DRAWING SUFFRAGE FOR THE MASSES, 1911–1917

A Thesis

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By

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ABSTRACT

During its seven year run from 1911 to 1917, *The Masses*, a radical socialist magazine published out of Greenwich Village, addressed almost every contemporary controversial social issue on its pages, from socialism to sexual liberation and pacifism. The magazine was committed to feminist ideals and as such, *The Masses* dedicated articles and cartoons to women's issue such as birth control, prostitution, worker's rights, and women's social, political, and economic emancipation. As a central issue of the time and as a key fight for the liberty *The Masses*’ socialists valued, *The Masses* gave the campaign for women's enfranchisement attention—from 1913 to 1916, cartoons about or related to woman suffrage maintained a regular presence on the pages of *The Masses*. In their style and in their approach to the subject, the cartoons dealing with woman suffrage reflect *The Masses*’ pictorial policy of art dedicated to radicalism and free expression. The drawings range in tone from pointed satire to direct editorializing, but on the whole, emphasize a feminist conception of the modern woman and advocate the extension of women's rights beyond the political sphere.

In this thesis, I argue that the cartoons of *The Masses*, though displaying a fervent support of women's rights as defined by feminism, curiously exhibit ambivalence toward the subject of woman suffrage in its graphics. This ambivalence resulted from the magazine's socialist viewpoint which championed revolutionary societal change that
would establish liberty and total political, social, and economic emancipation for all humankind, both men and women. The magazine advocated the vote for women as one of the many steps needed for women’s total emancipation, but in socialist opinion, the ballot was only a reform measure. In addition, *The Masses* offered only moderate support of the national suffrage movement due to its narrow middle-class focus on achieving the vote. Employing campaign tactics that emphasized expediency, the suffrage movement largely ignored the working-class woman, the woman that *The Masses* identified as most in need of a political voice.
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This project was inspired by a seminar taught by Babs in the fall of 2004 that focused on Greenwich Village in the early-twentieth century. I thank my fellow students in the class for agreeing that this topic was worth pursuing and for their contributions to the initial formative stages of my thesis.

And finally, a world of thanks is given to my husband Rob for his patience, love, and support and for never saying no to a trip to the zoo.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A spirit of change and progress characterized the 1910s. The outbreak of the First World War in Europe and the stirrings of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia marked the world scene. In the United States of America, thousands of immigrants flowed into Ellis Island and filled the tenements of urban neighborhoods, labor agitators vied for workers' rights, suffragists engaged in a strong push for both state and national constitutional woman suffrage amendments, progressive campaigns espoused societal reform, and the political vocabulary of the day buzzed with socialism and anarchism. In New York, in an old lower Manhattan neighborhood known as Greenwich Village where a twisted maze of streets discouraged commercial traffic and kept rents cheap, a community of rebels, radicals, and bohemians came together, a lively group of intellectuals and artists filled with optimism, unorthodoxy, idealism, and revolutionary spirit.\(^1\) The Masses, one of America's many little magazines of the period, emerged as a product of the Greenwich Village community and environment and developed into what Irving Howe described as

“the rallying center—as sometimes also a combination of circus, nursery, and boxing ring—for almost everything that was then alive and irreverent in American culture.”

*The Masses*, which ran from 1911 to 1917, was the original creation of Piet Vlag, Dutch immigrant and socialist who envisioned the magazine as an illustrated instructive tool in which the idea of consumer cooperatives and socialist philosophy could be spread. The magazine attracted many creative writers and artists with socialist proclivities like Art Young, a well known New York political cartoonist and satirist, and John Sloan, a realist painter and commercial illustrator, but its orthodox socialism and general stylistic dullness doomed the magazine to financial ruin in less than a year. In the following year, *The Masses* was transformed by new editor Max Eastman, managing editor Floyd Dell, art editor John Sloan, and the other members of *The Masses*’ editorial board into a spirited magazine of art and politics which sought to raise awareness about social issues of the time and to express a version of socialism freed from dogma. The magazine abandoned Vlag’s focus on consumer cooperatives and, instead, addressed almost every “ism” of the day, from socialism to feminism, from Freudianism to pacifism, and the staff rallied around every contemporary issue that contained a hint of injustice or social contention in an effort to advocate the socialist revolution of liberty for all humanity. The artists and writers of *The Masses* were as much participants in an

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4 Maurice Becker was another important artist who contributed to *The Masses* beginning in 1912. He studied with Robert Henri and John Sloan, was active in many political organizations, but never joined a party. See biographies of Becker, Sloan, and Young in Rebecca Zurer, *Art for The Masses (1911–1917): A Radical Magazine and its Graphics* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1985), pp. 163-168.
intellectual revelry as they were active agitators for social revolution. Writing and art were their contribution to the class struggle and cultural reorientation and The Masses functioned as the vehicle for their ideas.

Scholarship on The Masses and its contributors abounds, with each author carving out his or her own specific focus or angle of interpretation. For example, Rebecca Zurier, in Art for The Masses (1911–1917): A Radical Magazine and its Graphics (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1985), engages in a comprehensive analysis of The Masses’ graphics within the context of the social and political issues dealt with in the magazine. Leslie Fishbein’s Rebels of Bohemia: The Radicals of The Masses, 1911–1917 (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1982) explores and critiques the inconsistencies and contradictions within the radical belief system of The Masses’ contributors. In her book Heretics & Hellraisers: Women Contributors to The Masses, 1911–1917 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), Margaret Jones focuses on the women artists and writers who contributed cartoons, poetry, and stories to the magazine. Richard Fitzgerald, in Art and Politics: Cartoonists of the Masses and Liberator (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1973), assesses the success of integration art and politics by several prominent artists of The Masses and its successor journal, The Liberator. Building from this pattern of such concentrated scholarship, my study focuses on how the subject of woman suffrage was treated in the graphics of the radical socialist journal.

Why select woman suffrage within The Masses as a topic of study? The first decades of the twentieth century saw marked changes in the role of women in society. By 1910, the efforts of the past sixty years of suffrage agitation were finally beginning to make inroads into the American political system. In 1912, four million women in western
states had earned the right to vote in national elections at the state level. Such a large number of potential voters caused the political parties to adjust their platforms to reach out to women. The Progressive Party, in response to the expanded field of voters, made woman suffrage one of its principle planks.\(^5\) The National American Woman Suffrage Association, under the leadership of Carrie Chapman Catt, and its militant splinter group, the National Woman's Party lead by Alice Paul, campaigned with increasing intensity and increasing boldness until the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. The suffrage movement pushed women into the public realm through parades, door-to-door canvassing, participation in congressional committees, and public demonstration.

Outside the political sphere of the suffrage movement, the concept of the New Woman emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century as a result of changing social opportunities available to women. The New Woman encompassed not only women who sought college education and professional careers, but women who left home for employment in the cities, exploring the urban terrain independently without supervision.\(^6\) Both versions of the New Woman challenged traditional ideas of women's proper sphere of domesticity and feminine dictums of behavior, and were viewed, as were suffragists, with suspicion and alarm by great portions of American as disrupters of long-held social and moral values. Both suffragist and New Woman were engaged in expanding the definition of liberty for women.


Throughout its seven-year run, women were a primary topic for *The Masses* in both literature and art. A tribute to *The Masses* signed by several Village women recognizes the magazine’s dedication to women: “In cartoon, in verse, in editorial, in story, *The Masses* has stood for us all along the line as no other magazine in America has. When we fight for suffrage, for economic freedom, for professional opportunities, for scientific sex knowledge, there stands *The Masses*, always understanding, always helpful." The magazine was committed to feminist ideals and as such, *The Masses* dedicated articles and cartoons to women’s issue such as birth control, prostitution, worker’s rights, and women’s social, political, and economic emancipation. As a central issue of the time, as a key fight for the liberty *The Masses*’ socialists valued, *The Masses* gave the campaign for women’s enfranchisement attention—from 1913 to 1916, cartoons about or related to woman suffrage maintain a regular presence on the pages of *The Masses*.

In this thesis, I argue that the cartoons of *The Masses*, though displaying a fervent support of women’s rights as defined by feminism, curiously exhibited ambivalence toward the subject of woman suffrage in its graphics. This ambivalence resulted from the magazine’s socialist viewpoint which championed revolutionary societal change (meaning the replacement of capitalism with socialism) that would establish liberty and total political, social, and economic emancipation for all humankind, both men and

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8 The tribute was signed by Alice Carpenter, Zona Gale, Marie Jenney Howe, Anna Strunsky Walling, and Vira Boardman Whitehouse. *The Masses* (February 1916).

women. The magazine advocated the vote for women as one of the many steps needed for women’s total emancipation, but the ballot was seen only a reform measure. In addition, *The Masses* offered only moderate support of the national suffrage movement due to its narrow middle-class focus on achieving the vote. Employing campaign tactics that emphasized expediency, the suffrage movement largely ignored the working-class woman, the woman that *The Masses* identified as most in need of a political voice. My analysis of suffrage of the context of a radical socialist magazine’s graphics is divided by the two distinct editorial phases of *The Masses*. Chapter 2, which focuses on the first editorial phase under Piet Vlag’s direction, explores the potential conflicts that an orthodox socialist magazine might encounter in dealing with the topic of woman suffrage. Chapter 3 establishes *The Masses*’ graphic approach to suffrage under the editorship of Max Eastman as a part of a larger interest of feminism, distinguishes the political cartoon form of *The Masses* from the suffrage cartoon form, and concludes with what I consider the ultimate example of ambivalence towards the woman suffrage movement: enlisting suffrage as support in the magazine’s battle against wartime censorship.
CHAPTER 2

SUFFRAGE, SOCIALISM, AND THE EARLY ISSUES OF THE MASSES

The Masses began its publishing career in January 1911 at a time of increasing membership, votes, politicians, and publications for the Socialist Party. During the "golden years" of American socialism (1902 to 1912), over 300 English and foreign-language socialist periodicals circulated, but The Masses offered a new product in the fairly saturated world of the socialist press.\(^1\) The magazine, "devoted to the interests of the working people," under the editorial direction of Piet Vlag, placed strong emphasis on consumer cooperatives.\(^2\) The introductory editorial presented The Masses as "an outgrowth of the co-operative side of Socialist activity. Its publishers believe strongly in co-operation and will teach it and preach it vigorously through the columns of this magazine."\(^3\) The editorial continues: "But while the co-operative feature constitutes its distinctive feature—distinctive merely because other Socialist publications have so far almost entirely neglected this field—its aim is a broad one. It will be a general

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\(^2\) The masthead of The Masses declared the magazine as "devoted to the interests of the working people."

ILLUSTRATED magazine of art, literature, politics, and science.” Though not the first illustrated socialist monthly in the United States—_The Comrade_, a cultural magazine published by a group of New York intellectuals had run from 1901 to 1905—_The Masses_ aimed at a more general audience through pages filled with written and pictorial content of varied style and subject, from slice-of-life fiction and humor columns to reports on Socialist Party politics and essays on woman suffrage.⁴

Within both the international and American socialist organizations, the publication of _The Masses_ also coincided with a period of conflict regarding women and the matter of Socialist Party participation in suffrage agitation. The 1901 founding convention of the Socialist Party of America entered a demand for “equal civil and political rights for men and women” into the party’s platform.⁵ Yet the partnership between suffrage and socialism in the early twentieth century was one troubled by ideological conflicts on an organizational level.

Historian Elisabeth Israels Perry identifies the early twentieth-century suffragist vision of womanhood as twofold: “In one view she was subject to oppression and therefore needed the vote in order to protect herself; in the other her enfranchisement would bring into politics a superior moral conscience and thus improve conditions for all.”⁶ This vision of confidence in the power of the female vote to uplift all humanity,

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especially children, is evident in Mary Ellen Sigsbee’s 1912 advertisement (Fig. 1) in Woman’s Journal for the National American Woman Suffrage Association which contrasts the comfort and leisure of a middle class mother with sweatshop-type labor imposed upon a impoverished family and asks the question, “How can a mother rest content with this—When such conditions exist as this?” This direct appeal to women’s morality and motherhood as the responsible (and plausible, with the vote) agents of societal betterment parallels the message conveyed in Art Young’s 1912 campaign poster (Fig. 2) for the socialist candidate for governor of New York City, Charles E. Russell. Just as the vote for women would end child labor and sweatshops, socialism as a viable political system would crush the evils of capitalism—poverty, vice, hatred, disease, ignorance, and injustice—and usher in order, justice, brotherhood, development, and happiness. The shining citadel of light ushered in by Russell’s raised hand overpowers the dark slums and industrial factories at his feet. Though steeped in propaganda for their respective causes, these two drawings seem to ally the commitments of woman suffrage and socialism to put an end to oppression, be it for women, for the working class, or for children, via their political power.

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century claim to the vote as a natural right. Early suffrage agitators based their rhetoric on arguments of the equality and common humanity of men and women. The subsequent generation of suffragists, however, identified other claims to the vote centered on how woman suffrage would benefit society. In the context of the Progressive era this new rationale emphasized what good women could accomplish with the vote instead of justifying their universal qualification to it. See Chapter 3, “The Two Major Types of Suffragist Argument,” in Aileen S. Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890–1920 (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 43–74.

7 Alice Sheppard observes that Russell stands in a pose similar to that of the Statue of Liberty. Alice Sheppard, Cartooning for Suffrage (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), p. 55. Such an association enhances the propaganda of the campaign poster. Russell will not only transform New York City through socialist politics, but he will do so as a representative of liberty.
Despite the parallel nature of the goals of suffragists and socialists, the Socialist Party held reservations about the woman suffrage movement and the participation of socialist women in mainstream suffrage organizations and activities. Though in principle the party agreed that political subordination of women was unjust, they questioned whether the enfranchisement of women “had any direct bearing upon the final triumph of the proletarian revolution.”

Socialists, as comrades, had regularly supported strikes of “working girls,” because such protests fell in the realm of class conflict—women as members of the working class. Yet, because the woman suffrage movement was dominantly organized and implemented by middle-class women, any socialist backing of woman suffrage implied support of a campaign for political emancipation that crossed the boundaries of class. To negotiate this theoretical conflict, socialists attempted to distinguish their standpoint from that of the mainstream suffrage movement by identifying the difference in goals of the activist organizations: suffragists were reformers.

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8 Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), p. 217. It should be noted that such reservations were held largely by the male leadership contingent of the Socialist party. Women composed roughly one-tenth of Socialist party membership, and many of these women (like Ida Crouch Hazlett, Lena Morrow Lewis, and Meta Stern) were involved in national movement for woman suffrage at the organizational level, despite a stronger allegiance to socialism. Sally M. Miller argues that although not necessarily supportive of such women activists, “to reassure doubters, male party leaders emphasized the pioneering commitment of socialists everywhere to woman suffrage, but some admitted a belief that votes for women would delay the advent of socialism since women were presumed to be dominated by reactionary priests and ministers.” Sally M. Miller (ed.), *Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Twentieth-Century American Socialism* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996), p. 99.

9 From its formative period in the 1850s until the ratification of the 19th amendment in 1920, the suffrage movement was largely a middle-class movement that often courted wealthy, elite women as a pragmatic means of incorporated women of influence into the movement. At the turn of the century special efforts were made by Harriet Stanton Blatch in New York to extend the suffrage movement to working-class women. See Ellen Carol DuBois, “Working Women, Class Relations, and Suffrage Militance: Harriet Stanton Blatch and the New York Women Suffrage Movement, 1894–1909” and Sara Hunter Graham, “The Suffrage Renaissance: A New Image for a New Century, 1896–1910,” in Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (ed.), *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale, Oregon: NewSage Press, 1995), pp. 221-244 and 157–178.
rather than revolutionaries. Mari Jo Buhle explains: “Suffragists, Socialists contended, merely hoped to secure women’s place within the great plurality of interest groups—farmers, laborers, ...consumers, and others—so that women might exert their influence within the existing political system. To those aiming to overthrow that political system, such a goal was an anathema. Socialists had no desire to affirm a theory of government based on a false notion of political democracy.” To confirm this position of difference, at the 1907 convention the Second International issued a directive that called for “special campaigns against the oppression of women and for woman suffrage.”

Socialists were encouraged to agitate “strenuously” for woman suffrage because it was “one of the fundamental and most important reforms for the full democratization of political franchise in general,” but to do so only within the Socialist party. No alliance with middle-class suffragists was to be permitted.

It was primarily the women of the Socialist party who took the lead in executing the socialist campaign for women suffrage. The 1908 national convention formed the Woman’s National Committee as a clearinghouse for the activity of women within the party. Despite the Second International directive and a 1910 national resolution of the party which instructed that “direct action in the matter of woman suffrage...should be

10 Buhle, Women and American Socialism, p. 220.

11 The 1907 convention of the Second International, the federation of the worlds’ socialist parties, was held in Stuttgart, Germany. Twenty-five nations were represented.


14 Mari Jo Buhle notes that many socialist women found the Second International’s directive difficult to accept because “many Socialist women had spent their formative years within the suffrage camp and could not look upon their suffrage sisters as class enemies.” Buhle, Women and American Socialism, p. 222.
carried on under Party supervision and advocated from Party platform," the Woman’s National Committee assisted suffrage campaigns in every state and cooperated with non-socialist suffragists.\textsuperscript{15} Many socialist women shared the opinion of socialist activist Meta Stern: "An ever-increasing number of American working women is becoming profoundly and actively interested in the suffrage movement...it depends on the attitude of the Socialist Party towards the woman’s movement whether they will drift away from us or ally themselves with the bourgeois suffrage movement...The fact is that we do not care to wait for the realization of Socialism for the abolition of our political dependence."\textsuperscript{16} Such sentiments giving women’s political liberation primacy over the socialist revolution, alarmed conservative members of the party, who took control of party leadership at the 1912 convention. In 1915, the Women’s National Committee was abolished, as the party felt "special work for women was unnecessary"—all Socialist party work was for women.\textsuperscript{17} Given such party politics, how did \textit{The Masses}, as a magazine ultimately dedicated to socialism, treat the subject of woman suffrage in its graphics?

In accord with the mission of the magazine’s masthead—"devoted to the interests of the working people"—the first issues of \textit{The Masses} address women’s rights in connection with women in the labor force as comrades of the working-class. The second issue of \textit{The Masses} published an article by Eugene Wood entitled "A Highbrow Essay on Woman: A Dissertation on the Economic Function of Woman with the Part Played


\textsuperscript{17} Tax, \textit{The Rising of the Women}, p. 195.
Therein By Scientific Bulletins and Deep Thinkers,” which exemplifies the tone of the written and visual commentary on women’s issues in the early days of the magazine.

Wood, in a style of satire that complements his title, espouses the competence of laboring women both at home and in the workforce, yet the import of this message is overshadowed by the author’s critique of intellectualism and progressive science which asserted that the economic value of men and women could be measured numerically.\(^{18}\)

The few illustrations in the early The Masses that broach women’s labor issues do so in a disingenuous manner. For example, Alexander Popini’s illustration (Fig. 3) in the November 1911 issue entitled Women and Labor presents a rather greasy male employer engaged in a suggestive conversation with an attractive secretary under the glare of an older, haggard stenographer in the background. Popini’s drawing suggests by the coy tilt of the secretary’s head and the presentation of her figure that the secretary is interested in the man’s invitation, but the text below reads:

This represents the Brainy Business Man and his stenographers. It will be observed that the Brainy Business Man is addressing himself to only one of the stenographers. He has addressed himself already to the other, and the words were to the general effect that she had better stay until she had finished those letters because they were to be sent out the first thing in the morning. But the Brainy Business Man is saying something very different to the second young lady who is good looking and young and apparently not willing to get out and Have a Bite to Eat. The Brainy Business Man enjoys a bargain in women. Considering the over supply of women who are looking for jobs a bargain in this commodity is not hard to find. A great deal of rot is talked about the divorce evil and the social evil and the sweating of women workers and similar topics. If women were made economically independent these things would settle themselves

\(^{18}\) Wood appeals to the editor and to the typesetter to maintain his irregularly capitalized words because “I want to give the impression that I am a Deep Thinker. Nobody can be a Deep Thinker without the capital letters sticking up through his copy like bristles on a cucumber. If I can’t have any other symptoms of a Deep Thinker than Capital Letters, I must have them.” The Masses (February 1911), p. 10.
automatically, and many a Brainy Business Man without any Back to his Head would settle down into his proper sphere—whatever that is.

The text spells out issues faced by women in the workforce—harassment, unregulated labor, poor wages, sexual peril—in no uncertain terms, and is almost condescendingly edifying. Such an explanation that leaves nothing to the imagination or to the intellect is typical of Piet Viag’s editorial desire to ensure that the point of an illustration not escape the viewer’s comprehension or be open to interpretation.19

The best example of this relentless explanatory element attached to illustrations in The Masses lays in Art Young’s cartoon Observation de Luxe (Fig. 4). Two working-class children stand in snowy street, pausing on their way to work in the factories in the early to morning to look at the stars. The boy, identified as “Young Poet” by the caption, comments “Gee Annie, look at the stars! They’re as thick as bedbugs.” Young conveys an account of the conditions faced by tenement children with sincerity, but without crossing over into sentimentality. The children are clearly poor, indicated by the girl’s tattered dress and scrawny legs. But the sturdy round forms of their hats and humor of the boy’s reasoning express the children’s self-reliance and optimistic spirit, despite the circumstances of their upbringing. By turning the backs of the children towards the viewer, Young positions the viewer as participants in the scene, not as sympathetic observers or social reformers. The coupling of cartoon and caption is both humorous and poignant and demonstrates a satirical spirit inherent in The Masses.20 Despite the

19 Vlag viewed The Masses as a “practical educational tool” intended to elevate its readers. See Zurier, Art for The Masses, p. 17.

20 John Waite applauds the cartoon and the artist: “The combination of poignant sentiment with ruthless attack on things as they are for the children of men could scarcely have been bettered...Social satire with the widest possible framework of ideas was the genius of Art Young, as it would be the mark of the
independent success of the cartoon, it was published on page 12 of the October 1911 issue of The Masses as a central image surrounded by an article titled “A Picture and an Opinion: Arthur Young draws a funny picture for “The Masses” that isn’t funny and writes a joke that isn’t a joke” (Fig. 5). The article proceeds to explain in detail why Young’s cartoon is not amusing and how the humor translates into social awareness, linking poverty to the parasitical behavior of the wealthy. Such editorializing on an editorial cartoon reduces Young’s pointed commentary to pedestrian exposition and his artwork to mere illustration. Such blatant explanation of cartoons is an editorial practice that the later The Masses would, in almost all cases, discard.

The combination of writing and illustration in The Masses’ December 1911 “Woman’s Number” underscore how the Masses, under Vlag’s editorial direction, addressed women’s fight for enfranchisement in accord with the programmatic Socialist party line regarding suffrage. The issue begins with an editorial on “Women and Socialism” that reinforces the Socialist position on suffrage: “Suffrage for women has been always a consistent demand of the Socialist Party. But this political equality of woman is but the first step: Socialism insists on the economic independence of women—a much more important issue.” The editorial identifies the soldiers of the suffrage movement as bourgeois women who revolt “not against capitalist society but merely against man’s injustice to woman,” and extends a call to action to Socialist women to agitate for suffrage to draw more votes for the Socialist ticket.21


21 “Women and Socialism,” The Masses (December 1911), p. 3.
The frontispiece of the issue, *The Cheapest Commodity on the Market* (Fig. 6), depicts women en route to their workplace. The illustration, through its style of photographic realism, makes a strong statement regarding the low wages paid to women and their resulting high market value for employers. Though the women appear well-kempt, wearing clean shirtwaists and long skirts, their faces reveal no expression. They group together but do not exchange conversation, silenced by the prospect of a long day's labor in a factory that excretes a dark cloud of pollutants out its smokestacks. The relative youthfulness of the central figures is contrasted with the withered face of a women aged beyond her years by the conditions of her employment and the poor quality of life that employment affords. The effects of worker exploitation illustrated in the drawing are reinforced by an accompanying essay of the same title on the opposing page which blames the capitalist system for the devaluing of women. Yet concurrently, the image is also curiously an advertisement for *Progressive Woman*, the monthly magazine produced by the Socialist party's Woman's National Committee, which was intended to coordinate women's activities within the party and to serve as a forum for discussion of women's oppression. In turning the frontispiece into an advertisement, the attention of those interested in women's labor rights is seemingly directed towards a Socialist magazine focused on such issues.

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23 See Tax, *The Rising of the Women*, p. 186. *Progressive Woman* was founded in 1907 as *Socialist Woman*. The journal changed its name in 1909 to *Progressive Woman* in an effort to attract more readers. In 1913 the name was changed again to *Coming Nation*, and in 1914 the Socialist Party stopped support of the magazine, a year before the Woman's National Committee was abolished by the party.
Thus, *The Masses* under Vlag’s management was concerned with working women as brethren within the labor force, but implied that their social and economic needs would be better addressed or serviced elsewhere in the Socialist party, as in *Progressive Woman*. Though labor issues were intricately interwoven into arguments for woman suffrage, *The Masses* in its early formation did not include direct promotion of the enfranchisement cause within its limited scope. With his programmatic adherence to socialist dogma, Vlag approached women’s issues cautiously because of the tenuous relationship of the socialist party to woman suffrage.

After a year and a half of publication *The Masses* was unable to support itself financially and stopped publication in August of 1912. Vlag tried to merge *The Masses* with *Progressive Woman*, which was published in Chicago, but *The Masses* staff, especially Art Young and John Sloan, opposed such a venture and “they adopted the magazine themselves.” In December of the same year, *The Masses* published its first issue under the new editor Max Eastman. The magazine relinquished its early emphasis on consumer cooperatives, exhibited a redesigned format characterized by bold headlines and large graphics, and was reinvigorated with a lively radical spirit. The issue announced its editorial independence and break with the first issues of the magazine in this declarative editorial statement written by Eastman:

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We are going to make THE MASSES a *popular* Socialist magazine—a magazine of pictures and lively writing.

There are no magazines in America which measure up in radical art and freedom of expression to the foreign satirical journals. We think we can produce one, and we have on our staff eight of the best known artists and illustrators in the country ready to contribute to it their most individual work...We shall produce with the best technique the best magazine pictures at command in New York.

But we go beyond this. For with that pictorial policy we combine a literary policy equally radical and definite. We are a Socialist magazine. We shall print every month a page of illustrated editorials reflecting life as a whole from a Socialist standpoint...In our contributed columns we shall incline towards literature of especial interest to Socialists, but we shall be hospitable to free and spirited expressions of every kind—in fiction, satire, poetry and essay. Only we shall no longer compete in any degree with the more heavy and academic reviews. We shall tune our reading matter up to the key of our pictures as fast as we can.

Observe that we do not enter the field of any Socialist or other magazine now published, or to be published. We shall have no further part in the factional disputes within the Socialist Party; we are opposed to the dogmatic spirit which creates and sustains these disputes. Our appeal will be to the masses, both Socialist and non-Socialist, with entertainment, education, and the livelier kinds of propaganda.\(^{26}\)

Thus, Eastman liberated *The Masses* from its dogmatic erudition of Socialism under Vlag and opened the magazine to non-doctrinaire Socialism that encouraged latitude in interpretation of Socialist theory and also promoted political discussion that straddled issues international, economic, and social in nature.\(^{27}\) The radicals of Greenwich Village "embraced a pragmatic socialism that was as open ended as free verse," a socialism that

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\(^{27}\) See Zurier, *Art for The Masses*, p. 20. Zurier explains "Eastman's refusal to endorse any one line of thought was a response to what he considered pointless factional squabbling among a collection of 'ism-ists.'" Zurier, p. 73. See also, Max Eastman, "One of the Ism-Ists," *The Masses* (March 1913), p. 3. In regard to this new non-doctrinal editorial policy, Art Young stated, "We wanted one magazine which we could gallop around in and be free." "Wanted Magazine to Gallop Around In, Says Artists," *New York World*, 23 April 1917. Quoted in Zurier, p. 18.
was symbolic of freedom from contemporary bourgeois conventions of respectability.\textsuperscript{28} Such a liberal approach to socialism enabled \textit{The Masses}, as a socialist publication, to advocate woman suffrage, for it effectively ended any feeling of necessity to adhere to the Second International’s directive regarding political emancipation for woman. The second issue of \textit{The Masses} under Eastman’s stewardship directly tackled the subject of the mainstream woman suffrage movement in Art Young’s cartoon (Fig. 7) of a conversation between a young wife and a suffrage lecturer. The wife comments: “Yes, we’ve been married almost five years, and we never had a difference of opinion.” The stout suffragist responds: “Which one is the fool?”, thus highlighting the efforts of the suffrage movement to excite a dialogue about women’s traditional roles at home and in relation to men. Though not a direct statement of support for the suffrage movement, the cartoon sets the precedent for \textit{The Masses} in treating suffrage in its cartoons—all aspects of woman suffrage and its related topics would be explored in the context of feminism.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACCORDING TO THE MASSES

When Max Eastman was elected editor by The Masses' staff, they knew he was a former member of the philosophy department at Columbia, an author of numerous political essays, and that he had founded the Men's League for Women's Suffrage.¹ The magazine needed a successful organizer, a business executive, and a promoter in order to secure finances to keep the operation afloat, but in Max Eastman The Masses received not only a skilled entrepreneur, but also a strong (and charismatic) editorial presence who transformed the magazine into a radical Socialist journal free from the dogma of the Socialist Party. This freedom from dogma, recalled Eastman, "enabled us to join independently in the struggle for...woman's rights, for intelligent sex relations, above all (and beneath all) for birth and population control. Socialist dogma declared that all these problems would be solved when the economy of capitalism was replaced by a co-operative commonwealth. I was convinced to the contrary."² Eastman harmonized issues


of women’s rights with the expressed aims of The Masses’ revolution towards liberty for all humanity. Visually, The Masses addressed women’s rights through a compelling artistic policy of satirical editorial and political cartoons. Under this larger category of women’s rights, the magazine took up the issue of woman suffrage from a feminist perspective permeated with socialist ideology, a perspective that distinguishes The Masses’ cartoons from suffrage cartoons published in the mainstream media, and a perspective that contributes to the ambivalence towards the subject found in the The Masses’ cartoons.

3.1 A New Artistic Policy

As the newly-elected editor of The Masses, Max Eastman introduced a literary and artistic policy of free-spirited but directed content that sought to raise the social awareness of his readers regarding the political and social environments in which they lived. To appeal to audiences of all social backgrounds and political leanings—intellectual and working-class, socialist and non-socialist alike—Eastman turned to humor as a way to entertain and capture his readers’ attention, rather than preach to them, as was often the effect of the journal’s style during Piet Vlag’s tenure.3

3 It is important to note that although The Masses’ intent was to appeal to “the masses,” or the working class, it is likely that the magazine was rarely read by the working class because of its specialized intellectual content. Despite this lack of readership, the contributors to The Masses fully backed the struggle of the working class. See Arthur Frank Wertheim, The New York Little Renaissance: Iconoclasm, Modernism, and Nationalism in American Culture, 1908–1917 (New York: New York University Press, 1976), p. 34.
John Sloan, in reference to the first year of *The Masses* under Vlag, claimed that the publication "lost its potential to reach people outside of the Socialist movement when it lost its sense of humor." The illustrations of *The Masses* under Eastman's editorial direction fully demonstrate a capacity for astute yet humorous observations on daily affairs. George Bellows' drawing *Damaged Goods* (Fig. 8) records a moment of inept bourgeois blindness in which a man is more concerned with the condition of his umbrella than the well-being of his wife sprawled on the ice. The caption reads: "A Husband: "By God, Maria! I believe we’ve busted this umbrella." Readers of all backgrounds could relate to such general human interest humor, and such humor maintained a spirit of fun amid the magazine's consideration of more serious issues.\(^5\)

*The Masses*’ art sought not only to entertain, but to educate its readers on political and social affairs and to inspire them to act on their reactions. Thomas Maik notes that "Eastman desired art which informed, exposed, enlightened, inspired, and transformed, an art which dealt with life of the average man and woman and resulted in action."\(^6\) To do so, the artists of *The Masses* employed humor in its most poignant form—satire. Through caricature, juxtaposition, graphic directness, and carefully crafted captions, *The Masses*’ satiric cartoons offer social criticism based on humanitarian values in simple but forceful terms. Art Young’s *Observation de Luxe* (see Fig. 4) published in the October 1911 issue of *The Masses* offered an early taste of the direction of *The Masses*’ art would take under

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\(^5\) Bellows' cartoon could be read as statement on women’s social position in society in which male concerns dominated the female, but for the casual reader of *The Masses*, as soon as the joke was understood, the page was likely turned without much deeper analysis of the drawing.

the editorship of Max Eastman. Young's satiric cartoon combines a stable vertical composition with a witty, even ironic, caption to create a humorous and memorable societal critique. Before Eastman's election as the new editor of The Masses, Young recalls that he and Eastman "had discussed the possibility of building up the Masses into a magazine which would have the bold tone and high quality of Simplicissimus, Jugend, Steinlen's Gil Blas, and Assiette au Berre."7 Jugend and Simplicissimus, two iconoclastic German journals, and flippant French satiric magazines published full-page color cartoons that critiqued everything from the bourgeoisie to government policy.8 The Masses' staff admired the freedom of expression of the European journals and endeavored to address American culture and politics with similar untamed satire.9

With sophisticated wit, The Masses' editors and artists made biting social observations and criticism by directly attacking their targets. Stuart Davis successfully subverts the notion of culture high society by partnering a drawing of two wealthy women exiting the Morgan Collection gallery at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 9) with the dialogue: "Oh I think Mr. Morgan paints awfully well, don't you?" Davis presents the women in high fashion, feathered hats and all, but their vacant expressions belie the presumption that the women possess any cultured artistic taste. John Sloan's


8 Zurier, Art for The Masses, p. 17. Zurier notes: "For years, American artists had collected these publications on trips to Europe, or bought them in bookshops, while complaining that no equivalent existed at home." Zurier, p. 18. The Masses artists, like Kenneth R. Chamberlain, studied the radical approach of cartoons in these journals. See Richard Fitzgerald, Art and Politics: Cartoonists of the Masses and Liberator (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973), p. 164, and Zurier, p. 111.

9 The fact that The Masses had no obligations to financiers, stockholders, or advertisers enabled the magazine to publish whatever it desired, in contrast to magazines like Puck, Judge, and Life, illustrated American magazines of political and social comment that were much more conservative in terms of content and graphics. See Charles Press, The Political Cartoon (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1981), pp. 254-260.
cartoon The Women's Night Court: Before Her Makers and Her Judge (Fig. 10) satirizes the legal system and the men that administrate it. A prostitute, conspicuous in both gender and adornment, stands in a courtroom filled with men of "moral principle" — a judge, a court clerk, several prosecutors, and police guards. The function of the court to pass moral judgment, however, is undermined by the leering glances of the men at the woman, revealing their complicity in the women's situation. Even the policeman who stands with his back to the women, arms folded in stern disapproval, casts a backwards glance at the streetwalker's silhouette. Published in the context of a socialist magazine, the cartoon not only satirizes the defenders of social morality, but also, by interpretive extension, becomes political propaganda, identifying prostitution as a symptom of the imbalanced economics of the capitalist system and inviting the reader to ally him or herself with the socialist overhaul of capitalism.\(^{10}\)

The graphic style of The Masses' illustrations paralleled the directness of its visual and textual satire. The old The Masses, in keeping with its didactic mission, utilized traditional art forms of academic allegory and magazine illustration to "encourage viewers to work for the coming of the Cooperative Commonwealth."\(^{11}\) The editorial board of the new The Masses shifted the role of the readers of the magazine from a passive audience to what Rebecca Zurier calls "fellow conspirators," active participants in the questioning of contemporary politics who found the subjects of The Masses' satire as deserving of criticism as the staff did.\(^{12}\) This direct and immediate engagement with

\(^{10}\) Art Young, "Defeated," The Masses (May 1913), pp. 10-11.

\(^{11}\) Zurier, Art for The Masses, p. 106.

\(^{12}\) Zurier, Art for The Masses, p. 106.
political activism is reflected in the general stylistic change in The Masses' illustrations. Abandoned were the academic style of Charles Allen Winter (Fig. 11), which rendered women in the guise of classical allegoric figures carefully modeled in subtle tonal gradations, and the linear draftsmanship of Alexander Popini (see Fig. 3) in preference for drawings produced in the manner of nineteenth-century French lithographer Honoré Daumier.

The Masses' artists Art Young and Boardman Robinson purchased Daumier lithographs while in Paris, and Robert Henri, the teacher of John Sloan and Maurice Becker, encouraged his students to study Daumier's style. Daumier, admired by The Masses' artists for his caricature and social critique, employed an expressive black crayon line and dramatic contrasts of light and shadow. Robinson wrote of Daumier: "His drawing is frequently calligraphic, he seems to achieve the form and the symbol as the same time." Maurice Becker's' untitled drawing of a woman hurling a brick (Fig. 12) employs the crayon line in a dynamic manner that is physically suggestive of political and social activism. The violent action and furied emotion of the protesting woman is carried by the strength of the vivid black lines and reinforced by the composition of intersecting diagonals. The economy of detail, made mandatory by the medium, heightens the visual impact. Sloan's use of a heavy, ragged line in The Curse (Fig. 13)

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records the brutal reality of a swearing, drunk woman. In both drawings, the roughness of line conveys a forceful immediacy of subject without explicit content, thus giving the viewer interpretive authority over the subject.

Rough crayon drawing combined with satire defined the graphic style of The Masses, resulting in an artistic policy that did not simply publish drawings, but captioned drawings appropriately to include a satirical sting.\(^{16}\) At monthly editorial meetings, The Masses' staff members (and any artist, intellectual, or Greenwich Village visitor who wished to participate), in lively fashion, opined, philosophized, debated, and voted on literary and artistic submissions for the next issue. After manuscripts were read aloud and decided upon, unsigned drawings were pinned up on the wall and chosen for publication. After the selection of drawings, the task of captioning began. Some drawings, especially those by professional cartoonists on the staff which were designed as cartoons with paired text and image, were published with the caption the artist had suggested. Other captions were a group effort—meeting members would help an artist articulate the concepts in the drawing, oftentimes revising a caption several times before it best expressed the artist's point.\(^{17}\) Many drawings required the process of what Kenneth Russell Chamberlain called "fitting a gag to a picture," inventing a joke for a drawing that was originally sketched without satirical intent.\(^{18}\) In this manner, drawings were made cartoons, and most often, made political cartoons. It was this process of "fitting a

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\(^{16}\) There was always space, however, in the The Masses for art without topical content or comment. Nudes, figure studies, and travel sketches (often submitted by artists who were not staff members) were published intermittently. See Zurier, Art for The Masses, pp. 128–134.

\(^{17}\) All captions were subject to pre-publication, post-staff meeting editorial revision by Max Eastman or Floyd Dell, managing editor of The Masses. See Fitzgerald, Art and Politics, p. 26.

gag" that turned Stuart Davis's drawing of "two sad, homely girls from the slums of Hoboken"19 (Fig. 14) into a political piece of art when published on the cover of the June 1913 issue of The Masses. The drawing depicted two unattractive women made haggard by the dark hatch lines that scar and distort their faces. According to Zurier's account, when hung up for discussion at the editorial meeting, the drawing, far from innocuous in its style and subject, caused a stir. Art Young found the caricature too ugly to print; John Sloan demanded (via threat of his resignation) that the drawing be published. Sloan suggested the caption "Gee, Mag, think of us bein' on a magazine cover" and two months later, Davis' drawing appeared with Sloan's title on the cover of The Masses, printed in a putrid shade of green.20 With the simple addition of one sentence, Sloan transformed Davis' unpleasant drawing of homely women into a satire of "pretty girl" drawings that populated the covers of the commercial magazine press.21 An image like James Montgomery Flagg's A Spring Chicken (Fig. 15) of a shy bathing beauty exploited female sex appeal to sell magazines at the newsstands, and to The Masses' artists, was a symbol of all that was "artificial" in commercial art. With Davis' cover, the artists struck at the capitalist art market with their realism and independent expression.22

As is the case with Davis' homely hags from Hoboken and with the majority of The Masses' cartoons, the caption delivers the potency of the image. Often in the case of

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19 As described by Max Eastman in his autobiography, Enjoyment of Living, p. 412.

20 See Zurier, Art For The Masses, p. 33.

21 The cover created quite a stir outside of The Masses' editorial meeting. Harper's reprinted the drawing as an "antidote" to the current plague of "pink and white imbecility." The New York Globe wrote, "most cover designs don't mean anything. But this one does." Zurier, Art for The Masses, p. 33. Max Eastman commented: "It was realism; it was also revolt." See Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, p. 412–413.

22 Zurier, Art for The Masses, p. 25.
cartoons drawn by professional cartoonists on staff, once the line or joke of the caption is delivered, Zurier observed, "there is usually little else to look at in the image."²³ The Masses is credited with the innovation of one-line captions, abandoning the "he-and-she" joke and paragraph of dialogue under a picture as were the standard magazine practices of the day.²⁴ Max Eastman recalled years later, "It just came natural, in pitting creative art against commercial journalism, to title pictures in this more energetic fashion."²⁵

The Masses' staff realized the importance of the textual element of cartoons. Since the audience of the illustrations in The Masses were not viewers in a gallery context, but readers of a magazine, the caption was crucial for divulging the meaning of a drawing quickly. On its own, often the style or even the subject of a drawing might not convey anything to a reader, so the caption functioned as the key to interpretation and, perhaps more importantly, to political impact. For example, Michael Angelo Woolf's drawing of two poor children (Fig. 16) from Life magazine is similar in subject and in sentiment to Art Young's Observation de Luxe. Both cartoons depict children forced to the street due to the circumstances of their upbringings—one pair goes off in the wee hours of the morning to work in the factory, the other stands outside a tavern in the rain. In terms of style, Woolf's cartoon renders the plight of the children more sympathetically in a rough sketch that emphasizes tattered clothing and slum conditions in comparison to Young's even-handed stippling which reduces the environment to contrasts of light and

²³ Zurier, Art for The Masses, p. 36.

²⁴ The single line caption was quickly imitated, though much less successfully, by Harper's Weekly, and in 1925, by The New Yorker. Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, p. 412.

²⁵ Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, p. 412.
dark. In terms of strength of social comment, however, Woolf’s drawing demonstrates pathos and humor, but falls flat. The caption dialogue consists of a merely descriptive question: “Agnes, does your father drink, too?” In contrast to the satirical punch of Young’s caption (“Gee, Annie, look at the stars! They’re as thick as bedbugs.”), the pairing of drawing and caption in Woolf’s cartoon creates such clear readability that poignant social commentary is overshadowed by the transparent sentimentality of the scene of street urchins impoverished by alcoholic fathers. Because of the captioning, the image could easily be mistaken for an illustration of a serial novel or magazine short story. The witty, “energetic” style of Young’s caption quickly drives home the point of the cartoon without blatant description or explanation or questioning of the cartoon’s intention.

*The Masses*, with its commitment to “free and spirited expressions of every kind,” attracted several professional cartoonists, like Art Young and Kenneth Chamberlain, who welcomed the opportunity to publish drawings that contained commentary or subject matter far too leftward-leaning for more conservative, mainstream newspapers and magazines. For the most part, the artists on staff at *The Masses* held less defined political views than other staff members with more clearly articulated socialist political agendas. Chamberlain remarked: “I’d want to attack the injustice as I saw it, whether it was fiscal or social or whatever...[But] if you’d ask me what to do about it, I wouldn’t be able to

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26 Art Young’s drawing style is an exception to the standard crayon drawings published in *The Masses*. His personal style emulated nineteenth-century cartoonist Thomas Nast’s technique of pen drawing, but drew upon Daumier’s style of satire. Art Young, *Art Young: His Life and Times*, p. 54.

27 In 1914, out of the twelve art editors on the board, only five were members of the Socialist Party. Zurier, *Art for The Masses*, p. 24.
answer.” Despite the varied political intensity of the artists, the cartoons published in *The Masses* are inherently political, given their context in a self-declared socialist journal. Just as the reading of John Sloan’s *Before Her Makers and Her Judge* extends beyond social commentary and enters the realm of the political, the majority of the cartoons in *The Masses* make potent editorial comments by fusing art with propaganda. Young defined propaganda as “a kind of enthusiasm for or against something you think ought to be spread—that is, propagated.” Thus for Young and the editors of *The Masses*, any art that attempted to communicate an idea or express meaning was propaganda. The cartoons of *The Masses* may not expressly make an appeal to something political, but they propagate a larger institutional critique of American society underscored by the brand of liberal socialism subscribed to by *The Masses*’ radicals. In drawing explicit attention to social issues that required action of some form, political or not, through varying degrees of satire ranging from light ridicule to abrasive criticism or strong

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The interlacing of art and propaganda by the editors of *The Masses* became a point of contention for certain artists on staff. In March, 1916, editorial board members John Sloan, Stuart Davis, Glenn Coleman, Henry Glintenkamp, and Robert Carlton Brown threatened to strike if organizational changes were not implemented. The artists were upset with the increasing editorial liberty taken with their drawings, as Max Eastman and Floyd Dell added captions that infused their mild human interest drawings with sharp political comment without the cooperative consent of the staff. In the years following Eastman’s election to the editor position, the magazine’s intended system of cooperative editorship had broken down, leaving Eastman and Dell with the majority of editorial authority. The “strike” resolved with the staff reelecting Eastman as editor and the resignation of Sloan and other staff artists and writers. In reality, as many scholars have commented, the artists’ strike had more to do with a larger conflict between the artists and the editors about their conceptions of art and propaganda. Eastman and Dell were committed to art with class consciousness aligned with *The Masses*’ political policy. After the outbreak of world war in 1914, Sloan was disappointed in Eastman’s narrowing the scope of the magazine towards more ideological lines. He was “furious to find that new captions were put on our satirical human interest drawings, giving them a preaching twist...the editors wanted to keep hammering on propaganda and the satire lost its subtlety.” In making all art politically meaningful, they misunderstood the aesthetic concerns of Urban Realist artists like Sloan and Davis. See Zurier, *Art for The Masses*, pp. 35-40, Wetstein, *Republic of Dreams*, pp. 71-75, Fitzgerald, *Art and Politics*, p. 149, and Maik, *The Masses Magazine*, pp. 167-168.
condemnation, the cartoons in *The Masses* fit the definition of a political cartoon.\textsuperscript{30} It is this context of the political cartoon laced with editorial content that framed the topics addressed in the graphics of *The Masses*, including woman suffrage.

3.2 The Suffrage Cartoon Form and *The Masses*’ Graphics

Shortly after the first Women’s Rights Convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 to “discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women,” negative visual representations of women activists appeared in the popular press.\textsuperscript{31} Much negative press was generated in response to the adoption of the bloomer costume—a reform dress consisting of pantaloons worn under a shortened skirt—by women’s rights leaders like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony as a practical means to liberate women from restrictive and unhealthful clothing that tied them to their domestic sphere and passive societal role.\textsuperscript{32} Public opinion of such challenges to the status quo was summed up in the nineteenth century by cartoons like *Bloomerism—An American Custom* (Fig. 17) and *Woman’s Emancipation* (Fig. 18) that caricature the bloomer costume and

\textsuperscript{30} For a systematic discussion of the political cartoon form, see Press, *The Political Cartoon*, pp. 11-17.


present women with masculine features who occupy the public sphere and usurp men’s traditional occupations and habits (like cigar-smoking). By donning trousers, a man’s bifurcated garment, such women were viewed in the public opinion, not as bettering women’s health and mobility, but as radically challenging traditional ideology regarding the concept of the woman’s sphere which had dominated contemporary thinking about women’s societal function for over a century. The “women’s sphere” was a nineteenth-century “ideological construct for explaining and rationalizing the sexually separatist system that had...crystallized in the United States.” The women’s sphere, as realized within mainstream society, was essentially a domestic one in which women contributed to the public good by competently running a household, using their putative greater piety and emotional sensitivity to nurture children and instill in them the moral standards of society and to provide a retreat for their husbands and sons from the trials of the outside world. The virtues of a woman in her sphere followed standards of Victorian feminine behavior which included modesty and humility, piety and charity, and above all, propriety. Cartoons like Woman’s Emancipation appealed to the public fear that “if a


34 See Chapter 4, “Stations and Spheres,” in Bernard, *The Female World*, pp. 77-93. Jessie Bernard makes an important observation regarding the female proponents of cult of domesticity for women: “The apologists for domesticity—Catharine Beecher, Lydia Sigourney, Sarah Josepha Hale, Lydia Maria Child—were often themselves professional women; they did not assume that the home was the only sphere for women. Or, better, perhaps they saw more than homemaking as part of women’s sphere. Teaching, writing, and moral reform were also appropriate activities for women because they, in effect, performed the same kind of moralizing function as women’s domestic work.” Bernard, *The Female World*, p. 89.

woman wore clothes that allowed her to walk, she would walk away from her duties,’ thus abandoning both her assigned domestic sphere and her femininity.\(^{36}\)

In the early twentieth century, with the intensification of woman suffrage campaigns at the state and national levels, the negative imagery of the nineteenth century was embraced and expanded upon by anti-suffrage rhetoric and cartoons that employed the ideology of women’s sphere as the major rationale for opposing enfranchisement of women. Women who demanded the vote were depicted, as E. W. Gilpin’s 1909 Election Day! (Fig. 19) illustrates, as aggressive, masculine spinsters who neglected their children and abandoned their domestic duties to their hen-pecked husbands. In Rulers of the Nation (Fig. 20), a cartoon by Laura Foster, short-legged, militant suffragists race to achieve the vote in a frantic, unladylike manner. Such cartoons reinforced anti-suffrage rhetoric that argued admission of women to the political, and therefore, public, sphere would harm society’s moral and social structure, and that relied on outmoded biological arguments that women did not possess the physical or mental fitness for any decision-making outside of the domestic realm.\(^{37}\)

The suffrage cartoon, as an independent cartoon form, emerged at the turn of the twentieth century as a defined "visual propaganda medium with a single aim: to promote


\(^{37}\) The biological argument against woman suffrage was promoted in anti-suffrage pamphlets, essays, and lectures. For example, in 1896, at a mass meeting called by the Anti-Women’s Suffrage Association of Albany, New York, the Reverend Father Walsh explained why women mentally were not competent to vote: "The woman’s brain evolves emotion rather than intellect; and whilst this feature fits her admirably as a creature burdened with the preservation and happiness of the human species, it painfully disqualifies her for the sterner duties to be performed by the intellectual faculties. The best wife and mother and sister would make the worst legislator, judge, and police." See further explanation of the biological argument for anti-suffragism, see Aileen Kräditör, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 18-21.
the enfranchisement of women." Suffrage cartoons offered a form of visual rebuttal to the negative representations of women activists in the popular press, addressed anti-suffrage propaganda, and generated positive publicity for the suffrage cause. These cartoons, published in suffrage journals and commercial periodicals, were drawn primarily by women artists of middle-class backgrounds with varying degrees of artistic training. Suffrage cartoons, unlike The Masses' cartoons, were not the product of any individual periodical's specific artistic policy and therefore are not unified by style, form, or even by consistent rhetoric—each offers an individual perspective based on the artist's expectations of the suffrage movement and the vote—but they all share a common resolve in the power of cartoon art to shape public opinion and influence voters. The strength of suffrage cartoons is therefore located in their message, not so much in their artistry; very few merit or require detailed visual analysis.

At the hands of these female suffrage cartoonists, the typical graphic image of the stout and dumpy old maid of a suffragette was transformed in an attractive, slender, slender.

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38 Alice Sheppard, Cartooning for Suffrage (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), p. 122. In my discussion of suffrage cartoons, I rely heavily upon Alice Sheppard's scholarship, since her book is currently the only comprehensive catalogue of American suffrage cartoons available. Sheppard's project is not one of art history, but of women's history as she contextualizes the role of female cartoonists and suffrage cartoon rhetoric within the twentieth-century woman suffrage movement. The only other recent book to broach the subject of cartoons and suffrage is Monika Franzen and Nancy Ethiel, Make Way! 200 Years of American Women in Cartoons (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1988), but the coverage is limited and the analysis quite generalized. Lisa Tickner engages in a similar project as Sheppard with British suffrage cartoons in her book The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907–1914 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

39 For details into the lives and training of the major female suffrage cartoonists—Nina Evans Allender, Blanche Ames, May Wilson Preston, Ida Sedgwick Proper, Lou Rogers, and Mary Ellen Sigshbee, see Chapter 4, "Becoming a Suffrage Cartoonist," in Sheppard, Cartooning for Suffrage, pp. 95-120. For a discussion of the suffrage press, see pp. 84-87.

40 As two scholars of political cartoons have observed, "It is possible to produce an often-adequate cartoon with real artistic ability, and thus the ranks of social and political cartoons have been filled with some inspired amateurs." Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), p. 22.
youthful suffragist who exhibited energy, intelligence, and dedication to her cause, like
the soapbox orator drawn in May Wilson Preston’s *Votes for Women* (Fig. 21).  
Boardman Robinson observed this transformation of suffrage imagery in his *New York
Tribune* cartoon *The Type has Changed* (Fig. 22), drawing upon representatives of
suffragists in both pro- and anti-suffrage cartoons. In contrast to the dour, masculine
agitator of the past, Robinson presents the reworked suffragist as a model straight off a
fashion plate. The tall, slender suffragist, who adjusts her ostrich-plumed hat, is quite
striking in appearance and fashionable in dress. Her cause is identified by the “Votes for
Women” ribbon pinned to her chest.

Note the contrast, however between the two modern, re-imaged suffragists in
Preston’s and Robinson’s cartoons. Preston’s figure exudes a confident, assertive quality
as she actively participates in the suffrage campaign, a quality reinforced by the crispness
of the draftsmanship. Robinson’s suffragist stands passively in her posture, gaze, and
inactivity, more preoccupied with her appearance than with the cause she endorses.  
Robinson’s agitated vertical hatchings contribute to this sense of distractedness. In her
curvaceous physique and awareness of other’s gaze upon her, the suffragist shares many
similarities with the Gibson Girl (Fig. 23), an image that populated the press at the turn of
the century of a woman who was as beautiful as she was elusive, aloof, and coquettish.  
The Gibson Girl’s activities were limited to posing, polite social conversation, and
exercising her feminine wiles to toy with the hearts of suitors. Robinson’s “type” of re-

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42 Sheppard, *Cartooning for Suffrage*, p. 182.

imaged suffragist therefore contains residue of popular public sentiment regarding the frivolity of women’s worldly concerns and their fleeting interest in political affairs.

Preston’s suffragist, however, can hardly be mistaken for the detached Gibson Girl type. In her assertive attractiveness and distinctive femininity, the suffragist allays fears that political participation was contrary to feminine custom. She defines the New Woman of the twentieth century, a progressive woman who stepped outside the traditional sphere of women to pursue higher education and professional employment.

In addition to refashioning the public persona of the suffragist, suffrage cartoonists desired to prove that female progress could be “consonant with the wider aspirations of mainstream society.” To do so, suffragists were not only depicted as attractive and assertive young women, but also as nurturing mothers and dutiful wives, traditional types who would both maintain the domestic sphere and better the public sphere. Alice Sheppard explains: “The majority of suffragists reaffirmed their nineteenth-century upbringing and its belief in psychological gender dimorphism. Women were morally superior, had mothering instincts, were concerned with the public welfare—all of which could only enhance the world of politics.” Two cartoons drawn by Nina Allender illustrate this suffrage strategy to maintain the traditional ideas of femininity and domesticity, yet at the same time demonstrate how those qualities, if given the ballot, could be put to good use. In Spoiled Dinner (Fig. 24), the suffragist who stands at the stove, her conspicuous apron reinforcing her domesticity, makes a political statement

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from the home without appearing unwomanly. The 1918 elections simmer on the stove and are stirred with a spoon labeled “Women’s Votes.” The man in the background, representing the Democratic Senate, risks spoiling his dinner (the elections) by dallying in political conversation. In the 1917 cartoon titled Come to Mother (Fig. 25), Allender presents the first woman member of Congress Jeannette Rankin, a representative from Montana, as a nurturing mother looking after a small girl, identified as the Susan B. Anthony amendment. This is a highly saturated piece of suffrage propaganda, essentially spelling out in linear clarity that women can balance domestic duties and political duties, as well as encouraging the female Congresswoman to actively agitate for suffrage legislation. The Congresswoman’s attire—a tailored suit, a garment hailed by Harper’s Weekly as ‘sensible dress that kept pace with women’s expanded involvement in colleges and in the workforce’—and her youthfulness confirm her femininity, despite her very direct participation in the political arena.  

Though concerned with responding to anti-suffrage rhetoric through the visual construct of the suffragist image, suffrage cartoons ultimately functioned to rally support from both men and women for the female franchise. They underscore women’s right to the vote and the public need for their political voice, suffrage cartoonists employed a variety of rhetorical themes that reflected the rather disparate ideology of the suffrage movement. The movement was essentially grounded in paradox between an “attempt to

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46 Sheppard, Cartooning for Suffrage, pp. 188-189.

show the vote as so significant as not to be denied and yet so trivial as to create no essential alterations in the social system."^48 Suffrage cartoons illustrate the various aspects of such a conflicted, and relatively conservative, strategy which ranged from arguments for political equality to highlighting the need for expediency for political liberty because women's vote would put an end to a whole litany of social evils.^49 In Mary Taylor's cartoon Are Not the Women Half the Nation? (Fig. 26), the allegorical figure of Justice reminds Uncle Sam of the constitutional justice denied unenfranchised women. For some suffragists, social reform was their principal goal and suffrage the means.^50 Lou Rogers presents the female voter, poised with mop in hand and bucket at foot, ready to scour unclean bakeries, clean up playgrounds for children, and wash away sweat-shops and the residue of all other municipal societal evils (Fig. 27). Of particular concern to potential women voters was child labor, a social perversion that suffragists felt could be eliminated with the political empowerment of mothers. An unsigned cartoon (Fig. 28) juxtaposes an abused girl chained to child labor with the Declaration of Independence's promise of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" as the rights belonging to all humanity. The cartoon's title—Where the Mother's Vote is Needed—when paired with the pity and sympathy aroused by cartoon's imagery, makes a

^48 Sheppard, Cartooning for Suffrage, p. 132. See also Tickner, The Spectacle of Women, p. 151.

^49 For a thorough discussion of suffrage cartoon rhetoric, see Chapter 5, "Persuasive Themes," in Sheppard, Cartooning for Suffrage, pp. 121-139.

^50 Aileen Kraditor notes that other suffragists linked woman suffrage to reform because it "seemed to be the best way to secure support for their principal goal: the vote." Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, pp. 45-46.
political appeal to the necessity and expediency of the female vote to protect the nation’s children.  

The graphics of The Masses with woman suffrage as the primary subject matter operated loosely within the sphere of the suffrage cartoon form. They participated most directly in suffrage cartoon rhetoric by their satirical commentary about opponents of suffrage. Suffrage cartoonists frequently attacked their opposition in cartoons that highlighted the various types of anti-suffragists and the reasons for resisting the female vote. For example, suffrage cartoonist Ida S. Proper, in her ambitious and thorough cartoon Anti-Suffrage Parade (Fig. 29), presents both male and female “antis” promoting their individual arguments against suffrage, tied together in their march by the chains of dogma, domination, indifference, tradition, and selfishness. Proper’s image attempts to employ caricature as a satirical gesture, but the cartoon’s reliance upon an inordinate amount of text and labeling distracts from any humorous intentions. In a similar vein, but with an economy of narrative means and sense of humor typical of The Masses’s cartoons, Cornelia Barns drew a series of mocking depictions of anti-suffragists for The Masses. In Anti-Suffrage Argument No. 187 (Fig. 30), Barns upends anti-suffrage claims that women’s trivial preoccupations with fashion disqualified them from political participation. Three rather unremarkable men admire the latest male fashions in a shop window; below, the caption reads: “Women are too frivolous. They think about nothing

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51 Such imagery that highlighted the unique qualities of the female gender as moral and nurturing, in its attempt to legitimate women’s public virtue, perpetuated traditional gender roles—enfranchised women would continue to perform the duties and enact the virtues of their sphere. See Elisabeth Israels Perry, “Image, Rhetoric, and the Historical Memory of Women,” in Sheppard, Cartooning for Suffrage, pp. 8-12.
by styles and fashions." The figures are united with the ground through a series of diagonal lines, but the loose sketchy quality of the narrative context enables the viewer to focus on Barns' caricature of the fashion-conscious men. Barns endows them with distinctly un-masculine features—sloping shoulders, narrow jaw lines, and shapely slender legs.

A year later, in the March 1914 issue of The Masses, Barns revisits the male anti-suffragist in the cartoon Anti-Suffrage Meeting (Fig. 31) in which a trio of well-to-do men loiters in a cigar store. They dress fashionably with straw hats and high-button shoes, but they stand with shoulders slumped and wear vacuous expressions. Their degree of political commitment is highlighted in the caption: "United We Stand." They muster up only enough political enthusiasm to declare their political superiority over women. The irony of such male superiority is summed up in Barns' drawing of Voters (Fig. 32). In a style of figure-ground reversal, Barns again caricatures the male voters of America, but this time presents them as dandies with little going on upstairs in the thinking department.

Maurice Becker, in a 1917 The Masses cartoon (Fig. 33), presents men ripe with satisfaction that state amendments for woman suffrage failed in West Virginia and South Dakota. The men, who, due to Becker's heavy-handed crayon work, seem to be participants in a seedy lifestyle of illicit activities, stare smugly at the viewer and declare "They aint our equals yet." These cartoons assert that, given the mass of ignorant male

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52 This clothing-frivolity claim actually formed the foundation for many anti-suffrage arguments. Lois Kimsey Marshall, wife of Woodrow Wilson's Vice-president Thomas Marshall, argued that "current fashions were proof enough that women should be denied the vote." Leslie Fishbein. Rebels in Bohemia: The Radicals of The Masses, 1911-1917 (Chapel Hill: The University or North Carolina Press), p. 141.
voters, women’s enfranchisement would certainly not harm the mental fitness of the voting population.

The Masses’ cartoons also observed and commented on the difficulties suffrage agitators faced in terms of public opinion and perception. In the July 1913 issue of The Masses, Maurice Beckman playfully addresses the transformation of the public image of the suffragist by female suffrage cartoonists (Fig. 34). The caption contains the dialogue of two women watching a suffrage parade: “My dear—do you know this whole suffrage movement is nothing but a sex appeal?” Becker’s representation of the women carries the joke. The voluptuous bottom of one woman dominates the center of the composition. She gestures with her left hand, directing attention to the profile view of her companion’s chest. Clearly their “sex appeal” captures the viewer’s attention. This caption and image capitalize on the pun of “sex appeal” that both literally describes the female-oriented movement and remarks on the intensified attractiveness of the New Woman image (especially in comparison to the cigar-smoking, masculine hags of anti-suffrage propaganda) that accompanied the suffragist’s quest for liberation from political and social conservatism regarding gender roles.

The suffrage campaign pushed women into the public sphere to march in suffrage parades, to speak at suffrage rallies, and to canvas neighbors for support. With this new public visibility, suffragists attracted accusations of moral impropriety.53 A news item cited in the November 1913 The Masses reported the accusation of a prominent female

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anti-suffragist that suffragists were “responsible for the present vogue of indecency in
dancing, literature, plays and dress.”\textsuperscript{54} This perception of suffragists as “immoral” fuels
Elizabeth Grieg’s cartoon (Fig. 35) from the November 1915 issue that depicts two
women seated on a bench who watch a nearby demonstration of suffrage activists.\textsuperscript{55} The
women are clearly worldly. They wear bright lipstick, one exposes her legs up to her
knees, and they possess a quality of belonging to the city in their casual poses. They react
with the following dialogue: “Look at that suffragette, Madge—right out in the
street—wouldn’t you think she’d die of shame?” Madge replies, “Yeh,—you bet.”

These cartoons draw attention to an important distinction between suffrage
cartoons of the suffrage and commercial press and cartoons published in \textit{The Masses} with
suffrage-related subject matter. Though at times modeled on the same premise as suffrage
cartoons, \textit{The Masses}’ graphics do not necessarily participate in the same function. In
their humor and satire, \textit{The Masses}’ cartoons like Elizabeth Grieg’s \textit{Look at That}
Suffragette, \textit{Madge} or Barns’ \textit{Voters} translate into pro-suffrage statements through their
criticism of anti-suffrage wiles, offering only indirect support for the suffrage cause.\textsuperscript{56}
Alice Sheppard has criticized \textit{The Masses}’ cartoons dealing with suffrage-related issues,
with the exclusion of those drawn by Cornelia Barns, for being less accessible to the
viewer, for being less potent politically, and for preserving stereotypes of domesticity and
oppression. She bases this criticism on the fact that \textit{The Masses}’ cartoons were drawn by


\textsuperscript{55} Margaret Jones identifies these women as prostitutes. Jones, \textit{Heretics & Hellraisers}, p. 102. While such
identification strengthens the message of the cartoon, there is no textual support for such a conclusion, and
it cannot be confirmed simply by the appearance of the women.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{The Masses}’ cartoons always maintained a sense of humor, something more often absent than present in
suffrage cartoons.
men. Her essentialist argument ignores the context and function of the graphics in the socialist magazine, and instead assumes that these cartoons were intended to be propaganda pieces for the suffrage movement.\footnote{See Sheppard, \textit{Cartooning for Suffrage}, pp. 197-199.} \textit{The Masses}’ cartoons, however, are not suffrage cartoons or propaganda for suffrage. Rather, they dispense critical social commentary on topics of vested interest to the staff in a manner appropriate to the scope of \textit{The Masses} magazine’s artistic policy.

3.3 The Woman Question As Drawn In \textit{The Masses}

The women’s rights movement, inaugurated in the mid-nineteenth century to address the social, cultural, and political restrictions placed on women, quickly focused in on the vote, a tangible and symbolic goal of female emancipation, as the central issue of its campaign. In its effort to generate support for women’s enfranchisement, the women’s rights movement became analogous with the suffrage movement of the twentieth century, a movement which operated largely within of the traditional concerns of the women’s sphere. Amid their various visual styles and rhetorical tactics, twentieth-century suffrage cartoons answered the charge to legitimize women’s “potential for public agency” by representing women as society’s moral agents who, when given equal political
participation, would extend domestic values to the public sphere. While many suffragists desired to see the women's sphere expanded with public approval, they did not desire to abandon the idealism of women's emotional and moral virtue embodied within that sphere—the features that served to justify their entry into politics. The vote, therefore, offered a viable option for women who felt entitled to political equality, who wished to reform society with propriety, but not disrupt it, and who wished to be counted as full citizens in American democracy, but not lose claim to their femininity. Aileen Kradiator comments on suffragists' orthodoxy: "Few suffragists were radicals; the vast majority of them simply wanted the right to participate more fully in the affairs of a government the basic structure of which they accepted." In delimiting the woman question to a concentrated effort to achieve the vote, suffrage agitators promoted the franchise as an end goal for women activists, the solution to all of women's social, economic, and political problems. The resulting narrowed vision did little to address alternate aspects of women's rights.

In contrast to the mainstream suffrage movement, The Masses approached woman suffrage through the larger question of feminism. The magazine's writers and artists considered woman suffrage only a small, political phase of the cultural reorientation embodied by feminism, a reform effort that offered piecemeal change instead of

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60 As Winnifred Harper said, 'most suffragists are not feminists.' Winnifred Harper, "The Young Suffragists," Harper's Weekly 58 (September 27, 1913), pp. 7-8.
revolution that would democratize society.61 Feminism, according to the philosophy of Greenwich Village radicals in the 1910s, involved a comprehensive revision of attitudes and customs regarding the view of women and their place in society by both men and women alike.62 Women’s emancipation, in the feminist conception, was not simply emancipation from political silence, but from all societal conventions that held them to the domestic sphere and to the dictums of Victorian propriety. Emancipation required total political, social, and economic equality and freedom. This broad view of emancipation reconciled The Masses’ campaign for women’s emancipation with the larger socialist goal of a new society grounded in freedom. If women were fighting for freedom, they were fighting for a new society.63 Kenneth Chamberlain explicates the necessity of such emancipation in his cartoon Canned Innocence (Fig. 36). In representing women as preserves sealed in the Mason jar of the home, Chamberlain translates the traditional rhetoric of gender differentiation into literal pictorial terms. By restricting women to the domestic sphere, they are preserved in the public consciousness as pure, untouched by the troubles and immorality of the world of men. But in Chamberlain’s editorial opinion, the home not only protects, but also imprisons. The carefully sealed sterility of the domestic sphere prevented women from exploring their full potentiality as human beings.

61 John A. Waite, Masses: 1911–1917, A Study in American Rebellion, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1951, p. 141. Revolution was the credo of The Masses under Max Eastman’s editorship. He felt a social and economic revolution was needed to democratize society, not the slow, temporary solutions of reform. This revolution, Eastman believed, “could only be achieved through awakening the working people to rebellion.” Maik, The Masses Magazine, p. 56.


The ability of women to develop their “humanness” was of principal concern to
*The Masses*’ staff.\(^{64}\) This required, on a most basic level, a social emancipation of women
from the bourgeois standards of morality and propriety that “sheltered” women, locking
them in a form of patriarchal repression concerning their minds and bodies. Women’s
ignorance on subjects of moral vice and sexuality defined their innocence.\(^{65}\) In his 1915
cartoon (Fig. 37), Robert Minor targets the puritanical prudery of the New York Society
for the Prevention of Vice, a private organization that engaged in a crusade, with police
assistance, to suppress all art and literature it considered indecent and obscene.\(^{66}\) Here,
Minor depicts the Society’s president, Anthony Comstock, as a bombastic lawyer who
drags a mother before a judge and declares with complete moral indignation, “Your
Honor, this woman gave birth to a naked child!” The moral beliefs of such public figures
as Comstock denied women access to information on sexual reproduction and birth
control, making circulation or distribution of literature on the subject, even by medical
professionals, illegal. Spurred by feminist and socialist sympathies, *The Masses* risked
censorship and its editors arrest, violating state and federal obscenity laws, to facilitate
Margaret and William Sanger’s efforts to make contraception information available to all

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\(^{64}\) According June Sochen’s interpretation of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s writings, the major intellectual
leader of the struggle for women’s rights during the early part of the twentieth century, Gilman felt that
“women were treated solely as sex objects and not permitted to become human beings. Her goal, then, was
to free women to enable them to develop their humanness.” Gilman’s writings provided the basis for the
feminist ideas of Greenwich Village feminists Henrietta Rodman and Crystal Eastman, Max Eastman’s

\(^{65}\) See Bernard, *The Female World*, p. 90.

\(^{66}\) Zurier, *Art for The Masses*, p. 78.
women. Economic liberation of the working-class was at the heart of \textit{The Masses}' support of sex education and birth control. Max Eastman explained in a July 1915 editorial: "An unskilled worker is never free, but an unskilled worker with a large family of half-starving children cannot even fight for freedom. That for us is the connection between birth-control and the working-class struggle. Workingmen and women ought to be able to feed and rear children they want—that's the end we are seeking." Eastman chafed at the idea that the federal and state bans on the circulation of family planning information were "laws applying only to the poor," since with their money and education, women of the upper classes were able to access and employ contraception without governmental interference.

In its cartoons, \textit{The Masses} vehemently attacked the puritanism that governed sexual knowledge and contraception information by underscoring the consequences of the denial of such education. In her cartoon \textit{What Every Young Woman Ought to Have Known} (Fig. 38), Elizabeth Grieg plays upon the title of Margaret Sanger's New York \textit{Call} column "What Every Girl Should Know" and later pamphlet of the same name, which were both suppressed by Anthony Comstock's moral censorship. Sanger's writings addressed issues of sexuality of concern to adolescents such as menstruation, hygiene, venereal disease, and sexual feelings in adolescents. Grieg's drawing depicts a young

\footnote{\textit{The Masses} editors personally answered letters requesting information on family limitation. The magazine received sanction from the New York Society for the Prevention of Vice for publishing advertisements for Margaret Sanger's pamphlet "What Every Girl Should Know" and August Forel's clinical study, \textit{The Sexual Question}. Zurier, \textit{Art for The Masses}, p. 78. See also, Dell, \textit{Homecoming}, pp. 252-253. For an account of \textit{The Masses}' activities in regards to the Sangers' imprisonment, see Maik, \textit{The Masses Magazine}, pp. 128-130. See also, Jones, \textit{Heretics & Hellraisers}, pp. 44-53.}

\footnote{Max Eastman, "Revoluntionary Birth-Control," \textit{The Masses} (July 1915), p. 22.}

\footnote{Max Eastman, "Birth-Control," \textit{The Masses} (July 1916), p. 27.}
woman receiving counsel from an older woman, under a sign that reads "Women's Clinic." The lack of access to educational materials on sexual matters has led the young women to the clinic for medical help, a visit that could have been avoided with proper sex education. The clinic sign is written in German and a Romance language as well, as what one scholar has interpreted as "a not-so-subtle reminder" that birth control information was freely accessible in many Northern European countries. In *Family Limitation—Old Style* (Fig. 39), Kenneth Chamberlain draws with chilling reality a working-class mother who throws her sleeping infant child into a dark, cold river in the silence and shadows of a winter night. She practices the form of birth control available to her class, a victim of what Emma Goldman, the anarchist voice of the Greenwich Village radicals, described as "the economic grinding mill, which sets a premium upon poverty, and our puritanic law which maintains a conspiracy of silence." The cartoon is not satiric, but merely raw in its brutal honesty, a rawness intensified by the scumbled quality of the black crayon line.

*The Masses* viewed working women as the ultimate victims of the capitalist system, a system that exploited women’s lack of political and economic freedom to exact long hours in return for paltry wages. Floyd Dell explained: "Threatened by the capitalist code of morals, women became drudges...they lost their liberty, their freedom to become fully human." *The Masses*, under Max Eastman’s editorship, built upon concerns of

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70 Jones, *Heretics & Hellraisers*, p. 49.

71 Emma Goldman spoke these words at her 1916 trial for violating the New York Penal Code which forbade distribution of contraceptives or contraceptive information. A transcript of her defense to the court was printed in *The Masses*: "Emma Goldman's Defense," *The Masses* (July 1916), p. 27.

female labor exploitation illustrated in the first year of the magazine (see Fig. 6), and published cartoons that highlighted the corruption of industrial bosses, the intimidation of striking female employees by authorities, and the failure of the capitalist system to regulate working conditions. In a Kenneth Chamberlain cartoon (Fig. 40), a mill owner comments to his companion: “Woman suffrage? I guess not! Women are too shifty. I’d just got my mills running to suit me, when every damn woman went on strike for shorter hours!” The caption carries the punch of the cartoon, but Chamberlain satirizes the wealthy in his representation of the two men. He conveys the men’s economic station by bedecking them in all the comforts of wealthy society—top hats and fine coats, white gloves and cigars. The men are tucked snugly into a carriage, secured in place by their girth, their fat faces, thick necks, and rolling bellies made possible by their exploitation of female labor. When working women did exercise their striking rights to demand eight-hour days and a living wage, or as described by The Masses, “entered upon that self-starvation which is their only weapon against industrial tyranny,” the factory owners responded with police intimidation and other strike-breaking tactics. In a Maurice Becker drawing of such a situation (Fig. 41), a policeman dispatched by bullies a female striker with the threat: “Now you git out o’ here, young lady, or you’ll land in the workhouse!” His threat packs little punch, however, as the young laborer is all too familiar with sweatshop conditions, the very working conditions of her current

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79 Max Eastman, Untitled Editorial, The Masses (March 1913), p. 3. Male strikers faced the same form of intimidation from the alliance of industrial bosses and political leaders. For this reason, The Masses demanded emancipation for both women and men. The suffrage movement, in its gendered concentration on achieving the vote for women, did not incorporate the plight of the working-class male into their reform agenda.

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employment which she protests against. She retorts: “I ain’t afraid of the
workhouse—I’ve been in a workhouse ever since I started to work!”

Art Young draws attention to the problem of prostitution, a problem integrally
linked to the working conditions and sub-minimum wages of the lower class.\textsuperscript{74} In his
unique style of caricature which inflated figures into rounded, bloated forms, Young
depicts a factory boss and a brothel madam comparing notes on their individual
operations (Fig. 42). The large-chested, large-bottomed brothel owner patronizingly asks
the large-bellied factory owner, “By the way, how much are you paying for girls, now?”
Her employment clearly offers a much more lucrative wage. \textit{The Masses} considered
prostitution a symptom of the commercial greed of the capitalist system and prostitutes as
victims of their impoverished economic circumstance. Even so, Eastman criticized
reform efforts that assumed legislation of a minimum wage would eradicate the problem.
He wrote: “If I were a girl working all day and suffering the imposition of a living wage
in a rich country, I trust I would be either a prostitute or a thief.”\textsuperscript{75} Kenneth Chamberlain
attacked the failure of such legislation with his satirical cartoon of a comfortable middle-
class couple reading the evening paper (Fig. 43). In the caption, the wife remarks to her
husband: “Henry, here’s an article about a girl who went wrong—why, I thought they
passed a minimum wage law, or something, which prevented such distressing things.” In

\textsuperscript{74} Christine Stansell explains: “For laboring women, prostitution was a particular kind of choice presented
by the severities of daily life. It was both an economic and social option, a means of self-support and a way
to bargain with men in a situation where a living wage was hard to come by, and to hold one’s own in

\textsuperscript{75} Max Eastman, “Investigating Vice,” \textit{The Masses} (May 1913), p. 5. Eastman goes on to criticize reform
efforts to institute a living wage as not a means to address the problem of prostitution, but as a legislative
fix that would “give the moral people in the community a comfortable feeling that if any girls goes wrong
it’s her own fault.”
the opinion of *The Masses*, minimum or living wage laws offered only an overture of reform that failed to address the larger economic and social problems regarding women that created and perpetuated a market for such a profession.76

Out of their socialist concerns for economic revolution, *The Masses* presented working-class women as exploited victims of the capitalist system who were forced to labor long hours in deplorable conditions, but despite their victimization, working women were never represented as being defeated by the system. Instead, *The Masses* celebrated the New Woman of the working-class and her independent spirit in drawings like John Sloan’s *Return from Toil* (Fig. 44) and Cornelia Barn’s “*My Dear, I’ll be economically independent if I have to borrow every cent!*” (Fig. 45). “Bachelor girls” who defined the New Woman in the city—young, unmarried women who left home and labored in stores and factories, lived alone or with other women, and navigated the city’s offerings unsupervised—operated within a changing set of cultural values.77 Their daily entry into the workforce, be it the factory or the whorehouse, and their bachelorette lifestyle violated traditional standards of gendered spheres, yet it enabled working women to engage in a form of personal emancipation in the public sphere that differed from the kind that suffrage activists sought in the political arena for the body of womanhood. Once freed from their workplace, Sloan’s working women come alive with a vibrant energy and exuberance, exerting an alternate femininity imbued with frank sexuality in comparison to the conservative, domestic femininity presented in suffrage cartoons. Just

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as Sloan's figures are freed from body types defined by clothing and middle-class standards of decorum, these working-class women are free to assert their emancipation, independence, and sexuality.\textsuperscript{78} This new form of female emancipation, in the public sentiment, threatened the sanctity of traditional domesticity and was viewed with suspicion and alarm.\textsuperscript{79} For this reason, while feminists championed the independence of the modern working woman, middle-class suffragists for the most part shied away from identifying the suffrage movement with the working class. Suffragists appealed to the class to which their desired audience belonged, courting the audience whose public opinion they wish to sway—that of the upper and middle class—and largely ignored the working woman.\textsuperscript{80} In suffrage cartoons that do address the subject, such as Mary Taylor's 1915 cartoon \textit{No Vote Means No Remedy for Long Hours and Short Pay} (Fig. 46), the representation is not that of a confident woman who is empowered to change her social statues, but one of a woman who needs to be rescued from her unfortunate circumstances by the middle-class women's vote.\textsuperscript{81}


\textsuperscript{79} Sochen, \textit{The New Woman}, p. x.

\textsuperscript{80} The changing suffrage strategy in the early twentieth century contributes to this lack of focus on the working class. In order to secure larger public support of the suffrage cause, Susan B. Anthony decided it was easier (and likely more expedient) to solicit endorsement from elite women, rather than addressing working class issues. Graham, "The Suffrage Renaissance," p. 169. Anthony, a friend of socialist labor organizer Eugene V. Debs, did ask unions "to support woman suffrage in their own interest, but remained unwilling to lend her support to any other cause than woman suffrage until such time as she could vote." Kraditor, \textit{Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement}, p. 159.

\textsuperscript{81} The only suffrage cartoonist who expressly dealt with working-class issues in her cartoons was Lou Rogers. Her environment and political inclinations likely had an impact on her work. She lived in Greenwich Village, the center of socialism, feminism, and the discussion of the working-class struggle, and was also a member of the radical Greenwich Village feminist club, Heterodoxy. She was, however,
In a cartoon published in the August 1914 issue of The Masses (Fig. 47), a society women comments to her parlor mate: "I used to be interested in the suffrage movement, before it got mixed up with those labor agitators and socialists!" Such a cartoon, in which the art functions to give voices to the dialogue, draws attention to the divide between the interests of upper- and middle-class suffrage advocates and the working-class women who would most directly benefit from a political voice. For the editors, writers, and artists of The Masses, however, "the socialist philosophy provided...a class analysis for the economic ills of society while feminism gave them the value system they wanted for the culture as a whole." Two cartoons by Maurice Becker demonstrate The Masses’ class consciousness for women’s emancipation. In “Woman’s Proper Sphere is the Home” (Fig. 48), Becker spins the ubiquitous anti-suffrage tag-line into a pointed statement about what constitutes the sphere of the working woman. An Italian immigrant walks the street of a tenement slum, carrying a bundle of laundry on her head and a baby on her hip. Her labored walk is contrasted to the resolute stride of the wealthy gentleman, likely a landlord or factory boss inspecting the toil of immigrants who fill his pockets and fatten his belly, whom she eyes warily. In Becker’s abrasive presentation of

ultimately dedicated to the suffrage cause. Out of the several hundred suffrage cartoons she drew and published, only a handful focus on the working-class. See Sheppard, Cartooning for Suffrage, pp. 107, 127-129.

82 In her book, Nan Enstad argues that the consumer habits of working women contributed to middle-class perceptions of working women as too frivolous to be considered serious participants in the political system. Ironically, a similar argument was put forth about middle-class suffrage agitators half a century before. See Nan Enstad, Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 2-6.

83 Sochen, The New Woman, p. 6.

social oppression, the immigrant mother’s domestic sphere and public sphere collide, rendering woman’s sphere’s claim of moral and social uplift inert. In another cartoon (Fig. 49), Becker draws the interior of a tenement apartment, evoking the crowded quarters in softly sketched detail. As a mother sews piecework, her daughter asks what the word “militancy” means. In the caption, the mother responds to her daughter’s inquiry: “It means if we sit here like this, we’ll sit here forever.” Here, Becker not only rallies the working-class to political action, but the reader as well. The woman’s wry look at the reader suggests, “Maybe you should do something, too.” By 1914, when this cartoon was published in *The Masses*, Alice Paul, a leader in the national suffrage movement, had begun to introduce militant tactics into suffrage strategy for the legislation of a federal suffrage amendment.\(^8\) Given this context, Becker’s cartoon could be read as a statement of support of the new militancy within the suffrage movement. But it is more likely that Becker is encouraging participation of his readers in the socialist militant activities more closely associated with the working class—unionization, strikes, sabotage, and civil disobedience—in the effort to overthrow the capitalist system.

In giving women’s labor issues primacy, *The Masses* emphasized the necessity of women’s economic freedom in addition to political emancipation. Though the vote was not the solution to all of women’s problems, Max Eastman believed that suffrage was the “big fight for freedom” in his time, the first step for women to have choice in her way of life and not have domesticity forced upon her by men.\(^9\) He wrote: “There are many


women who, on account of their social or financial situation, can not function happily in that sphere.\textsuperscript{87} Likely influenced by Eastman’s personal interest in the suffrage cause (he organized the Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage because he had a “basic need to suffer a little in the cause of an ideal”), \textit{The Masses} published a “Woman’s Citizenship Number” in October-November 1915.\textsuperscript{88} The timing of issue also correlated with Woman Suffrage Party of Greater New York’s campaign for a state suffrage amendment that began in January of 1915 and culminated on election day, November 2. The suffragists of the New York City Party, as their contribution to the campaign, decided to canvas all registered voters in the city, a task which took them beyond Fifth Avenue into the immigrant neighborhoods to visit tenements and factories, an appeal to the working-class that the \textit{The Masses}’ staff could appreciate.\textsuperscript{89} The “Woman’s Citizenship Number” does not mention the New York campaign, but its publication date and content suggest awareness, if not a statement of support for the campaign.\textsuperscript{90} In addition, the issue offers a packaged overview of how \textit{The Masses} approached the topic of woman suffrage in graphics and editorials.


\textsuperscript{88} Max Eastman, quoted in Wetzsteon, \textit{Republic of Dreams}, p. 51. Source of original citation not specified.


\textsuperscript{90} Emma Goldman illustrated the extreme position of anarchists regarding woman suffrage in her chastisement of \textit{The Masses}’ “Woman Citizenship Number.” She wrote in her journal \textit{Mother Earth}: “Yet so prevalent has the suffrage disease become that even the radicals have become inoculated with its vicious virus. It was only to be expected, of course, that Socialist paper like the N. Y. \textit{Call} should champion the ‘cause,’ but it is rather disappointing to find \textit{The Masses} devoting an entire edition to ‘Vote for Women.’ Perhaps \textit{Mother Earth} alone has any faith in women. Perhaps we long believe women no longer need dolls; that women are capable and are ready to fight for freedom and revolution.” \textit{The Masses} published Goldman’s opinion in the January 1916 issue on page 20.
The cover of the "Woman's Citizenship Number" features a young, assertive woman drawn by Stuart Davis (Fig. 50). The figure, in suited attire and stance, is similar in type to May Wilson Preston's soapbox orator (see Fig. 21), and aligns with the mainstream suffrage movement's self-fashioned visual conception of the modern suffragist discussed previously. The fact that she rides unescorted on a city subway, however, connects the figure to the independent working woman, the New Woman of the city, often drawn in The Masses' cartoons. Inside, the issue contains several cartoons that rehash rather unoriginal suffrage-related jokes and themes. In a cartoon titled Overheard on Hester Street (Fig. 51), a working-class woman tells a suffrage canvasser: "You'll have to ask the head of the house—I only do the work." The cartoon is little more than a recorded observation of the City Party suffragists in action, a moment of humor presented for the entertainment of the reader. M. A. Kempf draws man in the guise of Atlas holding the earth, embroiled with unrest and turmoil and dripping a blood-like substance (likely a reference to the First World War that had engulfed the European continent), on his shoulders (Fig. 52). He appeals to woman for her aid: "This thing is getting to d—d hot and heavy and slippery for me to handle alone, I need help!" Robert Minor offers up another attack on Anthony Comstock and his moral crusade against vice in his cartoon O Wicked Flesh! (Fig. 53). Comstock, represented as a stout little man, follows his Christian conscious and removes the source of offense to his moral sensibility—the female species. In a series of three cartoons (Fig. 54), Stuart Davis characterizes types of anti-suffragists, all of which, in addition to possessing faulty reasoning, are drawn with physical deformations. In the first, a lady of the house with oddly elongated proportions tells her domestic help who looks up at her from a subservient position, "We've got other

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things to do, haven't we, Mary, besides interfere in politics!” Next, two over-life size, wealthy society women with grotesquely large bodies and small heads turn up their noses at the mere idea of suffrage. The caption reads: “What do we need with the vote. We can get all we want without it.” The third anti-suffragist type, whose prominent pointed nose is echoed in the shape of her hat, turns her head away from the troubles of the street in apathy and questions, “What's the use?”

In comparison to other cartoons in The Masses drawn out of concern for other women's rights issues such as labor and birth control, the imagery in the “Woman’s Citizenship Number” is fairly benign, lacking propagandistic tendencies or biting satire. The issue's graphics essentially equivocate moderate support of the terms of suffrage defined by the national suffrage movement. However, the number concludes with a back cover graphic that emphasizes a feminist conception of the female sphere. Kenneth Chamberlain's Woman's Sphere (Fig. 55) is not the home, but the globe. The modern woman, as on the cover of the issue, is a woman who not only fights for the vote, but also demands expansion of her “sphere” to include political, economic, social, and personal fulfillment.

Articles by The Masses' editors Max Eastman and Floyd Dell round out the suffrage-related material in the special woman's citizenship number, yet they suggest an ambivalence in regards the national suffrage movement. Despite publishing a magazine dedicated to the female vote that would arrive in its readers mailbox shorting before election day, Eastman and Dell found the various national suffrage platforms problematic and, in their critiques, offer a rather patronizing 'view of the struggle for emancipation as an organized movement. In his essay “Confessions of a Suffrage Orator,” Eastman
criticized the suffrage movement’s tactics, calling their arguments ‘old, classed, codified, false and foolish.’ In response to the platform that suffrage would extend domesticity to the public sphere for the benefit of all, Eastman wrote: “The babies of this world suffer a good deal more from silly mothers than they do from sour milk.” He explained further: “I do not want women to have, for the sake of their children, the control of the milk-supply and the food laws, half so much as I want them to have, for the sake of their children, all of the knowledge-by-experience that they can possibly get.”91 Both Eastman and Dell felt that women’s emancipation and participation in politics was useful for invoking a positive change in women’s consciousness, one currently ‘preoccupied with trivialities.’92 According to Eastman, “Any change in political forms, however superficial from the standpoint of economic justice, that will increase the breadth of experience, the sagacity, the humor, the energetic and active life-interest of mothers, can only be regarded a profound historic revolution.”93 Thus, The Masses’ support of woman suffrage was grounded more in ideology of women’s expanding social consciousness than in championing the direct action of the suffrage movement. The magazine approached the political needs of women from a feminist angle clearly divergent from the mainstream suffrage movement and used their observations of the suffragists in action as fodder for entertaining cartoons.


92 Fishbein, Rebels in Bohemia, p. 141


Dell (who was more generally a feminist than suffragist) also felt that the vote would, rather than politically or economically liberate women, win for women “command over their bodies, to remove existing penalties against the spread of contraceptive information.” Fishbein, Rebels in Bohemia, p. 141.
The moderated support of *The Masses*’ cartoons that deal directly with the suffrage cause and the ambivalence of *The Masses*’ editors are further illustrated in the humor of two cartoons drawn by John Sloan. His drawing titled *Cattle* (Fig. 56) of a suffragist speaking to a farmer is captioned “No, Miss, she ain’t home—but I kin tell you my wife don’t need no vote.” The cartoon exhibits gentle humor upon first reading, but the title suggests multiple interpretations. Does “cattle” refer to the ignorant farmer who sees no need for women to vote, or, to his wife, a representative of the class women satisfied with their political and social station, or, to the suffragist herself and the mass of women who filled city streets in suffrage parades like a herd of cows mooing its demands? The cartoon provides no definitive answer. *She’s Got the Point* (Fig. 57) depicts a Woman’s Suffrage Party rally attended by a crowd of men and one woman and her husband. The title implies a pro-suffrage reading of the cartoon, that the speech delivered by the suffrage orator for women’s enfranchisement is logical and sensible. Two members of the crowd in the left foreground turn to each other in a gesture of agreement with the speaker. But the caption that speaks for the women in the plumed hat implies a different meaning. The suffrage movement becomes not a cause to endorse out of sincere conviction for what it represents, but rather a leveraging tool in her relationship with her husband: “You’d better be good, Jim, or I’ll join ‘em.” Alice Sheppard draws attention to the ambiguity of this image. She asserts that it “weakened in its propaganda value by the caption.” “Instead of reinforcing the inherently pro-suffrage

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imagery,” Sheppard observes, “the caption restructures the scene to impugn suffragists’ motives.” The dialogue of the caption reorders the hierarchy of characters in the cartoon, and promotes the spirited wife to the position of main character, not the suffrage orator. It is not the suffrage orator who ‘has the point,’ but the wife, as she asserts her independence from male authority in the marital arrangement. In this respect, the cartoon proves to be consistent with The Masses’ goals for women’s rights. In regards support of the national suffrage movement, however, the image remains ambiguous. Such ambiguity in terms of The Masses’ cartooning signals ambivalence. When The Masses employed cartoons to make a directed point, even with humor, they did so definitively. For example, Sloan’s drawing Adam and Eve: Her First Mistake (Fig. 58) in which a diminutive Adam rides upon the back of Eve is a clear, humorous, statement of women’s inferior social position and the ridiculousness of that inferiority.

When both Sloan’s cartoons, Cattle and She’s Got the Point, are considered in the context of The Masses as a radical socialist magazine that chose illustrations for publication through a democratic process of editorial selection based on the magazine’s “tolerant and eclectic editorial policy,” the images are even more ambivalent in their intended effect. Sloan’s drawings could be an attempt to promote the suffrage cause through humor, a mode of illustration Eastman favored for its appeal to a wide audience. Or, in their satire, the cartoons might offer a critique of the suffrage movement’s tactics that appealed to disinterested or unresponsive audiences. It is even possible that Sloan’s

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95 Sheppard, Cartooning for Suffrage, p. 197. The cartoon, however, was apparently not offensive to suffragists in general, as it was reproduced in the December 1913 issue of The Woman Voter, described by its masthead as the “official organ of the woman suffrage party.”

96 Zurier, Art for The Masses, p. 39.
cartoons were published merely for their entertainment value, based on the simple fact that, when paired with a caption, they were irresistibly funny. Given an editorial board governed only by loose socialist politics and a spirit of irreverence and fun, however, it is difficult to reconstruct the reasons behind selecting, captioning, and publishing these images in *The Masses*.

Due to the ambivalent relationship between *The Masses* and the national suffrage movement as illustrated in the cartoons that address the subject directly, woman suffrage was linked, from 1913 to 1916, to other issues of women’s rights more closely aligned with the overarching ideological program of the journal. In the last year of the magazine’s publication, *The Masses*’ ambivalence to suffrage movement was solidified by their actions in connection to World War I, when *The Masses* enlisted the suffrage movement in a cause other than suffrage.

### 3.4 Suffrage in the Service of *The Masses*

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 had a monumental impact on the tone and agenda of *The Masses*: every issue thereafter included anti-war cartoons, reports from the European front by staff writers, and pacifist literature. John Sloan remarked with disappointment on “what he saw as Eastman’s attempts to narrow the scope of the magazine by ‘slanting it more and more seriously on ideological lines’ towards war

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97 Jones, *Heretics & Hellraisers*, p. 78.
protest after 1914." Initially Eastman interpreted the war as a tool of capitalist business interests to expand control of world markets. Many socialists, including staff members of *The Masses*, felt the war could aid the socialist cause—in its exhibition of the evils of capitalism, many would turn to the world brotherhood of Socialism as an antidote. With the increasing seriousness of the war abroad, however, the interests of *The Masses* turned towards protesting American intervention. Eastman wrote in his autobiography: "As the bloody events in Europe sobered us and made real the kind of fact implied by our ideas, we moved steadily away from the 'catastrophic' view of the coming of socialism. We lost little of our naïve faith in the permanence of liberties already achieved... We became more interested in staying out of war than in overthrowing capitalism." By 1916, preoccupation with the war dominated the magazine's pages. The usual rallying issues of *The Masses* like women, labor, and race took a back seat to editorials criticizing institutional support of the war, solicitations for anti-war support, and hard-hitting satirical cartoons that attacked militarism and the inhumanity of warfare. For example, in *The Deserter* (Fig. 59), Boardman Robinson assailed the tendency of the major combatants in the world war to claim divine sanction for their military campaigns by placing Christ in front of a firing squad composed of soldiers from warring nations.

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100 Eastman, *Enjoyment of Living*, p. 545.


Though I have no evidence to prove Robinson used the painting as a source, this cartoon closely resembles the composition of Francisco Goya's *The Third of May, 1808*, a painting that represents the Spanish victims of the Napoleonic invasion as Christian martyrs. Here, the central Christ-like figure in Goya's painting is replaced with Christ himself.
Robert Minor criticized the United States preparedness effort in 1916 and protested the
draft in his cartoon of an over-life size headless soldier (Fig. 60). The Army Medical
Examiner declares: "At last a perfect soldier."

Generally women remained a cause separate from anti-war sentiments expressed
in The Masses during the early war years, but a few illustrations link women’s
emancipation with the war in Europe. In 1914, three months after the eruption of
hostilities in European, The Masses published a drawing by Cornelia Barns titled
Patriotism for Women (Fig. 61). In the roughly-sketched drawing, a woman holding an
infant stares with glazed eyes out at the reader. In the background, a younger woman
hurriedly performs household duties, and a thin man turns the corner looking at a stub of
paper. The Masses’ editors added this explanation to the drawing: “The European
Governments are encouraging all soldiers to marry before they enlist, in order that the
ranks of posterity may be filled. They have reduced the cost of a marriage license in
England, but not, so far as we know, the cost of raising a baby.” The image, in humorless
terms, addresses multiple social concerns circulating in The Masses at the time: the war
and the concept of patriotism, the economics of child-rearing for working-class families,
and women’s control (or lack thereof) of their sexual reproduction. Kenneth Chamberlain
addressed opportunities created by war for women in the workforce in cartoons published
in the October 1914 and 1916 issues. In Afterwards (Fig. 62), for example, a soldier
returns home to find a whole army of women constructing a building. He says, “The
War’s Over. You can go home now, and We’ll run things.” The forewoman of the project
responds: “You go put up that gun, and perhaps We’ll let you help.” This battle of
“We’lls” presents a clear statement of women’s capableness and desire to participate in
activities beyond the domestic sphere. Similarly, in October 1916, The Masses published a drawing by Chamberlain that depicts the shock of a soldier returning from the front to see his female relatives engaged in physical labor outside of the home (Fig. 63). The caption reads: “T. Atkins, Who Believes that Woman’s Place is in the Home, Returns from the Front and Sees His Wife and Sister.”

Despite their feminist sympathies, Chamberlain’s drawings can also be read as a critique of the National American Woman Suffrage Association’s (NAWSA) use of women’s support of the war effort as a strategy for enfranchisement. The NAWSA viewed women’s participation in various aspects of ‘war work’ as “an opportunity to prove women’s patriotism and their practical capability as citizens.”

NAWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt accepted an appointment to the Congress’s Woman’s Committee of the Council of National Defense. Other suffrage leaders organized Red Cross and other relief agencies activities or helped coordinate women’s employment in the munitions industry and other jobs left vacant by enlisted men. Such participation in the war effort, even if the suffragists held pacifist beliefs, to gain political favor offended the anti-war sensibilities of The Masses’ staff, and supplied a reason for The Masses to distance themselves from the NAWSA. In response to such “opportunism,” The Masses wrote: “The spectacle of women anxious to insist a military bureaucracy in depriving others of their liberties, as signified by their offer to help in the work of conscription registration…has been viewed with intense chagrin by those who regard the political

¹⁰² Jones, Heretics & Hellraisers. p. 78.

emancipation of women as part and parcel of human emancipation."104 The National Woman’s Party, a militant offspring of the national suffrage organization, refrained from organized war work, but did employ the war as the basis of a suffrage propaganda campaign that centered on the slogan “Democracy Should Begin at Home.”105

In the early months of 1917, a marked change in the role of women’s issues, namely woman suffrage, in The Masses is observable. At this point after the United States entered the first world war,106 the inclusion of articles or drawings concerning the suffrage movement no longer functioned as editorialized feminist propaganda in the service of promoting the women’s emancipation or even as blanketed support of the national suffrage campaign, but rather they functioned in the service of a specific political agenda that engulfed both Max Eastman and The Masses: protest of the implications of wartime politics on American civil liberties. This shift in the editorial programming of the magazine is directly linked to the censorship trials of The Masses conducted under the auspices of the Espionage Act of June 15, 1917. The Espionage Act altered parts of the First Amendment to make words, in addition to deeds, grounds for accusations of treason, creating a dangerous environment for a magazine expressly critical of war policy.107 Under the Act, the United States Post Office was empowered with the authority to withhold any mailing promoting “treason, insurrection or forcible resistance to any law of the United States.” Under different circumstances, The Masses’ editors would have


106 The United States of America declared war on Germany on April 16, 1917.

regarded the Espionage Act as a challenge, but, as Zurier notes, "the desire to keep publishing at all costs in order to spread the message of peace moved them to avoid a confrontation with the censors rather than to court one." In July of 1917, The Masses submitted the August issue to Chairman of the Committee on Public Information in Washington before mailing to ensure that the content did not violate the new law, and the issue passed inspection. When submitted for mailing, however, the New York Postmaster General deemed the August 1917 issue of The Masses unmailable, though he refused to specify which passages were offensive. This censorship fueled Eastman’s determination to expose the wartime suppression of civil liberties and he exploited every opportunity to do so. It is in this context that woman suffrage reappears in The Masses’ imagery for the final time.

In the October 1917 issue of The Masses, an illustration by Boardman Robinson (Fig. 64) documents an event of a few months prior involving suffrage demonstrations and sedition. The National Woman’s Party had begun picketing the White House in January of that year as an aggressive form of suffrage demonstration to encourage President Woodrow Wilson to take immediate action on the proposed federal suffrage amendment, a piece of legislation overshadowed by the war. During the course of their demonstrations, over 200 suffragists were arrested for carrying banners that were

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108 Zurier, Art for The Masses, p. 42.

109 Since The Masses was the first journal to be censored and have their mailing license revoked under the terms of the Espionage Act, the editors challenged the decision in the courtroom. The August 1917 issue was eventually mailed by court order. For an enumerated account of the post office censorship of August 1917 issue of The Masses and the resulting court case, see “What Happened to the August Masses,” The Masses (September 1917), p. 3.
“seditious and treasonable,” and almost half were jailed.110 In Robinson’s drawing, a solitary suffragist standing outside the White House gates holds up a banner to President Wilson’s cavalcade that reads: “Kaiser Wilson, Have you forgotten your sympathy with the poor Germans because they are not self-governed? 20,000,000 American women are not self governed. Take the beam out of your own eye.” The drawing was appended not with a satirical caption, but with a simple explanatory editorial note: “This is one of the banners for which suffragists were jailed,” referring to the actual arrest of suffragist picketers at the White House. To The Masses editors, this event succinctly demonstrated the wartime censorship that conflicted with the First Amendment and the civil liberties of American citizens. In a report on the event in the August 1917 issue, The Masses applauded the actions of the suffragists for their insistence on demanding self-government and liberty because these demands ultimately questioned the democratic nature of the ruling American political body and challenged censorship policies. In doing so, The Masses described the suffragists as being “on the danger line—where all lovers of liberty belong; and where we are glad to see the militant suffragists taking a conspicuous place.”111 The Masses found within the militant ranks of the suffragists an ally for a common cause of liberty and the magazine expressed support, not for woman suffrage and political enfranchisement, but for the actions of the suffragists that protested


suppression of liberty. In the ultimate ambivalent act, woman suffrage became a subsidiary cause manipulated to address issues of greater concern to The Masses’ staff.

The Masses unfortunately never had the opportunity to depict the victory of the woman suffrage campaign in 1920 when women were legally enfranchised by the ratification of the nineteenth amendment. Given intensified government harassment and the legal trials of The Masses editors under the Espionage Act, The Masses was forced to cease publication; the last issue of The Masses was published in December of 1917. In the end, The Masses was silenced by the same political system that the suffragists worked so tirelessly to join.

The legacy of woman suffrage through illustrations in The Masses makes one wonder what form The Masses’ visual response to women’s enfranchisement might have taken. In comparison to the genre of suffrage cartoons that populated the commercial and suffrage presses, The Masses’ cartoons at times employed similar formats and arguments, but The Masses’ cartoons engaged in different dialogues. Suffrage cartoons sought to justify and legitimate women’s participation in the public and political arenas through directed propaganda. The Masses’ cartoons assumed that women deserved political equality as a basic fact that did not need justification, and thus their rhetoric focused on attacking those who did not recognize this simple truth. Further, the radical magazine’s cartoons took part in a dialogue that encompassed the idealist socialist goals of revolutionary emancipation for not only women, but for all of humanity shackled by the

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112 John Waite draws this conclusion about the cartoon and The Masses’ intentions: “They recognized kindred courage to tell what they believe to be the truth when faced with injustice and overwhelming power.” Waite, Masses, p. 141.

113 Zurier, Art for The Masses, p. 46.
capitalist system. *The Masses*, out of feminist concerns, essentially extended the national suffrage campaign’s agenda to address on multiple levels the social concerns of women, with a special emphasis on the needs of working-class women. Due to its narrow focus on achieving the vote, *The Masses*, often responded graphically to the national suffrage movement with ambivalence, offering moderate support for the movement as in its “Woman’s Citizenship Number,” yet at the same time, in the standard mode of the magazine, satirized its efforts of piecemeal reform. The female vote did not hold the transformative revolutionary potential that *The Masses*’ socialists desired. At best, though, *The Masses*’ staff believed woman’s political emancipation could expand women’s social consciousness and social participation to a point in which women could, in the ultimate reflection of the ideals of feminism constructed by Greenwich Village radicals, “satisfy their ambitions...with the highest prizes of adventure and achievement that life offers.”\(^{114}\)

TO THE WOMAN IN THE HOME

There are thousands of children working in sweat-shops like the one in the picture. There are thousands of children working in mines and mills and factories. Thousands more are being wronged and cheated by Society in countless ways.

IS NOT THIS YOUR BUSINESS?

Intelligent citizens WHO CARED could change all this—providing always, of course, that they had the power of the ballot.

DO YOU CARE?

Mothers, are responsible for the welfare of children. Do your duty as a mother and demand

VOTES FOR WOMEN!

NATIONAL AMERICAN WOMAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION
505 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK CITY

Fig. 1 Mary Ellen Sigsbee. *To the Woman in the Home*. Woman’s Journal, 27 July 1912.
Fig. 2  Art Young. Charles Russell campaign poster, ca. 1912.
Fig. 3 Alexander Popini. Women and Labor. The Masses (November 1911), p. 4.
Fig. 4  Art Young. *Observation de Luxe*. The Masses (October 1911), p. 12.
A PICTURE AND AN OPINION

ARTHUR YOUNG DRAWS A FUNNY PICTURE FOR "THE MASSES" THAT ISN'T FUNNY AND WRITES A JOKE THAT ISN'T A JOKE.

THE literature of parasites is of three types: it is described from its effects on the reader. Sometimes it is picturesque and beautiful, as for example, when it deals with parasites remote from us and at the same time picturesque in appearance. Sometimes it is amusing, particularly when the parasite described has no connection with us, but settles on our friends. And last of all the literature of parasites is disgusting. It disgusts when it deals with parasites that live on us and from us.

To this last class belongs the dialogue which accompanies the picture of Arthur Young's reproduction on this page.

Neither the picture nor its caption are intended as jokes. There is nothing very amusing about them. If the combination were submitted to the editors of our "comic" weeklies they would be rejected as too strong for the taste of the readers. One editor would likely snap of the picture and dialogue as "unsuitable." And "unsuitable" it is. If it were intended as a joke the smelliness would be out of place. But it is not intended as a joke. It is no more than an Unpleasant and Truthful Comment on Civilization. For the illustration of an insect mentioned in the caption is deliberate. It is meant to stir up emotions. If the boys had observed correctly, "There are as many stars as a millionth of a billion;" we might have been touched by his poetic imagination, but we assuredly should not have been disgusted. Because the mistreatment which a pleasant association has become poetic. Besides the mistreatment is a parasite feeding on us, not on oak trees.

If the boys had said the stars were as thick as brussels and we should all our abundance because astronomical and clearly we may be, we have seen and disgusted beggars. Accordingly begging us is neither picturesque nor amusing, but disgusting and repulsive. Naturally therefore the parasite and the caption grave on. For sensibilities until we disgust that perhaps it is not a joke at all, but is.

Having reached this conclusion we settle down deliberately to discover the meaning of the sentence which it carries.

Now there are many thoughts to be inspired by the picture, some of which are plain, others of which are cosmic, weird thoughts.

In the beginning, and quite naturally, we feel indignant that conditions exist which teach the

Such nice little children!—and to think that their minds are filled with all this disgusting deceit! And at this time if you have food enough, and thought enough covers the second thought which it is not given the common multitude to

Think. If you are of the elect, your counting room dies.

The idea is as thin as the Somnambulists were, but are the commentator B. & 0. the only parasites to be reckoned with? These are not well-dressed, fat-legged children. They are not lovely with faces smeared with dirty soot. They are not diseased, sickly parasites. They are dirty little, dirty parasites; but in our civilization we can do all the dirty work for them.

Fig. 5 “A Picture and an Opinion.” The Masses (October 1911), p. 12.
Fig. 6  Anton Otto Fischer. *The Cheapest Commodity on the Market. The Masses* (December 1911), p. 4.
Fig. 7  Art Young. *Which one is the fool?* The Masses (January 1914), p. 14.
Fig. 8  George Bellows. *Damaged Goods*. *The Masses* (April 1914), p. 7.
Fig. 9  Stuart Davis. *At the Metropolitan Museum of Art: “Oh I Think Mr. Morgan Paints Awfully Well, Don’t You?”* The Masses (March 1913), p. 15.
Fig. 10  John Sloan. *The Women's Night Court: Before Her Makers and Her Judge*. *The Masses* (August 1913), pp. 10-11.
Fig. 11 Charles Allen Winter. *The Militant. The Masses* (August 1913), front cover.
Fig. 12  Maurice Becker. *Untitled (Woman hurling a brick)*. *The Masses* (December 1916), p. 4.
Fig. 13 John Sloan. *The Curse. The Masses* (February 1913), p. 12.
Fig. 14  
Stuart Davis. "Gee, Mag, Think of Us Bein' on a Magazine Cover!" 
_The Masses_ (June 1913), front cover.
Fig. 15   James Montgomery Flagg. *A Spring Chicken.* *Judge,* 31 May 1913, cover.

Fig. 16   Michael Angelo Woolf. *Agnes, Does Your Father Drink, Too?* *Life,* ca. 1895.
Fig. 17  John Leech. *Bloomerism—An American Custom. Punch, 1851.*

Fig. 18  Artist unknown. *Women’s Emancipation. Harper’s New Monthly Magazine, August 1851.*
Fig. 19  E. W. Gilpin. *Election Day!* Library of Congress, no publication data, 1909.

Fig. 20  Laura Foster. *Rulers of the Nation.* *Life,* 29 August 1912.
Fig. 21  May Wilson Preston. *Votes for Women. The Woman Voter*, January 1915.

Fig. 22  Boardman Robinson. *The Type Has Changed. New York Tribune*, 24 February 1911.
ADVICE TO CADDIES

YOU WILL SAVE TIME BY KEEPING YOUR EYES ON THE BALL, NOT ON THE PLAYER

Fig. 23 Charles Dana Gibson. Advice to Caddies. Life, 1900.
Suffragist—"If he doesn’t stop talking and come in his dinner will be spoiled!"

Fig. 24  Nina E. Allender. *Spoiled Dinner. Suffragist*, 30 March 1918.

"That child needs a woman to look after her."

Fig. 25  Nina E. Allender. *Come to Mother. Suffragist*, 31 March 1917.
Fig. 26 Mary Taylor. *Are Not Women Half the Nation?* *Maryland Suffrage News*, 7 August 1915.

Fig. 27 Lou Rogers. *From Force of Habit She Will Clean This Up.* *Judge*, 8 February 1913.
Fig. 28 Artist unknown. *Where the Mother’s Vote is Needed*. *Maryland Suffrage News*, 15 May 1915.
Fig. 29  Ida S. Proper. *Anti-Suffrage Parade*. *Woman’s Journal*, 21 September 1912.
ANTI-SUFFRAGE ARGUMENT NO. 187. "WOMEN ARE TOO PRUDISH. THEY THINK ABOUT NOTHING BUT STYLES AND FASHIONS."

Fig. 30  Cornelia Barns. Anti-Suffrage Argument No. 187. The Masses (March 1913), p. 12.
Fig. 31  Cornelia Barns. *Anti-Suffrage Meeting*. *The Masses* (March 1914), p. 16.
VOTERS

Fig. 32    Cornelia Barns. Voters. *The Masses* (December 1915).
"They Ain't Our Equals Yet!"

Fig. 33  Maurice Becker. "They Ain't Our Equals Yet!" The Masses (January 1917), p. 19.
Fig. 34  Maurice Becker. *Sex Appeal*. *The Masses* (July 1913), p. 15.
"Look at that, sister—right out in the street—wouldn't you think she'd be of shame?"
"Yes—yes, dearest!"

Fig. 35 Elizabeth Grieg, Wouldn't You Think She'd Die of Shame? The Masses (November 1915), p. 19.
Fig. 36 Kenneth R. Chamberlain. *Canned Innocence*. *The Masses* (July 1914), p. 19.
"Your Honor, this woman gave birth to a naked child!"

Fig. 37 Robert Minor. "Your Honor, this woman gave birth to a naked child!"
What Every Young Woman Ought to Have Known

Fig. 38    Elizabeth Grieg. What Every Young Woman Ought to Have Known. The Masses (April 1915), p. 23.
Family Limitation—Old Style

Fig. 40  
"Now you git out o' here, young lady, or you'll land in the workhouse!"

"I ain't afraid of the workhouse—I've been in a workhouse ever since I started to work!"

Fig. 41  Maurice Becker. *In a Workhouse.* The Masses (March 1913), p. 3.
"By the way, how much are you paying for girls, now?"

Fig. 42  Art Young. "By the way, how much are you paying for girls, now?"
The Masses (December 1914), p. 18.
The Return from Toil.

Fig. 44  John Sloan. The Return from Toil. The Masses (July 1913), front cover.
Fig. 45  Cornelia Barns. “My Dear, I’ll be economically independent if I have to borrow every cent!” The Masses (March 1915), p. 7.
Fig. 46  Mary Taylor. *No Vote Means No Remedy for Long Hours and Short Pay.* Maryland Suffrage News, 22 May 1915.

Fig. 47  Kenneth R. Chamberlain. "I used to be interested in the suffrage movement..." *The Masses* (August 1914), p. 14.
"WOMAN'S PROPER SPHERE IS THE HOME"

Fig. 49    Maurice Becker. Militancy. The Masses (March 1914), p. 9.
Fig. 50  
OVERHEARD ON HESTER STREET

(To the Suffrage Convasser) "You'll have to ask the head of the house—I only do the work."

Fig. 51 Glenn Coleman. *Overheard on Hester Street*. The Masses (November 1915), p. 10.
Atlas, Mere Man: "This thing is getting too hot and heavy and slippery for me to handle alone. I need help!"

Fig. 52    M. A. Kempf. Atlas, Mere Man. The Masses (November 1915).
O Wicked Flesh!

Fig. 53 Robert Minor. *O Wicked Flesh! The Masses* (November 1915), p. 20.
Types of Anti-Suffragists — By Stuart Davis

Fig. 54  
Fig. 55    Kenneth R. Chamberlain. Woman’s Sphere. The Masses (November 1915), back cover.
Cattle

"No, Miss, she aint right—f I kin tell you my lady don't need no one."

Fig. 56    John Sloan. Cattle. *The Masses* (April 1913), p. 17.
She's Got The Point

"We're almost at home, now, so I'll join "Ye."

Fig. 57  John Sloan. She’s Got The Point. The Masses (October 1913), p. 10.
The Deserter

Fig. 59    Boardman Robinson. *The Deserter. The Masses* (July 1916).
Fig. 60  Robert Minor. “At last a perfect soldier!” The Masses (July 1916), back cover.
Patriotism for Women

Fig. 61  Cornelia Barns. *Patriotism for Women*. The Masses (November 1914).
Fig. 63 Kenneth R. Chamberlain. *T. Atkins Returns from the Front. The Masses* (October 1916), p. 13.
"Have you forgotten your sympathies with the poor Germans because they are not self-governed? 30,000,000 American women are not self-governed. Take the ball out of your own eye."

This is one of the banners for which the suffragists were jailed. —[Ed.]

Fig. 64 Boardman Robinson. Kaiser Wilson, Have you forgotten... The Masses (October 1917), p. 17.
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