ΤΕΥΧΟΣ ΔΕΚΑΤΟ
2021/2

ΚΡΙΤΙΚΗ

ΕΞΑΜΗΝΙΑΙΑ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΗ ΕΠΙΘΕΩΡΗΣΗ

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ΛΟΥΙΖΑ ΑΥΓΗΤΑ
ANDREW HEMINGWAY
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Εικόνα εξωφύλλου: Μάνος Τσιχλής
Ξημερώματα στο νταμάρι (Dawn at the quarry), μάρμαρο, ορείχαλκος, 30x11x15cm, 2019.

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Περιεχόμενα

ANDREW HEMINGWAY*

Class Consciousness and the Crowd in American Realist and Socialist Art, c. 1905-1940

Abstract

Although the nineteenth-century realist aesthetic was essentially bourgeois in its origins, by the early twentieth century it had been widely adopted in the parties of the Second International. But the precise definition of this aesthetic was debated and its definition was rendered more contentious as modernist forms challenged established naturalistic modes of representation in the visual arts. Modernism was associated with the principle of aesthetic autonomy (frequently – and misleadingly – collapsed into aestheticism) while realism was often linked to an instrumental or utilitarian conception of artistic purpose, despite the fact that many realist artists rejected such an equation. The stakes were raised after 1917, when the Bolshevik capture of power in Russia gave the definition of revolutionary art new prominence and urgency. This article takes as exemplars of these ideological shifts the transition from the theory and practice of the leading realist painter associated with the American Socialist Party in its heyday, John Sloan, to that of his friend, the prominent communist painter Philip Evergood, focusing particularly on their image of the crowd as an emblem of proletarian consciousness.

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Περίληψη

Συγγραφέας: Andrew Hemingway*. Τίτλος: Ταξική συνείδηση και το πλήθος στην αμερικάνικη ρεαλιστική και σοσιαλιστική τέχνη, c. 1905-1940.

Αν και η ρεαλιστική αισθητική του 19ου αιώνα υπήρξε επί της ουσίας αστική ως προς την προέλευσή της, έως τις αρχές του 20ου αιώνα είχε υιοθετηθεί ευρέως από τα μέλη της Δεύτερης Διεθνούς. Ο ακριβής ορισμός αυτής της αισθητικής ωστόσο, αποτέλεσε αντικείμενο αντιπαράθεσης και κατέστη ολοένα και πιο αμφιλεγόμενος καθώς τα νεωτερικά ιδιώματα άρχισαν να θέτουν υπό αμφισβήτηση τους καθιερωμένους τρόπους φυσιοκρατικής αναπαράστασης στις εικαστικές τέχνες. Ο μοντερνισμός συσχετίστηκε με την αρχή της αισθητικής αυτονομίας (συχνά –και παραπλανητικά– διολισθαίνουσα στον αισθητισμό) ενώ ο ρεαλισμός συνδέθηκε με μια εργαλειακή ή ωφελιμιστική αντίληψη περί καλλιτεχνικού σκοπού παρά το γεγονός ότι αρκετοί ρεαλιστές καλλιτέχνες απέρριψαν μια τέτοια εξίσωση. Οι προκλήσεις εντάθηκαν μετά το 1917, όταν στη Ρωσία η ανάληψη της εξουσίας από τους Μπολσεβίκους έφερε με επείγοντα τρόπο στο προσκήνιο την ανάγκη για έναν ορισμό της επαναστατικής τέχνης. Αυτό το άρθρο αντιμετωπίζει ως παράδειγμα αυτών των ιδεολογικών μετατοπίσεων την περίπτωση της μετάβασης από την θεωρία και πράξη του John Sloan, ρεαλιστή ζωγράφου συνδεδεμένου με το Αμερικάνικο Σοσιαλιστικό Κόμμα στην περίοδο της ακμής του, σε αυτήν του φίλου του και διακεκριμένου κομμουνιστή καλλιτέχνη Philip Evergood, εστιάζοντας στον τρόπο με τον οποίο απέδωσαν το πλήθος ως έμβλημα της προλεταριακής συνείδησης.

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This essay concerns ways working-class agency was pictured in American realist art from the heyday of the American Socialist Party to the years of the Popular Front. I take as my primary exemplars works by the most accomplished realist artists associated with these conjunctures, John Sloan and Philip Evergood.[1] I will argue that political imperatives to instrumentalize imagery of the working class were focused particularly on the figure of the urban crowd. But while these imperatives issued in some effective political graphics, they were resisted in relation to oil paintings, in which the crowd became an emblem of proletarian good fellowship and the potential for solidarity but not of a triumphant class consciousness. Although the communist culture of the 1930s ratcheted up calls for a propagandistic imagery of the proletarian mass that emblematized the "will to struggle," more sophisticated artists and writers of the period avoided triumphalist heroics as inauthentic. The cost of validity was a realism with a melancholic cast in which the crowd is only victorious ethically and socialism remains over the horizon.

The question of theory might not seem much of a topic for the pre-1917 American left, which has a reputation as theoretically impoverished. One recalls Trotsky's retrospective observation on the basis of his two-month stay in New York in 1917: "In ideas the socialist party of the United States lagged far behind, even European patriotic socialism."[2] But Trotsky's English was limited and he may have got a somewhat false impression. True, had he known their writings he would likely have been unimpressed by reformist socialists who claimed to bring Marxism up to date through Darwin, Veblen, or Dewey or some composite of their ideas. However, the factional divisions that set revolutionaries against reformists in Europe were just as intractable in the United States, and they were intensified by the underhand campaign of the Socialist Party's right wing to recall the IWW leader Big Bill Haywood from the party's National Executive Committee in early 1913 – as a result of which Haywood ceased to be active in the party and it lost one of its most charismatic leaders.[3]

Intellectual resources for the critique of Revisionism were certainly available. According to Brian Lloyd's mordant assessment of early American Marxism, the main voices of the socialist left in the years after 1905 were the Dutch socialist and scientist Anton Pannekoek, the Russian immigrant lawyer Louis Boudin, and the Italian American Louis Fraina – later a friend of Trotsky's.[4] Already in 1907 Boudin had published a swingeing attack on

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[1] Evergood's art is often associated with the category of social realism, a term that did have some currency in the late 1930s and 1940s, but which names an attitude with a wide range of formal concomitants rather than a style or a coherent aesthetic. The main attempt to give it definition, David Shapiro, ed., *Social Realism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1973), I find unpersuasive.

[2] Leon Trotsky, *My Life: An Attempt at an Autobiography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 274.

[3] Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement,* 1897-1912 (New York & London: Monthly Review Press, 1972), chapters 17-18.

[4] For Boudin's critique of Revisionism, see Brian Lloyd, *Left Out: Pragmatism, Exceptionalism, and the Poverty of American Marxism, 1890-1922* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 121-136; for Pannekoek, see 175-185; for Fraina, see 185-196.

Bernstein and others in his *Theoretical System of Karl Marx.*[5] Of the Revisionists as a whole he wrote: "The red flag of the social revolution is the red cloth the sight of which none of them can bear."[6] Against the revisionist prognosis of a gradual and peaceful path to socialism, Boudin insisted that socialism's coming would be sudden and violent. Through the struggle of organized labor to ameliorate its conditions the working class did not learn to accommodate to the capitalist system and its parliamentary institutions. Rather, it learnt a new ideology of collectivism that demanded complete socialization of the means of production.[7] Whatever the shortcomings of Boudin's Marxism, it gave proletarian consciousness and the class struggle a fundamental role in the realization of socialism.[8]

The tendency in the American labor movement that seemed to confirm the collective experience of production would of itself generate revolutionary consciousness was, of course, the Industrial Workers of the World or IWW, founded in 1905. (Despite its name, the majority of its members did not in fact come from the ranks of the factory proletariat). Although Boudin stood aloof from the rancorous strategic debate over industrial versus craft unionism that divided the Socialist Party's left and right wings between supporters of the IWW and of the American Federation of Labor,[9] Pannekoek and Fraina sided unequivocally with the IWW. One might have expected theorists so concerned with workers' psychology and revolutionary will to have had at least a critical interest in Georges Sorel's theses. But although T.E. Hulme's translation of *Reflections on Violence* was published by the radical New York publisher B.W. Huebsch in 1914 and there are a few passing references to Sorel as a syndicalist ideologue in the pages of the *International Socialist Review* and *New Review* – the main Chicago and New York organs of socialist thought respectively – I have found no sustained socialist response to his most important work.[10] Fraina certainly knew it by 1913 but seems to have judged it negatively.[11] It is

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[5] Louis Boudin, *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx in the Light of Recent Criticism* (Chicago: C.H. Kerr, 1907). The essays in this collection were published earlier in *International Socialist Review.*

[6] Boudin, *Theoretical System,* 230.

[7] Boudin, *Theoretical System,* 228-229. Chapter 2 addresses ideology and the role of ideas in history. Cf. L.B.B. [Boudin], "Theory as a Social Force," *New Review* 1, no. 7 (15 February 1913): 215-218.

[8] On Boudin's limitations, see Lloyd, *Left Out,* 121-136.

[9] Lloyd, *Left Out*, 137. On those divisions, see James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America, 1912-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 29-53.

[10] On the *New Review* as an organ of the left and its relations with the Socialist Party, see Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: The Viking Press, 1957), 49.

[11] Fraina refers to the book before the American edition appeared in "Syndicalism and Industrial Unionism," *International Socialist Review* 14, no. 1 (July 1913): 26. The article distinguishes between the anarchist foundations of syndicalism in Europe and the socialist bases of American industrial unionism and is implicitly critical of Sorel.

likely that Sorel's pessimism and his Bergsonian conception of the unconscious were too much at odds with the mechanistic psychology of the anti-Revisionists to draw any sympathetic response from them.[12]

If we are to get a sense of how early twentieth-century American socialists imagined the formation of revolutionary consciousness, we may find a more suggestive guide in Ernest Poole's novel *The Harbor,* which was number eight in the bestseller novels list of 1915 and went through twenty-two editions within a few months of its publication. The child of a wealthy Chicago commodities trader, the Princeton-educated Poole came to socialism through the Settlement House movement and muck-raking journalism. He had also reported the 1905 Revolution in Russia for the liberal magazine *The Outlook.*[13] Written in the first person and modelled on Poole's own experiences, *The Harbor* is essentially the Bildungsroman of a writer. Like his main character "Billy," Poole was for the working class, but not of it.

In Poole's narrative, the word that denotes the power and collectivism of workers is "crowd." Again, and again, *The Harbor* offers us a kind of phenomenology of the crowd as a class empowered, transformed by the common struggle. Its climax is a syndicalist strike on the Brooklyn waterfront that ends in bloody violence. Although the IWW is not mentioned in the book, the strike's organiser, "Marsh," is almost certainly modelled in part on Big Bill Haywood, who Poole had met as a journalist during the Paterson Silk Strike of 1913, and who reportedly told him that the union planned to shut down New York harbour in the spring of the following year – although the IWW was weak in the city and this did not occur.[14]

The Harbor's narrator probably mirrors Poole's own class and ethnic ambivalences, in that he is simultaneously repelled by the polyglot, racially and ethnically various immigrant working class of New York – "a chaotic army of ignorant men" – and also fascinated by it.[15] On the mantel piece of Billy's organiser friend Joe Kramer stands a large charcoal sketch of "a crowd of immigrants just leaving Ellis Island", of which Billy says: "They were of all races. Uncouth, heavy, stolid, with that hungry hope in all their eyes for more of the good things of the earth, they seemed like some barbaric horde about to pour in over the land."[16] At points, *The Harbor* reads like a dockside variant of Upton Sinclair's muckraking novel of the Chicago meat yards, *The Jungle,* which appeared nine

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[12] Note the negative appraisal of Bergson – which makes passing reference to Sorel and his syndicalist following – by the French radical socialist Charles Rappaport, "The Intuitive Philosophy of M. Bergson," *New Review* 2, no. 3 (March 1914): 133-142. On Sorel, see 139. Bergson's philosophy is "the Philosophy of Reaction".

[13] For Poole, see Ernest Poole, *The Bridge: My Own Story* (New York: MacMillan, 1940); Truman Frederick Keefer, *Ernest Poole* (New York: Twayne, 1967).

[14] For Poole's experiences of Paterson and their influence on *The Harbor,* see Steve Golin, *The Fragile Bridge: Paterson Silk Strike, 1913* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 144-145, 147, 235.

[15] For fear of the crowd, see Ernest Poole, *The Harbor* (NewYork: MacMillan, 1915), 233.

[16] Poole, *The Harbor,* 289-290.

years earlier. But that is written in the third person, and its central character is a Lithuanian immigrant.

In *The Harbor* the "crassly ignorant" dockworkers achieve a new power when they overcome their internal differences and act as one. To begin with, Billy can only see the waterfront pickets as "mobs of angry men", with "nothing inspiring" about them, "an appalling force turned loose, sightless and unguided." But when he observes them working together in meetings or demonstrations his perception is transformed. Describing a strike meeting, he writes: "Here was the first awakening of that mass thought and passion which swelling later into full life was to give me such flashes of insight into the deep buried resources of the common herd of mankind, their resources and their power of vision when they are joined and fused in a mass. Here in a few hours the great spirit of the crowd was born."[17] Away from the crowd, many of the workers are weak, despairing and timid. But through this democratic "new god," they acquire a power that in the end no police or military force can resist. The strike is lost, but the spirit of the crowd goes on because it is "reality," it is "life."

Around the time of Poole's novel, the pre-eminent realist tendency in American art was that of the Ashcan School. Like Poole, the Ashcan artists were fascinated by New York's immigrant throngs, but in their paintings and graphic work the crowd features, for the most part, only as a mass of vital plebeian humanity engaged in picturesque street activities or enjoying its earthy pleasures at Coney Island, a boxing match or the theatre and so on.[18] Three of the Ashcan School's main personnel were drawn to radical politics in a gamut that ranged from philosophical anarchism to socialism; several of them contributed to *The Masses,* the most vital organ of American socialist culture prior to 1917.[19] The key figure here is John Sloan, who illustrated some of Poole's magazine stories and belonged to the same Socialist Party branch.[20] In 1907 he drew an image of a big city rush hour for a Poole short story (fig. 1) that anticipates some of the motifs of *The Harbor* and suggests Poole may have helped shape Sloan's aesthetic perception of the crowd.[21]

Although Sloan and his wife joined the Socialist Party in early 1910, it is hard to fix

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[17] Poole, *The Harbor,* 315. For "the great spirit of the crowd," see also 344. This may be seen as a counter-image to the reactionary crowd psychology of Gustav Le Bon.

[18] The essential general sources on the Ashcan School are: Rebecca Zurier, Robert W. Snyder & Virginia M. Mecklenburg, *Metropolitan Live: The Ashcan Artists and their New York* (National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC, 1995) and Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[19] For *The Masses* and its artists, see Rebecca Zurier, *Art for the Masses: A Radical Magazine and its Graphics, 1911-1917* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

[20] See Van Wyck Brooks, *John Sloan: A Painter's Life* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1955), 46, 87, 97n.

[21] Ernest Poole, "From Critturs to People: The Recruiting of the Cities," *Saturday Evening Post* 179, no. 41 (13 April 1907), 5-7, 27-28. See Elizabeth H. Hawkes, *John Sloan's Illustrations in Magazines and Books* (Delaware Art Museum, 1993), cat. no. 161.

Fig. 1. John Sloan, "At Six O'clock the Waves of People Swing Across Broadway", *Saturday Evening Post,* 13 April 1907.

a date when he became a convert to socialism. In retrospect he wrote of "socially-conscious painting" that: "My old work was unconsciously very much so, especially before I became a Socialist."[22] His move from Philadelphia to New York in 1904 seems to have both sharpened his perceptions of inequality and injustice and brought him more into contact with political radicals.[23] In the presidential election of November 1908 he voted for William Jennings Bryan at the same time as noting in his diary that he was not a Democrat and of no party.[24] By the middle of the following year he was contributing to the socialist daily *The Call.*

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[22] John Sloan, *Gist of Art* (New York: American Artists Group, Inc., 1939), 3. This accords with bleak pictures such as *The Coffee Line* (1905; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh). See Rowland Elzea, *John Sloan's Oil Paintings: A Catalogue Raisonné,* 2 vols. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 67.

[23] John Loughery, *John Sloan: Painter and Rebel* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., Inc., 1995), 144-147.

[24] Bruce St. John, ed., *John Sloan's New York Scene* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 259.

Sloan had already pictured the democratic system in one of its aspects in his 1907 painting *Election Night* (fig. 2), which depicts the crowd gathered to see election results projected onto the *New York Herald's* building at the intersection of Broadway and Sixth Avenue.[25] The elections were for the State Assembly and two judgeships for the New York Court of Appeals. Both the Socialist Party and the moderately pro-labor Independence Party put forward candidates for the judgeships. However, promises of political reform have no bearing on Sloan's bacchanalian scene, which shows revellers under the El teasing each other with showers of confetti, ticklers, and tin horns. In his diary entry Sloan noted the sexual provocation among the bacchanalian crowd, which he emblematizes through the provocatrice in the red dress, who has clearly been active with her tickler but now recoils from a handful of confetti thrown over her shoulder by the man with the brown derby to her right – perhaps her companion, perhaps a pickup. Fellowship and sexual play seem to override political concerns.

Fig. 2. John Sloan, *Election Night,* 1907, oil on canvas, 25⅜ x 31¾ in. (66,99 x 81,92 cm), © Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, New York.

[25] Zurier et. al., *Metropolitan Lives,* 77, 143; Zurier, *Picturing the City,* 260-261; Elzea, *John Sloan's Oil Paintings,* vol. 1, 82-83; Heather Campbell Coyle & Joyce K. Schiller, eds., *John Sloan's New York* (Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE, 2007), 39, 164.

Fig. 3. John Sloan, "Political Action," *The Masses* 4 no 6 (January 1913).

Sloan himself ran as a Socialist candidate for the State Assembly three times in 1911-13, and in 1915 he ran for a judgeship.[26] But this doesn't mean that he was committed to the so-called parliamentary route to socialism. His ironically-titled *Masses* cartoon *Political Action* (fig. 3) was an illustration to Max Eastman's editorial in the January 1913 number, which insisted that political and direct action were not alternatives but necessary accompaniments whose appropriateness had to be determined experimentally, case by case.[27] Sloan's image pictures the exercise of force by anti-socialist thugs to discourage voting for the socialist candidate Meyer London in the 1912 Congressional Election, which Sloan witnessed as a volunteer poll watcher – he is the figure with glasses on the upper left who is pushed so hard against the wall by the cigar-smoking tough in the derby that his own hat is squashed, despite the presence of the policeman. "It is a matter of public rumor", wrote Eastman "that [London] was deprived of legitimate ballots by methods of the kind indicated. But John Sloan was or tried to be, a watcher at the polls, and his verdict is a good deal better than a rumor. It is both an actual and a symbolic portrayal of one thing that may happen when political action alone is resorted to for an attack upon private capital."[28]

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[26] Zurier, *Art for the Masses,* 193 n.83; Loughery, *John Sloan,* 175.

[27] For the meaning of this distinction, see Kipnis, *American Socialist Movement,* 391-394. Although often associated with violence by its opponents, direct action – also known as sabotage – was any action undertaken by workers at the point of production.

[28] Max Eastman, "Knowledge and Revolution," *The Masses* 4, no. 4 (January 1913): 5-7, 5; Loughery, *John Sloan,* 176. Discussed in Zurier, *Art for the Masses,* 89, 196 n.20. Max Eastman, "Ditto," *The Masses* 4 (February 1913): 5.

There are no signs that Sloan viewed the crowd as any more politically aware in his other great street level evocation of New York's streaming masses, *Six O'clock Winter* (fig. 4) of 1912, which seems primarily designed to suggest the interplay of individual impulses within a mass united only by proximity.[29] Sloan's hurrying figures are released from the monotony of their labors no less than his six exuberant young women in *The Return from Toil* (fig. 5), which appeared on the cover of *The Masses* in July 1913. A judgment on work is implied in their haste to flee it but this suggests more a behavioural reflex than a step in the formation of critical class consciousness. Still it is worth remembering that Poole, at least, saw in the circulating crowds of the city a latent collectivity.[30]

At the very moment in 1912 when he was working on *Six O'clock Winter,* Sloan's wife, Dolly, was actively involved in mobilizing demonstrations in New York to support the Lawrence, Massachusetts, strikers – a remarkable uprising of more than 20,000 woollen

Fig. 4. John Sloan, *Six O'clock, Winter,* 1912, oil on canvas, 26⅛ x 32 in., © Phillips Collection, Washington DC.

[29] For this work, see Zurier et. al., *Metropolitan Lives,* 95; Elzea, *John Sloan's Oil Paintings,* vol. 1, 115; Coyle & Schiller, *John Sloan's New York,* 39. For Sloan on the formal problems of depicting crowds, see Sloan, *Gist of Art,* 78-79.

[30] Poole, *The Harbor*, 384-385

and textile workers drawn from 25 nationalities and speaking 45 different languages, organised by the IWW.[31] Yet when Sloan and Dolly met a contingent of a thousand gathered to welcome a group of strikers' children at Grand Central Station in February, he seems to have seen them mainly as a "mob" that needed socialist organisation to calm down the anarchist element. Or so his diary entry suggests.[32] All of which points to a correlation between Sloan's imagery of the urban crowd and his sense of the limits to its untutored capacity for political action.

Fig. 5. John Sloan, "The Return from Toil," *The Masses* 4, no 26 (July 1913).

The American Socialist Party had no readymade aesthetic of struggle to offer Sloan, even had he wanted one. When he met the socialist writer Herman Bloch in 1909 he recorded in his diary: "Told him that I had no intention of working for any socialist object in my etchings and paintings though I do think that it is the proper party to cast votes for at this time."[33] But this is not the end of the story as Joyce K. Schiller and Heather Campbell Coyle, among others, have elucidated.[34] In his important – if inaccurate – biography of the painter, Sloan's long-term friend the cultural critic Van Wyck Brooks claims that Sloan "never read a word of Marx," and presents his socialism as an essentially compassionate response

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[31] On which, see: Joyce L. Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964), chapter 6; Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, vol. 4, *The Industrial Workers of the World*, 1905-1917 (New York: International Publishers, 1965), chapters 13 and 14.

[32] Entry for 10 February 1912, St. John, *John Sloan's New York Scene,* 600-601.

[33] Entry for 5 May 1909, St. John, *John Sloan's New York Scene,* 310.

[34] Coyle & Schiller, *John Sloan's New York,* 50-55. What was probably one of Sloan's most politically explicit pictures, *Tammany Hall,* New York (1911) was destroyed in a fire in 1930. See Elzea, *John Sloan's Oil Paintings,* vol. 1, 111-112.

to injustice and misery: Socialist Party theories "had never stirred his mind."[35] But Sloan was a voracious reader with a sharp intellect, and his theoretical capacity should not be underestimated. In spite of what he wrote in his diary in 1909, Sloan's engagement with socialism, by his own account – if we can trust Brook's report – affected his art profoundly and led to a "'crisis of conscience'" in the years 1909-12 when he "very seldom saw pictures". "[I] subtly weaned him away from painting city pictures" wrote Brooks, and when he resumed painting he found he had "outgrown" such themes.[36]

In 1911 Sloan told a socialist editor "when propaganda enters my drawings it's politics not art – art being merely an expression of what I think of what I see."[37] He would quit *The Masses* in 1916 after a rancorous dispute among the editors over whether or not all the illustrative material should have an instrumental function.[38] Floyd Dell, one of the magazine's literary lights, described those who dissented from the instrumentalization of their work – and for whom Sloan was probably the leader – as "art-for-art's sakers."[39] But Sloan had no aversion to making crude propaganda at times, as can be seen in his contemporary illustrations to George Kirkpatrick's anti-war tract of 1910, *War – What For?* (fig. 6).[40]

Some of Sloan's political graphics for *The Masses* are far more artful. This is notably the case with two images he made to give emotional bolster to the magazine's critique of a proposal for a New York state constabulary. In "Concerning Cossacks" published in April 1914, Eastman assailed the practice of appointing private police who were given the powers of public officials; when such guards were mounted on horseback they effectively became a cavalry. Referring to the use of the Pennsylvania Constabulary in the Philadelphia General Strike of 1910, he observed: "as a matter of history the constabulary of Pennsylvania is more dangerous to the lives and liberties of people without property than the private guards."[41]

The Philadelphia General Strike was sparked by a dispute between the Amalgamated Association of Street Car and Electric Railway Men of America (AFL) and the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company over wages, hours, and union recognition, which lasted from February to April 1910. The company – which was widely unpopular in the city – brought

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[35] Brooks, *John Sloan*, 91, 92. Brooks himself was a Ruskinian socialist and ardent admirer of William Morris.

[36] Brooks, *John Sloan,* 99-100.

[37] Entry for 1 August 1911, St. John, *John Sloan's New York Scene,* 554.

[38] The best discussion is in Zurier, *Art for The Masses,* 51-57.

[39] Zurier, *Art for The Masses,* 53.

[40] George R. Kirkpatrick, *War – What For?* (published by the author, 1910, in its eighth edition in February 1913). See Hawkes, *John Sloan's Illustrations,* nos. 797-809.

[41] Max Eastman, "Concerning Cossacks," *The Masses* 5, no. 7 (April 1914): 6. This follows on from the editorial comment "Out for Murder," *The Masses* 5, no. 6 (March 1914): 6

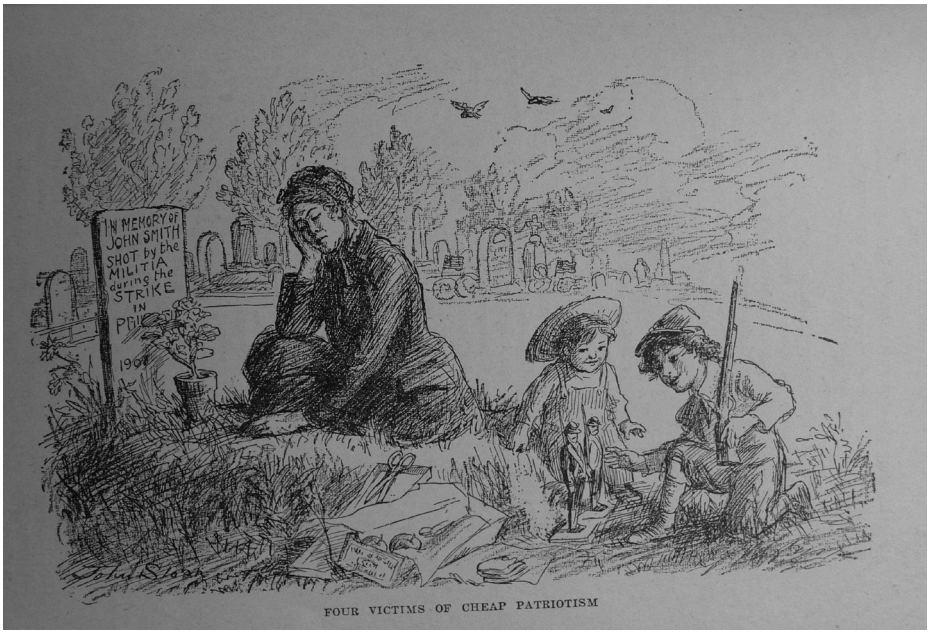

Fig. 6. John Sloan, "Four Victims of Cheap Patriotism," from Kirkpatrick, *War – What For?,* 241.

in strike breakers and there was considerable violence against scabs and destruction of cars from the beginning.[42] The PRT was supported by the city's mayor, John E. Reyburn, who supplemented the city's police forces with the Pennsylvania Fencibles (a private militia) and the National Guard. It was at least partly the introduction of the Guard that prompted the city's Central Labor Union to call a general strike, which lasted from 4 – 21 March and won considerable support.[43] Sloan's images refer to a mass demonstration of 20,000 in and around Philadelphia's Independence Square called by the General Strike Committee for March 5, which was ridden down by mounted police. According to the press reports hundreds of women and girls – who would later play a major role in the strike as a women's auxiliary – were among those trampled and beaten.[44] AFL president Samuel Gompers likened Reyburn's mounted police to Cossacks.[45]

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[42] Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States,* vol. 5, *The AFL in the Progressive Era, 1910-1915* (New York: International Publishers, 1980), 147.

[43] Foner, *History of the Labor Movement,* vol. 5, 154.

[44] Foner, *History of the Labor Movement,* vol. 5, 155, 158-159.

[45] Foner, *History of the Labor Movement,* vol. 5, 156. Cf. the socialist *New York Call,* quoted 148.

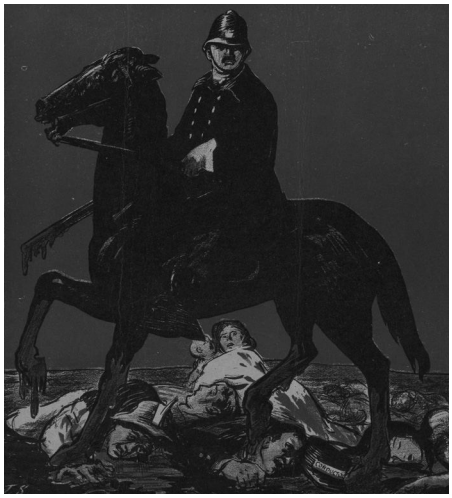

Fig. 7. John Sloan, "Shall We Have a State Constabulary In New York?," *The Masses* 5, no 35 (April 1914).

Sloan had already attacked the use of militia against strikers in one of his illustrations for Kirkpatrick's *War - What For?* (fig. 6) in which a widow grieves over her husband's grave – the tombstone inscription reveals that he has been shot down by the militia during a strike – while her little boys play with toy soldiers and contract the virus of "cheap patriotism." For the cover to *The Masses* issue where Eastman's text appeared Sloan – a native of Pennsylvania, who had lived in Philadelphia for 27 years – represented a mounted constable as an equestrian conqueror (fig. 7). It was, of course, a motif that went back to the Roman statue of Marcus Aurelius and had innumerable progeny, including recent monuments to Napoleon I and Kaiser Wilhelm II.[46] Sloan's glowering victor with his bloody sabre tramples on a pile of bodies reminiscent of Goya's heap of corpses in the *Third of May, 1808* (1814; Museo del Prado, Madrid) or motifs from his etchings of the *Disasters of War* (1810-20), which Sloan knew well.[47] To give emphasis a fallen mother with child, framed by the horse's legs, is the only fallen figure to break the horizon line. The flat blood red background and powerful silhouette are a return to the symbolist idiom of Sloan's posters and illustrations of 1895.[48]

In April 1915, Sloan returned to the theme, this time in a more straightforwardly illustrational mode (fig. 8). But his design still made reference to Baroque compositional structures, which articulate the pointed juxtaposition between the colossal statue of the state's founder atop the city hall, and the savagery of the defenders of law-and-order riding down a peaceful crowd in which fallen women and children are foregrounded.

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[46] Emmanuel Frémiet, *Napoleon* (1868). Louis Tuaillon, *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, on Hohezollernbrücke, Cologne, 1910.

[47] As a student and friend of Robert Henri, Sloan saw himself as working in a painterly tradition of which Goya was a preeminent representative. Henri gave Sloan sets of the *Caprichos, Desastres,* and *Disparates* which served for him as a model of etching technique. See Brooks, *John Sloan,* 44; Sloan, *Gist of Art,* 1, 185-186. Brooks equates Sloan's socialism with Goya's outlook: *John Sloan,* 91. *The Second of May 1808* and *Third of May 1808* were illustrated contemporaneously in Albert Frederick Calvert, *Goya: An Account of his Life and Works* (London & New York: John Lane 1908), plates 168 and 171.

[48] See Loughery, *John Sloan,* 39-41.

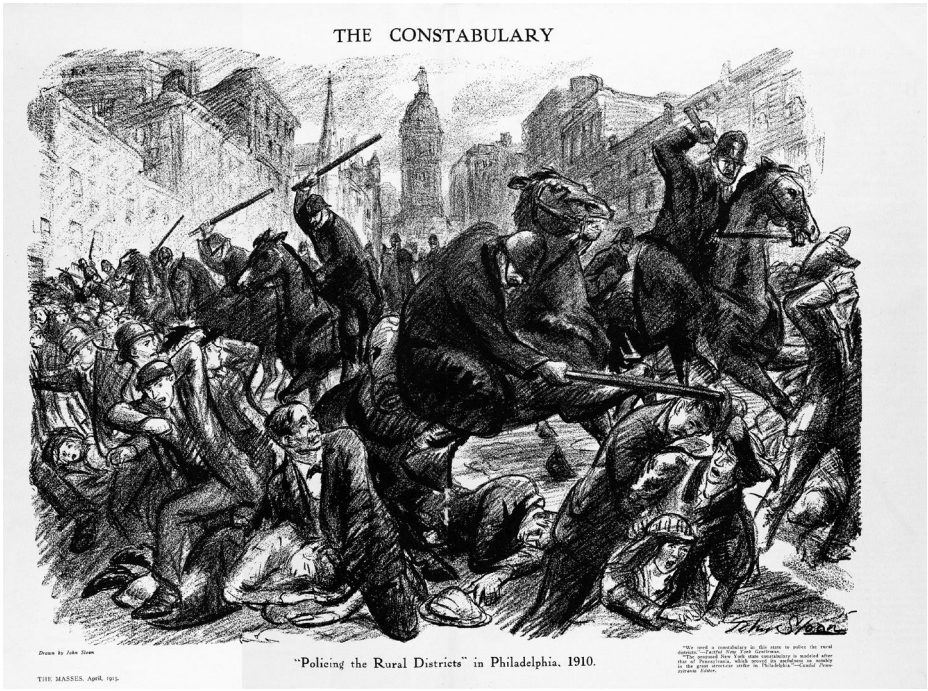

Fig. 8. John Sloan, "Policing the Rural Districts in Philadelphia 1910," *The Masses* 6, no 47 (April 1915).

The composition again suggests Goya, but this time the *2nd May 1808* (1814: Museo del Prado, Madrid). The image was sardonically titled "Policing the Rural Districts in Philadelphia 1910." At the time, Sloan wrote in his diary: "The General Strike in Phila. is on! Fully 50,000 men are out and there has been some rough 'goings on.' To read of the trouble makes me feel really ill in sympathy for these people ground down and yet unable to see that only by united political action can they do the right thing for themselves."[49] In light of this statement we can legitimately read the image not just as a comment on the misuse of the constabulary, but also on the shortcomings of direct action without a coherent political framework since despite some short-term gains the motormen were eventually defeated. However, the general strike was seen by some as having contributed significantly to the political education of Philadelphia's working class and it led to the setting up of a labor party in the city.[50]

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[49] St. John, *John Sloan's New York Scene,* 393.

[50] Foner, *History of the Labor Movement,* vol. 5, 162-163.

Fig. 9. Robert Koehler, *The Strike,* 1885-6, oil on canvas, 72¾x 110¾ in. (181,6 x 275,6 cm), © bpk Berlin/ Deutsches Historisches Museum/Arne Psille.

Beyond the immediate propaganda functions of such political graphics, prototypes were available for depicting the emergence of crowd consciousness within the residues of the genre painting tradition as this had been updated by nineteenth-century naturalism. Notably there was the monumental painting *The Strike* (1885-6; Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin) (fig. 9) by the talented German-American artist Robert Koehler, which pictures a dramatic set piece confrontation between industrial labor and capital.[51] This was exhibited at the National Academy of Design in New York in 1886 when Sloan was fifteen and attracted an extensive if mixed critical response.[52] Painted in Munich, the picture was always intended for the international exhibition circuit. It was awarded a silver medal at the Munich International Exposition of 1888, received an honourable mention at the Paris Exposition Universelle the following year, and was included in the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.[53] Engraved twice and reproduced in

[51] The work invites comparison with Alfred-Philippe Roll's *The Strike of the Miners* (1880; destroyed, formerly Musée des Beaux-Arts, Valenciennes), which is given compelling analysis in Marnin Young, *Realism in the Age of Impressionism: Painting and the Politics of Time* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2015), chapter 3.

[52] James M. Dennis, *Robert Koehler's The Strike: The Improbable Story of an Iconic 1886 Painting of Labor Protest* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 95-102.

[53] Dennis, *Robert Koehler's The Strike,* 102-107. The painting did not sell until the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts purchased it for $3,000 in 1901; it was installed in a hallway in Minneapolis Public Library (154-6). Koehler was director of the Minneapolis School of Fine Arts from 1893 to 1914.

[54] Dennis, *Robert Koehler's The Strike,* 118-119.

two illustrated books about the Exposition's artworks,[54] Sloan could not have been unfamiliar with it, at least as a conception.

However, by the time Sloan began painting in oil in the late 1890s it was hopelessly retardataire as a model. Naturalistic grandes machines were over or at least an endangered species. Sloan's art was small-scale and intimate, much concerned with surface and painterly dexterity. Rather than theatrical narratives emblematizing stock phases of ideology, he drew on personal observations and his training as an illustrator to construct episodic moments of plebeian experience, which were suggestive of compassion and fellow-feeling. They did not pose moral dilemmas and implied social criticism only indirectly for the most part. They also rested on an individualist model of the artist and a conception of artmaking as nonalienated labor.

Sloan's sometime friend and comrade Max Eastman starts out his 1913 book *Enjoyment of Poetry* by distinguishing between practical and poetic people. The former view the world in instrumental terms; they are concerned "with attaining certain ends" such as "money-making" and "maintaining respectability."[55] By contrast, "poetic people" and "all people when they are in a poetic mood" are "lovers of the qualities of things… They are possessed by the impulse to realize, an impulse as deep, and arbitrary, and unexplained as that 'will to live'… It is a wish to experience life and the world. That is the essence of the poetic temper."[56] Although Sloan and Eastman clashed over the instrumentalization of the graphics in *The Masses,* they shared this view, which had a more widespread currency among the Greenwich Village radicals.[57]

This is confirmed by the reviews of André Tridon – the New Review's main cultural writer in 1913 – and particularly by his response to the Armory Show, which he hailed as "the greatest exhibition of paintings ever held in this country."[58] For Tridon, Kandinsky's abstract *The Garden of Love (Improvisation No. 27)* (1912; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) was the show's signature work and in line with Eastman's criteria he evaluated it primarily in terms of artistic subjectivity: "What we appreciate most in a work of art is powerful self-expression, personality."[59] However, there were signs of another outlook emerging.

In December 1913, the *New Review* published a substantial essay on "The Social Significance of Futurism" by the young Louis Fraina. Rebuking those who dismissed the

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[55] Max Eastman, *Enjoyment of Poetry* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 4.

[56] Eastman, *Enjoyment of Poetry,* 6.

[57] See for instance, Brenda Murphy, *The Provincetown Players and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[58] André Tridon, "The Exhibition of the Independents," *New Review* 1, no. 11 (15 March 1913): 347.

[59] André Tridon, "New Tendencies in Drama and Art," *New Review* 1, no.15 (12 April 1913): 476-480.

"New Art" as merely a pathological symptom of degenerate capitalism, Fraina argued that both Cubism and Futurism were natural products of capitalism, albeit of capitalism in different national and social formations.[60] At the same time, he found it remarkable that many American Socialists applauded the New Art as something "epoch-making": " How can the Socialist find inspiration in an art thoroughly and superbly capitalist?—which, while it expresses the power of capitalism, likewise expresses all that is evil and degrading. Must we then admit that the Socialist is generally only an economic revolutionist, and finds inspiration in bourgeois 'revolutionary' art?" Fraina's answer was emphatically negative: "Socialist art must not adopt the tools of the bourgeois. Socialist art must forge its own tools, evolve its own methods to express and interpret the new culture which the Socialist movement carries within its folds."[61]

Fraina effectively anticipated the new concept of a socialist art integrated with the culture and needs of the working-class movement that was to be given particular interpretation in the international communist movement, in which he would play an early role.[62] We can trace the emergence of this new Bolshevik conception in the pages of the *Liberator* – successor to *The Masses* – over the years 1918-24.[63] But I will use as my exemplar the article "Art As a Weapon In the Class Struggle," published in the Communist Party's *Daily Worker,* in September 1925. Its author, Robert Minor, had been a cartoonist for *The Masses* and other socialist publications. To start with his own politics were anarchist and his initial response to the Bolshevik regime was correspondingly negative. However, in an article in the *Liberator* in 1920 he announced his conversion to communism and he became a long-term party functionary and loyalist.[64]

Minor opens this piece by invoking two magazines laying on the table in front of him, the *Saturday Evening Post* and a Moscow-based magazine, the *Bezbozhnik,* or *Atheist*. Each, he says, represents "the finest technical product of its kind," describing the pictures and words throughout as "startling, and marvelously beautiful as well as ingenious," a condensation of all "the cultural accumulation of past ages." But in *Bezbozhnik* the work of the artists has a "thunderous boldness" "in theme and execution" that is "destructive as fire and sword to the current standards of thought and the concept of life we find in the Saturday Evening Post." In a world radically divided between capitalists and workers

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[60] Louis C. Fraina, "The Social Significance of Futurism," *New Review* 1, no. 23 (December 1913): 965-966. Fraina had responded to Futurism as early as 1911 – see Paul Buhle, *A Dreamer's Paradise Lost: Louis C. Fraina/Lewis Corey (1892-1953) and the Decline of Radicalism in the United States* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995), 39, 58 n11.

[61] Fraina, "The Social Significance," 970.

[62] For Fraina's departure from the communist movement, see Draper, *Roots of American Communism,* 293-302.

[63] E.g., Floyd Dell, "Art under the Bolsheviks," *Liberator* 2, no. 6 (June 1919): 11-18.

[64] Draper, *Roots of American Communism,* 121-126; Richard Fitzgerald, *Art and Politics: Cartoonists of the Masses and Liberator* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), chapter 3.

all artists are propagandists for one side or the other. The difference is that the artists who serve capitalism are prostitutes, while artists who work for the revolutionary movement are true artists. This is because "the impulse of the artist is the hunger to bring incoherent things into focus with a unifying concept. Capitalism in its necessity to shut off, smother and obscure the meaning of life becomes a nightmare to the artist." The Communist artist offers a positive "Weltanschauung", while the capitalist artist can only offer "a lame and patched up 'Weltanschauung.'" Art is an "absolute necessity" to counter the insidious capitalist propaganda of movies and magazines, against which the communist press must offer a sound "Weltanschauung." "The essential characteristic of the true art is exactly this: That it brings an incoherent mass of fact into a unified concept."

Minor's title "Art is a Weapon in the Class Struggle," or its abbreviated form "Art is a Weapon," was a favorite slogan of the years of the Third Period Line, 1928-33, when it was even made the basis of a proletarian chant.[65] It seems a logical consequence of Leninism in its Stalinist deformation and crystallizes the view of art that accompanied the Bolshevization of the American party from 1925 on, and which went under the names of Proletarian and Revolutionary Art.[66] Although, as we have seen from Minor's statement, there was a belief that the production of such art was non-alienated and liberatory because it was done in the cause of human emancipation from class oppression, it was the opposite of Eastman and Sloan's notion of the aesthetic in that it was openly instrumental and allowed art no autonomy. In a practice so oriented to collective ends individual self-expression by the artist could not be a principal goal, although it might be a spice to ensure artistic vitality.

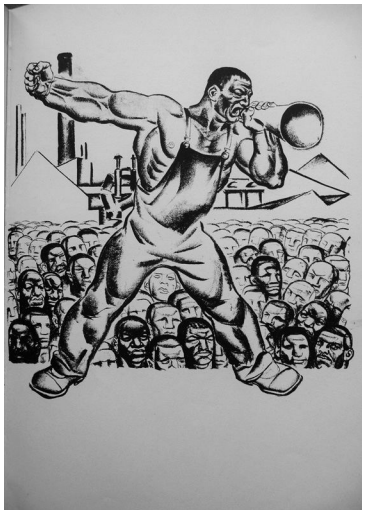

Fig. 10. Hugo Gellert, "Primary Accumulation," from Hugo Gellert, *Karl Marx' "Capital" in Lithographs* (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, 1934).

Van Wyck Brooks says that Sloan let his Socialist Party membership drop after the French and German social democratic parties supported the war in 1914, but remained a lifelong socialist in his convictions.[67] He came to feel that the Soviet Union was "using the symbolism and methods of religion," although like other old socialists "it never

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[65] Raphael Samuel, Ewan MacColl & Stuart Cosgrove, *Theatres of the Left, 1880-1935: Workers' Theatre Movements in Britain and America* (London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

[66] On which, see Andrew Hemingway, "Style of the New Era? John Reed Clubs and Proletarian Art," *Kunst und Politik. Jahrbuch der Guernica-Gesellschaft* 18 (2016): 159-178.

[67] Brooks, *John Sloan,* 92, 94.

[68] Brooks, *John Sloan,* 93.

made him happy to hear of the failure of the socialist state in Russia."[68] He did not contribute to the *Liberator* and lasted only six months on the board of *New Masses* in 1926 – then not yet a de facto organ of the CPUSA.[69] Predictably, he disliked proletarian art that showed the worker with "bulging with muscles" wearing overalls "drawn like crushed tin cans" – a description that suggests ineluctably the trite graphics of Hugo Gellert (fig. 10).[70] But there was one new-style revolutionary artist in whom Sloan took a keen interest despite his well-known communist affiliations, namely Philip Evergood. In the early thirties Sloan and Evergood and their wives became close friends and drinking companions. Sloan, in Evergood's words, gave him "a great deal of encouragement" and used his influence to promote his work – although he was not uncritical of its seeming rawness and crudity.[71]

Writing in 1946, the Marxist art historian Oliver Larkin observed that Sloan and Evergood shared a fascination with crowds, although he also noted that individual figures in Evergood paintings such as his 1936 *Street Corner* (fig. 11) were defined more sharply

Fig. 11. Philip Evergood, *Street Corner,* 1936, oil on canvas mounted on board, 30 x 55 in., © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA.

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[69] His departure from the board is announced, *New Masses* 2, no.1 (November 1926).

[70] Brooks, *John Sloan,* 99. Sloan's drawing of an agitator addressing a crowd during the Paterson Silk Strike in *The Masses* of July 1913 makes a telling contrast with this instance of Gellert's work. See Hawkes, *John Sloan's Illustrations,* no. 465.

[71] Kendall Taylor, *Philip Evergood: Never Separate from the Heart* (London &Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1987), 80-82.

[72] Oliver Larkin, "The Humanist Realism of Philip Evergood," in *20 Years Evergood* (New York: ACA Gallery, 1946), 19. Presumably the work of that title in Evergood's 1938 exhibition at the ACA Gallery.

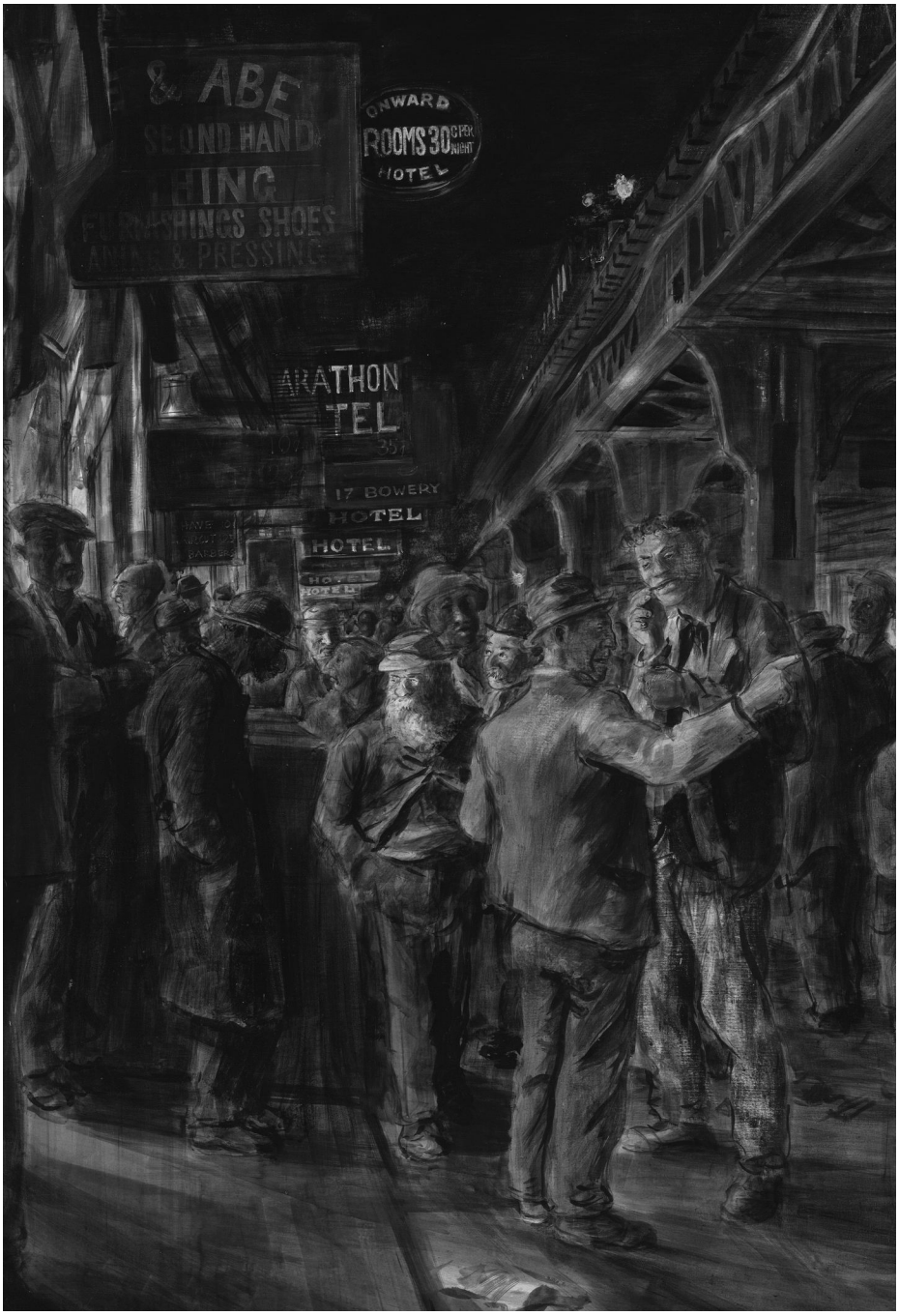

Fig. 12. Reginald Marsh, *The Bowery,* 1930, oil on Masonite, 48 x 36 in. (121.9 x 91.4 cm), Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1932, © Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

than Sloan's.[72] For Larkin, Evergood's crowd – unlike the crowds of contemporaries such as Paul Cadmus and Reginald Marsh (fig. 12) – was "never… a compositional bloc to be pushed around on his canvas, nor a collection of supers trying to keep their place behind the principal actors. The crowd is his principal, and moves with a collective will which is more than the sum total of its separate energies."[73] It was by composing his crowds of sharply distinguished individuals that none the less cohere into a collective mass that Evergood avoided the clichés of both the muscle-bound communist activist dominating the mass and the quality of fascinated revulsion that – in different registers – characterizes the crowd imagery of Marsh and Cadmus.[74]

The key work here is Evergood's *American Tragedy* (fig. 13), which is conventionally dated to 1937 presumably because a preparatory drawing (fig. 14) is dated to that year in a later inscription and the event alluded to in the painting, the Memorial Day Massacre in Chicago, took place on May 30 1937.[75] Arguing against a 1937 date is the fact that the picture was not exhibited until the artist's 1940 solo show at the ACA Gallery in New York. If it were painted in 1937, why was it not included in Evergood's 1938 ACA show?[76] Why did his friend Elizabeth McCausland not mention it in her important 1939 article "The Plastic Organization of Philip Evergood" whereas she praised it highly in her review of the artist's 1940 ACA show? Moreover, it seems improbable that in 1937-8 when he was painting major murals for the WPA Federal Art Project and Treasury Section of Fine

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[73] Larkin, "The Humanist Realism," 20.

[74] I have compared the realisms of Marsh and Evergood at length in Andrew Hemingway, "Realism under Duress: The 1930s," in *A Companion to American Art,* eds. John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill & Jason D. LaFountain (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015), 617-636.

[75] For an early interpretation, see John I.H. Baur, *Philip Evergood* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1960), 55. Baur's catalog text – which was recycled for his 1975 Abrams volume of the same title – was based heavily on interviews with the artist. In contrast to Baur, Patricia Hills rightly emphasized Evergood's communism in her article "Philip Evergood's 'American Tragedy': The Poetics of Ugliness, the Politics of Anger," *Arts Magazine* 54, no. 6 (February 1980): 138-142. Hills has subsequently come to see the painting as an instance of revolutionary art out of place in the context of the communist party's shift to support of the New Deal under the Popular Front. See Patricia Hills, "Art and Politics in the Popular Front: The Union Work and Social Realism of Philip Evergood," in *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere,* eds. Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Lindon & Jonathan Weinberg (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 193-199. My interpretation is different.

[76] ACA Gallery, *Paintings: Philip Evergood,* February 20 – March 3, 1938. The painting was exhibited as "An American Tragedy," in ACA Gallery, *Philip Evergood,* March 24 – April 13, 1940. Elizabeth McCausland, "The Plastic Organization of Philip Evergood," *Parnassus* 11, no. 3 (March 1939): 19-21; Elizabeth McCausland, "Exhibitions in New York," *Parnassus* 12, no. 4 (April 1940): 34, 36-37.

[77] For the murals, see Larkin, "The Humanist Realism," 18-19; John I.H. Baur, *Philip Evergood* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1975), 39-40.

[78] After its exhibition at the ACA Gallery the picture was bought by the collector Armand G. Erpf. See Shapiro, *Social Realism: Art as a Weapon,* 3.

Fig. 13. Philip Evergood, *American Tragedy,* 1939-40, oil on canvas, 29½x 39½ in. (74.9 x 100.3 cm), © collection of Harvey and Harvey-Ann- Ross.

Fig. 14. Philip Evergood, *Study for American Tragedy,* c. 1937-9, pencil, collage, 15½ x 22⅝ in., © Montclair Museum of Art, Montclair, NJ.

Arts Evergood also found time for a painting of this ambition and complexity.[77] Thus I propose a date of 1939-40.[78]

The Memorial Day Massacre was an episode in the campaign by the CIO Steel Workers' Organizing Committee to force union recognition from so-called "Little Steel" – a group of smaller steel companies that refused to sign an agreement like that which the giant US Steel Corporation signed with the SWOC in March 1937. The larger framework of this dispute was provided by the New Deal administration's attempt to legitimize and empower independent unions under the terms of the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, or Wagner Act. The chair of Republic Steel's board of directors, the irascible Tom Girdler, was immovably opposed to industrial democracy, a stance in which he was supported by the anti-New Deal Liberty League and the reactionary *Chicago Tribune*. Girdler was also able to rely on the notoriously anti-labor and anti-radical Chicago police department to act as strike breakers.[79]

The SWOC strike call of 26 May was met immediately with police violence against a legal picket outside Republic Steel's South Chicago plant.[80] On May 30 a march of somewhere between 1,000 and 2,500 strikers and their supporters – who included women and children – marched over the prairie towards the plant gate with the intention of establishing a legal picket. They were confronted by around 300 police and were commanded to disperse.[81] With little or no provocation the police began shooting into the crowd, fired teargas after retreating strikers, beat them with clubs as they ran and after they had fallen, and refused the wounded medical assistance. Ten strikers died from gunshot wounds – all wounds to the back or side. The police claimed that the strikers were foreigners and communists intent on trouble.[82] In fact, while the marchers were strikingly racially and ethnically diverse and one of those murdered by police gunfire was a communist – and not a steelworker[83] – the SWOC leadership was firmly anti-communist and the strikers' demands were for the industrial democracy promised by the Wagner Act, not revolution. The strikers had marched behind the nation's flag.

An American Tragedy has been associated with the Memorial Day Massacre since at least John IH Baur's catalog essay for Evergood's 1960 Whitney Museum retrospective, which noted that while Evergood painted it in part from newspaper photographs, "the picture is essentially a product of his own imagination, which soared on this occasion into a realm of theatrical heroism and villainy." For Baur the painting was "saved" not only by its qualities as painting, "but also, paradoxically, by the very violence of the

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[79] For an excellent account, see Michael J. Dennis, *The Memorial Day Massacre and the Movement for Industrial Democracy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).

[80] Dennis, *Memorial Day Massacre,* 106-107, 109-113.

[81] Dennis, *Memorial Day Massacre,* 130, 134, 135.

[82] Dennis, *Memorial Day Massacre,* 209-211.

[83] Joe Rothmund, a WPA worker and German immigrant. See Carl Harris, "'I Saw the Most Brutal Massacre of U.S. Workers,'" *Daily Worker,* 6 June 1937.

conception, which raises the picture to a symbol of tragic social strife rather than a comment on a specific instance of it."[84] This judgment matches critical responses to the painting at the time of its first appearance. Evergood's 1940 exhibition was widely and positively reviewed, but not a single review that I have discovered associated *An American Tragedy* with the Memorial Day massacre although several mentioned the work either to praise its design or to pass judgment on its type of political moralizing or both.[85] The exhibition was noticed twice in the *Daily Worker.* The first notice – more an announcement than a review – singled out none of the exhibits by name but illustrated *An American Tragedy* without comment.[86] Ray King, the author of the second notice, described the painting as "a strike picture with the police performing in their usual manner with clubs and guns," but found "the industrial background in bright vermilion… a little hard to take."[87] King was the only critic to express reservations about the painting's formal qualities.

It is noteworthy – and perhaps more than coincidental – that in March 1940 when the ACA exhibition opened, Meyer Levin's collective novel about the massacre, *Citizens*, also appeared. *Citizens,* which is dedicated to the ten who died from police gun shots and beatings, follows the pattern of the multi-character novel that had been developed most conspicuously by John Dos Passos. Levin, who witnessed the event, insisted on the representative character of his fictional characters as types,[88] and gave the book a documentary flavor by using quotations from hearings on the event before the La Follette Senate Subcommittee on Civil Liberties of the Committee on Education and Labor, although these were attributed to fictitious characters and the committee was given a fictitious name.[89] One contemporary reviewer referred to *Citizens* as a "photographic novel."[90]

Needless to say, the massacre was extensively reported in the communist press, including eye witness accounts by Levin and two others and descriptions of a Paramount

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[84] Baur, *Philip Evergood* (1975), 35-36.

[85] E.g., Emily Genauer, "Evergood Works Among New Displays," *New York World-Telegram,* 30 March 1940; Edward Alden Jewell, "Philip Evergood Shows Paintings," *New York Times,* 27 March 1940.

[86] Oliver F. Mason, "Evergood Exhibit at the ACA Gallery," *Daily Worker,* 26 March 1940.

[87] Ray King, "New Evergood Works Unique in US Art," *Daily Worker,* 31 March 1940.

[88] Meyer Levin, *Citizens: A Novel* (New York: Viking Press, 1940), 645. For Levin's account of what he saw, see "Leading Novelist Tells of Memorial Day Massacre," *Daily Worker,* 8 July 1937.

[89] Levin, *Citizens,* 649.

[90] *Kirkus Reviews* 25, no. 3 (1940). The book was reviewed critically by the communist writer Ruth McKenney – author of the documentary novel *Industrial Valley* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1939) – in *New Masses* 35, no. 5 (23 April 1940): 27-29.

newsreel that was suppressed as too inflammatory.[91] There were plenty of photographs of frenzied police violence in circulation, and Evergood seems to have taken the image of the prostrate African American in the left foreground from a photograph that was printed twice in the *Daily Worker*.[92] His pregnant Latina may well have been suggested by a real individual Lupe Marshall,[93] a Mexican-American settlement house worker who gave evidence to the La Follette Subcommittee. On the day, Marshall was clubbed as she tried to help the wounded and confronted the police over the beatings of fallen strikers. She appears in the Paramount newsreel and several photographs. But although she was a mother of three, she was not pregnant and did not carry a stick; neither was she protected by a heroic organizer. Like Levin, Evergood refashioned reports of the event into fictive types although with considerably more license. As with Sloan's image of the Philadelphia General Strike (fig. 8), Evergood was aiming at a typical confrontation between workers and the instruments of capitalist oppression. Perhaps he had Sloan's image in mind, since, as Kendall Taylor has pointed out, there is a fallen hat in the foreground of both compositions.[94] But the differences are more instructive.

Sloan, as we have seen, depicted not just the brutality of the mounted constabulary, but also signaled the weakness of workers who were not guided by any clearly articulated political goal or organization. In Evergood's image, marchers flee in all directions, but the centerpiece of the composition is an act of resistance and leadership. In Sloan's image, the forward impulse of the police as they threaten to overlap into our space is amplified by the steep perspective. Those billy clubs will be aimed at our heads next. Evergood's design is self-contained in its frieze-like array, like a neo-classical history painting.[95]

In Evergood's preparatory drawing (fig. 14), the spatial continuum between foreground and background is more articulated because the outlined form of the steel plant is larger and diminutive figures of cops beating demonstrators link the two. The jumps between different scales are also less pronounced. The figures on the far left proceed more at a diagonal and the right edge of the figure group recedes more through the sequence of feet. In the painting, sharpness of outline and color contrasts give the negative shape of the areas of yellow a flattening effect. The puffs of tear gas and gun smoke lie on the

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[91] In addition to the eye-witness accounts by Carl Harris and Meyer Levin, there is George Robbins, "Chicago's Memorial Day Massacre," *New Masses* 23, no. 12 (15 June 1937): 11-12. Robbins emphasizes the racial diversity of the marchers and the holiday mood. On suppression of the newsreel, see "Editorial," *New Masses* 24, no. 1 (29 June 1937): 2.

[92] 1 June 1937, 19 June 1937.

[93] Marshall was shown in the suppressed Paramount newsreel, which was seen only by the La Follette Subcommittee, and is described in both "Suppressed Chicago Film Shows Frightful Police Attack," *Daily Worker,* 19 June 1937, and, more fully, in Bruce Macdonald, "Death Plays the Star," *Daily Worker,* 11 July 1937. On Evergood's use of photographs and related materials, see Taylor, *Philip Evergood,* 171-175.

[94] Taylor, *Philip Evergood,* 172.

[95] As Patricia Hills has also noted – see "Philip Evergood's 'American Tragedy' " 139.

surface of the picture, as if smeared on glass. The collective blue wave of the police surges over recumbent bodies, pushes against the fleeing figures and shoves aside the two demonstrators falling balletically backward under blows from clubs on the right. The only figures who resist the blue tide are the sharply outlined unionist and his woman companion in improbable high heels whose confrontation with the charging officer with his gun frames the shocked and bloody face of the man in between clutching his head to ward off another clubbing as he sinks to the ground. It is not clear that the man with orange hair and his diminutive companion (Lupe Marshall was 4 foot 11) can resist the mass they seek to halt; but their resolute expressions indicate they will go down trying. In a long sympathetic review of Evergood's 1960 retrospective, George Dennison rightly drew attention to the painting's oneiric quality (in fact a feature of Evergood's work more generally): "It has the clarity and disproportion of nightmares and obsessive images."[96]

We should not identify the dauntless couple of *American Tragedy* as communists. They are defenders of workers' rights to elect unions of their own choosing under the terms of the National Labor Relations Act. They are pro-CIO and not AFL – the AFL unions being notoriously uninterested in organizing black and Latinx workers. They are defenders of the rights of free speech and peaceful demonstration. They are defenders of Americanism not so much in the sense that term had been appropriated by the Communist Party but in the New Deal sense. Evergood's little flag affirms this in the face of the "semi-fascist" police.

In his *Gist of Art,* Sloan remarked that "a fine composition is like a low relief" and he urged students think of their compositions as a stage.[97] This is a dictum that applies better to Evergood's *An American Tragedy* than to Sloan's early work, whether we are talking about paintings or political graphics. The formal qualities of *Election Night* (fig. 2) and *Six O'clock Winter* (fig. 4) suggest an episodic urban vision of movement and glimpses, a kind of grittier muddier version of Impressionism with more working-class content. Despite the compositional debt to Goya, a political graphic such as "Policing the Rural Districts" (fig. 8) adapts the same kind of idiom to didactic ends. By contrast, Evergood's *An American Tragedy* has more the stasis and sense of moral choice characteristic of history painting. The red-headed organizer grasping the tunic of the most fully defined policeman performs an *exemplum virtutis*, at the same time protecting his pregnant wife who has a no less confrontational stance. Women are active in the struggle but require support. It is no accident that the organizer's single accusatory profile eye is almost at exactly the picture's horizontal half-way point. But what is the narrative here? How will the confrontation end? As with pre-World War One American socialism, literature can help us define the ways in which the formation of revolutionary working-class consciousness was imagined.

In Poole's *The Harbor* the dockers' strike is defeated by the employers bringing in African Americans and recent immigrants as strike-breakers, by the brutality of the police

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[96] George Dennison, "Month in Review," *Arts,* no 30 (May 1960): 50-53, 52.

[97] Sloan, *Gist of Art,* 73.

and militia, and by the arrest of the organizers. In a scene not unlike that depicted by Evergood, the strikers' attempt to rescue their leaders is met with mounted police, shootings, beatings, and multiple arrests of both men and women.[98] In the aftermath the spirit of the crowd diminishes although it takes a further confrontation with the militia that leads to 39 wounded and 14 dead to quash it finally.[99] At the end of the novel Billy and Joe Kramer go their separate ways. The syndicalist organizer Kramer goes to Europe to agitate among the troops. Billy – convinced that the building of socialism is a long haul – settles back to supporting his family and building his career as a writer, hoping for the spirit of the crowd to resurrect itself someday.

It goes without saying that communist proletarian novels of the 1930s were less open-ended. The CPUSA proclaimed that the blueprint for building socialism was already defined in the Soviet Union. Workers in capitalist countries needed only the guidance of the party and the experience of struggle to forge a collective consciousness that would guide them on a similar path adapted to their particular historical and cultural circumstances. The Bildungsroman pattern was less effective as an instrument for articulating this projection than the use of a collective voice. Of one of the paradigmatic novels to deploy this device – Clara Weatherwax's *Marching! Marching!* which won the *New Masses* competition for an American proletarian novel in 1935 – Paula Rabinowitz has written: "thus a classic proletarian novel… ends with a mass chorus of strikers singing the 'Internationale' while marching towards a plant gate guarded by police. The narrative loses sight of the individual characters who have participated in the strike because the mass movement replaces the character as narrative focus. The narrative never reaches closure; instead of ending, it links its readers to the future struggle."[100] At the climax of *Marching! Marching!* the workers of a Western port city march into a confrontation with the militia – who are wearing gas masks and armed with rifles, bayonets, and machine guns – and cops armed with riot guns and clubs. Their only response is solidarity and song. "Our boys wouldn't gas and shoot their own fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters" —the crowd's inner voice hovers between a statement and a question and the book ends simply with the crowd singing *Hold the Fort.*[101] Such endings are the equivalent of numerous workers' victories enacted in communist cartoons in the *Daily Worker* by Jacob Burck (fig. 15), Fred Ellis, and William Gropper, the function of which was hortatory.

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[98] Poole, *The Harbor,* 341-343.

[99] Poole, *The Harbor,* 346, 349.

[100] Paula Rabinowitz, *Labor & Desire: Women's Revolutionary Fiction in Depression America* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 70. Cf. Barbara Foley, *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction,* 1929-1941 (Durham, NC & London: Duke University Press, 1993), 438.

[101] Clara Weatherwax, *Marching! Marching!* (New York: John Day Company, 1935), 255-256. *Hold the Fort* was an IWW song.

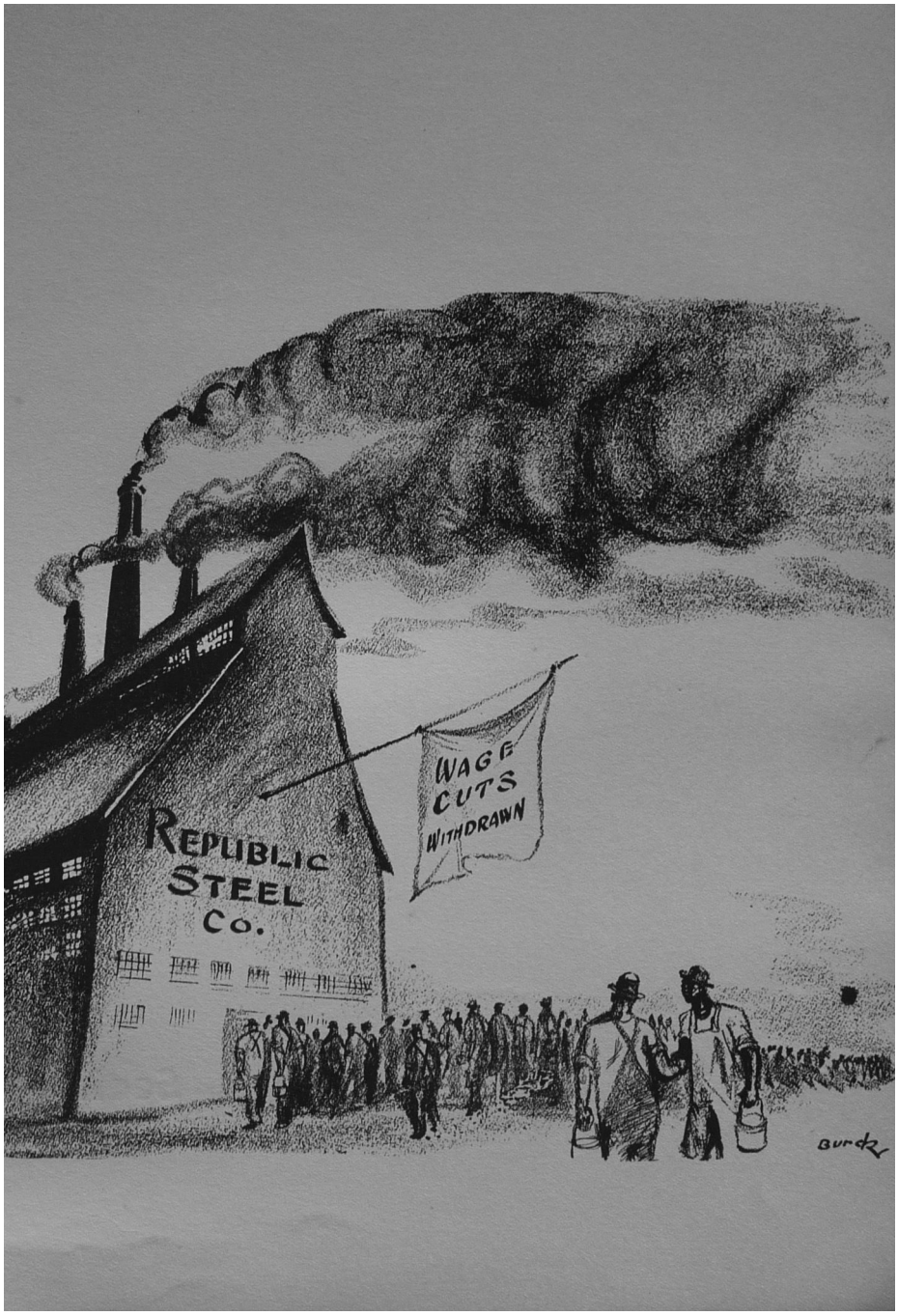

Fig. 15. Jacob Burck, "The Way to Go Back," from *Hunger and Revolt* (New York: Daily Worker, 1935), 63.

Like Sloan, Evergood made a clear distinction between painting and cartooning, acknowledging he had no talent for the latter.[102] In 1946 he told a *Daily Worker* critic that he did not do "'leaflet' painting."[103] At the same time both were insistent that narrative and satire were no barrier to the highest kinds of formal sophistication. *An American Tragedy* is no less hortatory than a cartoon, but unlike a cartoon it confronts us with the costs of an individual moral choice in which defeat and death are possible outcomes. Whatever false ideas Evergood had about the USSR, his commitment to a realist conception of art made the "revolutionary romanticism" of contemporary Soviet Socialist Realism out of the question for a picturing of workers' struggles in New Deal America. Realism demanded narratives with uncertain outcomes. *An American Tragedy* promises the viewer that the struggle will go on, not that there will be victory any time soon. In fact, despite the sacrifices of May 30, 1937, Republic Steel did not recognize the SWOC until 1941 and then only under the pressure of wartime production requirements.

[102] Philip Evergood, "Sure, I'm a Social Painter," *Magazine of Art 36,* no. 7 (November 1943): 259.

[103] Beth McHenry, "Evergood's Chosen Audience: The American Working Class," *Daily Worker,* 3 May 1946.

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Στα ελληνικά η λέξη «κρίση» συμπυκνώνει τουλάχιστον δύο μεγάλες κατηγορίες νοημάτων. Αφενός, παραπέμπει στις έννοιες της απόφασης, της άποψης ή της γνώμης και, σε στενή συνάφεια με αυτές, στις έννοιες της κριτικής, της αξιολόγησης και της δίκης. Έτσι κάποιας/ου η «κρίση» μπορεί, παραδείγματος χάρη, να επηρεαστεί από την υπερβολική χρήση αλκοόλ· οι δικαστικοί, οι δημόσιοι υπάλληλοι αλλά και τα επιστημονικά άρθρα περνάνε από «κρίση». Αφετέρου, παραπέμπει στις καταστάσεις εκείνες, στις οποίες η αναπαραγωγή της προηγούμενης, της κανονικής ή ομαλής συνθήκης είναι δύσκολη ή αδύνατη. Έτσι, για παράδειγμα, κάνουμε λόγο για «κρίση» άσθματος όταν το αναπνευστικό σύστημα δεν λειτουργεί κανονικά ή για οικονομική «κρίση» όταν το οικονομικό σύστημα δεν αναπαράγει ομαλά τον εαυτό του.

Η πρώτη σημασία προκύπτει από το αρχαιοελληνικό ρήμα «κρίνω», το οποίο αρχικά σήμαινε «διαχωρίζω», αλλά αρκετά νωρίς (στα ομηρικά χρόνια), επίσης, «αποφασίζω». Η δεύτερη σημασία, η οποία είναι και μεταφορική, προκύπτει –σύμφωνα με τους περισσότερους λεξικογράφους– ως μεταφραστικό δάνειο ή αντιδάνειο από τα λατινικά ή τις λατινογενείς γλώσσες. Η «κρίση» έγινε crisis (λατ., αγγλ. & ισπ.), crise (γαλλ.) και crisi (ιταλ.) και κατόπιν «κρίση». Με αυτό τον τρόπο, ενώ τα λατινικά, οι λατινογενείς γλώσσες και τα αγγλικά έχουν δύο όρους για να αποτυπώνουν τις δύο διαφορετικές οικογένειες σημασιών (iudicium, judgement, jugement, juicio, giudizio για την «κρίση» και crisis, crise, crisi για την «κρίση»), τα ελληνικά περιορίζονται σε μία και μόνη λέξη, την *κρίση*.

Κατά ενδιαφέροντα τρόπο, ήδη από τα αρχαία ελληνικά, μπορούμε να ανιχνεύσουμε κάποιες χρήσεις της λέξης, οι οποίες συμπυκνώνουν και τις δύο σημασίες. Έτσι, η «κρίσις» μπορεί να σημαίνει το κρίσιμο σημείο μιας αρρώστιας, το σημείο όπου "αποφασίζεται" η τύχη της ζωής του ασθενούς. Επίσης, κατά ενδιαφέροντα τρόπο, η φιλοσοφία, σε ανεξάρτητους μεταξύ τους κλάδους, έχει φέρει κοντά τις δύο σημασίες, οι οποίες συμπυκνώνονται στη μία και μοναδική ελληνική λέξη. Για παράδειγμα, στη φιλοσοφία και την ιστοριογραφία της επιστήμης η κρίση σηματοδοτεί μια κατάσταση, κατά την οποία το κυρίαρχο Παράδειγμα αδυνατεί να αναπαραγάγει ομαλά την κυριαρχία του εξαιτίας μιας πλειάδας εμπειρικών ανωμαλιών. Η κατάσταση αυτή, παράλληλα, ωθεί στην όξυνση της κριτικής και στην ανάληψη μιας σειράς αποφάσεων ή αξιολογήσεων, οι οποίες δεν ήταν διαθέσιμες στο παρελθόν. Αντίστοιχα, αλλά με αρκετές διαφορές, στον χώρο της πρακτικής φιλοσοφίας, η έννοια της κρίσης σηματοδοτεί την απουσία εγκαθιδρυμένων κριτηρίων για την ανάληψη και τη νοηματοδότηση μιας πράξης – κατάσταση η οποία αναγκαία ωθεί στην κριτική και την απόφαση.

Μοιάζει, λοιπόν, η κρίση όντως «να γεννά ευκαιρίες», όχι όμως αυτές που εννοούν οι επιτήδειοι της αναπαραγωγής της υπάρχουσας κατάστασης. Η "κρίση" επισύρει 'κρίση'. *Κρίση* λοιπόν…