

Ben Shahn's Identity and Dilemma with War

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Introduction

In October 1929, American society was plunged into a state of unprecedented crisis brought on by a collapse in stock prices. Moreover, as this social crisis spread worldwide, it became a factor that caused the Second World War as part of an era of global crisis. Amid this serious social crisis, what kind of awareness did Ben Shahn have of his identity? Furthermore, how did he view Modern Art of the time?

The Franklin D. Roosevelt administration implemented its New Deal policies aimed at tackling the unparalleled Great Depression. It goes without saying that the New Deal consisted of a series of economic policies. Among these were many art projects such as the Public Works of Art Project, Treasury Relief Art Project, and Federal Art Project (FAP). The Department of Treasury and Works Progress Administration (WPA) also implemented their own arts projects.¹

However, all these projects lacked a stable financial basis and were constantly surrounded by controversy over whether they constituted relief work for the unemployed or public support to improve the arts. Changes in government support and the political situation affected these art projects. This came to an end as a result of the transition to a War Footing and the formation of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

Certainly, the New Deal art projects faced many challenges concerning their administration, and the projects themselves were not necessarily highly praised. However, we see many cases in which artists participating in such projects as the FAP left behind a legacy that was inherited by the next generation of artists and, through this, contributed to the postwar artistic culture. Moreover, even though art projects were implemented as part of the Federal Government's public policies only briefly, we cannot deny the continuing significance of New Deal art projects in respect to the preservation of cultural heritage and historical memories and records.²

Ben Shahn was an artist who, having personally seen the state of the social crisis in the 1930s, was greatly influenced by the New Deal art projects. Shahn had developed a sophisticated eye for looking into society and human nature and went about his creative pursuits with an intense social awareness. Thus, we see a strong Social Message embedded in Shahn's works. In addition, he did not shy away from addressing such sensitive issues as the Holocaust or, later, the Cold War. We can also view this as Shahn, who had witnessed America's economic and social crises, returning to his origins as a Jewish immigrant following the end of the Second World War. In this sense, Shahn was a social realist who continued to question his identity, as well as an artist who strove to ascertain the social meaning of arts through his works.³

Shahn also visited Japan and was interested in Japanese culture, particularly that of Kyoto. He visited Japan in 1960 and began working on a series entitled *Lucky Dragon*, which was based

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around the theme of the 1954 Daigo Fukuryū Maru incident. While Shahn was unfamiliar with Montparnasse in Paris and his creative pursuits were focused on America, we must not forget that in his later years, he also displayed a fascination for Eastern cultures.⁴

Chapter 1—Shahn's Childhood and the Road to becoming an Artist

1. The Road to becoming an Artist

Shahn was of Jewish origins, born in the far north of the Pale of Settlement, a special Russian area for Jews in Kovno (present day Lithuania), near the Baltic Sea. His father, Joshua H. Shahn, was a woodcarver. His family was extremely poor, and he had a difficult childhood. To make matters worse, when he was four years old, his father, a radical socialist, was on the receiving end of oppression at the hands of Russian authorities and was interned in Siberia. Consequently, his remaining family members moved to Vilkomir, where he spent four years with both his paternal and maternal grandparents.⁵

During these four years in Vilkomir, Shahn was exposed to strict orthodox Jewish teachings, which are believed to have shaped the young Shahn's spiritual world. Looking back over these years, Shahn recalled that he devoted himself to studying the Bible and Talmud; however, he also recalled that he did not accept the teachings of Judaism in an uncritical manner. Even from a young age, Shahn was skeptical about the existence of God and in some cases deliberately broke the mitzvah. Works such as *Third Allegory* (1955) and *Where Wast Thou?* (1964) contain and present his spiritual journey through various motifs.⁶

Ultimately, Shahn was forced to leave his beloved grandparents and Vilkomir, a place full of memories. His father had escaped from internment in Siberia and, after much hardship, had immigrated to America, with the whole family joining him there in 1906. The family settled in Lorimer St. in Brooklyn, New York. Shahn, for whom this was the first experience of living in a gentile society, was shocked at how Jews, along with Blacks and Catholics, were the targets of overt discrimination.

The period around 1915 saw the revival of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a secret society of white supremacists, and the publication of *International Jew* in America by automobile giant Henry Ford in 1920. This book, originally published as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and thought to have been created by the Russian secret police sometime around the end of the 19th or early 20th century, fanned the flames of discrimination with notions of Jewish conspiracy and power.⁷ It was under these social conditions that a series of legal measures were taken with an aim to restrict immigrants, including the 1921 Johnson Act and the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act.

In Russia, many anti-Tsarist extremists and revolutionaries were rumored to be Jews. Thus, in 1881, following the assassination of Aleksandr II, violent riots against Jews known as pogroms (погром) broke out all over Russia. In the year before Shahn left for America, Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War was ascribed to treachery on the part of Jewish soldiers, which led to the murder of approximately 50,000 Jews. In addition, during the 1917 Russian Revolution, large-scale planned murders of Jews were carried out; in Ukraine alone, around 200,000 people are believed to have lost their lives as a result of this.⁸

During his youth, Shahn was highly eager to learn and aspired to achieve great things, expressing an ardent desire to pursue higher education. However, his parents lost money through bad investments and, to make matters worse, lost all their possessions in a house fire. Therefore, he had to abandon his dreams of studying at a full-time high school. While the family experienced dire financial hardship, memories of the fire were firmly imprinted in

Shahn's mind and became a motif for many of his works. For example, the sense of loneliness and anxiety found in works such as *Allegory* (1948) and *The City of Dreadful Night* (1951) express this event and are linked with works featuring the Cold War as a motif as well as the *Lucky Dragon* series, in which he depicts his shock regarding the H-bomb test.

The fact that his father and grandfather were craftsmen also influenced him greatly. Ever since he was a child, Shahn had been good with his hands, and he joined Hassenberg Lithography Workshop, a night time Jewish lithography workshop, with the aim of mastering this craft. Over a period of four years, Shahn honed his skills at this workshop as an apprentice. By the time he was 19 years old, he was able to support himself as an accomplished craftsman (journeyman). The lithographic techniques that he learned here enabled him to produce posters and lettering, giving rise to a fondness for unique styles and lettering that emphasized lines and for creating distinctive works throughout his lifetime.⁹

However, this is not to say that Shahn had abandoned his enthusiasm for learning; on the contrary, having graduated from an evening high school, he went on to study at New York University and City University of New York to obtain a degree. In addition, between 1916 and 1933, he took George B. Bridgman's class on anatomy at the progressive Art Students League, and in 1921, he entered the prestigious National Academy of Design.¹⁰

While it is uncertain whether at this time Shahn had decided to establish a career as a painter, in 1922 he married fellow orthodox Jew, Tillie Goldstein, and set up home in Columbia Heights, Brooklyn 120, a place where many artists lived. Between March and October 1925, Shahn and his wife traveled to Europe via North Africa. Shahn later looked back on this period as one in which he first got a sense of the complete story of Italian painting. Following their time in Italy, they went to France where, while learning French, they went to the Académie Julian and Grande Chaumière and met such figures as Pablo Picasso and André Derain.¹¹

Before embarking on their trip to Europe, Shahn and Tillie used the money they had saved through lithographic and bookkeeping work to purchase a modest villa in Truro, Massachusetts. Following their return to the United States, they used this as a base for their creative activities and earned a living through such means as signwriting for fairgrounds in New York.¹²

Having worked for a while and saved enough money, they once again went overseas, this time spending around a year on Tunisia's Djerba Island between 1928 and 1929. Their travels and time abroad gave them a direct sense of the slow passage of time and allowed them to encounter first hand a diverse range of people and their stories. They then left Djerba Island and spent several months in Paris, engaging in various sketch and drawing works. Paris at this time was home to a group of young bohemian artists, known as the *École de Paris*, who were engaged in highly individual expressions based on their own varied backgrounds. While Shahn initially drew his inspiration from Paul Cézanne and Henri Matisse, he gradually realized that the styles of Post-Impressionism and Fauvism would never be enough to satisfy him.¹³

Furthermore, Shahn and Tillie were by this time experiencing marital problems, which led to them getting divorced in 1935 and Shahn moving in with Bernarda Bryson. The divorce occurred immediately after they moved to Manhattan and was in reality more akin to an abandonment of the family. Along with the worsening economic situation and the New Deal, this was an epoch-making event that would dramatically alter Shahn's life.¹⁴

2. Anguish as a Jew and Self-reliance

Bernarda, a divorcee, was a radical who worked as a critic on art and social issues. In this respect, she shared Shahn's social awareness. However, she was a Christian, and it was

considered heretical and a sin in the eyes of God for an orthodox Jew like Shahn to marry a gentile.¹⁵ Indeed, statistics of the time show that it was extremely rare for Jewish people to marry gentiles.¹⁶

It is said that Shahn's own mother, Gittel Shahn, observed a *shiva* (a seven-day period of mourning) for her "lost son" and that Shahn himself continued to be traumatized by this, suffering an ongoing awareness and conflict in respect to his "sins" as a "traitor." It is also said that consequently, Shahn sometimes laid his feelings bare and rushed into things on impulse. He also made no attempt to see his relatives or children from his previous marriage to Tillie and cut himself off from his long-term friends.¹⁷

Thus, by disassociating himself from traditional Jewish society and immersing himself into American society, Shahn decided to start a new life as an artist. Bernarda proved to be the perfect partner in this new life in respect to the understanding that she showed toward him. She was an intelligent woman with aspirations to become an artist, and the fact that she was, at one stage, an avowed communist meant that she shared Shahn's sense of justice and spirit of rebellion. However, she differed from Shahn in having a privileged upbringing. This is evinced by the fact that her father ran the *Ohio State Journal*, a newspaper in Ohio, and her mother was a university professor who taught Latin.

Bernarda first became acquainted with Shahn in 1933 as a result of the mural suspension incident that occurred at the RCA Building in Rockefeller Center. Mexican painter Diego Rivera was in charge of creating this mural, with Shahn participating as an assistant. The unilateral suspension of this mural's creation caused quite a stir as it led to questions about the social nature of art. Thus, Bernarda, a reporter for the *Ohio State Journal*, was sent to New York to cover the incident. It was there that she met and found a kindred spirit in Shahn, and the two quickly became close to each other. In particular, Bernarda worked as the secretary general of the Unemployed Artists Group, and their joint editorship of *Art Front*, the newsletter of the Artists' Union, formed in February 1934, served to deepen their ties, leading to their eventual marriage.¹⁸

However, their political leanings were not the type in which they clung to extreme left-wing ideals. On the contrary, Bernarda distanced herself from communism not long after having become acquainted with Shahn. Shahn himself not even considered taking the path of a revolutionary like Rivera, despite sympathizing with union activities that sought to redress social injustice and calling for improvements to living environments and working conditions.¹⁹ This view was characteristic of many Jewish immigrants who had been brought up in New York's ghettos from a young age and seen their parents working in poor conditions in "sweatshops." These experiences fostered strong aspirations toward social mobility, achievement through individual effort, and determination to integrate with American society while at the same time valuing their ethnic communities.²⁰

What emerged was an amalgamation of radicalism and romanticism, which manifested as an unconflicting blend of criticism of American society with the acts seeking to fuse with the same society.²¹ Thus, even when Shahn got divorced from Tillie and married the gentile Bernarda, he did not completely abandon his Jewish identity. Rather, he developed an even higher sense of justice and social awareness in the face of the worsening economic situation and unparalleled social crisis.²²

Father Charles E. Coughlin formed the National Union for Social Justice in November 1934 and stepped up his campaign of anti-Semitism. In response, Shahn created *Father Coughlin*, a work that ridiculed Coughlin. Shahn had many things in common with Jews who immigrated to the United States with the hope of building new lives for themselves and found that they

had become lost “exiles,” with their various hardships leading them to return to the origins of their identity and Jewish faith. Shahn felt this especially once the Holocaust had come to light, a common phenomenon among many New York intellectuals.²³

3. Downtown Gallery and the Road to becoming an Artist

The first flowerings of mass culture in 1920s America had seen the birth of many commercial art galleries run by individuals. The Downtown Gallery was representative of these art galleries and the venue for Shahn's debut as a painter.²⁴

The Downtown Gallery was opened in 1926 in Greenwich Village (West 13-113) by fellow Jewish immigrant Edith G. Halpert. In its day, it served as a pioneer in promoting New York's commercial art. At that time, such institutes as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA: New York, founded 1929) and the Whitney Museum of American Art (founded 1930) had yet to come into existence, and even the Metropolitan Museum of Art (opened in 1870) had very little in the way of modern paintings. From the outset, Halpert aimed to foster modern art in the United States and even felt a sense of affinity with the sordid New York Realism.²⁵

Halpert sought to popularize contemporary art as much as possible and discover art that was native to America. To do so, she enthusiastically set about promoting unknown and outsider artists; in particular, she presented ethnic minority artists from Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa to the world as “American artists.” Non-WASP new immigrants at the time were gaining in prominence, and thus, with the emergence of New York Realism, which also depicted the lives of these immigrants, Halpert, an Eastern European Jew, believed that it was this diversity—something that was in complete contrast to Europe—in which she should seek out the characteristics of American art.²⁶

Halpert created a wide-ranging network of friends and acquaintances in the art world through skillful publicity and negotiation techniques. She formed relationships of trust with such influential figures as Abby A. Rockfeller, one of the founders of the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA); Julius Rosenward, a Jewish philanthropist; and Gertrude V. Whitney of the Whitney Museum of American Art (founded 1930). In addition, amidst the worsening economic climate of the time, Halpert extended her support to new artists and encouraged the participation of a large number of artists in the FAP. This was done with the support of her old friend Holger Cahill, who was in charge of the FAP. Such support and encouragement resulted in the emergence of highly regarded artists such as the yet unknown Arshile Gorky.²⁷

Thus, Halpert increased her reputation and network of friends and acquaintances in New York's art world. Moreover, she made numerous proposals to Abby A. Rockfeller regarding the establishment of modern art museums and in 1932 was in charge of planning for the creation of a mural in the Rockfeller Center's Radio City Music Hall. Furthermore, in 1934, she was in charge of planning and organizing The First New York Municipal Art Exhibition. In their conception, these mural plans and municipal art exhibitions emphasized the relationship between communities, culture, and the arts. Such emphasis undoubtedly had a direct impact on New Deal cultural policies and arts projects.

In September 1933, Halpert sent a letter to Robert Straus, in charge of the art projects at the National Recovery Administration (NRA), suggesting that the NRA use its budget on public cultural and arts projects. Halpert's contribution to the FAP of the WPA should not be overlooked. Halpert received a request from Cahill, in charge of the FAP, to go to Washington to take charge of FAP exhibition allocation plans. Working in this capacity from 1936, she personally inspected works sent by 5,200 individuals from across the country and came up with specific exhibition plans for the FAP.²⁸

Like Gorky, Shahn was still a new and unknown artist at this time; however, his encounter with Halpert proved to be his chance to make his debut in the art world. Shahn had submitted his works to the Downtown Gallery at the end of 1929 when he had returned from his second trip to Europe with Tillie. It was Halpert's painter husband, Samuel Halpert, along with Phillip Wittenberg of the American Jewish Congress, who had acted as intermediaries on this occasion.²⁹

Although Halpert was not much interested in Shahn's works, Abby A. Rockefeller showed a keen interest in them. Thus, in 1930, Shahn was given the chance to participate in group exhibitions—including *33 Modernists* and *46 Painters and Sculptors under 35 Years of Age*—at the Downtown Gallery and MoMA. Moreover, in April 1930, soon after these exhibitions, the Downtown Gallery held an exhibition titled *Ben Shahn: Paintings and Drawings*, which ran for three weeks. This was a very prosperous time for Shahn: Halpert urged Abby A. Rockefeller and others to purchase his works, resulting in the sale of his three oil paintings and approximately 20 watercolors.³⁰

Shahn and Halpert, however, experienced constant friction in their personal relationship: Shahn often forgot about important loans and contracts, while Halpert's keen business sense as an art dealer meant that she expected a commission of around 30% on sales of works by artists with whom she had contracts. As a result, at the end of 1930, Shahn severed relations with Halpert, and in 1940, he entered into a contract with Jewish art dealer Julien Levy. While Levy specialized in Surrealism, Shahn was not satisfied with the arrangement and broke off the contract after only a single personal exhibition.³¹

Chapter 2—The Great Depression and Social Realism

1. Shahn's Journey through the Great Depression

At the request of the Resettlement Administration (RA) and Farm Security Administration (FSA), Shahn participated in work relating to the WPA's FAP between 1935 and 1938. The project was to create posters promoting New Deal policies and a photographic record of the social crisis spreading throughout the United States, with particular emphasis on the realities of American agriculture and the daily lives of farmers.³²

Shahn was hired as an “arts specialist” by the WPA on the basis of the photography skills he learnt from his friend Walker Evans. This project was run by the economist Roy E. Stryker, with other participants including Evans and Dorothea Lange. For their part, Shahn and Bernarda went to many southern and central-western cities and used photography to record the lives of the people they encountered.³³

Shahn and Bernarda made around three photographic trips, producing photographs that conveyed a sense of attachment to the lives of ordinary people and the general social climate in America at the time. During these trips, they took a total of approximately 6,000 photographs, which are said to have had a major impact not only on Shahn's works but also on his way of life and social awareness as a person.³⁴

These photographic trips certainly had a major impact on Shahn, strengthening the awareness that he needed in order to turn social themes into artistic motifs and linking with the establishment of a more profound Social Realism in his works. Works such as *Years of Dust* (1936), *Unemployed* (1938), *W.P.A Sunday* (1939), *(Myself among the Churchgoers)* (1939), and *Willis Avenue Bridge* (1940) were born from his experiences of people and society during this trips.³⁵

For example, in addition to reproducing an entire photograph as an exact copy, *W.P.A Sunday* is a work employing a structure of perspective that exaggerates space and is intended to leave a strong impression on the viewer. In order to thus observe people and society, Shahn used photographs as the source of his images and sought to deepen the motifs in his art.

Looking back on this period, Shahn reflected that while these trips resulted in the disintegration of his artistic theory, they also affected a change in his style from Social to Personal Realism.³⁶ Perhaps we could say that he developed into a deeper kind of “social” artist who cast his eye over America and confronted the realities of people and society. In this sense, it seems that in contrast to his artistic career in the early 1930s, when he took up bribery scandals and frame-ups, Shahn’s eyes as an artist had become more commonplace and the motifs in his works were instead focused more on everyday reality.

Shahn turned the things that he gained from his journey through the Great Depression into motifs and approached his creative activities with enthusiasm. His accomplishments during this period may be formally divided into two fields. First, there were works in which he depicted the lives of ordinary people and general social climate in America at the time while sticking to the brief of the FAP. Second, there were the murals that he created to decorate public buildings at the direct request of the federal government.

2. Social Realism and the Creation of Murals

In Shahn, whose material dreams had been dashed as a result of the Great Depression, we see nostalgia for a bygone America, as symbolized by the spirit of the FAP. His creations depicting immigrants and pioneers in 1939, such as *Immigration*, *Immigrant Family*, *Opening of Frontier*, and *River Traffic*, were a reflection of nostalgia for the founding era of American society.

However, Shahn also believed firmly in facing reality and created many murals for public buildings that reflected this stance.³⁷ Between 1936 and 1938, Shahn created a major fresco mural for the Center of Federal Housing Development in Jersey Homestead, New Jersey. In this work, we see the explicit influence of Diego Rivera, leader of the Mexican Muralista Art Movement. It is said that when creating this mural, Shahn drew upon the ideas he had come up with for an earlier mural to be created inside the Rikers Island prison—a request that he had received from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in 1934 but that was left unrealized at the time.³⁸

The left-hand panel of the fresco mural at the Center of Federal Housing Development depicts Jewish immigrants fleeing Nazi persecution, passing the coffins of Ferdinando Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, and disembarking from a ship in a procession headed by Albert Einstein. In addition, he makes a series of contrasts, such as between handicrafts and the machine industry, the unemployed and workers, and past and present of material society, with the central panel depicting the formation of labor unions and the right-hand panel presenting an image of future workers. In this fresco mural, Shahn emphasized the energetic dynamism of people, and sought to imbue it with a sense of extolment of the era of the New Deal—an era in which people and their stories unfolded in a dynamic manner.³⁹

Next, between 1938 and 1939, Shahn created a 13-panel giant fresco in the main lobby of Bronx Central Annex Post Office at the request of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Buildings Administration of the Department of Treasury. Through the inclusion of Walt Whitman in this work titled *American Treasure: Walt Whitman*, Shahn highlights the importance of humanity and democracy among workers. While the mural at the Center of Federal Housing Development targeted a small community, this work was created for a large, unspecified

number of city workers. Thus, Shahn used a broad range of themes in an attempt to capture the tremendous energy of humanity through bold compositions and colors.⁴⁰

Between 1940 and 1941, Shahn worked on the creation of a mural on the themes of *Freedom of Religion*, *Freedom of Speech*, *Freedom of Publication*, and *Freedom of Election* following a request by the Section of Fine Arts, Public Buildings Administration of the Department of Treasury.

This mural, *Four Freedoms*, was created for the Woodhaven Branch Post Office in the Queens area of New York. However, by this time, the crisis of war had become unavoidable and the country had moved on to a War Footing, and therefore this mural was created under the influence of the “four freedoms” emphasized in President Roosevelt’s State of the Union Address of January 1941.⁴¹ Shahn also created a series of large mural frescos between 1940 and 1942 for Washington’s Social Security Building, including *Farmer* (1941) and *Basketball Players* (1940–42).⁴²

Irrespective of the social anxiety caused by the 1937 economic recession and the transition to a state of War Footing at the end of the 1930s, these murals appealed for support for New Deal policies and sought to eulogize American citizens.⁴³

Chapter 3—War and McCarthyism

1. Shahn and his Anguish at War

The rise of fascism and the “footsteps” toward war cruelly dashed Shahn’s social dreams. To raise funds for war expenditure in the Second World War, the federal government discontinued financial support for the WPA. This meant a gradual end to federally-funded art projects, including the FAP. Moreover, the House Un-American Activities Committee, formed in May 1938, sought to break up artists’ organizations and activities.⁴⁴

When, Nazi Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, the United Kingdom and France issued a declaration of war and Europe fell headlong into a state of all-out conflict from which there was no turning back. Around this time, Shahn created a series of works, collectively known as *Sunday Picture*, including, *Handball*, *Jesus Exalted in Song*, and *Vacant Lot* created in 1939 and *Ask the Farmers*, *Pretty Girl Milking a Cow*, and *Willis Avenue Bridge* in 1940. When looking at these works, Shahn’s style appears to have changed to one that is symbolic and introverted in nature.

The expressions of people depicted in these works are significantly deformed and full of helpless anguish. While works such as *Pretty Girl Milking a Cow* are not devoid of Shahn’s characteristic warmth, the warmth in them is in an introspective sense and reflects people in an everyday hidden drama. In addition, Shahn renders landscapes and buildings with profuse use of dark colors and closed compositions, suggesting social anxiety over the move from economic downturn to war. Shahn himself was fearful of war and felt an intense indignation over fascism. Thus, his method of introverted depiction was “his only way of expressing the dwarfishness of people trying to live amidst the atrocity of war.”⁴⁵

One reason for these characteristics was the conflict that saw a change in Shahn’s style to Personal Realism, a trend that was particularly evident during the Second World War until the postwar period.

In particular, with the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941 and the declaration of war by Germany, Italy, and Japan on the United States as well as the United Kingdom, Shahn’s sense of crisis concerning war and fascism became increasingly intense. This was the reason

that Shahn joined the Office of War Information in August 1942 and channeled his hatred for fascism and war through posters. Representative examples of these posters include *We French Workers Warn You...* (1942), *Peter and the Wolf* (1943), *For All These Rights We've Just Begin to Fight* (1944), *We Want Peace* (1946), and *From Workers to Farmers... Thanks!* (1944). In all these works, he uses a unique, mournful style to depict the fierce resistance of workers and farmers to fascism and war.⁴⁶

Shahn, at this time, felt a sense of anguish about the out-of-control "monster" that was war and depicted the ravages brought about by this brutal war along with people's feelings of despair in such works as *This is Nazi Brutality* (1942), which takes as its subject matter the massacre of civilians in Czechoslovakia; *1943, A.D.*, a depiction of a concentration camp surrounded by barbed-wire entanglements; *Italian Landscape* (1943–44), a depiction of a town reduced to rubble; *Italian Landscape II: Europe* (1944); and *The Red Stairway* (1944). These are expressions of his style of Personal Realism, similar to his nihilistic impressions of people who are struggling with the realities of war.⁴⁷

It is apparent that as the war continued, Shahn became increasingly tormented by feelings of despair. He became afflicted with feelings of emptiness akin to nihilism in which he mulled over the enormous power that war has in shaping the destinies of people and reflected on whether individuals are powerless in the face of this power. In order to escape from this anguish, Shahn turned to Symbolism, which at one stage he had thought of as secretive and abstruse, as a means of depicting war and people.

Thus, Shahn entered the lyrical world of the symbol, replete with both loneliness and grief. While he was working at this time on such works as *Girl Skipping Rope* (1943), *Cherubs and Children* (1944), *Liberation* (1945), and *Pacific Landscape* (1945), many of his works from this period are abstract and allegorical in nature and the people they depict often evoke a sense of loneliness and grief.

For example, *Liberation* depicts children playing on a Maypole-like swing among ruined buildings. While the motif of this work is the news of France's liberation during the Second World War, it also takes the emotion of grief and projects anxiety over the "unordinary" within the ordinary, all the while a universal sense of loneliness hanging in the air. This sense of grief and loneliness is also depicted symbolically in such postwar works as *Miners' Wife* (1948) and *Death of Miner* (1949).

Shahn belonged to an artists' union called the American Artists' Congress.⁴⁸ This led, in 1943, to Shahn receiving a request from the Political Action Committee of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to create posters promoting anti-war sentiments and peace as well as workers' protection. As a result, Shahn created propaganda and employment posters for CIO. Having received praise from the CIO for his work, Shahn was hired as director of the graphic arts division in 1945 and created posters in support of Roosevelt and the Democratic Party for the 1944 presidential and 1946 midterm elections.

Our Friend (1944), created on the request of the National Citizens Political Action Committee, gave strong support for Roosevelt's 4 elections, while *For all these Rights we've just Begun to Fight* (1946) appealed to the electorate to register and vote in the midterm elections.⁴⁹

However, the Democratic Party received a crushing defeat in the 1946 midterm elections, leading to Shahn's dismissal from his position in the CIO. In the 1948 presidential election, Shahn backed Henry A. Wallace of the Progressive Party and created posters ridiculing Democratic Party incumbent candidate Harry S. Truman and Republican Party candidate Thomas E. Dewey.⁵⁰ Shahn's political participation shows that despite the transition of his style to one of Personal Realism, he did not retreat into a world in which artistry became a goal

in itself but internalized a strong pathos in which he endeavored to incorporate some type of Social Message into his art.⁵¹

Shahn's tormented feelings of despair and nihilism over the war meant that he was unable to document social resistance on his canvas the way he had in the past, and the only method now left to him was creative activities that took motifs from his own inner feelings—his subjectivity itself. However, this does not mean that Shahn turned his back on society and escaped to the realm of symbol and concept, or that he abandoned the social messages that he had previously incorporated in his works. Rather, by creating introspective works tinged with symbolism, Shahn was able to deal fully with the background of human feelings and society, allowing him to create his own unique and profound world of Social Realism.⁵²

2. Pursual by the House Un-American Activities Committee

By the summer of 1937, there was already mounting criticism of Roosevelt and the New Deal. Given the failure of the Coffee-Pepper Bill (H.R.8239), which aimed to establish a Bureau of Fine Arts, the federal government learnt lessons from the FAP and closed off the path toward the implementation of cultural policies that would establish a permanent facility of this kind.⁵³

Moreover, the establishment of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) strengthened the anti-New Deal and conservative mood emerging at that time. In mid-1938, Representative J. Parnell Thomas of the Republican Party branded the WPA's art and theater projects as breeding grounds for communism, instigating criticism and deliberations on the FAP itself.⁵⁴

A HUAC public hearing began in August 1938, with Walter S. Steele, editor of the conservative *National Republic* representing over one hundred nationalist organizations in criticizing the FAP. Steele highlighted connections between FAP participants and Russia, such as the facts that Federal Music Project director Nikolai Sokoloff was born in Russia;⁵⁵ the Federal Theatre Project, of which Hallie Flanagan was director, intentionally cited "communist" publications; and Henry G. Alsberg of the Federal Writer's Project sent relief funds to Russians and leveled attacks against Federal One.⁵⁶

As the FAP was thoroughly grounded in WPA regulations stating that employment or dismissal from positions would not be based on political connections, it had adopted a more liberal attitude than those of other WPA projects and counted many artists who were committed communists among its ranks. Thus, at the HUAC public hearing, Steele also testified that the New York FAP and theater project had been run by the Communist Party-controlled Workers Alliance.⁵⁷

Under fire, the WPA placed a gagging order on its employees and tried to ride out the storm; however, HUAC's Martin Dies Jr. and J. Parnell Thomas continued with their pursuit, using the radio and newspapers to make accusations of an un-American communist threat. Moreover, this coincided with major Republican Party gains in the midterm elections of November 1938, with a number of leading WPA officials including Flanagan, Alsberg, and Ellen S. Woodward all being driven into testifying in front of HUAC.⁵⁸

Woodward testified that while she was not necessarily sympathetic with the WPA's art projects, she requested that Flanagan and Alsberg remove political themes from projects. She further stated that the WPA's art projects had produced good results and that the criticism by HUAC was misdirected. Flanagan, who was in charge of theater projects, held ideas that could be called "communist." However, in order to forestall an attack by the HUAC, she dismissed some of the extreme artists and asserted that theater projects were for relief and education.

Alsberg, who was in charge of writing projects, made even a greater attempt than did Flanagan to avoid involvement with radicals, explaining that he warned writers not to take an extreme tone.⁵⁹

Holger Cahill of the FAP and Sokoloff of the music project were not required to testify in front of the HUAC because the HUAC felt no direct threat with the music and art projects. However, in the case of the theater and writing projects, the testimonies of those involved served to clarify the existence of a communist threat. Thus, by the end of the 1930s, there was an increasingly strong sense among many that communism had penetrated throughout Federal One, and feelings of anxiety among the general public were running rife amidst the transition to a War Footing.⁶⁰

As the Democratic Party suffered a major defeat in the 1938 midterm elections, the Roosevelt administration attempted to reform the much-criticized WPA and appointed Francis C. Harrington, a former army technician, in place of Hopkins, who resigned.⁶¹

When the new Congress began in January 1939, WPA staff attended the House Appropriation Subcommittee for half a year, during which time they held negotiations on budgetary allocations and guaranteeing positions. However, as Congress ordered a budgetary subcommittee to examine all WPA projects, committee leaders, Clifton A. Woodrum and John Taber, had to investigate (much like HUAC) whether New York's writing and theater projects were hotbeds for radicalism and whether the administration and allocation of funds to regions was correct.

Therefore, while the WPA was bearing the brunt of criticism and public opinion was beginning to move away from cultural projects such as the FAP, the newly appointed WPA director, Harrington, also lost enthusiasm for maintaining Federal One. Harrington understood Hopkins's Federal One as a cultural development program and believed that it should provide public assistance as part of relief work but did not want to see permanent government support for the arts.⁶²

Such ideas that were prevalent in the House Appropriation Subcommittee at the time would have turned Federal One into an anachronistic cultural policy. However, Clarence A. Cannon of the Democratic Party criticized the excessive WPA attacks as equivalent to a "Red Scare." Cannon also reexamined the HUAC testimonials and exposed them as lacking in credibility.⁶³

However, the House Appropriation Subcommittee's criticism of the WPA did not subside, and a stream of criticism accused it of wastefulness in its budgets and an alleged disproportionate concentration on urban areas. Consequently, a parallel debate ensued pertaining to the WPA's art projects and the threat of communism, with the infiltration of communism being seen increasingly as a more significant issue than the support for the arts. In addition, criticism gradually grew over the New Deal policies, and it was argued that the achievements of the FAP were only of a temporary nature and had not resulted in lessons linked to constructive cultural policies or art projects.⁶⁴

3. Ben Shahn after the Second World War: The Turmoil of McCarthyism

With the end of the Second World War, Shahn reevaluated the nature of Realism, emphasizing once more the importance of humanism in art together with a conviction that art originated in people and their daily lives. In addition, he believed that it was precisely because the philosophic properties of art existed in these points that art possessed a grand and universal value.

As pointed out by Norihisa Matsumoto, this was a sign that Shahn was striving to move beyond mere Realism and on to a type of Symbolism, to penetrate into a world infused with a

more profound artistic spirit. Following the War, Shahn's style deepened to what was not merely Figurativism but could be called Symbolic Figurativism.⁶⁵

In the summer of 1951, Shahn started working as a teacher at Black Mountain College, an avant-garde arts college in North Carolina. However, Shahn's change in thinking toward art did nothing to diminish the critical stance he took toward avant-garde art or the Abstract Expressionism of non-objective art.⁶⁶ Shahn sought philosophical universalities in art and criticized Abstract Expressionism as lacking in content.

Even so, the pervasive mood of the Cold War and McCarthyism bore down relentlessly on Shahn. As early as 1947, *Advancing American Art*, an international traveling exhibition sponsored by the Department of State, was criticized for the destructive image it projected and was canceled midway. Shahn had three works in this exhibition—*The Clinic* (1944), *Reconstruction* (1945), and *Hunger* (1946)—and was investigated for his connections with communists.⁶⁷

Then, in 1949, Shahn was criticized by Republican Party Representative George A. Mondero over his association with such figures as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, all of whom were standard bearers of the Mexican Muralista Art Movement, a movement devoted to socialism. Shahn also came under fire as an artist connected with New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).⁶⁸

Moreover, we must not forget that McCarthyism generated unfounded suspicion between many intellectuals and artists and Shahn was no exception. It drove a wedge between his friendships; the critic Henry McBride, for example, who had long been someone who understood Shahn, criticized the red monsters depicted in *Allegory* (1948) as glorifying communism.⁶⁹

In February 1950, Representative Joseph R. McCarthy dropped a bombshell when he reported the existence of a communist spy network. This led to New Dealer and liberal intellectuals and artists coming under increasing pressure.⁷⁰ Shahn was targeted for investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the HUAC and also came under intense attack from private conservative organizations. In particular, the magazine *Counter Attack*, first published in 1947 by an ex-FBI agent, stepped up criticism of artists with communist sympathies between 1952 and 1954, and Shahn was no longer able to work at CBS Television, a highly liberal media organization at that time.⁷¹

FBI investigations mainly consisted of interviews conducted at Shahn's home, and it is said that, on the surface at least, he responded to these amicably, continuing to talk to the agents to the extent of being overly talkative. Shahn's wife, Bernarda, was an ex-communist; however, Shahn himself said that he had never belonged to the Communist Party but that he had belonged to seven or eight of the organizations that the attorney general had deemed to be threatening. In addition, Shahn freely admitted that he was interested in anti-war activities and peace movements, and he also declared to FBI agents that he would not disclose the names of acquaintances who could be considered communists. In 1968, Shahn created the poster *McCarthy, Peace*.⁷²

Shahn had the endurance to withstand the pressure and FBI's investigations. This was in part because he had the support of Bernarda, someone who understood him well, and he had by now been settled for many years in Jersey Homestead (renamed Roosevelt in November 1945), New Jersey, living an emotionally stable life. Roosevelt was a development planned by the FSA and contained textile mills and collective farms that helped communities maintain self-sufficiency.⁷³

Moreover, there were around 200 Jewish immigrant households (approximately 800 people)

living in Jersey Homestead. Among the residents of Roosevelt were people whom Shahn depicted in his murals, including Sidney Hillman of Amalgamated Clothing Workers and David Dubinsky of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union. More than anything, though, we can say that it was the creative activities in which he included social protests and messages that proved to be Shahn's salvation, with works such as *Epoch* (1950) and *Conversations* (1958) serving to counter anguish and dilemmas with McCarthyism.⁷⁴

Conclusion

On his journey through the Great Depression era, Shahn witnessed immigrants and the unemployed and black Americans doing their best to live amidst the harsh realities of their fates. Despite the difficult economic circumstances, each of these people's lives had a story to tell. During the latter half of his journey, Shahn took up his brush and sought to depict these stories on canvas.

With the terrible events of the Second World War, Shahn's style assumed an introverted kind of symbolism, which he recalled as having transformed into Personal Realism. Faced with the harsh realities of war, Shahn felt that he had no choice but to react to people's fundamental grief and isolation, his only method of doing so being to render their helpless feelings of despair and nihilism on canvas. However, we should also note that it was around this time that Shahn developed into as a realist striving to observe people and society from all angles, which lead to the establishment of his unique and profound world of Social Realism resulting from his multi-layered gaze.⁷⁵

Even after the War, Shahn's Jewish heritage meant that the grief associated with fascism and war continued to weigh on his heart. Until he created *Where Wast Thou?* in 1964, he was unable to address the Holocaust directly as a result of his feelings of helplessness and despair. This is partly because when the true extent of the Holocaust came to light, Shahn found himself looking back with shock on how he had removed himself from traditional Jewish society, including marrying a gentile, Bernarda.⁷⁶

However, Shahn did not lose his sense of social conscience, as evinced by the inclusion of sentiments relating to the reconstruction of Israel and the Holocaust in such works as *Sound in the Mulberry Tree* (1948), *Warsaw* (1952), *Third Allegory* and *Goyescas* (1956), and *We Did Not Know What Happened to Us* (1960).⁷⁷ For example, *Warsaw* is said to be a work based on the motif of the armed uprising among Jews that occurred in a Polish ghetto, consisting of an abstract depiction of the anguish and anger of a man charged with the illegal operation of a distillery, represented by a deformed "fist." Here, we see an expression of Shahn's strong social awareness and profound insight.

Thus, when tracing Shahn's steps following the War, we see that he viewed people and society with a multi-layered gaze. Ben Shahn did not engage in art for art's sake but endeavored to convey a social message through his work. This is because he wanted to prove his identity through his creative activities, shed light on the connections between people and society, and continue to question the universality of the human experience. In his later years, Shahn questioned this universality by returning to his Jewish origins, prompting the creation of *Identity* (1968).⁷⁸

In 1932, the Harvard University Society for Contemporary Art ran the *Sacco Vanzetti Series* and *Dreyfus Affair Series* of exhibitions, with Shahn's works continuing to attract attention long after the War had ended. Then, in 1956, Shahn was invited to Harvard to participate in the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, a series of lectures held by eminent artists. Along with

providing instruction to students, he set up a studio on the top floor of the Fogg Art Museum and continued to produce works. The following year, in 1957, Harvard University published Shahn's lecture as *The Shape of Content*, and in June 1967, it conferred on him an honorary doctorate.

Following Shahn's death in 1969, Harvard University Art Museums held a series of exhibitions in honor of his work, including *Ben Shahn as Photographer* (1969) and *The Photographic Eye of Ben Shahn* (1975). In 1970, Bernarda donated a vast quantity of his personal effects to Fogg Art Museum. The total number of items ran to over 6,000 and included not only photographs but also an extremely diverse range of other material, from sketches to woodblock prints.⁷⁹ The photographs alone contain many that are unique and cannot be seen elsewhere, which is why when the Fogg Art Museum held the exhibition *Ben Shahn's New York* in 2000, it was welcomed nationwide as an outstanding collection and a major sensation.⁸⁰

Notes

1. Nobuyuki Kawauchi, "Ben Shahn and the Federal Art Project," *Chubu International Review*, Vol. 7 (April 2012), pp. 8-35; Frances K. Pohl, *Ben Shahn: New Deal Artist in a Cold War, 1947-1954* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989).
2. Alan Brinkley, *Liberalism and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 1-16. American arts at the time were influenced not only by liberalism but also by the socialist arts of the Soviet Union.
3. All biographical information from *Ben Shahn, Voices and Visions*, ed. Alma S. King, Santa Fe East Gallery, Santa Fe: 1981. http://xroads.virginia.edu/~am482_04/am_scene/shahnimages.html
4. Yasuko Araki, "1960 Trip to Japan," in *Ben Shahn: Cross Media Artist/ Photographs, Paintings and Graphic Arts* (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, 2012), pp. 213-214. While it has been said that Shahn first visited Japan before the Second World War in the 1920s, there is no clear evidence to substantiate this.
5. Alden Oreck, "The Pale of Settlement," *Jewish Visual Library* <http://www.Jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/pale.html> Thus, there are also many of Shahn's works that contain such motifs as Israel and Jewish synagogues. Further, his mother Gittel L. Shahn was a potter.
6. Howard Greenfeld, *Ben Shahn: An Artist's Life* (New York: Random House, 1998), pp. 5-6; Ben Shahn, *Love and Joy about Letters* (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1963), pp. 5-7. The Talmud is a body of literature that collects Oral Law handed down by Moses and is also deemed to be another Jewish law.
7. Howard Greenfeld., *ibid.*, pp. 6-7. The KKK is said to have been formed in December 1865 at the end of the American Civil War by Nathan B. Forrest, an ex-lieutenant general of the Confederate State of America. In 1930, KKK had approximately 30,000 members. http://www.aaregistry.org/african_american_history/2207/The_Ku_Klux_Klan_a_brief_biography

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a text in the form of a dialog that professes to be a "secret Jewish plan for global domination." This document had a profound impact on the Nazis in Germany and is thought to have played a part in bringing about the Holocaust.

8. See Tatsuro Nomura, *The Lives of Jewish Immigrants in New York and their World of Work* (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1995). <http://www.trotsky-library.com/photo/02/pogrom.htm> Heiko Haumann, *A History of East European Jews* (New York: Central European University Press, 2003).
9. <http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/xtf/search?text=18;browse=;> <http://www.ipcny.org/info/FAQs/archives.html> Norihisa Matsumoto, *America's Minority Artists: Dreaming for the Realization of a Multicultural Society* (Tokyo: Akashi Shoten, 2001), p. 166. Norihisa Matsumoto's research provided many suggestions for this study.
10. http://www.askart.com/AskART/B/george_brandt_bridgman/ George B. Bridgman, *Bridgman's Complete Guide to Drawing From Life: Over 1,000 Illustrations* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971); George B. Bridgman, *Constructive Anatomy* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973).

Tama Art University Museum ed., *Ben Shahn: The Process of Creation* (Tokyo: Art Planning Grey, 1996). Kodansha ed., *American Scene: Ben Shahn* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1992). Yoshiaki Tono, *Ben Shahn: His Life and Art* (Famous Painters of the World Vol. 16, Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1962). Shahn was influenced

- by his father's radical political thoughts.
11. Howard Greenfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 41. Norihisa Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 167. Shahn and Tillie's new home was right in front of the apartment of Japanese painter Yasuo Kuniyoshi and his wife Catharine Schmidt (No. 110). Like Shahn, Kuniyoshi was also a painter under contract with Downtown Gallery, in his case for 20 years from 1933 until his death. John Russell, "An Art School That Also Taught Life," *New York Times* (March 19, 1989).
 12. Shahn's villa was photographed by his friend Walker Evans, held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/190024870>
 13. Ben Shahn, *The Shape of Content: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1956–1957* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 34–35.
 14. Shahn and Tillie were officially divorced in 1944. Norihisa, Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 169. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=46214453> <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/16/arts/16shahn.html>
 15. Yoshiharu Kawamura and Robert Muraskin, *Ethnic Minorities in the U.S.A* (Tokyo: Seibido, 2004), pp. 7–9; Donald J. Framberger, Joan R. Olshansky, and Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph (September 1979). "National Register of Historic Places Registration: Bronx Central Annex-U.S. Post Office." New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. http://www.oprhp.state.ny.us/hpimaging/hp_view.asp?GroupView=652. Comrades in Art: Revolutionary Art in America 1926–1938 http://www.comradesinart.net/comrades_flv/Bernarda_Bryson/index.html
 16. Peter Y. Medding, Gary A. Tobin, Sylvia Barack Fishman and Mordechai Rimor, "Jewish Identity in Conversionary and Mixed Marriages," in *American Jewish Year Book 1992* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1992), pp. 3–76
 17. Norihisa Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 170. Howard Greenfeld, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–39, 118–119. http://smyjewishlearning.atypica.com/history/Modern_History/1980-2000/American_Jewish_Community/NJPS_1990.shtml?HSTY
 18. Nobuyuki Kawauchi, "The New Deal Regime and American Intellectuals," *Chubu International Review*, Vol. 22 (March 1999), pp. 41–42. Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 15. Bernarda was fiercely opposed to Juliana Force, New York director of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), over the employment of artists.
 19. Andrew Hemingway, *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Cecile M. Whiting, *Antifascism in American Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); Julia Williams, *Artists against War and Fascism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986).
 20. See Tatsuro Nomura, *op. cit.*, Chapter 3. Mizuhoko Kotani, *Jewish Artists: In the Wake of their Creations* (Tokyo: Saimaru Shuppankai, 1987). While it is said that Shahn possessed a spirit of rebellion, had great esteem for socialism, and strengthened his critical faculties, his life was clearly far removed from Yiddish Communism. Cf. Yisrael Gutman, Michael Berenbaum, Yehuda Bauer, eds., *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1998).
 21. Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), pp. 309–310, 345–346.
 22. Between November 1998 and March of the following year, New York's The Jewish Museum held a retrospective exhibition titled *Common Man, Mythic Vision: The Paintings of Ben Shahn*. <http://www.thejewishmuseum.org/> Susan Chevlowe, etc., eds., *Common Man, Mythic Vision: The Paintings of Ben Shahn* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
 23. Shujiro Yazawa, *The Thought of American Intellectuals: A Group of New York Sociologists* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1996). Hideki Akimoto, *The Origins of New York Intellectuals: Politics and Literature in the 1930s* (Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2001). Reiko Maekawa, *American Intellectuals and the Collapse of Radical Vision* (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2003).
 24. Downtown Gallery records, 1824–1974, bulk 1926–1969 <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/downtown-gallery-records-6293/more> In addition to Shahn and Yasuo Kuniyoshi, black painter Jacob Lawrence belonged to the Downtown Gallery. Shahn's 1942 poster *We French Workers Warn You...* was used as the background for Kuniyoshi's *Somebody Tore My Poster* (1943).
 25. Halpert was an Eastern European Jew from Odessa (present-day Ukraine) who immigrated to America

- in 1906, the same year as Shahn. The Downtown Gallery was established in 1926 as Our Gallery, and Berthe K. Goldsmith was Halpert's partner. Diane Tepfer, "Edith Gregor Halpert and the Downtown Gallery Downtown, 1926-1940: A Study in American Art Patronage," Ph. D. dissertation (The University of Michigan, 1989), pp. 13-23, 27-32.
26. Avis Berman, "Pioneers in American Museums: Edith Halpert," *Museum News* (November/December 1975), pp. 34-38, 60-64; Cynthia Jaffee McCabe, *The Golden Door: Artist-Immigrants of America, 1876-1976* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1976), pp. 108-113, 120-124, 130-135.
 27. Diane Tepfer, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-31. Norihisa Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 19. Melvin P. Lader, *Arshile Gorky* (New York: Cross River Press, 1985); *The Downtown Gallery Papers* at the Smithsonian Institution are a useful source of information about artists connected to the Downtown Gallery. [http://siarchives.si.edu/Downtown Gallery Papers](http://siarchives.si.edu/Downtown%20Gallery%20Papers), Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. See Norihisa Matsumoto, "People from Downtown Gallery," *The Hiyoshi Review of English Studies*, Vol. 38 (2001).
 28. Diane Tepfer, *ibid.*, pp. 187-232. However, it is difficult to confirm completely the works that were inspected and exhibited from *Downtown Gallery Papers*. Gerald M. Monroe, "The '30s: Art, Ideology and the WPA," *Art in America*, Vol.63 (November/December 1975), pp. 64-67; Helen A. Harrison, "American Art and the New Deal," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 6 (December 1972), pp. 289-296. See my research, "New Deal Art Administration and American Art," *Toho Gakuen School of Music Faculty Bulletin*, Vol. 8 (July 1982).
 29. Philip Wittenberg papers, 1933-1958 <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/philip-wittenberg-papers-10469>
 30. Diane Tepfer, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-108; Howard Greenfeld, *Ben Shahn: An Artist's Life* (New York: Random House, 1998), pp. 55-60. The price of works was between 25 and 50 US dollars. Shahn expressed his deep gratitude to Halpert for opening up doors for him. <http://www.artfacts.net/en/artist/ben-shahn-18707/profile.html>
 31. Howard Greenfeld, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-315. Norihisa Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23. After Shahn broke off his contract with Levy, he reached an amicable settlement with Halpert in 1944. James T. Soby, *Ben Shahn: Paintings* (New York: George Braziller, 1963), pp. 78-99. In January 1968, almost a year before his death, Shahn entered into a contract with Kennedy Galleries.
 32. Archives of American Art, *Government and Art: A Guide to Sources in the Archives of American Art* (1995); Victoria Grieve, *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009).
 33. The photography project can be thought as having continued from the Resettlement Administration (RA), to the Farm Security Administration (FSA) and finally to the Office of War Information. Charles Hagen, ed., *American Photographers of the Depression: Farm Security Administration Photographs 1935-1942* (New York: Pantheon books, 1985).
- We also see that the aim of this project gradually changed to creating a record of rural America. See Rei Masuda, "The Photographs of Ben Shahn: An Artist at the Origins of Images," *Grafica* (2006 Issue 2). History of the New Deal Art Projects <http://www.wpamurals.com/history.html>
34. Clear records of the towns Shahn visited to take photographs can still be found at Harvard University. <http://www.artmuseums.harvard.edu/home/index.html> Library of Congress, *The Photographs of Ben Shahn* (Washington DC: D Giles Ltd, 2008).
 35. Norihisa Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 175. Harvard University Art Museum, Gift of Bernarda Bryson Shahn. These extensive photographs are preserved at Harvard University's Fogg Museum of Art. Ben Shahn at Harvard <http://www.artmuseums.harvard.edu/Shahn> However, there was a point when Shahn suddenly lost interest in photography and declared that he would be bidding it farewell.
 36. Prints of over 160,000 photographs from the FSA are held at the Library of Congress. America from the Great Depression to World War II, Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1935-1945 (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress)
 37. In looking back on his transition to Personal Realism, Shahn employs the term "a sort of"; thus, we can say that the signs of this transition first emerged in the latter half of the 1930s.
 38. Ben Shahn, *The Shape of Content*, p. 112. William F. McDonald, *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts: The Origins and Administrative History of the Arts Projects of the Works Progress Administration* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969).
 39. http://www.correctionhistory.org/benshahn/benshahn_rikers1.html His idea for the mural inside the

- Rikers Island prison was not realized because his three mural sketches were rejected by the Municipal Art Commission on the grounds that they depicted convicts who had committed crimes in a way that was overly full of humanity.
40. *Time* (June 29, 1936); Cf. Paul K. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976).
 41. Ben Shahn, *The Shape of Content*, pp. 29-31. Yoshiaki Tono, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-34. Frances K. Pohl, "Constructing History: A Mural by Ben Shahn," *Arts Magazine*, 62 (September 1987), pp. 36-40; Karal A. Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: A Cultural History of Post-Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1982); Aline B. Louchheim, "Shahn Feels Deeply and Sees Clearly," *Art News* 43 (1944). http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6389/is_4_86/ai_n28721657/
 42. This Social Security Building is currently the Wilbur J. Cohen Building. In addition, in 1937 Shahn worked on such murals as *Great State of Wisconsin*, which was designed to extol Wisconsin's progressivism and the Wisconsin Progressive Party. Norihisa Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
 43. Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *New Deal for Art: The Government Art Projects of the 1930's with Examples from New York City and State* (New York: Gallery Association of New York State, 1977); Michele Vishny, "Ben Shahn, Philip Guston, and Seymour Fogel for the Social Security Building, Washington, D.C.," *Art Magazine*, 61 (March 1987), pp. 40-43.
 44. U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities, "The American National Exhibition, Moscow, July 1959 (The Record of Certain Artists and an Appraisal of Their Works Selected for Display)," 86th Congress, 1st Session (July 1, 1959), pp. 941-963.
 45. Ben Shahn, *The Shape of Content*, p. 48. Ben Shahn, *Biography of a Painting* (Cambridge: Fogg Art Museum, 1956), pp. 32-37; Jane H. Mathews, "Art and Politics in Cold War America," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 81 (October 1976), pp. 762-787; Matthew Baigell and Julia Williams, eds., *Artists against War and Fascism: Papers of the First American Artists' Congress* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986).
 46. *Ben Shahn: Cross Media Artist/Photographs, Paintings and Graphic Arts* (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, 2012), pp. 99-105;
 47. <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/famous-artists/ben-shahn.htm#realism> James W. Ellis, "Ben Shahn's Sunday Paintings: Explanations for his shift from social realism to personal realism," M.A. thesis (Rice University, 1999). Italy in particular was a source of grief for Shahn, which he attempted to depict in many of his works. Ben Shahn, *The Shape of Content*, pp. 40-41.
 48. American Artists' Congress was integrated with the Artists' Equity Association in 1947, with Yasuo Kuniyoshi serving as the first chairman between 1947 and 1950. Yasuo Kuniyoshi Papers, 1921-1993 (Archives of American Art) <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/yasuo-kuniyoshi-papers-9175/more> <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/new-york-artists-equity-association-records-9541>. Kikukawa Masako, "Yasuo Kuniyoshi in the Cold War Climate: 'Advancing American Art' and the Artists Equity Association," *Doshisha American Studies*, Vol. 36 (March 2000), pp. 119-132.
 49. Stephen L. Taller, "The Poster Art of Ben Shahn," *Journal of the Poster Society* (Spring 1987), pp. 9-12; Ralph G. Martin, "The CIO Takes a Long Lease in the South," *New Republic*, 116 (January 13, 1947), pp. 19-21; American Treasures of the Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm183.html>
 50. Ben Shahn, "The Artists and the Politicians," *Art News*, 52 (September 1953), pp. 34-35; Frances K. Pohl, "Ben Shahn and Fortune Magazine: Representations of Labor in 1946," *Labor's Heritage*, 1 (January 1989), pp. 46-55. As a result of the 1946 midterm elections, the number of seats held by the Democratic Party decreased to 12 in the Senate and 55 in the House of Representatives—causing a major blow alongside those of 1938 and 1942.
 51. Yasuko Araki, "Ben Shahn as a Cross Media Artist," *Ben Shahn: Cross Media Artist/Photographs, Paintings and Graphic Arts* (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, 2012), pp. 206-212.
 52. Yoshiaki Tono, *Ben Shahn: His Life and Art* (Famous Painters of the World Vol. 16, Heibonsha, 1962), pp. 44-45. Thomas B. Hess, "Ben Shahn Paints a Picture," *Art News*, 48 (May 1949), pp. 20-22, 55-56; Carla Lonzi and Marisa Volpi, "Ben Shahn," *Paragone*, 69 (September 1955), pp. 38-61; Aline B.

- Loucheim, "Ben Shahn Illuminates," *New York Times* (August 30, 1953), p. 8.
53. Richard D. McKinzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152, 163, 185; Gerald M. Monroe, "The Artists Union of New York," Ph.D. dissertation (New York University, 1971), pp. 198-200; Lincoln Rothschild, "Artists' Organizations of the Depression Decade," in Francis V. O'Connor, ed., *The New Deal Art Projects* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972), pp. 201-201; Erica B. Rubenstein, "Government Art in Roosevelt Era," *Art Journal* (Fall 1960), p. 5.
 54. Richard D. McKinzie, *ibid.*, p. 115. Helen Langa, *Radical Art: Printmaking and the Left in 1930's New York* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004); Martin R. Kalfatovic, *The New Deal Fine Arts Projects: A Bibliography, 1933-1992* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994).
 55. Jason Gibbs, "The Best Music at the Lowest Price: People's Music in San Francisco," *Music Library Association Northern California Chapter*, 17-1 (Fall 2002). <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MUSI/mlancc/fa02nl.htm>. "Testimony of Walter S. Steele regarding Communist Activities in the United States. Hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Eightieth Congress, first session, on H.R.b1884 and H.R. 2122, bills to curb or outlaw the Communist Party in the United States. Public law 601 (section 121, subsection Q (2) July 21, 1947"
 56. http://www.archive.org/stream/testimonyofwalte1947unit/testimonyofwalte1947unit_djvu.txt Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952), pp. 478, 494-495; Jerre Mangione, *The Dream and the Deal: the Federal Writers' Project, 1935-1943* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), pp. 4-5.
 57. These testimonials took place one after another; however, the problem is that nobody attempted to subject the content of these disclosures to a careful review. Richard D. McKinzie, *op. cit.*, p. 156; Gerald M. Monroe, *op. cit.*, p. 222.
 58. As a result of the 1938 midterm elections, the number of seats held by the Democratic Party decreased to 6 in the Senate and 71 in the House of Representatives.
The Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) has the full text of former KGB agent Alexander Vassiliev's Notebooks containing more information on Soviet espionage in the United States during the Cold War <http://www.upress.state.ms.us/books/287> Martha H. Swain, "'The Forgotten Woman': Ellen S. Woodward and Women's Relief in the New Deal," *Prologue*, 15-4 (1983), pp. 201-213.
 59. Richard D. McKinzie, *op. cit.*, p. 157. Abstract Expressionism <http://www.warholstars.org/abstract-expressionism/timeline/abstractexpressionism39.html>
 60. Richard D. McKinzie, *ibid.*, pp. 157-160; James M. Dennis, *Government Art: Relief, Propaganda, or Public Beautification* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 275-276.
 61. Roosevelt wanted to reform the WPA's personnel and thus avoid criticism. Richard D. McKinzie, *ibid.*, pp. 158. History of the New Deal Art Projects <http://www.wpamurals.com/history.html> http://exploreuk.uky.edu/catalog/xt7nvx05xv47_333_2
 62. Richard D. McKinzie, *ibid.*, p. 158; Cynthia Koch, "The Contest for American Culture: A Leadership Case Study on The NEA and NEH Funding Crisis," <http://www.upenn.edu/pnc/ptkoch.html>
 63. Cannon asserted in respect to the WPA's employment rules that a person could not be fired even if he or she happened to be a communist. Richard D. McKinzie, *ibid.*, pp. 1579-160; William M. Fulkerson, "A Rhetorical Study of the Appropriations Speaking of Clarence Andrew Cannon in the House of Representatives from 1923 to 1964," Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Kentucky, 1969) ; Charles A. Jarvis, "Clarence Cannon, the Corn Cob Pipe, and the Hawley-Smoot Tariff," *Missouri Historical Review*, Vol. 84 (January 1990), pp. 151-65. <http://home.comcast.net/~neal4/mobiocan.htm>
 64. The problem was with the fact that art projects had become a political issue. Richard D. McKinzie, *ibid.*, pp. 85-86, 179; Belisario R. Contreras, *op. cit.*, p. 14. SIA RU000311, National Collection of Fine Arts (U.S.) Office of the Director, Records, 1892-1960 http://siarchives.si.edu/collections/siris_arc_216880
 65. Shahn stated that great artists were great symbolism philosophers. Norihisa Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 178; Howard Greenfield, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-267.
 66. Howard Greenfeld, *ibid.*, pp. 267-268. Norihisa Matsumoto, *ibid.*, pp. 178-179. Ben Shahn <http://www.columbia.edu/~lnp3/mydocs/culture/shahn.htm> Caroline Collier, ed., *Starting at Zero: Black Mountain College, 1933-1957* (London: Arnolfini Gallery and Cambridge University, 2005); Mary Emma Harris, *The Arts at Black Mountain College* (New York: The MIT Press, 2002); Vincent Katz, ed., *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art* (New York: The MIT Press, 2003).

67. Un-American Art <http://www.humanitiesweb.org/spa/gai/ID/1081> Shahn was not the only one on the FBI's black list, which also contained such names as Alexander Calder and Georgia O'Keeffe. Herbert Mitgang, *Dangerous Dossiers: Exposing the Secret War against America's Greatest Authors* (New York: Random House, 1991). <http://www.amazon.co.jp/Dangerous-Dossiers-Herbert-Mitgang/dp/0345358015-#> (New York: D.I. Fine, 1988)
68. It was not just Shahn's work that was criticized; Yasuo Kuniyoshi's *Circus Girl Resting* (1931) was severely criticized by Representative Fred Buseby. *Congressional Record*, 80th. Congress, 1st. Session, 1947, pp. 5220-5226; *Congressional Record*, 81st Congress, 1st Session, 1949, pp. 2317-2318, 3233-3235, 6372-6375.
69. McBride took *Allegory* to task for seemingly paying tribute to the Soviet Union. Ben Shahn, *The Shape of Content*, p. 25. McBride carried out his art criticism through such outlets as *The New York Sun* and *The Dial*. Steven Watson and Catherine J. Morris, eds., *Henry McBride, An Eye on the Modern Century: Selected Letters of Henry McBride* (New York: Yale University Press, 2000).
70. Sen. Joseph McCarthy Speech Explaining the Communist Threat (June 2, 1950). <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=858> Ellen Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 38-45.
71. http://books.google.co.jp/books?id=ArBLAQAAIAAJ&hl=ja&source=gbv_similar_books Needless to say, as with other stations, CBS Television is a media outlet funded by Jewish capital. Frances K. Pohl, *Ben Shahn: New Deal Artist in a Cold War Climate* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1989), pp. 118-120. Norihisa Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 181. HUAC (the House Un-American Activities Committee) and the Rise of Anti-Communism http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/McCarthyism/HUAC_Rise_AntiCommun.html
72. Rather than seeing Shahn and his wife as dangerous individuals, it would seem that the FBI wanted to use them to obtain information about "communists" and "communist organizations." Howard Greenfeld, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-267. Shahn's *McCarthy, Peace* contains his thoughts from the time on the Vietnam War.
73. *Time* (June 29, 1936); Paul K. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New Deal: The New Deal Community Program* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roosevelt,_New_Jersey
74. Norihisa Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, p. 182. U.S. Department of State, "United States and Soviet Union to Exchange National Exhibits," *Department of State Bulletin* (October 13, 1958), p. 577; Gerald Sorin, *The Prophetic Minority: American Jewish Immigrant Radicals, 1880-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), pp. 3-4.
75. Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," *Artforum*, 12 (June 1974), pp. 39-41; Fred Glass, "Ben Shahn in the Age of Abstract Expressionism," *Socialist Review*, 17 (March/April 1987), pp. 82-111; Thomas B. Hess, "Is Abstraction Un-American," *Art News*, 48 (May 1949), pp. 38-41; Alfred Werner, "Ben Shahn: The Artist as Social Critic," *American Artists*, 39 (December 1975), pp. 48-53. Nobuyuki Kawauchi, "Thinking about Ben Shahn on Bikini Day," *Asahi Shimbun* (national edition, culture column; February 22, 1988 evening edition).
76. *Where Wast Thou?* was a question many Jews directed at God when the full extent of the Holocaust came to light. Norihisa Matsumoto, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-188.
77. William Hauptman, "The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade," *Artforum*, 12 (October 1973), pp. 48-52; Max Kozloff, "American Painting during the Cold War," *Artforum*, 11 (May 1973), pp. 43-54; Christopher Lasch, "The Cultural Cold War," *The Nation* (September 11, 1967), pp. 198-212.
78. Bernarda Bryson Shahn, *Ben Shahn* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1964), p. 344; Matthew Baigell, *Jewish Artists in New York: The Holocaust Years* (New Brunswick, NJ; Rutgers University Press: 2002). http://www.wallpapers-free.co.uk/background/paintings/ben_shahn/identity/
79. Davis Pratt, *The Photographic Eye of Ben Shahn* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975). Fogg Art Museum has made these into a database titled "Ben Shahn at Harvard," which contains extremely useful primary sources for tracing Shahn's footsteps. <http://www.artmuseums.harvard.edu/Shahn>
80. The catalog from this occasion was published by Yale University Press, edited by Deborah Martin Kao, Laura Katzman, and Jenna Webster, and titled *Ben Shahn's New York: The Photography of Modern Times*. <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/1aa/1aa170.htm>