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**RHETORICAL VERSE: PERSUASION IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY
AMERICAN POETRY**

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Abstract

Between 1900 and 1940 in America, rhetorical verse—poetry with explicit hortatory goals and persuasive ends most often responding to specific political exigencies—became a popular rhetorical tool of the political left. However, through a number of cultural, political, and academic phenomena in the 1940s and 1950s, the artistic status of poetry would come to far overshadow its persuasive potential. As a result, poetry became the domain of the literary critic, leaving a robust tradition of rhetorical verse in the early decades of the twentieth century unstudied by historians of rhetoric.

This project traces an early twentieth-century American tradition of rhetorical verse by examining the poetic response to three controversial court cases: the trial of Arturo Giovannitti in 1912, the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1918, and the trial of the Scottsboro boys in 1931. Approaching a combination of archival and published material from a historiographical perspective, I contend that the poetry which responds to these trials represents an important example of how the political left often turned to rhetorical verse as a medium for their persuasive aims. Furthermore, I contend that the poems surrounding these trials display common features of rhetorical verse such as simplistic aesthetics, heavy end rhymes, and shared schemes and tropes drawn from the rhetoric of the labor movement. Nevertheless, as this project works to establish these commonalities, it also examines how rhetor-poets chose to deviate from these characteristics and how that effected the persuasive ability of the poems.

As a result of its aesthetic simplicity, much rhetorical verse can be and has been dismissed as “bad” poetry. However, reading these poems as rhetorical texts opens rich

new ways of rehabilitating a tradition of verse that balances artistic and persuasive qualities in a complex manner. In sum, I use a rhetorical historiographic approach to examine an understudied tradition of rhetorical verse as a major form of leftist rhetoric in early twentieth-century America.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Rhetorical Verse and the American Left

Giovannitti's poetry is the spiritualization of a lofty dream that he seeks to realize—the establishment of love and brotherhood and social justice for every man and woman upon the earth....Giovannitti is, like Shelley, a poet of revolt against the cruelty, the poverty, the ignorance which too many of us accept in blind content.

-Helen Keller, from Introduction to *Arrows in the Gale*, 1914

And that is why I have included the last speech of Vanzetti, eloquent with compassion and anguish, which falls into lines as easily as the frost into crystals.

-Selden Rodman on his decision to include Bartolomeo Vanzetti's final court speech as a poem in his *New Anthology of Modern Poetry*, 1938

If these 12 million Negro Americans don't raise such a howl that the doors of Kirby prison shake until the 9 youngsters come out (and I don't mean a polite howl, either), then let Dixie justice (blind and syphilitic as it may be) take its course.

Langston Hughes, from his editorial "Southern Gentlemen, White Prostitutes, Mill-Owners, and Negroes" which accompanied the publication of his poem "Christ in Alabama" in *Contempo*, 1931

In 1912, an Italian immigrant and labor activist wrote poetry from a Salem prison cell awaiting trial for his role in organizing one of the largest textile strikes of the early twentieth century. In 1927, sixty poets contributed to the *Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* in response to what many saw as a politically motivated show trial of two Italian-born anarchists. The following year, even more poets including modernist staples like

Edna St. Vincent Millay and John Dos Passos contributed to *America Arraigned!*, a poetry anthology memorializing the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. In 1931, Langston Hughes published the poem “Christ in Alabama” in the North Carolina-based journal *Contempo*, deliberately trying to provoke a political reaction in the wake of the initial trial and conviction of the Scottsboro Boys.

All of these examples (which I examine in greater detail in the following chapters) reveal one social role of poetry in early twentieth-century America, a role that might shock many contemporary poetry readers. In each of these instances an overtly rhetorical form of poetry emerges—poetry that responds to political exigences and has explicit persuasive designs. However, despite a rich tradition of rhetorical verse in early twentieth century America, most rhetorical scholarship on the period does not recognize poetry as type of persuasive public discourse.

This is not to say that rhetorical verse in this period is untouched. The rise of high-modernism—the ossification of the poem as well-wrought urn, an art object separated from the politics of its age—is a tale well recounted by many scholars of literature (Nelson, Harrington, Thurston, Berube, Rabinowitz, Marsh). It is a significant tale for scholars of rhetoric as well if we are to consider explicitly political poems¹ as rhetorical texts. The past two decades have seen many works that consider the overtly political poetry of the 1910s and 1920s Left as an overlooked (and often outright suppressed) tradition of American literature. However, this project contends that it is also

¹ Here too, I recognize that all poems are political; however, the poetry of the early twentieth century that was consciously and explicitly political holds the most insight into public discourse.

an overlooked American rhetorical tradition—that a strand of American poetry in the early twentieth century consciously acted as a form of public, persuasive discourse that was often marshaled for specific political causes (usually by those on the political Left).

In this project, I focus on the three major court cases already mentioned and the poetry that surrounded them: (1) the trial and acquittal of Arturo Giovannitti in 1912; (2) the trial and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1928; and (3) the initial trial of the Scottsboro Nine in 1931. My rationale for examining the poetry surrounding these particular cases is three-fold. First, all three legal battles were high-profile and followed by people across the nation (thanks in no small part, as I will contend, to the widely circulated poetry concerning the cases and defendants). Second, all three cases elicited poetry with explicit political, social, and rhetorical goals. Third, all three cases left an indelible imprint on the American consciousness, particularly intellectuals on the Left who were increasingly concerned with the social role of poetry.

Finally, while not the primary interest of this project, I will attempt to inscribe in my analysis of rhetorical verse the counter (and currently dominant) history of poetry during these decades—the concomitant rise of high-modernism as the dominant poetic movement in the early twentieth century. An example of how modernism developed in parallel with rhetorical verse can be seen in the year 1914, which marked the publication of Giovannitti's *Arrows in the Gale* (the collected poems he wrote while imprisoned for his role in the 1912 Lawrence textile strike) as well as the foundation of *The New Republic*, the eventual Rooseveltian bastion of liberal high-culture.² Likewise, while T.S.

² Ironically, a year earlier, in a letter from the magazine's financial backer Dorothy Straight, Straight

Eliot's *The Waste Land* was published in 1922, it was largely overshadowed by journalism and poetry concerning the Sacco and Vanzetti trial (Thurston 14). And in a similar example, Kenneth Burke's receipt of the final *Dial* prize for his avant-garde contributions to poetry in 1928 coincides with the publication of *America Arraigned!*, the collected political poems written during (and about) the Sacco and Vanzetti trial.

This parallel rise of a high-modernism concerned solely with aesthetics alongside the explicitly rhetorical poems surrounding these trials is significant because, as I will argue in subsequent chapters, the eventual dominance of the New Criticism, rooted in the poetic philosophies of high-modernists like Eliot and Pound, would be the impetus for the eventual suppression of rhetorical verse on ostensibly aesthetic grounds. That is to say, the eventual dominance of modernist aesthetics would be the primary reason the New Critics disregard rhetorical verse in the 1940s and 1950s, as most rhetorical verse espoused a much more simplistic aesthetic. And after all, Pound's *Draft of XVI Cantos* (published in 1925) is still regularly found on college syllabi today, whereas the political poets appearing in *The New Masses* (founded in 1926) would rarely be seen outside of specialized graduate courses.

To begin, I define and establish a tradition of American rhetorical verse largely centered on the various movements, causes, and concerns of the political Left. I then provide a glossary of key terms used throughout the dissertation that puts in bold the

expressed to Herbert Croly (the founding editor of *The New Republic*) the concern of a friend at the hiring of Walter Lippmann to the editorial staff because of Lippman's alleged "socialist leanings toward the IWW" (Seideman 16)

glossed terms. Following that, I provide an overview of my methods and methodology.

Finally, I give an overview of the chapters in this dissertation.

Background: An American Tradition of Rhetorical Verse

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
 Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
 The emptiness of ages in his face,
 And on his back the burden of the world.
 Who made him dead to rapture and despair,
 A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,
 Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?
 Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?
 Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?
 Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?

-Edwin Markham, "The Man with the Hoe,"
 1899

Few people today are familiar with Edward Markham's 1899 poem "The Man with the Hoe" (excerpted above) despite its massive popularity at the time of its publication. Instead, the familiar tale about American poetry at the outset of the twentieth century is the rise of Modernism³—expatriate writers in the salons of Paris and banks of London, the rise of "high culture" periodicals like the *New Republic* and *Partisan Review*, and the aestheticized *avant garde* poem lofted onto a pedestal above the "low-brow" interests of propaganda and politics. It was the first two decades of the new century that would see the staples of the eventual Modernist canon first appear in print: T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), Ezra Pound's first *Cantos* (1925), William Carlos Williams' *Sour*

³ Many literature scholars have rightly begun to trouble the idea of Modernism as a single literary movement (see Nicholls). Nonetheless, the fiction of a unitary artistic movement remains prevalent in many accounts of the era.

Grapes (1921), and Marianne Moore's first book, *Poems* (1921), among others. While these “high Modernists” would eventually be immortalized by the New Critics in the 1940s and 1950s (a phenomenon I discuss in detail in later chapters), there was another robust poetic tradition growing in early twentieth century America: a tradition of rhetorical verse.

I am defining rhetorical verse as poetry with explicit hortatory goals and persuasive ends. Few rhetoricians would argue with the idea that poetry is rhetorical—Kenneth Burke, after all, says, “Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is 'meaning' there is persuasion” (*Rhetoric of Motives* 172), and certainly poetry has meaning. However, few rhetoricians likewise examine poems as rhetorical texts intended to persuade an audience, despite the fact that there is a robust tradition of explicitly rhetorical poetry from the first three decades of the twentieth century that, through a series of cultural, critical, and political phenomena which this dissertation documents, was suppressed in large part due to its leftist political orientation. Before looking at some representative examples of rhetorical verse from the early twentieth century, however, I should more generally lay out characteristics of this type of poetry and how I am distinguishing it from the canonical modernist poetry with which it coexisted.

First, rhetorical verse was most often tied to the causes of the political Left. While Edna St. Vincent Millay famously wrote pro-war, pro-United States poetry during the second World War, until that point much of the rhetorical verse in America was tied to

organized labor, various Marxist/Leninist/Trotskyist movements, or other bastions of the Old Left.⁴ Second, rhetorical verse was concerned with circulation. While many canonical Modernist poets were publishing in boutique magazines priced to maintain an elite readership, rhetorical verse was circulated *en masse* via broadsides, periodicals, newspapers, and pocket anthologies, along with traditional book manuscripts. Third, rhetorical verse responded to specific political exigences, albeit often taking advantage of poetry's ability to be oblique or abstract in its critiques. Finally, despite eventually being silenced and nearly forgotten, rhetorical verse circulated alongside (and sometimes overshadowed) the canonical Modernist verse that most now associate with that time period. Below is a table contrasting key events in the traditional “Rise of Modernism” narrative with key events in this tradition of rhetorical verse.

	“High” Modernism	Rhetorical Verse
1899		Edward Markham's “The Man with the Hoe” published
1911		<i>The Masses</i> founded
1912		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrest and Trial of Arturo Giovannitti • Publication of “The Walker” in post-trial pamphlet <i>Ettor and Giovannitti before the Jury at Salem</i>
1913	Robert Frost's <i>A Boy's Will</i> published	

⁴ The Old Left was the progressive left of early 1900s. Centered around labor politics, the Old Left can be contrasted with the New Left of the 1960s whose politics centered around the various social movements of that decade.

1914	<i>The New Republic</i> founded by Herbert Croly	Giovannitti's <i>Arrows in the Gale</i> published
1917		<i>The Masses</i> editors charged with treason; last issue published
1920		Sacco and Vanzetti indicted
1921	Marianne Moore's <i>Poems</i> published in London by H.D.	
1922	<i>The Waste Land</i> published; Eliot wins the <i>Dial</i> award	
1925	Pound's <i>Draft of XVI Cantos</i> published	
1926		<i>The New Masses</i> founded
1927		Execution of Sacco and Vanzetti
1928	Burke wins final <i>Dial</i> award	<i>America Arraigned!</i> published
1930	Malcolm Cowley becomes literary editor of <i>The New Republic</i>	
1931		Scottsboro trial

Table 1: *The Parallel Rise of "High" Modernism and Rhetorical Verse*

The 1930s would see widespread public debates among critics and poets about the social (and rhetorical) functions of verse. Some contended that poetry should be a-rhetorical, having no social function at all. Others contended that poetry should be purely rhetorical—a proletarian literature aimed at spurring Marxist revolution among the masses. To understand the tensions between rhetoric and poetry that come to a head in the 1930s, one must first understand how rhetoric and poetry arrived at such a point in twentieth century America. Specifically, rhetoric scholars must understand the various strands of early twentieth century American culture that wished to yoke themselves to the social and rhetorical capital of “Poetry” writ-large.

In *Repression and Recovery*, Cary Nelson begins his 2001 project of recovering what I have termed rhetorical verse with Edward Markham's 1899 poem "The Man with the Hoe," though he and other scholars rightfully point out that one can find rhetorical verse about progressive causes dating at least back to the abolitionist poetry of the early to mid nineteenth century and even beyond. In any case, there is a distinct tradition of rhetorical verse tied to the political Left that can be pointed to certainly by the turn of the nineteenth century until the end of the 1930s. During this time, Nelson argues that poetry "became one of the most dependable sources of knowledge about society and one's place and choices within it. Indeed, for some people, poetic discourse was capable not merely of talking about but actually of substantially deciding basic social and political issues" (*Repression and Recovery* 127).

In his 2002 *Poetry and the Public*, Joseph Harrington establishes three factions vying for a claim to "Poetry" writ-large in the early twentieth century: (1) the popularizers—genteel poets with an inclination toward a popular, public 19th century Edwardian romanticism; (2) the high-modernists with their ideals of autonomous, aloof art; (3) and the emerging social poetry of the radical Left. As I have already mentioned, it is the tensions between the latter two factions that concern this chapter—the modernist proponents of high art and the proponents of hortatory, rhetorical verse on the political Left.

Modes of Circulation

In the early part of the twentieth century, poetry in America had a much broader social role than poetry after World War II, which in many ways receded into the academy due to what Michael Thurston calls “a

confluence of national politics, especially the anti-Communist inquisition...and literary politics, where new, formalist methodologies wrought deep changes in the institutions that publish, recirculate, evaluate, and preserve literary works” (7). This is most evident in the increased prevalence

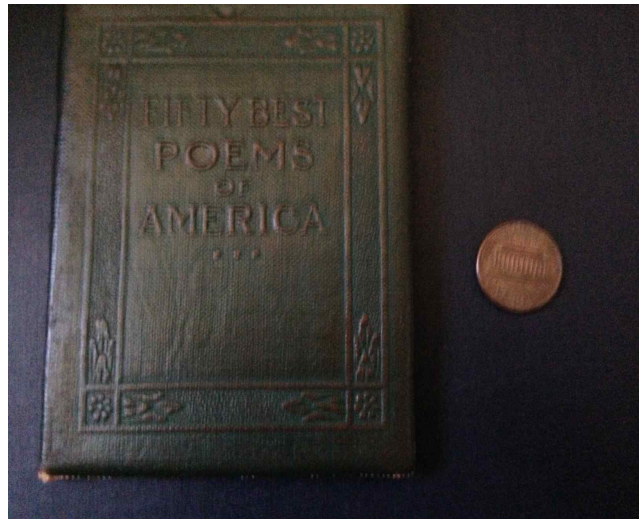


Figure 1: Fifty Best Poems of America, Little Leather Library edition, 1921

poetry had in the popular press, entering many homes daily through newspapers.

Likewise, editors like Louis Untermeyer compiled extensive anthologies of popular verse that appealed to a mass audience of Americans (unlike the poetry anthologies of today, which are mostly intended for use in an undergraduate classroom).

The reasons for the changes in poetry's public stature can largely be traced to the rise of the New Criticism of 1940s and 1950s. Critics like Cleanth Brooks and Allen Tate began to find professional homes in universities as opposed to the literary and cultural periodicals that supported critics in the early parts of the century. Likewise, poetry

reviews also came to be supported by university presses as opposed to being independent publications. Poetry increasingly moved from the public sector to the academic, cutting it off from a general public who were largely not college educated.

Poetry in the early decades of the twentieth century also went beyond the traditional book manuscript (though books of poems were still quite popular, as Michael Harrington points out in his 2002 example of the *Women's Home Companion* assuring its readers in 1911 that poetry books “outclassed” etiquette books in showing a woman's refinement [23]). Poems then quite often appeared in newspapers and were regularly clipped and saved in scrapbooks, creating custom-made anthologies that readers could return to (Harrington 32). Likewise, from 1916 to 1923 the Little Leather Library Corporation sold over 25 million leather-bound pocket anthologies of poetry as seen in Figure 1 (Rubin 95). Initially, these were paired with boxes of Whitman's chocolates and intended to be carried in vest pockets for ready access; however, as their popularity increased, the founders of the company began a mail-order service eventually shipping many copies as gifts to soldiers fighting in the first World War (Radway 159).

Labor unions also used poetry publicly to recruit members, organize meetings, convey messages, and to decorate the pages of their newsletters.⁵ In *Revolutionary Memory*, Nelson explains how poet Lola Ridge allowed her poem “Stone Face” to be reprinted on posters for a rally to free labor leader Tom Mooney, who was wrongfully imprisoned for murder in 1916 and eventually pardoned in 1939. Likewise, poems were

⁵ For a detailed discussion of “poem cards”—small cards of poetry that could be passed hand to hand on a factory floor without a foreman noticing—see Nelson's *Revolutionary Memory*. For an introduction to poetry printed in labor publications see Marsh.

also printed on “poem cards” used to advertise times and locations of organizational meetings for workers (Nelson 28-30).

Perhaps the greatest diversity of poetry, however, came from the periodicals and little magazines popular in the first two decades of the century. *Avant garde* publications like the *Dial* (which first published Eliot's *The Waste Land* in 1922) or *Hound and Horn* reached small audiences primarily in New York City and catered to poetry reflecting the aestheticism of high modernists mentioned earlier. Many of these lacked the politicized editorials and explicitly rhetorical verse found in more widely distributed “cultural periodicals” like *The New Republic* or *The Partisan Review*.

Finally were the broadly circulated political periodicals like *The Masses*, the Italian *Il Proletario*, and various union periodicals separate from the newsletters mentioned earlier.. Usually printed on cheap newsprint as opposed to the higher quality print and binding jobs of the little magazines, these venues for poetry were expressly designed to circulate broadly to readers with a variety of literacy levels. In his 2001 book *Making Something Happen*, Michael Thurston points out that each issue of *The Masses* had its price, 25 cents, printed on the cover (dedicated readers could also buy an annual bound volume of that year's issues for \$2.50) (24).

Understanding the broad and various ways poetry circulated during the first decades of the twentieth century is significant to understanding how poetry was used as an explicitly rhetorical medium by practitioners of rhetorical verse. Furthermore, having tangible audiences for the rhetorical verse contained in these periodicals helps explain the

rhetorical decisions made by various poets publishing in them. For example, rhetorical verse in the political periodicals, which were aimed at broad circulations of workers at various literacy levels, tended to be simple, regularly metered, and end rhymed creating a musical, easy to grasp poem. However, rhetorical verse in the cultural periodicals, aimed at a better educated and often literary minded audience, tended to be more aesthetically adventurous, embracing free verse and creating poems that were more inviting to ponder over than simply absorb.

In short, the poetic culture of the early twentieth century saw poetry as a popular and widespread social art, much more so than today's insular⁶, academized verse.⁷ Likewise, modernist aesthetics had not yet reached their dominance, leaving a much more flowery and conservative aesthetic that today many might consider “bad” or at the very least sing-songy and boring. Nonetheless, this poetic conservatism was quite popular at the time and appealed to many people's sensibilities about how a poem should look. In his 2011 book *Hogs Butchers, Beggars, and Busboys*, John Marsh points out that it was in fact the formal experimentation of the high modernists that was not very popular before World War I, with one critic headlining a *New York Times* article, “Says 'Verse Libre' Is Prose, Not Poetry” (11). Furthermore, the poetic conservatism of rhetorical verse is significant because it has long been the reason rhetorical poetry has been

⁶ The average print run for a new book of poems today is usually between 200-300, indicating the very small, elite audience that academic poetry has.

⁷ It is worth noting that one exception to this is slam poetry, which has developed a significant popular following thanks to the popularity of hip hop and the accessibility of YouTube for streaming performances. Nonetheless, there is a popular sentiment among academic poets that slam poetry should not even be considered poetry at all.

dismissed, though the poetry's accessibility is an enormous factor when one considers these poems not primarily as art objects, but as rhetorical texts.

Glossary

Aestheticism Aestheticism in this dissertation is the overarching concern with the formal elements of poetry: meter, line, rhyme, tone, etc. In the extreme, aestheticism divorces meaning from poetry in favor of formalistic experimentation.

Anarcho-Communist Anarcho-communism was a utopian form of anarchism that advocated for a forcible uprising of workers and a reordering of society to have small, self-ruled communes with no overarching governmental structures. Best seen in the writings of Peter Kropotkin, anarcho-communism ranged from a pacifist philosophy of freedom to the radical call for violent uprising against capitalism.

CPUSA The Communist Party USA was the American branch of the Marxist Communist Party. Established in 1919, the Communist Party would rise to prominence as the most visible radical labor organization in the country. CPUSA's literary initiative, the

Popular Front, greatly influenced the leftist literature of the latter half of the 1930s.

Culture Wars

The 1930s literary community in America came to be dominated by two camps. On the one hand were the *aesthetes* as Kenneth Burke calls them in *Auscultation, Creation, Revision*. Concerned primarily with poetic aesthetics, the aesthetes took an art-for-art's sake view of poetry, vehemently arguing that poetry should have no rhetorical or political functions. On the other hand, writers on the left, particularly those influenced by Marxism, called for art with exclusive social and rhetorical functions in service of the Communist Party. The debates between these camps about the social function of art spilled onto the pages of every cultural and political periodical, dominating the literary scene for most of the decade and coming to be known as the 1930s culture wars.

I.W.W.

The Industrial Workers of the World, often called Wobblies, was a radical labor organization active in the 1910s and 1920s. They advocated for a worker's uprising and a democratic shop model where workers elect their managers. The Wobblies often came into conflict with other labor organizations like the American Federation of Labor which they viewed as too conservative in their

tactics. In the first two decades, the Wobblies often took charge of labor-related defense trials, a role that would eventually come to be filled by the Communist Party USA after the I.W.W.'s demise.

Old Left

The Old Left was the progressive left of early 1900s. Centered around labor politics, the Old Left can be contrasted with the New Left of the 1960s whose politics centered around the various social movements of that decade. Because of the labor-centric nature of the Old Left, early twentieth century leftist rhetoric shared much of its language with the labor movement.

Radical

I use the term radical throughout this dissertation in a very specific context. Here, a radical is not just someone with extreme politics, but specifically a person or organization who advocates for the overthrow of the U.S. government. For example, some socialists with extreme political views nonetheless chose to work within the confines of U.S. democracy and would not fall under this dissertation's definition of a radical.

Rhetorical Verse

Poetry with explicit hortatory goals and persuasive ends most often responding to specific political exigencies. Most, though not all, rhetorical verse was aesthetically simplistic, with staunchly metered lines and end rhymes in order to appeal to broad

audiences across multiple literacy levels. Nonetheless, there are examples of rhetorical verse, most often aimed at a highly educated audience, that provide aesthetic challenges, as this dissertation details.

Syndicalism

Syndicalism was a transnational political movement in the early twentieth century that advocated for an international revolution of the working class to overthrow capitalism and replace it with localized syndicates of workers who were governed democratically from within and worked cooperatively with each other. Many syndicalists in the U.S. were Italian immigrants who tended to work in factories or textile mills.

Methods and Methodology

A historiographical effort to recover and elucidate the rhetorical verse of the early twentieth century, *Rhetorical Verse: Persuasion in Early Twentieth-Century American Poetry* employs a mixture of methods. In researching this project I visited multiple archives, both physical and digital. I additionally read deeply the labor histories of the early twentieth century in order to provide a rich historical context for the rhetorical verse produced. These activities allowed me to engage with a variety of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources—periodicals, pamphlets, individually authored

books, multi-authored anthologies, and literary journals among others—provided access to a robust tradition of rhetorical verse as well as to the critical response to that tradition in the form of reviews. The secondary sources provided historical context as well as contemporary perspectives on labor rhetoric.

On an additional note, much of my effort in researching was simultaneously preservational, as much of the rhetorical verse of the political left had fallen out of print, and the surviving originals into disrepair. For many texts, the only way to interact with them for the extended time I needed was to digitize them. From a digital humanities perspective, this has allowed me to include a significant number of digital artifacts embedded in the dissertation itself which, because of the elusive nature of many of the texts, can provide visual examples for those without the benefit of a major research library to track the texts down. Furthermore, as I will detail throughout the project, the physical features of rhetorical verse are significant because they indicate how a particular text was intended to circulate and to whom.

The overarching methodological orientation of this project is a historiographical one. Rhetorical historiography sees history not as a single, unified narrative but as a series of intertwining and diverging narratives, some of which are suppressed and some of which are privileged at varying times. This perspective is especially indebted to the discussion of historiographic theories and methodologies in rhetorical studies by scholars such as Jacqueline Jones Royster, Michael Leff, Maurice Charland, Debra Hawhee, Patricia Bizzell, Cheryl Glenn, Shirley Wilson Logan, Richard Leo Enos, and C. Jan

Swearingen. Drawing on their various metaphors for history and how it is written will help me examine a tradition of persuasive work generally placed outside of the dominant narrative of rhetoric's history. Complicating this historiographical lens is Debra Hawhee and Christa Olson's concept of pan-historiography—the notion that, as rhetorical historiographies focus on narrower and narrower ranges of dates they tend to sprawl in other ways. Truly, as the date range for this project narrowed I found it spreading in other ways—geographically, theoretically, and methodologically.

Likewise, feminist historiography is an important theoretical lens for this dissertation, and it gives me ways of considering how marginalized rhetors and rhetorics might enrich our understanding of rhetoric's history. Furthermore, many of the poets I will be examining were themselves politically marginalized, and feminist theory provides me a way to think about how poetry might be particularly useful to marginalized rhetors.

By approaching this project with a historiographic lens, I see the tradition of rhetorical verse that existed in early twentieth-century America as a crucial contribution to histories of rhetoric for that time period. A major tool of the Old Left to disseminate ideas and persuade workers, rhetorical verse offers a largely unstudied genre of persuasive communication that helped shape the opinions of the populace and the policies of the government alike. However, the eventual suppression of rhetorical verse resulted in a gap of public and scholarly memory—precisely why a historiographical study is critical in contributing to the already-existing histories of early twentieth-century rhetoric.

Overview of Chapters

This project is organized chronologically around three court cases and the rhetorical verse they produced: the 1912 trial of Arturo Giovannitti, the 1928 trial of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, and the 1931 trial of the nine Scottsboro boys. Each case was a world-wide phenomenon of perceived injustice, inspiring protests and activism on a global level. Furthermore, the rhetorical verse produced in response to each case furthered the defendants' legal defense by turning a trial into a symbolic moments around which the left could coalesce.

Chapter one, “Bread, Roses, Poetry: The Rhetorical Verse of Arturo Giovannitti,” details the rhetorical verse produced in response to labor activist Arturo Giovannitti's arrest. I begin with a background of the 1912 Lawrence textile mills strike, which Giovannitti helped organized and which was the grounds for his arrest. I also examine the rhetorical tactics of the Industrial Workers of the World, with whom Giovannitti was affiliated, showing how it was a common tactic of theirs to use verse and song as persuasive mediums to both recruit new members and rouse existing ones. Finally, I examine Giovannitti's own poetry, showing how it acted as judicial, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric, often blurring the lines between the three offices.

In contrast to chapter one, Chapter two, “Black Flags, Red Lyrics: The Rhetorical Verse of the Sacco-Vanzetti Affair,” examines a collective poetic response. While Giovannitti's rhetorical verse was written entirely by himself, the Sacco-Vanzetti affair

saw an outpouring of rhetorical verse from a number of poets on the literary left. I begin with a brief background of American anarchism, which I contend is integral to understanding the rhetorical situation surrounding the Sacco-Vanzetti affair. Then I provide a brief background of Sacco and Vanzetti themselves as well as an overview of the case and trial to which the rhetorical verse responded. Finally, I look at the verse itself, examining two multi-author anthologies with very different rhetorical purposes.

Chapter three, “Poetry for a Judicial Lynching: The Rhetorical Verse of the Scottsboro Affair,” looks at the rhetorical verse that responded to the arrest and impending execution of nine young African American boys falsely accused of raping two white women. Here I provide a brief background of the Scottsboro affair and multiple trials and retrials to establish the historical context for the rhetorical verse produced. Next, I look at individual poems about the case published in various periodicals with a variety of audience—the poetry of the political periodicals directed at laborers, the poetry of the cultural and literary periodicals directed (mostly) at educated northern white liberals, and *Theory of Flight*, the first book of poetry by Muriel Rukeyser that simultaneously launched her career and broke the mold for what rhetorical verse could achieve as both poetry and rhetoric.

Finally, the last chapter, “Conclusion: The Decline of Rhetorical Verse in America” suggests that the decline of rhetorical verse during the 1940s and 1950s was a result of the conservative backlash of those eras, spurred by World War Two patriotism and Cold War hysteria. As the radical left diminished, so did one of their most prominent

rhetorical mediums in rhetorical verse. Following this narrative of decline, I provide some insights and inferences arrived at through this dissertation as well as suggestions for further research on rhetorical verse.

As historiography, *Rhetorical Verse: Persuasion in Early Twentieth-Century American Poetry* attempts to bring to light the role rhetorical verse played in the history of twentieth century rhetorics. A prominent rhetorical tool of the political left, rhetorical verse offers a broad new body of rhetorical texts for scholars of rhetoric to study. Ultimately, this project argues that the persuasive and artistic features of rhetorical verse, as well as its diverse and prodigious employment by those on the left, make rhetorical verse an important yet understudied medium of persuasive communication.

Chapter Two

Bread, Roses, Poetry: The Rhetorical Verse of Arturo Giovannitti

Blessed are the strong in freedom's spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of earth.

Blessed are they that mourn for their martyred dead: for they shall avenge them upon their murderers and be comforted.

Blessed are the rebels: for they shall reconquer the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after equality: for they shall eat the fruit of their labor.

-Arturo Giovannitti, "The Sermon on the Common," 1914

In January of 1912, a twenty-nine year old orator named Arturo Giovannitti arrived in Lawrence, Massachusetts and delivered a rousing speech to striking textile workers in the city's common square. In this speech, a parody of the biblical Sermon on Mount, he exhorts his audience to resist the oppressive working conditions of the mill town through whatever means, even revolution. Within ten days, a sixteen year old striker was shot and killed by police, Giovannitti was in prison charged with inciting her murder, and the strike in Lawrence still raged under new leadership. By the end of the year, Giovannitti was a household name—his poetry (composed in prison) appeared in *The Atlantic* among other popular magazines and his trial, covered extensively by most major news outlet in America, sparked protests worldwide.

Histories of rhetoric that focus on the early twentieth century tend to focus on pedagogy—the period saw the upheaval of the old philological models at Harvard and Yale (see Berlin), as well as the rise of Black, Women's, and Normal colleges across the country (see Gold). Likewise, in Communication Studies, histories of the same time

period tend to focus on Presidential address. While Arturo Giovannitti was not president, nor was he tied to any universities, he nonetheless made significant contributions to how rhetoric on the political left was practiced in the decades leading up to McCarthyism.⁸

The goal of this chapter is two-fold. First, I aim to introduce Giovannitti as a practitioner of rhetoric during the early twentieth century, particularly within the tradition of the political Old Left.⁹ In particular, however, I contend that Giovannitti's most significant contributions to the rhetorical tradition come not as traditional oratory, though he was by all accounts an excellent public speaker, but through rhetorical verse—poetry with explicit hortatory goals and persuasive ends that most often responds to political exigencies. Giovannitti's poetry, composed while in prison, enjoyed wider circulation than any of his speeches in the months leading up to and after his highly publicized trial. The poems themselves, politically charged while ambiguous enough to appeal to many audiences, spread Giovannitti's political message and critiques of the justice system while inspiring thousands (including Helen Keller) to join the radical Industrial Workers of the World (Foner 348).

I have three reasons for examining Giovannitti's work in particular. First, Giovannitti's poetry is a hallmark example of the type of explicitly political rhetorical verse that enjoyed broad circulation and popular readership in the early 1900s. Second, Giovannitti's reputation as an orator is apparent in his poems, where he makes liberal use

⁸ As I will show throughout this dissertation, the conservative backlash of McCarthyism during the 1940s and 1950s silenced much of the leftist rhetoric and art of the early twentieth century. Nonetheless, Giovannitti's influence on the rhetorical and artistic practices of the political left during the first three decades of the twentieth century is not to be understated.

⁹ The Old Left was the progressive left of early 1900s. Centered around labor politics, the Old Left can be contrasted with the New Left of the 1960s whose politics centered around the various social movements of that decade.

of rhetorical schemes and tropes (Harrington 106, Monroe 38, Delville 79). Third, Giovannitti's poetry enjoyed wide circulation among the general public in popular anthologies, radical periodicals, and even traditionally conservative mainstream publications like the *Atlantic Monthly*.

To begin, I provide a brief background of Giovannitti, followed by an explication of his role in the 1912 Lawrence textile strike (popularly known as the Bread and Roses Strike) which led to his arrest. I also provide a background of how the Industrial Workers of the World, the union which helped organize the Lawrence strike and with which Giovannitti was loosely affiliated, had a history of using poetry and song rhetorically, placing Giovannitti's rhetorical verse into a historical context. Following this, I examine the poetry itself as both a hybridized genre of verse and oratory and as a type of judicial rhetoric in the Aristotelian sense.

In a final note, by the time of the conservative backlash to the radical left in the 1940s and 1950s, Giovannitti's poetry, once widely anthologized in the 1920s, had largely fallen out of print. His 1914 collection of poems, *Arrows in the Gale*, despite its massive popularity at the time, would only be reprinted sporadically in small runs, first in 1962 just after his death (E. Clemente and Sons Publishers, Chicago) and then reissued in 1975 (Arno Press). The rarity of these printings makes them prohibitively expensive for all but collectors, and it was not until being reissued by Quale Press in 2004 that the poems could legitimately return to popular circulation. As a result, I have attempted to include segments of much of Giovannitti's poetry in this chapter—if scholars are to view poetry as rhetorical texts, those texts must be available, not silenced. Likewise, I have tried to

include various artifacts such as fliers and songbooks that place Giovannitti's poetry into a tradition of rhetorical art produced and distributed by organizations of the Old Left in the early twentieth century.

Background: Arturo Giovannitti

Do you believe for one single moment that we ever preached violence, that a man like me as I stand with my naked heart before you could kill a human being?....I am twenty-nine years old. I have a woman that loves me and that I love. I have a mother and father that are waiting for me. I have an ideal that is dearer to me than can be expressed or understood. And life has so many allurements and it is so nice and bright and so wonderful that I feel the passion of living in my heart.

-Arturo Giovannitti, "Address to the Jury," September 1912.

Born in 1884 in Ripabottoni, Italy, Arturo Giovannitti emigrated to Canada, then the U. S. in the early 1900s (D'Attilio 271). By the early 1910s, Giovannitti began publishing poetry in both "wide circulation literary magazines" as well as propaganda pieces for the Industrial Workers of the World (Harrington 106). By 1911, he was also the sole editor of the socialist newspaper *Il Proletario* based out of New York City. However, it would not be until his arrest and subsequent trial for his role in the monumental 1912 Lawrence textile strike that Giovannitti's poetic stock would rise to global proportions. During his time in prison, Giovannitti wrote poems (eventually published as the 1914 collection *Arrows in the Gale*) which saw widespread circulation and popularity due to his highly publicized trial. By the 1920s, Giovannitti's poetry was frequently anthologized (Harrington 105), with famed anthologist Louis Untermeyer

going so far as to call Giovannitti's poem "The Walker" "one of the most remarkable things our [American] literature can boast" (*New Era* 191).

By 1934, however, Giovannitti's reknown had dimmed to mostly local fans in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, for which he served as head of the educational department, and to the previous generation of Leftist activists (Nelson 44). By the 1940s, his poetic fame had been almost completely extinguished due to an inseparable confluence of aesthetic and political factors that resulted in the overt silencing or gradual falling out of print of many Leftist writers from the first three decades of the century. Today, when he is known at all, it is usually for his role in the Lawrence strike, his subsequent arrest, and for his most famous poem, "The Walker" which, as already mentioned, he wrote in prison while awaiting trial.¹⁰

The "Bread and Roses" Strike of Lawrence, Massachusetts

As we come marching, marching in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray,
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing: "Bread and roses! Bread and roses!"

As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men,
For they are women's children, and we mother them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes;
Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses!

As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient cry for bread.
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew.
Yes, it is bread we fight for — but we fight for roses, too!

As we come marching, marching, we bring the greater days.
The rising of the women means the rising of the race.

¹⁰ It is worth noting here that due in large part to the recent increase (mild as it may be) in scholarly attention to Giovannitti, his collection *Arrows in the Gale* along with selected *Other Poems* was reprinted by Quale Press in 2004.

No more the drudge and idler — ten that toil where one reposes,
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and roses! Bread and roses!

-James Oppenheim, "Bread and Roses," 1911

Lawrence, Massachusetts in the early 1900s was a textile mill town with a reputation for being "the worsted center of the world" (Foner 307). It was also a town with growing labor issues. According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 1911, the average wage for employees in the Lawrence mills was sixteen cents an hour (Foner 308). Furthermore, the Lawrence mills were a "family industry," meaning everyone—husbands, wives, and children—worked in the mills in order to survive. In fact, by 1912, half of the children living in Lawrence were employed in the mills (Foner 309), and most families took outside boarders and lodgers into their homes in order to meet the high rent prices in the area. Philip S. Foner succinctly summarizes the general living conditions for workers trying to earn an average \$8.76 wage per 56 hour week in the industrial town:

Lawrence had two dubious honors. One was that it was a leading contender for being the most congested city in the nation, with 33,700 people, one-third of the population, dwelling on less than one thirteenth of the city's area—the slum area. The other was that the infant mortality rate in Lawrence was one of the highest of the industrial cities of the nation. Of the 1,524 deaths in Lawrence in 1910, 711 or 46.6 percent were children of less than six years. (313)

Compounded with these issues was the fact that most of the workers in Lawrence were new immigrants primarily from Italy, Syria, and Eastern Europe—within a one mile

radius of the mills lived an estimated twenty five different nationalities speaking around fifty different languages (Foner 310).

So it comes as no surprise that by 1912, tensions between the largely immigrant workforce and the Anglo-American mill owners were high. In January of that year, mill owners, in an attempt to compensate for a 1911 law that limited the workweek of women and children to 54 hours, refused to pay for lost hours forced under the new law, in effect instituting a thirty-two cent per week wage-cut. Workers left their looms in protest, carrying signs that read “We want bread...and roses too!” inspired by the above James Oppenheim poem titled “Bread and Roses” that appeared in the widely circulated *American Magazine* the year before. So even from the outset of the strike, poetry played a central and hortatory role, contributing to the movement's popular name, the Bread and Roses Strike.

As worker discontent resulted in smaller, sporadic walk outs in early January 1912, a fairly young but radically progressive union called the Industrial Workers of the World, with only a few hundred members in Lawrence, saw an opportunity for wide-scale collective action by appealing to the large Italian immigrant population and large number of working women employed at the Lawrence mills. The I.W.W., or “Wobblies” as they were popularly known, with their slogan “One Big Union” called in veteran organizer Joseph Ettor to come from New York to organize the growing number of workers going on strike.

The decision to call upon Ettor (as opposed to local leaders) was a calculated rhetorical move on the part of the I.W.W.. Ettor, the firebrand son of working-class

Italian immigrants, had just the previous spring toured Lawrence and become extremely popular with the large base of Italian immigrant workers in the mills (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 17). Affectionately known as “Smiling Joe,” Ettor was also a veteran organizer, having run strikes from Oregon to Pennsylvania for the I.W.W. (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 17). And it would be Ettor who would personally contact his friend Arturo Giovannitti during the first week of the strike and ask him to come to Lawrence (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 218).

At the time of the tumult in Lawrence, Arturo Giovannitti was a relatively unknown poet and editor of the socialist magazine *Il Proletario* living in New York City. A classically trained orator from a family of lawyers and professors in Italy, Giovannitti was fluent in English, Latin, and French, though he primarily spoke to crowds in a lofty, romanticized Italian (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 217).¹¹ Initially attending seminary in Manhattan to become a minister, Giovannitti quickly became involved in the radical politics of New York's Italian immigrant community (D'Attilio 271). Though he would not officially join the I.W.W. until many years after the Lawrence strike, his dedication to social justice (and to his friend Joseph Ettor) drove him to Lawrence.¹²

Between Ettor's previous organizing experience with the larger I.W.W. chapters out west and Giovannitti's well-documented talent for oratory (Foner 346; Harrington 106; Watson, *Bread and Roses* 218), the strike solidified and grew, with more workers

¹¹ At his trial, Giovannitti makes it a point at the beginning of his defense speech to emphasize that it is his first time speaking publicly in English (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 237). Whether this is the truth or an exaggeration for rhetorical effect, certainly most of his public speaking to that point was done in Italian—a key point in his defense as the police serving as witnesses for the prosecution only knew English (Foner 345).

¹² Giovannitti was initially hesitant to go to Lawrence at all until his wife urged him to go (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 218).

leaving their machines. One spokesman for the mill owners suggested that the strike would have collapsed in a few days had Ettor and Giovannitti not arrived and “swayed the undisciplined mob as completely as any general ever controlled his disciplined troops” (qtd. in Foner 317).

Despite the successes of Ettor and Giovannitti, by the end of January, a sixteen year old worker named Annie LoPizzo was shot and killed¹³ when police and militia tried to halt a parade of about 1,000 strikers. Though neither Ettor nor Giovannitti were at the parade, both were immediately arrested and charged as accessories to murder for their organizing work inciting the “riot” that resulted in LoPizzo's death. The two activists would be held in prison for almost a year before being acquitted in late November; however, whatever hopes the mill owners had for breaking the strike by silencing Ettor and Giovannitti failed as the I.W.W. immediately brought in new and equally effective strike leaders in “Big” Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. Flynn,¹⁴ according to activist and journalist Mary Heaton Vorse, would become the “spirit of the strike” (*Footnote to Folly* 8-9) during Ettor and Giovannitti's incarceration, rallying the female workers in particular and taking charge of a calculated public relations coup to (very publicly) send children of striking workers to stay with sympathetic sponsor families in New York City to weather the hardships of the strike. Haywood,¹⁵ a popular and veteran

¹³ There is speculation as to who shot LoPizzo, with both police and strikers claiming the other to have fired the fatal shot. Most scholars acknowledge the police as culpable (Nelson 44, Foner 336).

¹⁴ Eight years later, Gurley Flynn would help found the American Civil Liberties Union before being expelled from the executive board in 1940 for her activities with Communist Party. Despite numerous arrests for her political activism, Gurley Flynn would remain an unflinching suffragist, labor organizer, and birth control advocate, becoming National Chairwoman for the Communist Party USA in 1961. Upon her death in 1964, she received a state funeral in Red Square with over 25,000 in attendance before her remains, in accordance with her wishes, were interred in Chicago near Bill Haywood's and the statue to remember those executed in the Haymarket Incident of 1886.

¹⁵ Haywood, due to his radical and revolutionary politics, would repeatedly be the target of government investigations and criminal charges. After the federal crackdown of the I.W.W. following the Espionage

strike leader, encouraged workers to continue to strike until their demands were met and Ettor and Giovannitti were released.

Under new leadership, the strike raged on while Ettor and Giovannitti's continuing imprisonment made national headlines (in no small part thanks to Giovannitti's poetry, which by this point was already being printed and circulated in I.W.W. publications and pamphlets). And with a trial set for September of 1912, continuing tensions in Lawrence, and an imprisoned radical feverishly writing poetry that both documented and protested his incarceration, the stage was set for an outpouring of rhetorical verse.



Figure 2: Photo of Arturo Giovannitti (left) and Joseph Ettor

Who Were the Wobblies?: A Brief Background of the Industrial Workers of the World

Universal economic evils afflicting the working class can be eradicated only by a universal working class movement....A movement to fulfill these conditions must consist of one great industrial union embracing all

Act of 1917, Haywood skipped bailed and spent the rest of his life in exile in Soviet Russia, becoming a labor adviser in Lenin's government (Carlson 316). After his death in 1928, his ashes were split, partially interred in the Kremlin Wall and partially interred near the Haymarket Martyrs' Monument (Carlson 325).

industries, providing for craft autonomy locally, industrial autonomy internationally, and working class unity generally.

-Industrial Union Manifesto, 1905

Because of the role they played not only in the defense of Ettor and Giovannitti, but also in the widespread publication and circulation of rhetorical verse at the time, it is worth considering briefly an overview of the Industrial Workers of the World. Paul Brissenden, in his germinal history of the I.W.W. published in reaction to their near-dissolution in 1918,¹⁶ argues that the ideologies of the twentieth century I.W.W. can be traced through a rich history of nineteenth century European and American labor organizations such as the mainstream Knights of Labor, the secret society The Sovereigns of Industry, and the anarcho-revolutionary International Working People's Association among others (27-35).¹⁷ In any case, certainly by 1904, many within the American labor and Socialist movements were convinced of three things: (1) that industrial unionism¹⁸ was superior to craft unionism, (2) that the conservative American Federation of Labor would likely never achieve real benefits for working men and women, and (3) that as

¹⁶ The United States government used World War I as an opportunity to prosecute I.W.W. leaders under the 1917 Espionage Act. One hundred and sixty six I.W.W. leaders were indicted in 1918 alone and nearly five tons of documents and materials were seized from I.W.W. offices across the nation (Dubofsky 406-07). This, combined with the infamous Palmer Raids in 1920 which targeted and deported foreign-born I.W.W. members, caused a sharp drop in membership by the mid-1920s (Foner 557).

¹⁷ In fact, the entire first section of Brissenden's book is an in-depth analysis of the various labor organizations which in some way influenced the I.W.W.

¹⁸ In the broadest sense, industrial unionism differs from craft unionism in that it "includes all who work in an industry, skilled and unskilled, regardless of differences in craft, sex, or race" (Savage 3). The issue of racism in particular distinguished industrial unions from more mainstream labor organizations like the American Federation of Labor, who had a track record of actively discriminating against non-white workers (Honey 129) and who lobbied Congress to pass the discriminatory 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act (Rubio 69).

things were, radical labor was ineffectively and insufficiently organized to perpetuate a united, class-wide movement (Foner 13).

In January of 1905, these complaints were codified at a secret meeting of labor activists who sought a split from the A.F.L. Representatives from the American Labor Union, the Western Federation of Miners, the United Brotherhood of Railway Employees, the Brewery Workers Union, the Switchmen's Union, the United Metal Workers, the Baker's Union, and the American Federation of Musicians adopted the newly drafted Industrial Union Manifesto which advocated the philosophies of industrial unionism as a radical, class-wide movement aimed at the dissolution of capitalism (Foner 17). In addition to the Manifesto, the industrial unionists, still dissatisfied with the A.F.L., called for a second convention that June. By then, the massive general strike that sparked the first Russian Revolution (1905) was under way, and its reverberations were felt as the newly formed I.W.W. ratified their constitution by a vote of 47,728 to 3,540 (Foner 37).

For the first few years of its existence, the I.W.W. struggled under expected attacks from both the conservative A.F.L. and the politically oriented Socialist Labor Party (Dubofsky 108). However, by 1908, the I.W.W. were engaging in a series of free-speech fights in the western United States that John Baldwin, one of the founders of the American Civil Liberties Union, compared years later to “the struggle of the Quakers for freedom to meet and worship, of the militant suffragists to carry their propaganda to the seats of government, and of the Abolitionists to be heard” (qtd. in Dubofsky 173). Baldwin would go on to say that “the I.W.W. blazed the trail in those ten years of fighting

for free speech which the entire American working class must in some fashion follow” (qtd. in Dubofsky 173).

It was during this “free speech” period from 1908 to 1912 that the I.W.W. would begin to hone many of the rhetorical-poetic tactics it would use during the 1912 Lawrence strike and subsequent arrest of Ettor and Giovannitti. In 1908, after an internal attack by the Socialist Labor Party, I.W.W. members seized a cattle car and traveled from Portland to Chicago dressed in all red and black singing I.W.W. songs, holding propaganda meetings at every stop, and selling literature, poetry, and song sheets to finance their ultimately successful campaign to retain control of the organization (Dubofsky 137)¹⁹. These song sheets would later be collected into the famous “Little Red Songbook” of I.W.W. songs, first published the next year in 1909 (Dubofsky 136).²⁰

The Wobblies' use of poetry and music to spread their message, recruit members, and raise funds would only increase in the western U.S. as they clashed with local and state governments from San Diego to Chicago (Kornbluh 94-126). Furthermore, John Marsh points out in his introduction to I.W.W. poetry collected in *You Work Tomorrow* that, many of the Wobbly poets who helped build the union's reputation during this early “free speech” period would continue to publish radical I.W.W. influenced poetry well into the 1930s, despite widespread repression of the I.W.W. after the U.S. Entered World War I (Marsh 82).²¹

¹⁹ In total, the I.W.W. members, who had named themselves the Industrial Union Singing Club, sold \$175 worth of literature and \$200 in song sheets, and successfully rallied the I.W.W. to once and for all completely dissociate from the Socialist Labor Party (Dubofsky 138).

²⁰ For more on the history I.W.W. songs, see Green et. al.; Foner 151-54; Dubofsky 136-39. For an anthology of I.W.W. songs, poetry, art, and literature, see Kornbluh. For a rhetorical analysis of Wobbly songs, see Carter.

²¹ For a representative sample of I.W.W. poetry during the 1930s, see Marsh's *You Work Tomorrow*.

In addition to poetry, the I.W.W. also innovated on the literary front with what Franklin Rosemont calls “to the best of our knowledge...the first comic book intended as explicitly revolutionary propaganda” (3): *Mr.*

Block. Originally developed by German cartoonist Ernest Riebe, *Mr. Block* first appeared in the I.W.W.'s organ *The Industrial Worker* in November 1912, just after Ettor and Giovannitti's trial (Rosemont 3). With the comic strip itself still an emerging genre then, the *Mr. Block* strips ran regularly in the *Industrial Worker*, satirizing Mr. Block himself as a non-revolutionary worker who is “ignorant, gullible, spineless, patriotic, superstitious, religious, xenophobic, racist, and

jingoistic” (Rosemont 4). By May of 1913, Mr.

Block comics had become so popular among I.W.W. members and notorious among everyone else²² that the I.W.W. announced the full length Mr. Block comic book mentioned above.

While not an official publication of the I.W.W., the *Mr. Block* comic book nonetheless reflected I.W.W. views (Rosemont 6). Meanwhile, the Mr. Block strips continued to run in the *Industrial Worker*, becoming so popular that when one failed to



Figure 3: An Advertisement for the *Mr. Block Comic Book*, From *Solidarity*, 27 September 1913.

²² At a labor strike in Wheatland, California in early 1913, social psychologist Carlton Parker reported that around two thousand strikers were singing a popular song about Mr. Block when the sheriff's department began firing into the crowd (Rosemont 5).

appear, the editor of the *IW* apologized in print, saying, “Don't get it in your block that we are going to quit publishing Block cartoons. If we did, our readers would knock our block off” (qtd. in Rosemont 6). The I.W.W., ever shrewd about media circulation, would continue to press the popularly lampoonable Mr. Block into service in the pages of the *Industrial Worker, Solidarity*, and the *Industrial Pioneer*. Additionally, he would appear in a pocket-sized booklet, *Mr. Block and the Profiteers*, as well as postcards and single panel cartoons (Riebe 7).

By experimenting with medium, whether it be printed poetry, sheet music, or comics, the I.W.W. pushed the envelop of persuasive art in the first two decades of the twentieth century. As a result of this, John Marsh points out that the I.W.W. as a social movement “had an influence far disproportionate to their inconsistent strike record” (82). Furthermore, while those free-speech fights of the early 1900s built the I.W.W.'s strength, reputation, and propaganda machine in the West, it was not until the 1912 Lawrence strike and the subsequent high-profile trial of Ettor and Giovannitti that the I.W.W. would truly become a household name, even among non-working class Americans.

MR. BLOCK

HE SCABS AT LAWRENCE



Figure 4: Mr. Block: He Scabs at Lawrence, from the 1913 Mr. Block comic book

Rhetorical Verse and a Cause Célèbre: Giovannitti in Prison

These are but songs—they're not a creed
 They are not meant to lift or save,
 They won't appeal or intercede
 For any fool or any knave;
 They hold no covenant or pledge
 For him who dares no foe assail:
 They are the blows of my own sledge
 Against the walls of my own jail.

-Arturo Giovannitti, from "Proem," 1914

After arraignment, Ettor and Giovannitti were transferred to Salem, an irony that Joseph Harrington points out was not lost on the defendants or news reporters (110). Their imprisonment became global news, in part due to a coordinated effort of the Industrial Workers of the World, and in part due to Giovannitti's poetry. Defense committees were organized in almost every major city of the United States to raise money and awareness (Foner 337). The 23,000 still-striking textile workers from Lawrence likewise threw themselves into defense activities for their imprisoned former leaders (Foner 343). There were large protests in Berlin, and the Swedish Socialist Party urged a boycott of all American products until the prisoners were freed (Foner 343). Furthermore, the I.W.W. used the case as a way to further union ends, publishing Giovannitti's prison-composed poems in union magazines with the goal of recruiting workers, promoting solidarity across the country, and advertising the ongoing strike in Lawrence (Harrington 110-11). Foner notes that on September 4, just before the trial, the Lawrence I.W.W. claimed 16,000 members, 10,000 of whom were in good standing, thanks to the publicity generated by the Ettor-Giovannitti defense campaign and

Giovannitti's poetry (349). Contrast that to the few hundred dues paying members the I.W.W. had in Lawrence before the strike started in January of the same year (Foner 314).

The Ettor-Giovannitti case became one of the earliest American instances of *cause célèbre* in the twentieth century: in addition to workers, radicals, and activists, the general public and intellectuals on both the political Left and Right began to follow (and weigh in on) the case. William Taussig, a leading economist at Harvard, presented the popular sentiment of those on the Left in a July 1912 editorial in *Solidarity*, stating that “The indications are that Ettor was arrested not because of a determination to enforce the criminal law but in order to put him out of action” (qtd. in Foner 337). Meanwhile, the conservative voices of Lawrence organized patriotic rallies in protest of the I.W.W.'s activities in the city, with local priest Father James T. O'Reilly summing up the view on the Right that Ettor, Giovannitti, and the rest of the I.W.W. were “a band of pirates” in Massachusetts to “bring destruction” (qtd. in Watson, *Bread and Roses* 228-29).

As more people followed the case, Giovannitti's reputation as a poet grew. As already mentioned, the I.W.W. was publishing and circulating his work in their own organs. However, with the celebrity surrounding the case, Giovannitti found more mainstream periodicals opening their pages to him. His poems “The Cage” and “The Walker” received widespread acclaim and praise even from publications normally hostile to the I.W.W. and organized labor (Foner 346). Both poems were reprinted in multiple mainstream magazines including *The Atlantic*, *Outlook*, *Survey*, and *Current Literature* (Foner 346). Activist Helen Keller became such a fan during this period that she credits

Giovannitti's poetry with inspiring her to join the I.W.W. (Foner 346) and even wrote the introduction to his collection *Arrows in the Gale*, published two years after his acquittal.

Shortly after his trial, Giovannitti's poem "The Cage" was printed in the usually conservative *Atlantic*, and was subsequently reprinted in limited edition on vellum by the Hillacre Bookhouse in Riverside, Connecticut (Harrington 109). The poem itself is a subtle example of rhetorical verse: Harrington points out that we never see a judge named, nor do we get any particulars of Giovannitti's arraignment (109). Nonetheless, we are obviously and immediately thrust into a scathingly critical portrait of a courtroom:

In the middle of the great greenish room stood the green iron cage. / All
was old, and cold and mournful, ancient with the double antiquity of heart
and brain in the great greenish room. / Old and hoary was the man who sat
upon the faldstool, upon the fireless and godless altar, / old were the tomes
that mouldered behind him on the dusty shelves (43).

And for those familiar with Massachusetts legal practices of the time, the critique the poem enacts becomes richer: it was custom in capital cases for the defendants to be held before the judge in an iron cage in the center of the court.

So while a contemporary reader might attempt to (and can quite successfully) still read the poem as a generic and metaphoric critique of unfair imprisonment, a 1912 Massachusetts (and perhaps even broader) audience would be acutely aware of the well-publicized real-life particulars: (1) that it was common practice to hold men as they are held in the poem; (2) that Giovannitti, Ettore, and a third initial accused, Angelo Rocco, who was later released, were themselves held this way before the court (Foner 336); and

(3) that the unnamed “hoary” judge of the poem had a very real name—Joseph F. Quinn—who was quickly becoming famous himself as the first Irish justice elevated to the bench in Massachusetts (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 233).²³ In other words, despite its ambiguity and ability to resonate as a generic critique of injustice one hundred years later, the poem would have undoubtedly been a very specific critique of Giovanni's own very specific legal situation in 1912—and all without naming a single name.

What Harrington offers as a symptom of nineteenth century romantic poetic-ness—this lack of specific details about Giovanni's particular case—I suggest is a common advantage of rhetorical verse that Giovanni capitalized on: obliqueness. While the publication in the *Atlantic* was prefaced by a discussion of Giovanni's activist career, other publications lacked such context, without which the poem becomes a broader critique of abused legalities rather than a specific critique of Giovanni's own situation. As a rhetorical text, the poem's use of abstraction allows it to make potentially dangerous critiques more safely (he did, after all, write this poem critiquing the court and prison system while waiting in a prison to return for trial). Whatever abstractions Giovanni makes as a poet obviously do not detract from the poem's rhetorical powers of critique, however: as further evidence of the poem's rhetoricity, Harrington points out that the *Atlantic* actually *argues* with the poem's politics, reminding readers that the same laws Giovanni critiques in the poem are the laws that eventually acquitted him (109). Furthermore, Harrington continues that the lack of specific referentiality in Giovanni's

²³ Quinn would again make the news closer to Ettore and Giovanni's trial date for interviewing 106 jurors and finding only two capable of serving (“Only Two Jurors for Ettore” *New York Times*, 01 Oct 1912).

poetry make the poems “valuable as both literature and (by the same token) propaganda (118), a claim worth examining in some depth.

Poetry and Propaganda: A Complicated Relationship

The relationship between art (particularly poetry) and propaganda in the early twentieth century is complex and worth initial—if brief—attention here, specifically with regards to Giovannitti's poetry. Both in his address to the American Writers Congress, and in his book-length manuscript *Auscultation, Creation, and Revision*,²⁴ Kenneth Burke offers his attempt to collapse what he saw as the poetry-propaganda antithesis that dominated much of 1930s literary culture and debate (George and Selzer 78). While I examine the so called “culture wars” of the 1930s in more detail in later chapters, Giovannitti's poetry in the 1910s offers one early example of the type of collapsing Burke would advocate for two decades later.

Michael Harrington claims that Arturo Giovannitti defies Kant's famous antithesis of orator and poet:

“The arts of speech,” Kant writes in *Critique of Judgment*, “are rhetoric and poetry....the orator announces a serious business, and for the purpose of entertaining his audience conducts it as if it were a mere *play* with ideas. The poet promises merely an entertaining *play* with ideas, and yet for the understanding there enures as much as if the promotion of its business had been his one intention.” (qtd. in Harrington 196)

²⁴ Though it was written in the early 1930s, *Auscultation* would not actually be published until 1993 in James W. Cheseboro's collection *Extensions of the Burkeian System*.

This passage from Kant in many ways foreshadows Jeffrey Walker's conception of what he calls the “mainstream modern” view of poetry discussed in detail in Chapter One. In *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, Walker defines this mainstream modern (contemporary) view of poetry thusly before deconstructing it:

While poems may ‘contain’ ideas, or thought, or ‘themes,’ or may be ‘informed’ by certain intellectual or philosophical perspectives...such things are merely there, contained, as useful and sometimes even interesting but finally dispensable accessories and props, *because the essential business of a lyric is to dramatize or express a state of feeling or subjectivity.* (168)

Put another way—in Aristotelian terms—most contemporary scholars of both rhetoric and literature, whether implicitly or explicitly, consider poetry to be primarily concerned with *mimesis*, not persuasion. Even those scholars who would acknowledge that poetry, as with all language, is rhetorical rarely examine poems as rhetorical texts.

Propaganda, on the other hand, gets labeled as exclusively rhetorical—even hyper-rhetorical. The easy definition of propaganda contrasts with Aristotle's discussions of rhetoric. Though the *Rhetoric* is not explicitly a work of ethical theory (Irwin 142), in it persuasion is nonetheless implicitly linked to ethics: rhetoric is the faculty of *observing* the available means of persuasion in any given situation, though implicitly it is expected, as students of rhetoric are also students of dialectic, that one make ethical considerations in those situations (Irwin 143).²⁵ Propaganda, it could be argued, is solely

²⁵ This is more profoundly resonant when the *Rhetoric* is read alongside the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

concerned with persuasion as the end result, regardless of ethical considerations (though I intend to trouble this definition).

At the center of the historic tensions between poetry and propaganda is what I define in the previous chapter as the *hortatory-mimetic binary*. As I discuss in detail in Chapter One, poetry has a long history of being quietly persuasive as well as overtly propagandistic, and Giovannitti's poetry is no exception. In fact, Giovannitti shows a conscious attempt at creating poetry that blurs the lines between art and propaganda and collapses the distinction between persuasion and mimesis. For example, when Giovannitti was visited by Bill Haywood in prison, Haywood asked him to write a poem about “Sixteenth Century courts trying to solve Twentieth Century problems” (Kornbluh 187). The result was the poem “The Cage” discussed in the previous section.

For contemporary readers, poetry is often associated with spontaneous outpourings—the inspired genius funneling emotion onto the page. In the above scenario, however, Giovannitti's poem responds to specific exigencies. First, “The Cage” is written in direct response to his own unjust imprisonment. Secondly, it is written at the request of a fellow labor leader with the implication that the I.W.W. wanted a juicy critique of the judicial system from from a high-profile prisoner that it could circulate to further its own causes as well as its advocacy for Giovannitti's release. Third, the above scenario reveals a conscious recognition on the part of both Giovannitti and Haywood that poetry had rhetorical, if not outright propagandistic potential.

As I have shown in previous sections, this blurring of art and propaganda would be a hallmark of the I.W.W.'s rhetorical strategies, from the songs of Joe Hill²⁶ to the Mr.

²⁶ Joe Hill was the most famous and recognizable bard of the I.W.W., penning some of the organization's

Block comics. So it is no surprise that Giovannitti's poetry, operating in a larger tradition of political and rhetorical verse on the radical left, displays many of these same propagandistic features while retaining poetic devices like anaphora that mark it clearly at a glance as poetry. For example, in a later section of "The Cage," Giovannitti employs a hard anaphoric list that is almost Psalm-like in tone:

Remake of me the sword of thy justice,
 Remake of me the tripod of thy worship,
 Remake of me the sickle for thy grain,
 Remake of me the oven for thy bread,
 And the andirons for thy peaceful hearth, O Man!
 And the trestles for the bed of thy love, O Man!
 And the frame of thy joyous lyre, O Man! (46)

Here Giovannitti is clearly writing a poem, complete with Biblical phrasings, comforting images, and the strong anaphora to drive the reader through his list. These lines clearly appeal to a Western, Christianized poetic tradition. However, just before these lines the poem makes an equal appeal to the images and devices of a second tradition—a tradition of radical leftist poetry with propagandistic elements.

Early in *Repression and Recovery*, Cary Nelson briefly sketches a tradition of radical leftist American poetry dating all the way back to abolitionist poetry of the early 19th Century. Many of the poems he puts forward share common themes and images, being part of a tradition of "collective knowledge and collective action" (9). To support this point, Nelson creates "poetry choruses" throughout the book, taking lines from various leftist poets and reassembling them all together into cohesive new poems.²⁷ This is possible because poets on the radical left during the early part of the century were

most popular propaganda songs that appeared in the pages of the *Industrial Worker* and *Solidarity*. For more on Hill, see Kornbluh.

²⁷ For a particularly inclusive poetry chorus with many early-century poets, see page 166 of *Revolutionary Memory*

simultaneously drawing from and remaking the same tropes and images to create their rhetorical verse:

At the same time that one could argue every revolutionary poem holds a red banner aloft, one could equally argue that no poem can decisively do so. For the banner slides into a slogan, which slips into a star, which substitutes for a flag. There is no one thing that all of these symbols could become because that one thing has no single, stable name. It is the nexus of radical change, the red site of signification. (Nelson, *Revolutionary Memory* 177)

So, returning to Giovannitti's poem "The Cage," I have shown above his appeals to the mainstream Western poetic tradition. But just before those lines, Giovannitti thoroughly immerses the poem in the rhetoric of the Old Left with its focus on labor issues:

While I was hoe and ploughshare and sword and axe and scythe and hammer, I was the first / artificer of thy happiness; but the day I was beaten into the first lock and the first key, I / became fetters and chains to hold thy hands and thy feet, O Man! (46)

Here we are bombarded with language and images common to early twentieth century leftist rhetorical verse: the hoe and ploughshare and scythe and hammer; the tension between freedom and bondage; the fetters and chains. Compare Giovannitti's lines to the opening images of Edwin Markham's famous 1899 poem "The Man with the Hoe":

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,
The emptiness of ages in his face,
And on his back, the burden of the world.

Or perhaps compare it to a stanza from 19th Century Abolitionist poet John Greenleaf

Whittier's "Stanza for the Times":

Is't not enough that this is borne?
And asks our haughty neighbor more?
Must fetters which his slaves have worn
Clank round the Yankee farmer's door?
Must he be told, beside his plough,
What he must speak, and when, and how?

Here Giovannitti is participating in a larger poetic (and, I would argue, rhetorical) tradition—drawing images and tropes from other poetry of the radical left and reappropriating, refashioning, and remaking them as his own, all while still appealing to more mainstream poetic conventions.

This hybridization of mainstream poetic aesthetics and radical images and tropes is perhaps best seen in the following stanza of "The Cage":

O Man, bring me back into the old smithy, purify me again with the holy
fire of the forge, lay / me again on the mother breast of the anvil, beat me
again with the old honest hammer— / O Man, remould me with thy
wonderful hands into an instrument of thy toil. (Giovannitti 46)

In this stanza, Giovannitti combines the images of blacksmithing/steel forging (common in leftist and labor poetry at the time) with the religious imagery of self-flagellation. In doing so, the act of labor becomes an act of religion, hybridizing the poem's propagandistic and poetic functions.

Further compare these images to the smelting images of political poet Lola Ridge's²⁸ 1918 "The Legion of Iron":

²⁸ A famous anarchist activist, Ridge is perhaps best known for her poetry supporting the clemency efforts

They pass through the great iron gates—
 Men with eyes gravely discerning,
 Skilled to appraise the tonnage of cranes
 Or split an inch into thousandths—
 Men tempered by fire as the ore is
 And planned to resistance
 Like steel that has cooled in the trough (59)

As in Giovannitti's poem, the laborers become inextricable from the medium and tools of their labor—flesh becomes steel to be melted and molded just as the speaker of “The Cage” begs to be purified in the forge as a lump of ore.

And it is here that I return to the initial discussion of this section—the relationship between art and propaganda, particularly as exemplified (and complicated) by Arturo Giovannitti's poetry. In Giovannitti's poetry in general, the images found so commonly in labor propaganda become poet-ized as Giovannitti couches them in Western poetic conventions. Imagery that otherwise would be considered propagandistic (such as the lock and key metaphor seen in the following I.W.W. cartoon) instead become subsumed to the cultural *gravitas* poetry held (and still holds) in American society. And it is precisely this *gravitas* that allows poetry to function as a “safe” genre for Giovannitti, a claim I examine in more detail shortly. However, first, I look at another type of hybridizing exhibited in Giovannitti's poetry—the blending of oratory and poetry.

for imprisoned labor leader Tom Mooney. For more on Ridge and Mooney, see Nelson starting at page 51.

Oratory as Poetry: Giovannitti's Sermon on the Common

Through you, by the power of your brain and hand,
 All the predictions of the prophets,
 All the wisdom of the sages,
 All the dreams of the poets,
 All the hopes of the heroes,
 All the visions of the martyrs,
 All the prayers of the saints,
 All the crushed, tortured, strangled maimed and murdered ideals of
 the ages, and all the glorious destinies of mankind shall become
 triumphant and everlasting reality in the name of labor and bread
 and love, the great threefold truth forever.
 And lo and behold, my brothers, this shall be called the revolution.

-Arturo Giovannitti, "The Sermon on the Common," 1914

In *Poetry and the Public*, Michael Harrington notes that Arturo Giovannitti's public persona as both poet and orator, "complicated the distinction between poetry and rhetoric" (106). Likewise, rhetorical verse in general often blends the arts of rhetoric and poetry quite literally by reprinting speeches with poetic line breaks, thereby placing the new text forward to a readership as poetry.²⁹ While several of the poems from *Arrows in the Gale* contain portions of speeches seamlessly embedded as poetry, the poem "Sermon on the Common" was actually delivered as a speech at the Lawrence strike before Giovannitti ever committed it to verse while in prison (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 218). Delivered from the bandstand in the center of town at a rally shortly after Giovannitti's arrival in Lawrence, the speech mimicked the "Biblical cadences" of Jesus's beatitudes (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 218). Giovannitti's training as an orator was apparent during

²⁹ Sometimes these decisions to represent oratory as poems were made by the poet/orator him or herself, as is the case with Giovannitti. However, with Selden Rodman's 1938 poetic reprinting of Bartolomeo Vanzetti's "Last Speech to the Court" discussed in detail in the next chapter, sometimes the decision was made (posthumously or not) by an editor or anthologist.

the speech, with one witness describing his dominating oratorical presence as “leonine” (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 218).

As a poem, “The Sermon on the Common” maintains long, prose-like lines reminiscent of its oratorical origins. It immediately opens by thrusting its audience into the language of the Bible, mirroring the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount:

Then it came to pass that the people, having heard that he had come,
 assembled on the Common / to listen unto his words. / And they came
 from all parts of the earth, the Syrians and the Armenians, the Thracians /
 and the Tartars, the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans, the Iberians and
 Gauls and the / Angles and Huns and the Hibernians and Scythians, even
 from the deserts of sands to the / deserts of ice, they came to listen to his
 words. (34)

So from the outset, Giovannitti establishes himself as having a messianic message—what Harrington calls “a socialist Christ literally addressing the new evangel to a new gathering of nations” (123-24). But this opening also shows a poem acutely aware of its rhetoricity. The audience in Lawrence to whom this would have been delivered as a speech would have been incredibly diverse. As I already mentioned, Lawrence was an immigrant hub with about twenty five nationalities represented and about fifty different languages spoken (Foner 308). In the poem's opening, Giovannitti metaphorically recreates for his broader poetic audience what truly was a literal gathering of nations in his oratorical audience.

Giovannitti's "Sermon on the Common" also uses irony to convey its hortatory message. By inverting the Sermon on the Mount's message of humility,³⁰ Giovannitti encourages his audience (both oratorical and poetic) to collective action and even revolution:

All this and more than this they said unto you before I came, but now that I am come, a new evangel shall be proclaimed unto you, that your souls may be renovated and purified in the fire of the new salvation which is not peace but war....

Do not moan, do not submit, do not kneel, do not pray, do not wait.

Think, dare, do, rebel, fight—ARISE! (36)

Here is a species of rhetorical verse that is deliberative, the end result being exhortation in line with Aristotle's conception of deliberative [symbouleutikon] rhetoric (I.3.3).

Giovannitti's "Sermon on the Common" looks like a poem, reads like a poem, but completely subverts the "mainstream modern" view of poetry as exclusively concerned with *mimesis*.

In troubling the hortatory-mimetic binary laid out in the previous section, "The Sermon on the Common" serves as an exemplar of rhetorical verse. One could even argue that the poem is bluntly unconcerned with *mimesis*, its primary goal being to inspire collective action. However, I might suggest here that simply by breaking the speech into poetic lines, the hortatory functions of oratory inevitably take on certain

³⁰ "Travesty" or simply parodying religious texts and songs was a common tactic used by the I.W.W. and its sympathizers. A glance through the I.W.W. songbook finds many radical lyrics set to the tunes of famous hymns: "The Preacher and the Slave" set to "Sweet Bye and Bye"; "There is Power in the Union" set to "There is Power in the Blood"; "Nearer my Job to Thee" set to "Nearer my God to Thee" and many others.

mimetic functions. This, I contend, is directly a result of the medium being the message, in the words of Marshall McLuhan's famous aphorism—if it looks like poetry people immediately read it as poetry (purely mimetic) despite its persuasive objectives.

With the rise of digital rhetorics, much focus of the discipline has turned to the rhetorical implications of media—how do different mediums (print, digital, video, multi-modal, etc.) effect a text's rhetoricity: its composition, its circulation, and its reception?³¹ I have already put forward in the previous chapter that poetry itself might be considered a type of information technology. If so, it is worthwhile for rhetoricians to consider the rhetorical effects of placing a text into verse or composing a text-as-verse. This is because audiences, in the early twentieth century as well as today, inevitably approach poetry with different expectations than if they were listening to a speech. In the case of Giovannitti's “Sermon on the Common,” the perceived danger of a fiery, radical, even sacrilegious speech encouraging revolution is softened when the words appear as poetry. The proof of this claim is in history: Giovannitti was arrested for the speeches he gave in Lawrence, but when he reprinted them as poetry, they received gushing praise in the pages of *Poetry* magazine, the bastion of modernist elitism (see Monroe 38). The “safety” of poetry as a genre seen here leads to my next section examining how Giovannitti used the genre of poetry (and the public persona of the Poet) as a type of rhetorical shield in his defense.

³¹ For more on the concerns of rhetoric in digital mediums, see Wysocki et al.

Poetry as a “Safe” Genre: Lover of Verse or Agitator of Violence?

I find that poems are the best safe-conduct for revolutionary utterances...Besides you can always hang somebody at the end of an ode, while in an arricle [sic] you cannot go further than libeling them.

-Arturo Giovannitti (qtd. in Harrington 115)

In a rhetorically savvy move, Giovannitti's first request for reading material after his arrest was for a four-volume history of literature, prompting many to wonder how such a person could even be *accused* of inciting murder (Watson 217). He would follow with Byron, Shelley, Kant, and the complete works of Shakespeare, sculpting for himself a poetic identity that would seem incapable of murder (Watson 218). And by rhetorically crafting a public persona as a peaceful poet—a lover of “life and flowers and song and beauty” (Giovannitti, “The Walker” 8)—Giovannitti made it ever more difficult for the state to craft their own persona for him: a violent radical orator—godless, immoral, and anarchistic. In fact, Foner (345) and Watson (*Bread and Roses* 230) both argue that much of the prosecution's case during the trial hinged on portraying the I.W.W. and its members (including Giovannitti, though he technically would not join the I.W.W. until several years later) as dangerous and violent anarchists bent on the overthrow of the U.S. Government. However, by constructing his poetic persona as antithetical to the state's depiction of him, Giovannitti capitalized on the popular image of poets as *lovers*, *not fighters*. In short, Giovannitti's crafting of his poetic identity was an appeal to ethos based on people's presupposed notions about how poets act.

Harrington points out that Giovannitti uses the same rhetorical strategy in his poems that he does in his speeches: portraying himself as a poetic soul reduced to the condition of thieves and murderers by the justice system (121). For example, in “The

Walker,” the speaker of the poem contrasts how his poetic persona is strained by the strictures of prison:

I, who have never killed, think like the murderer;
 I who have never stolen, reason like the thief;
 I think, reason, wish, hope doubt, wait like the hired assassin, the
 embezzler, the forger, the counterfeiter, the incestuous, the raper, the
 drunkard, the prostitute, the pimp, I, I who used to think of love and life
 and flowers and song and beauty and the ideal. (8)

Here, Giovannitti highlights one of the most powerful qualities of rhetorical verse—the seeming harmlessness and safety of poetry. Put another way, Giovannitti's poetry capitalizes on a widespread sentiment articulated by W. H. Auden that “Poetry makes nothing happen” (qtd. in Thurston 5).³² Because if poetry truly makes nothing happen—if it is purely concerned with *mimesis*—how can a poet be dangerous?

Certainly, most rhetoricians would agree that poetry, as well as any language use, can and does make things happen. And Giovannitti as well recognized poetry's persuasive potential—his poems display a shrewd awareness of audience paired with an oratorical style (Harrington 106). His decision to switch from the inflammatory speeches he delivered at the Lawrence strike to written verse was no doubt a calculated one, as suggested by his statement that poems “are the best safe-conduct for revolutionary utterances” (qtd. in Harrington 115). Here, too, is reflected the idea that poetry is a “safe” medium—certainly Giovannitti knew that his poems can “do things” and persuade people, but he also knew that poetry offered him a generic safety that his oratory did not.

³² For more on Auden's pronouncement and general turn from politics, see Thurston.

The idea of poetry as a “safe” or apolitical genre is so deeply embedded in Western literary culture that one need look no further than Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* to find an example. In Act 3 Scene 3, a group of plebeians, seeking revenge for the assassination of Caesar and searching for the conspirators responsible happen upon a man named Cinna. When they become enraged upon hearing his name (a different Cinna was one of the conspirators), the poet attempts to emphasize his poet-ness in defense, famously shouting “I'm Cinna the Poet! I'm Cinna the Poet!” before being torn to pieces by the mob. And while Cinna's defense in this case failed, Giovannitti is appealing to the same trope of “safe” poetry to shield his very radical politics.

It is worth discussing Giovannitti's radicalism in more depth here to fully understand why turning to poetry was ultimately an effective rhetorical defense strategy. Giovannitti, while not technically a member of the I.W.W. at the time of the Lawrence Strike, was an anarcho-syndicalist who shared political philosophies with a growing international syndicalist movement. Syndicalism was a transnational political movement in the early twentieth century that advocated for an international revolution of the working class to overthrow capitalism and replace it with localized syndicates of workers who were governed democratically from within and worked cooperatively with each other (Topp, *Those Without a Country* 8). Furthermore, syndicalism was also closely tied to Italian immigrants like Giovannitti, and not just in the United States. Italian syndicalists took prominent roles as strike leaders in Tampa, Florida; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Sao Paulo, Brazil; and Marseilles, France (Topp, “The Lawrence Strike” 143).³³

³³ With the rise of syndicalism as a transnational movement, it quickly became larger than its Italian roots.

The transnational nature of syndicalism, its ties to Italian American immigrants, and its call for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism (and, in the case of anarcho-syndicalists, the U.S. Government) made nativists fear Italian immigrants not as wage depressers, but as violent radicals (Topp, "The Lawrence Strike" 139). These suspicions and fears of Italian syndicalists are addressed in Harriet Monroe's April 1915 review of Giovannitti's *Arrows in the Gale*, which appeared in the high-brow *Poetry*:

It may be that the future of the arts in America is in the hands of these immigrants and their variously intermarrying children; that they will endow us with that quick expressiveness, that enthusiasm for beauty, that warmth of passion, which have been chilled out of Angle-Saxon blood by ten centuries or more of British fog. Already we are reminded often of the impending change: by the fiery eloquence of some proletarian orator tearing the constitution to tatters, by the demoniac rhythms of certain figures modeled by a fierce young Slavic sculptor, by a burning poem sent to POETRY from a Syrian student of Columbia, or by this white-hot book of visions from the young Italian I. W. W. "agitator."

They are indeed agitating to the comfortable conservative, these visions. Such a one, seeking the solace of poetry beside his warm fire after a good dinner, will perhaps read no further than these lines of the Proem:

All that you worship, fear and trust

By late 1912 (two months before Giovannitti's trial), the Syndicalist League of North America was founded out of Chicago. Unlike the I.W.W., that was formed in reaction to the failures of traditional trade unionism, the S.L.N.A. Advocated a policy of "boring from within" the mainstream unions to grow its radical influence (Barret 810). The S.L.N.A.'s preeminent leader, William Z. Foster, would be better known for his activity with the Communist Party USA, where he would use the syndicalist strategy of boring from within to build a sizeable base for the Communist Party within American labor.

I kick into the sewer's maw,
 And fling my shaft and my disgust
 Against your gospel and your law. (Monroe 37)

Here, Monroe hits all the high notes: Anglo-American suspicions of radicalized immigrants like Giovannitti, the “safety” of poetry as a genre (as seen in the comfortable conservative seeking the solace of poetry by a warm fire after a good dinner), and Giovannitti's ability to both command and unsettle that safety with his “white-hot” verse.

Because of the suspicions of Italian immigrants, especially ones tied to radical anarcho-syndicalism, Giovannitti's decision to drape around himself the persona of a poet was rhetorically brilliant. He knew, as Paul Foner puts it, that it would not be Arturo Giovannitti being tried, but rather the principles and methods of radical syndicalism and the I.W.W. (345). And truly, the prosecution, with only the Haymarket trials of 1887³⁴ as legal precedent, did all that they could to convince a jury that a labor leader (Ettor) and a poet (Giovannitti), each miles from the crime scene, were violent and dangerous radicals responsible for a young woman's murder. The chief prosecutor repeatedly referred to Ettor and Giovannitti as “labor buzzards” and “social vultures” (Foner 345), reading aloud to the court from an I.W.W. manual the philosophies of one of the most radical labor organization in the nation:

³⁴ I discuss the Haymarket Square riots in detail in the next chapter, but a brief overview is useful here. On May 4, 1887, a bomb was thrown at a large labor rally killing one police officer and wounding six others. Eight anarchists were arrested and eventually convicted despite little concrete evidence based largely on their writings in anarchist journals (Watson 229). The case marked the only legal precedent for convicting someone of a capital crime based solely on their printed or spoken words. It also marked an initial Red Scare, with newspapers calling the defendants "bloody brutes", "red ruffians", "dynamarchists", "bloody monsters", "cowards", "cutthroats", "thieves", "assassins", and "fiends" (Avrich 216)

All peace, so long as the wage system lasts, is but an armed truce...Failing to force concessions from the employers by the strike, work is resumed and sabotage is used...For every striker killed by a Cossack, the life of a Cossack would be exacted. (qtd. in Watson, *Bread and Roses* 233).

To these harangues, Ettor responded with his own, unapologetic closing speech, offering no excuse for “carrying the flag of labor and liberty” (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 237).

However, it was Giovannitti, with his orator's eloquence and from the safety of his poet's persona, who would move the courtroom to tears (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 238; Foner 346).

Channeling his role as a poet and emotional being (as opposed to buzzard), Giovannitti began his closing speech by establishing the district attorney's *ad hominem* attacks as essentially unpoetic:

The District Attorney and the other gentlemen here who are used to measure all human emotions with the yardstick may not understand the tumult that is going on in my soul at this moment. But my friends and my comrades before me, these gentlemen here who have been with me for the last seven or eight months, know exactly, and if my words will fail before I reach the end of this short statement to you, it will be because of the superabundance of sentiments that are flooding to my heart. (Giovannitti, “Address to the Jury”)

Here, Giovannitti the Poet is on full display, as opposed to the labor vulture and saboteur the prosecution tried to portray him as. He is emotional, fallible, human—things his

audience would associate with an idealistic poet. But most of all, he is safe—Giovannitti the Radical, who the following year would publish an English translation of French anarchist Émile Pouget's *Sabotage*, is nowhere to be found.

Giovannitti continues in his speech to preach the lofty ideas of a poet, contrasting them with the mechanical, one-sided story the prosecution delivered in their reading from the I.W.W. manual. Defending his motives (which the prosecution argued were rooted in “the lust of power, the lust of notoriety, if not the lust of money” (qtd. in Foner 345), Giovannitti says, “We had come to Lawrence, as my noble comrade Mr. Ettor said, because we were prompted by something higher and loftier than what the District Attorney or any other man in this presence here may understand and realize” (Giovannitti, “Address to the Jury”). He then goes on to compare he and Ettor's motivations for leading the Lawrence strike to the motives for “the Saviour come on earth” (Giovannitti, “Address to the Jury”), a messianic rhetoric that echoes his “Sermon on the Common” discussed earlier.

Finally, Giovannitti arrives at the crux of his poetic defense—ethics—arguing that the prosecution's case is unpoetic and therefore unethical. Suggesting that the jury had only heard one side of “this great industrial question”—that of tactics and methods, referring to the I.W.W. manual read aloud by the prosecution (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 237), Giovannitti concluded:

But what about, I say, the ethical part of this question? What about the human and humane part of our ideas? What about the grand condition of tomorrow as we see it, and as we foretell it now to the workers at large,

here in this same cage where the felon has sat, in this same cage where the drunkard, where the prostitute, where the hired assassin has been? What about the better and nobler humanity where there shall be no more slaves, where no man will ever be obliged to go on strike in order to obtain fifty cents a week more, where children will not have to starve any more, where women no more will have to go and prostitute themselves; where at last there will not be any more slaves, any more masters, but one great family of friends and brothers. It may be, gentlemen of the jury, that you do not believe in that. It may be that we are dreamers; it may be that we are fanatics, Mr. District Attorney. But so was a fanatic Socrates, who instead of acknowledging the philosophy of the aristocrats of Athens, preferred to drink the poison. And so was a fanatic the Saviour Jesus Christ, who instead of acknowledging that Pilate, or that Tiberius was emperor of Rome, and instead of acknowledging his submission to all the rulers of the time and all the priestcraft of the time, preferred the cross between two thieves. (Giovannitti, "Address to the Jury")

Here, Giovannitti solidifies his implicit argument: that the prosecution's case is essentially unpoetic—focused on violence, tactics, and pragmatics. Giovannitti's case, on the other hand, is rooted in a poetic he has successfully idealized—focused on ethics, emotion, utopia.

Here, in the closing speech to the court that Bruce Watson refers to as an "impassioned eulogy to life itself" (239), Giovannitti places the finishing touches on a

peaceful, idealistic, poetic persona he began constructing the moment he was arrested. His focus on the “human and humane” is meant to recast the prosecution's argument that he is a dangerous radical. Furthermore, he redefines the prosecution's terms: if he is a radical, it is in the sense of Socrates or Jesus Christ, “radicals” who few if any on the jury might object to. And it worked: the courtroom remained still and silent with audible sobs heard from onlookers (Watson, *Bread and Roses* 239). When court resumed the following Monday, the jury delivered a verdict of not guilty for all three defendants: Giovannitti the Poet was acquitted.

Giovannitti, “Poet of the Judicial System:” Poetry as Judicial Rhetoric

My brother, do not walk any more.
 It is wrong to walk on a grave. It is a sacrilege to walk four steps from the headstone to the foot and four steps from the foot to the headstone.
 If you stop walking, my brother, no longer will this be a grave, for you will give me back my mind that is chained to your feet and the right to think my own thoughts
 I implore you my brother, for I am weary of the long vigil, weary of counting your steps, and heavy with sleep
 Stop, rest, sleep, my brother, for the dawn is well nigh and it is not the key alone that can throw open the gate.

-Arturo Giovannitti, “The Walker,” 1912

In addition to serving as a defensive genre, the rhetorical verse of Arturo Giovannitti also acts as judicial rhetoric—both in the sense of what Hester L. Furey means when he calls Giovannitti a “poet of the judicial system” (27), and in the traditional Aristotelian sense of judicial/forensic rhetoric. Giovannitti's critiques of the legal system in “The Cage” and his move to larger abstractions seen in lines like “One of the men in the cage, whose soul was tormented by the fiercest fire of hell, which is / the

yearning after Supreme Truth” dovetail with Aristotle's discussion of the unwritten laws of the universe in Book I of the *Rhetoric*. In fact, I contend that as rhetorical texts, Giovannitti's poems implicitly appeal to the same logic and categorizations that Aristotle uses in the *Rhetoric*.

Giovannitti's Poetry and Natural Law

The Mob, the mightiest judge of all,
To hear the rights of Man came out,
And every word became a shout
And every shout a cannon ball

-Arturo Giovannitti, from “The Republic,” 1914

Aristotle's conception of extra-legal laws written into the very fabric of the universe (what he calls *dikaion physikon* or “natural laws”) is on full display in the judicial poetry of Arturo Giovannitti. In fact, I argue that it is the genre of poetry in particular, with its mysticism and romance, that allows Giovannitti to shift the terms of debate from the legal particulars of his case to the extra-legal concepts (what I might argue are *dikaion physikon*) of Freedom and Progress.

Giovannitti's poem “The Cage” discussed previously hinges on a view of justice that is extra-legal (or, put another way, his poetry reflects a view that there is justice beyond mere legal justice). As mentioned in the previous section, the poem begins with three men locked in a cage in the center of a courtroom before a judge and jury (all described as “hoary old men” surrounded by yellowed legal texts). As the poem moves forward, the speaker describes all of the simple beauties that exist outside the courtroom where the imprisoned men cannot experience them. Over the course of the poem, the

man who was “most hoary of all” (assumed to be the prosecutor) rises to accuse the three men of murder and call for their deaths. However, it is at this climax of the poem that the speaker realizes that all of the “hoary old men” are actually dead, the moths and worms eating their legal texts. The poem ends with an appeal to Aristotle's conception of *epieikes*—a justice beyond mere legal justice:

They were dead like the old man in the painting, save that they still read the old books he could read no more, and still spoke and heard the old words he could speak and hear no more, and still passed the judgment of the dead, which he no more could pass, upon the mighty life of the world outside throbbed and thundered and clamored and roared the wonderful anthem of human labor to the fatherly justice of the Sun (46-47)

Here we see the prisoners of the poem no longer subject to the “dead” injustice of the law with the literal deaths of their accusers, but subject to the “fatherly justice of the Sun,” a “natural,” if idealized, justice. Here, Giovannitti's poem is appealing not to the technicalities of the law, but to *nomos koinos* (“common norms”), the legal equivalent of *doxa* for Aristotle.

One such commonplace that Giovannitti positions above legal justice is a conception of Freedom rooted in the vocabulary of Enlightenment thought that harkens his audience to America's foundations. In the fourth section of “The Cage,” the three prisoners are discussing the injustice of their incarceration, pointing out the irony that the crime for which they are imprisoned was yearning for freedom for their fellow humans:

And what man is more apt to become a thrall, brothers, and to be locked in a green iron cage, than he who yearns the most for the Supreme of the things that are to be—he who most craves for Freedom?

And what subtle and malignant power, save this love of loves, could be in the metal of this cage that it is so mad to imprison us?

So spoke one of the men to the other two, and then, out of the silence of the aeons spoke into his tormented soul the metallic soul of the cage.

Freedom, here, becomes a Burkean god-term: a term which “sums up a manifold of particulars under a single head (as with the title of a book, or the name of a person or some political movement) (*The Rhetoric of Religion* 2). Not only is it set apart as a “higher” law than the written law, but it contains a multitude of meanings: there is the obvious freedom of the prisoners, which they are being unjustly denied, but there is also, in the context of Giovannitti's larger activism, the freedom of the working class from capitalist oppression. And it is the flexibility of poetry as a genre that allows Giovannitti to yoke his own freedom metaphorically to the larger idea of class freedom, thereby capitalizing on the *kairic* celebrity of his case to bring attention to larger social ills.

Appeals to an Aristotelian “higher order” of legality are quite common in other poems of Giovannitti's rhetorical verse. In “The Sermon on the Common,” discussed previously, Giovannitti messianically claims that he has not arrived (the implication being in Lawrence) to destroy the law as many local leaders were clamoring.³⁵ He instead

³⁵ Father James T. O'Reilly, the most influential clergyman in Lawrence, from the outset of the strike maintained Ettor, Giovannitti, and the I.W.W. were making war on society and attempting to destroy the “present social order” (Foner 333). Furthermore, it was quite common for such belletristic rhetoric to be directed at radical organizations on the left during the early twentieth century. Dubofsky breaks down a common thought sequence explaining this phenomenon: a group gets “equated with socialism, socialism with anarchism, anarchism with assassination” (102).

claims to have come to fulfill a higher law—the “eternal law of progress” (35). Much like Freedom from the above example, Progress becomes a Burkean god-term, conveying multiple senses of progress in its meaning: there is ethical progress—proper wages and workweeks fought for by the strikers Giovannitti helped organizers. There is also technological progress—increased mechanization of society and its implications for labor.

Regardless of their definitions, though, god terms like Progress and Freedom, become *dikaion physikon* in Giovannitti's poetry—natural laws elevated above the written law. And in Giovannitti's poetry, natural laws serve as sharp contrasts to human laws, which the poet portrays as fallible or antiquated—“the judgment of the dead” (46). Therefore, Giovannitti uses the genre of poetry to shift the terms of debate away from his identity as a radical activist and onto the unassailable *dikaion physikon* of the universe: the Enlightenment conception of Freedom and Progress as inevitable natural laws.

Perhaps the poem that most overtly appeals to the Enlightenment rhetoric of natural laws is the 1914 poem “The Republic” about the early successes and ultimate failure of the French Revolution. The poem opens with a king espousing his divine right to rule with the aid of his “good liege” the Pope. However, after several stanzas of gloating over his power, the king watches as “a goddess of the common weal” arises and leads the mob of commoners in a metaphoric “storming of the Bastille” complete with guillotines and decapitated monarchs. However, as the day wears on and people lose interest, the impending revolution of the poem falls apart, ending with the “goddess” of

the revolution soiled between the “wanton, frothy” kisses of a police sergeant and a “decrepit millionaire.”

In this poem, Giovannitti returns once again to the concept of Freedom and self-governance as a natural law. The “divine right” of the poem's monarch is shown to be a falsehood, with the people's power (symbolized in the mob) being the true law of the universe. However, the power of the people is only law so long as everyone works in solidarity (another recurring theme of Giovannitti's poetry). When solidarity ceases, so does the power of the people, their goddess leader being reduced to the assaults of capitalist authorities symbolized in the police sergeant and decrepit millionaire. And so while the power of the people becomes a *dikaion physikon*, it is not an unassailable one—for Giovannitti, only when people's consciousnesses are raised can their true power be exercised. And while the Mob is “the mightiest judge of all,” justice in the poem ultimately still falls to the corruption of capitalist interest.

Poet Judges and Poem Apologias

“He has the soul of a great poet, the fervor of a prophet and, added to these, the courage and power of initiative that mark the man of action and the organizer of great crusades....This jail experience of Giovannitti's has given the world one of the greatest poems ever produced in the English language. It challenges comparison with the “Ballad of Reading Gaol” by Wilde and is fully as vital and soul stirring as anything Whitman ever produced. “The Walker” is more than a poem. It is a great human document.” (*Current Opinion*, January 1913)

Another argument for Giovannitti's poetry in particular (and poetry in general) as judicial rhetoric stems from Martha Nussbaum's 1995 piece from the University of Chicago Law Review titled “Poets as Judges: Judicial Rhetoric and the Literary

Imagination.” While she does not deal with Giovannitti explicitly in this piece, she does argue that each poet him or herself is a judge—both in a Whitman-esque sense that I will detail further, and the Aristotelian sense of being an “equitable” person³⁶ (Nussbaum 1478). Furthermore, she contends that the literary imagination of poets might benefit legal judges already sitting the bench, as “Literary understanding...promotes habits of mind that lead toward equality” (1489).

To begin, Nussbaum summarizes a section of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* where, by “Blue Ontario's Shores” the speaker is confronted by a Phantom who demands poets for the public life of America. Nussbaum distills the qualities of such a poet-judge as described by the Phantom:

Of these States the poet is the equable man,
 Not in him but off from him things are grotesque, eccentric, fail of
 their full returns,
 He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportion, neither more
 nor less,
 He is the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key,
 He is the equalizer of his age and land,...
 The years straying toward infidelity he withholds by his steady faith,
 He is no arguer, he is judgment, (Nature accepts him absolutely,)
 He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling
 round a helpless thing,...

³⁶ Nussbaum refers us here to the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1137b27-32), where Aristotle lays out a framework for a “normative conception of equitable judgment as an alternative to a simple or reductive reliance on abstract principle” (Nussbaum 1477)

He sees eternity in men and women, he does not see men
and women as dreams or dots. (Nussbaum 1478)

Furthermore, Nussbaum ties Whitman's conception of the poet judge to Aristotle's "equitable man," arguing that a poet's "commitment to fairness does not yield to bias or favor; his confrontation with the particular, while intimate, is unswerving. There is an ideal of judicial neutrality here, but it is a neutrality linked not with quasi-scientific abstractness but with rich historical concreteness" (1480). Like Aristotle's image of the architect's flexible ruler that bends and conforms to a stone, Nussbaum's poet-judge, rooted in a deeply humanistic literary imagination, "falls around" the complexities of a concrete case, perceiving all and disclosing it to our view (1479).

Ultimately, Nussbaum is not arguing to an audience of trained lawyers that poets would be better legal judges. However, what she is arguing is that the literary imagination of poets might serve trained judges when placed in the framework of "technical legal reasoning, knowledge of law, and the constraints of precedent" (Nussbaum 1480). I contend that it is precisely this "literary imagination" that allows Giovannitti's rhetorical verse to function so effectively in its judicial context. After all, as I have already shown, Giovannitti successfully used his poetry (and poetic persona) to thwart the state's attempts at staging a trial-by-character.

In Nussbaum's piece we are presented with the concept of the poet-judge. However, Nussbaum's arguments, when theorized further, lead to broader idea that the genre of poetry itself (in fact all imaginative literature) is a form of judicial rhetoric insofar as poetry is (at least in part) intended to stir an audience to a particular judgment about itself as a text. This can be a judgment as simple as "Do I enjoy this poem?" to a

more complex judgment rooted in a variety of critical frameworks and standpoints about the poem's aesthetics or politics or rhetorical dimensions or historical situatedness. The rise and codification of literary and rhetorical criticism as academic disciplines in the twentieth century supports this thesis in that, regardless of critical school, poems become entangled in a web of what Aristotle would call accusation (*kategoria*) and defense (*apologia*)--the fundamental categories of judicial rhetoric.

Before moving on to Giovannitti's poetry as a specific example of this phenomenon, it is worth parsing out the above claim further. For most audiences, a poem is its own *apologia*, guiding the audience to a judgment—*I like this poem; I don't like this poem; etc.* Of course, people might debate their judgments with friends, argue for the worth of one poem and the failure of another. But with the disciplinization of criticism beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, literary critics became professionalized attorneys in the court of literary appeal. Literary texts are interrogated in print (a form, I would contend, of *kategoria*), and while the text itself remains its own *apologia*, other critics step in to further accuse, defend, reinterpret, and influence the judgment of others with regard to the text. The court is that of poetic opinion, the barristers are the professional critics, and the judicial decisions on the parts of the audience(s) can result in suppression, canonization, or simple forgetfulness.³⁷

The critical reception to Giovannitti's poetry at the time of its publication—the *apologias* and *kategorias* offered by critics—gives more insight into how his poetry operated as a type of judicial rhetoric. Many critics of the day were flummoxed as to

³⁷ This metaphor becomes even more apparent during the “culture wars” of the 1930s, when writers on the political left and right fiercely debated the rhetorical and social functions of literature. For an in-depth history of the literary culture wars, see Bloom.

how to speak of Giovannitti's poetry. Harriet Monroe, in her April 1915 review of *Arrows*, which appeared in the prestigious Modernist bastion *Poetry*, views Giovannitti as a passionate and engaging poet “fettered by ordinary verse forms” which nonetheless “make room for his vivid imagery” (38). Likewise, Kenneth McGowan in the October 1913 issue of *Forum* sums up the unusual rhetorical nature of Giovannitti's verse:

The significant thing is that here we have a new sort of song....He and his song are products of something few Americans yet understand. We do not comprehend the problem of the unskilled just as we do not comprehend the I.W.W. that has come out of it. A poet has arisen to explain....In “The Walker” he has painted the prison as no man, not even Wilde, has done.
(Kenneth McGowan, *Forum*, 14 October 1913).

McGowan and Monroe's views are fairly representative—critics recognized that Giovannitti was doing something different with his rhetorical verse, though its passion and persuasiveness made the poems too intoxicating to dismiss.

Even the conservative *Atalantic Monthly*, when it reprinted “The Cage” in its January 1913 issue, expressed the inescapable allure Giovannitti's contemporary audience felt toward his poetry, even if their politics were radically opposed to his:

“The Cage” will call out plenty of literary criticism, plenty of expressions of social sympathy or lack of it, but the simple point which needs emphasis is that whether the poem repels or attracts the reader, he will find in it, if he cares to look, more of the heart and soul of the syndicalist movement than all the papers of all the economists can teach him. It is

ever wise to listen to the serious voices of mankind. (*The Atlantic*, January 1913, “The Poetry of Syndicalism”)

Here, Giovannitti's goal of creating a poetic persona is taken one step further by his critics: he is now not just a poet, but one of the “serious voices of mankind,” who, even with his radical politics, is worth listening to. And make no mistake, Giovannitti's poetic victories are very much rhetorical victories: his poetry packaged a radical politics largely found among Italian immigrants in a way that white Anglo-Saxon protestants of the time could appreciate and understand, if not wholeheartedly support. In the court of mainstream public opinion, radical labor movements seemed less scary—even less criminal—when yoked to Giovannitti's poetry.

And this, perhaps, is the greatest victory of Giovannitti's rhetorical verse: its ability to make safe, persuasive, and even sympathetic the radical politics it espouses. The next few years would see the legal and extra-legal suppression of the I.W.W. as the U.S. Government entered World War I, and while Giovannitti avoided arrest, much of the I.W.W. leadership was not so lucky. By 1917, just five years after Giovannitti's acquittal, America was deep into the throws of the First Red Scare which would eventually culminate in the infamous Palmer raids of 1919 where 556 leftists were arrested and deported (Avakov 36). Despite such repressions, however, Giovannitti's poetry would continue to be popularly anthologized throughout the early 1920s, a testament to its success as *apologia* for his radical political views (see below for an example of Giovannitti's poem “The Walker” reprinted in the 1921 *Fifty Best Poems of America*).

Finally, in considering Giovannitti's poetry as a form of judicial rhetoric, we see a final example of hybridizing that rhetorical verse does so well. The first appearance of Giovannitti's most famous poem "The Walker" was actually in an I.W.W. tract printed and circulated just after the acquittal titled *Ettor and Giovannitti before the Jury at Salem, Massachusetts*.³⁸ The tract included the transcript of both men's defense speeches to the court (which have since been reprinted in their entirety in Kornbluh), followed by Giovannitti's poem "The Walker." And here is one of the strongest arguments for Giovannitti's poetry as a species of judicial rhetoric: the I.W.W. and Giovannitti himself saw fit to publish his poem alongside the traditional Aristotelian *apologias* delivered at the trial, implicitly offering a poem equivalency with the rhetoric of the courts. And this is not to detract from "The Walker's" status as poetry or from its myriad comparisons to Oscar Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol," but merely to put forth evidence that both Giovannitti and the publishers with the I.W.W. were undeniably conscious of the rhetoricity of verse.

³⁸ Today, an original printing of the tract has been digitized and published online courtesy of the Boston Public Library.

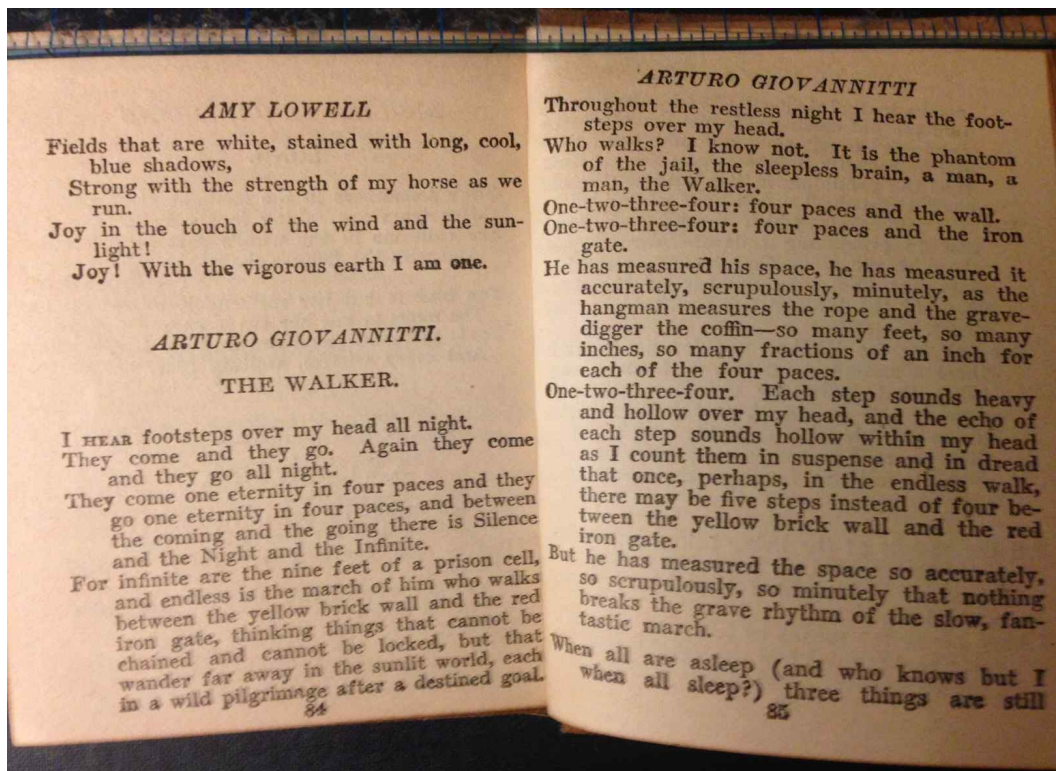


Figure 5: "The Walker" as it appears in *Fifty Best Poems of America*, Little Library edition

Conclusion

No! Whether a sob or a song,
While love shall life's battles endure,
While you in my will shall be strong
And I in your faith shall be pure,

While both have to weep, but our soul
Knows not what is doubt or despair,
While happiness be not our goal,
But simply the way to get there;

While after each loss we are trying
Again, though we never achieve,
And, mocked at and wounded and dying,
We still shall persist and believe,

While after each stormy nightfall
 More radiant each sunrise will seem,
 And while, after having lost all,
 Remain you and I and the Dream

Even though all the world shall adverse us,
 Though all our destruction acclaim,
 And priests in God's name shall accurse us,
 And fools in humanity's name;

Though all our old comrades we lose,
 And each of our friends turn a knave,
 And some pull the hangman's red noose,
 And all help to dig us a grave,

Still this unto you will I tell,
 That no man, no scaffold, no jail,
 No powers of heaven and hell
 Against you and me shall prevail!

-Arturo Giovannitti, "To the One Who Waits," *Arrows in the Gale*, 1914

In this final poem of *Arrows in the Gale*, Arturo Giovannitti takes a poetic victory lap after his 1912 acquittal, ending the poem by proclaiming that "no scaffold, no jail, / No powers of heaven and hell / Against you and me shall prevail" (Giovannitti 53). For the remainder of his life, Giovannitti made sure those words were true. While he never abandoned his radicalism, Giovannitti avoided volatile strikes after his release in 1912, preferring to focus on his poetry, editorial duties at various radical magazines, and his eventual leadership role as head of the Education Department for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) (Nelson 44).

In 1925, Giovannitti reunited with his friend Joseph Ettor for one last radical cause (D'Attilio 272). In 1921, a shoemaker and a fishmonger, both Italian immigrants and anarchists, were dubiously charged with murder in the state of Massachusetts. By

1925, the Sacco and Vanzetti case had become the new *cause célèbre* on the American left, picking up where the Ettor and Giovannitti trial left off. Ettor and Giovannitti themselves immediately began a series of public appearances, lobbying for Sacco and Vanzetti's release. The public speaking tour with Ettor would be one of Giovannitti's last (save for an impassioned eulogy for his assassinated friend Carlo Tresca, who was murdered in 1943 on orders from Mussolini) (D'Atilio 272). By 1930, Sacco and Vanzetti had been executed (a story I discuss in more detail in the next chapter) and Giovannitti no longer wrote much for the American press, instead focusing on his Brooklyn-based work with the ILGWU mentioned above.

At the time of his death in late 1959, the New York Times ran a brief obituary that emphasized Giovannitti's artistic stylings and abilities as a speaker:

Until the end of World War II when his health failed, he wrote and spoke extensively in the struggle to establish organized labor. At various times he was a close associate of Max Eastman, Norman Thomas, David Dubinsky, and many others. At the fiery labor rallies of the Nineteen Twenties and Thirties, Mr. Giovannitti was in great demand as a speaker. A colorful figure, with a Van Dyke beard, a Lord Byron collar and flowing tie, he addressed Italian and English-speaking audiences with an equally flowery fluency. (*New York Times*, 1 January 1960).

Interestingly, the obituary says nothing of Giovannitti's radical politics or poetry, simply noting his connections to organized labor. By this point, most of his poetry was also out

of print—a common fate for radical leftist writers due to a conservative backlash during the 1940s and 1950s.

Nonetheless, Giovannitti leaves us with a stunning body of rhetorical verse. His poetry, particularly those poems written in a Lawrence prison cell, blends oratory and lyric, pushing the boundaries of what poetry can do politically. The incisive critiques of the legal system seen in “The Walker” and “The Cage” act simultaneously as art and rhetoric, asking audiences both in 1912 and today to place themselves in the shoes of the murderer and the thief and then question their own views of freedom. Perhaps most importantly, however, Giovannitti's poetry would spawn a new generation of rhetor-poets on the political Left who would use poetry in response to political exigences. Max Eastman (who became chief editor of the leftist periodical the *Masses* one year after Giovannitti's acquittal) once remarked that the names Ettore and Giovannitti were as well known to American radicals as Lenin and Trotsky (D'Atilio 272). And as the Sacco-Vanzetti and Scottsboro trials would rock the radical Left over the next two decades, the poets responding to those cases looked, both explicitly and implicitly, to Giovannitti's verse as a model for how poetry and rhetoric might aid each other in doing the work of the world.

Chapter Three

Black Flags, Red Lyrics: The Rhetorical Verse of the Sacco-Vanzetti Affair

If it had not been for these things
 I might have live [sic] out my life
 talking at street corners to scorning men.
 I might have die, unmarked, unknown, a failure.
 Now we are not a failure.
 This is our career and our triumph. Never
 in our full life could we hope to do such work
 for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding
 of man, as now we do by accident.

Our words, our lives, our pains—nothing!
 The taking of our lives—lives of a good shoemaker and
 a poor fishpeddler—
 all! That last moment belongs to us—
 that agony is our triumph.

-from Bartolomeo Vanzetti's "Last Speech to the Court" as it appears in
 Selden Rodman's 1938 *A New Anthology of American Poetry*.

In 1927, a shoemaker and a fishmonger, both radical Italian-born anarchists were executed by the state of Massachusetts for a murder that many still maintain the two never committed. Nicola Sacco, the first to be executed, calmly walked to the electric chair before shouting "Farewell, Mother!" (Watson, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 345). Bartolomeo Vanzetti lingered, shaking hands with the guards and thanking them for their kind treatment before expressing forgiveness to his captors for the execution they would soon carry out (Watson, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 346). Globally famous after a seven-year series of high-profile trials and retrials rivaled in renown only by the Ettore-Giovannitti case a decade previous, Sacco and Vanzetti's execution set off violent protests world-wide and prompted what the *Boston Globe* called "one of the most tremendous funerals of

modern times” (qtd. in Watson, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 349).

In the seven years of their incarceration, the apparent and growing injustices of the Sacco-Vanzetti case inspired collective poetic action rivaled only by the organized labor poetry of the early twentieth century. The Communist party printed and circulated an anthology of poems dedicated to the imprisoned men titled *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* while a group of unaffiliated poets published their own memorial anthology, *America Arraigned!* after the execution of the two self proclaimed radicals.³⁹ In the decade since Arturo Giovannitti's rhetorical successes with poetry examined in the previous chapter, it seemed that poets on the left still saw rhetorical verse as a potent response to legal injustice.

In this chapter, I examine the rhetorical verse surrounding the Sacco-Vanzetti affair. Particularly, I contend that this rhetorical verse is an extension of the rhetorical strategies and traditions of the Old Left⁴⁰ seen in the poetry of labor as well as the poetry of Giovannitti. Unlike the Giovannitti case, which saw a collection of poems produced by a single author, the Sacco-Vanzetti affair heralded poetry from a *diversity* of poets and was an instrumental moment in radicalizing a generation of artists who would make the 1930s the most prolific era of rhetorical verse America has ever seen. Furthermore, the debates about the social role of poetry that dominated literary discussions throughout the 1930s began as a seed in the rhetorical verse of the Sacco-Vanzetti affair, which sought to

³⁹ I use the term radical throughout this dissertation very specifically to refer to those groups and individuals who advocated for the overthrow of the U.S. government. For example, some socialists had political views stretching extremely far left, but remained committed to working within the framework of American democracy. These, though politically extreme, would not fall under the label of “radical” for my purposes.

⁴⁰ The Old Left was the progressive left of early 1900s. Centered around labor politics, the Old Left can be contrasted with the New Left of the 1960s whose politics centered around the various social movements of that decade.

actively make social changes through art.

I have three reasons for examining the poetry surrounding the Sacco-Vanzetti affair. First, the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, like the Ettor-Giovannitti trial a decade previous, became an international *cause célèbre*, particularly for those on the political left. It was also a watershed moment that thrust a radical strand of American political thought into the spotlight of the general public, and this new found public awareness of anarchism was reflected in the rhetorical verse produced. Second, the Sacco-Vanzetti affair is another high-profile example of a political exigence eliciting a poetic response in early twentieth-century America. That so many poets turned to their craft in an attempt to effect social change only magnifies the use of poetry as a rhetorical tool from the previous case of Giovannitti writing poems alone in his prison cell. Third, the poetry of the Sacco-Vanzetti affair was the natural extension of the kind of rhetorical verse exhibited in the previous chapter by Arturo Giovannitti. Niccola Sacco's first radical act was to participate in the Ettor-Giovannitti Defense Campaign (Tejada 46), Ettor and Giovannitti themselves lobbied for Sacco and Vanzetti's release (Tejada 256), and perhaps most importantly, the number of poets turning to verse for rhetorical ends expands and diversifies the efforts of Giovannitti to write poetry with overt social and rhetorical functions.

To begin, I provide a brief overview of American anarchism that is essential to understanding the historical context and motivations of all involved in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. Then, I provide a background of Sacco and Vanzetti themselves as well as an overview of the case against them. Finally, I examine the rhetorical functions of the

poetry produced in response to their case, arguing that it exhibits not only judicial, but deliberative and epideictic elements.

Background: Anarchism in America

Both Nick and I are anarchists. The radical of the radical—the black cats, the terrors of many, of all the bigots, exploitators, charlatans, fakers, and oppressors. I am, and will be until the last instant (unless I should discover I am in error) an anarchist-communist, because I believe communism is the most humane form of social contract, because I know that only with liberty can man rise, become noble, complete.

-Bartolomeo Vanzetti, *The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti*

To understand the Sacco and Vanzetti affair, as well as the rhetorical verse it produced, one must first be familiar with histories of anarchism (particularly Italian-American anarchism) in the United States, as Sacco and Vanzetti's identities were inextricably tied, both by them and prosecutors, to their political views. In this section, I provide a broad but brief history of the notoriously difficult to define socio-philosophical movement that was anarchism. I also provide background on major U.S. events having to do with anarchist movements such as the Haymarket Affair, the assassination of William McKinley, and the First Red Scare (1917). Additionally, I briefly discuss several key anarchist thinkers in order to shed light on how a fishmonger and a shoemaker became radicalized.

Origins of American Anarchism

Anarchism is a notoriously difficult word to define. Historically, it has referred to

political, social, and philosophical movements (and more commonly, meldings of the three). It has been a pejorative used to label radicals as “men covered with crimes, stained with blood, and fattened by rapine, enemies of laws they do not make” (qtd. in Woodcock 11).⁴¹ Likewise, it has been a badge of pride, as seen in Vanzetti's proud proclamation which began this section. The word itself, from the Greek *anarchos*, literally means “without a ruler” and thus has fallen into ambiguity, having been used historically to refer both to a negative state of general unruliness and a more positive state of being unruled (Woodcock 10). Couple these ambiguities with the sometimes disparate movements (political, social, and philosophical) that are labeled “anarchism” and it quickly becomes apparent that we must talk about anarchism—as with any -ism from feminism to modernism—in plural terms of anarchism(s).

Most historians, when discussing American anarchism, point to a native strand of individualist anarchism in America as far back as writers like Henry David Thoreau were advocating civil disobedience and self-reliance in the early 19th century (Schuster; Woodcock; Jacker). Likewise, historians like Eunice Minette Schuster uphold the free spirit of the Western pioneers and early 19th-century utopian communities as being forerunners of a unique brand of American individualist anarchism. Eventually, as these native strands of individualist anarchisms coalesced and evolved, they inevitably came to be influenced by European anarchisms, particularly the more codified socio-philosophical movements found in the late nineteenth-century works of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, and Peter Kropotkin. Nonetheless, the anarchisms represented in those

⁴¹ This was the official stance of the French Directory, the executive council of the French government that was eventually overthrown by Napoleon.

early American individualist movements reflected a fierce individualism that certainly influenced Sacco and Vanzetti's political thoughts (though the two held a more complex anarcho-communist viewpoint focused on a mixture of individualism and collectivism). In fact, activist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who worked in defense of both Arturo Giovannitti and Sacco and Vanzetti, in her own autobiography, *Rebel Girl*, calls Vanzetti “an individualist who hoped to find happiness in this great land of opportunity” (300), highlighting at the very least some kindred spirit with early American individualist anarchists.

And while a good argument can be made for the influence of individualist anarchists on Sacco and Vanzetti's political views, that influence pales in comparison to the influence of anarcho-communist thinkers. By the late 1800s, the ideas of Mikhail Bakunin began to reach American shores, melding with the less defined forms of individualist anarchisms mentioned above. Bakunin's “Black International,”⁴² formed in response to his expulsion from the socialist-dominated First International, began to win over American radicals (particularly in heavily industrialized urban centers with large German-speaking populations like Chicago and Pittsburgh) with its ideas of *revolutionary* socialism that eschewed traditional politics and the ballot as capitalist tools (DeLeon 45). Furthermore, Bakunin, while advocating a radical form of socialism himself, was deeply opposed to Marx's theory of a proletarian dictatorship, formulating the foundational philosophies of localized syndicalism that would so influence Arturo Giovannitti's politics discussed in the previous chapter.

⁴² The Black International, formally known as the Industrial Working People's Association, would go on to greatly influence the development of American anarchism, primarily in urban centers with large European immigrant populations.

Following Bakunin's death in 1876, Peter Kropotkin became heir to role of philosopher of anarchism, building from Bakunin's ideas a fully realized theory of anarcho-communism where the means of production as well as the products were completely communized, though no governing force coerced adherence. Instead, Kropotkin theorizes in *Modern Science and Anarchism* a model anarcho-communist society:

The anarchists conceive a society in which all the mutual relations of its members are regulated, not by laws, not by authorities, whether self-imposed or elected, but by mutual agreements between members of that society and by a sum of social customs and habits – not petrified by law, routine or superstition, but continually developing and continually re-adjusted in accordance with the ever-growing requirements of a free life stimulated by the progress of science, invention, and the steady growth of higher ideals. No ruling authorities, then. No government of man by man; no crystallization and immobility, but a continual evolution—such as we see in nature. (Kropotkin 145)

Here, the utopian nature of late-nineteenth century anarcho-communism (and the reasoning behind historians grouping it with early-nineteenth century American utopian communities) is apparent, as both share a vocabulary of idealism and self-sufficiency. And while individualist and communist anarchism are distinctly separate, it should also be apparent why anarcho-communism as a movement appealed deeply to the growing immigrant communities of industrialized laborers in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth

century American: its advocacy for the abolition of an often slave-like wage system in favor of workers themselves controlling the means of production with which they worked was akin to the individualist anarchisms of early nineteenth century abolitionist utopianists.

The first Italian anarchist groups in the United States (and the forerunners of Sacco and Vanzetti's group) appeared in the 1880s (Avrigh, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 45). By 1888, the year of Vanzetti's birth, the first newspaper published by Italian anarchists, *L'Anarchico*, was printed by the Canfiere Group in New York (Avrigh, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 45). By the mid-1890s, Italian anarchist groups had been founded in Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago. And this massive and relatively quick spread of Italian anarchism was spurred in large part by the highly publicized Haymarket Affair of 1886-1887 (Avrigh, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 46), one of the most significant events in the history of the late-nineteenth century political left.

*The Haymarket Affair*⁴³

You need not laugh about it, Captain Schaack. You are one of them. You are an Anarchist, as you understand it. You are all Anarchists, in this sense of the word, I must say.

-Oscar Neebe, addressing the lead detective during his speech to the court after the Haymarket trials.

Just as anarcho-communism was beginning to make inroads into American cities in the late 1870s, the country entered what is known as the Long Depression, an

⁴³ What follows is a brief overview of the Haymarket Affair intended to briefly provide historical background for scholars of rhetoric as it pertains to the Sacco-Vanzetti case three decades later. A watershed moment in the history of both American labor and anarchism, the events of the Haymarket Affair have been the subject of many exceedingly thorough histories and analyses. For more detailed studies of the Haymarket Affair, see Avrigh, *The Haymarket Affair*; Foner, *May Day*; David; Green.

economic recession lasting from 1873 until 1879. The National Bureau of Economic Research estimates the economic retraction to have lasted 65 months, eclipsing the 43 month retraction of the 1930s Great Depression. During the Long Depression, 18,000 businesses and ten states went bankrupt (Reinhardt 40).

Unsurprisingly, the economic unrest contributed to the increase of movements across the country advocating for an eight-hour workday. As early as 1825, demands for shorter workdays were recorded (David 157); however, in the wake of the Long Depression, the eight-hour movements' resurgence in the 1880s would, by 1886, make that year an “epochal” one in labor history (David 160). As radical labor leaders in Chicago—initially opposed to the eight-hour movements as a compromise rather than an upending of with the wage system they sought to abolish—began to support the idea of an eight hour workday, its popularity among Chicago's workers in particular began to soar. Historian Henry David estimates that by 1886, 340,000 workers in Chicago supported the eight hour movement, with 190,000 of those going on strike to make their voices heard (177).

In addition to general labor discontent, Chicago at this time was also unsurprisingly the seat of a growing anarchist movement. The city was home to the “Information Bureau” of the International Working People's Association, as well as one of the IWPA's founding American members, August Spies. The IWPA (more informally known as the Black International mentioned previously) was a radical international anarchist organization whose goals were not only the complete and revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and government, but a “total revolution in human relations,

cultural as well as political and economic” (Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* 131). And it would be the revolutionary rhetoric of the IWPA that would be placed on trial after the violence that occurred in the Haymarket Square, setting a legal precedent that would be invoked both in the Ettore-Giovannitti trial and the Sacco-Vanzetti affair.

On May 1, 1886, workers across the nation went on strike in support of the eight-hour work day, an enormous culmination of the eight-hour movement discussed above. Three days later, on May 4, a crowd gathered in Chicago's Haymarket Square for a rally supporting the general strike and protesting police violence against strikers at the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company plant two days previous. IWPA organizer August Spies was scheduled to give a speech to the crowd at half past seven, followed by anarchist Albert Parsons at nine. The speeches of the rally, though at points generically incendiary, did little to rile the crowd—even the mayor of Chicago, who was present that morning, left the rally early remarking that it was a peaceful event (Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* 211). In fact, as the weather worsened and the wind became more biting, the crowd began dispersing of its own accord, so much so that the anarchist organizers of the rally began to suggest the meeting adjourn to nearby Zepf's Hall only half a block away (David 203). By the time the third speaker, Samuel Fielden, began his speech, the crowd—which began about 1,300 people strong—had dwindled to nearly a quarter that (David 203).

As Fielden began to close his speech, a large body of police descended on the cart the organizers were using as a stage. After police commanded the crowd to disperse, to which Fielden protested “We are peaceable,” a dynamite bomb was hurled from the crowd,

killing one officer and mortally injuring six others (David 204). The chaos after the explosion clouds the historical record. Most historians maintain that police regrouped and began firing on the fleeing crowd (Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* 210; David 204; Green 186). After a few minutes of chaos, what is clear is that only the wounded remained in the square, with sixty-seven casualties in total (Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* 208).

What followed the night of violence was by almost all accounts an investigation with dubious methods and motivations into the circles of the anarchist organizers and an equally dubious trial which set legal precedents for both the Ettore-Giovannitti trial discussed in the previous chapter and the Sacco-Vanzetti trial to be discussed shortly. In total, seven men with ties to the anarchist newspaper *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, including Parsons, Fielden, and Spies who had organized the rally, were arrested and charged with murder. After a questionable trial, the men were all convicted and hanged, becoming martyrs for the radical left and bogeymen for the interests of capitalism which sought to quash the growing anarchist movement as violent and anti-American.

More important than the actual trial and executions—which are documented thoroughly in a large number of histories (see Avrich; David; Green; Foner; Messer-Kruse; Nelson)—is the rhetoric surrounding them that prompted a national Red Scare, with newspapers and various capitalist interests painting all anarchists as bomb-throwing, violence-peddling agitators. What Paul Avrich calls “the first great American inquisition since the Salem witch trials,” the red scare that followed the Haymarket violence resulted in a campaign of radical-baiting that would not be seen again until (and would greatly

influence) the government suppression of radicalism during World War I (215).

Newspapers in particular sensationalized their reportage, calling anarchists “Bloody Brutes, Red Ruffians, Dynamarchists, Bloody Monsters, and Bomb Throwers” (Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* 216). The *Chicago Times* went so far as to call anarchists “arch counselors of riot, pillage, incendiarism, and murder” (Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* 216). So from the revolutionary philosophies of Peter Kropotkin, rooted in utopian cooperation, anarchy after the Haymarket became indelibly associated with violence and dynamite in the minds of many Americans.

The backlash of public opinion resulted in deep suspicion of anarchist groups. Historian Sidney Fine argues that “More than any other event the Haymarket affair conditioned Americans to equate anarchism with violence and murder” (779) despite the many different strains of anarchist thought in American history. Furthermore, mainstream labor organizations like the Knights of Labor, often allies of anarchists, worked to distance themselves from the negative rhetoric being applied to anarchy (David 210). And it was the anti-anarchist, anti-radical rhetoric, with its roots in the public response to the Haymarket affair, that would so color both public and legal opinion in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. However, if Haymarket provides the roots of American mistrust of anarchy, it would be the assassination of President William McKinley fifteen years later that would further deepen that mistrust.

The Assassination of President William McKinley

I killed the President because he was the enemy of the good people—the good working people. I am not sorry for my crime.

-Last words of Leon Czolgosz, assassin of President William McKinley.

In 1900, an Italian anarchist named Gaetano Bresci shot and killed the King of Italy, Umberto I. The assassination sent shockwaves through the American anarchist community, greatly influencing a young steelworker and anarchist named Leon Czolgosz whose disillusionment with the social injustices of early twentieth century capitalism he saw embodied in the leader of capitalist society, President William McKinley. Taking matters into his own hands, Czolgosz bought a .32 caliber revolver and traveled to Buffalo New York, where McKinley was visiting the Pan-American Exposition. As McKinley shook hands with various people in the crowd, Czolgosz shot the President twice before being subdued by the crowd and taken into custody.

Despite suspected mental illness and very tenuous connections to active anarchist circles,⁴⁴ Czolgosz and his crime became a public symbol of violent anarchism. Historian Sidney Fine summarizes the response of the general public to McKinley's assassination:

Although the assassin's connections with anarchism were of the most tenuous sort and although insanity rather than anarchism may have

⁴⁴ Despite being a self-proclaimed anarchist, established anarchist circles were suspicious of Czolgosz. The radical newspaper *Free Society* even printed a warning that he might be a spy, saying, “The attention of the comrades is called to another spy. He is well dressed, of medium height, rather narrow shoulders, blond and about 25 years of age. Up to the present he has made his appearance in Chicago and Cleveland. In the former place he remained but a short time, while in Cleveland he disappeared when the comrades had confirmed themselves of his identity and were on the point of exposing him. His demeanor is of the usual sort, pretending to be greatly interested in the cause, asking for names or soliciting aid for acts of contemplated violence. If this same individual makes his appearance elsewhere the comrades are warned in advance, and can act accordingly.”

prompted his actions, there was a general disposition among a public conditioned to think of anarchism in terms of Haymarket...to hold anarchism itself responsible for the death of the President and to view Czolgosz as but the instrument of an alien and noxious doctrine that regarded assassination as a legitimate weapon to employ against government and constituted authority. (780-81)

Blaming anarchism as a whole for the President's murder was a product of the rhetoric originating with the Haymarket Affair. It played to xenophobic and nativist strands of American society while demonizing dissent from American capitalism. And such rhetoric was not just limited to the newspapers.

In his first address to Congress, Theodore Roosevelt, who upon McKinley's death became the 26th President of the United States, placed blame for the assassination squarely on the shoulders of Czolgosz's anarchism. His speech called upon Congress to enact legal measures against professed anarchists:

I earnestly recommend to the Congress that in the exercise of its wise discretion it should take into consideration the coming to this country of anarchists or persons professing principles hostile to all government and justifying the murder of those placed in authority. Such individuals as those who not long ago gathered in open meeting to glorify the murder of King Humbert of Italy perpetrate a crime, and the law should ensure their rigorous punishment. They and those like them should be kept out of this country; and if found here they should be promptly deported to the country

whence they came; and far-reaching provision should be made for the punishment of those who stay. No matter calls more urgently for the wisest thought of the Congress.

This quote from Roosevelt's address highlights the historical prejudices against anarchism as a "foreign" and violent doctrine present since the Haymarket affair. However, it also foreshadows in its calls for legal action the coming Red Scare of the late 1910s, in which the government used raids and agent provocateurs to arrest and deport many on the radical left.

In his speech, Roosevelt goes on to further demonize anarchists and call for legal actions against them:

Anarchy is a crime against the whole human race; and all mankind should band against the anarchist. His crime should be made an offense against the law of nations, like piracy and that form of man-stealing known as the slave trade; for it is of far blacker infamy than either. It should be so declared by treaties among all civilized powers. Such treaties would give to the Federal Government the power of dealing with the crime.

And his comments would have far-reaching effects: many states passed anti-anarchist legislation. In New York, the state legislature passed the New York Criminal Anarchy Act of 1902, which made it illegal to advocate the overthrow of government or to publicly declare one's self an anarchist. The Federal government followed suit shortly after with the Immigration Act of 1903, which barred anarchists from immigrating to America. Of course, with a relatively small population of anarchists in America, most of

this legislation would remain dormant until the United States entered World War I in 1917, an event which provoked widespread government suppression of leftist radicals and marked the beginnings of the first Red Scare.

The First Red Scare and Luigi Galleani

War, Class war, and you were the first to wage it under the cover of the powerful institutions you call order, in the darkness of your laws. There will have to be bloodshed; we will not dodge; there will have to be murder: we will kill, because it is necessary; there will have to be destruction; we will destroy to rid the world of your tyrannical institutions.

-note attached to the bombs used in an anarchist campaign targeting high-profile supporters of new anti-sedition and deportation laws.

If the assassination of President McKinley resulted in increased fear of anarchism, the rhetoric surrounding the First Red Scare lumped all radicals⁴⁵—socialists, Bolsheviks, IWWs, anarchists—into a single group to be feared: Reds (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 164). By 1919, the Department of Justice fueled public panic over the “red menace” by declaring that a series of bombings (referenced in the head quote for this section) perpetrated by a small anarchist cell were actually part of an “organized conspiracy, nationwide in scope, to overthrow the American government” (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 164). Of course, the notion of this conspiracy was a myth—for all of the

⁴⁵ I should distinguish here between the terms “anarchist” and “radical.” I have already mentioned that I use the term radical to refer to any group or person advocating for the overthrow of the U.S. government. This includes Communists, some socialists, and some anarchists. The individualist anarchists mentioned in the previous section who were content to live in isolated utopian communities without advocating the overthrow of the U.S. government are good example of anarchists that I would not classify under my definition of radical.

labor militancy and widespread striking of the period, the chance of nationwide uprising, particularly one lead by anarchists, was remote (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 164).

Nonetheless, the culture and rhetoric of the Red Scare, alongside the anarchist bombing campaign that helped set it off, play integral parts in understanding the rhetorical verse of the Sacco-Vanzetti affair.

The United States' entry into World War I prompted the passing of stringent anti-sedition and deportation laws, many of which were intended to suppress foreign radicals who had immigrated to America. One such radical, Luigi Galleani, would prove to be the most influential Italian anarchist of his generation, and the political mentor of Sacco and Vanzetti.⁴⁶ Galleani was a highly skilled orator whose charm and charisma won him a dedicated following among Italian workers. His wholesale commitment to violent revolution would see him exiled from his native Italy as well as Egypt and France before arriving in America in 1901, the year President McKinley was assassinated. Galleani was a sought-after speaker at anarchist meetings, and a regular contributor to anarchist publications (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 55). Through the anarchist newspaper *Cronaca Sovversiva*, Galleani sold a booklet titled *La Salute è in voi! (Health is in You!)*, which was a recipe for making nitroglycerine at home, a practical companion to the violence he advocated (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 87).

In response to what historian Paul Avrich calls “deportation delirium” under the anti-sedition laws mentioned previously, in 1919 a group of Galleani's disciples sent thirty package bombs to high-profile public figures who supported the new laws,

⁴⁶ For more on Galleani's life, politics, and his direct influence on Sacco and Vanzetti, see Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti*, pp. 45-57

including governors, senators, Rockefellers, and the attorney general, Mitchell A. Palmer who would be responsible for some of the most egregious raids and deportations of the first Red Scare. There is debate as to whether Sacco and Vanzetti—themselves staunch Galleanists—played any role in this bombing campaign, with Avrich claiming their involvement a “virtual certainty” though their roles unclear (162). Regardless, the fallout from the bombings certainly affected Sacco and Vanzetti, creating a hysterical, high-profile campaign of red baiting and intensifying the public's already deep fear and mistrust of anarchists.

Ten days after the explosions, the government orchestrated raids began, further souring public disposition to leftist radicals. The arrest of Industrial Workers of the World leadership mentioned in the previous chapter, along with raids on the Russian Bolshevik Mission in New York and the arrest and deportation of known anarchists would ultimately result in the arrest of over four thousand immigrants in thirty three cities (Watson 11). By the end of the year, the “Soviet Ark” sailed from New York, taking 250 leftist radicals to the Soviet Union for asylum as the press and public cheered (Watson 11). The general hysteria and hostility directed at radicals—anarchists in particular—would continue into 1920, when Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were arrested and charged with murder. And despite each man having an alibi, their defense was ultimately weakened by their publicly anarchist identities as they attempted to cover for their Galleanist associates who orchestrated the 1919 bombing campaign that sparked the public hostilities in the first place.

The Rhetorical Verse of the Sacco-Vanzetti Affair

“We are proud of death,”
 Two men said;
 “We are proud of death,”
 When they are dead,

They shall be leaders
 Greater far
 Than the living
 Ever are.

They shall sway thousands
 With stopped breath,
 With quite hands.
 If you give them death

You give them a sword
 For their hands to slay
 All you hold dear and high
 Some day.

-“Their Weapon” by Mary Carolyn Davies,
 first published in the 1927 *The Sacco-
 Vanzetti Anthology of Verse*

The above Mary Carolyn Davies poem serves to demonstrate the extent to which Sacco and Vanzetti were idealized—perhaps even mythologized—in the poetry of the time. The two men's high-profile case elicited a widespread and organized movement among leftist writers to produce rhetorical verse—poetry with explicit hortatory goals and persuasive ends that most often responds to political exigencies. Many of these poems were circulated to soften public opinion towards the controversial anarchists, as can be seen with the *Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Poetry*, printed on newsprint-quality paper and sold for a very affordable twenty five cents. However, many of the poems had a more practical secondary goal to raise money for the Sacco and Vanzetti's legal defense,

as can be seen with *America Arraigned!*, cloth-bound and sold for a pricier one dollar and ten cents.

In this section, I examine the rhetorical verse produced in response to the Sacco-Vanzetti affair. To begin, I provide a brief historical background of the actual case and trial in order to illuminate the political exigence to which rhetorical verse responded. I then examine the two most popular anthologies of Sacco-Vanzetti related poetry: the 1927 *Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* and the 1928 *America Arraigned!* published after Sacco and Vanzetti's execution. Finally, I conclude with an analysis of individual poems that appeared in newspapers and periodicals over the course of Sacco and Vanzetti's eight-year incarceration.

Sacco and Vanzetti: The Crime and Trial

Before examining the rhetorical verse of the Sacco-Vanzetti affair, it is necessary to provide a very brief background of the case itself, as it was the direct exigence to which the rhetorical verse responded. There are many detailed histories of the alleged crimes, arrest, and trials of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti (see Ehrman; Avrich; Russell; Tejada; Temkin; Watson; Neville). As a result, this background simply serves to provide scholars of rhetoric with a brief historical context for the rhetorical verse produced, not to offer arguments about the often murky historical record of the case, for which the above works can be consulted.

In 1919, a factory paymaster and a security guard were murdered in a robbery

attempt on the streets of South Braintree, an industrial suburb of Boston. When police began monitoring the suspected getaway car, which had been impounded in a local garage, five Italian anarchists (including Sacco and Vanzetti) arrived inquiring about the car's whereabouts. Historian Paul Avrich convincingly argues that the men, who were not connected to the murders, were actually there to move a cache of dynamite from the car (204). Nonetheless, while the other three men escaped, Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested.

Niccola Sacco, a shoemaker originally from the Italian town of Torremaggiore, was by most accounts a family man and a “skillful and reliable worker” (Avrich, *Anarchist Voices* 99). To his neighbors and coworkers, Sacco was big-hearted and generous, but also a fairly well-known radical. In a 1987 interview, George T. Kelley, an economics professor and grandson of Michael Kelley who owned the shoe factory where Sacco worked, recounted his grandfather's memories of Sacco, saying that the anarchist would repair things at the Kelley homestead free of charge and share surplus vegetables from his garden with their surrounding neighbors (Avrich, *Anarchist Voices* 99). Kelley's grandmother was particularly fond of Sacco and would have him slaughter chickens for her occasionally, though she remarked he was particularly squeamish of the task. According to George, the Kelley family was well aware of Sacco's radical involvements, with Michael Kelley even telling Sacco to “Give up the radical crap. Be an American” (Avrich, *Anarchist Voices* 100). However, despite his radical views, Sacco seems to have been well liked by most who knew him, even holding the trusted position of factory watchman at the Kelley shoe factory.

Bartolomeo Vanzetti was more of a vagrant than his compatriot, having no family

and working as a traveling fishmonger. Originally from the Italian town of Villaffalletto, Vanzetti was quite outspoken and vehement in his anarchism. Beltrando Brini, who was just a child when Vanzetti stayed as a lodger with his family, called the fishmonger “anarchism personified,” continuing that Vanzetti “believed in the perfectibility of human nature, something that does not in fact exist” (Avrich, *Anarchist Voices* 101). One of the greatest consistencies in descriptions of Vanzetti was his idealism, which regularly overshadows his radicalism in the accounts of those who knew him. And Vanzetti's beloved nature within his community, like Sacco's, undoubtedly contributed to biased but powerful narratives of the oppressed shoemaker and fishmonger which in turn downplay their radical beliefs. And while all narratives contain elements of truth, perhaps the most agreeable narrative for Sacco and Vanzetti is this: both were outwardly peaceful, deeply idealistic, and beloved men who held extremely radical political beliefs that, at least on paper, included the sanctioning if not actual advocacy of violence.

Believing their arrest to be connected to their anarchism (and involvement with the cache of dynamite), both Sacco and Vanzetti answered police questioning evasively so as not to incriminate the others in their Galleanist circle (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 204). However, when discovering they were charged with robbery and murder, both men vocally maintained their innocence, with Sacco indignantly remarking, “If I was arrested because of the Idea I am glad to suffer. If I must I will die for it. But they have arrested me for a gunman job” (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 204). Nonetheless, their initial evasiveness with police and the District Attorney solidified the impression of the authorities that they had the right men, creating what Judge Webster Thayer would later

remark was the strongest evidence of their guilt (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 203).

Carlo Tresca and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (who took over leadership of the 1912 Lawrence Strike after the arrest of Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti) would spearhead the early legal defense efforts for the men, recruiting veteran Industrial Workers of the World lawyer Fred Moore who had defended Ettor and Giovannitti in the case discussed in the previous chapter (Temkin 12). Furthermore, following the arrest of Sacco and Vanzetti, their circle of anarchist friends set up the first Sacco and Vanzetti Defense Committee, whose goal was to publicize Sacco and Vanzetti's innocence while raising money for their legal fees.

Over the next seven years, the men, with the help of the defense committee, would embark on a series of legal battles attempting to be acquitted. Meanwhile, the defense committee's other function was to publicize the case to anyone who would listen, and they were highly successful, producing poetry, song, and journalism about the case. By the time of their sentencing in 1927, the case was global with protests in most of the world's major capitals (Watson, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 310). Like Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti a decade earlier, Sacco and Vanzetti were the most famous prisoners—and arguably people—in the world. And also like Ettor and Giovannitti before them, rhetorical verse played a large role in the fame of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Henry Harrison's *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse*, an inexpensive anthology of highly-accessible poetry published in 1927 on bound newsprint, would have been intended to circulate widely, raising awareness and encouraging action over the case. And if the ease with which one can still attain a copy today allows us to draw

inference about the document's contemporary circulation, then it circulated widely indeed. Conversely, the cloth bound *America Arraigned!*, printed after Sacco and Vanzetti's execution in 1928, would have had a much smaller print run and is thus far more difficult for contemporary readers to obtain. But if these poems responded to the political exigence of Sacco and Vanzetti's arrest, and if they had some sort of import or effect on public consciousness as it pertained to the case, then I should examine both collections in detail to parse out how they operated as rhetorical verse.

The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse

Justice has not chuckled up her wide sleeve at two men only, but at the whole world. What are you going to do about it? she asks, and laughs some more. Yes, what are you going to do about it?

-Henry Harrison, 1927, Introduction to *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse*

The above quote from Henry Harrison's brief introduction to *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* from the very first page makes no secret of the collection's hortatory aim: to spur widespread public action in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. In this section, I specifically examine poems from this collection as examples of rhetorical verse.

Different from the poetry of Arturo Giovannitti, *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* provides a diverse number of poets attempting to write persuasive poems and using a variety of rhetorical strategies to do so. But before looking at specific poems from the collection, it is worth briefly examining the physical aspects of the book and what they can tell us about the rhetorical verse contained.

More a pamphlet than a book, *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* sold for twenty-five cents per copy (a very accessible price equivalent to a little over three dollars today; such a price could facilitate a wide circulation for the anthology among the general public). It is printed on low-quality newsprint that, unsurprisingly, has not held up well through the years (I digitized my copy because even with careful handling the pages had a tendency to simply crumble away). I describe the physical features of the text because they are significant in allowing us to infer the intentions of the poets and editors. For example, that it was printed on low-quality newsprint means that it was not intended for long-term preservation or readership. Rather, it was a document of its historical moment, intended to circulate cheaply, quickly, and widely in response to the exigence of Sacco and Vanzetti's impending execution (which would occur the year after *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* was printed). In short, the physical features of *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* suggest that it was very much a rhetorical text designed to change minds and stir action in the then-and-now as opposed to more formal collections of poetry whose audience implicitly extends to posterity.

Likewise, these physical features suggest an audience for the collection: anyone who would listen. The newsprint and low price suggest that Harrison and the poets included wanted as many people to read the poems as possible. Harrison even ends his introduction by thanking Leon Blumenfield for “helping to publicize this pamphlet” (1), suggesting a wider PR campaign to raise the public's awareness of the poems. Furthermore, the editor explicitly places agency on the book's audience in his introduction, saying that “*The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* is helping to do its little

bit. The rest remains with you” (1). Here again, the anthology makes no secrets about its hortatory functions: it explicitly wants to spark action in its audience. So ultimately what we end up with is a collection of poems with a broad and diverse intended audience that is self-aware of and deliberate about its rhetoricity. Like the rhetorical verse of Giovannitti before it, *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* is supposed to be persuasive—it is supposed to change minds. But for further evidence of that claim, and for more particulars about how verse can function as rhetoric, I should turn the specific poems themselves.

The first poem in the collection is simply titled “To Sacco and Vanzetti” and was written by Ralph Cheney, a fairly common name on the literary left who organized the Rebel Poets group that included luminaries like Jack Conroy and Langston Hughes (Smethurst 20) and who would go on to edit (with Lucia Trent) the other major anthology of Sacco and Vanzetti poetry, *America Arraigned!* in 1929. Despite its title, the poem's address to Sacco and Vanzetti can really be read as an address to the literary left in America in general. A short poem, it is a series of three highly metrical quatrains with alternating hard end-rhymes, making it stylistically evocative of antiquated, 19th popular verse:

Before such men as you I stand
 With head hung low, abashed, ashamed
 Not only of my Judas land
 But that I also should be blamed.

That courts are ruled by wealth and error
 Is nothing new in history's pages
 And men who fight the armed White Terror
 Must face their death while hatred rages.

But shame on folk of the printed word
 Who raise no cry that rich men plunder!
 Come, let our voices all be heard
 In revolutionary thunder!

Stylistically, the hard rhymes and musical meter is quite conservative, lacking the aesthetic experimentations of 1927's poetic *avant garde*. Moreover, it is highly accessible—one does not need to know multiple languages or be steeped in the Western poetic traditions to grasp the poem's revolutionary utterances.

This lack of aesthetic innovation and stylistic conservatism was common to rhetorical verse and has long been a reason that leftist rhetorical verse fell out of (and often was actively suppressed from) the twentieth-century poetic canon. And certainly when read against the prevailing standards of the modernist poetic, “To Sacco and Vanzetti” is not an enduring masterpiece and is thus known only by a handful of specialized literature scholars. However, I contend that “To Sacco and Vanzetti” and other poems like it were operating in their own tradition—a rhetorical one. And when considered in the complex tradition of leftist rhetorical verse that evolved alongside modernism, these poems become rich persuasive texts worthy of study by rhetoricians interested in the means of persuasion in early twentieth century America.

One example of how *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* fits into this larger rhetorical tradition of the political Old Left is its adherence to the tropes and images of early twentieth century leftist poetry. Much as Arturo Giovannitti's poetry in the previous chapter relied on images from leftist rhetoric (the scythe, the plow, the iron forge, the color red, etc.), the poems in *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* also connect to the

larger tradition in much the same way. In Lucia Trent's "The General Strike," even the very title invokes the most powerful rhetorical tool available to workers—their ability to strike. In the poem itself, the author bombards us with the imagery of industrialism:

Man to man in a fearless row;
 No motors throb, no sirens blow,
 No wheels revolve, no engines purr,
 But strong men rise with a mighty stir
 To bellow their will to the gaping sky,
 "SACCO! VANZETTI! YOU SHALL NOT DIE!"

Here again we see the stylistically conservative hard end rhymes completely eschewed by the literary *avant garde*. But we also get a reliance on the language of labor: engines and wheels and strong workers rising. Furthermore, implicit in the poem, like much rhetorical verse in the early twentieth century, is the revolutionary utterance: the call to uprising. One can debate in any given poem whether the call to revolution was literal (as I suspect it was for much communist poetry) or a figurative call to the working class to band together in order to better their situation (as I suspect was true for the less-radical on the literary left).

The reliance on the tropes and symbols of organized labor in rhetorical verse created what Cary Nelson calls a "poetry chorus," the idea being that these texts, through their shared symbols, were interconnected. And while Nelson does not use the term rhetoric in his work, essentially what comes to exist is a network of poetry operating together to construct meaning, what Jenny Edbauer-Rice terms a *rhetorical ecology* (5). In the case of rhetorical verse, the poems construct meaning in concert with each other in the public consciousness. Nelson expands on this idea:

A poet who wrote only about misery on the farm would thus prompt

revolutionary sentiments in readers regardless of whether they were voiced in the poem. A poem restricted to a critique of capitalism would inevitably remind readers of poems about how people were suffering and about the rising commitment to radical change. (*Revolutionary Memory* 177)

To return to Trent's poem "The General Strike," here one gets the language of labor bleeding meaning onto the case of Sacco and Vanzetti, connecting the two despite neither Sacco nor Vanzetti being labor organizers. In effect, this brings the language of anarchism into the rhetorical tradition of the Old Left, implying that anarchism and organized labor share common rhetorical goals or at the very least have common enemies. And this is possible precisely because of the ecological nature of leftist rhetorical verse: "the banner slides into a slogan which slips into a star, which substitutes for a flag" (Nelson, *Revolutionary Memory* 177). The symbols are shared, and therefore unstable, their meanings shaped by the other poems in that ecology so that something like *red* is not simply a color, but an implicit call to revolution. In other words, in early twentieth century America, poetry became a social conversation, but more importantly, it became "a way of participating in collaborative political action" (Nelson, *Revolutionary Memory* 157) precisely because of its ecological nature.

That the rhetorical verse of the early twentieth century made up a rhetorical ecology is more evident than in *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse*. From Trent's "The General Strike"(8) to Henry Reich Jr.'s "The New Golgotha" (17) to Sigfried Sassoon's "I Accuse the Rich" (19), one can see the consistent use of the language and symbols of early twentieth century labor. I have discussed previously Trent's use of labor

rhetoric, but similar to Trent's poem, Reich's poem also extolls the general strike, ending the poem by exhorting workers to strike until Sacco and Vanzetti are freed. Sassoon's poem offers a familiar critique of capitalism, attacking the wealthy and creating a bond with its audience by using the very loaded word *comrades* to address its readers. One page later the word *comrade* once again in a different poem, "Demonstration," by David George Plotkin (21).

Furthermore, the word *red* also frequently appears, emphasizing the revolutionary nature of the anthology in particular and of much rhetorical verse in general.⁴⁷ We see it prominently in the opening line of David Irving Dobson's "Liberty's Plight": "O the earth is red with the blood of men" (21) where it connects the implication of revolution to a global scale. The color is also seen repeatedly in E. Merrill Root's poem "Sleepwalkers" (26-27) where it serves as the traditional metaphor for a worker's uprising, the "Red Sea" swelling.

Finally, like Arturo Giovannitti's poetry from a decade previous, the poems in *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* serve as a form of judicial rhetoric. Such rhetoric is most evident in James Underhill Lufton's poem "To Judge Webster Thayer." A short poem, "To Judge Webster Thayer," like most of the poems in *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse*, again uses a very regular metrical scheme that relies on hard end rhymes, making the poem conservative and stylistically unintrepid, though much more accessible to a general readership than the poetry of the *avant garde*:

And when you meet your God (is there a God
within the limits of your finite brain?)
How will you expiate, and how explain

⁴⁷ Explain Nelson's idea that red in rhetorical verse implies revolutionary undercurrents.

The harsh direction of your legal rod?
 Upon your robe of justice is a stain—
 The blood of the immortal Jesus shed
 That men henceforth as brothers might be free:
 Reclaimed from mortal hate and jealousy.
 Impelled upon a cross of lies, again
 Christ agonizes through a fearsome day.
 Yet while his spirit tarried in the clay
 “Father, forgive them” were the words he said. (16)

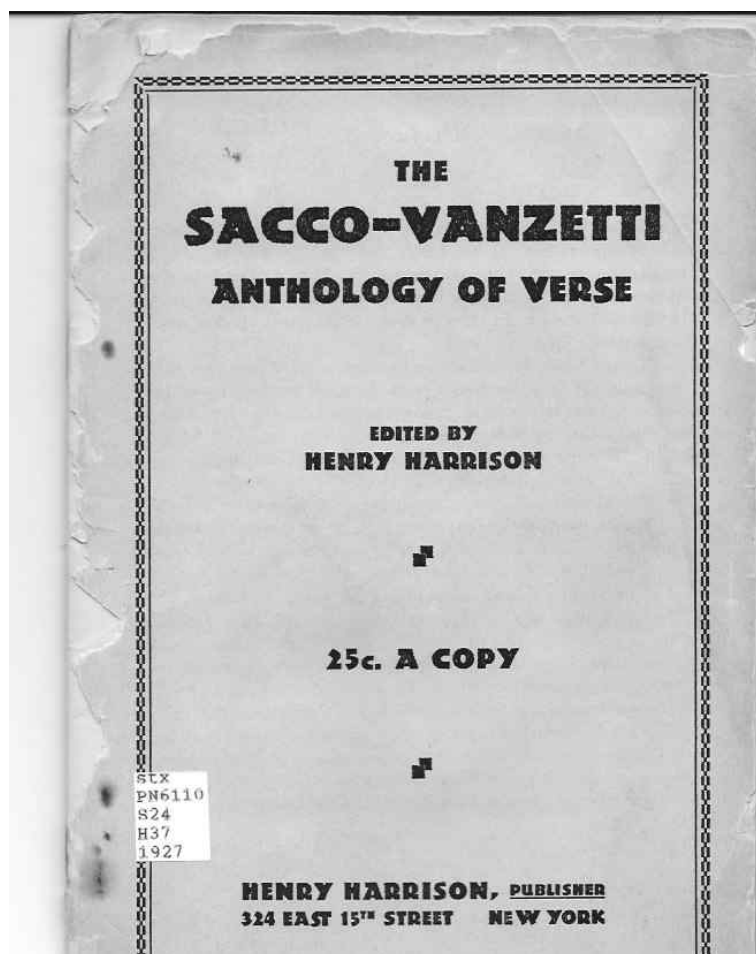
Addressed directly to the judge presiding over Sacco and Vanzetti's trial, the poem, much like Giovannitti's poetry, appeals to a sense of authority beyond the judge's “legal rod” (16). In the case of Giovannitti, that authority was what Aristotle called *dikaion physikon*, or natural law. In “To Judge Webster Thayer,” Lufton is more specific, giving the laws of nature a religious (particularly Christian) context and reminding the judge that the laws of God (in particular, the move toward forgiveness) supersede the laws of man.

The appeal to divine law perhaps might explain Lufton's decision in composing using such an aesthetically conservative form. The language of traditional judicial rhetoric is dry and bureaucratic—the language of the courts. However, the argument of Lufton's poem is not about man's law, but about divine law, so traditional judicial language wouldn't hold. Poetry, on the other hand, is traditionally associated for most with those larger aspects of the human experience—love, loss, etc.—and therefore a more contextually appropriate medium for making arguments about something as lofty as divine law. In this way, even seemingly banal aesthetic decisions become integral to the poem's operation as a form of judicial rhetoric (albeit an unconventional form).

In short, the persuasive ends of the poems found in *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* are both enhanced and constrained by the rhetorical ecologies in which they

circulated. Their aesthetic dimensions appeal to popular conceptions about poetry's social and political roles. And those aesthetic dimensions, so rooted in the poetry of the previous century, give the poems an accessibility and familiarity with the general public that blurs the lines of what constitutes judicial rhetoric. However, if the poetry of the *Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* was meant to be a wide-circulating instance of judicial rhetoric arguing for the freedom of the two anarchists, *America Arraigned!*, published a year after Sacco and Vanzetti's executions serves a different rhetorical function: to memorialize the two men as a form of epideictic rhetoric.

Figure 6: Cover of the Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse



America Arraigned!

If *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* was intended to be a widely circulating document meant to raise awareness and argue for their release, *America Arraigned!* is a memorial—equal parts eulogy and expression of outrage. Even the medium of their printings highlight the different rhetorical purposes to which the two texts aspired. In this

section, I analyze *America Arraigned!* as a form of epideictic rhetoric both praising Sacco and Vanzetti and blaming the judicial system, judge, prosecutors, and state of Massachusetts as a whole for their executions. First, I examine the physical textuality of the book, discussing how those dimensions belie the rhetorical intentions of the editors. Then I look at the text as a memorial and discuss the rhetorical dimensions of memorialization. Finally, I examine the text as epideictic rhetoric, showing how rhetorical verse often relies on epideictic strategies to persuade.

America Arraigned! is a cloth-bound book ninety-five pages long. As a result, it saw a smaller print run than *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* and is much more difficult to find today. However, the quality of the printing was much higher than that of *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse*, so copies today have held up much better (some yellowing of pages aside). This falls into line with its rhetorical purpose to memorialize: memorials are scarce but meant to last whereas persuasive tracts are meant to circulate widely but ultimately be discarded when their purpose is met. Furthermore, the quality of printing adds a prestige to the text: *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* is often referred to as a “tract” and dismissed as propaganda whereas there was no mistaking *America Arraigned!* as a book, and books have cultural cache.

The second consideration about the book's physicality was the price. At \$1.10 per copy, *America Arraigned!* cost considerably more than the twenty-five cent *Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse*. In 1928, \$1.10 (roughly fifteen dollars today) would not have been prohibitively expensive (the average yearly income was \$1,153 according to the IRS Statistics of Income report for that year), however it certainly would have

governed the audience for the book. One can see further evidence for how price was tied to audience in the writer Jack Conroy: Conroy (who was friends with Cheyney)⁴⁸ recommended all of his correspondents to “get a copy of the Sacco-Vanzetti anthology this payday” (qtd. in Wixson 141).

All of the physical aspects of *American Arraigned!* point to its intended purpose: to memorialize Sacco and Vanzetti. There has been much recent work on rhetoric and memory—Ekaterian Haskin's examination of rhetoric's role in cultural memory, the diverse approaches found in the collection *Framing Public Memory* edited by Kendall R. Phillips, the examination of buildings and monuments in *Places of Public Memory* edited by Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott, and the tangled relationship of media and public memory examined in *No Caption Needed* by Robert Hariman and John Lucaites. To those discussions I would like to add the topic of poetry: specifically, I examine how poetry has acted and continues to act as a memory technology, specifically in the case of *America Arraigned!*. However, before looking at the specific poems themselves, I should briefly complicate what I mean by *memory technology*.

In *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, Jeffrey Walker builds his central thesis around the idea that rhetoric's emergence from the poetic sphere was closely tied to poetry's function as a cultural storehouse for information. As a form of epideictic rhetoric, poetry offered a shared set of implicit instructions for preserving a common “Greekness.” That Achilles is praised for being a great warrior also implies that great warriors should act like Achilles. In this way, poetry (both epic and lyric) was a memory

⁴⁸ Conroy and Cheyney would later go on to found and head the leftist literary group and magazine the Rebel Poets in 1931

technology for passing on information from generation to generation in a pre-literate society, as Walter Ong and Eric Havelock both have argued.

However, with the advent of print, information could be preserved indefinitely. Nonetheless, the shift from pre-literacy to print culture was much more slow and complicated than most scholars point out according to Ong. Furthermore, print proceeded to change (in some ways) the social function of poetry, which instead of dying out, adapted. Without the necessity of pre-literacy for information preservation, poetry took on extraneous roles as art objects or entertainment (though I contend it always has had all of these functions). Still, poetry retained its role as a memory technology, and a rhetorical one at that. One only has to look at the poetry of Horace to see “art objects” actively trying to convince the Roman people that the Augustan regime was good and that they should adhere to the social values Augustus espoused.

Which brings me back to *America Arraigned!* and early twentieth-century print culture discussed in chapter one. According to Nelson, by the early twentieth-century poetry was a form of social conversation, a concept that is difficult for contemporary readers schooled in the notion that poetry is a private, internally reflective art as opposed to an outwardly focused expressive art (*Revolutionary Memory* 157). Joseph Harrington complicates this view, saying that poetry was “self-consciously oriented toward a public, was meant to serve a public, often social, function.” (17). Poetry was published in newspapers and read in the evenings as a family activity—likewise, poets were public figures, embarking on grand speaking tours to perform their poems to crowds, not just to a group of academics in a university auditorium (for an example, see one of the many

popular speaking tours of Vachel Lindsay).

However, this social view of poetry contradicts the dominant contemporary view (heavily influenced by the New Criticism) of the introspective academic poet. Certainly, poetry still performs a social function, but that function has largely retreated to the academy with only a few poets (Maya Angelou, for example) reaching the level of celebrity that poets enjoyed in the early twentieth-century. But if we can imagine poetry as this public, conversant art in the early twentieth century, I contend that the realm it operated in particularly was the realm of public memory. Specifically, rhetorical verse, as a poetic response to a historical exigence, would implicitly memorialize the event to which it responded in the public's memory.

This claim is overtly seen even in the second sentence of the foreword to *America Arraigned!*, where the editor Ralph Cheney explicitly states that the book “is a memorial tribute to Nicola Sacco and Bartolmeo Vanzetti, martyrs for world brotherhood and freedom” (9). That the book was to serve as memorial is further evidenced by its chronological organization. Divided into three sections or movements (in line with the tradition of ancient Greek and Roman lyric poetry), *America Arraigned!* recounts the entire saga of the Sacco-Vanzetti Affair. The first section, titled “Before Governor Fuller and his Advisory Commission Refused to Intercede,” remains hopeful with many of the poems directly addressed to Sacco and Vanzetti themselves. Of course, this section also reflects the mindset of the literary left early in the case—filled with ambition and drive to free the anarchists they saw as wrongfully imprisoned.

The second section, titled “After the Intercession was Refused but Before the

Crucifixion,” is decidedly less hopeful, its poems filled with outrage, many of them addressed to the judge, prosecutors, and even the people of Massachusetts at large. Once again, this section also puts into public memory the sense of outrage and helplessness felt on the literary left as their poetry, protests, and rallies failed to have any effect on what they saw as a deaf judiciary. Likewise, as the last appeals failed and the opportunity for gubernatorial intercession passed, the book shifts in tone from impassioned argument to the scathing yet resigned placement of blame (invective). Furthermore, it is also in this section that many of the poems begin to act as a form of epideictic rhetoric, blaming the judge, judiciary, and governor for Sacco and Vanzetti's now doomed fate. For example, Countee Cullen critiques those in the judiciary who refused to intercede in the case, saying “These men who do not die, but death decree / These are the men I should not care to be!” (51). Likewise, William Closson Emory's “Another Pilate” scathingly charges Judge William Thayer (the presiding judge in the case) of being “another Pilate” who washes his hand of responsibility in response to “the priests of gold” clamoring in his ear” (52). In any case, it is in this section that the epideictic potential of rhetorical verse is most clear, and as with any good piece of epideictic rhetoric (such as Pericles' funeral oration), it memorializes the subjects it discusses.

Finally, if the second section of *America Arraigned!* serves as memorial epideictic rhetoric through its blame (invective) of the judiciary, then the third and final section, titled “After the Crucifixion,” serves as memorial epideictic rhetoric through its praise (encomium) of Sacco and Vanzetti as martyred heroes. As the title implies, these poems,

written after Sacco and Vanzetti's deaths, are explicitly memorializing in their praise. While a few lament a lack of justice in the case or larger world, most extoll the virtues of the slain men. This is no clearer than in the poem titles from this section: "Red Flag," "Two Crucified," "They Are Dead Now," "Sacco-Vanzetti," "Dead They Live," "Peddler," and "Sacco & Vanzetti" to name a few. One exception to this praise, however, is Edna St. Vincent Millay's famous contribution to the book's third chapter, "Justice Denied in Massachusetts."

While not a direct encomium of Sacco and Vanzetti, Millay's poem (perhaps the most aesthetically complex and skillfully composed of the book) is no less acting as memorial epideictic rhetoric. In fact, I contend that primary subject of the poem is explicitly the effects of the Sacco-Vanzetti affair on public memory. The opening of the poem is tinged with disillusionment and resignation, with the speaker bluntly telling her audience "Let us abandon then our garden and go home /... / Not in our day / Shall the cloud go over and the sun rise as before" (79). The poem's resolute melancholy at the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti only deepens as the speaker continues "We shall all die in darkness and be buried in rain / ... / Evil does overwhelm / The larkspur and the corn" (79). Finally, at the height of the speaker's sadness, the poem turns, the final stanza shifting away from its mourning of the past and toward an uncertain future:

Let us sit still
 Here in the sitting room until we die.
 At the step of Death on the walk rise and go,
 Leaving to our children's children this beautiful doorway,
 And this elm.
 And a blighted earth to till
 With a broken hoe. (80)

Here, the speaker explicitly addresses the effects of the Sacco-Vanzetti Affair (and the poetry surrounding it) will have on future generations—implying that through the travesty of justice, we collectively leave our children “a blighted earth to till with a broken hoe” (80). Here also, the speaker is able to conflate the justice that was denied Sacco and Vanzetti with a larger, global justice that for the foreseeable future is tainted and broken.

This conflation, I contend, is possible because of the memorial epideictic properties of rhetorical verse: as public memory became increasingly governed by these poetic memorials that documented with great bias the Sacco-Vanzetti Affair, the sense of disillusionment and disappointment of the poets would inevitably transfer to the readership. No historical or journalistic recounting of Sacco and Vanzetti's tale could possibly undo the appeals to pathos that *The Sacco-Vanzetti Anthology of Verse* and *America Arraigned!* were capable of. I suspect it would be a challenge even for the reader sure-hearted in Sacco and Vanzetti's guilt to read either anthology and not feel the rush of humanity with which the poems were written—the anger, sadness, disillusionment, devastation, and revolutionary fervor contained within the lyrics. Even today, with countless histories arguing for or against the fishmonger and shoepedder's guilt or innocence and attempting to unravel the mystery of Sacco and Vanzetti, it is Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem or Henry Harrison's anthology, rightly or wrongly, that survive as the emotional exemplars for how people felt—and how one should feel—about Sacco and Vanzetti.

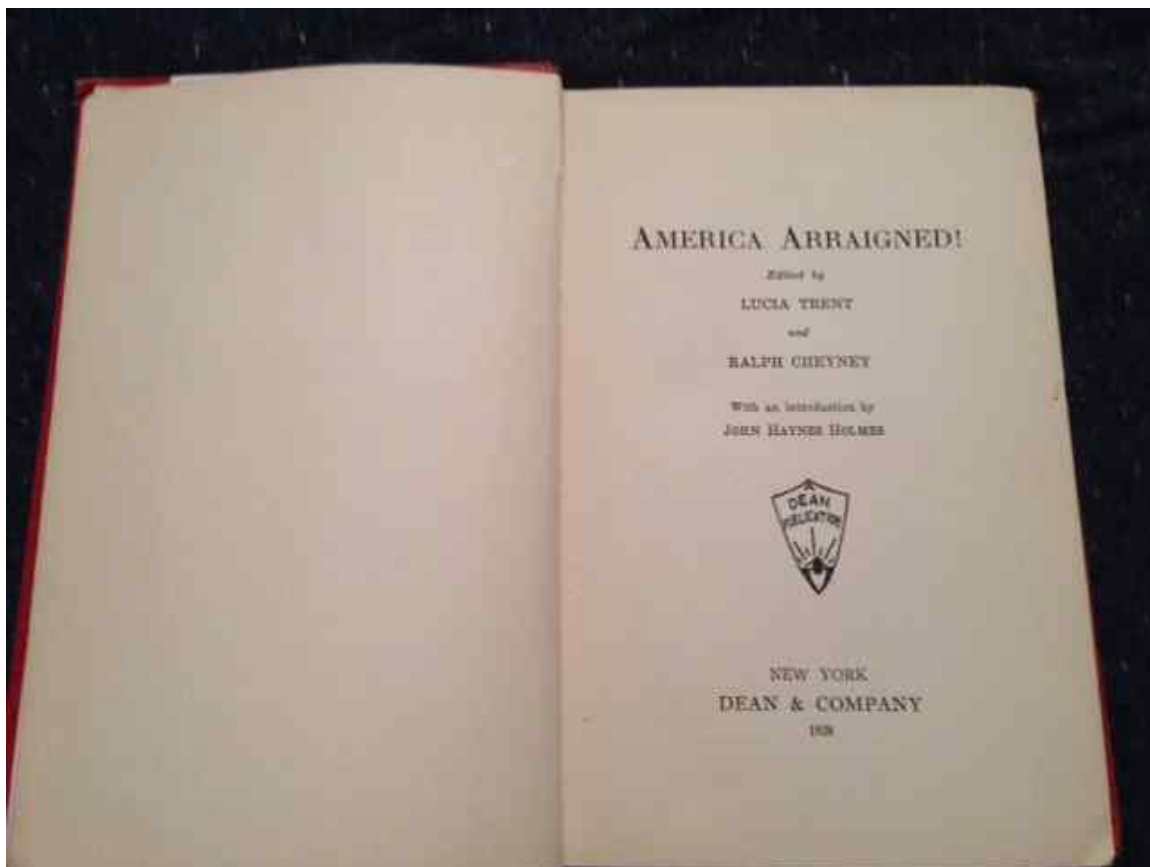


Figure 7: Title Page of America Arraigned!

Conclusion

Now we go down the year dry eyed with hate,
 Never again the tears of little woes
 Shall blind the hard and arid sight of those
 Who know that human laws can never wait—
 But kill as surely as the water flows.
 Never again the hope that any fate
 Can stay the death of words that came too late,
 And purge us of the bitterness that knows
 The certain way that empty justice goes.

-Kathleen Millay, "Grist," from *America Arraigned!*
 1928

The 1927 executions of Sacco and Vanzetti left many feeling outraged, despondent, and powerless, particularly for those poets of the literary left who had so vocally turned their art toward the defense of the two anarchists. The above poem, "Grist," by Kathleen Millay (youngest sister of Edna St. Vincent Millay) which appeared in *America Arraigned!* the year after Sacco and Vanzetti's execution is evocative of the mixed feelings of guilt, outrage, and disillusionment expressed globally by those who had involved themselves in the widespread defense activities of the case. Poetry that had been so vehement and exhortative in the years leading up to the executions turned sour and melancholy—a reminder to the rhetorical failure not only of the defense committee in freeing Sacco and Vanzetti, but of the poets in affecting public change significant enough to see the men released.

However, I might argue in many ways that the rhetorical verse of the Sacco and Vanzetti affair was not wholly a failure. After all, it was a primary tool in softening the public perception of two men whose defense was so hagridden by the public spectre of

bomb throwing anarchists and violent Galleanists that, shortly after the midnight of Sacco and Vanzetti's execution, thousands of workers in Manhattan's Union Square tore their clothing in mourning (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 346). In large part due to the powerful rhetorical verse surrounding the case, people around the globe, regardless of literacy level, found Sacco and Vanzetti immortalized in words, both written and spoken. Mobs in Geneva ransacked American targets while widespread walkouts throughout South America caused both the economy and public transit to grind to a halt (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 347). Police dispersed protestors from London's Hyde Park while rioters in Paris smashed the facade of the Moulin Rouge (Avrich, *Sacco and Vanzetti* 346). And all of it out of anger and grief over the execution of two men who, upon their arrest a decade previous, were quickly dismissed as terrorists and radicals by all but a dedicated inner circle of friends. Rhetorical verse may not have saved Sacco and Vanzetti lives, but it certainly immortalized them.

And perhaps this is the most telling conclusion scholars of rhetoric can take from the rhetorical verse of the Sacco-Vanzetti Affair—both in how it circulated and how it persisted: like Arturo Giovannitti's poetry before it, the poetry of the Sacco-Vanzetti Affair would inspire the next generation to take up verse in response to political exigencies. In 1931, just four years after Sacco and Vanzetti's execution, nine young men were arrested on a box car in Scottsboro Alabama and charged with rape. As the case progressed and injustices became apparent, the literary left would again marshal a poetic campaign, albeit far more limited than the Sacco-Vanzetti poetry, but rhetorically potent nonetheless. In his 1934 poem “Scottsboro, too, is Worth its Song,” Countee Cullen

attempts to stir an outpouring of rhetorical verse among the literary left reminiscent of that which came to Sacco and Vanzetti's aid:

Remembering their [poets'] sharp and pretty
Tunes for Sacco and Vanzetti,
I said:
Here too's a cause divinely spun
For those whose eyes are on the sun,
Here in epitome
Is all disgrace
And epic wrong.
Like wine to brace
The minstrel heart, and blare it into song.

And as the *cause célèbre* of the Scottsboro nine grew and Cullen's call resonated with artists from Harlem to Greenwich Village, the spectre of Giovannitti and Sacco and Vanzetti alike loomed large over the poets of the literary left who recognized that, when a cause becomes so large and traditional oratory fails, poetry not only aids rhetoric in doing the work of the world, but is often its best hope.

Chapter Four

Poetry for a Judicial Lynching: The Rhetorical Verse of the Scottsboro Affair

I said:
 Now will the poet sing,-
 Their cries go thundering
 Like blood and tears
 Into the nation's ears,
 Like lightning dart
 Into the nation's heart.
 Against disease and death and all things fell,
 And war,
 Their strophes rise and swell
 To jar
 The foe smug in his citadel.

 Remembering their sharp and pretty
 Tunes for Sacco and Vanzetti,
 I said:
 Here too's a cause divinely spun
 For those whose eye are on the sun,
 Here in epitome
 Is all disgrace
 And epic wrong,
 Like wine to brace
 The minstrel heart, and blare it to song.

 Surely, I said,
 Now will the poets sing.
 But they have raised no cry.
 I wonder why...

-Countee Cullen, "Scottsboro, Too, Is Worth Its Song," 1934

In the above poem, Countee Cullen, one of the premier voices of the Harlem Renaissance, laments the lack of poetic response to the plight of nine African American boys dubiously charged with rape in Scottsboro, Alabama. Certainly, early in the case the

poetic response to the Scottsboro case was paltry compared to the poetic response to the Sacco and Vanzetti case a decade before. Nonetheless, Cullen's lament would not go unheard. As the Scottsboro case would be appealed and retried multiple times, poets on the political left began to express their outrage at the injustices of the case in verse. Scottsboro poems began appearing regularly in the NAACP's organ *Crisis*, the Urban League's *Opportunity*, and Communist Party USA's *The New Masses* and *The Daily Worker*, creating a robust body of poetry that responded to the events in Alabama.

In this chapter, I examine the poetic response to the Scottsboro affair, contending that poets on the left turned to rhetorical verse—that is, poetry with explicit hortatory goals and persuasive ends that most often responds to political exigencies—in order to voice their protest to the unfolding Scottsboro saga. In particular, I examine these poems as a hybrid genre that is part art—concerned with formal and aesthetic dimensions—and part rhetoric—concerned with persuasion and public consumption. Many of these poems have been previously dismissed as simply “bad” poetry. However, by reading them as a form of rhetoric, we might gain new and rich aesthetic appreciation from previously undervalued texts.

My rationale for examining the poetry surrounding the Scottsboro affair is threefold. First, the poetry surrounding Scottsboro is heavily and directly influenced by the rhetorical verse of the Sacco-Vanzetti affair, as evidenced by Cullen's appeal to the memory of Sacco and Vanzetti in the opening poem. As such, the poetry of the Scottsboro affair builds upon and contributes to a larger and growing tradition of rhetorical verse employed by the Old Left throughout the early twentieth century.

Second, the Scottsboro affair was the third major *cause célèbre* in the early twentieth century following the arrest of Arturo Giovannitti in 1912 and Sacco and Vanzetti in 1920. And like the world-famous trials before it, Scottsboro, too generated a wealth of rhetorical verse that responded to a specific judicial exigence. Finally, the poetry surrounding the Scottsboro affair is significant because it reflects the growing debate in the 1930s about the rhetorical and political functions of art—a debate which would come to dominate the literary and cultural journals of 1930s America.

To begin, I provide a brief background of the Scottsboro case and trial, paying particular attention to the struggle between the NAACP and the Communist Party USA for control over the boys' defense. This is especially important because, as I will contend, this struggle greatly influenced both the tenor and type of poetry that was eventually produced. Next, I will look at several individual poems about the Scottsboro affair and how they each adhere to and build upon the early twentieth century tradition of rhetorical verse. Finally, I will examine Muriel Rukeyser's first poetry collection, *Theory of Flight*, as a book-length poetic response to Scottsboro.

On a final note, throughout this chapter I will be considering questions of circulation and audience—how might Rukeyser's book (which won the prestigious and high-profile Yale Younger Poet's Series) have circulated to different audiences than a poem like Langston Hughes' "Christ in Alabama," which first appeared in the small leftist journal *Contempo*. As a result, I contend throughout that the physical conditions of rhetorical verse play a significant role in who reads the text and how. But before analyzing the poetry, I should provide a brief background to situate the rhetorical verse of

the Scottsboro affair rhetorically.

Background: The Scottsboro Case and Trial

It begins in the dark on a box-car floor, the groaning timber
 Stretched from bolt to bolt above the freight-train wheels
 That grind and cry aloud like hounds upon the trail the
 breathing weaving
 Unseen within the dark from mouth to nostril, nostril to
 speaking mouth.

-From "A Communication to Nancy Cunard" by Kay Boyle, 1937

*The Case*⁴⁹

As seen in the above poem by Kay Boyle, the Scottsboro affair, destined to become one of the most famous *cause célèbres* of the early twentieth century, all began on March 25, 1931 in a boxcar on the Chattanooga to Memphis freight. After the train passed through Stevenson Alabama, a group of hobos approached the station master in Stevenson claiming to have been in a fight with a "bunch of Negroes" who subsequently threw the hobos from the moving train (Carter 4). At the behest of the hobos, who wanted to press charges, the station master phoned the county sheriff who ordered his deputy to "capture every negro on the train and bring them to Scottsboro" (Carter 5). The deputy had deputized every armed man in the town of Paint Rock and lined them up at the station platform by the time the train arrived. A quick search of the train found nine African American youths, one white youth, and, to the town's surprise, two white girls dressed in overalls and wearing men's caps.

⁴⁹ The following sections are intended to provide a brief historical overview of the Scottsboro affair for scholars of rhetoric to have context for the poetry written in its wake. For more detailed history, see Acker; Carter; Miller.

The nine African American boys were taken back to Scottsboro, where police began an interrogation. During this time, the girls, Ruby Bates and Victoria Price, approached deputies and claimed the nine boys raped them, though they were both in “such a nervous condition” that they volunteered very little information concerning the assault. Though it is unclear whether the young women were coerced in their testimony, the sheriff's office made little effort to conceal the young women's charge, and by that evening, an armed mob of hundreds surrounded the prison, only to disperse slowly as the anti-lynching state governor rushed a squadron of National Guardsmen to the jail at the sheriff's behest. After a hasty indictment guarded by more National Guardsmen, the young boys' trial was set to start on April 6.

The First Trial

The first trials for the boys were rushed affairs with any hope for a fair trial being impossible due to their widespread demonization as “black brutes” in popular media (Carter 20). For example, the Huntsville *Daily Times*, the hometown paper of the two young women, described the alleged rape as “the most atrocious ever recorded in this part of the country, a whole-sale debauching of society,” continuing that it “savored of the jungle and of the meanest African corruption” (Carter 20). Compounded on that was the fact that their trial date coincided with “Fair Day” in Jackson County, drawing an extra 7,000 people from the surrounding country to Scottsboro in order to buy goods from the large carnival market (Acker 17). Needless to say, tensions in Scottsboro were high, with many of the visitors wanting to watch the high-profile trial play out as a type of legal

lynching with most already certain of the nine youths' guilt.

At their first trial, the only counsel the boys could find was a white Chattanooga lawyer who specialized in real estate law and had a drinking problem, arriving to the courtroom with liquor on his breath (Acker 18). Between his inexperience with the Alabama courts and the tense, hostile atmosphere of the courtroom, the nine boys were almost certainly guaranteed conviction, which predictably came after a very hasty and short trial. The presiding judge, J.A. Hawkins quickly handed down death sentences for the boys; however, these harsh sentences, coupled with a New York City protest on the boys' behalf, drew the attention of the International Labor Defense (ILD), the legal wing of the Communist Party USA.⁵⁰

Appeals and Retrails

Judge Hawkins set the boys' execution date for June 10, the earliest Alabama law permitted, so the ILD needed to move quickly to file appeals. Furthermore, throughout the boys' imprisonment, the ILD and NAACP clashed often over who would manage the case (and its attendant publicity), with the ILD hiring Joseph Brodsky and George W. Chamlee to represent the boys and the NAACP offering to hire famed trial lawyer Clarence Darrow. The tensions between the two organizations stemmed from the NAACP's distrust of the Communist Party and from the Communists Machiavellian tactics to wrest the case from any NAACP influence and steal the spotlight in order to

⁵⁰ In both the Arturo Giovannitti and Sacco-Vanzetti cases, the radical leftist Industrial Workers of the World spearheaded both the legal defenses and propaganda campaign. However, with the 1919 Palmer raids and increased federal pressure, the IWW disbanded in the early 1920s. Nonetheless, the rise to prominence of the Communist Party USA in the twenties and thirties left them well positioned to take up the mantle of legal defense for leftist workers.

make inroads into the south, particularly among African Americans. And while the boys' parents were ultimately persuaded by the Communist Party USA to use the services of the ILD, the NAACP's influence could be felt throughout the Scottsboro affair.⁵¹

The boys themselves immediately took a liking to Brodsky, who promised them no such half-hearted defense as they received at their first trial, but also that they would have the support of “thousands of black and white workers across the nation” (qtd. in Carter 56). Meanwhile, the ILD launched a massive information campaign meant to further wrest influence over the case from the NAACP. ILD-organized workers marched in Harlem carrying banners that read “Death to Lynch Law, “Smash the Scottsboro Frame-up,” and “Legal Lynching” only to be met by a phalanx of policemen with clubs (Carter 59). The following day, the front page headline of the New York Times read “Police Clubs Rout 200 Defiant Reds Who Attacked 'Lynch Law' in Alabama.” And with that national exposure, the ILD had very publicly linked itself to the case.

The next few years saw a series of appeals based on arguments that the boys had inadequate counsel, that the jury was intimidated by the hostile crowd drawn by the trial, and most significant historically, that it was unconstitutional to maintain a segregated, all-white jury.⁵² After the Alabama Supreme Court upheld the convictions (granting one of the boys a retrial because he was only 13 years old) and rescheduled the execution dates, the ILD finally appealed the case to the United States Supreme Court. Arguments in Washington began October 10, 1932, a year and a half since the boys' arrest at Paint Rock. The result was a landmark decision that ruled the boys were denied due process

⁵¹ For more on the dogmatic clashes between the ILD and NAACP, as well on the NAACP's continued but waning influence on the case, see Carter (51-103).

⁵² One of the most significant and lasting legacies of the Scottsboro case was the legal precedent set by this ruling effectively desegregating juries in the South 30 years prior to the Civil Rights movement.

guaranteed under the fifth and fourteenth amendments and overturned their convictions based on the haste with which Judge Hawkins moved the boys to trial. However, the boys were not acquitted and the story did not end here, with the court ruling their cases be sent back to Judge Hawkins who had initially presided over them for a retrial.

The series of trials, appeals and retrials subsequent to the Supreme Court decision is well documented in histories of the Scottsboro affair, but suffice it to say that by this point the case was already globally famous and would remain so for the following six years as the ILD battled through the court system yet again. Additionally, by 1933, Ruby Bates, one of the women who initially accused the boys, had recanted her testimony and even taken up with the ILD as an activist on behalf of their freedom. Ultimately, however, the efforts of the ILD as well as the poets and activists who in various ways supported the boys' cause over the next six years met with mixed results. Five of the boys were convicted, though all avoided the death penalty spending most of their lives in prison. Four of the boys, however, had all charges against them dropped after persistent pressure from both Northern and Southern activist groups.

Scottsboro as a Rhetorical Platform

With the legal history complete, it is significant to discuss the Scottsboro affair's role as a rhetorical platform—both for the ILD (and by extension, Communist Party USA) and for the NAACP—as this role greatly influenced the poetry produced about the case. For the Communist Party this was no ordinary murder trial, but an opportunity to make inroads into the non-unionized Deep South and particularly into the African

American community. As already mentioned, the ILD immediately embarked on an extensive information campaign—a problematic point for the NAACP, whose executive director had found it difficult to cooperate with them in the past because he felt “their main goal always remained propaganda instead of results” (Carter 53). In fact, Communist Party dogma (and atheism) made it difficult for an organization like the NAACP, so closely allied with (and in some ways dependent on) religious groups, to become too close to the Communist-run ILD. And though the director's view on Communists and propaganda was an overly cynical one, it was true that the ILD and Communist Party USA were shrewd and skilled propagandists who wasted no time slathering the Scottsboro case across both their official party organs (*The New Masses* and *The Daily Worker*) but also across a number of periodicals from the leftist to the literary.

As early as mid-April 1931 the *Daily Worker* was running stories and poetry about the Scottsboro case, with a frontpage headline that read: “Negro Youngsters Being Railroaded to the Electric Chair—Start Nation-Wide Fight to Free Nine Negro Youths” (Acker 36). Below that, they reprinted a plaintive letter from Haywood Carter (one of the nine imprisoned boys) to his mother that portrayed the youths in a very sympathetic—almost bathotic—light. This letter, which I discuss in detail in the next section would later be lineated and published as a poem by Kay Boyle, whose poetry headed this section.

Like the ILD, the NAACP also saw the rhetorical potential of such a high-profile case for their organization; however, they came to this realization much later than the

ILD, allowing the Communists to take early control of what would become a world-famous trial. By the time of the Scottsboro case, the NAACP had established a strong track-record of legal advocacy on behalf of African Americans. However, their slow and tepid response to the case (the reasons for which are numerous and debatable)⁵³ caused them to be largely cut out of what would be a publicity gold mine. Nonetheless, their influence and advocacy should be duly noted and will play a major factor in the rhetorical verse of the case.

In short, the Scottsboro case, thanks to its eventual global infamy, would become a rhetorical pulpit for the political organizations that took up the boys' defense. It was not the first legal advocacy that the Communist Party USA engaged in,⁵⁴ but it was certainly the largest in scope. In 1931 CPUSA was arguably at its strongest, with the competing labor organizations of the 1920s largely snuffed out or greatly weakened during the recent Red Scare. However, having the resources and backing of the Fourth International, CPUSA was in a prime spot to aid the incarcerated youths and was desperately looking for the kind of national pulpit that Scottsboro would offer.

⁵³ Perhaps the most compelling explanation for the NAACPs slow response to the case was an organizational one: the NAACP greatly depended on their chapters for advice on local matters, and the nearest chapter, Chattanooga, had collapsed in 1930, resulting in executive secretary Walter White hearing about the case through southern newspapers which incorrectly stated the boys had able counsel (Carter 52).

⁵⁴ The legal wing of the Communist Party USA, the International Labor Defense, was founded in 1925 in response largely to the demise of the Industrial Workers of the World and subsequent jailing of many of their members. The ILD, overlapping with much of the human infrastructure of the IWW who remained free, would aid in the defense of Sacco and Vanzetti among others, though certainly the Scottsboro case would thrust them into global view moreso than any other case in their history.

The Rhetorical Verse of the Scottsboro Affair

That Justice is a blind goddess
Is a thing to which we black are wise:
Her bandage hides two festering sores
That once perhaps were eyes.

Scottsboro's just a little place:
No shame is writ across its face—
Its court, too weak to stand against a mob
Its people's heart too small to hold a sob.⁵⁵

-Langston Hughes, "Justice" 1932

The poetic response to the Scottsboro case was varied with the literary left quite obviously inspired if not invigorated by the rhetorical verse of the Sacco-Vanzetti a decade previous when many 1930s poets were just cutting their poetic teeth. The above Langston Hughes poem is one example of how this new generation of activist poets were blending the now-ascended tenets of high-art aestheticism with the language and tropes of the early twentieth century radical left. While I will return to Hughes's poem shortly (as the story of its composition and publication is one worth a devoted rhetorical study of its own), for now I will simply let it serve as an introduction to the rhetorical verse of the Scottsboro affair.

In this section I examine several individual poems written in response to the Scottsboro trial, paying particular attention to their intended audiences. These particular poems were chosen because they effectively represent the gamut of poetry that was produced in response to what is to this day one of the most famous and influential legal battles in American history. First, I will look at a set of poems published in

⁵⁵ The second quatrain of the poem did not appear in the original poem. It was first added in a 1932 letter to Hughes' friend Carl Van Vechten (Miller 61).

organizational organs, specifically the NAACP's *Crisis* and the Communist Party USA's *The New Masses*. These poems are significant because they were written for periodicals with very specific readerships to which the poems could make specialized rhetorical appeals.

Next, I look at a set of poems published in cultural and literary periodicals like *The New Republic*, *The Partisan Review*, and small, independent journals. Like the organ periodicals, these magazines would have a defined readership, though it would be much more generalized and difficult to appeal to *en masse*. As a result, the rhetorical devices used in these poems differ than the more straight-forward appeals in the organ periodicals.

Finally, I examine Muriel Rukeyser's first collection of poetry, *Theory of Flight*, as a book length response to the Scottsboro. When she was 21, Rukeyser went to Alabama to cover the Scottsboro case (and was arrested in the course of doing so). As a committed leftist and developing radical, the case profoundly affected Rukeyser as can be seen in *Theory of Flight*, which won the prestigious Yale Younger Poets Series. As a cloth-bound book-length collection that won a prestigious and exclusive literary award, *Theory of Flight* had perhaps the most complex audience of any of the Scottsboro poetry. It also, more than any of the rhetorical verse of the Scottsboro affair, displays a very *avant garde* aesthetic, radically experimenting with form and fitting quite soundly into the modernist canon. For these reasons, it is an unusual and significant example of rhetorical verse that bridges the gap between the "bad" rhetorical verse that is so often dismissed and the aesthetic sensibilities of early modernism that have become poetic

canon for contemporary readers. But before examining *Theory of Flight*, I should first turn to the significantly less challenging poetry that appeared in the political periodicals of the Communist Party and NAACP

The Poetry of Political Periodicals

In the early nineteenth century, some of the most read periodicals outside of newspapers were the periodicals for various political organizations. The Communist party had their literary magazine, *The New Masses* that specialized in proletarian literature and circulated to an estimated 25,000 per week by 1935 (Foley 100). They also had a more general newsletter, *The Daily Worker*, that also printed poetry along with essays and journalistic articles. Meanwhile, the NAACP had *The Crisis*, which like the *Daily Worker* published a mix of essays, journalism, and poetry. Poetry about Scottsboro appeared in all of these venues regularly.

In this section, I will examine three poems, two from *The New Masses* and one from *The Crisis*, in order to consider how rhetorical verse adapts to the broad readerships of these periodicals. Additionally, the third poem I examine, Langston Hughes' "Scotsboro Limited" provides a unique example of the malleability of rhetorical verse, as it is a one-act play about the Scottsboro affair written in verse. In considering "Scotsboro Limited" then, I will analyze how two very different audiences and mediums (it was first published *The New Masses*, but then was later performed on stage in New York City) affect its rhetoricity. First, however, I should turn to the more traditional poems of the political periodicals.

The first poem I will analyze is titled “They Shall Not Die” by Mike Quin. Quin, born William Paul Ryan, was a regular columnist for *The Daily People's World*, the Communist Party USA's west coast daily paper, though he is perhaps best known for *The Big Strike*, a journalistic coverage of the 1934 West Coast Waterfront Strike. Appearing in *The New Masses* in 1934, “They Shall Not Die” was written when Quin received news that the Scottsboro boys were scheduled to be executed. The poem itself, written in orderly quatrains with hard end rhymes, reads almost like a nursery rhyme. Take the first three quatrains for example:

If the world martyred Negroes rose
 From long-forgotten graves;
 If the dark soil burst and issued forth
 Its hoard of murdered slaves;

If they marched their broken bodies past
 In ghastly black parade
 Before the men who struck them down
 That fortunes might be made;

The sea of lash- torn human Negro flesh,
 Rope-strangled throats, gouged eyes,
 Charred bodies, bullet-ridden forms
 Would shock the very skies.

Compared to a poem like *The Waste Land*—which requires a reader to know multiple languages, be familiar with the entire Western poetic tradition, and be comfortable with aesthetic innovation—“They Shall Not Die” is decidedly accessible, even for an audience of workers with varying literacy levels. The poetry of the political periodicals was meant to be read (and often times read aloud).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ For another example of performed poetry, see Robert Hayden's “These Are My People,” which he wrote as a protest song after Scottsboro in the early 1930s. The song itself was quite popular with Detroit's workers, though Hayden would not put it into print until he published his collection *Heart-Shape in the Dust* in 1940 (Miller 84).

Another note of import, particularly with the rhetorical verse of *The New Masses*, is that quite often rhetorical verse shared a rhetorical vocabulary with the old labor movement. As a result, many examples of rhetorical verse co-construct meaning with each other, what Cary Nelson refers to as a *poetry chorus*. And “They Shall Not Die” is no exception. Throughout the poem are images of bondage, industry, and direct appeals to worker solidarity. For example, the second-to-last stanza reads:

That hand is white, but not our hand.
White workers will not kill
Their fellow workers, black or brown,
To do a master's will.

With this quatrain, the poet simultaneously indicts white southerners while distinguishing white Communists as brothers-in-arms, unwilling to hurt a fellow worker regardless of ethnicity. Likewise, in much rhetorical verse of the political left, the *worker*, rather than any racial, ethnic, or gender groupings, becomes the baseline element of society.

The next poem I examine is titled, “The South” by Gwyn Clark and it appeared in the October 1931 issue of the NAACP's organ *The Crisis*. “The South” is a unique example of rhetorical verse because not only was Clark not a professional poet (Quin wasn't either, though he was a professional writer), Clark was also a 14 year old child, just a year older than two of the Scottsboro boys, Eugene Williams and Roy Wright. Usually, *The Crisis*, in their poetry section called “The Poet's Corner” published fairly well-known poets with established reputations; however, this issue's “The Poet's Corner” was a special issue of children's poetry edited by Langston Hughes and providing us with a child's take on rhetorical verse.

There is no explicit mention of Scottsboro in particular in “The South.”

Nonetheless, the first trial having occurred just six months before this issue, it is hard not to read the Scottsboro affair into the poem based on the subject matter of "The South." A short poem of just one metered stanza, "The South" is irregularly metrical with hard end rhymes:

It's pitiful to see
 These white women who will faint
 When stufg be a bee,
 Or jump on a chair
 And pull their dresses above the knee,
 If by chance a mouse they see--
 Yet they can watch their men
 Throw a rope over a beam, laugh and
 sing,
 While at the other en a colored man
 swings,
 Or see a Negro tied to a stake and
 baked;
 And they do not faint.
 They say they are civilized and Christians--
 But ther is no worse barbarism
 in this "sweet land of Liberty."

Here, as with many other poems of the Scottsboro affair, the primary rhetorical function of the poem is invective, heaping blame upon southerners for the brutalities they perpetuated against African Americans. Clark's poem is particularly effective invective through its use of antithesis, emphasizing that white women in the south can be scared by the smallest things, yet think nothing of a lynching.⁵⁷

As I have mentioned, a significant reason I chose Clark's poem is because as a fourteen year-old black male only six months removed from the initial incidents at

⁵⁷ In fact, it was common practice in the south at this time for lynchings to be public, family affairs where, after the act, everyone would take pictures and have a picnic. For more on the practice of lynching, see Wood.

Scottsboro, his poetic voice is particularly insightful to the plight of his peers in an Alabama jail, perhaps moreso than any other poet writing about Scottsboro.

Furthermore, his poem takes into account his audience and instead of using the language of labor as a unifying symbol set, Clark's poem focuses on racial tropes: the swooning white southern belle, the callousness of white people in front of a lynched black corpse. This further reflects the divide in the Scottsboro case: many in the NAACP were resistant if not outright hostile toward the Communists, so the language of labor would appeal far less to the readership of *The Crisis*.

If “The South” was unique for its author's age and background, Langston Hughe's *Scottsboro Limited* is unique for its bending of genre. Initially published in the November 1931 issue of *The New Masses*, *Scottsboro Limited* is set up as a one act play centered around The Scottsboro trial. However, I include it under the umbrella of rhetorical verse because the play itself is written in verse, making it a unique hybrid genre of poetry and theater.

Scottsboro Limited is written as a mass chant, inspired by the left-wing German Proletbuehne theater group, who was credited with introducing a new type of “worker theater” in 1931 (Miller 61). In other words, the poem's heavily metered lines with regular hard end rhymes were deliberately written for the active participation of a working class audience (a point I will return to shortly). In print, this has the effect of seeming quite conservative aesthetically and even reads a bit monotonously in parts. However, in production, as the poem was intended to “lift you off your feet” (Miller 61).

Which brings me to the most interesting facet of *Scottsboro Limited*: its

performance. In print in *The New Masses Scotsboro Limited* was like much other rhetorical verse: aesthetically uninspiring though quite easy to read. However, at a mass meeting for the Scottsboro defense in May of 1932, Hughes participated in a production of *Scotsboro Limited* (which he had by then republished as a pamphlet with four other Scottsboro poems) (Thurston 111). As a play, “Scotsboro Limited” was intended to greatly involve the audience, creating an interracial community of workers in the audience. For example, in the final scene, the stage directions call for the “Internationale” to be sung (Hughes original plan was to have plants in the audience so other workers thought that their peers were so moved as to spontaneously burst into the Communist anthem) and a red flag raised above the boys on stage.

Along with audience participation, one of the primary rhetorical devices of the play are the boys' actual speeches, taking the plays hybridization of genres even further. In particular, the eighth boy tends to be the most vocal in his opposition and critique, telling his jailer, “We ain't half as low as you! / Paid to kill people, that's what you do. / Not just niggers—but your white brothers too.” Here again is Hughes attempting to transcend ethnicity by appealing to class, an epilogue to “Red” plants in the audience previously assuring the boys that “We'll fight! The Communists will fight for you. / Not just black—but black and white.”

In short, the rhetorical verse found in political periodicals tended to be quite conscious of its audience, making aesthetic decisions so as to appeal to a variety of education backgrounds and literacy levels. While the aesthetic conservatism of these poems might be considered “bad” by contemporary standards, it was much more

common to see aesthetically conservative poems in the early twentieth century, particularly when those poems were targeted at a popular audience such as the poems found in newspapers or political periodicals. However, there were poets attempting to balance an aesthetically conservative, accessible rhetorical verse with elements of the newly ascended modernist aesthetic of the previous decade. The result were poems that, while not innovating much on the aesthetic front, nonetheless combined aestheticism and persuasion in unique ways, and this type of rhetorical verse usually appeared in the literary and cultural periodicals of the nation.

The Poetry of Literary and Cultural Periodicals

In this section, I examine the rhetorical verse of the Scottsboro affair that appeared in literary and cultural periodicals. To begin, I provide a background of 1930s poetic culture, explaining exactly what I mean by a literary or cultural periodical. Then I examine two representative poems from these periodicals, studying how each operates as rhetorical verse.

Poetic culture in early twentieth century America, as I detailed in the introduction to this dissertation, was far more public and less rooted in the academy than contemporary poetic culture. There were three major vectors (excluding books) for how poetry was disseminated to the public. One was newspapers—a concept a contemporary reader of poetry might find foreign. In fact, everyday readers often kept clippings of poems they liked in scrapbooks to be read at night for entertainment, creating personalized anthologies (Harrington 32). These poems were generally tailored to a

broad audience, being aesthetically conservative and easy to read.

More important for this section however, another major vector for poetry, particularly in the northeast, was the literary periodical. Also known as “little magazines,” these were periodicals that specialized in literature, usually *avant garde* modernist literature. Their primary audience was quite small circles of *literati* including other poets, critics, and other highly educated people with a passion for poetry. As a result, literary periodicals were where most of the eventual canonical modernists published. Literary periodicals, because of their small, elite readerships could afford high quality printings and as a result were much sturdier than the political periodicals discussed earlier. Some examples of literary periodicals were *The Dial*, which first published T. S. Eliot's “The Waste Land”, and *Hound and Horn*.

The final vector for poetry's dissemination was the cultural periodical. Unlike the literary periodicals, cultural periodicals published a variety of writing, including journalism, fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Usually, the bulk of the cultural periodical would have been dedicated to criticism, commentary on current events, and a variety of essays and treatises on intellectual topics. Usually, the final few pages of a cultural periodical were reserved for poetry. These periodicals had a much broader readership than little magazines, though certainly nothing so broad as a newspaper. Some examples of cultural periodicals were magazines like *The New Republic* and *The Partisan Review*.

It was in this poetic culture and through these various vectors that poets on the literary left began to disseminate the rhetorical verse of the Scottsboro affair. The first of such poems I will analyze is titled “Communication to Nancy Cunard” by Kay Boyle.

Published in *The New Republic* in 1935, “Communication to Nancy Cunard” recounts in verse a condensed story of the Scottsboro affair (Nancy Cunard was the daughter of a wealthy British shipping magnate who compiled one of the first anthologies of African American literature and journalism; Boyle sent a first draft of the poem to Cunard before sending it to *The New Republic*).

One unique aspect of “Communication” is that it is constantly asserting and reasserting the audience of the poem—who it is for and who it is not for. For example, the opening of the poem establishes who it is not for:

These are not words set down for the rejected
 Nor for outcasts cast by the mind’s pity
 Beyond the aid of lip or hand or from the speech
 Of fires lighted in the wilderness by lost men
 Reaching in fright and passion to each other.
 This is not for the abandoned to hear.

So from the outset we know the audience is not the poor or abandoned of society. Later, the poem provides more negation for who the poem is not for—it is not for the boys themselves or the women who accused them. At the turning point of the poem, halfway through, the speaker shifts gears and lists who the poem is for: the sheriff, the jury venireman, a Sunday school teacher who testified against the boys, and the two deputies who shot a handcuffed Ozzie Powell (one of the defendants) in the head. In other words, the poem is intended for the very people and system that perpetrated the affair.

However, I assert that the venue of its publication, *The New Republic*, may suggest a second audience, one that might actually take primacy to the poem’s stated audience: northern liberals. The bulk of *The New Republic’s* circulation was in the northeast (Seideman 22), and Boyle, a staple of the northeastern literary scene at this time, was

well aware that an Alabaman sheriff did not have a subscription to a leftist cultural periodical. She was also well aware of who did. In this sense, the poem's rhetorical objective would have been to draw out of complacency northern liberals by offering a scathing invective of the southerners involved with Scottsboro.

Another poem where the audience and rhetorical goals of the poem were intertwined was Langston Hughes' "Christ in Alabama." Published in a small experimental magazine called *Contempo* out of the University of North Carolina, the story of "Christ in Alabama's" publication sheds insight into Hughes' rhetorical intentions for the poem. In 1931, editors Anthony Buttitta and Milton Abernethy, upon hearing of Hughes' plans to do a reading tour in the south, asked him to speak at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (Thurston 98). They also solicited a poem responding to the Scottsboro affair to appear in the second issue of *Contempo*, the publication of which would coincide with his visit (Thurston 98).

When Hughes arrived in Chapel Hill, the two editors, both members of the Communist-affiliated John Reed Club, took Hughes to "the snappiest cafeteria in town" where the light-skinned Hughes was nonetheless served because the soda jerk thought him to be Mexican (Thurston 98). The backlash of the incident (both at the cafeteria and to the poem itself) was intense, with Hughes being excoriated in the local press. In fact, tensions were so raised that when news reached Hughes' mother in the north, she wrote begging him to abandon his plan to visit the Scottsboro defendants as part of his tour (Thurston 98).

I contend that the public outrage toward "Christ in Alabama" that swept the south

was precisely the rhetorical goal of the poem. Hughes' decision to publish the poem in *Contempo*, a southern little magazine was in part at the request of the editors, but also a calculated rhetorical decision. Knowing it was his chance to have a considerable readership in the south—the editors printed an extra 5,000 copies of the issue on top of their usual print run (Thurston 98)—Hughes took advantage of his platform to write what was arguably one of the most inflammatory poetic responses to the Scottsboro affair.

Cary Nelson describes “Christ in Alabama” as a “poem of searing truths uttered by ambiguous speakers” (72), and certainly that is an apt description, confronting a southern readership with the stark images of the violence southerners had perpetuated. Furthermore, the short, terse lines of the poem are a perfect example of aesthetic form heightening rhetorical potency—each image of violence and oppression distilled to three or four words:

Christ is a Nigger,
Beaten and black—
O, bare your back.

Mary is His Mother—
Mammy of the South,
Silence your mouth.

God's His Father—
White Master above,
Grant us your love.

Most holy bastard
Of the bleeding mouth:
Nigger Christ
On the cross of the South.

Here, as was a common trope, the figure of suffering Jesus is melded with the suffering

of African Americans.⁵⁸ Rhetorically, the piece acts as invective, placing blame on the South for what Hughes implies through his images is the biblical suffering of African Americans. In any case, one can clearly see how the poem was meant to both condemn a southern readership, and in doing so, incite them.

With both Boyle and Hughes' poem, in addition to each having very clear audiences, both also conform to the tendency of rhetorical verse to be less-than-experimental when it comes to poetic form (though, I would also argue, both poems push the aesthetic envelope more than the poems of the political periodicals, whose audiences would have been less educated than the general readerships of cultural periodicals). “Communication to Nancy Cunard” is long, sprawling free verse that does little to challenge—either through typography or meter—the long block stanza-ed free verse poem that most contemporary readers are familiar with. In fact, the poem itself often reads more like journalistic prose than poetry. On the other end of the spectrum, “Christ in Alabama” keeps lines short and rhythmic, creating an almost sing-songy rhythm that heavily dominates the poem. In both instances, however, the poems' lack of aesthetic innovation was a strategic decision common to rhetorical verse: these poems were meant to have swift rhetorical effects on their audiences, whether that be shaming a northern liberal to action or inciting a southern conservative to anger. They were not, however, meant to be pondered or interpreted the way contemporary readers have been schooled to approach poetry. In other words, despite using a poetic aesthetic, these poems are first and foremost rhetorical texts. However, as we will see in the next section, not all

⁵⁸ For another example of this trope, see Mae Smith Williams' “Black Jesus” from the August 1931 issue of *The Crisis*.

rhetorical verse eschewed aesthetic experimentation, and as a result, evolved the potential of poetry to be both persuasive and artistic.

Book of Rhetorical Verse: *Theory of Flight* as a Political Response to Scottsboro

Alabama and the South are soft with spring;
 in the North, the seasons change, sweet April, December and the air
 loaded with snow. There is time for meetings
 during the years, they remaining in prison.

In the Square

a crowd listens, carrying banners.
 Overheard, boring through the speaker's voice, a plane
 circles with a snoring of motors revolving in the sky,
 drowning the single voice. It does not touch
 the crowd's silence. It circles. The name stands :
 Scottsboro

-From Muriel Rukeyser's "The Lynching of Jesus," 1935

In 1935, Stephen Vincent Benét selected Muriel Rukeyser's *Theory of Flight* for publication in the very prestigious Yale Younger Poets Series (the series would go on to launch the careers of some of the most famous poets America has produced including Adrienne Rich, James Wright, W. S. Merwin, and John Ashberry among others). The above excerpt reveals one of the major themes of the book—the Scottsboro affair which Rukeyser covered as a journalist and later activist. At the age of 21, Rukeyser went to Alabama to see first hand the injustices of the southern legal system, a trip which convinced her to join the International Labor Defense and was a major step in her early

radicalization.⁵⁹

I contend that *Theory of Flight*, a sprawling, at times overwhelming, manuscript, is one of the most complicated examples of rhetorical verse from the early twentieth century. Most often read solely as a book of literature for its aesthetic innovations, *Theory of Flight* can also be read as a rhetorical text responding to a political exigence (the Scottsboro affair) with specific persuasive designs for its audience. More specifically, *Theory of Flight* hybridizes the concerns of earlier (and more critically maligned) rhetorical verse with a modernist aesthetic that prizes radical experimentation with poetic form.

My rationale for examining *Theory of Flight* is three fold. First, it is a germinal text, both for Rukeyser's career and for the advance of American poetry. In fact, Harold Rosenberg, in his 1936 review for poetry magazine, says of Rukeyser, "Miss Rukeyser's first book is remarkable for its self-confidence and lack of hesitation," indicating just how poetically forward-thinking the book was at the time. Second, despite its aesthetic innovations and experiments, the book remains, at least in part, a response to the Scottsboro affair, making it an unusual example of rhetorical verse that actively concerns itself with aesthetic innovation (a trait lacking in much rhetorical verse). Finally, by winning the Yale Younger Poets Series, *Theory of Flight* reached a wide and diverse audience quite different than the poetry published in *The New Masses* or even *The New Republic*.

⁵⁹ Rukeyser would continue in her activism for the rest of her life, most famously traveling to West Virginia and research her book of poetry *The Book of the Dead* which raised awareness of silicosis in miners and was a damning critique of the mine companies that knowingly put laborers at great risks for profit.

I begin by providing a brief background of Rukeyser to provide context for the conditions that brought her to write *Theory of Flight*. I then look at the book as a whole, discussing the rhetorical advantages of the codex form. Finally, I conclude by analyzing “The Lynching of Jesus,” a sprawling free-verse poem that makes up the core of the larger manuscript and deals directly and specifically with the Scottsboro affair.

Muriel Rukeyser: Poet, Activist, and Dedicated Leftist

Not Sappho, Sacco.
 Rebellion pioneered among our lives,
 viewing from far-off many-branching deltas,
 innumerable seas.

-Muriel Rukeyser, “Poem Out of Childhood,” 1935

Muriel Rukeyser was born on December 15, 1913 in New York City where she would attend a private preparatory academy before attending Vassar College alongside Elizabeth Bishop. At age 21 she traveled to Scottsboro to report on the ongoing legal travesty that had engrossed the nation. That trip marked the beginning of her radicalization that is on display in the excerpt opening this section, and after Scottsboro she immediately joined the ILD. She also began writing for the Communist Party USA's organs *The New Masses* and *The Daily Worker* around this time and generally becoming more active in revolutionary circles.

Writers on the radical left were not surprising in the early twentieth century, and Rukeyser was from a generation and geographical location that placed her in contact with people, journals, and literature of the left. Likewise, as was the fate of many leftist

producers of rhetorical verse, much of Rukeyser's early work fell out of print after the conservative backlash of the 1940s and 1950s. However, her return to prominence in the contemporary modernist canon arises from her unabashed aesthetic experimentation favored by the New Criticism. While other rhetorical verse might come across as aesthetically stilted, Rukeyser pushes the envelope of poetic form, writing terse lyric and rambling journalistic poetry equally confidently all while maintaining her political and rhetorical messages.

There is a tendency among critics to conflate Rukeyser the Activist and Rukeyser the Poet, precisely because she conflates the two in her poetry so often. And truly, it is impossible (or perhaps irresponsible) to read her rhetorical verse disconnected from her biography and politics. However, it is equally irresponsible to place inordinate weight on her politics and ignore her aesthetic experimentation, which I argue is a large part of how such a radical poet writing radical poems survived the “Dark Ages” of the 1940s and 1950s when so many other leftist poets became lost to us. In that sense, it is precisely her aesthetics that scholars of rhetoric should attend to, as it was her aesthetics that allowed her rhetorical verse to survive.

The Forward

A rhetorical document in its own right, Stephen Vincent Benét's forward to Rukeyser's book merits a short discussion. In the six-paragraph essay that is essentially a defense of Benét's selection for the series mixed with praise for Rukeyser's poetry, Benét immediately addresses the political tenor of Rukeyser's poetry, acknowledging by the

start of the second paragraph that “Politically, she is a Left Winger and a revolutionary” (5) before explicitly saying he would not talk about her politics. Referencing the “culture wars” that so dominated 1930s literary journals with debates about the social functions of art, he goes on to say:

I do not intend to add, in this preface, to the dreary and unreal discussion about unconscious fascists, conscious proletarians, and other figures of straw which has afflicted recent criticism with head noises and small specks in front of the eyes. But I will remark that when Miss Rukeyser does speak of her politics—and she speaks with sincerity and fire—she does so like a poet, not like a slightly worn phonograph record, and she does so in poetic terms. (5)

It is precisely this defense of Rukeyser (that she is first and foremost a poet who happens to be political) that makes her rhetorical verse so effective. Whereas Arturo Giovannitti was obviously a poet in a highly wrought 19th century aesthetic sense, he was nonetheless a somewhat archaic one. Rukeyser is obviously a poet in the modernist sense—experimental and aesthetically adventurous—the kind of poet who would appear in *The Dial* or *Hound and Horn* more than the *Saturday Evening Post*.

This distancing of poet from politics is a common feature of rhetorical verse—one which skillful rhetoricians capitalize on. Arturo Giovannitti used as his defense that he was “simply a poet...a lover of beautiful things.” Likewise, the poems in *America Arraigned!* take full advantage of the cultural capital of poetry—that it is apolitical art. But by 1931, the cultural status of poetry had shifted. The ornate, formalistic, rhyming

verse of 19th century America was largely a popular art if one at all. Modernism had risen and transformed *what* a poem fundamentally is. And Rukeyser's poetry is versed in the modernist aesthetic. However, it is also political, though as one can see from Benét's preface, the impulse for many was to disregard the political as outside of or unrelated to the aesthetic. I suspect this slight of hand—the dismissing or overlooking of the political in favor of the aesthetic—is simply one more function of rhetorical verse downplaying its politics while still nonetheless espousing them: making dangerous or radical utterances in the “safe” form of poetry.

Theory of Flight: Rhetorical Verse as Codex

In the previous section I discussed individual instances of rhetorical verse that appeared in various periodicals and journals. However, Muriel Rukeyser's *Theory of Flight* is an excellent example of how a book-length manuscript can operate as rhetorical verse, as well as the advantages and disadvantage of a book versus an individual poem in a periodical. First, not all of the poems in *Theory of Flight* deal directly with the Scottsboro affair, a fact, as I will argue shortly, strengthens the rhetorical moves the book does make. Second, as *America Arraigned!* served as a public memorial for the Sacco-Vanzetti affair, so *Theory of Flight* memorializes (perhaps even elegizes) the Scottsboro affair. Finally, *Theory of Flight* employs a very modernist *avant garde* aesthetic, experimenting greatly with poetic form. As a result, it does very different intellectual work than the explicitly hortatory (and aesthetically conservative) rhetorical verse more typical from the literary left.

To begin my discussion of *Theory of Flight* as a book-length example of rhetorical verse I should focus on the elements of the manuscript that, on the surface, have no explicit hortatory function. In fact, a great deal of *Theory of Flight* has little or nothing to do with the Scottsboro affair. The opening poem, “Poem out of Childhood” details the story of Rukeyser (and her generation's) coming of age (she was born the year before the first world war). However, what may seem to be a poem utterly unrelated to the Scottsboro affair actually lays the groundwork for Rukeyser's views on it, detailing her radicalization (with the aforementioned line, “Not Sappho, Sacco.”) and explaining implicitly how and why a twenty-one-year-old woman born to wealthy Jewish parents in New York City might end up arrested in Scottsboro, Alabama for covering the trial of nine young black men.

Even if the first poem is tangentially connected to Scottsboro, many of the poems in *Theory of Flight* lack even such tangential connections as detailed above. I argue, however, that this actually strengthens the rhetorical work the book is doing while being a key feature to it surviving the 1940s and 1950s when much rhetorical verse from the literary left was suppressed. Take, for example, the poem “Sonnet.” Even stylistically the poem stands out: while the bulk of the book is sprawling, almost prosaic free verse, “Sonnet” is a beautifully rendered Petrarchan sonnet. The poem itself eschews the radical politics that underlie many of the other poems and is instead is a quiet meditation on the miraculousness of communication and language with lines like:

And if an essential thing has flown between us,
rare intellectual bird of communication,
let us seize it quickly ; let our preference

choose it instead of softer things to screen us/
each from the other's self. (25)

Now contrast this passage to a passage from one of the more overtly political poems in the manuscript about coal miners:

We'll be a long time dead, come that time, buried
under coal where our life was;

we were children and did not know our childhood,
we got infants, and never knew our wives,
year in and out, seeing no color but coal,
we were the living who could not have their lives. (52)

I argue that it is precisely this contrast—the overtly rhetorical poem eliciting sympathy for working miners versus the elaborate Petrarchan sonnet meditating on philosophies of language—that allows the couched defense of Rukeyser's radicalism seen in Stephen Vincent Benét's forward when he says, “when Miss Rukeyser speaks her politics...she does so like a poet” (5). By placing the onus of her identity on her poetry (much as Arturo Giovannitti did for himself in his legal defense), Rukeyser's radical politics become “safe”—laundered by the perceived “safety” of poetry as a genre. She becomes a poet who happens to be political, rather than a dangerous radical who happens to write verse.

The next point that makes *Theory of Flight* an intriguing example of rhetorical verse is its status as a codex. As I have shown in previous chapters, much rhetorical verse existed as aesthetically simple self-contained verse often published in periodicals.

As I have previously argued, this was a rhetorical advantage to verse as a medium because short, hortatory messages set to particular rhythms were easy to memorize and disseminate regardless of literacy level. When poems did appear in codex form, they still tended to be self-contained poems from individual authors, as seen with the anthologies compiled about the Sacco-Vanzetti affair. The exception is Arturo Giovannitti's *Arrows in the Gale*, which, while harkening back in many instances to a 19th century aesthetic shares many similarities to Rukeyser's *Theory of Flight*.

In any case, that *Theory of Flight* offers us a single-author, book-length manuscript of rhetorical verse is significant, in no small part to the cultural cachet of the codex. In fact, that *Theory of Flight* was published as a cloth-bound codex tells us that it was meant to last with an air of permanence periodicals do not enjoy. And implicit in that lasting is another rhetorical motive: like *America Arraigned!* did with the Sacco-Vanzetti affair, *Theory of Flight* was intended to memorialize the Scottsboro affair.

I discussed in detail the previous chapter how a book of poetry might serve as a public memorial, and *Theory of Flight* certainly operates in much the same way as other volumes of memorializing rhetorical verse. Significantly about *Theory of Flight* is that it self-consciously places itself within the rhetorical tradition of the political left, equating Scottsboro with other famous judicial cases of the left. In other words, through the process of memorializing Scottsboro, Rukeyser places it within a larger pattern of judicial travesty against leftist activists. For example, in the following passage she invokes a list of famous leftist cases, figuratively placing them in the same courtroom as the Scottsboro trial:

John Brown, Nat Turner, Toussaint stand in this courtroom,
 Dredd Scott wrestles for freedom there in the dark corner,
 all our celebrated shambles are repeated here : now again
 Sacco and Vanzetti walk to a chair, to the straps and rivets
 and the switch still spitting death and Massachusetts' will. (48)

In doing so, Rukeyser implies that this poem is not just a memorial of Scottsboro, but that Scottsboro is a culmination of the persecution of leftists and radicals—that when one remembers Scottsboro one remembers John Brown and Tom Mooney and Sacco and Vanzetti. Furthermore, the value of memorializing Scottsboro in verse is implicit in this claim because for Rukeyser, all of the sham trials and unjust imprisonments of labor activists and radicals in the early twentieth century are represented globally in one word: Scottsboro.

Finally, *Theory of Flight's* experimental, modernist aesthetic sets it apart from much rhetorical verse, which more commonly employed fairly simple and conservative aesthetic devices in order to facilitate ease of reading and memorizing in diverse audiences of varying literacy levels. As already shown, Rukeyser experiments with traditional forms like the Petrarchan sonnet before contrasting with a poem that looks like one of Ezra Pound's cantos. Her sprawling use of free verse and her mixture of allusions to familiar leftist tropes with allusions to academic poets (the third to last poem in the book is titled “Citation for Horace Gregory”) create an instance of rhetorical verse that does work quite different from other examples of the genre.

As I have shown throughout this dissertation, rhetorical verse is quite often

hortatory: it responds to specific political exigencies and attempts to elicit specific actions or feelings from its audience. And to be certain, Rukeyser's *Theory of Flight* has hortatory elements—she is quite clearly and passionately advocating for her audience to remember Scottsboro in a particularly negative light. However, while most rhetorical verse is intended to generate immediate actions in an audience, Rukeyser's book intends to generate intellectual actions. This, too, is part of its function as a memorial—its rhetoricity arises not from persuading us to *do* something (donate to the ILD, protest, etc.) but from persuading us to *remember* the Scottsboro affair a certain way.

Her modernist aesthetic is another indicator of this rhetorical purpose—a factory worker is not going to read *Theory of Flight* and decide to join the Communist Party (though that was precisely the rhetorical aim of much rhetorical verse). More likely than not, *Theory of Flight's* readership would have been fairly small, highly educated professors, critics, and literati to whom the complex machinations of her modernist aesthetics would have appealed greatly. In fact, in an intellectual world where high modernism now dominated the small journals and presses (Pound and Eliot had long had their influence felt, even if there was pushback from the literary left), Rukeyser's experimental aesthetic would have been the cloak that got her political message through the doors of the *avant garde*. And as I have already suggested, that same modernist aesthetic is also the cloak that got her poems, with their radical messages, through the censorship of the 1940s and 1950s, simply because *Theory of Flight* was an aesthetic triumph and could not be dismissed otherwise as was the fate of much rhetorical verse. However, for an example of a poem that was both aesthetically challenging and overtly

political, I should turn to Rukeyser's explicit response to Scottsboro, "The Lynching of Jesus."

The Lynching of Jesus

As a book, *Theory of Flight* is broken into three sections: 1.) Poem Out of Childhood, 2.) Theory of Flight, and 3.) The Blood is Justified. The poem "The Lynching of Jesus" is the third and longest poem of the middle section 2.) Theory of Flight, putting it almost directly at the center of the ninety-seven page manuscript. The poem itself is a direct response to Scottsboro, mentioning the town explicitly and placing the details of the case into a tradition of persecuting activists on the radical left.

In this section, I consider "The Lynching of Jesus" in particular as both a central poem to the larger manuscript and as an example of rhetorical verse. First, I describe the poem, which at seven pages long warrants a summary. Second, I consider the poem as an example of rhetorical verse, considering both its rhetorical and aesthetic dimensions. Finally, I consider how "The Lynching of Jesus" both adheres to and deviates from the tradition of rhetorical verse that I have established in this chapter.

To begin, I analyze how the poem conforms to the tendencies of rhetorical verse established in this dissertation (responds to a specific political exigence, has hortatory elements, has a particular audience it is trying to persuade, etc.) while also diverging from other tendencies of rhetorical verse (rather than aesthetic conservatism and simplicity, "The Lynching of Jesus" is quite aesthetically innovative and challenging). However,

despite the divergences just mentioned, I should first describe the poem and establish why “The Lynching of Jesus” might be classified as rhetorical verse.

“The Lynching of Jesus” is a poem in three sections: 1.) Passage to Godhead, 2.) The Committee-Room, and 3.) The Trial. The first section, a series of sestets, relies on celestial imagery and language as it physically ascends the reader to heaven for a God's-eye view of humanity. In doing so, it establishes the cruelty and violence mankind is capable of, speaking of the many crucifixions humans have perpetrated and ending with the question: “what numbers of lynched Jesuses have not been deified” (45), foreshadowing the poem's dealings with the Scottsboro affair.

The second section, in a sprawling and scattered free verse that experiments with page formatting, opens by establishing a class of “superiors,” both leaders of state and “voting men.” Written from the perspective of this upper class, the poem's speaker describes a committee meeting where these “superiors” wield their power through votes: a vote to kill Sacco and Vanzetti, a vote to kill Tom Mooney,⁶⁰ and a vote of poverty to Piers Plowman. After the “verdicts” are handed out, the “superiors” then prepare to watch the lynchings with “16 views under magnifying glass / 8 views of the trial and the burning” (47). Finally, the section ends with the “superiors” lying down to sleep after a long day of oppressing, only to be kept up by the songs of the dead—“Shakespeare's heroes the saints the Jews the rebels”—who, in a parallel to class uprising, have risen from their graves to climb the hill with “sheaves and tools and all the weapons of ascent”

⁶⁰ Tom Mooney was a labor activist who was imprisoned in California on charges of bombing the 1916 Preparedness Day parade in San Francisco. His imprisonment was the subject of much rhetorical verse, particularly by poet-activist Lola Ridge; however his case never reach the global infamy as Arturo Giovannitti, Sacco and Vanzetti, or the Scottsboro affair.

(47).

The third section is the section that deals directly and explicitly with the Scottsboro affair. The section opens by establishing that “the South is green with coming spring,” offering a hopefulness in the midst of the previous section's oppressive listing of unjust verdicts and offering a foil to the hopelessness in the Scottsboro case. At one point, the speaker even points to the images of spring and contrasts them to the case, saying, “here is your justice, come out of the crazy jail.” In this section, too, the poem explicitly raises the call to revolution foreshadowed in the previous section, drawing on the imagery of the radical left (such as the sickle and hammer) that is so prevalent in rhetorical verse (a point I will return to shortly). The poem then equates Scottsboro with a smattering of other unjust trials of labor activists, invoking John Brown, Nat Turner, Sacco and Vanzetti, Tom Mooney again among others. Finally, the section wraps up with the seen of a crowd with banners and a speaker before naming the town after a curt colon: Scottsboro.

A final demi-section with no title written rhyming quatrains concludes the poem, returning us to the celestial language and imagery of the first section, again taking a God's-eye view of the earth. The quatrains then take the reader through time and space, conjuring the Romans, the Gothic period, the “savannahs of space,” and finally, a plane flying high over the earth with a risen Jesus whose stormy presence commands the reader, “See ! / the wind ! / ... FLY” (50), a hortatory command to transcend the injustices of the world.

From this brief description it is clear the many ways that “The Lynching of Jesus”

is building from a tradition of rhetorical verse. First, the poem is steeped in the images and tropes of the radical left. From sickles and hammers to revolutionary utterances, it owes much not only the tradition of rhetorical verse that preceded it, but also to the rhetoric of the left. Additionally, the poem clearly has persuasive designs on its audience, encouraging readers to view and remember Scottsboro in a certain way. Finally, the poem clearly has hortatory elements to spur readers to action, whether it be the poem's call to revolution or its final command to figuratively fly. However, there is a clear divergence from rhetorical in one significant tendency: Rukeyser's poem, unlike much other rhetorical verse, is aesthetically challenging, innovative, and distinctly modernist.

As I detailed in the above description, the poem moves between clearly divided sestets and quatrains with rhyming end-rhymes to sprawling and often journalistic free verse. This sets the poem apart from earlier rhetorical verse, which relied on heavily metered lines and ubiquitous end rhymes to appeal to the broadest possible audience regardless of literacy level. "The Lynching of Jesus," however, is less concerned with the hortatory aims of other rhetorical verse. The rhetorical work it is doing is more intellectual than political (though obviously the poem still espouses a politics). I would argue that the poem's primary rhetorical goal is to influence how Scottsboro is remembered, particularly among highly educated northeastern literary elites who would have been the primary readers of her book.

The second point of note about the aesthetics of "The Lynching of Jesus" is that they are markedly modernist. This, too, would appeal to an audience of northeastern elites who would have been quite steeped in little magazines and cultural periodicals of

the 1920s that were publishing the experimental *avant garde* works that would eventually make up the modernist canon. Perhaps more significantly, I argue that the experimental aesthetic of “The Lynching of Jesus” and of *Theory of Flight* in general is precisely what allowed Rukeyser's work to survive the censorship and suppression of the 1940s and 1950s that other leftist poets, like Edwin Rolfe, Arturo Giovannitti, Sol Funaroff and many others fell victim to.

As the New Critics rose to prominence in the 1940s and 1950s, they retreated poetry from a public art to an academic one, housed in English departments and printed in the poetry reviews of university presses. The New Critics valued the aesthetics of *avant garde* modernism, and distanced themselves from the less-innovative aesthetics of rhetorical verse. This critical move was convenient as McCarthyism made it life-altering if not outright dangerous to write about leftist topics, or to even write criticism of writing that deals with leftist topics. By aesthetically dismissing rhetorical verse as “bad,” a generation of critics were able to avoid dealing with the often radical politics espoused by rhetorical verse. However, a book like *Theory of Flight*, aesthetically innovative and quite modernist, thus did not meet the same fate as other books that dealt with similar topics and used similar language.

In conclusion, Muriel Rukeyser's *Theory of Flight* represents a poignant and innovative example of rhetorical verse. Its memorialization of the Scottsboro affair was critical and potent, forcing humanity to take note of injustice and encouraging us to transcend such horrible travesties. In *Theory of Flight*, one gets a poet who is both a literary modern and a radical leftist. And as the culture wars between Marxists and

aesthetes raged around her, Rukeyser produced a book of rhetorical verse that balanced the views of both camps.

Conclusion

A blinded statue attends before the courthouse,
bronze and black en lie on the grass, waiting,
the khaki dapper National Guard leans on its bayonets.
But the air is populous beyond our vision:
all the people's anger finds its vortex here
as the mythic lips of justice open, and speak.

-from Muriel Rukeyser's "The Lynching of Jesus," 1935

By 1937, five of the young men arrested in Scottsboro were serving life sentences, having exhausted their appeals. Through the efforts of the ILD, Communist Party, and various localized defense committees, the four others arrested in 1931 had all charges against them dropped. And despite the injustices of the case and the public outrage that accompanied it as seen in the above excerpt from Muriel Rukeyser's "The Lynching of Jesus," by the final appeals and verdicts in 1937, the public was increasingly disinterested in the Scottsboro affair. Furthermore, with tensions in Europe growing and a second world war seeming increasingly likely, the plight of the remaining five incarcerated boys gradually fell from the general public's eye. Likewise, poets on the literary left were turning their attentions to the increasingly influential League of American Writers, which would hold its second Writer's Congress that same year of 1937.

Nevertheless, the Scottsboro affair and the rhetorical verse that surrounded it had an indelible effect on the literary left. Occurring at a time of increasing radicalization of writers and unfolding over the first seven years of the 1930s, Scottsboro gave the writers of the left (increasingly contentious about the social role of poetry) a clear and defined exigence to which their poetry could respond. Through the conservative backlash of the 1940s and 1950s which saw the suppression of much leftist literature, it is the rhetorical verse of the literary left that survived best due to the more ambitious aesthetic experimentations of poets like Rukeyser.

Finally, it would be the rhetorical verse of the Scottsboro affair more than any other *cause célèbre* that would inspire the writers and artists of the New Left as they struggled to find guiding political art poetry that survived the dark years of McCarthyism. Harper Lee's 1960 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* is obviously quite indebted to the literature of the Scottsboro affair (Miller 221). Furthermore, Rukeyser's influence on the emerging feminist poets of the 1960s is unparalleled, with Adrienne Rich saying in a blurb for Rukeyser's selected poems:

Muriel Rukeyser's poetry is unequalled in the twentieth-century United States in its range of reference, its generosity of vision, and its energy... She pushes us, readers, writers, and participants in the life of our time, to enlarge our sense of what poetry is about in the world, and of the place of feelings and memory in politics.

And with the resurgence of the New Left seen in the various social movements of 1960s, poets needed guidance and examples of poetry that acted rhetorically.

Much has been made of the New Left coalescing in particular on college campuses and other institutions of higher learning,⁶¹ creating the perfect environment for a new outpouring of rhetorical verse. As an entirely new generation of poets like Adrienne Rich or Allen Ginsberg or Gwendolyn Brooks began exploring the political possibilities of verse, the poetry of the 1930s, and particularly the poetry of the Scottsboro affair provided some of the best examples of poetry's rhetorical possibilities. And in the tumultuous years of the 1960s, it would be this new generation of poets who would push the poetic envelop with their own forms of rhetorical verse, discovering all new ways for poetry to aid rhetoric in doing the work of the world.

⁶¹ For more on the birth of the New Left see Isserman.

Chapter Five

Conclusion: The Decline of Rhetorical Verse in America

View of the Capitol from the Library of Congress

Moving from left to left, the light
is heavy on the Dome, and coarse.
One small lunette turns it aside
and blankly stares off to the side
like a big white old wall-eyed horse.

On the east steps the Air Force Band
in uniforms of Air Force blue
is playing hard and loud, but—queer--
the music doesn't quite come through.

It comes in snatches, dim then keen,
then mute, and yet there is no breeze.
The giant trees stand in between.
I think the trees must intervene,

catching the music in their leaves
like gold dust, till each big leaf sags.
Unceasingly the little flags
feed their limp stripes into the air,
and the band's efforts vanish there.

Great shades, edge over,
give the music room.
The gathered brasses want to go
boom—boom.

--Elizabeth Bishop, 1951

In January 1949, Elizabeth Bishop wrote to her long-time friend Robert Lowell expressing her reservations at being appointed the Poetry Consultant to the United States Library of Congress (the position that would eventually be known as the United States Poet Laureate). Her office in Washington, the view from which is described in the above

poem, put her out of her Florida Keys environs, and the military presence outside of her window undoubtedly conjured painful memories of the naval base explosion that killed her mother when she was a child. One element particularly weighing on her mind most certainly was the recent furor surrounding Ezra Pound. In the last months of 1948, a committee of fifteen Fellows of the Library of Congress under the poet Archibald Macleish voted to award the prestigious Bollingen Prize to Pound. Pound himself was incarcerated at St. Elizabeth's Psychiatric Hospital on charges of treason for his support of Mussolini's fascist regime during World War II. The ensuing controversy over the committee's choice briefly reignited the old debates over the public, rhetorical functions of poetry, only to silence them for years.

To many, it seemed inappropriate to give the nation's most prestigious government award for verse to a poet who very recently openly supported fascists in Italy, was an avowed anti-Semite, and was facing federal charges of treason. Outraged politicians demanded investigations into the committee's selection process, and Robert Hillyer, the president of the Poetry Society of America openly denounced Pound, saying he “never saw anything to admire in Pound, not one line.” Likewise, two of the Fellows on the selection committee abstained from the final vote: Kathleen Garrison Chapin, whose husband was the Attorney General who indicted Pound for treason, and Karl Shapiro, who said he could not openly support an anti-Semite (Tytel 302). The rest of the committee defended their selection on aesthetic grounds—that a poet's politics have no bearing on the quality of their poetry.

It was a watershed moment—the public and official amputation of politics from

poetry. No longer were poems to be judged on their rhetorical savvy, their political programs, or their content, but solely on their aesthetics. Pound's *Pisan Cantos* winning the Bollingen Award marked a new era for poetry—one focused on high-modernist aesthetics, increasingly hostile to the idea of rhetoric, and steeped in New Critical theories of reading and writing. The severing of politics from poetry represented in the committee's apolitical defense of Pound's poetry would come to characterize the 1940s and 1950s, with the rhetorical verse that marked the first three decades of the century falling out of fashion (and out of print).

The divorcing of poetry from its rhetorical and social functions seen in the first three decades of the twentieth century also coincided (and not coincidentally) with the severe repression of the political left during the 1940s and 1950s. Solidified by the rise and entrenchment of the New Criticism over these two decades, this repression can be seen as English Departments' disciplinary response to the House Committee on Un-American Activities (Nelson *Revolutionary Memory* 66)--the rhetorical poetry of the American left during the first decades of the twentieth century was suddenly a political liability. However, it could now be systematically suppressed on aesthetic grounds, just as Pound's poetry could be praised on aesthetic grounds while disregarding the politics of both. The well-wrought urn was also the politically safe urn during a time of blacklists, violence, and conservative backlash.

In this chapter, I provide conclusions, inferences, and implications for further work on rhetorical verse, which suffered greatly from the suppression of the 1940s and 1950s detailed above. As a significant rhetorical medium in the early twentieth century,

rhetorical verse gave voice to the passions and frustrations of the political left at a time when many of those activists were laying the groundwork for the ambitious social programs Americans still enjoy today. That poets so often turned to verse as a public, persuasive medium hints at the social stature poetry had in early twentieth-century America. Moreso, it provides an entire body of rhetorical texts—in fact, an entire rhetorical tradition—that has gone unstudied by rhetoricians.

Conclusions—or what I can say for certain

The central question that this dissertation sought to answer was: historically, how has poetry operated persuasively, politically, and publicly. To answer this question, I focused in particular on the poetry of early twentieth-century America due to its wealth of rhetorical verse—poetry with explicit hortatory goals and persuasive ends that most often responds to political exigencies. Most commonly employed by the political left, rhetorical verse became a powerful tool for persuasion that leaned on poetry's cultural cachet while challenging the notion of where art ends and rhetoric begins.

Throughout this dissertation I provided a general portrait of rhetorical verse and its characteristics by analyzing the verse pertaining to three court cases: Arturo Giovannitti, the Sacco-Vanzetti affair, and the Scottsboro affair. These three incidents provided clear political exigencies to which the attendant poetry responds, a diverse collection of rhetorical verse to be analyzed, and a clear, connected poetic/rhetorical tradition in which rhetorical verse operated. Giovannitti's poetry presented a single-authored, book-length manuscript composed in prison that directly critiqued the judicial

system which put him there. The rhetorical verse of the Sacco-Vanzetti affair gives two multi-authored anthologies with very different rhetorical functions—one on newsprint intended to circulate widely and quickly and the other cloth bound intended to memorialize. Finally, the poetry of the Scottsboro case gives a wealth of examples of rhetorical verse in various mediums intended for various audiences—the poetry of the political periodicals, the poetry of the literary/cultural periodicals, and another single-authored book manuscript that actually challenges many of the aesthetic tenets of rhetorical verse.

For all its diversity, rhetorical verse rather consistently displayed aesthetic and rhetorical features that link these poems together in a tradition that some argue stretches back to early nineteenth-century abolitionist poetry (Nelson 12). First, rhetorical verse tended to be aesthetically conservative, relying on hard end rhymes and strong, orderly meters. While contemporary readers might dismiss much rhetorical verse as “bad” for this reason, this aesthetic simplicity made rhetorical verse extremely accessible (and memorizable) across a swath of literacy levels. Furthermore, the tradition of rhetorical verse developed in parallel with the rise of literary modernism, which had not yet exerted its influence over the aesthetics of poetry. This means that for a large portion of the general public, the aesthetic simplicity of rhetorical verse actually mirrored the most popular poems of the day. Of course, some examples of rhetorical verse challenge this aesthetic simplicity, as I have shown in chapter four with Muriel Rukeyser's *Theory of Flight*. Nonetheless, these poems are the exceptions, expanding the tradition of rhetorical verse and what it can do.

A second common trait of much rhetorical verse is its response to specific exigencies. While I limited my analysis to poems that responded to court cases, the tradition of rhetorical verse is much broader. There are poems meant to recruit laborers to unions, poems that call for Marxist revolution, poems that respond to factory conditions among others. In fact, the number and diversity of examples of rhetorical verse is one area for further study by scholars of rhetoric, a point I will return to shortly.

A final common trait of rhetorical verse is its reliance on the schemes, tropes, and symbols of the political (and most often radical) Old Left.⁶² The Old Left, so rooted in the labor movement of early twentieth-century, relied heavily on the language of the labor movement to achieve its rhetorical goals, and rhetorical verse is no different. From industrial images to the sickle and hammer to the politically charge nature of the color red, examples of rhetorical verse often feel as though they are speaking to one another in a language contemporary readers might find unfamiliar. And often in rhetorical verse, the symbols—even the poems themselves—seem to blend together: “the banner slides into a slogan, which slips into a star, which substitutes for a flag” (Nelson *Revolutionary Memory* 177). In any case, this common language, as with the simplistic aesthetic, creates accessible poems despite a reader's literacy level. And accessibility was significant for rhetorical verse, for many of these poems were intended for laborers, many of whom were immigrants with only a tenuous grasp of English.

⁶² As I have established elsewhere, the Old Left's politics were rooted in the issues of labor, in contrast to the New Left that arose in the 1960s, whose politics were rooted in the various social movements of the time.

Inferences—or what I learned in the process

For this section I should first return to the initial theme of this conclusion—the eventual decline of rhetorical verse. If the first three decades of the twentieth century saw rhetorical verse at its apex, the next two decades would see it at its lowest. The patriotism sparked by the U.S. entrance into the second world war resulted in a conservative backlash to the radicalism that marked the 1930s. And with the rise of McCarthyism it became dangerous to even write *about* most rhetorical verse, much less create radical verse yourself. Paired with the rise of the New Criticism, whose proponents eschewed rhetorical verse as basic and aesthetically unappealing, rhetorical verse gradually exited the poetic consciousness of the nation.

It is inference to say that this fading of rhetorical verse was politically motivated, but there are numerous examples of poets who continued to write rhetorical verse only to be met with professional stonewalling.⁶³ Likewise, there are numerous examples of poets who saw extended, productive careers as their radicalism faded and their verse shifted its audience to the new home of American poetry—the academy. And while a handful of literary scholars are seeking to rehabilitate some of the leftist producers of rhetorical verse, perhaps a more productive road into this forgotten tradition of American verse is through its rhetoricity. Even if these poems might still be dismissed according to a contemporary aesthetic, their rhetorical functions provide a fascinating layer largely overlooked by scholars of literature.

It is also inference to gather the general effectiveness of poetry-as-rhetoric.

⁶³ For one example of a radical poet whose fortunes turned after the war, see the poet Edwin Rolfe, who despite being contemporaneously rehabilitated by Cary Nelson, was forced to self-publish his final collection of poetry because no other publisher would touch it (130).

Obviously, there are rhetorical advantages to verse as a medium: it is easy to memorize and recite, easy to internalize thanks to metricality, and holds an esteem with the general public. And we might infer further advantages: poetry is a “safe” genre in that few expect radicalism from a poem. Poetry is also a genre that is often thought of as distinctly not persuasive, allowing the persuasive designs of rhetorical verse to go unnoticed.

While verse has its advantages, both obvious and inferred, it is nonetheless difficult to speak to its effectiveness based on the cases examined in this dissertation. Certainly, for Arturo Giovannitti, rhetorical verse played a key role in his eventual acquittal. By styling himself the persecuted poet as opposed to the rabid radical, Giovannitti's case became a much more sympathetic one. However, the same victories are not seen in the Sacco-Vanzetti or Scottsboro affairs. While poetry certainly helped soften or even outright sway public opinion in both cases, the end results were not so positive as Giovannitti's acquittal.

Finally, one can infer that even though rhetorical verse had specific persuasive designs, most rhetorical verse makes at least some attempt to balance its rhetorical and artistic natures. Whether it is something as simple as lineating a speech with poetic linebreaks to something as complicated as Muriel Rukeyser exploring the form of the Petrarchan sonnet, rhetorical verse is a hybrid genre—one that inhabits the offices of rhetoric while wielding the form of poetry. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, rhetorical verse can operate as epideictic, deliberative, or judicial rhetoric depending on the situation; however, by virtue of its form it will always be a poem.

This hybridization then raises the question, why? Why poetry? I might suggest a few answers to this. First, there was a tradition of using poetry rhetorically in early twentieth-century America. If one looks at the poetry about Sacco and Vanzetti, it often references Giovannitti. Likewise much of the poetry of Scottsboro references Sacco and Vanzetti. Poets had watched generations of earlier poets turn to rhetorical verse to address social ills, and in some cases it worked. Second, as a “safe” genre, poetry allowed a rhetor to make far more radical or dangerous statements than a speech. Even Giovannitti recognized that, “poems are the best safe-conduct for revolutionary utterances.” (qtd. in Harrington 115). This is because most people do not expect revolutionary utterances in verse form—they expect flowers and beauty and love.

A final inference for why so many rhetors turned to verse in the early twentieth century was economy. Poems are short, easy to reproduce, and as I have pointed out, easy to memorize. From the labor cards discussed in the introduction to the newspaper poem scrapbooks kept by so many families, poems were easy to print, easy to circulate, and familiar to most. A laborer who might not have time to read a proletarian novel could read a poem at a glance. In many ways, for the purposes of leftist activists, poems (and likewise songs) represented one of the most accessible and easy-to-circulate persuasive mediums of the early twentieth century.

Implications for further study

In order to fully address my critical question, I had to limit my focus to three specific bodies of rhetorical verse. Nonetheless, there is much left to be done with what

has long been a forgotten rhetorical and poetic tradition. Below are some ideas for further studies of rhetorical verse

- Perhaps the clearest need for further study is two-fold: (1) recovering the sheer corpus of rhetorical verse produced from 1900 to 1940 alone, and (2) providing rhetorical analysis and theorizing that accounts for rhetorical verse. Perusing a labor archive alone, one would most likely find poem after poem of rhetorical verse, most of which, I suspect, have not been studied and are likely no longer in print. Furthermore, rhetorical verse opens an entirely new body of texts (in fact, an entire new tradition) waiting for study by rhetoricians. And though in the past poetry has long been the domain of literary critics, rhetorical verse is a type of poetry uniquely suited to study by scholars of rhetoric.
- The production of rhetorical verse was not limited to early twentieth-century America. The 1960s saw a rise of the New Left, and with it, new forms of rhetorical verse spearheaded by poets like Adrienne Rich, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Allen Ginsberg among others. Furthermore, rhetorical verse is not necessarily a modern phenomenon. Horace's poetry in support of the Augustan regime in ancient Rome is another example of poetry responding to political exigencies and having persuasive designs. I suspect that regardless of historical period, scholars of rhetoric will always find examples of rhetorical verse, and tracing both its poetic and rhetorical evolution as a tradition is certainly a worthwhile historiographical effort.
- Rhetorical scholarship of the early twentieth-century often focuses on either

- presidential rhetoric or pedagogical histories. Rhetorical verse offers a new corpus of rhetorical texts for both theorists and historians of rhetoric to consider.
- This project suggest that poetry could even today be a powerful rhetorical medium. Studying the ways and contexts in which verse acts rhetorically could allow scholars of rhetoric to develop a contemporary rhetorical poetic, fully realizing and theorizing poetry's persuasive poetential.
 - The performativity of much rhetorical verse offers a broad range of study for those scholars interested in performance. As many of these poems were intended to be performed, either at rallies, picket lines, or simply at a reading, it is worth considering the implications of their embodied performance.
 - Finally, this project narrowly examined rhetorical verse in early twentieth-century America, a culmination of several thousand years of Western poetic and rhetorical evolution. Just as I have suggested researching rhetorical verse in other time periods, likewise is there the potential for research into the rhetorical verse produced in non-Western rhetorical and poetic traditions.

Final Thoughts

While the Elizabeth Bishop anecdote at the outset of this chapter suggested symbolically the decline of rhetorical verse (and decline it did), it nonetheless did not die out. Today, as communication technologies make it easier than ever to disseminate information, the potential of rhetorical verse has never been more exciting. Poetic performances can be streamed across the globe via YouTube and anyone can publish

verse on a blog or website. And many of the appeals of rhetorical verse in the early 1900s—its brevity, accessibility, and public stature—apply to poetry still.

There are many still today who would vociferously uphold W.H. Auden's assertion not only that “poetry makes nothing happen” (qtd. in Thurston 5), but even that poetry *should* make nothing happen. Likewise, many still would immediately mark poetry with persuasive designs as “bad.” But to do so overlooks the full potential of verse. And in defense of contemporary aesthetics, Muriel Rukeyser has more than shown throughout her career that rhetorical verse can push the aesthetic envelope while still persuading audiences.

In short, rhetorical verse has much to offer for both theorizers and historians of rhetoric, for lovers of poetry, and for anyone concerned with persuasive communication. Furthermore, rhetorical verse also offers insight into the rhetorical practices of the political left in the early twentieth-century. A staple of labor rhetoric, rhetorical verse played a significant role in the progressive labor gains made over the course of the early 1900s and the in modernization of the American workplace. Most significant, however, rhetorical verse offers a world of potential, historically and contemporaneously, for how rhetoric and poetry can (and often do) work together to make the world a better place.

Appendix A: A Timeline of the Events in Lawrence, Massachusetts

The golf links lie near the mill
That almost every day
The laboring children can look out
And see the men at play.

-Sarah N. Cleghorn, "The Golf Links," 1916

- January 1, 1912:** Massachusetts state law goes into effect stating that women and children under 18 could work no more than 54 hours per week.⁶⁴
- January 3, 1912:** I.W.W. Local 20 meets to discuss new law, agrees that mill owners' silence about new hourly rates meant wage cuts.
- January 10, 1912:** Italian branch of I.W.W. holds mass meeting of 1,000 Italian textile workers who unanimously vote to strike starting that Friday.
- January 11, 1912:** 1,750 weavers leave their looms in the Everett Cotton Mill.
- January 12, 1912:** Lawrence police respond to riot bells as workers from all of the textile mills walk out.
- January 13, 1912:** An estimated 20,000 textile workers are now on strike. Joseph Ettor arrives in Lawrence.
- January 15, 1912:** Police and militia begin guarding the mills through the night. Pickets turn out *en masse* before each of the mills
- January 19, 1912:** Arturo Giovannitti arrives in Lawrence.
- January 20, 1912:** The strike reaches its greatest strength at around 22,000 workers.
- January 24, 1912:** Big Bill Haywood and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn arrive in Lawrence.
- January 29, 1912:** Annie LoPizzo is killed by police during parade. Ettor and Giovannitti are arrested and charged with inciting her murder.
- Early February:** The United Textile Workers, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor., organizes a "relief station" to provide aid for striking workers. However, only those workers who pledged to return to work received aid.

⁶⁴ While this timeline is meant to give a general overview of the Lawrence strike, for more detailed histories see Foner; Watson; Brissenden; and Conlin.

- February 7, 1912:** In an attempt to expose the callousness of Lawrence authorities, the I.W.W., in connection with Socialist Party locals in New York, begin organizing a plan to send the children of striking workers to stay safely with sympathetic families in New York City until the end of the strike.
- February 10, 1912:** The first contingent of 119 children embarks by train for New York.
- February 21, 1912:** Ettor and Giovannitti are arraigned; Judge Mahoney finds probable cause of guilt and rules them held without bail until their trial.
- February 24, 1912:** A delegation of 200 children scheduled to leave Lawrence under the care of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn is stopped at the train station by police. When the mothers continued to try and place their children on the train, police drew clubs and assaulted the group of women, several of whom were pregnant. The story made global headlines and, along with Ettor and Giovannitti's arrest, helped shift popular sentiment on the strike from hostility to sympathy.
- February 26, 1912:** Both Houses of Congress spend the day in debate after being flooded with petitions demanding an investigation of the Lawrence strike.
- February 29, 1912:** The American Woolen Company (the largest mill owner in Lawrence) authorizes the Joint Committee of the state legislature to arrange a meeting with strikers' representatives on its behalf. Negotiations, which the general strike committee had previously rejected due to bias with independent arbitrators, begin in Boston.
- March 13, 1912:** The general strike committee accepts American Woolen Company's terms, achieves raises between five and twenty two percent for every worker in Lawrence. Strikes at American Woolen Company factories end.
- March 24, 1912:** Agreements with other textile mills reached. Strike officially called off and general strike committee disbanded. Workers begin to redirect their efforts into the Ettor-Giovannitti defense campaign.
- March 25, 1912:** Last company of militia leaves Lawrence.
- April 1, 1912:** Reverberations of the Lawrence strike's results are felt through New England. By this date, 275,000 textile workers had received wage increases as an indirect result of Lawrence.

- April 3, 1912:** Detroit News estimates that 438,000 textile workers across the country will receive between \$12,000,000 and \$15,000,000 in additional wages per year as a result of the Lawrence strike.
- May 1, 1912:** 5,000 textile workers march past the Salem jail where Ettor and Giovannitti were imprisoned singing the “Internationale” and carrying a banner that read “If Ettor and Giovannitti are to die, twenty million working men will know the reason why.”
- June 17, 1912:** Large protest held in Berlin for Ettor and Giovannitti's release from prison
- September 15, 1912:** Twenty-five thousand workers from all over Massachusetts gather on the Boston Common to hear twenty five speakers take up Ettor and Giovannitti's case.
- September 27, 1912:** A second Lawrence strike begins, with 10,000 textile workers walking out in protest of the impending trial of Ettor and Giovannitti.
- September 30, 1912:** The Ettor and Giovannitti trial begins. Workers in Lawrence begin a 24 hour general strike in protest.
- October 12, 1912:** Father James T. O'Reilly leads a patriotic parade in backlash to the I.W.W. organizers. A banner reading, “For God and Country / The Stars and Stripes Forever. The Red Flag Never! / A Protest Against the I.W.W. / Its Principles and its Methods” was hung above Essex Street in Lawrence.
- October 16, 1912:** Prosecutors begin laying out their case against Ettor and Giovannitti.
- November 23, 1912:** Ettor and Giovannitti give their closing speeches to the court.
- November 25, 1912:** Ettor and Giovannitti are acquitted of all charges.

Appendix B: A Timeline of the Events of the Sacco-Vanzetti Affair

- June 2, 1919:** A series of Galleanist-organized bombings rocked the eastern seaboard. A note attached to each bomb called for revolution against the U.S. Government and was signed “The Anarchist Fighters”
- April 15, 1920:** A robbery occurs in Braintree, Massachusetts leaving a paymaster and a security guard dead
- May 3, 1920:** High-ranking Galleanist Andrea Salsedo dies mysteriously in New York City after allegedly accusing Sacco and Vanzetti's group of anarchists for the 1919 bombings.
- May 5, 1920:** Ricardo Orciani, Mario Buda, Sacco, and Vanzetti go to a garage to retrieve Buda's car in order to hide their anarchist literature (and perhaps a cache of dynamite) for fear of being deported. The garage was already under surveillance due to suspicions about Buda being involved in the Braintree robbery. Sacco and Vanzetti fled by streetcar, only to be arrested and searched.
- May 6, 1920:** Sacco and Vanzetti are questioned by the district attorney for what they thought was the reason for their arrest: their belief in anarchism, which in 1920 was a deportable offense.
- May 9, 1920:** The Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee is formed by members of Sacco and Vanzetti's anarchist circle.
- June 22, 1920:** Vanzetti's trial for a separate robbery in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. Sacco's timecard at the shoe factory showed that he was at work during the Bridgewater robbery, so he was never charged.
- July 1, 1920:** Vanzetti is convicted of robbery and attempted murder in the Bridgewater case.
- September 11, 1920:** Sacco and Vanzetti are indicted for the Braintree robbery and murders. Webster Thayer is the presiding judge.
- May 31, 1921:** Trial begins at Dedham, Massachusetts.

- July 14, 1921:** Case goes to jury. After deliberating three hours, jury returns a guilty verdict
- November 8, 1921:** The first of many motions for a new trial made over the next three years.
- October 1, 1924:** Judge Thayer denies all motions for new trial.
- May 12, 1926:** Massachusetts Supreme Court upholds Sacco and Vanzetti's conviction.
- August 3, 1927:** Governor Fuller says he will not intervene in the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti.
- August 23, 1928:** Sacco and Vanzetti are executed.

Appendix C: A Timeline of the Events of the Scottsboro Affair

- March 25, 1931:** The Chattanooga to Memphis freight is stopped by an angry posse in Paint Rock Alabama. Inside are nine African American boys and two white women in mens overalls and caps. The nine boys are taken to Scottsboro, where the two women accuse them of rape.
- March 30, 1931:** The boys are indicted by a grand jury.
- April 6-9, 1931:** All boys are eventually convicted and sentenced to death in a series of day-long trials.
- June 22, 1931:** Boys receive stay-of-execution pending appeal to the Alabama Supreme Court.
- April-December 1931:**ILD and NAACP file a series of appeals on behalf of the boys.
- January 1932:** NAACP withdraws from the case.
- March 24, 1932:** Alabama Supreme Court upholds seven of the nine convictions, granting Eugene Williams a new trial because he was a juvenile at the time of his first.
- November 7, 1932:** Supreme Court of the United States rules the boys' consitutional rights were violated. Moves for new trial.
- January 1933:** The ILD asks Samuel Leibowitz to take over counsel for the boys *pro bono*.
- April 6, 1933:** Ruby Bates appears as witness for the defense, now denying any rape occurred.
- February 15, 1935:** Case returns to U.S. Supreme Court.
- April 1, 1935:** In a landmark ruling, U.S. Supreme Court orders new trials for the boys on grounds that eligible African Americans were intentionally left off of the segregated jury, effectively desegregating southern juries.

- January 26, 1936:** Ozzie Powell, one of the defendants, is shot in the head for attempting to slash a deputy with a knife.
- July 24, 1937:** Rape charges against final four defendants dropped. The five who were convicted received life sentences.
- November 15, 1938:** Alabama governor denies clemency for remaining five Scottsboro boys.

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M.F.A. in Poetry, Pennsylvania State University, Fall 2007-Spring 2010

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Selected Awards and Fellowships

CALS Dissertation Fellowship, Research Stipend, Course Release, Fall 2012-Spring 2013

Wilma Ebbitt Fellowship in Rhetoric, Travel Monies, Fall 2010-Spring 2011

Selected Publications

Forthcoming: "Snapshots of Identification: Kenneth Burke and T.S. Eliot" in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 44.4 (September 2014): Print.

"Something to Push Up Against: Using Theory as Creative Pedagogy" with Kimberly Quiogue Andrews in the anthology *Dispatches from the Classroom*. Eds. Chris Drew, Joseph Rein, and David Yost. New York: Continuum, 2012. Print.

Selected Conference Presentations

"Aelia Eudokia: An Empress Poet's Contributions to the Rhetorical Tradition" Conference on College Composition and Communication. Indianapolis. March 2014

"Aristotle, Antistrophos, and Banal Classicism" National Communication Association. Washington D.C. November 2013.

"The Songbird and the Dissident: Stesichorus, Aristotle, and the Fable." Rhetoric Society of America. Philadelphia. May 2012.

"Something to Push Up Against: Using Theory as Creative Pedagogy." Conference on College Composition and Communication. St. Louis. March 2012