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Iconography of the Labour Movement

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Iconography of the Labour Movement.
Part 2: Socialist Iconography, 1848–1952

Abstract: This is Part 2 of a two-part study which aims at preliminary conclusions regarding the iconography of the international labour movement. Earlier research in the fields of social history, art history and visual rhetorics has been consulted for this purpose. After 1848, emerging socialist parties and labour unions depended on republican iconography for their manifestation of collective identity. The republican virtues of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity remained important, but Fraternity was gradually replaced or merged with Unity and Solidarity. In a process akin to the identification of the goddess of Liberty with a more common “Marianne”, the representation of Unity and manual work in socialist iconography became focused on images of individual male or female workers. In earlier prints and illustrations, these representations have strong affinities with how the concept of labour was personified in official monuments of the same period. Later, the doctrine of socialist solidarity between agricultural and industrial workers transformed the bipartite iconographic scheme of earlier personifications of Unity into a representation of agriculture and industry, or country and city. After 1917, the dilemma of how to represent dual aspects of society and its functions also included questions about the representations of the socialist leader. The Hjalmar Branting monument in Stockholm serves as an example of how the iconography of reformist social democracy is not always comparable to Soviet socialist realism.

Keywords: Labour Unions, Social Democracy, Communism, Russian Revolution, Soviet Union, Austria, Germany, United States of America, Sweden, Personification, Composition

Iconography of the Labour Movement

Part I: Socialist Iconography, 1848–1952

Fred Andersson



Fig. 1. Ange-Louis Janet (1811–1872), *La République*, 1848. Oil on canvas, 72.5 x 59 cm. Musée Carnavalet, Paris, acquisition number P188 (acquired in 1888). Image source: Online catalogue of Musée Carnavalet, <http://www.carnavalet.paris.fr/fr/collections>

The origin of the strong connection between labour unionism and socialist ideology in Europe is conveniently traced back to the events of 1848. In February of that year, and in anticipation of anti-monarchist and nationalist uprisings all over Europe, Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) published their *Communist manifesto*. It was written for the League of Communists, formed in Paris by groups of immigrant German labourers. In the manifesto, Marx and Engels famously stated that the interests of the communists are no other than those of the proletariat; communists will temporarily unite with liberal and bourgeois factions in the revolt against monarchy and feudal tradition, but the union will be short indeed.

At this stage Marx and Engels did not foresee the extent to which real events would soon prove them right in a most ironic fashion. The deep divide between liberal-democratic and radical-popular opposition was one of the main reasons for the failure of all revolts outside France. In the Austrian empire, the strong nationalist component created further tensions between Pan-Germanic, Hungarian and Slavic movements. The violence of March and October 1848 in Vienna ended with small steps towards liberal reform, but more large-scale outcomes of these would not materialise until much later.

To some extent the modern or radical labour unions grew out of fraternities which were part of the old guilds of trades and crafts. The influence of socialist ideas in literate circles of skilled labourers and craftsmen was an important factor. But because the guild system was protected by conservative legislators in most parts of Europe, except in England and France, it hampered both free trade and the development of new forms of political organisation, such as free labour unions.¹ As Marx and Engels realised early on, it was industrial capitalism and its large-scale exploitation that brought workers together and provided the necessary conditions for a unified labour movement; as long as industrial development was controlled by conservative and protectionist state policies, socialism would not attract the masses. In that respect, the German-speaking parts of Europe were a lost cause for Marx and Engels after 1848. They both took refuge in Britain, with Engels acting in the double role of political organiser and British representative of the profitable industrial business of the Engels family. It fell to others to inspire and organise the early socialist labour movement in Germany, Austria, and later the Nordic countries.

Socialist iconography in German-speaking Europe and in the USA

In the work *Blutigrot und silbrig hell*, from 1991, the art historian Josef Seiter (b. 1950) has summarised his long inquiry into the imagery, symbolism and agitational traditions of the social-democratic movement in Austria. The title of the book, which roughly translates as “Red as blood and light as silver”, refers to the red and white of both the party of the Austrian social democrats and the flags of the post-1918 republics of Austria. Seiter traces this colour symbolism back to March 1848 in Vienna. He quotes an eyewitness, Andreas Scheu, whose mother sold flowers and decorations. Sympathetic with the revolutionaries, she distributed all her red and white items for free until nothing was left.² White stood for the quest for freedom of the press, and it was the dominant colour of the revolutionary movement before this goal was reached on 14 March 1848.³ Red was already closely associated with the attributes of radical French republicanism, such as the *bonnet rouge*, and the red flag of the *sans-culottes*. In Paris earlier the same year, both public opinion and leading intellectuals such as Louis Blanc (1811–1882) were in favour of replacing the French Tricolour with a red flag. According to Blanc, a single colour would be a more proper symbol of the unity of the people. However, the proposition was turned down.⁴

Pan-Germanic nationalism already had its own tricolour: the black, red and yellow one, which is still the flag of unified Germany, black and yellow (or gold) being the old Habsburg colours – and liberally inclined fraternities of craftsmen tended to favour blue for their standards and banners. It was therefore quite logical that red should become the main colour of the socialist labour movement in all German-speaking regions, and soon also in the Nordic countries. Initially, the importance of the colour was expressed in verbal discourse more than in actual use. The inaugural speech of Ferdinand Lasalle (1825–1864) at the constitutional meeting of *Der Allgemeine Deutsche Arbeiterverein* (General German Worker’s Association) in 1863 is often quoted as decisive. In the speech, Lasalle stressed the importance of a unified front of all wage labourers irrespective of origin, industry or skill, and he associated this unity and solidarity with the image of one single banner, the colour of which would preferably be red.⁵

Already for Lasalle’s funeral the following year, a song was written in which one verse referred to “the banner given us by Lasalle”.⁶ However, not until 1873 was a red banner officially inaugurated in one of the sections of Lasalle’s movement. The banner, now in the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Bonn, is inscribed with two mottos on its front side: that of the French Revolution (“*Freiheit, Gleichheit, Brüderlichkeit!*”), and that of strength through unity (“*Einigkeit macht stark!*”). The symbol of the handshake inside a wreath of oak leaves adorns the centre of the banner; the oak branches are bound together with a white band, and on it is written Ferdinand Lasalle’s name and the date “*23 Mai 1863*” (the foundational date of *Der Allgemeine Deutsche Arbeiterverein*).⁷

This was not the first red flag or banner to be displayed at meetings and manifestations of socialist societies and groups. A red banner had a prominent placement at the first congress of the Socialist International in Geneva in 1866, and the red banner of the Danish section of the International was inaugurated in 1872.⁸ The years 1866, 1872 and 1873 mark greater formalisation and ritualisation of the status of the red banner. The novelty of a costly and official banner of the German labour movement, a jubilee banner in honour of its founder Lasalle, was symbolically important. It was soon to be followed by similar banners and standards of labour unions and social-democratic parties in Germany, Austria, Hungary and the Nordic countries. The general message of the Lasalle banner is symptomatic of how republican symbols and mottos were now assim-

ilated by the labour movement and adapted to its cause. Its handshake expresses both the concept of Fraternity and that of Unity, which was growing in importance. The presence of oak leaves as a general attribute of strength underscores the importance of the notion of strength through unity. The triad of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity is retained as an inscription, but it has been supplanted by the more explicitly partisan one of Unity.

Similarly to how the earlier use of *Citoyen*/Citizen and *Frère*/Brother as salutary terms in radical circles were replaced by the gender neutral Comrade (in French, *Camarade*, in German, *Genosse*, in Swedish, *Kamrat*), the idea of Brotherhood or Fraternity was gradually replaced by that of Unity and Solidarity. Labour historians have studied how in France the concept of *fraternité* was marginalised in favour of *solidarité* at the same time as political sympathies switched from the old “liberal” fraternities to the socialist labour movement at the end of the 19th century.⁹ A similar development can be traced in other countries.

As shown by Seiter, the labour unions in Austria were earlier associated with a modification of the old Masonic handshake into the form of two hands united, holding an upright hammer. Around 1880 this symbol was so common as a badge or pin worn by factory workers that the Austrian police and ministry of interior monitored its use.¹⁰ Here it should be recalled that the hammer of the mason or blacksmith, as well as the carpenter’s square and the pair of compasses, were attributes frequently used by both masonic lodges and craftsmen’s guilds. The hammer took precedence as a particularly salient symbol of industrial work, and it was later to form one half of the emblem of socialist industry and agriculture known internationally as the *hammer and the sickle*.

The sickle as an attribute has connections to both agricultural and female work. In this respect it is different from the scythe, which was introduced as a harvesting tool already in Roman times, but never seems to have appeared in depictions of harvesting women between the 2nd and 16th centuries. Evidence of the division of labour in Europe from the 17th century onwards shows that to the extent that women were engaged in reaping at all, it was most probably with a sickle rather than a scythe.¹¹ The combination of men and women holding hammers and sickles would become an iconographic device which in an intriguing way expressed the unity in socialist or communist society of town and country as well as man and woman. In the case of Austria, however, Seiter has

not been able to find any widespread use of attributes of agricultural or female work in the iconography of social democrats before 1918. Male personifications and male attributes predominated – with the notable exception of Marianne or Liberty. In the Hungarian part of the double monarchy, however, the hammer was combined with the sickle as early as in 1904 in a badge for that year’s May Day demonstration. On the badge, the crossed tools are depicted against a background of industrial buildings and a rising sun.¹²

Both the rising sun (with or without a divine eye) and the terrestrial globe, along with the handshake, belonged to the symbolic elements passed on from French republicanism to the labour movement.¹³ Of course, attributes of various professions were also important in labour union contexts. As an example of works that could provide such visual inspiration, consider Ange-Louis Janet’s (1811–1872) *La République* (fig. 1), which Janet submitted in the contest for the official personification of the second French republic in 1848 (cfr Part 1 of the present study, in *ICO – Iconographisk Post*, no. 1–2 2020).

In this image, Republic sits on a throne amidst heaps of piled-up tools and products of industry, agriculture and the arts. The symbols of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity are depicted only in a secondary manner – as medallions that are carved on the front side of the dais on which the throne rests. (Compare this with the recommendations, quoted in Part 1, for how submissions to the contest should include the three republican virtues and the colours of the Tricolour). Between the medallions two inscriptions in loose handwriting are visible: “*Liberté des cultes*” (freedom of worship) and “*Liberté de la presse*” (freedom of the press). To the immediate left of the dais, we see a sheaf of grain, a rake, a watering can, a scythe and a sickle. To the right, a blacksmith’s hammer and other attributes of metal work, building, mining and the fine arts. Republic wears a blue robe – loosely draped around her lower torso and legs – and a white dress edged with the colours of the Tricolour around the neck. In her right hand she holds the scales of Justice, and in her left, a flaming torch. In the background we see to the left an industrial building with a shipyard at a sea shore, and to the right the erection of a church (a shining cross is clearly visible).

Originating from stately allegories such as this one, the torch became a common symbol of banners and print matters commissioned by socialist labour unions at the end of the 19th century – both in Europe and in the USA. Sometimes the torch is held by a goddess of Liberty, with or without a Phrygian

cap. It is not difficult to guess from which main source these devices derived their popularity – from the Statue of Liberty by Bartholdi, inaugurated in New York in 1886. But with its crown of rays instead of the Phrygian cap, Bartholdi's statue represents a liberal or liberal-conservative version of Liberty. As Marina Warner puts it: "Although the political history of the statue, and its French origin, have not been erased from its story, Liberty is no longer La Liberté, but was identified from the start with an American ideal of democracy, now represented as an American gift to the world."¹⁴ In socialist contexts, it was the torch and not the crown of rays which proved instrumental for expressing the concepts of enlightenment and truth.

We will now look at an example of this. At Christmas in 1888 in New York, the immigrant German newspaper *New Yorker Volks-Zeitung* presented its readers with a versed New Year's greeting for which a lithograph print was composed by a certain "F. Cambensy" (fig. 2).¹⁵ The verse, printed on a large sheet which is presented to the reader by the goddess of Liberty, exalts the theme of "Das alte Banner" (the old banner). In the words of the poet, this banner has the colour of "Das einige, geliebte Roth" (the only and beloved red), the wind in which it moves is compared to "Der Athem reinster Menschlichkeit" (the breath of purest humanity). Consequently, the red banner behind the goddess carries the inscription "Das Banner der Humanität" (the banner of humanity). It is adorned with a laurel wreath and three fringed bands inscribed with the three mottos of the French Revolution. The goddess proudly wears a *bonnet rouge* and holds a torch from which the words "Recht" (justice) and "Wahrheit" (truth) emanate in rays of light. She raises the torch in her right hand, as in Bartholdi's statue. She is also armed with a sword, the tip of which points at one of the four poisonous snakes that she tramples under her feet. On the snakes are written spiteful terms such as "Lüge" (lie), "Sophismus" (sophistry) and "Klassenbevorzugung" (class privilege). In comparison to such 18th century allegories as that of *Gouvernement* in Gravelot's and Cochin's *Iconologie* (see Part I, *Iconographisk Post*, no. 1–2, 2020), the snake has now acquired a fully negative iconographic meaning.

The space around Liberty is filled with various references to different professions and to industrious work and studies. Seafaring and heavy industry are represented in the background. To Liberty's left we see a blacksmith's anvil and hammers, to the right oak leaves and various objects of agriculture, forestry, sea-



Fig. 2. "F. Cambensy" (pseudonym?), *Neujahrs-Gruss* (New Year's Greeting), printed for inclusion in *New Yorker Volks-Zeitung*, Christmas Sunday edition 1888. Chromolithograph, 48.3 x 68.6 cm, private collection (offered for sale at Heritage Auctions, November 2014). Image Source: Heritage Auctions, membership access.

The extensive and valuable cultural heritage represented by painted and embroidered banners of labour movements in Sweden has been studied by art historians Thomas Millroth and Margareta Ståhl (both born in 1947). Millroth summarised his findings in a few short essays published around 1980; some of his observations were later developed by Ståhl in her far more detailed research. Through her supervisor, Lena Johannesson (b. 1945), Ståhl became affiliated with the research project *Arbetarrörelsen och språket* (Labour Movement and Language), in which she focused on the communicative function of flags, standards and banners in Swedish workers' organisations from the mid-1800s to 1890. In order to investigate the historical background of iconography and mottos, as well as the reception of socialist demands and symbols in public debate, Ståhl documented and studied a large corpus of newspaper articles, meeting protocols, letters and half-forgotten publications. Ståhl's position as an archivist of the Swedish Labour Movement's Archive and Library (ARAB) gave her continuous access to this kind of material.¹⁹ The main results were published in her doctoral thesis, defended in 1999 at Linköping University. The title of the thesis was borrowed from a memorial pamphlet with which Hjalmar Branting was honoured after his release from prison on 28 October 1889: *Vår fana röd till färgen* (Our banner of the colour Red).²⁰

Like Maurice Agulhon (1926–2014) before them, both Millroth and Ståhl have stressed how the division between liberal and socialist organisations and ideas was symbolically articulated in the latter half of the 19th century. The clearest visual proof of this articulation and differentiation was the gradual replacement of the old blue or white guild and union banners with red ones.²¹ In Sweden this process started with the inauguration of the standard of the Carpentry Worker's Union of Stockholm (*Stockholms Träarbetareförening*) in December 1883. In 1885 a red flag with crossed torches, a handshake and the motto "*Frihet, Jemlikhet, Broderskap*" (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity) was inaugurated by the Union of Manual Labourers in Malmö (*Malmö arbetarnafackförening*), and in 1886 the social democratic clubs in Gothenburg and Stockholm both adopted red banners with the same motto.²² In other red banners and flags which soon followed, the goddess of Liberty with a torch became a popular motif. As Millroth remarks, some elements more associated with older or "liberal" banners were sometimes retained, for example the beehive as a symbol of unity and assiduity, and Marianne without a Phrygian cap. Later

such elements tended to disappear, and as the revolutionary years of 1917–1918 drew closer, many new banners depicted industrial buildings, workplace scenes and individual workers carrying a torch or a tool. Workers represented were usually male. Such banners were especially associated with a banner painter active in Gothenburg, Axel Wilhelm Bergqvist (1859–1927).²³

Liberty, Equality and Fraternity remained important for the mottos found on banners, but phrases referring to organisational unity and solidarity were gaining importance. Millroth lists some typical examples from the years around 1900. Most of them correspond directly to mottos used in recruitment campaigns by British and American labour unions: "Unity is strength" ("*Enighet ger styrka*"), "United we stand, divided we fall" ("*Enade vi stå, söndrade vi falla*"), "Organisation is power" ("*Organisation är makt*"), "Organisation and knowledge is power" ("*Enighet och upplysning är makt*"), "In brotherhood lies our strength" ("*Uti broderskapet styrkan*"), "Workers unite" ("*Arbetare förena er*"), "Sons of labour all unite" ("*Arbetets söner sluten er alla*"), "Proletarians of all countries unite" ("*Proletärer i alla land förena er*") and "Join your union" ("*Gå in i din fackförening*").²⁴ The Swedish phrase "*Arbetets söner sluten er alla*" (sons of labour all unite) is, however, the opening line of the march song *Arbetets söner*, written by the proletarian poet Henrik Menander (1853–1917) and first printed in *Social-Demokraten* in 1885. It became the most popular song of the social democratic movement in Sweden and is still today sung every year in the party's May Day demonstrations.

In 1902 Menander also translated into Swedish Eugène Pottier's (1816–1887) *L'Internationale* (1871). It became the song of the new Left Social Democratic Party (*Sveriges socialdemokratiska vänsterparti*), which soon evolved into the Swedish Communist Party (SKP), after the controversy over Bolshevism in 1917 and the constitution of the Third International in 1919. With his translation, Menander gave Swedish workers some apt illustrations of crucial *topoi* in socialist agitation. Pottier's "*Le monde va changer de base / Nous ne sommes rien, soyons tout!*" he translated quite differently as "*Från mörkret stiga vi mot ljuset / Från intet allt vi vilja bli*" (approximately, "from darkness we rise towards the light, from nothing we aspire to everything"), thus connecting spiritual light symbolism to the importance of self-education.²⁵ Pottier's last verse about how workers (*ouvriers*) and peasants (*paysans*) will join forces as the great party of the workers (*le grand parti des travailleurs*), putting an end

to the rule of idlers and preparing a future in which the sun will shine brighter, was translated more to the letter by Menander and prepared for the combined symbolism of hammer and sickle referred to above.

These Swedish examples serve to demonstrate how in the agitation and propaganda of the international labour movement the republican traditions were now slowly abandoned in favour of concepts and representations with which workers could more readily identify. The ancient practice of representing civic virtues as female personifications was for the most part abandoned in favour of the male worker as representative of the working class and the socialist and industrial future. The first scholar to pay any close attention to this ideological shift was probably Eric Hobsbawm, in a 1978 article for *History Workshop*, the journal of socialist historians in Britain. Hobsbawm generally took for granted that the iconographic precedence of male characters expressed real conditions of the division of labour at the time; it would seem that at the end of the 19th century men dominated the industrial labour force to an increasing extent and that, correspondingly, women were being largely confined to work at home, or simply to unpaid domestic work.²⁶ A group of feminist scholars immediately took issue with Hobsbawm, pointing out that workplaces with a female majority and organisational work led by women were still neglected areas in academic research.²⁷ In her 1997 book *Iconography of Power*, Victoria E. Bonnell refers to this debate and calls for a more nuanced analysis of how male and female characters interacted as personifications of different aspects of society and of the working class, especially in Russia.²⁸ Her research has been the main inspiration for the next two sections of this article.

Prejudiced opinions about the masculine or “patriarchal” character of labour unionism are countered by such examples as the local club of seamstresses in Landskrona, Sweden. It was founded on 9 September 1906 and immediately applied for membership in the nationwide Women’s Labour Union (*Kvinnornas fackförbund*).²⁹ The club’s banner was commissioned from Viktor Lindblad’s decoration firm in Örebro and was inaugurated in 1907 (fig. 4).³⁰ Its iconography is typical of the comparatively traditional output of Lindblad’s firm



Fig. 4. Banner of the labour union of seamstresses in Landskrona, founded in 1906. Collection of the Archive of the Labour Movement in Landskrona, Sweden. Photo Fred Andersson.

at the time. On the front side, the inscription on the upper band announces the name of the club. The lower band appears to wrap around a globe and carries the date of the club's foundation and the mottos of Equality and Brotherhood (although the members were exclusively "sisters"). The virtue of Liberty is not written out; instead it is presented as a "Marianne", who stands on the globe, in front of a seascape with a rising sun. She carries a torch in her left hand and is of the type without a *bonnet rouge*. An additional and larger torch is attached to the terrestrial globe, which is surrounded by a wreath of oak and laurel leaves. On the back side, a handshake is depicted inside a similar wreath and two crossed torches. This emblem is accompanied with the motto "*Vi strida för frihet och mänskörätt*" (We fight for freedom and the rights of mankind).

Here the symbolism of light and the Enlightenment is strikingly prominent, combined with symbols of international solidarity (globe), unity (handshake), organisational strength (oak) and victory (laurel). As a symbol not only of the triumphant warrior, but also of Apollonian merits, the laurel has often been used in emblems of socialist study organisations, publishing houses and libraries.

Unity and division in four representations of Work

In Finland, which before 1917 belonged to the Russian empire as a grand duchy, Czar and Grand Duke Alexander II (1818–1881) introduced the first steps towards liberal reform. In 1863 at the Finnish parliamentary assembly, or *lantdag*, he put forward a proposition which confirmed the autonomous status of the grand duchy and strengthened the position of the Finnish-speaking majority against the traditionally Swedish-speaking nobility and bourgeoisie. After the assassination of Alexander II, in 1881, Finnish authorities issued a call for the erection of his monument in the Senate Square in Helsinki. In the competition for the monument, the top-ranked proposals were by Johannes Takanen (1849–1885) and Walter Runeberg (1838–1920). In the end, it was decided that the two would share the commission. Takanen would execute the main statue of the czar, and Runeberg would develop the four pedestal groups outlined in his proposal. However, Takanen's premature death, in 1885, meant that Runeberg assumed responsibility for the whole project. Of interest for the present topic is only one of his four pedestal groups, placed at the west side of the present monument and dedicated to *Labor*, Labour (fig. 5).

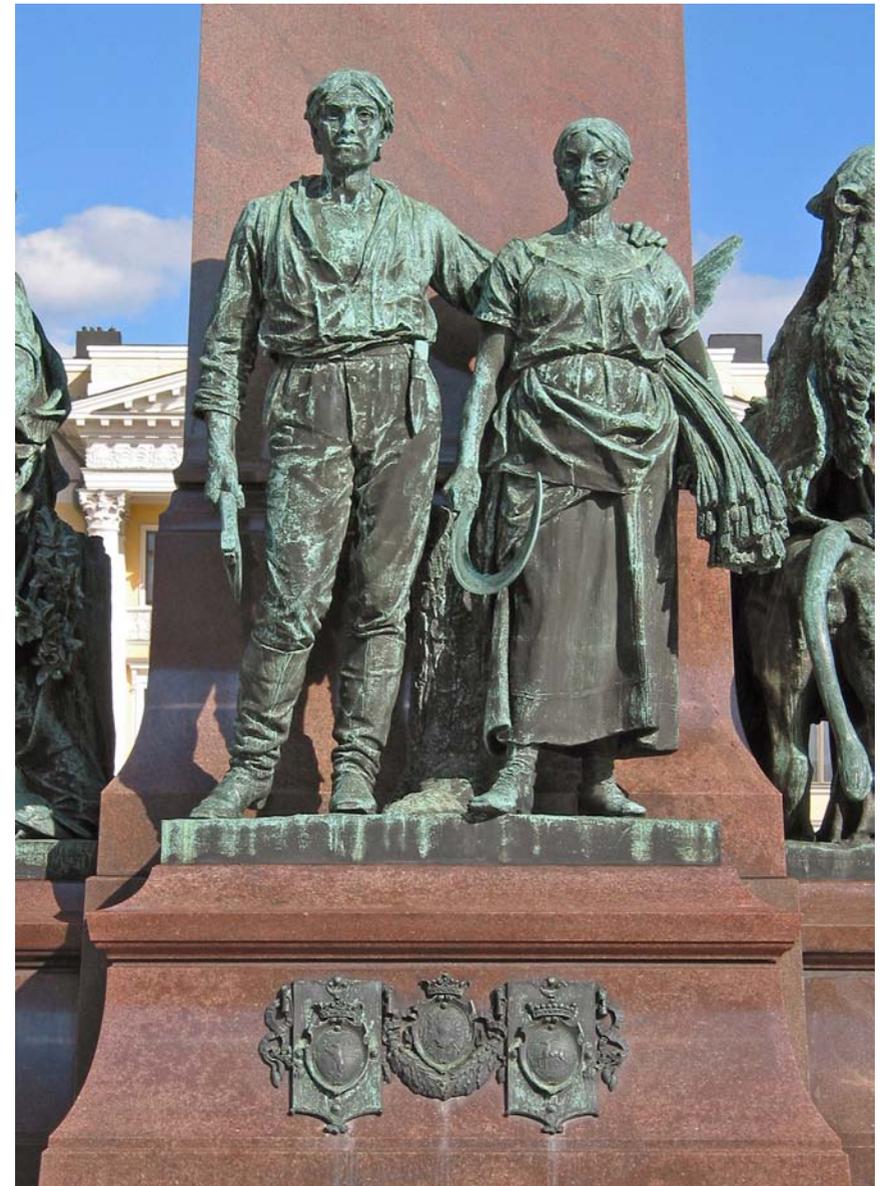


Fig. 5. Walter Runeberg (1839–1921), Labor, the western pedestal group of Czar Alexander II's monument in Helsinki. Inaugurated on 29 April 1894. Bronze, height 2,3 m. (Original plaster cast replaced in December 1894.) Photo Lars Berggren.

This group proved to be the most problematic element of Runeberg's monument project. In contrast to the allegorical representations of various civic virtues on the other sides of the pedestal, the man and the woman of *Labor* are the only characters in this program which aim at a realistic depiction of representatives of the common people. Runeberg's first biographer, Petrus Nordmann (1858–1923), quotes numerous statements and letters from members of the monument committee about this discrepancy.³¹ In the final version seen at the Senate Square today, both the man and the woman clearly represent rural work, or agriculture and forestry. As expected, the woman holds the sickle and the sheaf of grain, and the man the axe. Runeberg, who executed all the sculptures for the monument in his Paris studio, might have taken iconographic guidance from such contemporary French works as *La Moisson* (The Harvest) by Henri Michel Chapu (1833–1891). Chapu's work was finished in 1883 as part of a sculptural program for the rebuilt Hôtel de Ville de Paris. His personification of Harvest holds the scythe in her right hand and supports the sheaf of grain with her left, similarly to the woman in Runeberg's *Labor*.³²

The models and sketches for Runeberg's original proposal of 1884 seem to be lost, but there is ample evidence that *Labor* underwent major changes before the final inauguration of the monument ten years later. Apparently the first conception of *Labor* included only the female personification, with her sickle and her sheaf of grain; according to a Helsinki newspaper report, she was accompanied by a butter churn and a circular saw blade.³³ This part of the proposal did not pass the scrutiny of the monument committee, and in 1885 it was decided that the *Labor* and *Pax* groups both should be revised by Takanen.³⁴ However, Takanen passed away later the same year, and the revision task went back to Runeberg. A newspaper report from 1888 describes his new version of *Labor*: "[...] a boy and a girl, the former jauntily standing on a machine part, the girl carrying a sheaf".³⁵ A committee member quoted by Nordmann was somewhat more specific: "[...] the representative of industry thrown into the group Labor, the blacksmith boy, who stood straddle-legged on a pair of cog-wheels which in turn rested on a cylinder, should be reworked".³⁶ A new version of the group was demanded, but in December 1892 Runeberg told an interviewer from the Helsinki newspaper *Nya Pressen* that he had not yet begun it.³⁷ After it was finally finished and accepted by the committee in the autumn of 1893, there was no time to cast it in bronze before the inauguration of the

monument on Sunday, 29 April 1894. A painted plaster cast had to be temporarily erected for the occasion.³⁸

Despite all attributes of industrial production being omitted, the group was still described as a representation of both agriculture and industry by some commentators.³⁹ It seems that Runeberg's final solution was dictated more by aesthetic concerns than any explicit ideological bias towards industrialism. Still, the treatment of the topic proved difficult and was probably at odds with traditional conceptions of Finland as a primarily agricultural nation. *Labor* remained somewhat of an exception both in Runeberg's production and in Finnish public sculpture at large. Thirty-three years after its completion, a letter to the editor in *Borgåbladet*, the newspaper in Borgo/Porvoo, the artist's place of birth, questioned the alleged "greatness" of Runeberg. The letter asserted that genuine greatness cannot be claimed for a sculptor who commits the grave "error" of inserting amidst antique and allegorical elements a group displaying "a Finnish farmer and his wife" who "approach us with their base and far from beautiful features".⁴⁰ Even though *Labor* represents a rather conservative conception of the people of Finland and leaves out its growing industrial proletariat, the very presence of common people seems to have distorted the image of Runeberg as the leading classicist among Finnish sculptors.

A contemporary of Runeberg's, Walter Crane (1845–1915) was an influential member of the British Arts and Crafts movement and a strong proponent of the strain of ideology known as "guild socialism". In this role, he provided illustrations for such journals as *The Commonweal* (edited by William Morris), *Justice* and *The Labour Leader*. Some of these prints/illustrations were reprinted in the collection *Cartoons for the cause* (1896), with plate no. 10 originally printed in *The Labour Leader* as the journal's Christmas address to its readers in 1894 (fig. 6). The lines of verse included in the cartoon comprise the end of a longer Christmas poem by Crane, printed on the opposite page. With its pious wish for "good luck to labour, hand, heart and brain", the verse harmonises well with the dreamy utopianism of the cartoon, typical of Crane's style.

In this cartoon, Labour is represented as an ideal couple of small-scale farmers or tenants with a single child. The placement of tools on the ground serve to accentuate the division between female and male spheres of labour. In a manner echoing the composition of earlier allegories such as Janet's *La République* (fig. 1), the rake is placed to the left, beside the mother, and tools of heavier, mas-

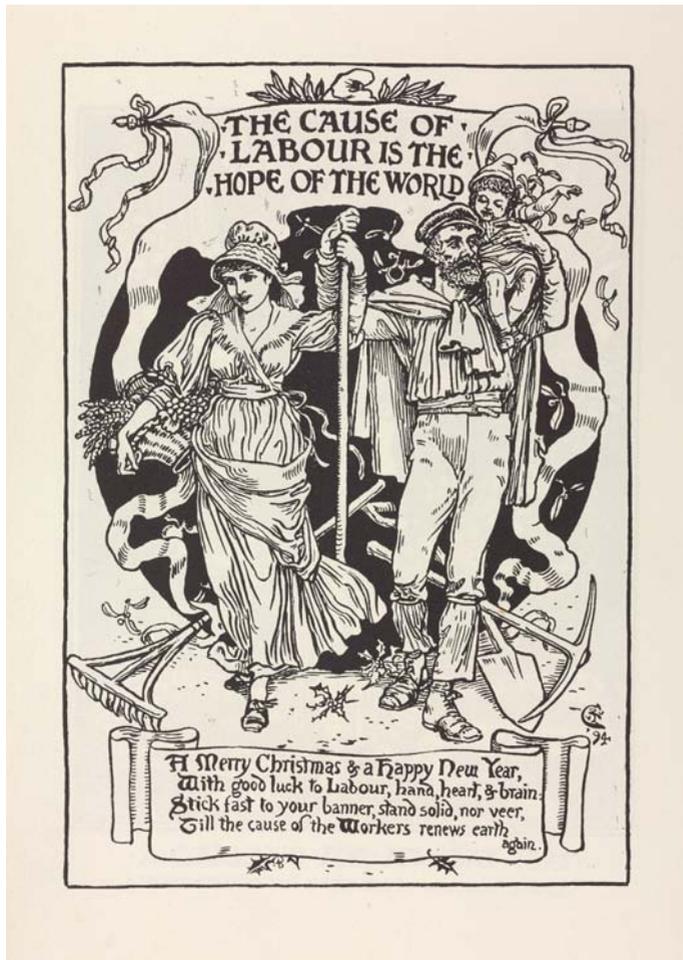


Fig. 6. Walter Crane (1845–1915), *A Merry Christmas*. Plate 10 of *Cartoons for the Cause* 1886–1896: A souvenir of the International Socialist Workers and Trade Union Congress, 1896. Eighteen sheets (including 12 plates), each sheet 50 x 32 cm. Limited edition. Image source: Yale University Library, Beinecke Library.

culine work (spade and pickaxe) to the right. The mother carries the results of the harvest, and the father their child. As if walking in a May Day demonstration, they jointly carry the standard on which the main motto of the allegory is written: “The cause of labour is the hope of the world”. At the top of the pole, a Phrygian cap crowns the composition. The child, precariously balanced on the father’s shoulder, raises an arm in an inciting gesture, and wears another Phrygian cap.

Given these signs, the child can be interpreted as a personification of the

“hope” of which the motto speaks; it embodies simultaneously the future, the cause of labour and the virtue of Liberty. In the context of “guild socialism” and the romantic rural ideals favoured by Crane and his circle, it is noteworthy that the message of the composition does not refer to specific kinds of workers or labourers who will unite, but only to “labour”, “the world” and “the hope” (as represented by the child) in a more abstract manner. The composition, with the central pole symmetrically dividing and uniting the gendered female and male sides with their attributes, connote notions of private prosperity and harmony rather than organisational work at a larger societal level.

Cartoonists contributing to leftist publications with a wider readership in the growing industrial labour force naturally adopted a less romantic idiom. In a short but perceptive study, journalism professor Linda J. Lumsden (b. 1954) of the University of Arizona has analysed some examples from American socialist, syndicalist and anarchist journals such as *Industrial Worker* (published by the IWW union, 1906–present), *Appeal to Reason* (1895–1919) and *The Masses* (1911–1917). She considers these political cartoons to display rhetorical processes of social identity formation. Among such processes she mentions categorisation, comparison and psychological distinctiveness.⁴¹

A successful polemical or satirical message facilitates the audience’s categorisation of values and features into “ours” and “theirs” or “us and “them”; the elements representing the categories must be kept psychologically distinct from each other, and the final point of the message or joke is often reached by means of rhetorical comparison. Several of Lumsden’s examples are didactically bipartite. In one, the right half of the cartoon is occupied by a ridiculously small worker who places his pathetic vote in a ballot box guarded by a gargantuan capitalist. To the left, the relationship is inverted, and tiny capitalists shiver beneath the proletarian giant of direct action and strike.

In another similar example, one sees in the left background the U. S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., and in the right, a factory. This opposition is repeated in the foreground, with a stereotypically “bourgeois” politician standing on the Washington side, and an IWW activist on the opposite, factory side. Between them, an indecisive wage worker carrying a shovel is presented with a choice. The politician offers him a ballot and points down a road that leads to the Capitol on the horizon. The IWW activist, who carries the spiked club of “direct action”, points in the opposite direction, to the right, towards the factory, and

exclaims: “Here is the place where you are robbed”.⁴² In this example, the rhetorical visual comparison involves both the “left to right” axis and the close-far axis in pictorial space. In the foreground, close to the viewer, the immediate choice is presented. In the background, far away, the sites where the potential outcomes will occur are visible. A road leads to one of these destinations in the distance/future. This is a visual idiom familiar from the iconography of Hercules at the crossroads.

This binary didactic structure is very different from the one in Runeberg’s *Labor*, Crane’s *A Merry Christmas* or any similar compositions. In these earlier examples, the pair of personifications are always heading “towards” us in representational space with no indication of a choice to be made between contrasting alternatives. The ideological choice has already been made, the union between man and woman or city and country has already been confirmed, and the pair is eternally parading or marching towards the spectators (“us”), who are always situated in the “prosperous” future. When in the SFSR and USSR the Party had assumed absolute power and “abolished” privilege and class difference (ideologically if not in reality), it became essential to repeat and reproduce this visual structure.

The poster for the one-year anniversary of the dictatorship of the proletariat in SFSR by Alexander Apsit (born Latvian as Aleksandrs Apsītis, 1880–1944) is a good case in point (fig. 7). We recognise elements from older examples – the rising sun, the industrial buildings, the wreaths, the red flags, the tools representative of industry and agriculture, and the symbols of earlier repression crushed in the foreground. The personifications of industry and agriculture are both male, but the muscular industrial worker clearly assumes the active role: standing with hand on waist and a rifle on his back, trampling the crushed shield of czarism under his boot. Because the peasant in traditional clothes to the right is male, he carries a scythe and not a sickle.

Victoria E. Bonnell considers Apsit’s poster to be “the first major statement of a new image in Bolshevik iconography”.⁴³ As she proceeds to demonstrate,

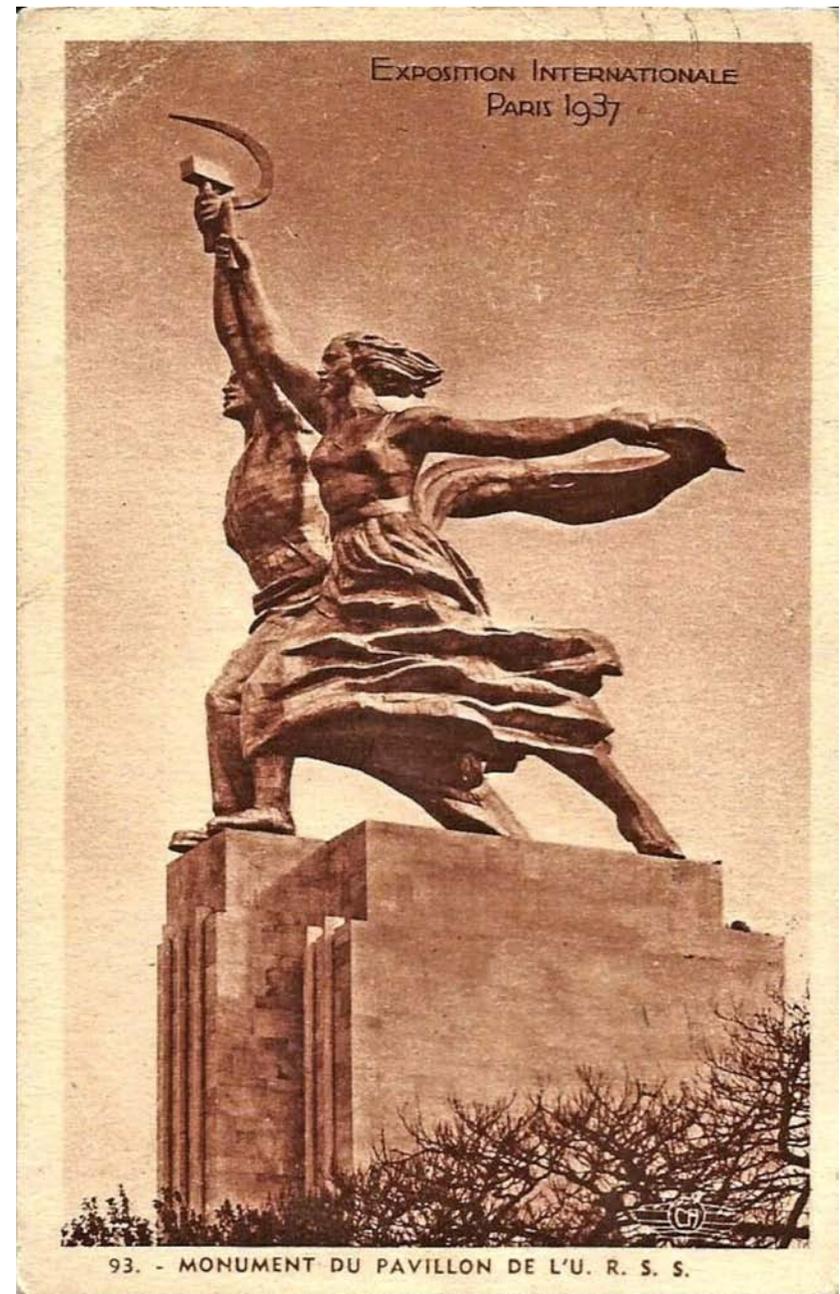
Fig. 7. Alexander Apsit (Aleksandrs Apsītis, 1880–1944), Год Пролетарской Диктатуры, октябрь 1917– октябрь 1918. (First anniversary of the dictatorship of the proletariat, October 1917 – October 1918), poster. Image source: Invaluable, LLC, online auction 16 November 2019, lot 79 (<https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/propaganda-poster-anniversary-proletarian-dictato-79-c-3114ddf923>).



the formula, which was new in 1918, quickly turned old and obsolete when the rapid collectivisation and industrialisation of Soviet society inspired new stylistic ideals. After the civil war of 1918–1922, avant-garde experiments influenced Soviet poster production to a great extent, and the active participation of women in society and production was stressed in official propaganda. The collectivisation of agriculture became closely associated with the story and image of the *kolkhoznitsa*, the modern and emancipated woman who leaves her domestic or urban life to work at the *kolkhoz*. In Russia there had been no previous tradition of female personifications of agriculture. Partly because of its sheer novelty, the portrayal of the female agricultural worker – preferably on the march or driving a tractor – became an effective contrast to the male peasant or *muzhik* of past days.⁴⁴

This conception received its ultimate monumental formula in *Industrial Worker and Kolkhoz Woman*, the 24.5 m. tall sculpture in stainless steel, designed for the 1937 *Exposition Internationale* in Paris by Vera Mukhina (1889–1953). The union of man and woman, industry and agriculture, party and state are here complete (fig. 8). The attributes of industry and agriculture, the hammer and the sickle, are identical to those of the party and the state. The man and the woman, equally muscular, join their attributes and stride forward in a diagonal movement of unanimous alliance. They are not meant to be interpreted as portraits or realistic representations in the sense favoured by those socially conscious contemporaries of Walter Runeberg, such as Jules Dalou (1838–1902). Instead Mukhina adheres closely to the new doctrines of socialist realism and the principle referred to in Russian as *tipazh*. As Bonnell explains, *tipazh* was to be regarded as the visual characterisation not of individuals but of social groups; moreover, it was not supposed to be a “typicality” but rather a “typicalization”.⁴⁵ The social identity expressed by means of *tipazh* should be “real” in an *ideological* sense: it should be a “typicalization” of the population by means of socialist work and schooling.

Fig. 8. Postcard for the 1937 world exposition in Paris, showing the Soviet pavilion designed by Boris M. Iofan (1891–1976). Top sculpture by Vera Mukhina (1889–1953): Рабóчий и Колхóзница (*Industrial worker and kolkhoz woman*), 1937. Stainless steel, height 24.5 m. Now at the VDNKh (Exhibition Center of National Achievements), Moscow. Image source: <http://archipostcard.blogspot.com/2012/10/face-face-extreme.html>



The single or double body of the Leader

Perhaps the radically “totalitarian” modernity of Soviet socialist realism can be put in greater relief if we return to the Social Democrats of Sweden, and look at a work by an artist whose naturalist aesthetic ideals essentially belonged to the 19th century, Carl Eldh (1873–1954). Eldh was the son of a blacksmith (the name “Eldh” means “fire”) and felt closely affiliated with the cause of social democracy. Some of his colleagues in *Konstnärsförbundet*, an association of radical artists who had created an independent art school in opposition to the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, were close friends of the Social Democratic leader Hjalmar Branting. Eldh also became acquainted with Branting, who occasionally bought his artworks. After Branting had served three times as Swedish prime minister (1920, 1921–1923 and 1924–1925), he was to be honoured with a bust in the parliament (*riksdag*), and Eldh received the commission.⁴⁶ It was therefore quite natural that he would also execute the Branting monument in Stockholm, which was erected at the initiative of the central organisation of Swedish labour unions (*Landsorganisationen*) in front of its headquarters (fig. 9). The sculptural piece is placed in a small garden, which in turn is part of the large square *Norra Bantorget*, a traditional marching ground for the labour movement in Sweden. Even though the monument was not inaugurated until 1952, Eldh executed the first sketches and maquettes more than 20 years earlier. The long process of preparing the final version familiar to today’s visitors of *Norra Bantorget* was partly documented by Karl Asplund (1890–1978) in his biography of Eldh from 1943.⁴⁷

Eldh was confronted with the dilemma of representing Branting as both a socialist agitator and a statesman. His first documented maquette, from ca 1930–1931, is similar in structure to the final monument, but the crowds to the left and the right lack differentiation. Branting himself looks indecisive, in a manner contrary to the combative gesture of his raised right arm, which is an obvious reference to the codified salutation of international socialism. In comparison to the final version, his image is also less dominating in terms of size.⁴⁸ New maquettes from 1933–1934 show Branting in a similar but more alert posture, standing as a colossus on plinths on which workers carved in relief create a dynamic leftward movement with pointed banners.⁴⁹ These drafts were probably discarded as too strident or authoritarian. Another composition from 1933–1934 is very close to the final one, but architecturally framed in a manner



Fig. 9. Carl Eldh (1873–1954), the Hjalmar Branting monument, Stockholm, *Norra Bantorget*. Designed before 1943, inaugurated on 2 June 1952. Bronze, height 3.5 m. Frontal view. Photo Lars Berggren.

later abandoned. Above the front groups of attentive followers to the left and right of Branting, additional groups march symmetrically towards the centre in a distant representational space. The resulting effect is overcrowded and stiffly symmetrical.⁵⁰

Importantly, Branting’s basic posture, with the raised right arm and clenched fist, was retained in all versions and in the final monument. In it, the background groups have been discarded and replaced with the settings we see today:

to the left the countryside with a pine-tree and a ploughed field, to the right the city with industries, smoking chimneys and a fir-tree. Men, women and children of various ages occupy both sides. The diversity and absence of clear differentiations between the two groups in terms of ages and genders also holds true for the attributes of different occupations. An elderly man grabs a spade as if busy digging the soil, but he stands in the crowd of the “city”. On the other side, a muscular male wearing a blacksmith’s apron is standing immediately to the left of Branting. Two founding fathers of social democracy in Sweden are standing on the “city” side, immediately to the right of the man with the spade. They are Axel Danielsson (1863–1899) and August Palm (1849–1922), who both preceded Branting as editors of the daily *Social-Demokraten* (Danielsson also founded the daily *Arbetet* in Malmö). Their placements and bodily attitudes reflect how, in their lives, they developed very different opinions on the leadership of the Swedish labour movement.

Danielsson is the taller and younger of the two. He stands closer to Branting, turning his head and his gaze attentively towards the leader. After years of opposition, Danielsson finally yielded to the reformist policies of social democracy under Branting. Danielsson was also responsible for the revision of the official program of the Swedish Social Democratic Party in 1897. August Palm, on the other hand, always remained a strong opponent of Branting’s, and was often considered too unconventional to receive commissions from the party. A tailor master and a highly popular public orator, Palm was easily recognized by his limp, his small stature, and his energetic personality. We see him standing to the right of Danielsson, essentially on the outer edges of the monument. He turns away from Branting and strokes his long beard sceptically. His presence on the periphery of the monument’s representational space indicates that, ideologically, it makes room for reflective dissent.

In comparison with the earlier drafts, the realized monument strikes a balance between symmetry and variation. Its composition echoes the union of town and country invoked in “L’Internationale”, and the bond between the two is embodied in the central image of the leader. He is depicted in superhuman scale, and as he stands on a small protruding elevation, he appears to be situated both in front of and slightly above the flanking crowds. Yet his features are not particularly idealised, both Branting’s face and those of Danielsson and Palm closely resemble photos of them. Also, this realist stance differs significantly

from the Soviet attitude which Bonnell describes as “the leader’s two bodies” – a notion borrowed from the medievalist Ernest H. Kantorowicz’s (1895–1963) *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1957).

In the Stalinist cult of personality, Stalin’s physical existence was separated from his idealised omnipresence in sculpture, painting and printed matter in all corners of the Union.⁵¹ This double character of Soviet life has been further commented in an article by Ekaterina V. Haskins and James P. Zappen (both of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York, dates of birth unknown to the author) in which they relate the visual culture of Soviet posters to the dissident cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895–1975). Bakhtin’s studies of the absurd tales of Rabelais have been influential in literary and political theory. According to Bakhtin, this carnivalesque literature demonstrates that even in highly authoritarian societies there have been areas of social life in which official discourse can be subverted and the established order turned upside down. The example of Rabelais was also decisive for Bakhtin’s conception of literature as essentially dialogical, as opposed to authorised interpretations and monological truth. But the dialogical thinking of Bakhtin and the unceasing monologue of party propaganda around him were not absolute opposites, Haskins and Zappen claim. As they see it, Soviet propaganda of the Stalinist era involved not only “authoritarian proclamations” but also arguments and images that were “internally persuasive”.⁵² With this term, Haskins and Zappen seem to imply a more profound effect than mere submission to authority. The exaggerated contrasts between good and evil, and between current prosperity and previous misery, in the imagery of Stalinist propaganda, were intended to inspire not merely a passive acceptance, but a genuine belief in achievements previously conceivable only as carnivalesque fantasies.

Such theories probably serve to clarify the difference between works such as Eldh’s Branting monument and the monuments of socialist realism in the Soviet Union, and later in such nations as the People’s Republic of China and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. It is not only a matter of Eldh being an artist born in 1873 and educated in the tradition of French naturalism. There is also the stark contrast between Swedish and Soviet politics. Sweden remained a constitutional monarchy, and while the Swedish Social Democratic Party was the dominating political force, it was never identical with the state. Unlike the situation in the Soviet Union, there was never an opportunity to construct a

dual reality in the sense described by Bonnell, Haskins and Zappen. The varied features and clothing of the crowds surrounding Branting suggest a diversity of occupation and class, and not a homogenous proletarian ideal. Branting is represented not only as the leader of the proletariat, but also as a statesman ruling a heterogeneous nation.

The Branting sculptural piece is the only 20th-century monument in Sweden that bears any similarity to a monument to a ruler. That Branting is the subject of such a memorial might seem odd to an outsider, given that Branting was only prime minister in a constitutional monarchy, and served for only three short periods. The historical reasons for this are, again, quite simple. In Sweden, the monarchs of the 20th century could never reach the status of symbols of national independence, as in Nazi-occupied Denmark and Norway. Nor was there a politically elected head of state who at the same time acted as wartime commander-in-chief during World War II, as in the case of Carl Gustaf Mannerheim (1867–1951) in Finland. National pride in Sweden was instead strongly connected to the development of a modern welfare state, and to the peculiar Swedish concept of *folkhem* (approx. “home of the people”). In the decades following the Second World War, this concept was embraced by more or less the whole political spectrum in the country. It was, however, associated with policies introduced by social democracy, and could thus easily be regarded as embodied in the image of one of the pillars of that movement.

As mentioned above, in the monument, Branting stands on a small protruding elevation. This platform and the iconographic elements on it, around Branting's lower legs, can be interpreted as significant of the status of the leader in the Swedish context of *folkhem* and social democracy. To the immediate left of Branting's feet, a pine sapling appears to be growing, and to the right, a small fairy clings dreamingly to a tuft of grass and flowers.⁵³ This symbolism is quite unrelated to that of socialism and labour union struggle. It instead relates to folkloristic notions of great importance for Swedish national romanticism, in its dedication to rural traditions and the mysticism of nature. In their function as reminders of national identity and the actual soil and blood of the nation, the vegetative elements and the fairy are also easily associated with the concept of a “home of the people”. They connect Branting and his followers on the “ground level” and make the leader appear as only temporarily risen above the people.



Fig. 10. The rear side of the Hjalmar Branting monument, Stockholm. Translation of the full inscription, to the left: “Swedish social democracy erected this monument in honour of its great leader [hövding] Hjalmar Branting. He dedicated his life to the workers of Sweden.” To the right: “He aroused the dormant strengths of the people and led its struggle for freedom and justice. In his work the future lies hidden.” Photo Lars Berggren.

If Eldh and his labour-movement patrons had instead chosen the version in which Branting stands elevated in colossal format on a plinth, the monument would have been more in accordance with norms seen in nations with “genuine socialist systems” (see, for example, Otakar Švec's monument to Stalin in Prague⁵⁴), and if the flowers had been in the hands of enthusiastic children instead of those of a folkloric spirit, they would have been signs more in line with the Stalinist cult of personality. We can see how the Branting monument differs from socialist realism by means of the absence of certain signs and the presence of others. Stylistically, it also adheres more closely to earlier naturalism in its conception of representational space. The rhetorical augmentation of Brant-

ing's body into, indeed, that of a giant, could be explained quite believably as an effect of perceptual perspective, given his position in front of the crowd. By this device, the figure becomes less of a second body of omnipresence and more of a credible representation of someone who is the first among equals.

Carl Asplund's evaluation and interpretation of the monument in his biography adheres closely to a nationalist rather than a socialist frame of reference. He asserts that it is a profound work, the motif of which "on the one hand seems to be accompanied by the effervescent tones of the International", but which is, on the other hand and at its deepest roots, "an apotheosis not of socialism but of the Swedish people, Swedish power and unity".⁵⁵ These words could also be regarded as characteristic of Swedish exceptionalism during the Second World War.

If we turn to the back side of the monument, the elements suggestive of national sentiments and national history seem to have taken full precedence over those associated with socialism (fig. 10). This composition was evidently conceived at a late stage (it is not mentioned by Asplund in 1943), and probably represents a compromise suggested by patrons and colleagues. Asplund reproduces an earlier and much different version in which a male figure – heroically posed but wearing simple clothes with rolled-up shirt sleeves – reads from an open book held up in his left hand. In his right hand, this worker and agitator raises the torch of enlightenment. Standing on a rocky, stepped elevation, he occupies the centre of the composition. To the left he is flanked by a woman carrying a child, and to the right by an elderly man who leans on the handle of his spade. Both are of a smaller scale than the man in the centre. They match in many ways two figures on the front of the monument: a woman with a child, standing far to the left, and a man with a spade, mentioned earlier, to the right. Finally, this earlier version of the back side is framed by two symmetrically placed, arching ornamental trees.

Nothing remains of this composition in the final version except the general symbolism of fire and soil. The light-bearing Prometheus theme – reinterpreted as the Lucifer theme of theosophy – was prominent in the iconography of the goddess of Liberty as well as in Soviet iconography after 1919. In the Soviet Union, the male riding torch-bearer – sometimes on a winged Pegasus – often appeared in designs promoting the spread of communism through the Third International, and in campaigns against illiteracy.⁵⁶ In Sweden, an emblem

showing a riding torch-bearer and two stars was adopted during the same period for the standard binding of books belonging to libraries of popular study organisations. *Folket i bild* (approx. "the people in images"), the main publishing house of the reformist or social democratic labour movement in Sweden, often used an emblem with two crossed torches and palm fronds.⁵⁷

Thus, the symbolism of the torch and the light-bearer had become specifically associated with educational efforts of the labour movement and the progress of studious workers. This imagery was in keeping with the idea of the working class rising "towards the light": its struggle to encompass everything after having started with nothing.

It is then significant, as a deviation from the original plan, that in the final version of the Branting monument the light-bearer has been replaced with a signal fire. In Swedish, the signal fire, *vårdkase*, stands for the right and duty of all free men to mobilise in times of threat. It is associated with the medieval concept of *ledning* (a military force composed of volunteers of the people, rather than paid warriors), and appears in the heraldry of several Swedish towns and regions.

The signal fire is flanked by two stellar constellations: to the left Orion's belt, to the right the Big Dipper (Ursa Major) or probably the nearby and similar constellation Little Dipper (Ursa Minor) with the polar star (Polaris in Ursa Minor) at the tip of its "tail". Both the Big Dipper and the polar star carry royal rather than socialist connotations in Sweden. When the heart field of the great coat of arms of Sweden was revised after the ascension of Jean Baptiste Bernadotte (1763–1844) as king of Sweden under his royal Swedish name Karl XIV Johan in 1818, it included a combination of the *vase* (sheaf of corn) of the old Vasa dynasty and the arms of Ponte Corvo (the fief given to Bernadotte as French imperial marshal). In 1826, Bernadotte ordered the placement of stars in his arms, and the stars were later reorganised as the Big Dipper. In this context, it should be remembered that another name for the Big Dipper is "Charles's wagon", in Swedish, *Karlavagnen*, i.e. a reference to the royal name Karl (Charles).

The polar star – in Swedish, *nordstjärnan* (the North star) – was associated with royalty already in 17th-century Sweden. Certain documents and prominent placements testify to its status, in the form of a five-point star, as the personal emblem of King Charles XI (1655–1697).⁵⁸ It was later to lend its name

to the royal *Nordstjärneorden* (Order of the North Star), awarded primarily to members of the clergy and academia. A five-point polar star/North star has been a part of the emblem of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences since its constitution, in 1741.⁵⁹

The alternation between five-point and four-point stars in the representation of the constellations on the Branting monument seems rather haphazard (it does not correspond, for example, to the relative luminance of the stars in question), but if, indeed, the constellation to the right is intended to be the Little Dipper rather than the Big Dipper, the position of the north star as a five-point star right above the signal fire could not be coincidental. Is this an intentional reference to royal symbolism and the role of Swedish constitutional monarchy? This is difficult to determine, but it could probably be clarified by future archival research.

Aside from these more specialised questions, it is noteworthy that the symbolism of torch, light-bearer and socialist educational strategies has been replaced in this scheme by the rather differently coded light symbolism of signal fire and star. The interpretive possibility which connects the stars to the coat of arms of Jean Baptiste Bernadotte brings us back to where we started, to French republican iconography. As a typical *petit bourgeois* careerist of the French Revolution, Bernadotte was certainly not unaffected by the fanciful heraldic culture of Bonapartism. With its connections both to royalty and to the learned societies of 18th-century Enlightenment, the emblematic use of the five-point star in academic and republican contexts (e.g. the flags of the United States of America) is associated with values not easily reconciled with the red star as the symbol of international communism after 1917. The signal fire symbolises popular mobilisation – reinvented as mandatory military service in the 20th century – but in Sweden this mobilisation was mostly under the authority of ruling kings.

Finally, the pictorial elements of the posts that flank the central motif of the back side further accentuate the prominence of Swedish history and of Swedish natural environments in the monument. To the left, a stack of sheaves dry under a sunny sky with three swallows. Even into the 1950s, these stacks were a familiar sight in Sweden. To the right, the early industrial age is represented in the form of a waterwheel under a birch tree, and instead of a sun there is a stylised cloud formation. This structure repeats the left-to-right division

of agricultural labour and industrial labour manifest on the front side of the monument, but in a Swedish context it is virtually impossible to include a sheaf of grain in a monument of national importance without bringing the emblem of the royal Vasa dynasty to mind.

To a much greater extent than the front side, the back of the monument seems to support Asplund's identification of an apotheosis of "the Swedish people, Swedish power and unity", rather than one of international socialism. The inscriptions on the flanking posts, however, speak only of the monument as one erected by Swedish social democracy "in honour of its great leader Hjalmar Branting" who "aroused the dormant strengths of the people and led its struggle for freedom and justice."

Summary and discussion

The general aim of this study in two parts has been to draw preliminary conclusions about the origin and development of the iconography of the international labour movement. In terms of periods, the study has been limited to encompass examples of designs and artworks created between the First French Republic and the years of the Second World War. Thus, it ends with the point in history in which the labour movement had become closely associated with the two forms of political organisation, whose existence it legitimised: the communist parties of one-party states, and the social democratic parties of reformist parliamentarianism. Mukhina's design for the 1937 Soviet Pavilion in Paris, and Eldh's monument to Hjalmar Branting, could be regarded as examples of how these diverging paths of political strategy were expressed in monuments of national significance. The inclusion in the Branting monument of allusions that would hardly be compatible with a more revolutionary interpretation of societal development is characteristic of how, in Sweden, social democracy sought consensus across class borders.

There is no apparent reason why the overview provided here should not be pursued further into the present. The immediate years after 1945 seem, however, to mark an historical shift. At its final inauguration on 2 June 1952, Carl Eldh's monument already belonged to the past, both aesthetically and ideologically. In the West, modernist visual idioms rapidly replaced the iconography of nation, state and people in public art. In the USSR, socialist realism represented another development of universalist modernity. There, history was acknowl-

edged only in so far that it prefigured the bright future of classless society. Both in this official propaganda of planned economy, and in visual design and satire related to socialist movements in the West, political iconography tended to repeat already established formulae. It therefore seems logical to end the enquiry here, at least temporarily. Further research should of course include the development in all those African, Asian and Latin American countries in which socialist rule was established with the support of the USSR or the People's Republic of China during decolonisation. This will necessitate a study of rather different societal contexts and historical mythologies, reasons why the Mexican mural movement has not been mentioned in the present article. Another major omission concerns the socialist satellite states in Eastern Europe. As in the cases of the People's Republic of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the institutionalisation of socialist realism there relied heavily on Soviet models and essentially belongs to the post-1950 development not covered in this text.

No archival research has been conducted in the preparation of this study. Only secondary written sources – in the form of museum catalogues, newspaper articles and quotes from previous research – have been consulted. The methodological problems associated with an erudite enquiry of a topic of such magnitude and complexity as “Iconography of the labour movement” has been commented upon in the summary and conclusions of Part 1. There it was also suggested that the iconographic study of images might, as such, be an effective method for overcoming schematic preconceptions as far as politically charged topics are concerned. Visual propaganda conveys abstract notions in a concrete and tangible manner as images for edification or laughter, but it can also, in a “silent” manner, reveal a dependence on traditions and values not openly recognised.

The earlier research used for this study belongs mainly to the fields of social history (or more specifically labour history), art history and visual rhetorics. Major works of social history and labour history that have been referred to include Maurice Agulhon's *Marianne into Battle* (*Marianne au pouvoir*), Antony Black's *Guild and State* and Josef Seiter's *Blutigrot und silbrig hell*. Works by earlier French historians – such as Otto Karmin – have also been of use, and the contents of a series of issues of the British journal *History Workshop* from 1978–1979 have been highly valuable. Among social historians there

was evidently a growing interest in the iconography of the working class and the labour movement for some years between ca. 1970 and 1980, a period during which new social movements influenced both research and university policies to a great extent. After several decades of marginalization, there are today signs that the interest in this heritage is rising among both scholars and practising artists.

In more specialised art historical research, there are essays by Ernst H. Gombrich that are certainly indispensable for understanding the function of iconographic symbolism and visual metaphor in the context of political propaganda. Gombrich's approach to the social function of images has influenced Margareta Ståhl and other researchers involved in the Swedish project *Arbetarrörelsen och språket* (Labour Movement and Language). This project was partly the initiative of Professor Lena Johannesson of the universities of Gothenburg and Linköping. Johannesson has specialised in studies of the history of popular prints and the illustrated press in Sweden, and her methodology is rather close to approaches associated today with the research field of visual rhetorics. Of the same generation as Johannesson and Ståhl, Victoria E. Bonnell is another scholar who has studied popular and political visual culture in a similar vein.

One may define visual rhetorics as an analytical approach to visual communication informed by art history, classical rhetorics and modern linguistics/semiotics. The connection to art history and iconography means that visual works and designs are treated as primary sources in their own right, as “visual texts” and not as mere exemplifications or illustrations. In that regard, even the present study refers to some primary sources, namely, the visual ones.

Some analytical remarks associated primarily with visual rhetorics and semiotics provided the main conclusions of Part 1. It was suggested that apart from the combination of personifications, symbols and attributes in political allegories, the placement and relative salience of elements in the composition could be regarded as additional “semiotic resources” that contribute to the communication of a message. It was also suggested that a distinction should be made between tripartite allegories in which at least three personifications are visible – with one as a dominant mediator – and bipartite allegories in which the significant relationship is only between one single personification and a set of values represented by attributes. To the category of bipartite allegories should probably also be counted those in which the composition is fully dominated by two

personifications of equal value and prominence. Walter Runeberg's *Labor* (fig. 5), Walter Crane's *A Merry Christmas* (fig. 6), Alexander Apsit's poster from 1918 (fig. 7) and Vera Mukhina's monument from 1937 (fig. 8) are all examples of this structure. When a third, intermediary element is introduced, such as the standard in Crane's print or the background landscape with marching crowds at the centre field of Apsit's poster, it has merely a secondary or attributive function.

Similar structures are present in some of the satirical cartoons analysed by Linda Lumsden. Using the terms of Lumsden, one could say that the psychological distinctiveness necessary for social identification is present in a binary fashion both in her examples and in the examples of bipartite allegories analysed here. The difference between satire and affirmative propaganda rests, however, in the use of this psychological distinctiveness. For a satirical cartoonist it is essential to be able to evoke a rhetorical comparison between distinct categories, and to exaggerate the alien and laughable aspects of the targeted one. By contrast, such print material as Apsit's poster or such monuments as Mukhina's *Industrial Worker and Kolkhoz Woman* express a rhetoric in which the categories are unified, at the same time as they remain psychologically distinct.

As both economic history and the literary tradition of proletarian writing testify (see, for example, the novels of Martin Andersen Nexø, 1869–1954), the task of winning rural populations for the cause of the labour movement was not an easy one. Most of these people earned their meagre living with hard manual labour, but they were normally either small-scale farmers with little interest in collective solutions, or agricultural labourers with a minimum level of literacy and organisational experience. The unification of industrial and agricultural labourers therefore became a pressing political goal, and one which needed to be expressed in striking verbal and visual images. As some of our examples show, governmental and republican iconography already offered models for the categorisation of industrial and agricultural labour in images of their unification.

Jacques-Jean Barre's design of the great seal of the Second French Republic from 1848 (fig. 8 in Part 1) shows Republic with a cogwheel of industry and a plough of agriculture. In Ange-Louis Janet's *La République* from the same year (fig. 1), there is a clear differentiation between attributes of agriculture to the left and attributes of industry to the right, with scythe and cogwheel in prominent positions on the respective sides. The background landscape is structured

as a comparison between industry and sea trade to the left and architecture in the service of religion to the right. In the printed allegory of Liberty from *New Yorker Volks-Zeitung* (fig. 2), the attributes of manual work in the foreground do not form differentiated groups, but the background is structured in a manner akin to Janet's painting, with sea trade to the left and a building to the right. Here, however, the building is clearly an industrial one. When Vilhelm Robert Ekman painted a paraphrase of the print (fig. 3), he simplified the background into a homogenous seascape with a sailing boat and a rising sun, evocative of the generic symbolism of Liberty and enlightenment present already in the emblem of *Liberté* in Gravelot's and Cochin's *Iconologie* (fig. 3 in Part 1) and later recurring in standards and banners of the labour movement (fig. 4).

In such compositions as Walter Runeberg's *Labor* (fig. 5), man and woman are made to personify the division of labour as a fundamental aspect of societal unity. It is noteworthy that at one stage in the preparation process, the work was clearly intended to be a representation of industry and agriculture, and that the cogwheel was again used as an attribute of industry. Finally, the work was turned into the representation of male and female agricultural labour seen in the Senate Square in Helsinki today. Walter Crane's composition (fig. 6) has a similar structure both formally and content-wise, but the placement of the personifications has been reversed and the presence of the Phrygian caps and the written motto marks its place in an internationalist and socialist discourse rather than a national one.

One might reasonably ask whether the placement of the male personification to the heraldic right side in Runeberg's composition, in comparison to the left side in Crane's, signifies a difference in relative prominence. I have not been able to collect enough evidence for a more definite answer to this question. The placement of the male personification of industry to the heraldic right side in such Soviet examples as Apsit's poster (fig. 7) and Mukhina's monument (fig. 8) could well be a mere coincidence, especially when one compares these examples with a more extensive selection of Soviet printed matters. That the personification of industry should become predominantly male and the personification of agriculture predominantly female is, however, conveniently explained as a consequence of the *kolkhoznitsa* mythology studied by Bonnell. The bipartite juxtaposition of male and female personifications was also an effective means for expressing a unified symbol of labour, people and nation.

In Carl Eldh's monument to Hjalmar Branting (figs. 9 and 10) the compositional structure is again the tripartite one with the depiction of the leader as a dominant mediator. This time, industry/city is positioned to the heraldic left and agriculture/country to the heraldic right side. In the composition, these societal forces are typified not as single personifications but as crowds with distinguishing backgrounds. In the rejected version of the back side of the monument, a central personification of enlightenment is flanked by figures evocative of motherhood/youth and of agriculture/old age in a similar tripartite manner. Similar figures are also visible in the final version of the front side of the monument, but with no apparent logic in relation to the industry–agriculture division. In comparison with the tripartite iconography of Hercules as a personification of the people guarding the three virtues of the Republic (fig. 7 in Part 1) or the Republic as a mother guarding the wellbeing of her people (fig. 9 in Part 1), the male leader is in the Branting monument portrayed naturalistically as an ordinary albeit larger-than-life individual, but also as a visionary who by his presence unites diverse factions of society in times of political unrest. The rhetoric of simple bipartite or tripartite divisions is downplayed in favour of one in which the people – with their assorted demands and needs – are embodied in the image of their leader.

Two important questions have thus far been scarcely touched upon in this study. One concerns the reason that the goddess of Liberty largely fell out of favour in revolutionary iconography after 1917 – apart from the industrial labour force being perceived as typically male. The other concerns the ubiquity of the personification of the people or the working class as a freestanding embodiment of human physical strength, sometimes reduced to the synecdoche (part for whole) of a single, thrusting fist. Both questions have been dealt with in previous research.

In his response to Hobsbawm's article on male and female personifications in labour movement iconography, Tim (Timothy) Mason (1940–1990) drew attention to some cartoons from *Der wahre Jacob*, the satirical magazine of German social democracy. In the cartoons, published between 1918 and 1922, the goddess of Liberty or “Marianne” adopts an attitude seemingly resonant with how the German Social Democratic Party addressed its voters at the time: she is depicted as a friendly cleaning lady who merely sweeps the debris of the past to the side, or as a more serene entity who protects the newly founded

German republic against the dangers of revolutionary communism.⁶⁰ It is not unlikely that this “domestication of female socialist icons” (as Mason puts it) contributed to the perception of “Marianne” as an old-fashioned and tainted symbol: “[...] a French lady, 88 years old in 1918, a lady who had now (for the benefit of prudish German social democrats?) decided to cover up her breasts. Delacroix might well have turned in his grave[.]”⁶¹

One should also keep in mind that in the ancient rhetorical tradition in which iconographic personification in the West is based, there may have been an element of gendered domestication or passivity from the very beginning. As Marina Warner has clarified in *Monuments and Maidens*, abstract nouns often have a feminine gender in Greek, Latin and related Indo-European languages; moreover, it belongs to their character as abstract nouns that they designate the thing acted out (e.g. *Libertas* or *Justitia*) but not the action performed. These gendered linguistic structures obviously influenced Aristotelian philosophy and its division between active/shaping form (*eidos*) and passive matter (*hyle*).⁶² As we have seen in Part 1, it was not the *act of ruling* but the principles of *rule as such* (Monarchy, Democracy, etc.) that were represented as female personifications in Gravelot's and Cochin's *Iconologie*. Later, such female entities as Britannia, Germania, Marianne and the Swedish *Svea* served to consolidate the perception of national communities as rooted in shared biological and historical origins, a perception in stark contrast to the proletarian experience of having no share in the material resources of the “motherly” community.

In a chapter of *Arbetarrörelse och arbetarkultur: Bild och självbild* (Labour movement and labour culture: Image and self-image), which presents contributions by art historians and ethnologists to the aforementioned project on the labour movement and its language, Lena Johannesson has analysed a wide range of examples of how the human body of titanic size and strength became a notorious element of political iconography in the 19th and 20th centuries. The contexts and examples covered by Johannesson are contiguous to the ones presented here, but chosen across a much wider spectrum, and with a focus on larger “motif complexes” (“*motivkomplex*”) and visual formulae of bodily attitudes and gestures.

In order to designate the object of her study, Johannesson has coined the term “the formula of the grand human shape” (“*den stora gestaltens formel*”), which she defines thus: “[T]he representation of a (mostly young), greatly ide-

alized human being as a full-length image, often seen from a low vantage point in order to achieve a monumentalising effect. The image type is often realised in colossal format [...].⁶³ This definition would fit most examples of labour union symbolism and overt propaganda analysed here. In the sculptures (figs. 5, 8 and 9) the low vantage point is added by means of their high placements and/or sheer size. Given the requirement that the character should be idealized and preferably young, it is significant, however, that many representations of leaders – such as that of Hjalmar Branting – would deviate from the formula.

Another device or formula analysed by Johannesson is that of “the gesture of the clenched fist” (“*den knutna nävens gestik*”). The raised right arm with a clenched fist (as in the Branting monument) has long been the international salutary gesture among socialists, and therefore important as a marker of identity. Johannesson traces its modern origins back to prints and artworks of the First French Republic and the period between 1830 and 1848. Notably, Daumier’s famous print from 1834 of a typographic worker, prepared to fight for the freedom of the press, exemplifies both the monumentality of a grand human shape and the expressive power of clenched fists.⁶⁴ Later uses of the isolated clenched fist as a sign of organisational power and combative strength are defined in rhetorical terms by Johannesson as a device of metonymy (technically a partial substitution of an abstract notion by a more concrete one), i.e. a device akin to that of synecdoche.⁶⁵

By way of conclusion, and as a return to general questions of methodology, it should be mentioned that Gombrich includes one example of the rhetoric of the clenched fist in his essay on the language of political satire, “The Cartoonist’s Armory”. It is David Low’s cartoon for the *Evening Standard*, 3 July 1939, in which the arm and fist of popular opinion – inscribed “WE SHALL FIGHT” – is thrust against Hitler and his entourage, with the British cabinet as hapless bystanders. For Gombrich, the significance of such examples lies not in their status as metonymy or synecdoche, but rather in the way in which they demonstrate a more general principle of *metaphorical* imagery proper.

With the drastic substitution of one term for another characteristic of metaphors, the reader or spectator readily accepts that Achilles *is* a lion (and not merely compared to one, as in a simile), that a thrusting fist *is* the will of the people, or that a gigantic palm in which the leaders of the world pathetically squat *is* destiny or God.⁶⁶ In another essay collected in *Meditations on a Hobby*

Horse, Gombrich speaks of “metaphors of value in art”, i.e. how concrete and visible values are made to stand for non-visible or conceptual ones. He makes a distinction (notoriously hard to muster for many semioticians) between this metaphorical function and the conventional use of what he terms “code-symbols” or “code-signs”, such as iconographic attributes.⁶⁷

Visual “metaphors of value” are not coded signs, Gombrich contends. Still, he is eager to remind his readers that the expression of such metaphors should not be reduced to a physiological basis or confused with the romantic notion of “expression” as an individual expression of “feeling”.⁶⁸ Metaphors are shared, and they are strong vehicles for the communication of collective beliefs and intuitions. Sometimes they are also shared between rather different ideological standpoints.

Notes

- 1 See e.g. Black 2003, 169–78.
- 2 Seiter 1991, 103.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Agulhon 1981, 64.
- 5 Seiter 1991, 34–35.
- 6 Ståhl 1999, 77.
- 7 A reproduction of the banner is available online at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, <<http://erinnerungsorte.fes.de/traditionsfahne/>> (last read 1 July 2020).
- 8 Ståhl 1999, 67–68.
- 9 Black 2003, 176.
- 10 Seiter 1991, 103.
- 11 Roberts 1979, 5–13.
- 12 Seiter 1991, 70 and fig. 59. To the extent that Seiter includes material from other organisations and areas of the Austro-Hungarian empire than the German-speaking ones, he also contributes to the history of the labour movement in some of the later socialist satellite states, and some of the regions belonging to the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia after the Second World War.
- 13 Cfr fig. 6 in Andersson 2020, 168.
- 14 Warner 1985, 7.
- 15 It has not been possible to establish the identity of “F. Cambensy”, but the name occurs in several socialist and anarchist periodicals during ca 1885–1900.
- 16 Millroth 1980, 33; Ståhl 1999, 147.
- 17 According to *Social-Demokraten*, Tuesday, 30 August 1938, 5–6. The article also tells that the painting was found the same year in a flea market in Stockholm by the author Ture Nerman (1886–1969) and the art historian Sixten Rönnow (1899–1969), who were writing a history of the Swedish labour movement. At the time of the publication of the article in *Social-Demokraten*, the artist’s name was still unknown.
- 18 Ståhl 1999, 200.
- 19 The archive is open to the main public. It also contains a large collection of the preserved banners of the Swedish labour movements. The banners have, however, been transferred to a storing facility in Åkersberga north of Stockholm.
- 20 Ibid., 35. In April the same year, the Swedish Social Democratic Party had been founded with Branting as its leader. The party entered the Second Socialist International.
- 21 Millroth 1982, 40–44; Ståhl 1999, 102–113 and 123–142.
- 22 Millroth 1982, 34; Ståhl 1999, 142–159.
- 23 Millroth 1982, 46.
- 24 Millroth 1980, 33.
- 25 Compare with Lucifer as light-bearer in theosophical thought. The Swedish historian of religions Stefan Arvidsson has studied the use of Christian and romantic imagery in the labour movement. Regarding the Lucifer motif, see Arvidsson 2016, 49–51.
- 26 Hobsbawm 1978, 130–133.
- 27 Alexander, Davin & Hostettler 1979.
- 28 Bonnell 1997, 18.
- 29 As reported in *Morgonbris*, no. 3 1906, 8.
- 30 The banner is kept in *Arbetarrörelsens arkiv i Landskrona* (Archive of the Labour Movement in Landskrona) and has the acquisition number NAF 4766, no. 0015 in the special banner collection. Documentation about the banner is kept at the archive among the files of *Skrädderiarbetareförbundet avdelning 11:1* (Tailor’s union, section 11:1).
- 31 Nordmann 1918, 119–140.
- 32 According to online catalogue of the museums of the city of Paris at <<http://paris-museescollections.paris.fr/fr/petit-palais/oeuvres/la-moisson>> (last read 1 July 2020), the plaster model for Chapu’s *La Moisson* is kept at Petit Palais and has the acquisition number PPS3394.
- 33 *Finlands Allmänna Tidning*, Tuesday 21 October 1884.
- 34 According to *Åbo Tidning*, Thursday 13 August 1885.
- 35 In original: “[...] en gosse och en flicka, den förre käckt stående på en maskindel, flickan bärande en kärfve”. *Helsingfors Dagblad*, Wednesday 5 December 1888.
- 36 In original, as quoted by Nordmann 1918, 124–125: “[...] den i gruppen inryckta representanten för industrien, smedspojken, som stod bredbent på tvenne kugghjul, hvilka i sin tur hvilade på en cylinder, borde omarbetas”.
- 37 *Nya Pressen*, Thursday 8 December 1892.
- 38 Nordmann 1918, 138–140.
- 39 For example in *Östra Finland*, Monday 30 April 1894.
- 40 In original: “[...] en finsk bonde med sin kvinna [som] med sina grova och ingalunda vackra drag träder en till mötes”. *Borgåbladet*, Tuesday 24 May 1927.
- 41 Lumsden 2010, 226.
- 42 Ibid., 228–231.
- 43 Bonnell 1997, 23.
- 44 Ibid., 107–123.
- 45 Ibid., 104–105.
- 46 Asplund 1943, 147–150.
- 47 Ibid., 150–154.
- 48 Reproduced in *ibid.*, 151.

- 49 Reproduced in *ibid.*, 152–153.
- 50 Reproduced in *ibid.*, 150.
- 51 Bonnell 1997, 161–168.
- 52 Haskins & Zappen, 2010, 327.
- 53 These details of the final version can be studied closely in Asplund 1943, plate 41. A comparison with plate 38 shows that the fairy was added in the last revision of the front side of the monument in 1942–1943.
- 54 In her doctoral thesis about public sculpture in the Swedish “folkhem” between 1940 and 1975, Jessica Sjöholm Skrubbe (b. 1972) stresses the dominance of the male worker and the male leader in representations of labour movement history included in her material. She states that in the Branting monument there is a “similarity in type with a number of socialist monuments in Eastern Europe” (“Brantingmonumentets principiella likhet med ett antal socialistiska monument i öststaterna”, Sjöholm Skrubbe 2007, 121). She also makes the following comparison with the case of Otakar Švec (1892–1955), whose monument was inaugurated in 1955 and demolished in 1962: “Regardless of the relief, rather than block-based character of the Branting monument, there were similarities between the two monuments in terms of visual strategies, not the least regarding the manner of composition, with the central position of the leader in hierarchical perspective, flanked by representatives of ‘the people’” (*ibid.*, 324, n. 22, translated by the present author). Even though this is correct as a general description, Sjöholm Skrubbe seems to overlook the differences between the tradition in which Eldh worked and the morphology of socialist realism of which Švec’s monument was a typical example. One should also keep in mind that when Eldh made his first sketches for the Branting monument, socialist realism in the USSR was only at its inception.
- 55 Asplund 1943, 153. In original: “[...] över vars motiv visserligen Internationalens toner tyckas brusa [...] en apoteos icke över socialismen utan över svenskt folk, svensk kraft och samling”.
- 56 For example in a plate designed by Alisa R. Golenkina (1884–1970) for the State porcelain factory in Petrograd, 1920. The plate bears the inscription *МЫ ЭАЖЖЕМ ВЕСЬ МИР ОГНЕМ III ИНТЕРНАЦИОНАЛА* (“We will inflame the world with the fire of the third international”) and the rider hovers above a landscape with burning ruins of antiquity. A copy of the plate was offered for sale at Christie’s in London in June 2019 and sold for 60,000 GBP.
- 57 Personal communication with representatives of *Arbetarnas bildningsförbund* (The united study organisations of workers) in Sweden, book items in the author’s own collection.
- 58 Seitz 1938, 96–103.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 108–111.
- 60 Mason 1979.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 172.
- 62 Warner 1985, 68–69.
- 63 Johannesson 2007, 337. In original: “Med ‘den stora gestaltens formel’ avser jag [en] framställning av en (mestadels ung), starkt idealiserad människa i helfigur och ofta sedd ur låg siktpunkt, vilket ger monumentaliserande verkan. Bildtypen utförs vanligen i kolossalformat[.]”
- 64 *Ibid.*, 354.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 338.
- 66 Gombrich 1963, p. 142, figs. 120 and 123.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 12–13.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 23–27.

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