is constantly being undermined.

Part of my strategy for engaging students, for making history relevant to their own lives, has been to connect past and present, suggesting analogies, while being mindful of the dangers of a distorting or conflating *presentism*,<sup>1</sup> an approach I developed with the participation of my own students, beginning with my introduction of a new university-level course on “The Great War, 1914-1918,” in which we explored several figures of a century ago whose ideas have particular resonance in our own time, some well-known to history or to the Great War literary/historical canon, some tied to leaders of a more recent vintage, such as those connected with the current war in the Ukraine.

The course proved successful in terms of student engagement, aided perhaps by the public as well as academic attention given the centennial of the Great War, which has continued, unabated, to grow.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that another current trend, an eddy in the ongoing current culture wars, is the desire of some educational reformers (not educators) to eliminate the use of anything like a “current events” approach to history, which is discussed in Kathleen Ferrero’s article in this issue’s Forum, “Teaching High School World History: Did State and National Standards Eliminate the Teaching of Current Events?”

However, whatever may be the future of my favored approach of connecting the past with the present, I offer a discussion of the perils and rewards of an appropriately guarded “presentism,” followed by two examples of its relevance to world historical studies when used to disentangle nationalism and racism across regions and cultures, and as an investigational tool in an analysis of Vladimir Putin’s war against Ukraine as

seen through the lens of the Great War. This study concludes with a discussion of how the knowledge gleaned from over two years of such analytical explorations has enabled me, in concert with my students, to energize my thinking as well as my teaching.

### **The Perils of Presentism**

In the history classroom, one of the primary tenets of historical thinking is to strenuously avoid “presentism,” that is, viewing the past through the perceptual lenses of the present to the point of distortion or occlusion. Our disciplinary anxiety about presentism surfaces from time to time, most recently in a controversial essay by American Historical Association (AHA) President James H. Sweet. Sweet, echoing Lynn Hunt’s 2002 AHA journal article, “Against Presentism,”<sup>3</sup> admonished his colleagues for collapsing the recent past into “the familiar terms of contemporary debates, leaving little room for the innovative, counterintuitive interpretations.” He concluded his article with the following warning:

*The present has been creeping up on our discipline for a long time. Doing history with integrity requires us to interpret elements of the past not through the optics of the present but within the worlds of our historical actors. Historical questions often emanate out of present concerns, but the past interrupts, challenges, and contradicts the present in unpredictable ways. History is not a heuristic tool for the articulation of an ideal or imagined future. Rather, it is a way to study the messy, uneven process of change over time. When we foreshorten or shape history to justify rather than inform contemporary political positions, we not only undermine the discipline but threaten its very integrity.<sup>4</sup>*

This is an old debate and concern, originally raised by philosophers of history,<sup>5</sup> and was certainly an important part of my own training in the field. However, I found Sweet’s “Author’s Note,” added two days later, more interesting than his original piece, especially considering his many achievements in African history and the study of the international slave trade. In a remarkable response to criticism that he was insensitive to issues surfacing in popular culture and discourse regarding African colonial history and the international slave trade, Sweet abruptly reversed his position, adding a sincere but paradoxical overlay to his original statement:

*I sincerely regret the way I have alienated some of my Black colleagues and friends. I am deeply sorry. In my clumsy efforts to draw attention to methodological flaws in teleological presentism, I left the impression that questions posed from absence, grief, memory, and resilience somehow matter less than those posed from positions of power. That is absolutely*

*not true. It wasn't my intention to leave that impression, but my provocation completely missed the mark.*<sup>6</sup>

Sweet's comments and retractions bring the value of connectedness in World History to the forefront. Concerns about presentism are valid, but creating history that is relevant to the times and meaningful to the public—especially to our students—is a much more urgent concern.<sup>7</sup>

I argue in this essay not for presentism—historians always have had to negotiate the uneven territory between past and present<sup>8</sup>—but for *connectedness* in history, for replacing Sweet's admonition against so-called teleological presentism with an acknowledgement of the uncanny in history, the intense historical resonance of the past in the present, as a vital teaching-and-learning opportunity. In the context of World History, there is another equally important aspect of connectedness and interconnectedness: the ways in which people, events, ideas, movements, and even revolutions interact across borders, nationalities, and communities. In other words, World History is entangled in a variety of ways, and the process of *disentanglement*—geographical or temporal—can be a useful and effective starting point for inquiry.

In the context of undergraduate teaching, I have found the line between presentism and historicism to be somewhat fluid and contingent. For example, when teaching the US Civil Rights Movement in the context of Black Lives Matter (BLM), as I have done for the past three years or so, it would be absurd *not* to connect past and present. In fact, the rapidity with which BLM became a global movement emphasizes and enhances the world-historical context of the mid-twentieth-century Civil Rights struggle. So often, current events recontextualize the history classroom, sometimes abruptly and in real time, and yet, when managed with nuance, they can provide rich opportunities for teaching and learning.

My own experience of designing and teaching the Great War course is another case in point. The intrusion of the present into the past provided vivifying and sometimes uncanny moments that encouraged students to move beyond binary thinking and simple cause-and-effect relationships and into a much grayer domain of historical ambiguity, indeterminacy of meaning, and multicausality. As I launched my new class, I feared that my students, studying the Great War in the midst of a rapidly developing European conflict and a raging global pandemic, were liable to become disoriented and possibly anxious. Media commentators, thinktank pundits, and scholars scrambled to cobble together meaning and to establish patterns and causal relationships from historical fragments, shards of narrative, and decontextualized reference points. The Crimean War, the rise of Hitler, the Holocaust, World War II, the founding of NATO in 1945, the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, and so on, were arranged, sometimes arbitrarily, to make sense of the current crisis in Ukraine and to encapsulate it in so many digestible soundbites. While many of these reference points were appropriate, I

became aware that much less commentary referenced the historical precedent of WWI. Exploring this puzzle with my students opened up our field of inquiry in a unique and immediate way; the history of WWI provided profound analogies, historical parallels, and resonances with Russia's present war of aggression against its sovereign neighbor. The echoing and mirroring in the 24/7 news cycle and social media, in contrast to the more structured narrative about WWI unfolding in the course, led me to explore the uncanny in history, in an empirical sense (as a specific theory emerging out of the experience of trauma during WWI), a metaphorical sense (regarding war and memory, individual and historical), and in a pedagogical sense (as a strategy of student engagement connecting past and present).<sup>9</sup>

### **Disentangling Nationalism and Racism across Regions and Cultures**

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924) addressed Congress, requesting a declaration of war against Germany. It was a reversal of his campaign slogan, "he kept us out of war," an inclination that Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) ridiculed in his *Autobiography* of 1912:

*Yet amiable but fatuous persons, with all these facts before their eyes, pass resolutions demanding universal arbitration for everything, and the disarmament of the free civilized powers and their abandonment of their armed forces; or else they write well-meaning, solemn little books, or pamphlets or editorials, and articles in magazines or newspapers, to show that it is an "illusion" to believe that war pays, because it is expensive. This is precisely like arguing that we should disband the police and devote our sole attention to persuading criminals that it is "an illusion" to suppose that burglary, highway robbery and white slavery are profitable. It is almost useless to attempt to argue with these well-intended persons, because they are suffering under an obsession and are not open to reason. They go wrong at the outset, for they lay all the emphasis on peace and none on righteousness. They are not all of them physically timid men; but they are usually men of soft life; and they rarely possess a high sense of honor or a keen patriotism.<sup>10</sup>*

Once sympathetic with peace advocates such as Jane Addams (1860-1935), Wilson now claimed that Germany's use of unrestricted submarine warfare against commercial and civilian targets was "a challenge to all mankind." "We have no quarrel with the German people," Wilson famously said. "We have no feeling for them but one of sympathy and friendship." After excoriating "Prussian autocracy," Wilson pointed to Russia as a beacon of hope: "Does not every American feel that assurance has been added to our hope for the future peace of the world by the wonderful and heartening things that have

been happening in Russia?” The most enduring sentences in one of the most important American presidential speeches in US history have echoed—at times sincerely and at times hollowly—for more than a century: “The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty.”<sup>11</sup> 1917, the height of the Great War, was also the year in which Ukraine briefly became a republic, independent of Russia. A headline in the *New York Sun* of Sunday, July 22 shouted, “Ukraine Reborn as a Nation after 263 Years in Serfdom.” Historical hindsight is so often tinged with irony.

The most informed writer on Ukraine at the moment of Ukraine’s national rebirth in 1917 was writer and public intellectual George Raffalovich (1880-1958), an ephemeral character in world history, a drifter blown by the zeitgeist of the WWI Era. Raffalovich’s career as a political commentator, his passion for social causes, and his nuanced understanding of international relations, politics, and history is one of the many stories that brings the history of our interconnected world to life but also connects past and present in significant ways. Raffalovich, a quasi-academic, a writer of speculative fiction,<sup>12</sup> and an articulate and informed spokesperson for the emergent Ukrainian nationalist movement, pinned his hopes for the Ukrainian future on a growing ethos of liberal internationalism, the foundation of which was peaceful coexistence, cooperation, and individual state sovereignty. Raffalovich, who came from a wealthy Jewish family of Ukrainian descent, took every opportunity between 1913 and 1918 to set the Ukrainian national movement in broad historical, geographical, and diplomatic contexts,<sup>13</sup> interweaving his socialist, anti-imperialist, and revolutionary ideas across oceans and borders. Raffalovich traveled widely and he frequently pulled up his anchor of citizenship, migrating from France, to England, and finally to the United States.

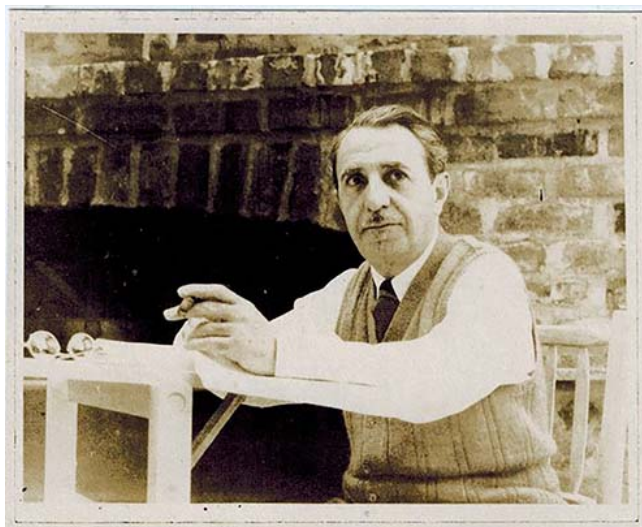


Image 1: George Raffalovich, c. 1946, with permission provided by the Raffalovich family.

Raffalovich was initially virulently “anti-Muscovite,”<sup>14</sup> but he eventually moderated his position with respect to Ukrainian independence, distancing himself from radical separatists but advocating for constitutionalism, cultural independence, and social justice. Writing in *The New Age* in October of 1915, Raffalovich conceded, “I have long since ceased to advocate the formation of an independent Ukraine. The eventual result is one that concerns no one but the Ukrainians. All I ask for is justice. That will be obtained when a body of opinion from England and France help the Russian people in wresting it from the Russian bureaucracy. That body of opinion is to be created only by dint of publicity, and this I attempt to supply.”<sup>15</sup>

Raffalovich had Fabian inclinations and was staunchly anti-imperialist and anti-militarist, an early example being his fierce and public objection to the Italian invasion of Ottoman Libya in 1911. Between 1915-1916 the cultural political climate seemed to shift under Raffalovich’s feet. In addition to anti-Semitism being directed at him personally, Raffalovich began to be accused of having pro-German sympathies. “Indeed,” as historian David Saunders points out, “most British officials came to believe that almost all Ukrainian political activity during the first three years of the war was pro-German. . . . In November 1916 MI7d [a branch of the British War Office’s Directorate of Military Intelligence, responsible for press liaison and propaganda] banned pro-Ukrainian literature in Britain, on the grounds that ‘the Ukrainian agitation is favored by the Austrian Government in order to embarrass Russia.’”<sup>16</sup> After leaving London for New York in 1915, Raffalovich became embroiled in a political scandal involving a British Liberal MP, Joseph King (1860-1943), in which Raffalovich leaked sensitive wartime information to the *New York Times*, violating Britain’s rapidly tightening Defense of the Realm Act and landing King in political and legal hot water.<sup>17</sup> Raffalovich hastily emigrated to the United States,<sup>18</sup> where he eventually attained citizenship and retooled his career as a versatile lecturer on international culture and politics. *The Atlanta Constitution* reported in 1931 that he received an A. M. in history from Emory University and that in 1931 “the Ukrainian University in Prague gave him the degree of doctor of Philosophy, in recognition of his many books and articles on Ukrainian history.”<sup>19</sup>

Ukraine gained a short-lived independence from Russia between 1917 and 1920, before it was absorbed into the Soviet Union. In July of 1918, Raffalovich expressed his hopes and dreams for an independent Ukraine in the *New York Sun*: “There is now in Kiev a Ukrainian Parliament with a responsible Government which has complete executive power within Ukraine. Ukraine elects her own representatives and controls her own Cabinet. The Ukrainian Ministry will discuss with Russia all points that need to be discussed. The peace, amity and cooperation will be strong. It is, in short, a partnership, but henceforth, Ukraine is to be a partner, not a subject.” Raffalovich argued idealistically that although people (and empires) were resistant to change,

Ukrainian independence from Russia represented change for the better, not for the worse. “It means that [in] having her liberty Ukraine will take her part in the fight for worldwide liberty. The Allies should welcome this new proof of Europe’s liberation from a great nightmare.”<sup>20</sup> Raffalovich went on to discuss the history, geographic features, and ethnic composition of his homeland. Phrases in Raffalovich’s article, viewed in retrospect in light of the present conflict in Ukraine, verge on the uncanny (in the sense of historical repetition and resonance in the present): “The nation having been considered non-existent in Russia had no political frontiers. The ethnographical frontiers of Ukraine which we must therefore adopt are not the easiest to determine, owing to the system of Cromwellian plantations which has been used by the Russian authorities at various periods, Crimea being the most thorough example of this policy.”<sup>21</sup>

Significantly, Raffalovich evoked the example of Ireland, the exploitative British plantation system, and the ruthless brutality of British subjugation which killed around one-fifth of the Irish population through war, famine, and disease during the Cromwellian reconquest of 1649-52.<sup>22</sup> This was an indirect reference as well to the Easter Rising of 1916, when people from all walks of life become politicized and involved in the struggle for Irish independence. Writing in *The Irish Standard* (Minneapolis, Minnesota) in 1918, Raffalovich noted that “many freedom-loving people in surrounding countries have settled in Ukraine and particularly from Ireland. The descendants of early Irish settlers still preserved their Celtic names—O’Briens, O’Rourkes, and others of unmistakably Gaelic origin, among them many distinguished men: military officers, political figures, and musicians.”<sup>23</sup> The questions raised by the Easter Rising, as reported by present-day historian Fearghal McGarry, were, and still are, hauntingly relevant to the citizens of Ukraine: “What led people from ordinary backgrounds to fight for Irish freedom? What did they think they could achieve given the strength of the forces arrayed against them? What kind of republic were they willing to kill and die for?”<sup>24</sup> George Raffalovich clearly understood. Writing under a penname, Bedwin Sands, Raffalovich wrote pointedly in the *Irish Standard* in September of 1916 in support of the Irish nationalist movement. To address the “sorrowful grievances” of the Irish people, the real solution is simple: “It spells four words: Ireland for the Irish.”<sup>25</sup> For students, Raffalovich’s heterodox yet interconnected political positions, his anti-imperialism, his anti-Zionist posture, and his passionate pro-Ukrainian stance are vivid illustrations of the worldwide rise of nationalism and revolutionary ferment, central motifs in the zeitgeist of this complex and changeable period.

George Raffalovich’s ability to float across borders, to weave his political arguments, comparisons, and activities transnationally, was certainly not unique in this period. And his interest in global revolutionary change, socialism, spiritualism, and the occult was shared by a variety of figures on the cultural and political left.<sup>26</sup> A parallel may be found in the life and times Annie Besant (1847-1933), feminist, Theosophist, socialist, and political activist, who worked tirelessly on behalf of self-government (or

Home Rule) for Ireland and then extended her advocacy to India, when the parallels of colonialist and imperialist oppression become too compelling to ignore.<sup>27</sup>

Besant's situation in India was complex—wonderfully so—and at times ambiguous, as she occupied a kind of liminal position in terms of identity, culture, and politics. As Marc Jason Gilbert, in his close study of Besant's and Indian politics during the WWI, has pointed out, "Besant's mix of Theosophist respect for India's ancient traditions and its progressive destiny led to occasional battles with both Indian progressives (who objected to her respect for India's traditional culture) and conservative elements of India's body politic (who objected to her modernist ideas, such as feminism)."<sup>28</sup> Besant's staunch commitment to the Home Rule movement in India, which she co-founded with Bal Gangadhar Tilak, was inspired by her previous work in Ireland. There, Home Rule was often seen as a means of defusing political unrest, but in Besant's hands it was a provocation that eventually saw her jailed by the Government of India as the most feared opponent of their regime. Gilbert goes on to say that "Besant sought to exploit that parallel, which could be seen by the British as familiar and, with the war on, as a now more than ever necessary route of step-by-step-negotiated constitutional reform. Since the Congress was long allied with the now nearly victorious Irish nationalist movement, Home Rule served as a familiar and empowering idea strong enough to draw all Indian political factions into the same political arena."<sup>29</sup> Taking a "Moderate" stance, which favored constitutional agitation over "Extremist" violence, Besant was an early supporter of Mohandas K. Gandhi's work in Africa and may have given him the title of *Mahatma* ("Great Souled One"). She was also an early and passionate supporter of Gandhi's program of "Passive Resistance" to British rule, and his strategy of mass struggle (*satyagraha*), that is, until three days before the Amritsar Massacre in 1919, which she predicted, and which Gandhi admitted, was the inevitable result of conducting a peaceful mass movement under the current circumstances.<sup>30</sup> Like Gandhi, she had her critics: her support of Sanskrit education and admiration for India's ancient past mentioned above left her vulnerable to accusations that she was disposed to favor Brahmins and Brahminism, which Ramachandra Guha notes, provoked the ire of the emerging non-Brahmin movement because she "interpreted the history of India in Hindu, even Brahmanical terms."<sup>31</sup> It is worth noting that the largely Brahmin leaders of the Indian National Congress, as well as Gandhi and Besant, perceived that non-Brahmin movement a threat to Indian political unity, much as anti-colonial/nationalist movements globally have viewed minority concerns.<sup>32</sup>

Whatever the case, in her Presidential Address delivered at the Thirty-Second International Congress held in Calcutta, December 26, 1917 (she was elected as President of the Indian National Congress a year after her release from internment for her political activity), Besant sought, and for a time succeeded, in helping unite India's largest political division--between the Hindu-dominated Congress and the Muslim



League—by focusing the attention of all Indians on the war as an exemplar of the racism undergirding the empire.

*As the war went on, India slowly and unwillingly came to realize that the hatred of autocracy was confined to autocracy in the West, and that the degradation was only regarded as intolerable for men of white races; that freedom was lavishly promised to all except to India; that new powers were to be given to the Dominions, but not to India. India was markedly left out of the speeches of statesmen dealing with the future of the Empire, and at last there was plain talk of the White Empire, the Empire of the Five Nations, and the “coloured races” were lumped together as the wards of the White Empire doomed to an indefinite minority . . .*<sup>33</sup>

Long before being elected president of the Indian National Congress in 1917, Besant had served as president of the Theosophical Society, an expansive global movement that espoused “universal brotherhood” and “the importance of supernatural powers in Eastern belief systems.”<sup>34</sup> Despite their differences and misunderstandings, Gandhi consistently acknowledged Besant’s contribution to India. His last words on Besant, as Guha points out, were: “So long as India lives, the memory of the magnificent services rendered by Dr. Besant will also live. She had endeared herself to India by making it the country of her adoption and dedicating her all to her.”<sup>35</sup>

Building on this trajectory in my course, I expanded the circle, crossing more borders (both national and disciplinary) and making more connections. For example, Annie Besant was undoubtedly connected to and influenced by the international humanitarian networks that developed in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, particularly the anti-caste (anti-racist) movement led by the British activist and publisher Catherine Impey and the African American exposure journalist Ida B. Wells (1862-1931). Impey founded the anti-racist, anti-imperialist journal *Anti-Caste* in March of 1888 and edited it until the last issue was published in 1895. Impey and Wells, with support from Frederick Douglass (1817 or 1818-1895) and W. E. B. Du Bois (1888-1963), formed the Society for the Furtherance of the Brotherhood of Man in 1893. Besant, a pioneer in “first wave” feminism in Britain, overlapped with Impey and Wells, and one of Besant’s journals, *Our Corner*, though less overt than *Anti-Caste* on the topic of race, “recognized in theory the brotherhood of the entire human race.”<sup>36</sup> In 1894, Wells was scheduled to speak about lynching and race prejudice at the Pioneer’s Club in London, a progressive women’s club considered to be one of the most democratic in the city, accepting women from all classes, rich and poor alike.<sup>37</sup> As Wells noted in her autobiography, *Crusade for Justice*, “I am to speak at the Pioneer Club Thursday next and Mrs. Annie Besant will preside. The Pioneer is the first woman’s club ever established in London. It has outlived the days of ridicule, and most of the brainy

women of London belong to it.”<sup>38</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, an associate of both Wells and Impey, shared Besant’s forthright anti-imperialism and connected it with the plight of African Americans in a world-historical context.

Writing in the *Crisis* for June 1919, as David Levering Lewis notes, Du Bois predicted, “‘soon or late’ would come an independent China, self-government for Egypt and India, and ‘an Africa for the Africans and not merely for business exploitation. Out of this war will rise, too, the American Negro, with a right to vote and a right to work and a right to live without insult.”<sup>39</sup> In her *Autobiography*, Ida B. Wells associated WWI with racial injustice at home, particularly the Brownsville (Texas) Affair of 1906, when Black soldiers were accused of killing a white man and wounding another. On scant evidence, President Theodore Roosevelt discharged 167 Black infantrymen. Wells recalled that as a result of the court-martial the twelve men accused of firing on the police and the citizens of Houston “were condemned to be hanged and the remaining members of that immediate regiment were sentenced to Leavenworth for different terms of imprisonment.” Wells took this as a call to action: “It seemed to me a terrible thing that our government would take the lives of men who had bared their breasts fighting for the defense of our country. I felt that a protest ought to be made about it, and I feared that unless the Negro Fellowship League did it, it would not be done.”<sup>40</sup>

Another example of globalized, interconnected nationalist and revolutionary ferment can be found in the history of modern Armenia. On May 28, 1918, the Armenian National Council declared the independence of Armenia, before it was divided between the Turkish National Forces and the Russian Red Army. This brief moment of national independence came in the wake of the 1915 Ottoman genocide against Armenians and other ethnic minorities, a tragedy engineered by the Committee of Union and Progress—the so-called Young Turks—that etched a horrific template for the reprisals exacted by a decaying empire: scapegoating, ethnic cleansing, and genocide.

As Peter Balakian has persuasively argued, the movement in America for humanitarian intervention for the Armenians in Turkey in 1896, and its massive relief effort in the region during the genocide of 1915 and beyond, commenced the modern era of human rights relief.<sup>41</sup> The Armenian independence movement of the late nineteenth century is a resonant *prequel* to the Easter Rising of 1916, particularly the activities and demonstrations of the Dashnak and Hunchak parties and the powerfully symbolic Ottoman Bank Incident of 1896, when a small cluster of men, led by Armen Garo (1872-1923), barricaded themselves in the prestigious Ottoman Bank and made demands for genuine “freedom of worship, education, and the press,” and “the restoration of usurped real property.”<sup>42</sup> Garo later recalled the dramatic events of 1896 (which he miraculously survived), as Balakian reports: “[Garo] wrote, what could we do, ‘Let those wretched ones massacre us?’ Garo implored the people inside the bank not to be afraid. ‘We’re neither murderers, nor bandits. We are Armenians who have come here in defense of our people’s cause.’ An Irishman who worked at the bank shouted

back—'I am an Irishman, sir, and I understand you very well. How can I help you?'"<sup>43</sup> Armenian "roving" revolutionaries and intellectuals in this period, as Hourì Berberian has suggested, participated in multiple revolutions (Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian), and "their border crossings within the region and beyond, their adoption and interpretation of and adaptation to such influential and global ideologies as constitutionalism, federalism, and socialism, become ideal subjects for retelling a complex story of the revolutionary linkages, of local and regional actors with global ties to big ideas."<sup>44</sup>

Once again, George Raffalovich's analysis in 1914 was prophetic: "A glance at the map of the Middle East will show how the importance of every question of the European and Asiatic problems of the day is linked to a certain degree to the Ukraine question. The future of Armenia and the free passage of the Dardanelles are the two most important ones to England. Unless we impose a return to the old policy on Eastern affairs and cease to support indiscriminately a Government that cannot deal decently by their subject races, it is there that we shall pay the penalty."<sup>45</sup> In a number of publications from this period, Raffalovich placed the consequences of Russian imperialism and militarism within a wider, international context in order to awaken America and Britain to grave violations of human rights worldwide: "The American public have been saturated of late with breaches of international law, and numerous tales of atrocities. Jews, Lithuanians, Belgians, Serbs, Armenians, and even the Poles themselves have one by one brought the story of the wrongs they have suffered, until arson, pillage and rape are taken almost as a matter of course."<sup>46</sup>

The global nature of the Great War appeared to observers as an intricate multicultural and transnational panorama, as historian Peter Englund has documented so vividly and intimately. For example, on a windy, raw February day, the smell of snow in the air, Olive King, a volunteer ambulance driver for the Serbian Army, is stationed in Salonica, repairing her ambulance. In this overcrowded, over-fortified town, "[t]he streets are like a fancy-dress parade of uniforms: the blue-gray of the French, the khaki of the British, the brown of the Serbs, the brownish green of the Russians and the green-grey of the Italians. In addition to this polyglot conglomeration there are colonial troops from India, Indo-China and North Africa."<sup>47</sup> The Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1916, made famous by the larger-than-life figure of T. E. Lawrence, adds another layer of complexity to the global history of the Great War. Lawrence was deeply committed to Arab independence and famously advocated for it in the unsettling aftermath of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916. An especially dramatic moment, fueled by chivalric tales of the Crusades, was the battle in Palestine in 1917 between British and Ottoman forces. These conflicts, and contradicted promises made to Arab leaders, "accelerated the development of Arab nationalism, while at the same emboldening the British government, in the November 1917 Balfour Declaration, to indicate its support for the establishment in Palestine of 'a national home for the Jewish people.'"<sup>48</sup>

Lawrence would try another strategy, launching a very public campaign against direct rule of Iraq by the British, which led to the Iraqi Revolt, or the Great Iraqi Revolution, of 1920. In a widely read letter to the *London Times*, July 23, 1920, Lawrence made an economic argument against direct rule of Arab nations by Britain: “Freedom is enjoyed when you are so well armed, or so turbulent, or inhabit a country so thorny that the expense of your neighbor occupying it is greater than the profit.”<sup>49</sup> Following this story thread provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the discourse of post-WWI Middle Eastern colonialism, which, as Michael Provence notes, “was based on racial, civilizational, and ultimately legal justifications for the League of Nations mandate system. The colonizing Great Powers’ self-image represented everything the colonized population was claimed to lack: rationality, hygiene, modernity, moderation, and civilization itself. The League of Nations served as the principal support on which such claims to rule based themselves.”<sup>50</sup>

New complexities emerge when introducing the Great War in the context of Africa, where colonialism and imperialism are in the foreground. Senegalese memoirist and Great War veteran, Bakary Diallo (1892-1978), recalled the calming effects of his *gris-gris*, amulets that served as protective talismans, as he lay gravely wounded in the field hospital in Neuilly-sur-Seine. A friend from Senegal had advised him in the Ndar language, “Whenever you’re in trouble, concentrate on your *gris-gris* and the difficulty will disappear before your very eyes.” This freed him from the awful, uncanny nightmares he was experiencing and allowed him to sleep peacefully. In Diallo’s telling, *gris-gris*, made from bits of straw, rare herbs, sliced monkey tails, snakes’ heads, rat hair, elephant hair, preserved boars’ hearts, and so on, wrapped in rabbit hide or goatskin, become talismans of philosophical reflection and of memory:

*You poor inert materials, I say, that living beings believe to be holy, with faith born from centuries of belief, what mysterious powers do you have? What powers do men attribute to you, in secret or in public? How do we explain why humans, who are so afraid of death and even of pain, invented you to believe in you when they go to war? And I, insignificant member of the human race, why can’t I understand that the strongest charms are the rule of love? Instead, I spend my time on earth thinking about destroying you, pillaging you, in order to make my talismans and adorn myself with them. What sort of creature am I?<sup>51</sup>*

Diallo thus shapes his wartime experience into an *antiwar* narrative espousing universal brotherhood and world peace.

Exploring the interconnected histories of peace advocacy and human rights during the Great War was surely, in my own case, colored and heightened by the war in Ukraine, another instance of the uncanny (the unnerving sense of historical repetition, doubling, and simultaneity) serving as a starting point for historical inquiry. However,

this exploration of historical repetition and mirroring need not dissolve into teleological presentism. I would argue instead that these instances of connection across borders and across time are essential opportunities for deconstructing historical truisms (that history repeats itself, for example), for problematizing binary thinking, for helping students to understand the complexity of our globalized world, and for making history more relevant and resonant.

## **Past into Present: Vladimir Putin's War against Ukraine through the Lens of WWI**

In the context of teaching the Great War course in the spring of 2022, Russia's war against Ukraine evoked images and plotlines from the period of 1914-1918, pictures and stories that were constantly reinforced by the 24/7 news cycle: the conventional land war on European soil, the systematic focus on civilian targets and domestic infrastructure, the displacement of an entire population, even the closing of the Dardanelles by Turkey—not in 1914 but in 2022! In so many ways, the sense of the uncanny is heightened by our digital media environment. The past and present come at us in continuous, simultaneous streams. History is dismembered and resurrected by the minute, fact and fiction, truth and falsehood, past and present, strangely mixed. And yet this context provides a starting point for disentanglement and disambiguation and for critical inquiry.

Relatively few historical references were made to the Great War in contemporary commentary and analysis in the media, and yet President Joseph Biden's comments as the war escalated seemed to channel Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric of democratic evangelism: "Liberty, democracy, human dignity—these are the forces far more powerful than fear and oppression. They cannot be extinguished by tyrants like Putin and his armies. They cannot be erased . . . from people's hearts and hopes by any amount of violence and intimidation. They endure. And in the contest between democracy and autocracy, between sovereignty and subjugation, make no mistake: freedom will prevail."<sup>52</sup>

On February 24, 2022 President Biden announced that he was "authorizing additional strong sanctions and new limitations on what can be exported to Russia." The United States was not acting unilaterally, he emphasized. A coalition of twenty-seven members of the European Union were coordinating, including France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and many others, "to amplify the joint impact of our response."<sup>53</sup> Media commentators, analysts, pundits, and historians all scrambled to draw historical parallels in order to make sense of Putin's most recent aggression towards Ukraine. At times it was like glimpsing history through a postmodern kaleidoscope: early Ukrainian tribal origins, Tartar and Mongol invasions, Prince Vladimir accepting orthodox Christianity, the death of the Russian Imperial

Empire, the birth of the Soviet Union, the rise of fascism, World War II, the creation of NATO, the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet Union, the horrific battles in Chechnya, and the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. These historical reference points were employed, somewhat randomly, it seemed to me, to explain cause and effect or to assign blame. Historical framing and periodization matter, as I constantly remind my students, and this is especially the case for the Great War. Putin went so far as to compare events in separatist-controlled Dombas with genocide, and he justified his war in Ukraine as “denazification,” even as Russia proceeded to flatten entire cities, damage hospitals, a maternity ward, schools, town halls, theaters sheltering women and children, apartment buildings, a nuclear power plant, and even a Holocaust memorial site, marshaling crushingly asymmetrical fire power against a much weaker but more passionate volunteer army of born-again nationalists.

The Biden administration’s response to Russia’s latest expression of authoritarian militarism has been forceful, collaborative, and cautious, the specter of World War III always looming on the horizon. However, Biden’s comments initially appeared to be a pale reflection of Woodrow Wilson’s rhetoric of democratic evangelism and his heartfelt ethos of liberal internationalism. On February 4, 2021, Biden addressed reporters in the White House Briefing Room, arguing that the United States must meet accelerating global challenges “with diplomacy rooted in America’s most cherished democratic values: defending freedom, championing opportunity, upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law, and treating every person with dignity. That’s the grounding wire of our global policy—our global power. That’s our inexhaustible source of strength. That’s America’s abiding advantage.”<sup>54</sup> As G. John Ikenberry has pointed out with such clarity, strands of internationalism culminated in the twentieth century. Vladimir Putin’s *Weltpolitik* seems to vacillate between regional imperialism and a cynical authoritarianism. Biden, in response, has framed his call to action in terms of Wilsonian liberal internationalism with tendencies toward a “globalist” and a “realist” orientation and an emphasis on collective security through military alliances, underwritten by American hegemonic power. In some respects, Biden’s policies toward the war in Ukraine seem to diverge intentionally from Wilson’s emphasis on diplomacy, negotiation, and arbitration, preferring the “big stick” of global sanctions and indirect military intervention. The ghost of Theodore Roosevelt still haunts American foreign policy.

The present discourse around Putin’s war of conquest against Ukraine has drawn upon Wilsonian tropes: “we have no quarrel with the Russian people,” “we will meet the test,” and, “we will save democracy.”<sup>55</sup> While Biden has championed the solidarity and sanctity of NATO military alliances and the coercive power of global economic sanctions, Wilson was much more committed to internationalism and peacemaking, best exemplified by the last of his Fourteen Points, which called for a “general association of nations,” laying the foundation for the League of Nations in 1920 and,

subsequently, the signing of the United Nations Charter in 1945. This legacy is characterized both by the hope and idealism of international harmony and failure: the failure of the United States to join the League of Nations and the inherent weaknesses of the United Nations engendered by hegemonic power and hierarchy. However, the Wilsonian legacy of liberal internationalism is complex. Beneath the surface of liberal democratic evangelism and enlightenment lay a fractious mixture of moral blindness and outright racism. Wilson's support of the post-Civil War order in the Jim Crow South, which he extended by segregating the civil service, was mirrored in his foreign policy. As Ikenberry explains, this paradox is reflected in Wilson scholarship from the mid-twentieth century to the present. "[Wilson] proclaimed seemingly universal principles about the rights and protections of nations and peoples, but he never questioned prevailing imperial and racial hierarchies. His notion of the self-determination of nations and peoples was, in practice, quite limited. At Versailles, only the peoples within the European parts of the collapsed Eurasian empires were granted national recognition. The others were consigned to 'protectorates.'"<sup>56</sup> Ikenberry, drawing on the work of historian Erez Manela, concludes that the hopes for self-determination of colonized, marginalized, and stateless peoples across the globe, including Chinese, Koreans, Arabs, Jews, Armenians, and Kurds, among others, were dashed with the realization that the Western domination of their societies would not end, as Wilson was not above colluding with British and French imperial interests.<sup>57</sup>

President Joseph Biden's own ancestry is significant, as well. In June of 2021, Biden, a proud Irish American and a Catholic, made an emotional address to US troops stationed in England, ahead of the G7 Summit. *The Irish Post* reported that "[Biden] took the opportunity to quote the renowned Irish poet W. B. Yeats (1865-1939), paraphrasing the famous finishing line from his poem, "Easter 1916," which described the beginnings of the Irish War of Independence after the Easter Rising. 'The world has changed utterly,' Mr. Biden said. 'A terrible beauty has been born.'"<sup>58</sup> Yeats memorialized in his verse Irish revolutionaries "MacDonagh and MacBride / And Conolly and Pearse," ensuring that their ghosts would haunt Ireland's future and that their story would live in history. "Easter 1916" unfolds like a terrible but beautiful dream of death, rebirth, and transformation: "We know their dream; enough / To know they dreamed and are dead; / And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?"<sup>59</sup>

The British writer, peace activist, and feminist, Vera Brittain (1893-1970), who became an agent and speaker for the League of Nations, recalled, in her classic Great War memoir, *Testament of Youth* (1933), the moment when the Covenant of the League of Nations, distilled from articles 10, 12, and 15 of the Treaty of Versailles, was read aloud for the first time. "The air was electric," she wrote, "with a dramatic sense of testing and crisis as the familiar words brought home—probably, to most of that audience, for the first time—the full significance of the League in the international relationships of a tortured post-war world: 'The Members of the League undertake to

respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In the case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled. ...” Britain also reported that, after a breathless moment, Lord Robert stood up and, with diplomatic eloquence, proclaimed, “if these articles are disregarded, the whole foundation of new Europe will be shaken!”<sup>60</sup>

As refugees continue to stream out of Ukraine by the million, and as Europe and the world prays for peace, we grope amidst a fog of historical reference points, metaphors, analogies, folk parables, tropes, and media soundbites—the “tropics of discourse,” to echo Hayden White’s apt phrase—to rationally explain a situation that is something akin to madness.<sup>61</sup> And yet the very real but too often understated traditions of internationalism, cooperation, and peace activism are worth remembering, amplifying, and holding onto. In the United States, as Michael Kazin has argued, this movement was represented by a diverse array of cosmopolitan Socialists, anti-militarists, and feminists who worked closely with members of Congress to mount street demonstrations and popular exhibitions, challenging advocates of military “preparedness.”<sup>62</sup> Activist intellectuals, such as Max Eastman, editor of the radical journals *The Masses* and *The Liberator*, directly challenged Woodrow Wilson about the prospects of America engaging in war and of curtailing civil liberties at home: “There is no use making the world safe for democracy if there is no democracy left in the world. There is no use of waging a war for liberty if every liberty we have must be abolished in order to wage war.”<sup>63</sup>

As democratic institutions around the world deteriorate in the face of militant authoritarianism, an international ethos and sense of community is emerging in political culture, state and local governments, finance, commerce, industry, the arts, and academia, and its traces are revealed in bands of blue and yellow, adorning social media, clothing, gardens, and even city skylines.

This spontaneous, *ad hoc* flowering of internationalism, peace activism, and a renewed awareness of the importance of strengthening international law, echo the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century international peace movement. That an ethos of internationalism and peace is still alive is a testament to youth, to a new generation of global leadership catalyzed by public opinion and grassroots advocacy. History contains many uncanny moments, to echo Sigmund Freud; these can be valuable teaching moments as well.





Image 2: Miami Skyline, March 6, 2022. Photograph by the author.

In a prescient speech to the UN General Assembly, September 17, 2021, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky (b. 1978) seemed to channel this entangled history of war and peace, appealing to member nations: “It’s time to wake up!” Ukraine awoke to the call of the United Nations in 1945, he said pointedly, and since then it has not fallen asleep.

*It did not fall asleep when it survived the Holodomor [a manmade famine in the Soviet Union from 1932-33 that killed millions of Ukrainians] [and] Babyn Yar [a site of massacre carried out by Nazi Germany in 1941]. Did not fall asleep when the whole world survived two wars, the Holocaust, [and] lost 100 million people. This was the price for humanity to realize that all nations, all countries are equal, and all conflicts must be resolved through dialogues and only through dialogues, not tanks. Believing this, in 1945 Ukraine became one of the founding members of the United Nations. Today, they would be shocked to see the words "ensure the*

*rights of all peoples" in the theme of the General Assembly. I'm sure they would say, "What have you been doing all these 76 years?"<sup>64</sup>*

With regard to the present crisis in Ukraine, it is the international peacemaking tradition of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I think, that constitutes a genuinely usable past. The international peace movement was a loose, progressive, and enduring coalition that strove, according to Ikenberry, to “strengthen international law and institutionalize norms of the peaceful settlement of disputes through arbitration and the building of an organization of nations with wide participation and authority over matters of peace and security.”<sup>65</sup> The moral blindness of liberal internationalism vis-à-vis a history of hierarchy, racism, and imperialism has inspired the democratic world community to examine its vanities and blind spots, as it rouses to Zelensky’s clarion call, “It’s time to wake up!” Perhaps the present teaching moment can awaken our students to the vibrancy and urgency of studying war *and* peace in an interconnected global context. After all, a valuable and valid aspect of history is to instill hope, even if through a realist lens.

### **Connecting the Present to the Past by “Doing History”**

In my history courses, I emphasize the close reading and contextualization of primary sources, encouraging students to “do history” rather than merely consume it. I share the small discoveries and connections I make in my own reading and research and explain how my perception of historical events changes as I read, learn, and experience new things. Recently, while teaching the first part of our US History survey, I explained to my students that my perception of the American Revolutionary War had changed after immersing myself in the history and literature of WWI. Joseph Plumb Martin’s eyewitness account of the Battle of Yorktown (1781), with its vivid description of trench warfare, sappers, miners, and abatis, struck me as strangely modern, and the globally interconnected nature of the Revolutionary War stood out in bold relief. Raising students’ awareness of how our own perceptions and past experiences shape our historical understanding is especially important for students who have recently transitioned to college or university from high school, where history curricula is often shaped by standardized testing and orientated toward chronology and factual memorization rather than historical thinking.

One strategy I use to connect past and present is the “Then and Now Essay,” a writing assignment that encourages students to reflect on the distinctions and continuities between past and present. In “The Gilded Age and the Progressive Era,” a course that precedes my Great War course in sequence, I gave students the following prompt: “The Then and Now Essay entails a historical reflection on past and present. How is the Gilded Age/Progressive Era a kind of historical gateway to modern America? Identify the key issues, social movements, tensions and conflicts, cultural

changes, artistic developments, economic realities, ideologies, scientific and industrial innovations, environmental issues, demographic shifts, diplomatic and/or military projects, and political debates. It might be helpful to focus your essay on one or two of these areas.” Here is another version: “Are we presently living in a second Gilded Age or Progressive Era? What have scholars and commentators said about this? What's your take on the issue? What are the implications of thinking about the present historical moment as Gilded Age 2.0 or Progressive Era 2.0?” From the Great War course: “How does the social and political activism of historical figures such as Catherine Impey, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, and Annie Besant prefigure the modern Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and, more recently, Black Lives Matter, especially with regard to the intersection of anti-racism, anti-imperialism, and feminism in a global context? More specifically, how did the work of Ida B. Wells prepare the ground for an activist like Alicia Garza (b. 1981), one of the three female founders of Black Lives Matter?” In a different vein: “Compare the worldviews of George Raffalovich and Volodymyr Zelensky with regard to Ukrainian nationalism and independence from Russia. What are the limits of these kinds of historical comparisons?” Finally: “Are there lessons or insights we can apply from the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 to the present COVID-19 pandemic? Is this a case of history repeating itself? Why or why not?”

One of my favorite strategies for student engagement is a digital storytelling capstone project, tagged in my syllabus as “Documenting History: Creating Short-Form Documentary Films.” Digital stories are short narrative films constructed from basic digital materials around a well-crafted voiceover. I introduce the project in my syllabus this way: “The Documenting History Project, a short-form, research-based documentary film using primary documents and images, will give you an opportunity to explore, document, and convey a highly focused topic within the scope of the course that is especially interesting to you. These short-form documentaries, sometimes referred to as digital stories, will be carefully constructed from still images, texts, voiceovers, and music soundtracks using very basic film editing techniques. Typically, they will be about 5-7 minutes in length. Along with the completed film, you will be required to submit a *Voiceover Script* (3-5 pages), a visual *Storyboard*, and a *Contextual Hypertext Essay* (5-7 pages), placing your film into a larger historical context and providing curated links to resources for further reading and research.” For the digital story capstone project in my Gilded Age/Progressive Era course, each student focuses on contextualizing a primary source from the course reading and research, “exploding” a significant moment in history, or profiling a minor historical figure of interest to them. At the end of the course, we have a Digital Story Film Festival instead of a final exam, a celebratory event which serves to cement the sense of community we have created during the semester. The digital stories are creative and are expressed in the students’ individual voices. I encourage them to connect history to their own experience inside and outside of the classroom, allowing them to embody and take ownership of the story in ways that linear

argument and disciplinary logic often suppress. In my Gilded Age/Progressive course, I shared a short, no-budget documentary film I made using digital-story techniques for the Gibson House Museum, a Victorian house museum in Boston's Back Bay neighborhood where I serve on the board of directors.<sup>66</sup> My goal was to model, at a professional level, digital storytelling, and creative inquiry.<sup>67</sup>

A more intensive, immersive approach to student engagement entails experiential learning and short-term, faculty-led travel experiences. At Stonehill College, my colleague Dr. Anna Ohanyan and I offer a program of linked courses (in History, Peace and Conflict Studies, and Political Science), short-term travel and cultural tourism, and intensive civil society internships in Yerevan, Armenia (in education, environmentalism, women's issues, political transparency, and international conflict mediation). We work to place students according to their individual interests. We call it the LION Program, which stands for the Learning Inside Out Network. The coursework connects past (the long history of the Armenian people and the Armenian diaspora, the WWI Era, the Armenian Genocide at the hands of the Ottoman Turks, comparative perspectives on Empire, and the Soviet Era of Armenian history); and the present (economics, the environment, revolution and democracy, civil society, war and peace, and geopolitics). The program concludes with an international conference for students and junior faculty that we host in Yerevan at local colleges and universities. The last iteration of the conference was *Local Roots of Global Peace: International Student Conference on Global Development and Security Studies*, Eurasia International University, Yerevan, Armenia, June 21-22, 2019, where I offered a keynote address on the history of the Armenian Genocide.

A final strategy of engagement that I used in my Great War course grows out of my longtime experience and training in writing pedagogy. The concept is fairly straightforward, if you have the time and the bandwidth in any given semester: share your own writing and research in progress with your students in order to model critical and creative inquiry. As the course progressed, I wrote and published an op-ed-style piece for the *EVN Report*, an online international public affairs journal out of Yerevan, Armenia, about the conflict in Ukraine and the historical precedent of WWI. "Waking Up to History: Putin's War and the Historical Precedent of WWI"<sup>68</sup> was written and published during the course of the semester, and I shared my drafting-and-revision process with my students in real time. It was my work with students in Armenia, in fact, which had led me to develop the course on the Great War in a global context in the first place—Armenia, that cultural, historical, and geopolitical crossroads in the heart of Southern Caucasia.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> In her review of Malcom Gaskill's *The Ruin of All Witches: Life and Death in the New World*, in the *New York Times Book Review* [October 30, 2022, 10] Caroline Fraser applauds Gaskill for scrupulously avoiding presentism, the "practice of examining the past through a contemporary perspective." Here, Fraser articulates the disciplinary truism that historians should strive to inhabit a reality different from their own by distancing themselves from the past and "suspending hindsight."

<sup>2</sup> The historical resonance of this topic in contemporary popular culture can be gauged by Sam Mendes' and Krysty Wilson-Cairns' haunting film, *1917* (2019), and by Edward Berger's very recent *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022), based on the 1929 anti-war novel of the same name by Erich Maria Remarque.

<sup>3</sup> Lynn Hunt, "Against Presentism," *Perspectives on History: The Magazine of the American Historical Association*, 1 May 2022, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2002/against-presentism>.

<sup>4</sup> James H. Sweet, "Is History History?," *Perspectives on History: The Magazine of the American Historical Association*, 17 August 2022, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2022/is-history-history-identity-politics-and-teleologies-of-the-present>.

<sup>5</sup> A classic example is Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vintage, 1961).

<sup>6</sup> James H. Sweet, "Is History History?"

<sup>7</sup> Especially when we consider the decline in history majors and the fact that many colleges and universities are dropping the general education history requirement.

<sup>8</sup> An excellent and much more fruitful discussion of this issue can be found in Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Freud's "The Uncanny" (1919) is an essay haunted by the Great War of 1914-1918, its violence, mechanization, trauma, and horror. It is in many respects an essay about war and memory and the ways in which the past and present intersect—or collide. Freud connects the feeling of the uncanny to intellectual and moral uncertainty, repetition, mechanization, doubleness, images of dismemberment, and, most importantly, a morbid anxiety that comes "from something repressed which *recurs*." Freud extends his analysis to "repressed desires and surmounted modes of thinking belonging to the prehistory of the individual and of the race." Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," in James Strachey, ed., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV (1914-1916) (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute for Psycho-Analysis, 1957), 279; Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 241; Heidi Schlipphacke, "The Place and Time of the Uncanny." *Pacific Coast Philology* 50, no.2 (December 2015): 163-173; Pierre Pachet, "World War One and the Interpretation of Freud's Concept of the Event." *Comparative Literature* 88, no. 6 (December, 1973): 1316. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2907677>; and Anthony Sampson, "Freud on the State, Violence, and War." *Diacritics* 35, no. 3 (Autumn, 2005): 78-91, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4621043>.

<sup>10</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *Theodore Roosevelt; An Autobiography* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913), 577, quoted from the digitized copy in the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/13024840/>.

<sup>11</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War Against Germany," April 2, 1917 [transcript], Miller Center website, University of Virginia, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-2-1917-address-congress-requesting-declaration-war>.

<sup>12</sup> Published in the British journal *The New Age*, between about 1907 and 1915, Raffalovich's short fiction, some of which was in the form of veiled political allegory, included fantastical themes, such as interplanetary travel and alien life, weaving in speculative ideas about political philosophy (socialism versus aristocracy), economics, gender roles, morality, future civilizations, and science. He also published gritty realist fiction depicting peasant life in Russia, state-sponsored discrimination and violence experienced by Jews and Poles in the Russian Empire, and the increasing social and political unrest bubbling just beneath the surface of society.

<sup>13</sup> David Saunders, “Britain and the Ukrainian Question (1912-1920),” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 103, No. 406 (Jan. 1988): 49-52. Accessed via JSTOR.

<sup>14</sup> George Raffalovich, “The Ukraine and Prussia.” *The New Age*, New Series, XVI, No. 17 (February 25, 1915): 466.

<sup>15</sup> George Raffalovich, in “Letters from Russia.” *The New Age*, New Series, XVII, No. 24 (October 15, 1915): 581.

<sup>16</sup> David Saunders, “Britain and the Ukrainian Question (1912-1920),” 59.

<sup>17</sup> “Somerset M.P. fined £100,” *Taunton Courier, Bristol and Exeter Journal and Western Advertiser* (Taunton, Somerset, England, October 25, 1916): 1. King was charged in 1916 for violating Britain’s Defense of the Realm Act, specifically for “1) With having without lawful authority communicated information with respect to the supply and condition of certain war material of the King in a letter dated August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1916, addressed to George Raffalovich of New York. 2) Unlawfully recording certain information with respect to the supply and condition of certain war material of the King. 3) Doing certain acts preparatory to the commission of an offence under the Defense of the Realm Act, viz., dictating and causing to be transcribed, and thereafter signing and addressing, a letter dated August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1916, to George Raffalovich, containing information with respect to the supply and condition of war material of His Majesty.”

<sup>18</sup> In a January 15, 1917 letter to the Secretary of the Junior Conservative Club of London, Raffalovich characterized his conversations with Joseph King as friendly exchanges of “gossip of London and New York.” After explaining why he was only able serve Britain during the war in a limited way, Raffalovich lamented, in Kafkaesque terms, his ill unfair treatment by the authorities: “The very stupid way in which a police official treated me on the evidence of a letter which I never saw, written by a man whom I never met, to some third person, caused me to realize that unless I was prepared to live a life of continuous falsehood throughout the war, it would be better for me to come and help the Ukrainians of America.” Sincere thanks to George Raffalovich’s granddaughter, Alison Raffalovich, for generously sharing this letter with me.

<sup>19</sup> “Series of Talks on Current Events Announced by University Women.” *The Atlanta Constitution* (November 15, 1931): 48. Accessed via Newspaper.com. A father of four children (Alan, George, Frances, and Grace) with his first wife Dorothy Harmon Dawson Raffalovich (1889-1940), George Raffalovich, Sr. died in New Orleans, Louisiana on May 17, 1958. Obituary of George Raffalovich. *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, Georgia, May 19, 1958): 21. Accessed via Newspapers.com. Also, George Raffalovich family tree. Accessed via Ancestry.com.

<sup>20</sup> George Raffalovich, “Ukraine Reborn as Nation after 263 Years in Serfdom.” *The Sun* (New York, July 22, 1917): 9.

<sup>21</sup> George Raffalovich, “Ukraine Reborn as Nation after 263 Years in Serfdom,” 9.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> “Famous Irish Ukrainians,” *The Irish Standard* (January 26, 1918): 1, accessed via Newspapers.com.

<sup>24</sup> Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising, Ireland: Easter 1916* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>25</sup> Bedwin Sands [pseud. George Raffalovich], “Ireland for the Irish,” *The Irish Standard* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 2, 1916): 1. Accessed via Newspapers.com.

<sup>26</sup> Raffalovich had an interest in the occult and collaborated with Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), English occultist, ceremonial magician, writer, painter, and mountaineer, on a series of seven experimental and mystical one-act plays entitled *The Rites of Eleusis* in 1910, the intention of which, according to Crowley, was “to illustrate the magical methods followed by a mystical society which seeks for illumination by [erotic] ecstasy.” Quoted in Tracy W. Tupman, “Theatre Magick: Aleister Crowley and *The Rites of Eleusis*,” PhD diss., (The Ohio State University, 2003): ii.

<sup>27</sup> Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee and Franz Coetzee, eds., *Empires, Soldiers, and Citizens: A World War I Sourcebook* (Chichester, England: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 292.

<sup>28</sup> Marc Jason Gilbert, “The war got in the way: Annie Besant, the contingencies of the Great War, and the course of Indian nationalism,” in Roger D. Long and Ian Talbot, eds., *India and World War I: A Centennial Assessment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 166-167.

<sup>29</sup> Marc Jason Gilbert, “The war got in the way,” 172.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>31</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *Rebels Against the Raj: Western Fighters for India’s Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022), 47.

<sup>32</sup> Kasinath Krishnaji Kavlekar, *Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India, 1873-1949* (Kolhapur: Shivaji University Press, 1979), 107; and Nicolas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011– 2011), 242. See also, Faisal Devji, “A minority of one,” *Global Intellectual History* (Taylor Francis Online, 2021), DOI: 10.1080/23801883.2021.1939505. My thanks to Marc Jason Gilbert for raising this point.



<sup>33</sup> Annie Besant, “The Case for India: The Presidential Address Delivered by Annie Besant at the Thirty-Second Indian National Congress Held at Calcutta, 26th December 1917, <https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=12820>.

<sup>34</sup> Hans Martin Krämer and Julian Strube, eds., *Theosophy across Boundaries: Transcultural and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Modern Esoteric Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 5 and 16.

<sup>35</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *Rebels Against the Raj*, 177.

<sup>36</sup> Caroline Bressey, *Empire, Race, and the Politics of Anti-Caste* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 18 & 98. Bressey’s excellent research and analysis is indebted to Paula Giddings’ exhaustive biography of Wells: Paula J. Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Caroline Bressey, *Empire, Race, and the Politics of Anti-Caste*, 179.

<sup>38</sup> Alfreda Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020 [1970]), 151.

<sup>39</sup> David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009), 359. As context for one of my many “archival labs,” periods of structured inquiry with primary documents, I shared selections from a remarkable book, Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: African American Troops in World War I* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996).

<sup>40</sup> Alfreda Duster, ed., *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America’s Response* (New York: Harper/Collins, 2003), 64.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris*, 104-105.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>44</sup> Hourii Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2019), 2.

<sup>45</sup> Bedwin Sands [pseud. George Raffalovich], *Ukraine: A Lecture Delivered on Ukrainian History and Present-Day Political Problems* (London: Frances Griffiths, 1914), 71.

<sup>46</sup> Bedwin Sands [pseud. George Raffalovich], *The Russians in Galicia* (New York City, New York and Jersey City, New Jersey: Ukrainian National Council, 1916), 5.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Englund, *The Beauty and the Sorrow: An Intimate History of the First World War*, trans. Peter Graves (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 331.

<sup>48</sup> Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee and Franz Coetzee, eds., *Empires, Soldiers, and Citizens*, 76.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 123.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, 97.

<sup>51</sup> Bakary Diallo and Lamine Sengor, *White War, Black Soldiers: Two African Accounts of World War I*, trans. Nancy Erber and William Peniston, ed. George Robb (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, Company, Inc., 2021), 120.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Biden, “Remarks by President Biden on Russia’s Unprovoked and Unjustified Attack on Ukraine,” February 24, 2022, *The White House Website*, accessed March 3, 2022,

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/24/remarks-by-president-biden-on-russias-unprovoked-and-unjustified-attack-on-ukraine/>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Joseph Biden, “Remarks by President Biden on America’s Place in the World,” February 4, 2021, *The White House Website*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/>.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph Biden, “Remarks of President Joe Biden—State of the Union Address As Prepared for Delivery,” March 1, 2022, *The White House Website*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/03/01/remarks-of-president-joe-biden-state-of-the-union-address-as-delivered/>.

<sup>56</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crisis of Global Order* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020), 133.

<sup>57</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy*, 135-136.

<sup>58</sup> Rachel O’Connor, “Joe Biden Quotes Irish Poem about the Easter Rising in Emotional Speech to Troops,” *The Irish Post*, June 10, 2021, <https://www.irishpost.com/news/joe-biden-quotes-irish-poem-about-the-easter-rising-in-emotional-speech-to-troops-214012>.

<sup>59</sup> William Butler Yeats, “Easter, 1916,” Poetry Foundation website, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43289/easter-1916>. A valuable resource for poetry of the Great War is Constance M. Ruzich, ed., *International Poetry of the First World War: An Anthology of Lost Voices* (London, New York, Oxford, Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021).

<sup>60</sup> Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1978 [1933]), 563.

<sup>61</sup> Hayden White, *The Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

<sup>62</sup> Michael Kazin, *War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914-1918* (New York, etc.: Simon and Schuster, 2017), xii.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Kazin, *War Against War*, 190.

<sup>64</sup> Volodymyr Zelensky, “Speech by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky at the general debate of the 76<sup>th</sup> session of UN General Assembly” (17 September 2021). *President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky Official Website*, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/vistup-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelenskogo-na-zagalnih-70773>.

<sup>65</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy*, 88.

<sup>66</sup> Todd S. Gernes, *The Wounded Eros: Remembering Charles Hammond Gibson, Jr. (1874-1954)*. The film was made in 2006 in collaboration with photographer Shun Liang and premiered at the Boston Athenaeum, October 10, 2007, paired with an original play, *These Four Walls: A History of a Romantic Friendship*, coauthored with Dr. John Anderson of Emerson College. Here is a link to the film: <https://vimeo.com/48716088>.

<sup>67</sup> See Todd Gernes and Elizabeth Belanger, “Digital Storytelling in Teaching History,” H-Net (February 11, 2019), recorded in April 2018 at the OAH Annual Meeting held in Sacramento, California as part of the Mellon-funded Amplified Initiative, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/3699541/pdf>. For very recent examples of my students’ digital stories, consult the following YouTube playlist: Gilded Age & Progressive Era Digital Stories, HIS 309 Fall 2022, Professor Todd S. Gernes, Stonehill College: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLeTrlQoir8OFQMdtYolHg2SoTulKDEw4e>.

<sup>68</sup> Todd Gernes, “Waking Up to History: Putin’s War and the Historical Precedent of WWI.” *EVN Report* (March 20, 2022). <https://evnreport.com/politics/waking-up-to-history-putins-war-and-the-historical-precedent-of-wwi/>.