THE SOCIAL AND LYRIC VOICES OF DOROTHY LIVESAY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the growth and development of an important contemporary Canadian poet, Dorothy Livesay. I attempt to show that common to her personal, lyrical poems and her social documentaries is a democratic and humanist sensibility. Her purpose as a writer is to communicate with Canadians her responses to contemporary life as she experiences and feels it. Her perspective is that of a sensitive and critical mind, conscious of injustice and the difficult striving of people for happiness and fulfillment in what she feels to be a restricting, often violent society. She has always been a rebel; and it is her rebellious, unquiet spirit which drives her to express both her communal concerns as a political poet, and her innermost personal feelings as a woman.

Chapter one shows her early concern with the problem women have in finding fulfillment in a male-dominated world. Her intimate knowledge of and fondness for women Imagist poets finds reflection in *Green Pitcher* and *Signpost*. Also evident is her realistic response to her environment, and the influence of Raymond Knister. During this apprenticeship period in her life she mastered the Imagist technique, and indicated competence at treating larger social questions.

Chapter two explores the impact of the 1930s and upsurge of revolutionary ideas had on her writing. She accepted Marxism as the only perspective which could rationally explain the social evils caused by the depression. Her life as a social worker
led her to see the worst aspects of industrial society. She channelled her political activism into revolutionary poetry after she became aware of the lyrical writings of Auden, Spender, Day-Lewis and others. In this chapter I also show her commitment to peace and the Loyalist cause in Spain. Much of her finest lyrical and social poetry in this period is her response to the ugliness of war against which she has campaigned all her life.

Chapter three extends my analysis of her social poetry into the area of national themes. I investigate the important question of national identity in Canada. I also indicate that Dorothy Livesay is a patriot but not a jingoist. As such she has made an important contribution in making her compatriots aware of the real essence of their nation which is the people who live and work within an expansive landscape.

Chapter four describes the difficult decade of the 1950s. Dorothy Livesay responded to the atomic age and problems of raising a family by a sharp reduction in the quantity and quality of her poetry. I then show how her return from Africa to Vancouver in 1963 led her to re-explore the lyrical point of view of a woman in love.

Chapter five concludes the thesis with an examination of her latest social poems, re-emphasizing the continuity of her democratic, humanist perspective, I show how her interest in new techniques and her rapporte with young writers enables her to continue exploring themes of love, war, art and politics in modes that
communicate clearly and effectively her progressive, critical attitudes to contemporary life in Canada.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the generous and indispensable help and encouragement of Dorothy Livesay. Her letters and hours of discussion opened not only the world of her own experience and writings, but also invaluable insights to our national literature as a whole. I also wish to thank my advisor, Dr. William New, for his patient help.
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CHAPTER I

APPRENTICESHIP

Dorothy Livesay has made a contribution central to the development of a national English-Canadian literature. She was the first poet in Canada to break completely from a romantic pastoral mode of writing, and from the T.S. Eliot wasteland world of despair, to speak in a revolutionary voice about the social reality of industrial workers. At the same time she retained her early appreciation of the Imagist style with its intensely lyrical, feminine content in order to write about emotions which she believes characterize not merely her own feelings, but those of many contemporary Canadian women who search for meaning and fulfillment in a male-dominated society. Her response to social reality and her lyrical songs are two aspects of a common sensibility. Always her concern is with people, with their striving for happiness, for social justice. The occasion may be the delicate internal feelings of a young woman seeking communication with her husband, or the exploitation and racism she observed in giant complexes of modern industry. Her perspective, in general, however, remains the same: democratic and humanist. At times she is radical and explicitly calls for social revolution in her writing; often she explores the internal crises of mind and emotion. But always she deals within a social context; and usually speaks in a voice easy to listen to and easy to understand.
There is another essential aspect to an understanding of her life's work. She has been motivated to write all her life, albeit with varying levels of intensity and success, by her belief that poetry is essential to humanity. This credo she expressed succinctly in a comment to *The Vancouver Sun* in 1966:

I believe that poetry is in most people if it can only be released. Everyone has a rhythmic feeling and an individual reaction to the world.¹

This is a democratic view which runs contrary to any notion that poetic art is fit only for an intellectual elite, or is an esoteric experience of the artist to be communicated with a small coterie of friends. Her poetry has both a personal and social use. She could not agree, for example, with the claim of author George Whalley that: "The state of the world -- even the fate of the world -- is really not our business."² Her view of poetry is more inclined to that expressed by A.J.M. Smith in his essay, "The Poet and the Nuclear Crisis."

It draws mankind together by extending the power of feeling, while at the same time it sharpens and intensifies it. Poetry is an instrument of self-awareness, and awareness, like charity, begins at home. Without it we cannot usefully take up the burden of politics and ethics.³

The development of Dorothy Livesay's poetry indicates too that she is aware, in practise at least, of the inter-relationship between the personal and social aspects of poetry. This relationship is always specific, rooted in the historical development of a nation. Hence at any given moment a poet must consciously define his task.⁴ Dorothy Livesay has done precisely this at various stages of her life, emphasizing first one, then another aspect of what she has felt was necessary to re-vitalize poetry, to make it meaningful to Canadian listeners. Always, however, her object is the same: to capture the rhythm and feeling of
her response to the world in order to communicate with and enrich the experience of others.

Dorothy Livesay did not begin her life as a poet with a clearly defined credo. Fortunate to be born into a family of highly literate parents, however, she did familiarize herself very early in life with the imagist experimenters in the United States. These writers, especially Emily Dickinson, Elinor Wylie, Hilda Doolittle and others, had a large influence on her style as did another experimentalist, Virginia Woolf. Imagism, combined with Dorothy Livesay's awareness of Ontario rural life, an influence traceable through Isabella Crawford and Raymond Knister, characterizes her early writing.

Her short story, "Heat", published in 1929, reveals an important clue as to how she saw the world as a young woman. The story is about the emotional unrest of a young Ontario farm-wife, Jessie, as she tries to understand the meaning of her marriage. What is important is the writer's early concern with and insight into a female neurosis resulting from being tied in an unsatisfactory, uncommunicative relationship with a man. This woman's perspective is a common thread throughout her writing. So is her observation of social reality which is also evident in "Heat." The following description, for example, places the unhappiness of the young wife within a realistic setting:

The sizzling noise spat in her ears, the stove terrified her with its heat. It was too much to have to cook, to watch another eat on such a day. It was more than a woman could bear. So she said to herself; but in reality it was fear of his coming that brought the dizziness to her head.

One factor compounds the other; her emotional anxiety stems from her inability to communicate with her husband. But the very real social
circumstance of rural housework gives rise to her feelings. The climax of the story is the death of her husband caused by a heart-attack in the sun-scorched field; Jessie had never reconciled herself to him. She recalls her early girlish passion for him, how she lost it under a heavy male oppressiveness which she neither understood nor overcame. Unfortunately, the story dissolves into an obscure ending with Jessie clinging to her colt. Nevertheless it foreshadows much of the poet's later experiences in life and indicates she was sensitive to the social and emotional circumstances of being a woman in contemporary Canadian society.

**Green Pitcher** (1928), Dorothy Livesay's first book of poetry, presents a feminine, lyrical and Imagist view of her world. The twenty-five short poems in this slim volume present a quivering, sensitive spirit of an outsider, the mind of a young woman who sees in stark images, stripped of metaphor, a world of rural impressions and romantic fantasies. "Impuissance", for example, is typical of the shy young poet standing outside the world which entrances her, unable to communicate with it. Not unexpectedly a young man is at the centre of this world:

```
I saw the hot sun
Gleaming upon the hay-load
And upon his bronzed face
And strong, lithe body. (GP, p. 4)
```

The natural speech rhythm is enhanced by the stark realism of rural imagery. She does not embellish her poem with romantic sentiment or obscure it with metaphor. Direct presentation of the objective situation carries the feeling of sadness, or longing which she felt as an outsider:
I longed to cry out,
"Stay! stay! I am here."
But the words would not come:
My feet were held fast.
Instead I watched the wagon
Pass through the gate
And lumber along the road
Till the boy was only a swaying form
Against the sky. (GP, p. 4)

The feeling is not profound, even girlish. But it hints at the difficulty women have in asserting their individuality where the male, as in this poem, occupies the centre-stage of life. The image of "feet...held fast" hints at an image of "feet united" much later in her poetry when she finds a sense of fulfillment with a man.  

Another poem, "Fireweed", clearly indicates her Imagist technique. She does not describe the flower; she presents it:

Seed of the fire
Sprung from charred ground
To hide the dry, stark trees
Carved in black nakedness (GP, p. 6)

The plant objectifies her emotion; the image itself conveys the sensuousness of her feeling:

Tongues of fire on fire,
Where moths unsinged
Seek honey in their need
And their desire (GP, p. 6)

The sexual implication of the image is obvious. Poet is flower; flower receives moth -- with need and desire. But this world is limited to the perspective of a rather sheltered, sensitive middle-class girl.

She combines images of nature -- sun, wind, rain, trees, crows, moon -- into delicate, sometimes fragile, jewelled lyrics. "Chinese" (p. 16), catches the clash of opposite images which the poet develops later with "Bartok and the Geranium"; "Reality" (p. 6) contains the important image-symbol of the "narrow bed" which recurs throughout her poetry;
and "Shower" (p. 2), plays with natural imagery which she integrates into her later social poetry. None of them have any real deep artistic substance of their own; rather, they indicate the poet's restive, probing spirit. And they capture something of the innocence and pain of female adolescence.

*Signpost* (1932), her second volume of poetry, contains a number of lyrics which are simply an extension of her mode in *Green Pitcher*. Dorothy Livesay wrote several emotionally tight, tersely written lyrics collected in *Signpost* in response to her hopeless infatuation with a student at the University of Toronto. They capture well this common adolescent experience. An example of her tense feeling is conveyed in "Climax":

```
My heart is stretched on wires,
Tight, tight.
Even the smallest wind,
However light,
Can set it quivering--
And simply a word of yours,
However slight,
Could make it snap.          (S, p. 13)
```

The inter-locking "ight" sound binds the poem well; short words with hard consonantal endings, especially in the last line, jar the rhythm with a sense of her feeling. Her technical skill is high; poems like this point toward her more mature lyrics which also strip metaphor and speak directly. Another important short poem in *Signpost* is "In the street". This two sentence lyric, something akin to a Haiku, presents a theme dominant in her writing:

```
In rainy weather
Who can tell
Whether we weep
Or not?

I dread the sun
For his fierce honesty.  (S, p. 17)
```
The literal sense of this poem at the time of writing describes her fear that her unrequited love might be revealed. But the image of the sun emerges an important symbol throughout her work. She regards the sun, if sometimes fierce, always essential to life, to man's struggle for meaning and happiness. "Fierce honesty" too says something about her striving as a poet. She does, as her later poetry indicates, quite ruthlessly expose social and emotional reality as she understands and feels it.

Two poems in *Signpost* which go beyond the narrow scope her somewhat narcissistic lyrics are "City Wife" and "Old Man." The first won Dorothy Livesay the Jardine Memorial prize in 1932. It is, like her story "Heat", about a young farm wife who struggles to place herself within her new rural environment, and more important, to discover meaning within her marriage. The psychological realism of the young poet's characterization of a "city wife" (city woman who marries a farmer) is due to the poet's understanding of the social circumstance shaping the mind of her character. The poem, narrated by the wife, opens with her description of her husband as he leaves to work in the field:

...until their driver comes  
To swing with iron hand the heavy gate  
As if it were the night he pushes back  
(S, p. 40)

She sees the world in metaphor; he is prosaic -- finds completeness in a harmony of man-land-beast bound together in productive work:

Absorbed in the day ahead, which means to him  
Only the day between concession lines.  
(S, p. 40)

He has an earth quality about him like D.H. Lawrence's character Maurice Pervine. The wife, like D.H. Lawrence's women, cannot define herself within the confines of work:
I know by heart the things I ought to do;
And yet, forgetting all, I stand and dream.  (S, p. 40)

She defines herself instead through him, the man; her anxiety is that her identity is diminished by his commitment to "the strong land."

The specific setting of the poem is a spring day on an Ontario farm. Spring stirs the restless searching of her mind. The long, dark Canadian night of winter is over; she listens to the call of crows. Dorothy Livesay uses this bird as a particularly Canadian symbol of spring, of new life -- of both the challenge and fear the striving for new life brings. The crows remind the wife "how the winter was long"; and provokes her to wonder about her relationship with her husband:

\[
\text{Is it to me he comes, or to the barn}
\text{Where in the golden gloom the horse stamp} \quad (S, p. 42)
\]

She calls to mind the Orpheus myth and its warning:

\[
\text{Not to look back, lest any evil chance}
\text{Should tell us how life vanishes...} \quad (S, p. 43)
\]

She is afraid to search backwards for the meaning of her love; at the same time she is frightened by the thought of her future:

\[
\text{Jet crows cawing and cawing above,}
\text{Crows in the sky:}
\text{Is it a song they shout--}
\text{Or a warning cry?} \quad (S, p. 44)
\]

Her confusion remains unanswered within the poem; she returns to await her husband, hoping he will bring fulfillment to her "fire of... joy, and...sweet unrest" (S, p. 45).

Of course Dorothy Livesay had not experienced this emotional condition first hand; this poem is pure projection on her part. Its realism owes its success in part to the poet's sensitivity to the female point of view; in part, to the influence of the rural realist writer,
Raymond Knister. In her biographical memoir introducing his collected poems, Dorothy Livesay wrote in 1949:

...apple-blossomed orchards, upstanding elms by the snake fences, unknown wild flowers in the cool woods. This was Ontario—self-contained, enclosed—but where man had somehow struck a compromise with nature.

That farm country which, when understood, becomes an intense experience—that was Knister's milieu, the central column of this thought. 14

A few paragraphs later she adds this revealing comment:

And in reading them (Knister's "unmusical imagist verses"--cb) I, too, was suddenly stirred, as if I had found my own voice speaking. 15

"City Wife" is an expression of this voice, as is "Old Man", which also relies on realistic rural imagery to catch the mood of loneliness and old age.

The title song of Signpost poses a question which was extremely relevant to the poet, one which she answered in her social commitment a few years later. It also re-iterates the theme of quest in "City Wife":

Spring is forever a question,
And no one really knows
Whether to dig in his garden,
Or follow the flight of the crows
Led by a veering sign-post-- (S, p. ix)

This image describes well the predicament of the poet herself in 1932.

Her lyrical poems, it must be remembered, were written as an expression of her very real frustration and unhappiness at the University of Toronto. She was unclear as to her direction in life; her decision to spend her third year at Aix-en-Provence at the University of Marseilles did, however, offer her new perspectives. During her very happy year there she wrote a number of prose works; she tried a novel (still unpublished) and completed a number of short stories. Unfortunately, she could not
get them published at the time. Only much later, when she had become established as a poet, were "The Last Climb" and "Glass House" published.

The background to "The Last Climb" Dorothy Livesay describes in her unpublished autobiographical notes:

This was Mdme. de Sevigne's town and I was transported into her world. Later I came to recognize it was a town known to Mireille, Milhaud, Cezanne and Van Gogh; as well as having known Julius Caesar. Amongst the farm people also one saw suddenly a Saracen woman, for the Moors had been here; and St. Victoire, the nearby mountain which Cezanne has painted, was the scene of a bloody battle against the Christians; they were, I was told, obliged to hide in the caves along its precipitous sides.

Her story is about a moment of happiness in the lives of a young man and woman, Paul and Marian, after they struggle together to climb the peak of St. Victoire. The completeness of communication is expressed physically:

Their lips and bodies met; there was no more barrier. Above them the huge shadow of the cross fell obliquely, a shelter from the tremendous sky.

Presumably the cross symbolizes here the meaning of love as counterposed to the vast chaos of sky. In any case, the union between man and woman is tenuous; the sadness of departure, real:

Slowly they rode home, not talking. She felt too forsaken to try and breach any gap, force any words.

Again, then, the concern of the young writer focuses on the difficulty of communication. There is no profound insight, or sweeping social vision here; but there is a Katherine Mansfield delicacy which captures a moment of human feeling.

Dorothy Livesay wrote "Glass House" in response to her stay with an old aristocratic French family in Aix; and especially to the struggle of a young girl servant for emancipation. The author changed the setting to rural Ontario and organized it in such a way as
to probe the subjective responses of its four main characters to their environment. Particularly significant to the story is the use of sun imagery; each person is measured against its "fierce honesty."

Hence the description of young Anna:

Anna, the servant girl, singing at one of the windows, shook out her cloth as if it were sun dust she was scattering.20

She lives an open life, seeks out love with her young man. A young boy in the story is also a figure blessed in sunshine. Truant from school, he romps naked through the warm sun-flooded woods until he sees Anna driving off in the wagon on her way to her lover. The two are joined in this scene as a symbolic unity of innocence and a quest for freedom. Two other characters, Charlotte and Lawrence, are closed -- trapped by their egos and unable to communicate with other people. Lawrence lives in world of contrived feeling, romance; Charlotte is "a squat animal, grubbing in the earth."21 Each cuts the other off from the warmth of sunlight. "Across the sun a tiny cloud passed; for a moment it was cold."22 This line contrasts their relationship to the sun with that of Anna and the boy.

An important clue to Dorothy Livesay's identification in this story with the servant girl also helps explain her later much more political identification with the dispossessed workers of the 1930's. In a letter dated June 10, 1967, the poet wrote:

One point we dealt with on Friday morning, that I can't stress enough, is that I got my view of an 'outer' world where people worked, where people were unlike my parents and culture...from all those Ukrainian, Polish and Lithuanian girls we had as 'mother's help' in Winnipeg; and Canadian farm girls coming to the city; and Finnish girls in teenage years, in Toronto. The one point I am sure about is that I always tended to identify with the immigrant girl, rather than with my mother. I resented the way she treated them and exploited them in her
writing (!!!) and since I was not intimate with her, but hid things from her, I listened avidly to the stories the young girls told and felt one with them when my mother (as would happen) would make them cry. It seems this could be your clue as to how a 'bluestocking' literati might turn from narcissistic lyricism to poetry of a wider, more humanist significance?

This letter explains the poet's sensitivity to the feelings of women, especially to their feelings of being limited and oppressed. This response combined with her knowledge of the woman Imagist poets and Knister's anti-romantic description of farm life account for the kind of poetry Dorothy Livesay wrote in this early period. She passed her apprenticeship with the Jardine prize. She could respond in an intuitive, emotional way to people and events, and she could capture her response in pleasing, technically successful poetry. What she needed was the stimulus of social commitment and a sense of the communal use of poetry in order to break from the rather limited world of Clarkson and Aix.
Footnotes

1 Dorothy Livesay, "New World of Poetry Catches Modern Tempo", The Vancouver Sun, January 29, 1966.


4 I do not at this point mean to cross swords with Irving Layton's "Blakeian Angel" explanation of writing (see "The Creative Process", Ibid., p. 29-40). What he describes here is the subjective process, the physiology of the poetic soul. When he says, for example, "Rhythm is the sound we hear when time is wiped out; when there's not past or future, but only NOW", this does not necessarily deny historical perspective. Art does suspend the moment and can even transcend it to an eternity which "teases out of thought" as Keats suggests. But art, including rhythm (which is after all the sound of speech), is historical, rooted in a specific social-cultural context of a people.

5 For biographical background see D. Pacey's "Introduction" to Selected Poems of Dorothy Livesay, Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1957, pp. xi-xix. Glimpses of autobiography are also supplied in Dorothy Livesay's The Documentaries, Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1968. Peter Stevens, University of Saskatchewan, is preparing a Copp Clark text on Dorothy Livesay. Publication date unavailable at time of submission.

6 See selected correspondence of Dorothy Livesay, Appendix A.


8 Ibid., p. 36.

9 There is a grim irony to this story. Dorothy Livesay herself suffered some of the anxiety in her own marriage which she ascribes to Jessie. Also the author's husband, Duncan Mcna, died suddenly of a stroke while she was away studying in England in 1959. The emotional quality to the story is therefore an important aspect of the writer's consciousness.


D.H. Lawrence, "The Blind Man", England, My England, Penguin Books, London, 1964, pp. 55-75. The first sentence is this story is almost identical to the final image of "City Wife". Dorothy Livesay read Lawrence intensely when she was young, and undoubtedly her poem also reflects his influence.


Ibid., p. xiii.

Both these stories were submitted by the author's father to two American publications, Harpers and Atlantic, in 1931. Neither accepted them. After their publication in Northern Review, Martha Foley reprinted "Glass House" as one of her Best American Short Stories (1951). See Pacey, Selected Poems, Op. Cit., p. xiv.


Dorothy Livesay, "The Last Climb", Northern Review, Vol. 4, No. 6, August-September 1951, p. 6.

Ibid., p. 8.


Ibid., p. 2.

Ibid., p. 3.

See selected correspondence, Appendix A. Florence Livesay, Dorothy Livesay's mother, wrote a number of books on the Ukrainian-Canadian population in Winnipeg. See Bibliography. Her point of view was that of the White or anti-Soviet Ukrainians. Hence she never reconciled herself to the fact of her daughter's commitment to communism.
CHAPTER II
MARXISM AND SOCIAL POETRY

George Bernard Shaw wrote, "Marx made a man of me." In a very real way Marxist philosophy liberated Dorothy Livesay's mind too. Although she had always rebelled against her mother's conservatism and allied herself with her father's iconoclasm, only when she became actively conscious of industrial class struggle and revolutionary ideas did she grow beyond the rather narrow ideological confines of her upbringing. Emma Goldman, a Russian-Jewish revolutionary intellectual, first confronted Dorothy Livesay with a political interpretation of literature. She attended Emma Goldman's lectures with her childhood friend, Eugena ("Jim") Watts, who later introduced the poet to Frederic Engels' *Family, Private Property and the State*. Engels' attempt to explain scientifically and historically the cause of women's domination by men had a great influence on her thinking. Miss Watts continued to stimulate Dorothy Livesay with Marxist ideas. During their final year at the University of Toronto, they actively engaged in ideological discussions. An economics professor, Otto Van der Sprenkel, who had worked in Soviet Russia, spoke highly of their socialist experiment. As the depression continued to grip western capitalist economies, the Soviet Union assumed a position of a "brave new world" in the minds of many workers and some intellectuals.

The decisive event to influence her to Marxism, however, was her post-graduate year (1932-33) in Paris at the Sorbonne. She describes
how personal, emotional involvement and political commitment intertwined:

The two things that happened to me which affected my life rather deeply were the participation, mostly through literature, in the communist movement of mass demonstrations and cultural meetings, always as a shy stranger and onlooker but nevertheless emotionally much moved by political events then happening; and the involvement in a love affair which soon developed into a companionate marriage. We shared the same penthouse apartment with the barest of conveniences and plenty of bugs.2

This experience never led her to write political poetry, however. She wrote a number of love lyrics, most of which have not been published. She returned to Canada where her affair ended, and decided to work as a social worker in the slums of Toronto, then Montreal and New Jersey. As a Marxist revolutionary and social worker during the depression, she saw the worst aspects of capitalism. Her imagist poetry no doubt seemed completely inappropriate to the new content of her life. Therefore whatever writing she did was agitational or propagandistic, aimed at the immediate problems of the day. Only after she discovered the social poetry of the English lyricists, Auden, Spender, Day-Lewis and others, did she find a mode within which to express her new view of the world. Even then, it took a personal crisis before she finally wrote her two major revolutionary documentary poems, "The Outrider" and "Day and Night."3

Before a reader can appreciate fully the significance of these poems, however, it is necessary to understand something about the ideological background to the literature of social realism in the 1930's. "Proletarian literature", as writers in the 1930's called their movement, had its first real origin in the October 1917 socialist
revolution in Russia. Immediately following the accession of Soviet workers' power under the political leadership of V.I. Lenin, the arts and literature flourished in a renaissance of experimentation and creativity. Up until the late 1920's open, vibrant polemics amongst intellectuals, artists and common workers alike raged on as to what culture in a new society should be. These polemics flourished despite the most difficult economic-political-social circumstances ever faced by the Soviet Republics. Early in the debates two general directions emerged: one argued generally for openness and flexibility in art, for experimentation and fidelity to reality over conformism and subservience to policial dictates. The other tended to demand fidelity to the working class, to evaluate a work's political line more highly than its reflection of reality. A critic of the first school, Alexander Voronskii, editor in the 1920's of Krasnaia nov, argued that writers, even those not completely committed to the new order, could help the Russian nation understand itself better by their unrestricted description of life. He stressed the dialectical relationship between art and science, distinguishing them as being qualitatively different one from the other:

Both art and science have the same object: reality. But science analyses, art synthesizes. Science is abstract; art is concrete. Science is aimed at man's mind; art at his sensuous nature. Science perceives life by means of concepts; art by means of images.

In other words a novel is not a sociological tract, even though the object of both may be the same: i.e., social reality. Implicit in Voronskii's position is a strong emphasis on democracy, not just in social-economic life, but in political and cultural affairs as well. Lenin had chartered this course for the new republic in its infancy.
Tragically, a combination of historical circumstance and incorrect political leadership under Joseph Stalin defeated the pleas of men like Voronskii for openness and a free flow of creativity in the arts and literature. Democracy degenerated into bureaucracy. Administrative decisions began to replace the slower process of ideological conviction. Revisions in fundamental theories of Marx and Lenin on such questions as the importance of democracy, national independence, the role of a vanguard political party in a workers' state, the relationship of culture and ideology to society, etc., took the form of new theories to rationalize what in effect was the personalization of political power and the establishment of a class of bureaucrats. Most of these developments were not immediately apparent; many were rooted in the national psychology of the Russian people, its economic backwardness and its political isolation by the capitalist states.

In any case, as the Soviet Union was the only workers' state at the time, its official position on politics and ideology had an overwhelming influence on communists around the world. Part of the negative effect of this influence can be seen in much of the dogmatism of many Marxists, especially in countries where there was no national indigenous Marxist current among the workers or intelligentsia. Such certainly was the case in the Anglo-American world, whose cultures are steeped in pragmatism and anti-intellectualism. Hence the ideological understanding of a number of Anglo-American Marxist intellectuals in the 1930's was shallow. For example, John Strachey's book, *The Coming Struggle for Power*, had an enormous influence on the Anglo-American Left, especially on writers and intellectuals like Dorothy Livesay. There is unquestionably a revolutionary thrust to the book;
but it also suffers from dogmatic, un-Marxist propositions. A kind of ahistorical, apocalyptical vision gripped the thinking of the Left:

The death of capitalism and the substitution of another economic system in its place, will leave no single side of life unaltered. Religion, literature, art, science, the whole of human knowledge will be transformed.\(^5\)

While it is true all social revolutions upheave the total life of a people, the complete stress on the "new Millenium" distorted the real process of social change which involves all the tradition and experience of the past. His attitude to the importance of national consciousness is also extremely mechanical and untrue:

A communist economy cannot possibly admit of national boundaries.... Thus there cannot every be two communist nations in the world at the same time.... For example, when the German working class obtains power, the world will not see a communist Germany and a communist Russia. There will still be one Union of Socialist Soviet Republics...

The fact that "soviet" is a Russian word, and a particularly Russian evolved form of political power, somehow managed to escape most Marxists in this period. Hence Marxism, rather than standing on its own feet, rooted in the culture of the intelligentsia and working class of Anglo-America, became identified almost entirely with the policies of one country, the Soviet Union.\(^6\)

Regardless of some of these weaknesses in the Marxist ideology of the Left, writers of "proletarian literature" did make a considerable contribution to re-vitalizing realism in North American literature. In the United States novelists such as Michael Gold, John Dos Passos, John Steinbeck and others concentrated their focus on the working class; their perspective was realistic and critical, and embraced the idea of workers' power as the only rational re-ordering of society. V.F. Calverton,
Proletarian literature, therefore, is more than realistic literature. It is a literature dominated by the dynamic mythos, carrying within itself the seeds of prophetic conviction and challenge. Proletarian literature of today discovers its framework of reference in the new morality of an emancipated working class in a collective society.

After he acknowledges that this style of prose had become "a movement in the mainstream of American literature", he notes the difficulty of re-molding poetry in this direction:

Proletarian poetry has not made advances at all comparable with those of proletarian fiction and drama.... A more difficult art than the novel or the drama, it is expected that poetry will be the last of the arts to be successfully woven into the proletarian pattern.

The only major national poet to emerge from this period within a proletarian pattern in the United States was John Beecher. But as his poetry has only recently been recognized a major contribution to American literature, he had little influence on other writers.

Dorothy Livesay herself admits the difficulty she had in redirecting the essentially lyrical impulse of her poetic voice to her new ideological perspective. Indeed, poetic social realism in this period directly confronted not only outworn 19th century English romanticism, but also the modernist mode of T.S. Eliot and the personalist, introspective Imagism which had so influenced Dorothy Livesay as a young writer. She was in a sense called upon to denounce her literary origins. At the same time she found it increasingly difficult to remain silent as a poet. The Left English lyricists inspired her out of her dilemma. As she writes in The Documentaries:

What was my astonishment and unbelief, to find that British poets like Auden, Spender and C. Day-Lewis were writing a poetry freed from dogmatism. It was revolutionary, true, but full of lyricism and person-
There was nothing like it in Canada nor even America. Here was a movement in literature that met my own inclinations, for it discarded the pessimism of T.S. Eliot and reclaimed a brave new world—that of Blake and Whitman.  

The degree to which Day-Lewis influenced her theoretical position in poetry is obvious from a brief glance at *A Hope for Poetry* and Dorothy Livesay's *New Frontier* essay, "Poet's Progress." Day-Lewis says the poet is not a political thinker or leader; "he stands, like a mirror at the crossroads, showing the traffic, the danger, the way you have come and the ways you may go—'your own divided heart.'" Dorothy Livesay says the same thing with her comment that "Poets are not independent philosophers: they are gleaners." These attitudes reveal more about the writers than the role of the poet. Both were lyrical and at the time committed to a socialist perspective. Neither of them were ideologists, and their lack of philosophic depth is evident in their poetry. Dorothy Livesay's metaphor of "gleaners" also explains why she has been influenced by different movements throughout her life. Not that she is a weathervane. Quite the contrary. She has actively opposed established attitudes and methods in poetry. But she herself has never been an ideological innovator. She has responded to events emotionally, almost intuitively, directed by her generally humanist democratic values.

Her awareness from direct experience in the 1930's of the inhumanity of capitalism and the threat of fascism and war led her to conclude that poetry must be related to politics, must speak in a voice committed to the emancipation of collective man. Again the influence of Day-Lewis is clear. He phrased his argument this way:
Yet the bourgeois critic must remember that there is no reason why poetry should not also be propaganda; the effect of invocation, of poetry, and of propaganda is to create a state of mind; and it is not enough to say that poetry must do unconsciously what propaganda does consciously, for that would be to dismiss all didactic poetry from that of the Bible downwards.16

And Dorothy Livesay phrases her position similarly. She argues:

Recognizing that we are living in a time of transition, their ("modern poets") concern is to identify themselves with those forces in society which are working towards human development and expansion, as opposed to other groups, identified with capitalism, which are seeking to hold the clock back. That is the general philosophical direction. To those who still cling to the more static conception of society such poetry is "propaganda". Fifty years hence it will not seem so, and the critics will again have time to concern themselves with the highly varied individual differences between poets who are now lumped together as being ruined by the "collectivist complex."17

She directed her argument in this article against writers in the Canadian Authors' Association and conservatives like the still domineering figure of Charles G.D. Roberts to whom political involvement was anathema. These traditional poets continued to rhyme sing-song verses about trees, faeries and nymphs, brooks and country lasses. Dorothy Livesay had rejected this tradition in Canadian poetry as a very young writer. What she read in *Poetry Magazine* (Chicago) impressed her far more than her mother's romantic pastoral poems.18

Even though Ezra Pound's experimentation with rhythm technique strongly influenced Dorothy Livesay's writing style, she took a completely opposite ideological position from him. In 1935, the year she wrote her social revolutionary poems, "The Outrider" and "Day and Night," Ezra Pound published his defense of Mussollini's fascist state.19

The point is that poets took sides. Dorothy Livesay chose to be a spokesman for the Left, for the Spanish Loyalists, for "New Deal" democracy, for industrial unionism, for a new socialist world order.
The immediate circumstances which led her to write "The Outrider" and "Day and Night" the poet describes in her introduction to *The Documentaries*. Day-Lewis's influence on the first poem is obvious. In fact she prefaces "The Outrider" with a line from Day-Lewis's lyrical prophetic poem, "The Magnetic Mountain."

Void are the valleys, in town no trace,
And dumb the sky-dividing hills:
Swift outrider of lumbering earth,
O hasten hither my kestrel joy.

The "outrider" symbolizes the prophetic messenger who lifts suffering people out of despair and into action for a new future. Dorothy Livesay's poem also incorporates images of sun, earth, signpost, etc. found in "The Magnetic Mountain." For example, the following lines from Day-Lewis clearly show in the tone and style of "The Outrider".

Consider these, for we have condemned them;
Leaders to no sure land, guides their bearings lost
Or in league with robbers have reversed the signposts
Disrespectful to ancestors, irresponsible to heirs.
Born barren, & freak growth, root in rubble,
Fruitlessly blossoming, whose foliage suffocates
Their sap is sluggish, they reject the sun.

The search for a new vision, images of barrenness which characterize the old order, hope in a revolutionary future -- these are common to both poems.

The "outrider" in Dorothy Livesay's poem, however, is a symbol taken from Canadian social reality. An Ontario farm boy, forced off the land to seek his livelihood in the city, returns to the country-side with a prophetic message about the necessity for struggle and revolution. He thus becomes the "outrider" or vanguard.

The influence in this poem of Raymond Knister (to whom the poem is dedicated) is evident in Dorothy Livesay's use of clear,
realistic images of rural life. Indeed, the most successful aspect of this documentary is that it truthfully captures the feeling of a major social upheaval in Canada during the 1930's. As a result of depressed farm prices and high mortgage payments on debts accumulated during the prosperous 1920's, many thousands of farmers were forced off the land to seek their future in large industrial centres.

The situation she describes remains relevant because the painful process of urbanization continues today, as every Newfoundlander or Native Indian knows. "The Outrider" describes the suffering of both old and new generations. In the harsh, stark rhythm of the old farmer's narrative the poet captures the feeling of commitment he has to his land:

The year we came, it was all stone picking:
Sun on your fiery back, and the earth
Grimly hanging to her own. At the farm's end
A cedar bog to clear. But in the dry season
Not enough drink for the cattle.
The children gathered blueberries, and ate corn meal.
We danced no festivals.22

One of her most successful characterizations, this old farmer conveys in bald, hard truths the difficulty of pioneering the land. Nature is not an enemy, but an adversary, demanding hard work. And like the sea, this environment claims its victims:

...One day
Wind prying round, wrenched free the barn
And lightning had the whole hay crop
Flaming to heaven. Trying to save the horse
Arthur was stifled. His black bones
We buried under the elm. (DN, p. 8)

The quality of understatement in this passage, the clear, stark image of death makes even more emphatic the old man's unhappy situation:

I stumble around now, lame old farm dog:
When I'm gone, one less hunger
And the hay still to be mown. (DN, p. 8)
Social conditions, not lack of effort or will, have caused this situation. The poet suggests that the old man is a victim not of the land, but of exploitive-social relations.

Her range of social realism expands as she shifts focus from the old man to the second generation. The husband describes his family, particularly the restless, questing spirit of his wife:

But love was never enough, though children sprang Year after year from your loins--never enough For my yearning though your eyes burned strangely-- And earth has kept you far more fierce and safe. (DN, p. 9)

There is an obvious kinship between this woman and "City Wife" and Jessie ("Heat"). But fulfillment comes when the wife in "The Outrider" passes on her restive spirit to her son. An important symbolic image of him is his response to the crow:

The thing I feared, the crow, Was hoarse with calling, whirling, diving down And suddenly his urgent social bent Was answer to my inwardness. (DN, p. 10)

Like the "city wife", he is ambiguous at first toward the hoarse call of spring. But finally it leads the boy into action, to quest for a meaning to life in the city. He sets off in a state of innocence, racing through "swinging air" toward his unknown destination.

The second section of the poem shifts radically in rhythm: from a sing-song flowing line approximating his carefree rural situation, to a terse, clipped sound of an industrial city:

It was different, different From the thoughts I had. Ashphalt and factory walls are not Soft ending to abroad. (DN, p. 10)

He moves from innocence to a state of experience; hard reality strips him of illusion. He becomes aware of the difference between the objective indifference of natural disaster and human cruelty:
Weather you can grumble at
But men can make you groan (DN, p. 11)

His process of growth continues with his involvement in a strike.

In a nice dozen words the poet contrasts his youth and eagerness to struggle to the skepticism and fear of an older worker:

An old worker stares:
His wizened face
Skeptical still--
Years in the trace. (DN, p. 12)

He is a counter-point to the "old lame farm dog"; both old men who have worked their lives away, alienated from the young generation, are important symbols representing the poet's view of the tragedy of old age under capitalist society.

Youth, however, is dynamic. After police break the strike, the young farmer-turned-worker adopts a revolutionary political analysis: the world shall be inherited by those "Who wield the world's machine." (DN, p. 14). This becomes the new "signpost" pointing to the necessity for political unity between farmer and worker, a unity symbolized by the return of the "outrider." He finds farmers praying for miracles, "windmills without arms". What they need is a sense of direction which the messenger provides: "This struggle is our miracle new found."

The weakness of this final section, however, is its abstractness. Evocation through image and rhythm give substance to the reality of farm life and the process of urbanization. But the political message in the final section of the poem is stated, not lived. A much more artistically effective method to convey the feeling of necessity to struggle would be to capture an episode that lives the message. In general she does integrate her political vision within a truthful presentation of reality, and the poem successfully captures the listener's
imagination and helps change his consciousness, his perception of and feeling about reality. The central images are true and realistically conveyed. The shifts in rhythm and pace also help capture the mood. Only when her lyrical political enthusiasm intrudes as an imposition onto the story does she weaken its impact.

Something of her limitation as a social revolutionary poet is also apparent in her poem "Day and Night." The problem is one of point of view. Dorothy Livesay wrote shortly after she had been a social worker, and therefore it is difficult, both for the poet and the listener, to sort out exactly whose voice is speaking: the lyrical voice of an empathetic, female outsider, or, the male industrial worker in the steel mill. Munro Beattie seems to think this problem is inherent in all social poetry:

The poet of social protest cannot bear to write as an outsider. He must become the chum as well as the spokesman of the worker, a role which class, education and sensibility make implausible. At the emotional centre of "Day and Night" there speaks a gentle suffering spirit which is clearly the poet's and not the factory worker's.

True enough some of the poet's attempts to catch the speech of workers falls flat. Lines like "Say, Joe, you sure/got those out fast" (DN, p. 11), and "We bear the burden home to bed/The furnace glows within our hearts" (DN, p. 20) definitely read badly, do not convey realistically a worker's voice. There is almost a tinge of paternalism in some of her lines. But these poems do very definitely require, like most of Dorothy Livesay's poetry, a correct oral presentation in order to catch the voice, rhythm and meaning which are so integrally tied together. This quality of sound, which a careful reading projects, over-comes some of the poem's wordiness and sentimentality. When it is
read by the poet, the actual quality of her female voice also overcomes any ambiguity as to the point of view. Sound itself says "this is a woman telling about the feeling of industrial workers"; and the listener assumes it is her interpretation of that feeling. The poet's introduction to a reading of "Day and Night" at Simon Fraser University in 1967 is relevant to this point:

I think all through my poetry from way back to the present there has been a musical melodia, as Pound calls it, calling forth the poem in a sense, making it a happening. This was true of..."Day and Night". The poem really got started in my mind from Cole Porter's "Night and Day"... The poem combines the Cole Porter theme of love enduring no matter what the times are like and the theme of the oppressed person trying to declare himself a brother and a lover. Also the theme of struggle--against war and for a better human society.

A fair critical estimation of the poem, therefore, must evaluate the ability of the poet to integrate images of industrial life with a quality of sound (through rhythm and rhyme), and then evaluate her ability to inter-weave both sound and visual impact with her thematic vision.

The poem begins with one of the first realistic images of industrial society found in Canadian literature:

Dawn, red and angry, whistles loud and sends
A geysered shaft of steam searching the air.
Scream after scream announces that the churn
Of life must move, the giant arm command.
Men in a stream, a human moving belt
Move into sockets, every one a bolt. (DN, p. 16)

Dawn is not heralded by the traditional cock. Morning becomes a literal hell, signalled by the call of the factory whistle. An ugly, but more realistic industrial scene replaces a romanticized rural landscape so common in Canadian poetry of this period. Important too is that Dorothy Livesay's view is quite different from Archibald Lampman's fear
of industry itself which he expresses in "City at the End of Things."
The author of "Day and Night" is not a luddite; she knows "the churn/
Of life must move". Without industry modern society perishes. Her
main concern is the quality of life in the factory, the alienation,
racism and speed-up which she attributes to private ownership and the
profit motive:

We have eyes
To look across
The bosses' profit
At our loss.  (DN, p. 20)

Thus the initial image of the factory itself is not symbolic of evil.
It is created by man, and is to his benefit or detriment depending
upon how he chooses to use it.

As she saw industrial society in North America, factories
worked to the detriment of workers. She aptly describes their
work process as a "dance in time to the machines." In order to capture
the mood of this dance, she shifts from a long line of strong stresses
to a short, two-beat pattern.

One step forward
Two steps back
Shove the lever,
Push it back (DN, p. 16)

Here she integrates sound and theme. The first two lines of the
quatrain compose the title of Lenin's pamphlet written in 1904 about
the Second Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party. The
political essence of Lenin's tract is to encourage revolutionaries to
endure despite temporary setbacks:

One step forward, two steps back.... It happens in
the lives of individuals, and it happens in the history
of nations and in the developments of parties.... We
have already won a great deal, and we must go on fight-
ing, undeterred by reverses, fighting steadfastly,
scorning the philistine methods of circle scrapping....27
This then gives revolutionary significance to the Cole Porter song "Night and Day," the motif of which is woven in the next section of the poem. Again the rhythm shifts to incorporate yet another mood. Despite the industrial worker's condition he calls for love to "be with me in the pounding/In the knives against my back," and ends with a plea for someone to speak his grievances: "find the words I could not say." (DN, p. 18)

Section III integrates another important theme: brotherhood between black and white workers, as opposed to racist division imposed (as the poet sees it) by the common enemy to both, the capitalist owners:

We were like buddies, see? Until they said
That nigger is too smart the way he smiles
And sauces back the foreman; he might say
Too much one day, to others changing shifts.
Therefore they cut him down, who flowered at night
And raised me up, day hanging over night--
So furnaces could still consume our withered skin.

(DN, p. 18)

"They" refers to the "boss" who later becomes the subject of the spiritual work song and final revolutionary message. The poet also plays with the image of "day/night" and "white/black" to counterpoint the traditional white chauvinist view of "black" as ugly and evil, and "white" as daylight and beauty. She does the same thing much later in her Zambian poems. What is to her credit is that she was sensitive to the race issue as a crucial factor in the revolutionary process within the United States as far back as the 1930's.

Boss, I'm smothered in the darkness
Boss, I'm shrivellin' in the flames
Boss, I'm blacker than my brother
Blow your breath down here. (DN, p. 19)

Here she steps up the tempo with the sound of a Negro spiritual. The
culture of black America, an offspring of three hundred years of oppression, enriches her theme of industrial oppression. Race and class, as she indicates, are inter-related. Black workers suffer double oppression. The white worker by chanting the black worker's song indicates the suffering of both are caused by exploitive social relations. When the poet reads these lines, she both raises her voice pitch and controls her breath in such a way as to add a dimension of vibrancy unobservable in the straight written form, and emphasizes the work rhythm effect of his chant.

She shifts the tempo twice more as the poem works up to its call for revolution in the final section. A Blakeian image of the tiger forged in the furnaces of experience is evoked in the lines:

The furnace glows within our hearts:
Our bodies hammered through the night

These lines lead up to the two-beat quatrains which sum up the experience of the steel workers in their call to turn life "the other way." (By this the poet means socialism, whereby the workers themselves will own the factories, set the pace of work within them and eliminate racism.

Dorothy Livesay rewrote parts of the poem in the mid-1960's and altered some of her final verses to incorporate the Martin Luther King Jr. vision of a non-violent revolution, black and white together. Thus she incorporated yet another popular song motif, "We Shall Overcome."

Are you waiting
Wait with us
Hand in hand
We'll walk in peace

... 

Deep in our hearts
We're not afraid
We'll overcome
The barriers laid
Significantly, in her new book, *The Documentaries*, published after the assassination of King Jr., she reprinted the original version found in *Canadian Poetry Magazine*.

In any case, "Day and Night" is her most outstanding prophetic poem. Although it suffers problems of wordiness and to a certain degree of confusion in point of view, generally it possesses qualities of good poetry. It explores realistically a major area of life in Canada hitherto completely unexplored by Canadian poets. She does so with a sense of commitment to her subject and a passion for social justice. The truth of the poem remains relevant today in spite of its weaknesses, and certain minor reforms in the industrial life of our country. It catches the pulse of its listeners, and can move an even slightly sympathetic imagination to a greater awareness of a class struggle which has by no means changed fundamentally since she wrote it in 1935. My conclusion, therefore, is that "Day and Night" is good poetry, deserving a larger audience of listeners than it has received to date. As a final comment, here is Leo Kennedy's response to the poem in 1936.

> Because I have called attention to poems of factory life by Klein and Livesay, it may be felt that this article invites everyone to write them. Nothing of the kind! Industrial poems cannot be written by middle class poets who have not contact with the subject. He must touch life at a thousand points...grasp the heroism, joy and terror, the courage under privation and repression, the teeming life-stuff all round him that is also the stuff of great poetry. Poetry that is real, Canadian and contemporary can be written tomorrow by poets who worried about 'dreams' and their precious egos yesterday.

Even in contemporary culture featuring anti-heroism and escapism I believe Kennedy's comment is valid. Fortunately, Dorothy Livesay, a middle-class poet, did "have contact with the subject" and was able to
capture in "Day and Night" something of the rhythm and political portent of modern industrial society.

An integral part of her perspective in this Marxist phase of her writing, therefore, is her obvious concern to present a critical, realistic view of industrial society. Her critical view encompassed a belief that re-vitalized democracy could be achieved only with the syndical and political organization of the working class in alliance with other oppressed groups such as farmers (cf. "The Outrider"). Another important aspect of her perspective, however, was her concern for peace. She organized youth meetings against war and fascism, a glimpse of which she captures in one of her "Seven Poems":

Impartially the chairman-undertaker
Smiling casts his vote, announces death (DN, p. 4)

This refers to an important meeting she organized, but which overruled her hopes by a tie-vote and chairman's decision. The "Seven Poems" are too abstract to carry much meaning for a contemporary listener. The point is simply that Dorothy Livesay campaigned for peace, and when General Franco's fascist rebels launched their civil war against the elected Republican government in Spain, she campaigned for the Loyalist cause, against the threat of fascism. Activist youth in the 1930's viewed Spain much as youth today view Vietnam. Both wars are symbols of power versus justice. Dorothy Livesay expresses something of this sentiment in the poem, "Spain."

When the bare branch responds to leaf and light,
Remember them! It is for this they fight.
It is for hills uncoiling and the green thrust
Of spring, that they lie choked with battle dust.31

"Spain" is not good poetry; it is wordy, rhetorical and written to meet the dictate of meter and formal rhyme. But it reminds the reader of
the important historical fact that twelve hundred young Canadians formed a Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion to join the famous International Brigades of volunteers who fought Hitler's and Mussollini's troops long before it was a fashionable thing to do. Alan Crawley, a long-time friend and critic of Dorothy Livesay, recalls the very real impact of this event on her life:

The Macnairs were distressed at many meetings with men who had returned to Canada after fighting at such terrible odds against Fascism in Spain, and they had letters from friends still in the unhappy country. They were both doing all they could to help young men and women who were without jobs, without homes and often without hopes for the future. Dorothy's sympathy and generous spirit were at all times ready to comfort and aid these unfortunate youngsters, and her kitchen and rooms were always open to them.32

As Crawley makes clear here, Spain was very much part of the personal feelings of the poet. She felt personal grief, therefore, when the fascists shot Spain's great lyric poet, Garcia Lorca. Dorothy Livesay knew his warm, humanistic poetry well; he symbolized to her all that was good and gentle in Spain. Her tribute to him, therefore, sums up her whole emotional commitment to the Loyalist cause. As F.R. Scott observed in his review of Day and Night:

The poem Lorca stands out, perhaps because Lorca is at the same time the creative artist and the complete symbol of our ideological conflict and he thus enables Miss Livesay to fuse the personal and the social feeling more intensely.33

It must be emphasized that there is a fusion of "personal and social feeling" in "Lorca", as in most of her writing. Style is informed by perspective; what she says is primary. Crawley, for example, claims that "Lorca" is his favorite poem of Dorothy Livesay's; he claims too that in his readings of Canadian poetry across the country in 1946, "Lorca" was always a favorite. When asked why the poem affected him,
he stressed the significance of its content:

I was moved because I had heard what was happening in Spain, I had read much about Spain and was very much interested in it. I was very sympathetic to the people who were going there to fight for what freedom there should be... Beyond that I think it is a beautifully written poem, in which, to me, there was no tendency to overdo anything.34

The poem is indeed terse and coherent. The emotional impact of Lorca's death on the poet conveyed in the first two stanzas:

When veins congeal
And gesture is confounded
When pucker frowns no more
And voice's door
Is shut forever

On such a night
My bed will shrink
To single size
Sheets go cold
The heart hammer
With life-loud clamor
While someone covers up the eyes. (DN, p. 22)

The image of the "voice's door" emphasizes poetry is oral; poet can no longer speak to poet. She uses a similar image in "Roots" ("Poet pounds on poet's door/ and there's no answer!") to describe the tragedy of non-communication. Important too is the bed symbol. Here it "shrinks to single size"; death of the love poet kills the potential for love itself. Silence imposed by his murder is "driven in/Nailed down", re-calling the crucifixtion of Christ. The irony here is that Franco had the blessing of the Catholic Church hierarchy; yet he is responsible for killing a Christ-figure. His poetry captures the magic of heaven; with Lora dead, "we descend now down from heaven/Into earth's mold, down." (DN, p. 22) The wailing "ow" sound emphasizes her grief.

The sun image in the next stanza symbolizes the poet's belief in Lorca's humanism: "When you lived/Day shone from your face." But
with his death: "the sun rays search/And find no answering torch."
A source of life itself appears to be extinguished. Lorca's death
seems to negate the vibrant life around the poet as she walks through
Stanley Park. But her perspective changes as she realizes the poet
lives through his poetry and through the continuum of life. The
poet "breaths" and "dances" through his poetry:

    Explode
    Unchallenged through the door
    As bullets burst
    Long deaths ago, your breast. (DN, p. 24)

The stark realism of his violent death makes more powerful the thought
of his poetry over-coming such violence. His poetry "outsoars the
bomber's range." The poetic truth of that statement is borne out by
the fact that Lorca remains a popular poet long after the war ended.
Here in a very particular historical image she captures an important
truth: peace does triumph over war. Poetry re-vitalizes man and
lives on past its creator's death. The poems "explode" through the
"door"; they communicate with more power than bullets.

    There are weaknesses in the poem. Structure is too formal;
repetition of the three italicized images of Lorca weigh the poem
down. Some of her metaphors are abstract and a certain wordiness in
section three slows down the rhythm of it. These minor weaknesses,
however, do not destroy the poem's lyrical impact. "Lorca" re-affirms
the beauty and vitality of poetry. There is implicit here too, of course,
a strong protest against the violence of war and the nihilism of
fascism which she felt very strongly.

    Her most dramatic Spanish Civil War poem is "Catalonia" which
she wrote in the spring of 1939 after the last major Loyalist front
was over-come by General Franco. In five short sections she describes
the ugly scene of a deserted battle field, wounded tired soldiers, their final retreat and concludes with a prophesy of victory for the Loyalist cause. Unfortunately, Dorothy Livesay chose not to publish this poem in The Documentaries. It adds an important dimension to her poetic record of events in the 1930's. The narrative line of "Catalonia" is clear; the poet does not intrude. The voice is that of a soldier present on the battle scene.

But we, grey snakes who twist and squirm our way from hump to sodden hump, roll in a hole of slime, scarring our knees to keep awake

She captures something of the battle starkness characteristic of Wilfred Owen's poetry. The unspoken, unromantic heroism of wounded soldiers helping their comrades from wrecked tanks is told without embellishment.

Sorensen burst in
upon the tank, gasping and hurried, thrusting bandages towards him, helping him stand up and breathe.
"The other soldier's dead." They took his gun and letters spilling from his pockets, these the two remembered.

The name "Sorensen" emphasizes that these men are International Brigade soldiers; a simple detail of "letters" reminds the reader of the tragedy of war. Some one is left behind, someone like the girl mentioned in the first lines of the poem:

...who rests tired head on easy arm
and sleeps encircled by her own heart-beat

In this situation the barrier between soldier and lover is shut forever by death. But yet not so entirely. The poet says they die for a cause that lives. There is no sense of bitterness or wailing as the soldiers retreat from the last great battle of the Civil War:
People are marching, marching, and they meet the tattered tunics of the soldiers, some of whom walk bare backed in the cold. A woman stops and gives a shawl, a skirt for covering for soldiers on ahead, who march to make a further stand.

Though darkness fall once more, a tattered flag, the men will stand upright spirit sustained, the floor of Spain a ground not tilled in vain with blood with bones of young men scattered far; not fertilized in vain, 0 grey-green gloss of olives, wind-bent on a hill, of earth supported by the vineyards' yield, and wheat crisp in the sun. No more sterility or drouth or barrenness is yours 0 rolling plains; who make a covering now for breath and bone; for growing hands whose fingers work beneath the roots, to burst out of the earth again, another spring!

Here image emerges as symbol. The simple gesture of a Catelonian woman covering a soldier signals a sense of dignity; it is an orderly retreat. Nor has the poet forgotten why young soldiers died on Spanish soil. In a very real sense the dead bodies fertilize the soil for future resistance. Catalonia fell in the spring of 1939; spring is the last and key word of the poem. New life will grow; despite terrible losses and feelings of betrayal and defeat, the poet transcends the agony of the moment with a sense of history. Indeed the whole aesthetic pleasure of the poem is related to history, to the poet's commitment to a movement, which although it met defeat, did in fact continue to grow. Catalonia today is a militant province in opposition to Franco's rule. A new generation of students and workers, rooted in the battle thirty years ago, fights on. There is a sense of victory even in defeat in Dorothy Livesay's image of death and re-birth. It is an archetypal image, but it has particular impact because she uses it within a specific historical context. There is nothing abstract or vague: the "tattered flag", the unfolding terrain, the dead bodies merge in
symbolic unity. Nothing is extraneous. Thus "Catalonia" is both
documentary and prophecy told in clear communicative language. A
sense of history and meaning to the savagery of this war re-affirms
the Loyalist cause, not with dogmatic slogans, but with a quiet dignity
and realism characteristic of her best social poetry.

Two other examples of her anti-war poetry are "VJ Day" and
"Sonnets for a Soldier." "VJ Day" is a restrained, almost sonnet­
like presentation of the poet's conflict between her personal life and
her sense of political duty.

It seemed a poor thing to do, to wed, when the Japs
Had begun to gnaw their way through the Manchu plains,
When Sapin cast a ballot, and was outraged, raped
In an Olive Grove, by a Monastery wall.36

An: example of her best style in this period, her meaning is clear;
images are sharp. In the first eleven lines she tersely states the
issues absorbing her political attention. A Japanese army "gnaws"
its way through China; Spain is "outraged". The image of her "raped"
by a "Monastery wall" is doubly ironic because the Church hierarchy
collaborated in the "rape" when it should have been a champion for the
"holy" act of marriage between the government and the people consumated
through the "ballot." Other images referring to unemployment in Canada
also stress the poet's apparently selfish desire to marry. Her
husband-to-be cautions her with the wisdom that "Only Hitler was in
a hurry." The first section clips to a close with the internal rhyme
of "So you said. And we wed." (PP, p. 1)

The second section reaffirms the correctness of their decision
to carry on life in the face of war and social injustice. War did burn
itself out; China regained her independence; even the scars of civil­
war heal ("the rubble of Barcelona is this moss under my hand.").
Kathleen O'Donnell, in her doctoral dissertation on Dorothy Livesay, suggests the "conclusion of this poem shows that the individual is more important than the masses." My interpretation of the poem is quite the opposite. Marriage does not symbolize an individual act in spite of social conditions. Instead the poet suggests there must be a merging of personal and social concerns. Love and marriage reaffirm life, strengthen one's commitment to peace, social justice and democracy. The poet's revolutionary enthusiasm is matured not quelled by the wisdom of her husband. If one is not able to merge their own personal feeling of love with an individual, their larger social concern becomes abstract, and like Hitler's ambitious haste, burns itself out. A mature, realistic view of the relationship between individual concern and social consciousness is the philosophical centre of "VJ Day." One is not pitted against the other as suggested by Miss O'Donnell.

An example of a situation where social duty and personal feelings do clash is presented in her "Sonnets for a Soldier." Yet even in the difficult circumstance of a soldier leaving for battle, love has a power to unite people in some kind of commitment. The first sonnet presents the seemingly hopeless situation:

So saying bald
Goodbye, word bounding down each waiting step
Till out of sight and sound, I saw you turn,
Walk firm toward the iron gate. Its clang
Shattered a world. (PP, p. 20)

She describes her soldier-lover leave through the Canadian Pacific railway terminal in Vancouver. Words "bounce" in rhythm down steps; the gate symbolizes the absolute separation between lovers. Her immediate response is that love is killed; her world, "shattered." She thinks how
each of them will grow and change, and so when re-united in the beauty of Stanley Park:

That night of fog, bleaching the bones of trees
Will not shroud you and me again; too wide apart
We will have grown; our thoughts too proud
Too tall for sheltering beneath these boughs. (PP, p. 20)

She maintains her bleak perspective through images of death; trees become "bleached bones"; rather than "cover", they "shroud." All is hopeless and lost. Such is the terrible agony felt at first by a person forcibly separated from their lover.

The second sonnet presents the perspective of the same woman after separation for a period of time. She discovers that despite the lack of physical communication their ties continue to grow:

The lover's voice, gentle and high and clear
Ripples in some inland sea, mind's own.

Rather than the two minds growing apart, she feels her own mind "More meditative grown." The image of the mind as an "inland sea" is similar to Milton's conception of the mind being "its own place", guided by free will. So too with the lover who transcends physical separation to communicate through the power of her imagination:

And though we have no hands, no hands to touch,
Love is assailant again upon this citadel--
His sudden password shattering all doors. (PP, p. 20)

The choice of the word "password" emphasizes he is a soldier and they are separated by war. Her memory of him "shattering all doors" repeats her important image of "doors" as barriers between people.

In "Lorca" the dead poet's poetry "bursts" doors; here a memory of the lover breaks down barriers of physical separation. Essential to her philosophy, traceable right through her phase of political activism and indeed central to it, is her belief that communication between human
beings through love or poetry or physical touch, is essential for human happiness.

By the end of the second world war, Dorothy Livesay's political position had mellowed from her earlier revolutionary enthusiasm. Many factors contributed to her drift from communism. Her own ideological understanding of Marxism was never profound. In daily life she could not maintain the commitment to political activism which the Communist Party of Canada demanded from Left intellectuals. A certain dogmatic and sectarian approach to art within the Communist Party of Canada, in effect a carbon copy of the Stalinist attitudes within the Soviet Union, also drove her into a more liberal position. She reflects this attitude in her elegy to Franklin Roosevelt, entitled simply, "FDR". Here she expresses her sorrow at this death; the spirit of the "New Deal" had encouraged her faith in democracy as early as 1935. She addresses "Walt" (Whitman) in a hope that Roosevelt's policies would carry over into the next decade; that the spirit of change would be picked up by the coming generation "spanning tomorrow's sun."

(PP, p. 23) The poem also hints at a certain pessimism. There was no brave new world at that juncture in history. Indeed, the end of the war marked the beginning of the atomic age, and over twenty years of cold war tension. "FDR" is an appropriate poem to close off a chapter devoted to her Marxist phase of development because it was during the Roosevelt years she engaged most actively in politics and in writing political poetry.

What must be assessed is the significance of this period to Dorothy Livesay's development and to Canadian literature as a whole. It is obvious from an examination of her social documentaries
(including those examined in Chapter III) that Marxism greatly expanded her perspective. Her actual life involvement as a social worker, and later as political organizer and publicist for New Frontier opened her consciousness to a world of class struggle which she recorded in her poetry. New perspective demanded new forms which she found in the poems of the English lyricists. But she never mastered Marxism; nor in these early social documentaries the full potential of a critical, realistic study of Canadian life.

Alan Calmer, a critic from the United States, pin-pointed the problem in 1936. After paying tribute to Dorothy Livesay and the Montreal "school" (F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, Abraham Klein and Leo Kennedy) for leading an "insurrection" in Canadian poetry, he makes the following analysis:

I get the feeling from New Provinces and The White Savannahs that you have been largely content to take over these transformations in American and English verse at their face value, without rooting them very deeply in your own native patterns. It seems to me that you haven't dug into the varied meanings and shades of meaning which these new tendencies must have for Canadian poetry alone, or the particular relevance which Canadian poetry must have to these new ways of writing. My impression is that you have welcomed these new attitudes in an altogether uncritical fashion, that you have been inflexible and unthinking, and even smug, towards them—that you have not hammered away at them, gripping them with all your might, squeezing out of them the sustenance which your poetic growth requires. I feel that you have adopted the new mode of literary expression almost as meekly and blindly as your predecessors imitated the tones and moods of English Romantic poetry.

This is a harsh estimation; but he wrote it as a sympathetic ally with the hope of motivating more particularly Canadian poetry, more rooted in our national situation. This is exactly what Dorothy Livesay wrote during the 1940's with her two documentaries, "West Coast" and "Call My People Home."
Before examining them, however, it is important to distinguish Dorothy Livesay from many of her English and American counterparts. Most poetry readers are aware that many of those writers who identified strongly with communism in the 1930's later reversed their position. Perry Anderson, in an analysis of British culture, explains the process this way.

By and large, the radicals of the thirties were not historians, sociologists or philosophers. By contrast there was a plethora of poets and natural scientists—the two vocations most unsuited to effect any lasting political transformation of British culture. Where there was abid (sic) to "apply" their formal beliefs, the outcome was frequently bad art and false science: at its worst, the rhymes of Spender and the fantasies of Bernal. For the most part, however, the leftism of these intellectuals was merely a set of external political attitudes. It was inevitable that anything so provincial and insubstantial would be blown away by the first gust of the international gale. A few years later, most of the rebellious litterateurs were banal functionaries of reaction.

This characterization is only partly applicable to Dorothy Livesay. True, to a considerable extent her political affiliation was a formal expression of her general feeling about social conditions as she experienced them. But her main motivating feeling of humanity and commitment to a sense of justice had origins in her childhood, and she never deserted them. True, too, that she suffered a period of personal and political depression in the 1950's (see Chapter IV). But she never became a political renegade. Her decision to re-publish her social poems in The Documentaries along with historical notes indicates she still values those experiences and sees their relevance to struggles taking place today. She expresses her own view this way:

This (leaving the Communist Party—cb) did not cause me to hate the communists, or to red-bait...no one else except the communists seemed to be concerned about the plight of our people, nor to be aware of the threat of Hitler and war. These things they saw clearly and they did extend brotherhood to the down and out—and the rest of the world,
including most social workers, was hostile....I felt they lost contact with reality. They did not predict the H-Bomb and they were totally unprepared for the world it presented. Nevertheless even today I feel none of the fashionable hostility towards communists; I still own some as friends; and I feel that the comradeship that existed during the depression was a wonderful experience to have had; I owe it to the communists that I had it.41

Her generous view of the past is refreshingly different from the many "revelations" other writers cashed in with during the 1950's. There is a quality of honesty here that is important to the integrity of her life and her poetry. She recognizes her contribution to social realism in Canadian poetry was directly related to her involvement with communists and other Left activists during the 1930's. If Marxism made a man of Shaw, it certainly helped make Dorothy Livesay a better poet.
Footnotes


3 This crisis she describes briefly in her introduction to "Day and Night" in The Documentaries, Op. Cit., p. 17. She writes a much more explicit account of this situation in her confessional poem, "Ballad of Me." See analysis Chapter IV.


6 Ibid., p. 350.

7 National perspective remains a particular problem for Canadians, writers as well as politicians. For a further discussion of this question see Chapter III.


9 Ibid., p. 227.

10 John Beecher wrote to me: "I am really astonished by the response I am getting today, some of it from the most unlikely quarters. My currently most popular piece, 'In Egypt Land', had to wait in manuscript for 20 years before it was even printed for the first time, and quite a few years after that to be read with any understanding." (March 25, 1969) Today he is heralded by everyone from William Carlos Williams ("This is a man who speaks for the conscience of the people."), to Time Magazine ("a product, and a proponent of the great unfinished American revolution."). See Brochure, John Beecher reads his poetry, and Max Geismer's "Introduction" to Hear the Wind Blow, International, New York, 1968.

11 The Documentaries, pp. 16-17.


14 A Hope for Poetry, p. 221.

Ezra Pound, *Jefferson and/or Mussolini, L' Idea Statale Fascism as I have seen it*, Liver-right Publishing Corp., New York, 1935, p. xi. The whole book is an apologia for Mussolini; blood myth reference (p. v); anti-Sovietism (pp. 28, 36, 37); anti-democracy (p. xi-xii). Practical political extension of his commitment, of course, led him to broadcast fascist propaganda to United States troops during the Italian campaign in World War II.


Ibid., p. 38.

Dorothy Livesay, *Day and Night*, Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1944, p. 8. Future references from this text will be indicated by DN followed by page.


The importance of the poem as sound, incorporating the poet's own voice, rhythm, breath control, etc., cannot be overstated. I have heard Dorothy Livesay read on several occasions to young audiences completely unfamiliar with the 1930's, although in one audience a number of young industrial workers were in attendance. Each time she visibly captured the collective imagination of her listeners, and, in a limited sense, transformed their consciousness, if only for a few moments.

Dorothy Livesay, tape-recording of poetry reading at Simon Fraser University, February 14, 1967.


Dorothy Livesay, poetry reading, Simon Fraser University, February 14, 1967. She has never published this version.
Dorothy Livesay considers "Day and Night" dated, although valuable as an historical insight into social reality of the 1930's. In fact, her poem is completely relevant to present conditions in large U.S. industry. The following quotation is from a leaflet being distributed by an inter-racial, radical caucus (the "Aggressive Caucus") of local 600, United Auto Workers Union, comprising 34,000 members at the Ford Rouge Plant in Detroit: "We say that Ford Labor Relation's mailed fist policy of wholesale disciplinary penalties is a deliberate policy of suppressing frame-plant workers (4,000 workers, 94 percent black--W.A.) protesting their being used to perform hard, heavy, dirty and unpaid work that is wrecking their bodies and making us old before our time. "We say instead of our union leaders threatening those who are angry and in rebellion against these company policies, they should lead all workers, black and white, in rooting out racism and discrimination in the plant as the best way to unite all workers of our union against the Ford Motor Company." (Cited by William Allan, "Black Caucuses Energize Auto Union Poll", The Peoples World, San Francisco, April 5, 1969, p. 4)


Interview with Alan Crawley, See Appendix F.

See Appendix B for copy of the poem and an historical description of an important event in Spain during the Civil War relevant to Dorothy Livesay's pro-Loyalist sentiments.

Dorothy Livesay, Poems for People, Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1947, p. 1. Future references will be indicated by PP followed by page.


After Dorothy Livesay recovered from her illness during the winter of 1935-36 (when she wrote "The Outrider" and "Day and Night"), she took on responsibility as one of the editors of New Frontier. William Lawson, managing editor, said in an interview (January 1969) that New Frontier was launched in response to the Canadian government's decision to illegalize sale of the United States left-wing literary magazine, New Masses. In an opening editorial New Frontier described its aims as two-fold: "to acquaint the Canadian public with the work of those writers and artists who are expressing a positive reaction to the social scene; and to serve as an open forum for all shades of progressive opinion." The magazine "while recognizing the quality of the work produced by divers pioneer artists and writers" wanted to focus on writers "who are
becoming more interested in the social implications of Canadian life, are turning out work which has both social and artistic value." (New Frontier, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1936, p. 3) The magazine was one of the most literate productions of the Left in Canada. Dorothy Livesay's contribution to New Frontier is discussed again in Chapter III. The magazine folded in 1937 from a shortage of funds.


CHAPTER III

NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

A definite national perspective emerges from the poetry written by Dorothy Livesay over the past forty years. Yet to say that Dorothy Livesay is a national poet immediately opens a Pandora's box for Canadian literary critics. There is constant argument as to what our nation is, what our national culture is and should be. Julian Symons charges point blank, "What Canadian poetry most lacks (and what Larkin, Lowell and some other writers by contrast have been able to use profitably) is a truly national style."1 Through an analysis of Dorothy Livesay's national imagery and her treatment of the whole theme what it means to have national identity, I hope to show how Symons is missing a central point in his reference to national style. Another, more optimistic critic than Symons, assures Canadians we are progressing well:

Although we have yet far to go in fully defining and valuing our Canadian identity, I believe that we are on the road, and that as we clarify our national goals our literature will at once reflect and guide us towards those objectives.2

Unfortunately Desmond Pacey does not proceed in his article to help define or clarify. Yet he does hint at an important relationship between the development of national consciousness and literature. Culture is not simply a spontaneous out-pouring of individual thoughts and feelings in a random variety of forms. Creation of a national culture is a conscious process, and it has roots in the experiences and attitudes
of particular peoples within given historical circumstances. Frantz
Fanon, whose study of colonialized cultures is particularly perceptive,
offers this definition:

A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract
populism that believes it can discover the people's true
nature. It is not made up of the inert drags of gratuitous
actions, that is to say actions which are less and less
attached to the ever-present reality of the people. A
national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a
people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and
praise the action through which that people has created
itself and keeps itself in existence. ³

A number of points are particularly relevant for the Canadian nation
here. The focus is on people, not landscape. What people do to create
themselves and keep themselves in existence is the source of national
culture. ⁴

When Dorothy Livesay began to write as a young woman, Canadian
poetry seemed obsessed with a self-conscious, pro-British imperialist
nationalism. Dorothy Livesay, describing this period in a recent
interview, says that "if you look at anthologies of the teens and the
twenties they will show you that there was this kind of insistence that
we describe the Canadian countryside, arouse patriotic fervor or else
describe history." ⁵ Actually the poetry in this period generally did
not root itself in a realistic description of Canadian life. Rather it
was romantic; landscapes were stylized. Meter and rhyme patterns were
formal, modelled on English romanticism. The closest poem Dorothy
Livesay wrote to this mode was "Sonnet for Ontario." (S, p. 28) A
straight description of landscape, the poem is full of trite cliches
and formalized response. Its theme is that despite "the purple smoke/
Of crocuses" and the "prairie meadow lark", "there is something in these
trees, these hills,/ This orderly succession of straight roads/ And fields"
of Ontario she cannot forget. "This land grows like a garden in my heart."
She satirizes precisely such utterances of sentimentality in her poem "O Canada".  

**O CANADA**  
(After swallowing a New Canadian Anthology.)

I

They call you country! with reverential breath  
label your maples red; their lungs  
expand to find your grasses emerald green,  
saliva oozes from their tongues.  

Hepaticasa are mauve, and snowdrops white  
(for Nature is so wonderful)  
the pine trees slant forever on a rock  
a symbol of man's struggling soul.  

And man himself? a greyish scarecrow wraith  
with hands uplifted to the night  
and if one swore at him or pinched his leg  
poor fellow, he would die of fright.  

II

The geographic school  
lays down a simple rule  
for poem making, this:  
mingle your maple with a virgin kiss.  

If pine trees lean one way  
they're bidding you to pray  
if grass is green, why then  
tell everyone about it once again.  

Their interest will not wane  
at listening to the rain  
recorded in poetic blend--  
the weather is your confidential friend.  

Your menu? sunset soup  
wind on the kitchen stoop  
and for desert, a tart  
of prairie crocus served with bleeding-heart.  

She does not decry her nation, nor its beautiful landscape. But she feels the country is demeaned by drooling, trite cliches about trees and maple leaves. Further she dislikes attempts to ascribe symbolic meanings to everything; hence her derision of the pathetic fallacy "slanting tree
equals struggling soul." When she describes landscape usually it is an integral part of man's existence. He works and struggles with it. The poems she satirizes in "O Canada" denigrate man too; they reduce him to a mere ghost, without flesh, blood, and real human feelings. And of course they are never to be found working. Her identity in the second part of the poem of maple leaf "with a virgin kiss" stresses her scorn for the lack of zest in this kind of writing. Her final line "prairie crocus served with bleeding-heart" is almost a direct satire on her "Sonnet for Ontario." The play of words between flower and sentimentalist ("bleeding-heart") sums up her rejection of the romanticist landscape tradition.

The majority of Dorothy Livesay's early poems integrate landscape in a realistic presentation of rural life. In "City-Wife" and "The Outrider" her images of the land are meaningful only in the context of the people who work it, who struggle to make it sustain life. By the 1930's her focus had shifted almost exclusively on social conditions per se. She presents new images of an industrial landscape. And again this landscape is seen as meaningful only within the context of how it affects the lives of people. For the steel worker, thoughts of trees and open country-side are a relief from the drudgery of the factory. For the farmer, the same scene is "all stone picking". Left-wing writers in Canada did not feel a strong national sentiment in this period. They were attracted to the United States, especially its New Deal democracy. If anything their attitudes were anti-British imperialist, a feeling often manifested in satires against a Canadian Author's Association mentality.

An assertion of a positive identity, a feeling of belonging
to a particular people or nation becomes more evident in her writing after she moved from Toronto to Vancouver. As early as 1936, the critic A.M. Stephen characterized her as a western writer and predicted an outburst of poetry from this region. After praising her success in overcoming the influence of T.S. Eliot and departing from the poetry of Carman and Lampman, he adds:

But if I may interpolate a personal—or regional note—Miss Livesay is not from Montreal or Toronto. She was born in Winnipeg—in the west—where, to quote her own words, "Our veins, unbound, set free the fighting heart." And, if I may be pardoned in the presence of guests, may I state my belief that it is to the West we must look for the new force that can and will regenerate the spirit of Canadian poetry.

Her two later poems, "Signature", which she uses to introduce her 1957 Selected Works, and "Roots", which she uses to close off her latest book The Documentaries are evidence enough to prove Stephens correct. Her roots are definitely in the west. And her poetry about the people and scenery in the west is her main contribution to a Canadian national consciousness.

Before examining these two poems in detail, however, it is important to have an idea of how Dorothy Livesay deepened her understanding of and feeling for the western region of her nation. The key is her social consciousness; her commitment to the Left movement made her aware of the real living-working conditions of people. An example of her social concern merging with a sense of patriotism, of belonging with a people as they fight for dignity and some material comfort is her reportage of the coal-miners strike in Corbin, B.C. Her story presents not only data, but interwoven with her choice of facts is a third dimension of feeling, of projection with the miners as they recount the details of their daily lives and the highlights of
violence on the picket lines. In the instance of Corbin a purely trade union economic battle for higher wages leads the writer to investiage a deeper problem -- foreign control in Canada. The company is American owned, and there is a definite edge of Canadian patriotism as part of her social commitment to the workers in her conclusion: "But what if the Mackenzie King government should not live up to its pre-election promises, and threaten confiscation of the mine if the industrial magnates refuse to co-operate. It looks as if the Canadian government and the American company are sleeping in the same bed." The miners' struggle to endure and better their conditions is an assertion of national identity; she does not need to tack on any maple leaves.

Not until World War II did Dorothy Livesay try to deal explicitly with the theme of national identity. In "West Coast" she asks whether or not war is the correct path for Canada to take. She poses the question through a poet-intellectual as he witnesses a dramatic transformation of Vancouver as a result of the creation of a giant war-time ship-building industry. The final decision of the pacifist poet to identify with the war effort grows out of the creative energy and sense of national unity and purpose organic to the process of the industry itself. In many ways it is an archetypal situation; the literary intellectual, who C.P. Snow calls "natural luddites", stands outside the process. But Dorothy Livesay draws the poet into the process, makes him identify with the striving of the nation at the same time preserving his skepticism.

"West Coast" opens with a description of the dramatic impact the ship-yard had on the surrounding North Vancouver community.

We saw the shoreline ripped
And boxes set in tidy rows, a habitation for
A thousand children swept from farm to mine

(DN, p. 40)
It is not entirely positive image: industrial sprawl encroaches on nature, forces people to up-root, creates a conformity of "tidy boxes." But it is more positive than negative; Dorothy Livesay believes in the over-riding creativity of this development.

And walls reared up, ship high, Grim curtain for machine-gun rat-tat-tat  
As caulkers work and welder steered  
The starry shrapnel on a new laid keel.  

(DN, p. 40)

The image of the welder (the "rat-tat-tat" and "shrapnel") reminds the listener these are ships for war. One of the artistic successes of this poem over "Day and Night" is the accuracy and vividness of its industrial imagery. Later in the poem, for example, this image appears in which the "outsider":

Stood in the blacksmith's doorway where the furnaces Bellied and glared, vomiting molten steel  
Till the great moulder caught and shouldered it  
Machine's male hands on feminine soft flesh  
Creating features, fittings for a bride  
A child of ocean still at berth, unscarred. (DN, p. 42)

The metaphor of the "male hands" on "feminine soft flesh" is appropriate to convey the creative process. Its extension through an ironic twist of the phrase "still birth" to "still at berth" is clever without intruding on the flow of narrative rhythm. Obviously the author spent some time becoming acquainted with the industry and job-process itself; its authenticity rings true.

But what of the "third person", the "outsider" in the poem? He is unsure, "one hesitant to knock." But as Dorothy Livesay notes in her preface to "West Coast" in The Documentaries, the energy of workers has an impelling rhythm and drive of its own. She structures the poem so that workers tell their own stories of their origins, hopes and feelings. They tell it like it is. The first to speak is a miner:
Who fought in strikes and met starvation
Then back to pits again to face damnation
The dust sticking in throat, the cough, collapse
Then from the Sanitarium, down to sea
The sea-coast air, and ships a-building there (DN, p. 44)

Her obvious feeling for these people is rooted in her own experience; she knew Corbin miners, had written on their behalf. The same genuine sense of identification can be felt with her projection of the farmer's situation. Faced by ruined crops, bad weather, poor markets, hundreds "trecked bare-footed, underclothed/Greedy for fruit in Okanagan fields." (DN, p. 45) For them too the ship yard; even though a product of war, is a haven. The fourth voice too was a familiar one to the writer. Dorothy Livesay had organized among young unemployed workers; she met impoverishment as a social worker and had fought actively for more adequate government relief. In "West Coast", she submerges her personal feelings in order that the starkness of her images stands on its own; empathy is inherent in her typology.

Who have reared on rations and soup-kitchens
And sent from school unlearned, clutching at work
Out from the curling east to streaming west
Riding the rods with hobos, drug fiends, college students
And sleeping, at the country's end, in flophouse—
A friend to jail, on easy terms with hunger. (DN, p. 45)

The young men for whom this voice speaks had little to identify with in the nation during the 1930's; but the possibility of contributing, of earning a decent livelihood also sets their "voices free."

Significantly, Dorothy Livesay never cut any lines from the "voice" sections of her original poem when she re-published it in The Documentaries. Fortunately she cut a jarring, awkward metaphor of her "outsider" poet ("Who sat with Horace at Socrates' heels/Lulled to the murmur of Virgillian bees"). She also cut a section of stanzas which merely repeat her description of the many immigrant peoples who find
both material benefit and some kind of spiritual identification as a result of the ship-building industry. The revised poem is more tight, than the original and a number of grammatical changes from participles to active verbs speeds the tempo somewhat.

The poem concludes with an effective integration of landscape description with thematic content. She views the industry from the height of Grouse Mountain; below her unfolds the inlet, Stanley Park, Lion's Gate Bridge and the distant outline of Vancouver Island. But the beauty of this view is heightened, made meaningful in social terms, by the "blue and violet, quick magenta flash/From welder's torch."

(DN, p. 48) Men and women from all over the nation are joined in a common effort. Ironically they build ships of war. Yet in spite of that, and because too Dorothy Livesay finally sided with the decision to wage war against the fascist axis-powers, their collective act is not seen as being futile. The ship-yard is an affirmation of life, a symbol of hope and national regeneration. The outsider literary-intellectual overcomes his ludditism, and his justifiable anti-war sentiment to join his voice in unity with the chorus of the ship-yard workers.

In some ways Dorothy Livesay herself under-estimates the symbolic importance of this industry to our national development. Her main concern in her introduction of "West Coast" in The Documentaries is in explaining her feeling about the war. But the strength of the poem does not lie, as she seems to indicate, in the ideological conversion of Earle Birney to join the war effort; or that the war effort itself was negated by post-war developments. The importance of the poem is that it touches on a key symbol of our national identity. The ship-yard industry in a very real way helped make our nation industrially
independent; it provided Canada with a merchant marine, jobs, and with them a sense of national pride, national fulfillment. Twenty-five years later the same yards which provided work for 14000 men, stand practically deserted. Vancouver has expanded into the largest port on the west coast of North America, but not one deep sea ship flies a Canadian flag. Instead bulk-carriers from around the world carry off our natural resources to be processed elsewhere.

The success of the poem is that it fulfills what Fanon accurately describes as a major function of national culture. "West Coast" does "justify and praise the action through which [a] people has created itself and keeps itself in existence." Tragically, the ship-yard which motivated her to write the poem is a mere shadow of its former greatness. All that remains as witness to this once vital aspect of our national life is a skeleton ship-yard, a massive wall mural in the Marine Workers' union hall, and Dorothy Livesay's poem, "West Coast." She underestimates the significance of her poem by suggesting that it is simply an historical memory of a past event. There is something more dynamic to art than that. The ship-yard inspired her to create the poem; the poem has the potential of inspiring a ship-yard. In other words the poem is an active force, one of many facets of that which is summarized in the term national consciousness. How important an ingredient this poem is to that national consciousness depends of course on how many people read or hear it read. The poem contains its own aesthetic power to move an imaginative mind, especially one familiar with Canada, which most Canadians to some degree are. Its aesthetic quality, however, cannot be divorced from the specific historical event, nor be stopped from influencing and changing contemporary consciousness. That is part of the power of national culture. It both
derives itself from the action of people, and influences future actions. All of which leads back to the question posed by Symons of a "truly national style." "West Coast" embodies just that—a "truly national style". By style we are not concerned simply with technique, although even here Dorothy Livesay's poem is more closely related to Isabella Crawford's epical narrative form than any specific American or British influence. The essence of style is informed by the writer's world-view, by content and perspective. The content of "West Coast" is national; its images are rooted in the reality of the Canadian nation. The poet's perspective is affirmative; it coincides with and speaks for the historical moment. Hence it captures something of the vitality of the event itself; it has kinship with the style of our national life itself.

Another event in World War II led Dorothy Livesay to probe the national theme further. "Call My People Home" is her most complete poetic expression of what she thinks and feels are the most essential features of patriotism and national consciousness. In a sense the whole poem is extremely ironic. Thousands of Japanese-Canadians were uprooted from their B.C. coastal homes during World War II because the federal Liberal Party government decided these people were a threat to Canadian national security. Canada was at war with Japan to defend democracy against aggressive fascism: the government mentality could be summed up in a line from the poem -- "once a Jap always a Jap." The government's decision to abrogate the rights and property of a section of its citizenry because of their national origin had precisely the quality of injustice to it which motivated, presumably, the country's involvement in a war against fascism. What obstensibly was an act of "patriotism",
i.e., the portection of the B.C. coast from "alien" Japanese-Canadians, turned out to be an act of national shame. The victims of injustice through their suffering and struggle to make themselves new homes, through their commitment to their own sense of dignity and worth as people, prove that they are what real patriotism is all about.

The poem is written as a radio play and is tightly and carefully structured to present a fairly full spectrum of perspectives. It opens with the point of view of the Isseis (generation born in Japan) and closes with that of the Niseis (generation born in Canada). The old generation have already known one up-rooting:

Home, they say, is where the heart is:
Transplanted walls, and copper-coloured gardens
Or where the cherry bough can blow
Against your pain, and blow it cool again--
This they call home. 14

They live with vivid memories of their native land; all immigrant groups do in the first generation. The tragedy for Japanese-Canadians is they are uprooted a second time, this time against their will:

Home was the uprooting:
The shiver of separation,
Despair of our children
Fear for our future... (CMPH, p. 1)

Their pain is two-fold. They lose their life's work; and they suffer the insecurity of their children. People usually sacrifice willingly in order to liberate their children. For the Isseis to see the future of their children uprooted too is a very imaginable agony.

The opening chorus is followed by seven individual voices, each introduced by an "Announcer." The Fisherman is introduced with a reference to the racism which leads eventually to his deep bitterness and hatred. He contends not only with the sea, but also with:
The uncertain temper of white fishermen
Who hungered also, who had mouths to feed
Who pressed the government to give them licences
Before the yellow faces.  (CMPH, p. 2)

The poet understands the economic basis of racism; white fishermen have "mouhts to feed." They allow their sectional self-interest as white fishermen overcome a wider commitment to social justice. Despite hardships facing the Japanese-Canadian fisherman, however, he achieves two major accomplishments. He owns his boat, and becomes a naturalized citizen. For him "Home was my boat: T.K. 2930".

The snug and round one, warm as a woman
With her stove stoked at night and her lanterns lit
And anchor cast, brooding upon the water
Settled to sleep in the lap of the Skeena.  (CMPH, p. 2)

The image of the "boat-woman" is quite meaningful to a large section of the B.C. population; fishing was one of the primary industries in the province. The fisherman's recollection of his thirty years on the coast calls to mind the changing nature of the industry, and the fact that a few cannery owners made fortunes out of thousands of men like himself. He is not bitter, however. He has worked hard and has won his identity and his home. Then he loses everything:

How speak about the long trip south, the last
We ever made, in the last of our boats?
The time my life turned over, love went under
Into the cold unruly sea. Those waves
Washing the cabin's walls
Lashed hate in me.  (CMPH, p. 4)

The image of life turning over is appropriate. His boat may as well have turned over and he be drowned. A fisherman can cope with that; there is no cruelty in the sea. But for human beings to destroy a life-time of labor and struggle just because of racial prejudice is too much to bear: "The old men wept."
A remarkable quality about this section of the poem is the power and accuracy of its description. Dorothy Livesay has never travelled up the B.C. coast, yet her feeling for it is dead accurate. Details of geography, sea conditions, even quite a subtle quality about the character of Alert Bay -- all are conveyed realistically. Tone is controlled, and the speech rhythm is consistent and impelling. His final line understates his storm of feeling:

That was: the end of my thirty years at the fishing
And the end of my boat, my home. (CMFH, p. 6)

The next speaker is a young girl who tells the children's point of view. Home to them is British Columbia; muddy Fraser River fishing ground, Steveston school house, blackberries on a hillside are all images familiar to them. They too learn about white racism early in life:

(And learned soon enough, of
The colour of their skin, and why
Their hair would never turn golden) (CMFH, p. 7)

Unlike another exodus recalled by the image "My blackberries spilled/
Smeared purple/Over the doorway," her people are forcibly uprooted.

Only the Mounties writing our names
In the big book; the stifled feeling
Of being caught, corralled. (CMFH, p. 8)

Here too is an important national image. In official popular culture Mounties "always get their man" or trot around the world in musical rides. A more realistic portrayal of them is of their carrying out duties of an armed, political police force. The poet was well aware of their role in breaking unions, spying on the Left and intimidating Native Indian people. She had experienced all these aspects of their activity, and so she presents them as she saw them, without embellishment.
Much of "Call My People Home" has the characteristics of being a "found" poem. An example is Mariko's letter which is apparently a close approximation to one discovered by the poet while researching material for her radio play. Mariko must face not only the decision of her mother to marry her off to a man she does not love, but also the overwhelming circumstance of their situation in a concentration camp-like centre. Her letter to her loved one, Susumu, describes her new "home."

She has hung her pink petticoat from my bunk rail
Down over her head, to be private; but nothing is private
Hundreds of strangers lie breathing around us
Wakeful or coughing; or in sleep tossing;
Hundreds of strangers pressing around us
Like horses tethered, tied to a manger. (CMPH, p. 9)

The simile is appropriate; the deportees were huddled into Vancouver's Pacific National Exhibition, made to sleep in horse stalls. Part of her agony is that Susumu has been deported and she has no contact with him. Everything is indefinite, hazy like a nightmare:

It is hard for me to believe, myself,
How you said the words, how you spoke of a garden
Where my name, MARIKO, would be written in flowers,...
(CMPH, p. 9)

The image of her flower time past effectively counter-points her present suffering.

An important dimension is added to "Call My People Home" with the inclusion of a white man's point of view. The Mayor is a sympathetic figure; he is an exception to the "window breaking rabble and the politicians blackout". He fights against the prejudices of his neighbours:

They had read the newspapers, they did not want
Criminals and spies settling upon their doorsteps.
(CMPH, p. 11)
Here again the poet understands the nature of racism. The fact that she chooses to mention newspapers as a source of prejudice and hysteria indicates she believes racism is not inherent in people's outlook. It has to be planted. "Child's mind maimed before he learns to run." But the type represented by the Mayor is also true to life. A large section of white opinion in B.C. opposed the action of the government. Dorothy Livesay's husband was involved with other civil libertarians in an effort to stop the forced migration. The Mayor, drawn from actual historical evidence like all the characters in the poem, typifies the best characteristics of western Canadians. He is democratically minded, friendly, direct in approach and effective in action.

Putting out my hand
I felt hers move, rest for a moment in mine--
Then we were free. We began to work together.

(CMPH, p. 11)

He has a genuine desire to help make them a new home, provide them a new sense of identity. What is weak in my opinion is the failure of the poet to present yet another point of view from white society. No one articulates the racist rationalizations which led to the government's decision. The good white man is a true image; but she dulls the knife edge of her criticism, and in fact limits a full realistic view of the deportation, by neglecting to present a suitable spokesman for "The window-breaking rabble and the politician's blackout."

One of the happier stories in "Call My People Home" is told by a mother of a family who chose to migrate to the prairies rather
than split parents from children. Their's is not an easy choice; their whole life has been a struggle to make their small Fraser Valley farm a home. They decide to start over again only for the sake of their children:

> You took my hands, and said: "It's the children's country. Let them choose." They chafed for independence. Scenting the air of freedom in far fields. (CMFH, p. 13)

The poet indicates here a real understanding of what patriotism means, of what Canadian national identity is about. Immigrants choose Canada as a new homeland. But once they establish roots in the country, their commitment is no longer purely voluntary. If they are to remain true to their own children, the embodiment and hope of their life's struggle, they have to root themselves even deeper in this country. White racism or Anglo-Saxon chauvinism prevents many Canadians from understanding this psychological reality. Patriotism springs out of struggle with the land, sea or in the workshops of the nation and is not accountable to bloodline. It is a sense of identity, and dignity common to people who put something of themselves into the land they live in, nor does this deny pride in their past. In a very symbolic scene at the end of The Wife's narrative, the Japanese-Canadian farmer, almost defeated by hardship, is renewed by a coincidence of two aspects of his new situation. One is the beauty of a summer prairie night which reminds him of his native Japan. The other is a friendly exchange of words with his neighbour, a Ukrainian emmigrant who is also stirred to thoughts about his homeland by the Canadian prairie.
Touching your arm, using words more broken
Than yours, like scraps of bread left over.
"See how tomorrow is fine. You work
Hard, same as me. We make good harvest time."
"This land
Is strange and new. But clean and big
And gentle with the wheat. For children too,
Good growing." (CMPH, p. 14)

The delicacy and poetic truth of this scene makes comment difficult. It conveys a feeling both immigrant farmers have in common to their new homeland even though their origins are hemispheres apart. They are part of the land; something of themselves went into making it both beautiful and abundant. And both have a common stake in the country, their children. Patriotism is flesh and blood human stuff, not an outworn mythology dating back to General Woolfe, nor an abstract and stylized landscape of maple trees. Dorothy Livesay's national imagery in this scene from "Call My People Home" is one of the best examples of her affirmation of a realistic unaffected Canadian national pride.

Two more individual voices conclude the poem. Unfortunately the poet does not maximize the possibility potential in the contrasting images of a young rebel (Shig), and a philosophic student. Shig embodies the agony of a Blakeian state of Experience; the student, of Higher Innocence. But for some reason the poet has a Nisei Voice narrate Shig's story and the sermon-like moralization at the end ("But he blackened our name/Shut gates to the sea.") emasculates the impact of Shig's temperament. He should speak his own hate, his own mindless rebellion because it is a dimension of experience with its own quality of humanity. She makes the mistake of having a lamb present the tiger's point of view. Hence to a small degree
I think she weakens the integrity of the poem.

Not significantly enough, however, to undermine the final chorus of Niseis. They sum up the theme:

Home, we discover, is where life is;
Not Manitoba's wheat
Ontario's walled cities
Nor a B.C. fishing fleet.
Home is labour, with the hand and heart,
The hard doing, and the rest when done:
A rougher ocean than we knew, a tougher earth,
A more magnetic sun.  (CMFH, p. 14)

The conclusion is an accurate summation of historical reality.
Japanese-Canadians did in fact re-root their lives, remained faithful to their dignity, and through their commitment to life, lived out a more genuine patriotism than those who forced them to leave their coastal homes.

"Call My People Home" does more than assert a positive concept of what Dorothy Livesay feels is essential to genuine patriotism. The total impact of the poem cuts sharply against what is implied by her to be false national consciousness. Anglo-Saxon chauvinism and white racism are also part of Canadian reality. Her poem helps expose much of the hypocrisy of "official" Canadian culture:

One of the most persistent of Canadian myths is the belief that our nation is built on a deep respect for the value of cultural diversity. This is not a land, according to this notion, where all citizens must be melted down into a common metal but a land where all may freely add their piece, whatever the shape or color, to the cultural mosaic. Well, that's humbug as everyone, except maybe editorial writers and politicians, well know. We neither encourage cultural diversity nor tolerate much real dissent.15

Dorothy Livesay's poem vividly reminds Canadians that Mr. Cocking's
harsh generalization is not too far off the mark. But Dorothy Livesay, in "Call My People Home" at least, acknowledges the possibility of tolerance, and certainly suggests that in spite of pressures to conform, people can maintain their identity. She suggests in her poem that the struggle to make a meaningful and dignified home in Canada is a long, difficult battle. But she rejects any notion of passivity or cynical despair. The meaningfulness of struggle itself is the final message of her most successful documentary poem.

Dorothy Livesay also treats the national theme in a subjective, lyrical way. She gives prominence to her sense of national identity by strategically placing poems with this theme in two key volumes of her work. "Signature" (introductory poem to Selected Poems) begins with an English epitaph marking the name "Livesay", proceeds with a description of the poet's origins in Canada, and concludes with a new "signature," a Canadian epitaph.

LIVESAY THE NAME GOD THEN GAVE
AND NOW LIVES AYE INDEED THEY HAVE  (SP, p xxi)

A simple pun on the English name written on tombstone motivates the poet to trace her origins.

Born by a whim
This time
On a blowing plain
I am as wind
Playing high sky
With a name--
Winnipeg!  (Sp, p xxi)

The Canadian prairies give her life, even though she can trace her ancestry back through time to England, and long before then back to
antiquity "Till the lover came.../Shaped me a name". The signature of history, which she traces back on the "winds of time" (a metaphor she uses with double meaning to include the real prairie wind of her birth), does not leave the same mark as the signature of being born "to the sound/Of a Winnipeg wind". When she dies, she will be without roots again, "only wind/Sucked to the sun's fire." And hence a new, Canadian epitaph, for the name Livesay:

    THE PRAIRIE GAVE BREATH: I GREW AND DIED:
    ALIVE ON THIS AIR THESE LIVES ABIDE. (S, p. xxii)

Further evidence for her feeling of kinship to the Canadian west is her recent autobiographical poem "Roots" with which she closes The Documentaries. The poem is structured as a quest; she sets out with her son to drive back across geography and time to seek the "sun" and "roots" of her early life. Many Canadian poets use the technique of moving across a sweep of geography to find some meaning or national identity through images of landscape and history. It is an appropriate national form because Canadians are generally a mobile nation of people, and hence have a kinship to a number of landscape scenes. A poem like "Roots" successfully evokes not the psychology of a tourist, but a deeper feeling of belonging, of being part of the landscape. And this personal feeling of the poet touches on an important aspect of a collective feeling, or national consciousness.

She begins in Vancouver and extends an image of the city she wrote in a 1940's poem, "Vancouver." Her description of Vancouver in this poem begins with a metaphor of the city's masculinity:
The city is male, they said: smelling the sweat
Squeezed as a log boom's launched
Into False Creek; as a stevedore unloads
The sick-sweet copra; hoists high
The outgoing wheat, matey and muscular. 16

The poet's imitation of Sandburg's "Chicago" technique is not
important. What in "Vancouver" is relevant to "Roots" is the poet's
feeling that the city is asleep.

your mouth
Cries out unheard
Can you awaken yet, out of this sleep
And proclaim the word?17

"Roots" elaborates on this feeling. Strangers call it a "second-hand
city"; external appearances are obvious:

second-growth forest
sirens and sea-gulls
second-hand stores
hand-me-down houses (UB, p. 8)

But she is concerned with the soul of the city as is expressed by the
poets who live there. Symbolic of their condition is Lowry "stumbling/
on the beaches." He was neglected and abused by Vancouver, and only
lionized long after city authorities burned him out of his shack at
Dollarton.18 Vancouver has passion: "city where/under the thumb-print
of rain/love rages." The song and feeling of this passion, however,
is not communicated.

In Stanley Park
the sea pounds
on the beaches
poet pounds on poet's door
and there's no answer. (UB, p. 9)

The physical landscape and human quality counter-point each other well.
Potential is not realized. In "Lorca" she says poetry can burst through
the "door" of death. In "Roots" poets have been unable to break down barriers; to communicate the soul of the city either between themselves or with the city itself.

Her family redeems her loneliness. Yet the continual rains of the west coast drive her to seek the prairie sun of her childhood. Most images she recounts from her trip have an historical or personal significance. In section IV animal ("meadowlark", "6 mountain goats," "timber-wolf") and other nature images ("sun", "clouds", "sage-brush", "mountains", "fields") are a galaxy of impressions received as she travels along a tangent, "the man-made pavement." She indicates a harmony between man and nature, especially in section V.

In Saskatchewan
they seem to hate trees
they hate the finger upraised
to disturb the flatness
not The Wind Our Enemy
       but trees                  (UB, p. 11)

She reminds the listener that the Canadian prairies have changed radically since Anne Marriott wrote her documentary poem about the poverty and dust-bowl conditions in the 1930's. The reference to Anne Marriott's poem ties in with her image of Lowry to emphasize her feeling that poet's speak the soul of a nation. Her feeling about this subject has roots in her lifetime struggle to promote Canadian literature. In 1939 she complained to Charles G.D. Roberts that no one saw fit to publish The Wind Our Enemy, and called for the promotion of poetry with "some expression of experience, related to the way people live and struggle in Canada."19 Another prairie image of the
"false fronts" of small town buildings recalls Sinclair Ross's novel, *As For Me and My House*. At the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border spring greets her with:

> a keen wind blowing  
> air so fresh I grasped it  
> in lungfuls, armfuls.  

(UB, p. 12)

Contrast this with her image of the prairies in "*Vancouver*":

> through the plains  
> A dry wind flapping blankets in my face  
> And as I gasped for air, the dust  
> Cluttered the ankles.  

Both images are true. The difference is not merely seasonal, either. "*Roots*" describes both a subjective and objective springtime. Her personal rejuvenation as a writer, as a grandmother coincides with the season of rejuvenation and the actual condition of economic rejuvenation she saw on the prairies. In "*Roots*", as opposed to "*Vancouver*", she projects a harmonious relationship between poet and landscape, a sense of identity with it.

Her trip eastward in space and backwards in time ends in Winnipeg ("pivotal, facing east and west") with memories of her childhood. Her most important memory, planting flowers while plodding along behind her father, is captured in an abrupt masculine rhythm.

> in spring my father  
> poured the round seeds  
> into my hand--crusty and crooked.  
> Now! plunge finger in, and dig  
> a narrow thole, just finger deep  
> release your hold  
> bury the seed.  

(UB, p. 13)
As a child she never connects seed with flower. But as a mature woman, she understands the significance of planting: "heart planted then/and never transplanted." "Roots" sums up the poet's feeling for her country; of being part of it--planted in the soil. The flowers that grow out of her "planting" in Canadian life are her poems.

A final look at her response to Canadian nationalism is, appropriately, a poem she wrote in honour of Centennial Year. She does not trumpet rhetoric, or paint pretty pictures of hills and trees. Her focus is people: "Centennial People." Written in St. Johns, New Brunswick, where she worked as poet in residence (University of New Brunswick) in 1967, the poem expresses her concern with the waste of human potential due to social structures and conservative social values stamped on the minds of young people. An earlier poem, "Of Mourners", summarizes the central thought of "Centennial People" and many other Dorothy Livesay poems. She says do not blame human nature or technology for human suffering. She also says do no pass off knowledge of suffering with sentimentality. The root cause of suffering, she claims, is the enslavement of children's minds:

Mourn, with me, the intolerant, hater of sun:  
Child's mind maimed before he learns to run.  

(SP, p. 48)

The central image of "Centennial People" attempts to re-create the feeling of what it means to maim a mind.

The poem opens with a description of the conservatism she witnessed in Maritime society:
What held them together was not God
but going to church.

In this T.S. Eliot world of gesture and ritual, no one is allowed to
deviate from a norm. Simple household images and clear exposition
of detail carry a real feeling of tediousness and boredom. The
tragedy is to cripple the natural impulse of youth to explore life.

and a girl in spring
looking at green fields
   unfolding
must be blinkered
hands refolded

A girl longing
for a breath
of wind of love?
must turn in a narrow bed
clean white sheets
hands washed and hung
on the line in the sun
and never dance on the clothesline
herself

The girl recalls Dorothy Livesay's early thematic concern with the
enslavement of the female spirit. The "narrow bed" and "clean white
sheets" symbolize more than sexual confinement. They imply a state
of mind; a curtailed imagination through curtailed experience. A
mechanical ordering to every aspect of her life maims her mind, kills
the dance Dorothy Livesay feels is spontaneous in all human beings.

The final comment of the poem is highly ironic:

   It was a 'good life':
you did not find
everything you wanted
but you learned to accept
everything you found.

"Good life" is a parody of political and advertising slogans about the
nature of Western society. And the crucial word is "learned". Man is not inevitably a prisoner; he is taught to "accept" his condition. Behind the sombreness of tone is a hope that the energy inherent in the girl will triumph. Thus her centennial tribute springs from Dorothy Livesay's lyric-emotional and social-critical sensibility. She responds to her nation from the point of view of its people and their striving for happiness in the land in which they live.

In addition to her poetry, Dorothy Livesay has tried to promote a healthy, non-jingoistic patriotism in the arts as a teacher, critic and public spokesman. Her open letter to Charles G.D. Roberts sums up her attitudes toward Canadian literature that she campaigned for with New Frontier, in numerous public addresses, fights with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and other sections of the Canadian cultural bureaucracy. Her letter pleads for early recognition of new Canadian talent, and for critics "who would have the necessary background and culture to be objective when they turned to the writing of their own people." She emphasizes her belief that poetry is an essentially oral art by pleading for more assistance to bring poetry to the Canadian people:

We need to have poetry read aloud and in public places, in schools and auditoriums, from massed choirs and soloists. Above all we need the radio, as musicians need it, so that the music of poetry may become familiar to our people.

Her fight for the promotion of Canadian poetry on radio has been a life-time struggle. Although she appreciates the role played by the CBC, more than once she has fought with conservative attitudes which
govern the corporation. Recently she argued with Robert Weaver over the issue of poets doing their own reading. Dorothy Livesay feels that Canadians should hear the voice of the poet himself, and not the voice of a professional reader.\textsuperscript{27} Dorothy Livesay has also campaigned to increase Canadian literary content in the curricula of Canadian schools and universities. At a Canadian Poets' Convention in Kingston in 1956 she campaigned for a strong resolution on this question, and warned there was "no general knowledge of Canadian culture in the school teachers."\textsuperscript{28} She has always believed that culture stems from peoples' experiences and is not the private preserve of an Ivory Tower academy. Her poem "Without Benefit of Tape" claims, "The real poems are being written in outports/on backwoods farms."

(UB, p. 1) Her preference for visionary and lyrical poetry is reaffirmed in her thesis:

\begin{quote}
On the ideological side there were many echoes of Shelley's revolutionary utopian vision in poetry of the 1930's. Now in the sixties we seem to be becoming somewhat fatigued by cerebral and mythopoeic poetry. There is a return to Imagism; and with that return lyricism inevitably canters alongside.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

Furthermore, Dorothy Livesay has tried in her role as critic to promote young writers, and to learn from them. She opposes vigorously the use of anthologies precisely because they stifle awareness of what is new and growing in poetry to the arbitrary and often conservative tastes of anthology editors.\textsuperscript{30} All these aspects of her life's work are statement enough that she accepted in practice Alan Calmer's sharp criticism in 1936. She has rooted herself deeply in "native patterns", with a content and sound easily understood by an intelligent Canadian ear.
Footnotes

1Julian Symons, "A National Style?", Canadian Literature, No. 36, Spring 1968, p. 61.

2Desmond Pacey, "The Outlook For Canadian Literature", Canadian Literature, No. 36, Spring 1968, pp. 21-22.

3Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, Grove Press Inc., New York, 1966, p. 188.

4The word "nation" itself causes Canadian critics difficulty because most English-Canadian critics do not recognize Quebec as a nation. My contention is that the present state of Canada contains two nations: a Canadian nation and a Quebec nation. "Nation" is defined as "a stable, historically developed community of people with a territory, economic life, distinctive culture and language in common." (Webster's New World Dictionary, Nelson, Foster & Scott Ltd., Toronto, 1962, p. 977.) Both the Quebec and Canadian nations have those characteristics. Therefore when I describe Dorothy Livesay as a national poet, I mean a poet of the Canadian nation (whose common language is English). For further clarification of this important question see Unequal Union by Stanley B. Ryerson, Progress Books, Toronto, 1968.

5Dorothy Livesay, "Interview with Robert McNutt, December 18, 1967. Unpublished. Ms. used with permission of author. See Appendix "C".

6Because "O Canada" remains unpublished it is reproduced here in full.


9Ibid., p. 8.

10There is sufficient evidence in the poem to conclude the poet-intellectual is Earle Birney. See Day and Night, p. 41 for images of poet-mountain climber.


The question of Canadian literary content in the school and university curriculum relates to the effect of a poem like "West Coast" quite directly. The poet herself is mindful of the problem of Canadians forgetting their history and comments on the jacket of The Documentaries that it "will be of inestimable value in helping today's youth in high schools and universities understand their Canadian past."

Dorothy Livesay, Call My People Home, Ryerson Chap Book, Toronto, 1950, p. 1. Future references indicated by CMPH, followed by page. The poem was originally published in a special issue of Contemporary Verse, Summer 1949.


Dorothy Livesay, "Vancouver", Contemporary Verse, No. 31, Spring 1950, p. 15.

Ibid., p. 16.


Actually conditions for farmers on the Canadian prairies have not qualitatively changed. There is still much rural poverty, and prairie radicalism is once again playing a role in Canadian politics. See CBC television 11 p.m. newscast, April 12, 1969.


See Appendix "B" for complete poem.

The quality of Dorothy Livesay's patriotism is similar to that written by W.A. Foster in his historic pamphlet, Canada First; or, Our New Nationalism, 1871. He called for "some cement more binding than geographical contact, some bond more uniting than a shiftless expediency; some lodestar more potent than a mere community of profit." His patriotism was also anti-chauvinist. "When we say Canada First we don't mean Canadians first. We are not such fools as to suppose that a Canadian is better than anybody else. But at the same time many of us think a Canadian is no worse than other people, and we
would have all who have made Canada their home, feel or try to feel
that there is no disgrace attached to the name Canadian, and that to
be known as such, either here or abroad, involves no social or
political obstruction. The great lesson to be learned after all is,
as D'Arcy McGee taught, to learn to respect ourselves, to have a
modest but firm confidence in our own strength, and an equally
certain hope in our future." Cited by Stanley Ryerson, Unequal


26Ibid.

27I myself became involved in the dispute when I wrote Weaver
on April 14, 1967 and urged him to allow Dorothy Livesay to read
her poetry as I feel the presence of the poet greatly enhances
a reading. He wrote a condescending letter in return, more in
"amusement" than in "anger", suggesting I didn't know what
Anthology was all about (which I had admitted in my letter to him--
my point being in all situations it is better to hear the poet's
own voice). In the end I did hear Dorothy Livesay read her poetry
on the program, and was disappointed only that her allotted time
was so short. The point is that more than one creative Canadian
talent has been thwarted or driven away by CBC bureaucracy. I am
sure the same holds true for many other cultural institutions in
the country. In fairness to Weaver, he has written a sympathetic
and perceptive review of Dorothy Livesay's poetry (see "The Poetry
of Dorothy Livesay", Contemporary Verse, No. 26, Fall, 1948, pp. 18-
22).

28The Kingston Conference (1956) Resolution reads in part:
"The Conference believes that the quality of Canadian literature now
justifies and requires that Canadian colleges and universities include
more of this literature in English courses, particularly in freshman
survey courses taken by students specializing in other disciplines."
revelations by Carleton professors Steele and Mathews about American-
ization of Canadian universities (see Canadian Magazine, March 30, 1969;
Sunday Supplement, CBC Radio, April 6, 1969; The Way It Is, CBC
television, April 6, 1969), the Kingston resolution has more relevance
today than in 1956.

30 See relevant section of Dorothy Livesay interviewed by Robert McNutt, Appendix C.
The creative output of a writer rarely flows evenly. Dorothy Livesay lived a personally and politically alienating decade during most of the 1950's, and its impact on her consciousness shows in the decline of the quantity and quality of her poetry in this period. A poem she wrote in 1942 is an apt metaphor for her experience. "Fantasia" is about the agony of creative people (mainly poets) who, unable to overcome the grinding reality of day to day life, "dive under" to "Undine and her comb." Her immediate concern in the poem is with the drowning of her friends Raymond Knister and Bouchette, and other writers close to her sensibility -- Shelley and Virginia Woolf. But the poem symbolizes the general problem of the artist in alienating social and personal circumstances. Her image is similar to Abraham Klein's metaphor of the poet: "And lives alone, and in his secret shines like phosphorous. At the bottom of the sea." For Dorothy Livesay the 1950's were like a drowning. Her early enthusiasm for marriage recorded in "V-J Day" and "Nativity" diminished; eventually it became a burden. Her poem "Other" describes her discontent in this period. "Men prefer an island"; they are circumscribed. Her woman's world, on the other hand, is "A place where none shall pass, /None possess;/A mainland mastered/ From its inaccess." Somewhat obscured by metaphor and wordiness, it expresses a personal restlessness she ascribed to her female characters in "Heat" and "City-Wife." "Wedlock", also written in the
1950's, is more explicit:

And our two souls so left
Achieve no unity:
We are each one bereft
And weeping inwardly. 3

Evident here is an obvious feeling of pain, even though she internalizes her sadness. The struggle for communication and unity between man and woman is, of course, central to her poetry. In her lyrical poems she gives expression to her intensely personal feelings, but they relate to larger social questions. Happiness between man and woman is, after all, not simply a personal matter. Involved are a complex of social relations, attitudes and actual living conditions.

Problems in her marriage were compounded by and related to the general social-political atmosphere of the 1950's. World War II defeated fascism, but the alliance between the Soviet Union and the West froze apart during the Cold War. In North America dissent and activism were practically eliminated by the hysteria of McCarthyism. 4 And the long mushroom-cloud shadow of the atomic bomb seemed to darken everything on earth. From the revolutionary enthusiasm of "The Outrider" with its message of "a miracle new found," she declines to despair.

We see no mysteries; miracles are not accepted,
The beating rain bears no messages for man;
Though sun may still burn hot, searing the skin
No heart dare listen while fear stirs the womb.

(NP, p. 5)

She suggests that man is numb to nature; fear grips the mind and threatens the unborn. Only a tentative hope resides in the innocence of children.

New Poems contain many images of desapir and blackness. The "door" image in "The Dark Runner" opens not to light, but "fumbling darkness found". (NP, p. 6) In "Nocturne", she invokes the forces of darkness
to hide her from the world of tension.

O bind me with ropes of darkness,
Blind me with your long night.  (NP, p. 11)

In this poem, as in others, there is a merging of her lyrical personal feeling (here, feelings of despair and loneliness) and her social perspective, which in this poem includes a bleak sense of helplessness. Social perspective is more obvious in her overtly unpublished anti-war, "Arms and the People" (see Appendix B). She puns the word "arms" to signify weapons (instruments of death) and human limbs, which, when acting in concert, can prevent the out-break of war. She poses an age-old question to the atomic scientists:

That man there, with the narrow face
Intent at the test-tube, recording a cyclatron,
That man breaking up atoms---
He is a father.
Will he prefer a gun
To his søn?5

Her obsession with the danger of war springs from her early pacifism and her hope that World War II would really create a permanent "united nations." Her point of view also reflects her sensitivity as a mother of two growing children. Problems of peace and happiness in marriage were not abstract questions for her. But because of the general decline of social activism and poetic output in this period, and because of her own condition as a working mother, her poetic expression is of limited quality and quantity.

She wrote one major poem during this period, however. "Bartok and the Geranium" is one of her best lyrics, combining perfection of technique with a thematic content central to her life's work. Because she develops her contrasting images of flower and music so completely and precisely they emerge as very loaded symbols. The poet feels that
some critics have, consequently, interpreted the poem beyond recognition.

In her reading at Simon Fraser University (February 1967) she described Dr. Roy Daniell's interpretation of the poem as symbolic of "the contrast and conflict between nature and art." While she does not deny Dr. Daniell or any critic the right to speculate, she feels strongly that criticism should restrict itself more closely to the actual content of the written words. Dorothy Livesay agrees completely with Susan Sontag's outcry against interpretation:

"Today is such a time, when the project of interpretation is largely reactionary, stifling... In a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability, interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art. Even more: It is the revenge of the intellect upon the world. To interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world—in order to set up a shadow world of "meanings.""

Miss Sontag's position is not anti-intellectual; it is anti-academic, and challenges much of the bureaucratic pomposity that passes for literary criticism within the North American academy.

My understanding of "Bartok and the Geranium" is limited, therefore, to the images themselves and their relationship to the cannon of Dorothy Livesay's work. The poet explains that she conceived the poem after she requested her creative writing extension class of adults to "think of two very disparate images and clash them together."

She had been explaining effect of Haiku poetry on B.C. writers. The next day she was at home "listening to Bartok's violin concerto on the radio and noticing my very bright geranium in the window which had come out in bloom. So the poem is simply my response to that." At a purely descriptive level the poem successfully captures a visual-oral sensory response expected from a cultured North American sensibility. Such a sensibility could easily imagine Bartok's music as explosive,
masculine assertiveness, devilish in origin, boundless in space but consumed quickly in its own passion. "And when he's done, he's out."

There is something quite approximate in Bartok's music to the reality of contemporary male egoism in western culture. More universally, the explosive characteristic of man's sexual pattern has some kinship to the Bartok-male image of the poem. But ethnocentricity is a dangerous habit of mind. Many cultures have completely different patterns from our own; the male can be docile or meditative. In Asian and pre-industrial cultures, time and distance have a rhythm completely opposite to North American drives. In other words there is an historical particularity to the image. Similarly with the flower. The poet sees in the flower a passivity, a contentment to bask in light appropriate to the poet's understanding of the female—again an historical, particular female. When the male's "done" -- "out" -- "She lays a lip against the glass and preens herself in light." The word "preen" with its connotation of vanity is crucial to an understanding of the poem. The poet's feels there is a nervous tension in the female psyche. She says the two elements, for the moment only, "together breath and be". But they do not merge. He asserts and explodes, crashes out. She "has no commentary", but basks, somewhat selfishly, vainly in light.

Dorothy Livesay admits there is in "Bartok and the Geranium" "a kind of male and female element which I think runs through all my poetry." In other words there is something even more particular to her personal response to these images than the average listener might appreciate. From her very early imagist lyrics through to her most mature love poems in The Unquiet Bed, she is concerned with a complex of emotions related to what she feels to be a necessary and universal striving
for communication and unity between man and woman. The problem of the female is how to assert her identity, yet preserve her particularness as a female, in a world dominated by the exploding, assertive and dominating presence of the male. In "Bartok and the Geranium" the conflict is not resolved; but it is very beautifully presented. Flower and music co-exist temporarily. But the "touching" is momentary. The "he" explodes out; the "she" retains an almost selfish, self-cultivating intactness.

Remarkably, the poet has apparently succeeded in finding a sense of female-male harmony, and more important, in giving her emotional discovery a vibrant, re-juvenated lyrical poetic voice. The Unquiet Bed marks a complete re-birth of both her social and lyrical perspectives. The poems breath not only experience of her past; they speak with a content and style of the present upsurge among youth in their striving for honesty in communication and meaning in life. Dorothy Livesay formulated the theoretical propositions of her re-birth before she published The Unquiet Bed. In her Master of Education thesis she presents a linguistic analysis of contemporary Canadian poets, evaluating them from the point of view of style, "specifically, of the relationship of their rhythms to metre, sound texture and syntax." Her study and her own new approach to poetic technique came about as a result of her return to Vancouver from Africa in 1963 to discover a major "happening" of poetic activity that summer at The University of B.C. She discovered a new rhythm and intensely personal, confessional mode of writing from poets such as Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Charles Olson (from the United States), and young west coast Canadian writers
such as Lionel Kearns, Jamie Reid, Patrick and Red Lane. One of the qualities of Dorothy Livesay is that through her diversity of experience and travels and her lifetime commitment to writing poetry she has cultured a supple mind. Her sensibility is not rigid; she listens and is capable of growth even in late middle-age. She describes the problem of the necessity for growth in her analysis of Raymond Souster's poetry:

The problem is a major one facing not only Souster, but Milton Acorn (today) and Alfred Purdy (perhaps tomorrow). How, having once found a style, a voice, a rhythm of one's own—how to keep from becoming stale? Yeats found the solution in perpetually renewing himself, perpetually finding new techniques, exploring ancient metrics.... Since poets no longer die young, the challenge is unmistakable: they must either stop writing, or be reborn, again and again!11

Dorothy Livesay proved with her publication of The Unquiet Bed that she could be re-born, that her perceptions of life could be re-juvenated and spoken in new ways.

This does not mean the poet is completely re-born. She is rooted in her past experiences and techniques. The musical melopeaic influence of Pound and Williams in her youth is closely related to the projectivist theory of Charles Olson who influenced Dorothy Livesay to conclude that "a poet's rhythm is tied up with his own individual gait, his gestures, his breath control."12 Dorothy Livesay, too, has always insisted on poetry as a spoken art. The message of her letter to Charles G.D. Roberts cited in the last chapter is repeated in 1948 with a comment to Alan Crawley about the importance of radio to encourage Canadians to speak poetry aloud.13 And in her thesis she repeats the theme:

'In the past, failure to articulate a poem has resulted, all too often, in failure to understand it. Unless we hear its rhythm, a poem is meaningless.'14

As a teacher she makes her students study poets reading their own work to learn themselves how to speak its rhythm.15 Although most poets
accept this idea about poetry as a spoken art, there is still a great deal of conservatism and ignorance in the school system as to how poetry should be taught. There is an undue stress on formalism, metres and metaphors, of dissecting poetry as a literal rather than oral art.

A second-rate Canadian critic, V.B. Rhodenizer, expresses precisely such a mentality when he insists that poetry "is regular verse, or meter" and adds further that "Not many can make the constant readjustment essential to an appreciation of rhythms other than metrical."16

Fortunately, Dorothy Livesay's point of view is beginning to prevail. The whole youth movement today is characterized by poetry readings, folk songs, poetry set to music in folk-rock, ballads, etc. When a more complex poetry than that played in popular culture is reproduced in books, then, "typography matters; margins matter."17

So much for her theories. As M.L. Rosenthal states in his opening analysis of the Projectivist Movement, "the real magnetic center of the poet's criticism lies in his poetry."18 The lyrical subjective poetry in The Unquiet Bed can be divided into two main groups. One group of poems focuses on Dorothy Livesay's thoughts and feelings about being a poet; another group, about being a woman. Of course both groups inter-relate; she is, after all, a woman poet. From the first group the following poems contain important insights to her new style and approach to poetry: "Without Benefit of Tape", "The Incendiary", "The Emperor's Circus", "To A Younger Poet", "For Abe Klein: Poet", "Making the Poem", "Poet and Critic." The first and last are most important in understanding her credo. "Without Benefit of Tape" says real poetry comes from outside the large Canadian urban centres. It is spoken by common people in small towns and countryside where
people still face nature directly, are not choked off from sunshine and fresh air. People are natural and freed to grow under such conditions: "boy in the flying field/is pulled to heaven on the keel of a kite". Imagination is allowed to grow and breath, unlike the confined spirits of "Gentennial people." In "Poet and Critic" she argues with those who see poetry only in a two-dimensional form as printed words:

Your poems sit
small gods upon my shelf
saying (you say)
only as much as form and shape
can shout. (UB, p. 54)

The poet says poetry is more magical than a "small god". She does not want poets hallowed; she wants them to be heard. Poems are "more/ than the thing seen, touched"; they have a distinctive being as sound:

what I bring to them
is outside, stranger
than the spelled message
and what I seal
on the poem's mouth
is my tongue's pressure. (UB, p. 54)

Her individual quality of speech gives the poem a distinctiveness lost when understood simply as a printed message. In other words, she lives out her theory in these two poems, "Without Benefit of Tape" with regard to content, and "Poet and Critic", with regard to technique. In "The Incendiary" she expresses her enthusiasm for the outbreak of poetry being written in Canada after her return from Africa. The poem is a tribute to her husband, and a statement of her faith in Canada:

country you came to, late
and loved with hate
and longed to set fire to. (UB, p. 2)

She believes poetry has the power to fire a country, and she uses metaphor
of the phoenix (out of his ashes something new and beautiful is born) to describe the rejuvenation she feels. "For a Younger Poet" suggests how this process of rejuvenation worked in her own situation. A two-part poem, the first presents her outward appearance to the young writer as "a VIP"; the second, describes her secretive preying upon his youth. The poem is similar to Blake's image in "The Mental Traveller" in which the old woman binds down the male infant: "And lives upon his shrieks and cries, And she grows young as he grows old."

Both poems are about a dialectical relationship between youth and age. Dorothy Livesay admits candidly her dependency on the young writer for energy and inspiration.

"The Emperor's Circus" is a more intellectual image of the role of an artist. As a boy he captures the magic of a circus:

he drew the horses, tossing manes
the tremor of their hoofs, the cries
of innocent creatures circling the dust:
he saw the silence
yielding in their eyes (UB, p. 17)

Magical and beautiful, the Arabian horses symbolize something of the tragedy of an enslaved spirit that yearns to break out of "circles."
The theme relates to the theme of "Centennial People", except that in "The Emperor's Circus" the focus is on the significance of art as a means of transcending reality. The most important act of the aging Emperor is his decision to "feed the flames"; by tossing his drawings "into time" he immortalizes his youthful sensitivity to suffering—a more important act, the poem implies, than all his Imperial decrees.

"For Abe Klein: Poet" describes the tragedy of a poet unable to toss his art into time. Her image of Klein as "a drowned man now" recalls her poem, "Fantasia", and the tragically common drowning of sensitive
souls. "At the bottom of the sea", Klein's poetic sensibility lies buried "where the slain poems wingless, tremble" in his mind. A tribute to another poet, Jack Spicer, is "Making the Poem"--an experiment itself in Spicer's "serial poem" technique. The poem happens in bits and pieces: dreams and words are "like furniture". Even though images are dissimilar they do touch each other at peculiar angles and their total effect captures the feeling of spontaneity associated with Spicer's free flow method of writing.

All her lyrics about poetry stress two things: poetry must be communicated to ordinary people (and derive itself from their actions and feelings); and two, it must be oral, stamped by the distinctively individual voice of the poet. Her poems themselves have a distinctive Dorothy Livesay sound, yet are direct and understandable. She does not embellish her poems with metaphor, or distort syntax to meet a prescribed system of meter or rhyme. She may distort syntax to emphasize meaning and catch the reader's imagination, such as the line "his nakedness/awkwardly visible", suggesting his openness of character and youthful awkwardness at the same time. She uses rhyme and rhythm too, of course. But sound is organic to structure and meaning. For example, in "Without Benefit of Tape" repetitive sound patterns ("Icing-eyes", or "shouted out") re-enforce meaning and pull the poem together. Occasionally she uses a far-fetched metaphor (the "bee-hive" image in "Abe Klein"); other times she juxtaposes disparate images to underline meaning (the image "swimmer heaves himself upwards/onto a rock" illustrates her assertion that "The serial poem is a/progression" in "Making the Poem"). In reading these poems, she breaths into them a quality of sound that is distinctively her own voice; and this facilitates an
understanding and appreciation of them.

The outstanding quality of The Unquiet Bed, however, derives from the clear, almost painfully honest lyrics which describe her feelings about being woman. Written in the mode of Robert Lowell and other "confessional poets", she does not "dread the sun/For his fierce honesty". She tells everything. Crucial to an understanding of her love lyrics and autobiographical poems is an appreciation of her social perspective. Her lyrics are not simply moments of eroticism, despair, anger or irony limited to her own personal sexual adventures. She has a definite over-view which informs her lyrics, projects beyond her personal experiences and touches on the essentially social phenomenon of man-woman relationships. Dorothy Livesay grew up instilled with ideas about the necessity for women to assert their individuality; Engels' Family, Private Property and the State made a strong impression on her. But modern Western society is dominated by males; women occupy second-class status in the economic-social-political-cultural affairs of our society. It is a constant struggle for women to maintain a sense of dignity and individuality, and at the same time cultivate their particular qualities of being women. Women express themselves individually in a myriad of psychological reactions to social-political-cultural realities. But there are traceable patterns. Therefore, Dorothy Livesay's honest and unequivocal lyrics help illuminate a crucial area of human relationships long obfuscated in myth and pre-judice. Her perspective is essentially humanistic and democratic. She insists that women be allowed to grow in their "own light"; at the same time she says they cannot fulfill themselves as human beings (anymore than men can) unless they learn how to give something of them-
selves in love. She insists on a unity between two opposite tendencies in the communication of love between man and woman: maintenance of integrity and individuality on the one hand; surrender of ego and merging of personalities on the other.

The most perfect expression of her attitude to being woman is her title poem, "The Unquiet Bed." The title suggests the sexual-spiritual restlessness common to her lyrical poetry from her first Imagist poems onwards. In crystal clear language and deceivingly simple imagery, the poet creates a moving self-portrait.

The woman I am
is not what you see
I'm not just bones
and crockery (UB, p. 39)

The image of "bones" and "crockery" are charged with meaning. She insists she is more than a physical, sexual object: she is also more than a man-servant, a dish-washer. Immediately, therefore, the poem reaches beyond a personal statement; it has implications for all women.

the woman I am
knew love and hate
hating the chains
that parents make

As a young rebel who insisted on charting her own course in life, as a mother and social worker, poet and teacher, she has fought against chains--"Child's mind maimed before he learns to run."

longing that love
might set men free
yet hold them fast
in loyalty

Love can unfasten chains; the image is similar to Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* in which love frees mankind from domination by tyranny. At a personal level too, love is a liberating force. Concomitant with
love is commitment; loyalty implies giving of self as well as steadfastness.

    the woman I am
    is not what you see
    move over love
    make room for me

The last line is perfect. At a personal level it is a simple demand to her lover. But the "me" is no longer "bones and crockery", rather she is a human being, an equal, a comrade and friend. At a social level the poem is a plea for all those who are at present denied their place in the sun. If man and woman can make room for each other in their lives, can live out their feelings of love, then there is hope for the collectivity of humanity--for The Man and The Woman. What gives this poem its power is more than its musical, two beat ballad simplicity, more than its pleasing sound and simple message. It speaks a lifetime of struggle for freedom and love, and says much about her vision for human beings, her desire to see them happy and fulfilled.

"Move over love/make room for me." The line has a quality to it that sticks in the memory and haunts the mind with a wide range of thoughts.

An important back-up poem to "The Unquiet Bed" is her autobiographical and "confessional" lyric, "Ballad of Me." The poem, written when Dorothy Livesay returned to Canada from Africa is about her "fantasies", the "wildly/trying" air of being a poet. It divides into four sections: each one an image of a crucial period in her life -- childhood, early womanhood, mother-wife stage, and late middle-age. Section i helps explain her early shyness, her perspective as an outsider in her early Imagist poetry. She was born awkward -- feet first -- and has stumbled ever since:
what happened was:
the world, chuckling sideways
tossed me off
left me wildly
treading wild
to catch up

(UB, p. 5)

An image from another childhood remembrance poem, "Isolate", helps clarify her unusual description here. In "Isolate" a child invents games to create a small world around herself. But when a fire-engine roars by "She stands alone at the gate:/games fall apart." (UB, p. 15)

In the same way the poet feels the earth tosses her off, leaves her alone, an outsider and poet.

Section ii, much more important than i, explains explicitly how she came to write her social documentaries, "The Outrider" and "Day and Night." Again, however, the candidness of her autobiography is valid poetry because it speaks of an aspect of being a woman common and important to contemporary women. She says in the poem she had an abortion. The focal words are "guilt" and "poems". Why should a woman feel guilty for having an abortion, she asks. For the abortionist, usually a man, it is just another fee and another "cloud of dust." For the father, "he'll make another." But for the child? The source of guilt in the traditional Christian tradition lies in the death of an unborn child, "the abortive dancer." Not so, in the case of Dorothy Livesay. When her nine month gestation period was up, "she burst forth/an outcry of poems." A common medical fact is that women who have abortions usually do go through some form of physiological and psychological crisis at the time they would ordinarily be giving birth. For the poet the experience led her to write her poetry; in a very real sense she created a child -- not of her body, but her imagination. Ironically, the poems she created were an "outcry"
against capitalism, which, as she believed then, is also the economic base responsible for maintaining women in an inferior position to men. Hence she turns the guilt she is supposed to feel, according to the values of her society, into an accusation against that society itself.

Section iii of "Ballad of Me" extends the personal-social perspective she uses to glimpse at her past. She describes her problems in marriage, but the image is so symbolic it speaks for a mass of women who are frustrated and dominated by a male-run society:

And what fantasies do you have?  
Asked the psychiatrist  
when I was running away from my husband.  
Fantasies? fantasies?  
Why surely (I might have told him)  
all this living  
is just that  
every day dazzled  
gold coins falling  
through fingers. (UB, p. 7)

Her "fantasies" are her poems. Her frustration is that she cannot write while tied down to the daily chores of a housewife. The psychiatrist, however, responds with a typically male-chauvinist answer: Be woman; i.e., go home and wash dishes. Other women have different "fantasies"; but the process of male chauvinism is the same. Women are denied their potential as creative, productive human beings and are ascribed confining roles as house-wives.

In section iv she returns to her childhood home at Woodlot in Clarkson, Ontario. She goes incognito to glimpse at her past, "wary/fearing to scare/the crow". The pun on "scare-crow" is meant to emphasize her symbolic use of the crow image as a bird of spring in Canada, a bird to herald new times and new directions in life. The concluding line "No one remembers/Dorothy was ever here" suggests an ironic acceptance of the eroding effect of time. Her life's
work is apparently all in vain. But, fortunately, she never resigned herself to obscurity. New experiences led to a re-awakening of her "fantasies". Thus once more the call of the crow, the challenge of spring and new insights motivated her to write another "out-burst of poems." 21

A number of erotic love poems in *The Unquiet Bed* revolve around an important theme in her writing of the past two or three years. The direct and delicate, chrystal-like lyrics reflect an obvious re-awakening of her feelings of sexual love. At her Simon Fraser reading she told her audience: "When a middle-aged person falls in love, they cannot regain their youth, but they can regain their innocence." 22 Most of the lyrics in Section III of *The Unquiet Bed* are songs of innocence. Her main theme is that a man and woman must communicate, must touch each other both physically and spiritually. She re-affirms age-old truths; the beauty is in the telling of them. "A Book of Charms" and "The Dream" are her two most impressionable songs. Both utilize traditional feudal images -- rose and unicorn -- to present her feeling of love.

> Wear this you said
> and gave me a rose
> to press against my breast  (UB, p. 44)

The archetypal rose evolves from object to symbol in a subtle, beautiful way; the five three-line stanzas are syntactically inter-connected, pulling the reader through one transition after another. From the gift of the rose, the flower changes until her lover comes to "read me in rosy light". As a result of clever structuring the poem also plays effectively on the subtle border region of the mind between wish-fulfillment and fantasy:
and as I slept its shape 
scattered, its petals were 
strewn on the white sheets 

perfumed, I lay 
between the leaves 
love's book, and dreamed 

you came and found me there 
untangled me from petals and from sleep 
read me in rosy light (UB, p. 44)

There is no punctuation after "sheets", but a comma follows "perfumed". Yet adjective is separated from "sheets" by stanza break and is made, therefore, to modify "I". This technique, which gives the poem its dream-like quality, is used even more skillfully in the next stanza. The verb "dreamed" ends the stanza: "I lay...and dreamed"; the next stanza begins with subject-verb: "you came." Because there is no punctuation between stanzas, it can be read: "I dreamed you came." The ambiguity is intricately woven into the poem's structure, so the reader does not feel jarred by trickery. Another success of technique is her use of the book image as a conceit. She is the content between the covers ("sheets"). For her lover to "read" the contents implies more than simply consuming her physically. There is something to be learned as well as enjoyed. "A Book of Charms" is a delicate poem, however, and too much interpretive mauling will scatter its petals. Anyone can appreciate its softness and romance.

A number of other quite imaginable poems trace out her recent re-exploration of the sexual-love world. The erotic sexual symbolism of the unicorn arouses a "strangeness" in the poet's blood in her fantasy poem, "The Dream." Her sexuality is more overt in such poems as "Four Songs", "The Touching", "The Notations of Love". In all of them she relates the beauty of physical passion with her striving for spiritual fulfillment, of meeting her lover half way, joined in a
mutually rewarding relationship. "The Taming", which suggests The Taming of the Shrew, describes an African friend's remonstration for her to "Be Woman." When the lover in the poem says essentially the same thing, she acknowledges that women should accommodate themselves to certain limits of male authority. But to me an attitude of male superiority is summed up in the words "Be woman," and suggests that no full communication between man and woman can endure unequal union.23 Another lyric, "And Give Us Our Trespasses", describes the agony of a lover who feels shunned, when "to lift the receiver/is to push the weight/of a mountain." (UB, p. 49) The telephone brings communication; but between the act of telephoning and not is a world of "distances."

The dialogue between woman and lover which begins in The Unquiet Bed completes itself in "The Sculptors." The poem describes violence in our world; she claims slaughtered pup-seals are not so tragic as bombed children in Vietnam.24 Then she turns to her lover and draws down the "blinds" on this world, in order that the two of them can "create reason/only two." If lovers can communicate, sculptor a meaningful world, then there is hope; they can "pull the rope/that relases folds of darkness/admits daylight." Central to her love poetry, therefore, is a desire for human communication, and an understanding between man and woman, the only basis of rational and humane relations between larger groups of people as well. There is no schizophrenia between her communal and personal perspectives. Social commitment and lyrical impulse are of the same humanistic and affirmative sensibility.
Footnotes

1 Undine, a river goddess in German mythology, was one Dorothy Livesay's favorite stories as a child. See bibliography.


3 Selected Poems, p. 76. She follows "Other" with "Wedlock" in this volume.

4 Lukacs's description is apt: "Nihilism and cynicism, despair and agnost, suspicion and self-disgust are the spontaneous product of the capitalist society in which intellectuals have to live. Many factors, in education and elsewhere, are arrayed against him. Take for instance, the view that pessimism is aristocratic, a worthier philosophy for an intellectual elite than faith in human progress. Or the belief that the individual -- precisely as a member of an elite -- must be a helpless victim of historical forces. Or the idea that the rise of mass society is an unmitigated evil. The majority of the press, highbrow and lowbrow, tends to minister to prejudices of this kind (it is their role in the campaign for the continuation of the Cold War). It is as if it were unworthy of the intellectual to hold other than dogmatic modernist views on life, art, and philosophy. To support realism in art, to examine the possibilities of peaceful co-existence among nations, to strive for an impartial evaluation of communism (which does not involve allegiance to it), all this may make a writer an outcast in the eyes of his colleagues and in the eyes of those on whom he depends for a livelihood. Since a writer of Sartre's standing has had to endure attacks of this kind, how much more dangerous is the situation likely to be for younger, less prominent writers." (Gerog Lukacs, Realism in Our Time, Literature and the Class Struggle, Harper & Row, New York, 1962, p. 91.) Dorothy Livesay certainly felt many of the pressures Lukacs describes in this essay written in 1956, one year after New Poems was published.

5 Dorothy Livesay, "Arms and the People", unpublished, see Appendix B.

6 The poet complained of over-interpretation to Robert McNutt and added, "This is ridiculous to try and probe things. As Dylan Thomas said: Look at the images before you, this is what the poem is about. Of course in all art there are other things underlined, there is another level of meaning but that does not destroy your first impression -- you don't have to find something deeper; you can enjoy the poem on the level that it is given, that you see on the page." See Appendix C.


8 Dorothy Livesay, tape, Poetry Reading, Simon Fraser University, February 14, 1967.
9Ibid.


11Ibid., p. 61.

12Ibid., p. 9.


15In her interview with Robert McNutt she describes the "appalling" way her M.A. students read poetry. "Now I have found that you can't consciously tell a person to change his way of reading, but by letting students hear poets read on records and on tapes, and by insisting that everyone in the class read poems to the class, they have begun to get more heart into it." See Appendix C.

16V.B. Rhodenizer, "Introduction", *Canadian Poetry in English*, Acadia University, p. xxxii.


20Her father encouraged her to assert herself, and not be restricted by her sex. See selected correspondence, Appendix A.

21There is considerable ambiguity in section iv of "Ballad of Me." The poet has considerably re-worked it from the original version published in *The Canadian Forum*, Vol. 44, No. 528, January 1965, pp. 230-1. In *The Unquiet Bed* version, she cut two stanzas and re-wrote the last, an indication that she herself felt a difficulty in expressing her feeling as a 53-year-old woman looking back over her life as a writer.


23Dorothy Livesay insists this poem indicates her acceptance of male authority. My reading of it is quite different. Both tone and content are ambiguous enough to allow an interpretation of "The Taming" as being a negative experience for a woman, rather than a fulfilling one.

24Poem reproduced in Appendix B.
 CHAPTER V

REAWAKENED SOCIAL VISION, 1960's

Dorothy Livesay's regeneration as a lyric poet is a consequence of many factors. The vigour of young poets writing in exciting new modes, her own personal re-discovery of sexuality and love, and most important, the renewal of social activism and commitment by increasingly large sections of young people have all contributed to a re-awakening of her poetic imagination. Her lyrical poems definitely catch the spirit of the contemporary, youth, hippie-activist movement: its open honesty (a spirit of "let it all hang out"), commitment to love and spontaneity, of communicating message through media. All these trends and aspects of contemporary cultural happenings among young people are reflected in her writing. She does not feel a generation gap; rather she sees a continuum in the struggles of today with those she participated in during the 1930's for democracy, civil rights and peace. Therefore she identifies with the new movements, tries to communicate as a poet with them, and through her poetry bring to the youth something of their history. This helps explain her decision to re-publish her social documentaries.

From even a brief study of her recent poetry, it is clear that the experience which opened her imagination to the energy and light of the sun from the darkness of the 1950's in North America was her three year work-tour in Zambia as a UNESCO teacher. When
she first went to Africa, Zambia was a British colony (Northern Rhodesia). Her stay coincided with the climax to Zambia's national liberation struggle, the breakup of the white-dominated Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and subsequent formation of two new republics, Zambia and Malawi. The revolution of the Zambian people was relatively peaceful, though not without years of struggle and patient leadership. Dorothy Livesay saw the movement as the culmination of her own struggles for a new social order in North America and democracy in Spain. For her the terribly bitter defeat of the Spanish Republic seemed redeemed by the victory of the black African people in Zambia. Of course during her stay in Africa, she was always an "outsider". In fact as a white person she would immediately be identified with colonialism, and white racism. But as her Zambian poems indicate, she is empathetic to the black revolution, even though she obviously cannot express the same feeling about the revolution that African writers do. Nevertheless, as her poems indicate, she felt something of the rhythmic throb of the African independence movement, and her journalist's eye documents a series of images about Zambia and its people in such a way as to move a Canadian listener close to African reality.

The poem, first published in chap-book form entitled Colour of God's Face, has been re-arranged and shortened to present a coherent thematic development. "Zambia" moves from the poet's first response to Africa, through to the point of view of an objective reporter and concludes, finally, with the complete integration of the poet's voice with the story of Lenchina. One over-riding con-
sideration when evaluating the success of these poems is that they are meant to be read aloud. A drama and rhythm inherent in all the Zambian poems, particularly "The Prophetess", simply does not come alive without an intelligent, sympathetic oral interpretation of them.

The first image in the first poem, "Initiation", is a crucial ideological key to the whole work.

From the twentieth of November at the turn of the moon's tide I entered the dark continent--it was blazing with light. (UB, p. 57)

The opening three lines read like a log entry from one of the early white explorer-conqueors. The metaphor "dark continent" describes the white racist, colonial mentality; the myth of racial superiority justifying the right of white men to bring black men the "light" of Christianity and "civilization" has deep historic roots in European thought.

Racial discrimination between different human ethnic groups, the notion that some human races are predestined to rule and others to obey, has antecedents thousands of years old. This concept of a social predestination deriving from a biological and racial one, European thought acquired from Aristotle...So tranquilizing is the concept of biological predestination that we forget any concept of the origin of social stratification among men. We hardly know the names of those pre-Aristotelian historians who insisted that the division into masters and slaves is not the result of physis, or differentiated nature, but of nomos, of law imposed by human malevolence, dictated by the interest of one group, and facilitated by brute force.¹

"Dark continent" is a slogan of physis, of racial superiority of whites (synonymous with light, goodness, beauty and enlightenment) over blacks (synonymous with darkness, evil, ugliness and savagery).
Dorothy Livesay introduces the poem with this racist content in order to expose it as being untrue. The reality of Africa "blazing with light" completely reverses the false consciousness symbolized by "dark continent." As the poem progresses, "light" assumes more meaning than just the light of sun; Africa is a light, a revolutionary beacon to all men who strive for human freedom. This is the final message drummed out in the "lumpa" chorus of "The Prophetess." Her use of the ironic juxtaposition between black and white is common in her poetry. "Day hanging over night" describes the racist division between white worker and black worker in "Day and Night"; "She's daylight; he is night" contrasts the male and female elements in "Bartok and the Geranium." But in "The Initiation" the irony is particularly sharp, and important for understanding the poet's perspective.

There is, however, a sharp contrast between the "resplendent sunshine", "inviolate jacarandas", and "gold fisted" trees of modern Lusaka and the "pitiless dust" of the "Village." The poet's initial enthusiasm and up-lift in Lusaka is tempered by the reality, as she an outsider sees it, of a technologically backward rural village. For her the place is "nameless"; everything merges in an undifferentiated organic unity--hut, ground, woman, child, grass. Here she finds a rhythm quite opposite to that signalled by the shrill cry of a factory whistle. The two-step dance of a modern production line contrasts sharply with the seasonal rhythm, the rising and falling of both man and vegetation with the coming and going of the rains.
Between the land and themselves
they feel no difference
loving the earth no more
than a man loves his own hand:

Use it, and live
or cut it off, and die. (UB, p. 58)

The African village harmony between nature and man is different too from her farm imagery of North America. Africans in this poem are not cash-crop farmers; they apparently live a subsistent life, and are subsequently passive to their environment. The point of view of the poet here is somewhat ambiguous as well. She does not pass comment; but obviously she is alien to the scene ("pitiless dust" symbolizes all the discomfort of it). She does not try to idealize the simplicity of rural life; it is backward -- a legacy of colonialism.

But a subtle change in perspective is apparent in her next two poems, "Wedding" and "Funeral." In these poems she enters the lives of people more than in her initiatory poems; she is a documentarist, not a reporter. Her impression centres on the image of the drum, the sound which signals the rhythm of day and night, and the rhythm of passion:

The hand that does the drumming
drums man home
to womb and woman
beats that rhythm
on black curving thighs
thrusts love upwards. (UB, p. 58)

The overt sexual imagery is sensuous; the rhythm catches a pulse and feeling of a universal human passion. Contrasted to the marriage act, symbolic of fertility and life, is her description of the funeral of a young boy drowned in a river. As the poet follows
the procession capturing crucial details—wailing women, "correctly silent" men, "sultry dust"—she focuses on the black box carrying the body, and ends the poem with a curious ambiguity.

but the brother alone at the drowning
the brother killed with his cry.

The poet seems to indicate that the brother who survived the situation was killed spiritually or psychologically by witnessing the actual death of his drowned brother.

Her concern, however, is not with clarity of narrative. Rather she concentrates on presenting an impressionistic feeling of tragedy, again a universal feeling (communal grief over the death of a youth), but again seen in a particular African context.

Her next two poems enter fully into the lives and aspirations of the Zambian people. "The Leader" is clearly sympathetic to the national liberation movement led by Kenneth Kaunda. Indeed, he is the subject of this poem; he speaks to the people from giant ant hills common in Zambia in order to bring them one message—"Kwatcha!"—Freedom!

The two images in the first section are effective counterparts, night and day. Night is oppressive, hot, dark. It is a "snake/strangling the drums/ squeezing the air", which is both a literally accurate description of a Zambian night and symbolic for their state of colonialism, domination by white oppression. Zambia is a copper-rich nation, and its large population of miners have always been an important political force in the fight for independence.

The image of beer halls as being a boiling cauldron accurately
describes the process of political unrest, the arguing and planning among workers, no doubt part of their movement.

But the Copperbelt day is saved by a strike of thunder the man on the anthill crying out 'Kwatcha'! wilder than rain pelt or the beat of sunlight children shout freedom waving green branches. (UB, p. 61)

Relief is the leadership provided by Kaunda. He is the light of day; like the "outrider", he signals direction for his people. His shout for freedom is echoed by the future, the nation's children, whose chorus overcomes the forces of nature ("wilder than rain pelt/ or the beat of sunlight."). The second section of this poem shifts to the perspective of the leader himself. The shift is awkward, structurally, and the image is too abstract. It ties in later with "The Prophetess" who is also described in terms of a "bell clanging". Both make the sounds of leadership, but are inspired by much more than an individual will. They embody something of the national collective will which has a certain religious quality to it. The "sun"-"moon" images symbolize the suffering and pain a leader must endure for the sake of his peoples' freedom, until every flower and stone in the land "bleed my song". The song is "Kwatcha!"

The Zambian series ends with another image of African leadership, a black mother-prophet. Dorothy Livesay takes an historical event and molds it into a new mythology, combining symbols of a black Christ with drug cultism and a vision for African freedom led by one
of their own people, an African mother. The historical aspect of her poem relates, according to the poet, to one of the offshoots of the Zambian national liberation movement, the Lumpa sect, whose immediate origin traces itself to a mushroom-drug-induced hallucination experienced by Alice Lenchina. Her name symbolizes something of the anti-colonial content of the movement. Missionaries, in their traditional wisdom, christened her "Regina". But the Bemba people do not have an "r" sound in their alphabet, so her name is Africanized to "Lenchina." Africanized too is the content of her English name, "Queen," for Lenchina emerges as a Queen, or at least a leader of her own people against the English for Zambia freedom. Because her movement based itself on mysticism, with strong overtones of communal tribalism, the Lumpa sect, after national liberation, challenged the authority of Kaunda's new republic. A national liberation movement, particularly in industrially under-developed countries, contains many, often contradictory, currents. Lenchina's movement was a protest against white domination; but its mysticism led backwards, through a purification process (stripping consciousness and material existence free of "white" culture), to old tribal ways. They struggled against modernization; and like the drug-cult movement in North America became luddite and anti-social. From a force in the revolution, they became a force against it, and Kaunda eventually stopped Lenchina's group with his national army.

Dorothy Livesay is interested in Lenchina's revolutionary stage only however. She is a mythic figure arising out of the spontaneous struggle of her people for self-hood and freedom. Lenchina's inspiration to give leadership derives from the mythologies of Africa, not Europe. Her visionary message is "to rouse you, my people." The poet cuts
through narrative detail, and quickens the pace of the story; like
the night, which "falls sudden and definite", so to the story catches
the tempo of the "Lumpa" movement, which grows "sudden and definite".
The peoples' minds are prepared from an African mother-leader:

Not by a white man's God
need we be saved
but by the resurrection of a woman
an African mother

A| | A

(UB, p. 65)

The drums, symbol throughout the poem of a distinctly African voice, rhythm-soul, respond to Lenchina "tentative questioning." But as she develops her story and envelopes the people in the magic of her story, the drums beat louder and louder. She is rooted among her people, "short and stumpy", and like the bush in Old Testament mythology, she speaks the message of God to her nation. The choral response of the tribe, the "ai ai" sound, emerges into a chant, "the new hosannah!"

Lumpa  (in the highest)
lumpa the drums beat
lumpa  lumpa  lumpa
lumpa  lumpa  lumpa  (UB, p. 65)

The final climax of sound as it builds in tempo has the power to lift an audience and carry it into the magical world of Lenchina's liberation cult. But only a sensitive oral presentation of it can capture the rhythm and tension of this important communal experience of the Bemba people.

"Zambia" is a good documentary poem in the sense that it captures, from the point of view of an outsider, a white Canadian woman, some of the feeling and imagery of a national struggle of an
African people to free themselves from colonial white domination and colonial backwardness. Zambia still finds itself faced with the military-economic threat of Ian Smith's apartheid white regime in Zimbabwe (self-styled and illegally proclaimed "Rhodesian Republic"). The success of the poem is directly related to the poet's perspective, and her technical skill in capturing her identity with the African struggle. The key point, however, is perspective. Content informs style:

The distinctions that concern us are not those between stylistic 'techniques' in the formalistic sense. It is the view of the world, the ideology or Weltanschauung underlying a writer's work, that counts. And it is the writer's attempt to reproduce this view of the world which constitutes his 'intention' and is the formative principle underlying the style of a given piece of writing. Looked at this way, style ceases to be a formalistic category. Rather it is rooted in content; it is the specific form of a specific content.

Lukacs's analysis is especially relevant to social documentary poetry. "Zambia" succeeds because her "intention" is to bring the feeling and spirit of the Zambian peoples' struggles to a Canadian audience; she wishes to share her emotional and ideological identification with the African freedom movement with Canadians because she sees a relationship between this struggle and those she wrote about thirty years ago.

Dorothy Livesay has written another, unpublished, documentary from her African experience. But her focus is on the European figure, Dag Hammarskjold. He has been mythologized in the West as a humanist and democrat, a man of fair-play who, in impossibly trying
situations, played the role of a neutral civil servant for the United Nations. This is how Dorothy Livesay also portrays him in her "found" poem, "The Hammer and Shield." The weakness of the poem is not her technique; she effectively pulls together newspaper comments, bits of speeches from political leaders, and Dag Hammerskjold's own poetry. The fatal flaw in her poem is that her central image, that of Hammerskjold himself, is very largely untrue. She does not simply describe human feelings, or her own emotional responses in this poem. Her aim is to tell history, and through the telling of history to capture a feeling for the tragedy she sees in his death. Fortunately the poem has not been published; recently Conor Cruise O'Brian, who also served with the U.N. in the Congo, has written a play about the former Secretary General of the United Nations exposing the essentially anti-Lumumba role played by the UN Forces in the Congo. As Patrice Lumumba, then elected Premier of the Congo, called in the UN for help to expel Belgian and other white mercenary paratroopers from Katanga Province, then clearly any poem which makes Hammerskjold the tragic victim is simply too far off historical truth to make it credible.

Credibility is after all a first requisite for social documentary poetry. It was precisely her own self-critical estimation of lack of her credibility that led her to scrap another documentary poem, "Momatkum." The poem is a documentary about the Native people of Canada, a "story of the Indian told in white language."3 She has had intimate working connections with the Native people, as
a journalist, social worker and poet. But she feels she has not mastered their frame of mind and particular poetic qualities of their speech to be able to do justice to their point of view. The point is Dorothy Livesay is quite conscious of the importance of perspective and content to social documentary poetry. The difficulty the poet faces today, therefore, is of an ideological nature. Certainly there are as many stories to be told about Canada as there were in the 1930's. The Native story is one which, with considerable effort, she could tell effectively. What she needs is the confidence of a philosophical position. Milton Acorn published an excellent article about the general problem facing contemporary Canadian writers as to perspective and content. He criticizes the tendency to substitute content with form, and fires directly at the West Coast school of Creeley, Olson, and George Bowering. Acorn is sympathetic to his fellow poets, as Dorothy Livesay is to Milton Acorn. But his point about the influence of a "cosmic pessimism" and lack of philosophic perspective among Canadian poets is relevant to Dorothy Livesay's latest writings. Not that she is nihilist. Quite the opposite. She affirms meaning in life, and sees the necessity to struggle for human freedom and national independence. It is unlikely, however, that she will create any artistically fulfilling and moving social documentaries unless she extends the energy of her lyrical re-awakening and her sense of identity with the African liberation movement to the social-political realities of Canada in the 1960's and 1970's.
Three very recent poems indicate she still maintains a strong social commitment to peace and national liberation. "The Metal and the Flower" indicates her clear support for youth protesters against the war in Vietnam. Dorothy Livesay herself joined a group of young sit-in protesters at the nuclear air base in Comox in 1964. In a shortened revision of "The Metal and Flower" her message is simple and clear:

they march into autumn
against the mailed and metalled
study-minded knights
who assail the countryside
ravage the trees and grass
on Vietnam prairies.³

The "they" are flower-bearing, young anti-war activists; their flowers, symbols of life and beauty, contrast sharply to those who destroy "trees and grass". The poet uses "Vietnam prairies" deliberately to relate Vietnam to the Canadian scene. Part of the violence of North American society, according to the poet, is our ability to rationalize death, to externalize it and divorce our actions from our consciousness of their consequences. This is the theme of "The Rat", in which she describes her decision to poison a creature (who she never sees) for disturbing her sleep.

Not actually POISON
the label said
just a merciful
leukemia
(UB, p. 34)

The same way noxious chemicals used in Vietnam are described as "defoliants," and police terror against black ghettos is called "law and order." The full irony is that "he wasn't a rat but/a squirrel."
By objectifying something she neither knew nor understood, by
labelling it "enemy" in an act of "defense" (which is not defense
but promotion of limited self-interest), she repeats on an individual
level what society does with its social terminology -- "rat" becomes
"communist", "viet cong", "nigger", "hippie", "student radical", etc.

A second poem published since The Unquiet Bed dealing
with Vietnam is "Waking in the Dark". Like her earlier "V-J Day",
she inter-relates her personal life situation with the great social
currents of her time. In "Waking in the Dark" she thinks as a
grand-mother, and pictures her grandson growing up in a world shadowed
by Vietnam:

Whenever I see him
in mind's eye
I see him light-haired and laughing
running in a green field

Morning radio and newspapers remind her of the war. The paper "is
insinuated under the door"; it does not tell the truth anymore than
the label on the "rat poison". A news item suggesting the war will
take a hundred years to win if atomic bombs are not used is
situated "between comic strips/ads and girdled girls"; violence is
so common that mass media grows insensitive to it. She says if
Americans continue their genocide against the Vietnamese people:

our grandchildren growing up
and their children
will be humans who feel no pity
for the green earth
and who look upon procreation
with indifference.

Her horror has a quality of Orwellian despair:
When I see my grandchild running
in a game of football
his helmet is empty
in his right arm
he carries his head

Only through a grotesque personalization of violence can she relate
the colossal collective violence being committed against a whole
nation of people. Without lecturing a bit (her horror is too direct
and immediate), the implication is for her listener to likewise
personalize the brutality of that war, and act to end it.

A man who did act and was murdered for his effort is
Martin Luther King Jr. Her lament at his death, "I Have a Dream",
avoids the pitfall of attempting to sum up the meaning of his life
and assassination. She wants to express her grief, deep and personal,
for a man she felt to be one of the great hopes for a non-violent
revolution in America. Grief is a complex emotion, and so powerful
it numbs the mind and body—and is often the profound silence before
a storm of rage. The black community in America responded collectively
in this way—grief, then rage. Her poem is her grief. She responds
simply by describing in a naturalistic way her environment, as she
joins marchers in a memorial service. The physical world has not
changed:

The earth has not shuddered
nor have the heavens been sundered
but a man has been "to the mountain top"
and we walk now groping
our sight broken

But the impact of his death has profound effect on humanity, on
the subjective reactions of millions of people. The loss of sight
seems to be temporary, however, because the last image of the poem is of a solitary gull "flying over/the flowing river." There is no pathetic fallacy; the river does in fact just keep flowing. It exists; and life persists, and surges forward. Fortunately the poet avoids cliche. Nor in this poem does she present a political program. The poem is a lament, but it is so devoid of human imagery its tone becomes sepulchral, and sounds slightly hollow toward the end.

Nevertheless, Dorothy Livesay has obviously maintained something of her youthful revolutionary commitment. Her African poems, anti-Vietnam war poetry and lament to King illustrate her identity with the revolutionary impulse of contemporary history. She sees the world as a grim, violent place, fraught with struggle. But she does not despair, nor retreat from reality. She reflects on it in her writing, and asserts her own values, also rooted in the reality of this world. Love, sunshine, flowers, happiness and peace -- "longing that love/might set men free" -- are also real aspects of world reality. As a poet she tries to quicken her listener's appreciation of both sides of this reality, and so move him to action. Although she is not in the vanguard of any revolutionary movement in Canada, she is still in the forefront of those who are trying to bring poetry, its rhythm and imagery, into the lives of the Canadian people. She is, first and foremost, a poet, an affirmative poet, one who combines her lyric and social voices to advance human freedom and happiness. Her only request in return is that her country as well as her lover realize that:
The woman I am
is not what you see
move over love
make room for me.

Given a national interpretation of these lines, Dorothy Livesay
is asking nothing more than an opportunity to be heard.
Footnotes


3Interview with Dorothy Livesay by Charlie Boylan. See Appendix A.


6Dorothy Livesay, "Waking in the Dark", Scan Magazine, Vol. 4, No. 4, August-September 1968, p. 7. See complete poem in Appendix B.

7Dorothy Livesay, "I have a Dream". See Appendix B for complete poem.
Primary Sources


_____ "Glass House", *Northern Review*, Vol. 3, No. 5

_____ "The Last Climb", *Northern Review*, Vol. 4, No. 6, August-September 1951.


Other poems by Dorothy Livesay referred to in the thesis are listed in Appendix B.
Secondary Sources


Pace, Desmond. "The Outlook for Canadian Literature." Canadian Literature, No. 36, Spring 1968.


APPENDIX A

Selected Correspondence and Discussions with Dorothy Livesay

1. On Politics and Art:

"Granted then, that a poet's first commitment is to poetry (and you will have to grant it, or time will ride over you like a stone), the question remains of how much a part of social and revolutionary change (to which, by the very fact that he is a poet he must give allegiance) can demand of him; and of how much of himself he is willing to give. Some individuals will reply, none; others will make what gestures, do what actions that they can.

It follows from all this that a left-wing party cannot expect discipline from its writers; every time they have tried in Russia, in China, in Poland -- they have failed. It's like trying to melt gold with a candle! A wise party would treat writers with the respect they deserve -- would, above all, read their work, discuss it; and would seek to call on writers for support in crises where their position as 'voice' would help. To my knowledge the CP (Communist Party of Canada -- cb) has never behaved in this way; and its people have lacked the vision to make use of what aspects of the creative spirit can be made use of, in a public sense. I have a suspicion that Cuba has learned from all the mistakes of the past, and is allowing its poets and painters greater scope; but asking from them certain services, as it were 'civic duties'."

-- June 6, 1965

*I should add that it is very important to know that I share the view of Lenin and Trotsky: the artist is not a political animal and cannot be handled as such. The trouble with Hammarskjold is that he should have been a poet, not a politician.... We [poets] see life on a different, personal level, and we should be allowed by the state, to express ourselves that way (under Stalin and Kruschev many were not). Most writers though are not reclusees, not turned in -- they are community minded, they have ideas and responses to society. I have always been committed to pacifism -- so there will be times when I agree with the Party, and times when I won't. That freedom to be myself is the most vital freedom I have! Like Joan Baez, who I heard on TV, and like Ginsberg, whom I went to Saint John to hear, Saturday night, I speak out freely as a poet about the human problems that concern me....

I don't despise you for taking a political stand. I admire you and think it is good -- for you. As long as you don't try and become a writer or a painter! Stick to your politics. Saul Alinsky when here, gave a speech demanding that the one aim for a better world must be 'power'. 'Get power, action is power' he kept saying. Fine -- for those who want to change things that way. But for me it still holds, that old saying, 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.'
I've seen it, over and over again. And so I will not choose that path. But I will take my stand and speak freely against those who make war and those who destroy man's potential: 'child's mind maimed before it learns to run.'

You will just have to face that this is sort of the person I am; and you will have to learn the hard way, I fear, that all artists are this type of person... You do your job, we say -- let us do ours....

The literary tradition in Canada is humanist. You should be glad it's not mystical (as in Bergman, and Sweden). You should be glad that just because we are not blindly for you, we are not against you."

-- March 28, 1967

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"Most people here can't 'vomit' the western-humanist view; particularly the writers can't... Even though, with Bob Dylan, we see the horror of the American way of life-in-death, we still cling to the ideology that created it, or led to it; because we think men, western men, were not 'great' enough as human beings to put those ideas into proper practice... we cannot shake off the conviction that the utopian-humanist view of mankind is a good one: if only man could live up to it! He never does; we are always disappointed.

But I am not equipped to theorize: too intuitive, feminine. However, I do thoroughly appreciate the fact that there are other concepts of the world and that they have a right to be put to work for the countries that so believe... there is no question but that China accomplished far more, with its ideology, than India has done (with our poor western equipment). But just because the western hasn't worked, so far, I persist in believing it could. I persist, I suppose, because literature -- poetry and drama -- assert it!

Ah well, I shouldn't ramble. I know I am not equipped. At least I learned, in Africa, that children who have never grown up except in a circle, have a 'world-view' that is circular -- they cannot be plunged into squares and triangles (the difficulties of teaching math are frightful). Similarly if you teach painting, you learn with a shock that children there do not 'see' colours as we see them. Pink is brown, etc. The 'concept of the world' is utterly different. Such people, I became convinced, can never accept western democracy -- except in an entirely superficial 'rhetorical' way. These differences are far too fundamental to be changed by imposing western education upon such peoples!"

-- April 13, 1967

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2. Autobiography and Poetry:

"I first got interested in sound and music in poetry whilst studying the symbolists, Paris, 1932. This led to Edith Sitwell, and her experiments. I admire her techniques very much and I daresay she has had quite an influence on me... After that, I was a year in Paris, 1959 (at UNESCO) and used to go to weekly readings in a little theatre in Mont parnasse, where contemporary French poetry was being read aloud. I remember writing to Alan Crawley and telling him then, my belief that poetry was a spoken medium. It was therefore wonderful to come back to Vancouver, 1963-4, and hear Ginsberg, Creeley, Duncan, Olson -- all insisting on the spoken thing...and to remember that during the forties it was Alan Crawley in B.C. who was doing the most in this regard, by speaking poetry aloud, all over the place. At that time Earle Birney followed suit, and we began to get poetry readings into the high schools.

All through those years I was amongst those battling the CBC bureaucracy...for the right to have the poet read his own work... I do not pretend that I am a wonderful reader of my own poems, but I do say, with Morley Callaghan, that people want to hear the author speaking...

Yes, I enjoy and admire Yevtechenko's public poetry -- especially a poem on Hawaii and one on Alaska that were published in an American glossy mag...but I wonder if the USSR would invite Ginsberg to Russia and let him write poems (that might also be satiric) about that country?... I enjoy public poetry and polemic. But I think that the other type of poet (what's his name -- whom Auden has translated -- Vinokurov?) will be the Russian most remembered, by poets. Because he is more subtle; and personally involved."

-- April 11, 1967

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"My father was always interested in Russian literature anyway. We had all of Turgenev, Tolstoi, Chekov, Gogol...he had everything of that period before the revolution. Going to Emma Goldman's lectures encouraged us to study Russian literature.

But this was the kind of person Jim Watts was, you see. Always alert to new ideas, and I was very much the follower. She kept exploring everything. She delved into books on sex, and trial marriage and so on before I did, and told me all about them. She was taking anthropology and planning to be a doctor. She got particularly interested soon in politics, philosophy and psychology. We were both interested in women as creative people and were mad about those women poets I mentioned (H.D., Emily Dickinson, Elinor Wylie, etc. -- cb), and just daft about Katherine Mansfield. All this was going on in our late teens in high school. It was a kind of ferment.

My father perhaps wanted to stimulate me in these ways, but because he was my father I would, in a sense, resist. But he stimulated my friend so much that she leaped ahead, and the things she discovered, she brought to me. I remember she brought us something by Engels on the 'Origin of the Family', and that just shook us to death. Engels completely,
well, mesmerized us. It was years before I recovered from that book...

The material for 'Country Wife' comes from that Ontario countryside you saw today. My father took me for a drive along the St. Lawrence one summer at the haying season. I must of known Knister; yes, that year I would have known him. I identified my feeling about the countryside with him as a farmer's son. "City Life" was a kind of a first love in a poem. It was all unreal, I had never experienced any of that myself. But it was the kind of love affair that I suppose I wanted to have. I wrote a story along the same lines published in The Canadian Mercury ("Heat") about a girl on a farm, receiving a love she didn't want, or wasn't ready for....

I would have written Call My People Home about 1946 because I had got to know these Japanese-Canadians. First of all I read all the back files of the Fisherman Nesei paper and read letters from the Japanese about their experiences, and used all that data. It is a found poem, a documentary. But also I took a trip to Greenwood and interviewed the Mayor and got all his story from him, as well as the story of Amy and all her family....

I made a whole series of trips up into the interior and the Cariboo visiting Indian villages, talking to Indians and also based on my experiences as a social worker in Vancouver, stories of the Indian girls who came down and were lost to society and lost to their own people. The name of my piece was Momatkum. It was never published because, people like Alan Crawley even, and also people who knew something about the Indian peoples' poetry, said that it was written in English poetry, like Longfellow. They all compared it to Evangeline. They said it was the story of the Indian told in white language.... It was a marvelous experience; I did a whole series of articles for the Toronto Star on the Indian problem. That was right after I came back from Europe (1946 -- she had been assigned to report for the Toronto Star on European Post-War recovery. Hence "London Re-visited" in Poems for People. -- cb). I went all the way up to Prince George and I was going to take the riverboat from Prince George down the Mackenzie. I had to fly to Fort St. John, and there I got a man to take me up river in his riverboat as far as the rapids. You get the feel of the Mackenzie country and the pioneer life, and wherever I was I sent the Star these dispatches about these communities, Hudson Hope, St. John and so on. At the same time, I was visiting any Indian reserve I could get into either by the help of a priest or an Indian agent. But there was one very dramatic village I visited, up the Pacific Great Eastern a ways, a kind of Emily Carr kind of place, lost and strange.

The result was I did a half hour drama, part of it was in poetry describing the old people's life. They wanted their people to maintain the tradition. I had a chief speaking and he was pulling for the old way of life, and in between, rather like in the Japanese poems, there are these shafts of talk from the young Indians, restless-crazy to get out, wanting the big lights, and I had a particular girl whose life story I had read in a social work case history who had a lot of potential and came down and got bedraggled in the city and then finally was in jail -- it was the girls' reformatory I guess -- and then was
sent back to her Indian village. So it was a poem where nothing was resolved."

-- Interview with C. Boylan
May 30, 1967

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"The problem of autobiography is shown up clearly in the review (Globe and Mail) of Leonard Woolf's latest volume, Downhill All the Way. It seems he did combine the personal recollections with the public ones -- but I would imagine that a great many of the people mentioned are now dead and gone. Could he have said it earlier on? I like his aims: 'First, to show it (his life) and his little ego in relation to the time and place which he lived his life, to the procession of historical events...secondly to describe, as simply and clearly as he can, his personal life, his relation...to persons and to himself'...

One point we dealt with on Friday morning, that I can't stress enough, is that I got my view of an 'outer world' where people worked, where people were unlike my parents and culture...from all those Ukrainian, Polish and Lithuanian girls we had a 'mother's help' in Winnipeg; and Canadian farm girls coming to the city; and Finnish girls in teenage years, in Toronto. The one point I am sure about is that I always tended to identify with the immigrant girl, rather than with my mother. I resented the way she treated them, and exploited them in her writing (!!!) and since I was not intimate with her, but hid things from her, I listened avidly to the stories the young girls told and felt one with them when my mother (as would happen) made them cry... It seems to be that this could be your clue as to how a 'bluestocking' literati might turn from narcissistic lyricism to poetry of a wider, more humanist significance?"

-- June 10, 1967

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"The young draft-dodger poet in the Globe and Mail knows nothing about Canadian history or culture. Why should he be given The Documentaries to review?

Friends of my generation...like it though... Also, students like it. My purpose was to give students of Canadian literature some clues about the Thirties."

-- January 21, 1969

"Further to my packet of yesterday. I meant to say, to begin with, that you are right about the Emily Dickinson dates; because a short while ago I found an old diary, about 1927, where I mentioned my love for E.D., and quoted her. What I do recall though, I believe faithfully, was the fact that I only saw scattered and anthologized poems, as with Sarah Teedale and Edna Saint Vincent Millar -- Jim Watts gave me Elinor Wylie's book, Angels and Earthly Creatures, and I remember her passionate interest in that poet. We were interested in all women writers, and women as writers. My father fostered this, as he was a great devotee of the Brontes, especially Charlotte; of George
Eliot and Jane Austen; then of Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and Katherine Mansfield. Jim W. and I were mad about Mansfield.

So: E.D. was a great favorite, but was not read exclusively. Her first collected volume I remember seeing about 1930, in Winnipeg, when M.E. Nichos' son lent it to me when I was cub reporting on the Winnipeg Tribune.

Later in Paris I got interested in the 17th century metaphysicals in connection with my thesis on the moderns and the French symbolists; and saw the connection between Donne and Emily Dickinson. By that time, however, I had stopped writing that sort of lyric... There was a long break of two or three years before I began writing social poetry, about 1935... The early metaphysical and E.D. type poetry reappears in my late years, in The Unquiet Bed!"

-- January 22, 1969
APPENDIX B

Dorothy Livesay's Poetry

The following poems are referred to in the text of the thesis but are not published in any of her books to date. Poems listed here are in order of mention in the thesis. "Catalonia" is followed by an historical note.
CATALONIA

I

The flag of darkness lowers at half-mast blotting the blood-stained hieroglyphs from eyes strained from the smoke, the flares, the rat-tat-tat of guns' incessant bark. A sudden lull fans wind on brow; recalls from far off hills the ones who rest... oh unbelievably a girl who rests tired head on easy arm and sleeps encircled by her own heart-beat.

But we, grey snakes who twist and squirm our way from hump to sodden hump, roll in a hole of slime, scarring our knees to keep awake (earth's fermentation working overtime). Horizons reel, groping for an axis, stars burn in whirling rockets overhead—we wrench ourselves over the last trench, down down, down in scurrying scramble tossed towards lost lines, lost outposts, lost defence...

II

The captain of the third brigade sprang from a hillock where he peered into the flare-lit dark. He crouched and doubled up, ran to a gunner's nest. "They've quit" he hissed. "They've left the ridge and swarmed to cover, in the wood... The tanks ? they've left the bloody tanks defenceless...wounded men will be inside." Then Sorensen came up. He'd seen the tired retreat from our right flank. Tall, lean— as a stripped tree—he hung above the captain, panting words. "What's that ?" The captain thrust a fist in the man's face. "You mean it, Sorensen ?" "I'll go " the lean one said...and down he slithered on his knees, towards the tanks.

III

Inside a tank the smoky darkness lurched and stupidly the air clutched at his face acrid with oil. It shoved his nostrils in clung to his palate with a gritty clamp, branded his lungs. He choked and coughed tried to restrict his chest from heaving rasps -- crouched on the floor, head thrust against steel wall. And now again pain stung his shoulder-blade his arm, still bleeding, hung beside him limp—a stranger's arm. He looked at it, and saw himself the same, inertly cut away from human contact, blood of brotherhood. The sweat broke on his brow, the blood closed down against all sound of guns. "He swayed," and fell.
The boy he fell upon stirred from his dream, moved, and felt out the knife-wound in his side. The soggy bandages were now a wad of blood, clotted and warm; the quivering flesh throbbed like a heart-beat pounding through the room... his room at home so clear now in his mind shuttered with slanting shafts of light, the chunks of day on rosy plastered wall, his chairs hunch-backed, the cool tile floors with candle-grease scattered in silver coins beside the bed... But 0, that voice...what voice sang out to him screaming in siren tones, Arise, awake, stand up and strike, strike back and shoot, shoot till the last strip fumbles in your hand--till silence huddles in the muffled tank.

The tank! He rose up, leaning on one arm then crawled away from his companion's side. The fumes, the oily fumes, spluttered within his brain but dragging himself up, he reached the slit and peered outside. The earth still seemed to heave with showers of fire still bursting from its bowels.

Then something moved, a shadow writhing low upon the ground; and Sorensen burst in upon the tank, gasping and hurried, thrusting bandages towards him, helping him stand up and breathe. "The other soldier's dead." They took his gun and letters spilling from his pockets, these the two remembered. Then ploughed on to find the next tank, and the next, where other men lay trapped and helpless, ammunition gone.

Now we retreat in better order, confident of gun on shoulder, captain in command. The wounded swing in swift-made hammocks, safe from guttering death or prisoner's assault. and as they move others are marching down people are shuffling down the roads of Spain bundled with babies, chattels, cooking-pots a donkey-load of warmth, a basket light with bits of bread, dried beans, remains of other hasty meals, swallowed between the zoom of air-raids over village streets. People are marching with all song gone out, all sunlight flattened grey upon their faces; now in steady haste pushing ahead to valleys where the mountain shade leans kindly down, where snow looks good to sleep upon. No winds can blow more fiercely than a bomb, and winter's frost will pierce steel needles lighter far to bear than thrust of shrapnel splitting under skin.
people are marching, marching, and they meet
the tattered tunics of the soldiers, some of whom
walk bare backed in the cold. A woman stops
and gives a shawl, a skirt for covering
for soldiers on ahead, who march to make
a further stand.

Though darkness fall once more,
a tattered flag, the men will stand upright
spirit sustained, the floor of Spain
a ground not tilled in vain with blood
with bones of young men scattered far;
not fertilized in vain, 0 grey-green gloss
of olives, wind-bent on a hill, of earth
supported by the vineyards' yield, and wheat
crisp in the sun. No more sterility
or drouth or barrenness is yours
0 rolling plains; who make a covering now
for breath and bone; for growing hands
whose fingers work beneath the roots, to burst
out of the earth again, another spring!

-- 1939
Historical Note on Dorothy Livesay's "Catalonia"

"Catalonia" marks the last great battle of resistance by the Loyalist government and the International Brigades against the invasion of General Franco. The following story about an incident during the Civil War helps clarify the commitment Dorothy Livesay and other Left writers during that period felt toward the Loyalist cause. The relationship between politics and poetry is made amply clear in the story:

"You must imagine a great hall at the University. The walls are covered with tapestries. The grandeur can only be remade with words. There is a dais where the learned and their guests are seated -- a bejeweled Bishop, whose ring of office glitters, the Provincial governor, one of Franco's important generals, and Madame Franco surround the Rector, Miguel de Unamuno. And above them is a large photograph-banner of Franco. A packed audience faced the dais waiting for the speakers. The date is October 13, 1936. According to my source, a Professor of Literature spoke first, expressing his sincere hope for the future. Then, a visitor from Saragossa spoke of "the energies of Spain at white heat in a crucible passion -- and like gold from the crucible..." etc. But the man they were waiting to hear was General Millan Astray -- thin, emaciated, one eye and one arm. My source uses the words "mutilations" and "gashes" to describe him. This general was known for his iron discipline, his campaigns in Africa, and his battle-cry, "Viva la Muerte!" As he stood to speak, someone in the audience shouted, "Viva la Muerte!" According to my source, the General opened his speech with the statement that more than one half of all Spaniards were criminals, "guilty of armed rebellion and high treason." He said, "Catalonia and the Basque country -- the Basque country and Catalonia -- are two cancers in the body of the nation. Fascism, which is Spain's health-bringer, will know how to exterminate them both, cutting into the live, healthy flesh like a resolute surgeon free from false sentimentality. And since the healthy flesh is the soil, the diseased flesh, the people who dwell on it, Fascism and the Army will eradicate the people and restore the soil to the sacred national realm..."

He said, "Every Socialist, every Republican, every one of them without exception -- and needless to say every Communist is a rebel against the National Government which will very soon be recognized by the totalitarian States who are aiding us, in spite of France..." etc. General Millan Astray's speech ended with the audience shouting, "Franco, Franco, Franco!"
When Unamuno rose, the crowd became silent, and this, according to my source, is what he said:

"All of you are hanging on my words. You all know me, and are aware that I am unable to remain silent. I have not learnt to do so in seventy-three years of my life. And now I do not wish to learn it any more. At times, to be silent is to lie. For silence can be interpreted as acquiescence. I could not survive a divorce between my conscience and my word, always ill-mated partners.

"I will be brief. Truth is most true when naked, free of embellishments and verbiage.

"I want to comment on the speech -- give it that name -- of General Millan Astray who is here among us.

"Let us waive the personal affront implied in the sudden outburst of vituperation against Basques and Catalans in general. I was born in Bilbao, in the midst of the bombardments of the Second Carlist War. Later, I wedded myself to this City of Salamanca which I love deeply, yet never forgetting my native town. The Bishop, whether he likes it or not, is a Catalan from Barcelona.

"Just now I heard a necrophilous and senseless cry: 'Long live Death!' To me it sounds the equivalent of Muera la Vida! -- To Death with Life! And I, who have spent my life shaping paradoxes which aroused the uncomprehending anger of others, I must tell you, as an expert authority, that this outlandish paradox is repellent to me. Since it was proclaimed in homage to the last speaker, I can only explain it to myself by supposing that it was addressed to him, though in an excessively strange and tortuous form, as a testimonial to his being himself a symbol of death.

"And now, another matter. General Millan Astray is a cripple. Let it be said without any slighting undertone. He is a war invalid. So was Cervantes. But extremes do not make the rule; they escape it. Unfortunately, there are all too many cripples in Spain now. And soon, there will be even more of them, if God does not come to our aid. It pains me to think that General Millan Astray should dictate the pattern of mass-psychology.

"That would be appalling. A cripple who lacks the spiritual greatness of a Cervantes -- a man, not superman, virile and complete, in spite of his mutilations -- a cripple, I said, who lacks that loftiness of mind, is wont to seek ominous relief in seeing mutilation around him."

The audience was very quiet, but their feelings of unease and confusion filled the air. The General could no longer stand it, and interrupting Unamuno, he shouted, "Muera la Intelligencia!" "To death with intelligence!" "To death with bad intellectuals!" a journalist from Cadiz yelled, something prompting him to correct the General's statement, if only a little.

Unamuno's presence had such authority, he was able to make himself heard again:
"This is the temple of intellect. And I am its high priest. It is you who are profaning its sacred precincts.

"I have always, whatever the proverb may say, been a prophet in my own land. You will win, but you will not convince. You will win, because you possess more than enough brute force, but you will not convince, because to convince means to persuade. And in order to persuade you would need what you lack -- reason and right in the struggle. I consider it futile to exhort you to think of Spain. I have finished."

Deep in the arsenal
Of our heart's country
Batteries of arms
Are heaped, are hoisted;
Labyrinths of arms
Dug deeper, and tunneled
Under our day.
But who can say
Arms will outdistance a man's stride?
Who can predict the strength of a man's will?
Who can put a young man against a gun
And say: The machine has won!

That man there, with the narrow face
Intent at the test-tube, recording a cyclatrone,
That man breaking up atoms—
He is a father.
Will he prefer a gun
To his son?

In April the blossoms
Blow in upon our gardens
Our thoughts are falling with flowers;
Our hearts sing, learning over again
How the song sparrow greets the sun,
How the phoebe awakens the morning.

Does the Japanese plumb
Trailing her coral clouds from delicate limbs
Does the plum seek destruction?
The thrush caught in a comb
Of white cherry foam
Does the thrush call for death?

No man's children,
Throwing open the door on an April morning
No man's children sing, to be silenced;
To have old age blister their morning.
And no man, pushing back a chair from a hasty breakfast,
Prays to find death waiting
At the bus stop.

There are arms, bombs, super-atomic destructors:
But there are arms, wrapping a man to the heart,
Crying good morning.

There are arms, piled downward into earth's secret places
Only the miners know, moving in dark recesses
Men with half-hearts and sick, half-hearted faces
Piling the arms of all wars' dark excesses—
But there are arms, arms of a man and woman
Linked high, high, in a bond to heaven:
These the sun sees, on a planety morning
And laughs at the sign of a new season:
Arms, performing a new rite---
Arms that engender reason
And endorse the light!

-- Probably pre-Korean War
CENTENNIAL PEOPLE

What held them fast together was not God but going to church every Sunday at 11 a.m. (a little more often in Lent) and getting up promptly at half-past seven for the day's duties (i.e. breakfast dishes coat brushed shoes polished perfunctory kiss) or no kiss at all just goodbye.

What held them fast together was dinner at 12 noon: pot roast, potatoes, carrots and apple pie (On Mondays, tapioca pudding) and "tea! at half-past five--white bread and jam.

In the evenings they sat down seriously to bridge or cribbage having discussed the newspaper headlines and the letters to the editor and at 10 o'clock sharp they prepared for bed.

If there were diversions other than these they were not mentioned

If there were yearnings to stay up till 3 a.m. and sleep till noon they were not sanctioned one step off the marked route could not be tolerated

and a girl in spring looking at green fields unfolding must be blinkered hands re-folded
A girl longing
for a breath
of wind of love?
must turn in a narrow bed
clean white sheets
hand washed and hung
on the line, in the sun
and never dance
on the clothesline
herself

And a boy bursting
with energy
must bury his longing
under ground.

It was a 'good life':
you did not find
everything you wanted
but you learned to accept
everything you found.

-- April, 1967
THE SCULPTORS

i

Here we have entered a strange world
world not given
    but made
where the walls glow
with music reverberating
    from our choices
where we may make
    our own recordings
world not given
where we do not have to search
a feverish destination
instead we practise
    the art of making the walls move
with calligraphies of laughter
self against self
    opposed
yet meeting
    fusing

ii

Outside the snow
    on the roof
receives the sun
    melts downward
I receive your violence
    melt down
    into new meanings

Listen! there's a crow
    cawing
overhead
there's a change
    swinging
in the windy sky
hold this moment
    hold it
a world evolves
    in your most gentle
hands
and out of our mouths
    a balloon is blown
upward
    a world for tossing

iii

The film took us
north
not gulls
but geese
waving and screaming
    urging
    exhorting
The film took us
barren lands
slumped hills slowly burning with greeness
sky's incredible
sunrise

And the wings weaving
the birds whitely
screaming

Into this moved
sudden, a structure
long, white, nosing
a ship
upon this wild
architecture
a thumbprint

The waves weave
wings beat over

A single man, in the marshes
squatting squinting
utters a gutteral
bird cry

They seethe and whirl
in the blazoned sky
and he shoots

One white wing
is all wings falling

fallen

The world took us
by black
Telephone:

And why are you so disturbed
I asked her
by the baby seals
whacked into silence
bloodied for their skins?

When human creatures
children with mind's eye
and a possible godlike gesture
are bombed off the earth
quicker?

Why are you so disturbed
by a small flutter
on the ice?
Draw the blinds
pull the curtains
be sure to close the doors
let us sit face to face
a light in darkness
braced
against the slaughter
of innocence
black or white.

iv

We make marvels
measure distances
establish cities

even, we
beget children
in our own image

but within these walls
only two can control
the imagination

pull the rope
that releases folds of darkness
admits daylight

and out of walls
windows
tables and chairs

create reason.

-- 1967
THE METAL AND THE FLOWER

Under my windows
the young march on and sing
on flutes on zither
on guitar
celebrating autumn
red orange yellow
carrying chrysanthemums
and zinnias
they march into autumn
against the mailed and metalled
study-minded knights
who assail the countryside
ravage the trees and grass
on Vietnam prairies

The young celebrate once more
innocence and experience
proclaim, in their blue jeans
jackets and long hair
the right to own love
to distribute its blossoms
impervious to all man-
-u-fractured
metal.

-- 1967
I HAVE A DREAM

(for Martin Luther King)

Here we wait under spring sun
spilling fresh-brimmed
into a pool of pines
last year's needles browned
and bruised
last year's snow white shadow
hugging the hollow

here we wait
hearing the river below
flowing again in patches
sloshing ice chunks
into the sedges

here we wait
and note at the wood's edge
a new grave dug
false flowers spewing color
on the muddy mound
and a new name burnishing
the ground

a gull flies over

the earth has not shuddered
nor have the heavens been sundered
but a man has been "to the mountain top"
and we walk now groping
our sight broken

here we wait
in pine-branches
from afar off
winging his way
flying over
the flowing river

-- 1968
APPENDIX C

Interview with Miss Dorothy Livesay by Robert McNutt, December 18, 1967

RM: What is it that makes Canadian poetry — Canadian? We have been studying some of the earlier Canadian poets and we have arrived at Pratt who is quite different from some of the earlier ones. Carman comes to mind immediately. What is there about this milieu that is Canadian that makes it different from say American poetry.

DL: Well originally of course, the Fredericton group didn't think of themselves as Canadian, they aligned themselves as North American poets. They lived abroad most of the time — Carman and Roberts lived in the United States and in England and they felt themselves to be a community of poets, they were never worried about this problem. Then there came the great Nationalist movement in Canada, the patriotic movement of the 20s. Carman and Roberts came back, tore all over the country giving readings and there was really a kind of flag waving going on in these years when I was a young girl, so we became much more conscious of it. The Canadian Authors' Association boosted anything Canadian to such a degree that those of us who began writing and publishing in the 30s were quite disgusted, and we felt we were orientated again to the cosmopolitan world. We were interested in what Auden and Spender were doing in the 1930s in England.

RM: Could we develop this "disgust" a little bit here. What exactly were you and the poets who were developing in the same period trying to get away from, aside from obvious things like "smokey hills".

DL: Well, the waving of the Maple Leaf, you know Carman's rather patriotic poems and Roberts and a host of minor poets who if you look at the anthologies of the teens and the twenties will show you that there was this kind of insistence that we describe the Canadian countryside, arouse patriotic fervor or else we describe history. Well, I think really from people like Duncan Campbell Scott and Lampman onward there was much more of a feeling that poets should be concerned with his interior landscape and it so happened that there was this correlative Lampman identified with a Canadian countryside around Ottawa and Scott identified with the north and with the aboriginal life, so that a poet simply takes his environment where he is and absorbs it and that is as far as it goes. If you are in a country like Canada which is so very regional, people are far more regional poets than they are Canadian poets with quotes around them. Earle Birney started out on the west coast with "David" and that is a west coast poem, more than a Canadian poem because there aren't mountains like that down in New Brunswick. In the same way you find Alfred Purdy writing about Ontario with a real flavour of that countryside.
RM: As well as emphasizing the rhythm. The point was made this morning earlier that Morley Callaghan prefers to read his own stories rather than turn them over to an actor. Is this a valid comment a general feeling among poets?

DL: Very much so amongst the poets writing today, especially the younger ones. They feel that poetry has gone back to being an oral art. As you know it is read now in Coffee Shops, all across the country. It is mixed in with ballads, singing and then a poet will get up and read a 'set' of his poems. The oral tradition of course is really the first one in poetry and it is this we have come back to. Consequently, a person like myself resents it very much when the CBC says "We would like to put some of your poems on Anthology but we have a woman actress whom we want to read them." No matter how poor one may sound, I think it is far better that the reader hear me than hear an actress. On the other hand we do want the readers to try it out for themselves the way we put it on the page; but we don't want any affectation.

RM: Well if the poem is as it is an extension of yourself then it does seem logical that it will come across much more truly and fairly if you read it yourself.

DL: Yes. Well actually the CBC has done a very good thing in producing a set of records just out (costs $7.50) of modern Canadian poets reading. It is very useful to have, because it gives the poet himself each time.

RM: This puts an additional strain on the poet today then. He has to study some of the technical tricks of presenting material to an audience like microphone technique.

DL: Yes, but also it puts a strain on teachers. For instance I have students doing M.A. work now in Canadian poetry and when they first began reading poems (they were doing papers on different Canadian poets) their reading was really quite appalling. They were afraid to speak out clearly and simply or they mumbled or they rushed through -- they gave no real weight to what was on the page. Now I have found that you can't consciously tell a person to change his way of reading, but by letting students hear poets read on records and on tapes and by insisting that everyone in the class read the poems to the class, they have begun to get more heart into it and I think by May they will be better readers.

RM: I was reading in a recent edition of the Canadian Author and Bookmen, some comments that you had made about your poem -- Lament for your father and you made the comment towards the end of your writing that you were very lucky, you grew up "in a garden." I take it there was more to that than the fact that your father was a gardener.

DL: Yes the garden I was thinking of was that both my parents were writers and there were books everywhere. My mother was a poet, my father was very interested in the novel. He was a newspaper man but his passion was the novel, particularly that of Henry James, Proust, and Virginia Woolf. So that I had all these things, fruits, you might say to pick, whereas most youngsters growing up in Winnipeg at the end of the first world war and then in Toronto in the 20s, wouldn't have had this opportunity. I was soaked in a tradition.
RM: I find "Lament" a very moving poem and certainly it comes from an experience which is a very moving experience. I think perhaps you could read it for us, then tell us, or share with us, some of the things that are most striking about the poem and about the experience, in connection with the passage of time, and so on.

DL: Yes, well, by the way, the dates of this anthology are just haywire. I suppose 1957 means it was published then. My father died in 1944 I think, or was it 43. When did the war end?

RM: in 45.

DL: In 44, he died before the war was over. I was there at the time visiting him in Clarkson with my two children. I just woke up one morning and my mother called me and she said, "Come and see. I think, your father..." Well, it was a year after that that I suddenly seemed to remember the situation and going in to see him in the room and my mother not believing he was dead. I went up to his hand and touched it and realized it was not the same hand -- and yet it didn't seem to be dead. Well, it took all that time then; this was not a poem then written immediately under the emotion, it was emotion remembered if you like "in tranquility."

RM: Thank you. As I say, I find that a particularly moving poem. There is one image that has constantly puzzled me, that is the image of the hand that would not strike a child and yet could ring a bell and send someone to doom. Could you explain that?

DL: Yes. Anyone who knew my father would understand this, but I can see it would be more difficult. My father had all this tenderness and poetic quality in him. He adored children, dogs, and flowers, but he had a terrible stutter and perhaps to overcome that in life he could be very authoritative, demanding and ruthless even. He had quite hot fierce tempers so that though we children did not suffer from this, I think in his office (he was general manager of the Canadian Press) I know that the young men learning the hard way how to write a newspaper reporters often suffered from his moods in this way.

RM: So the authoritarian hand was never shown to you at home?

DL: No, he was absolutely the reverse, too permissive probably. We were spoiled brats, I guess!

RM: An anthologist can be a great influence on poetry eventually, I suppose, by what he picks.

DL: Oh, I think they have fearful power and one could do a whole essay on the things they have done to change a trend. I mean, Smith did a lot of good pioneer work but now he is a man in his 60's and he is not very interested in the younger generation at all. That is why an Anthology like "New Wave Canada", published by Raymond Souster at Contact Press last year, gives poets in their teens and twenties a chance.
RM: Well, does this anthology approach which seems to be so common, does this put a barrier in the way of a young poet trying to be heard?

DL: Yes, definitely. Many young poets who should perhaps have been in an anthology 10 years ago are only now included and then again there is a whole other generation coming up. Certain people have been forgotten or left out who shouldn't have been and others are put in who are just friends of the critics.

RM: Tell me, does it really help to get published if you are from Toronto.

DL: The trend now is to start little presses all over the country: In Vancouver "A Very Stone House" published four books of poems, no, half a dozen last year and they are continuing. They now have a grant from the Canada Council I think to do more books. Mr. Hurtig, a book seller in Edmonton has just started publishing. He has done Eli Mandell's new book of poems "Idiot Joy" and he is going to bring out a book edited by Alfred Purdy called "The New Romans" I believe, which is a series of essays by Canadian writers as to what they think of Americans. Well, right across the country you can duplicate this activity. Here in New Brunswick, Fredericton, a group of poets connected with the University has decided to start publishing books because they can't get them published in Toronto. And they are going to bring out a series of "Chap" books by February, at which time, by the way, there is going to be a Writer's Conference going on at U.N.B. with a poet from Montreal, George Bowering, and Alden Nowlan from Saint John and two novelists coming.

RM: You mentioned the "beat" generation which is the one I suppose I fall into chronologically if at all. How about the hippies who are younger.

DL: I think the hippies follow. They are the continuation of the beat generation. You find Ginsberg now leading the hippies, in a flower parade in New York, or he and the child psychologist - Spock- you know, were arrested together in an anti-Vietnam war demonstration. So that the older "beat" have influence and they are still with the younger hippie group. But of course the hippies are in two groups, aren't they though, there are the activists who write poetry and go to readings and demonstrate and so on, and the others who are withdrawing more into drugs and a very private kind of life. But it is the activist hippies that interest me, I think they remind me very much of the young people in the 30s during the depression, because we were great anti-war fighters and we were for civil rights and equal rights for Negroes and so on. All these things were going on in the 30s and I was a part of them.

RM: I am in favour of taking the music away as a matter of personal taste. Another poem called "Perception" could you read this one for us; it is a very short work and I find it fascinating.

DL: Yes, "Perceptions"

Oddly enough this is about the nephew of Red Lane. The other brother, Patrick Lane, is also a poet (has had a couple of books out already), and his little boy of six or so likes to play on the type-
writer and comes out with the oddest results! But also, his father sent me a series of his child drawings and that is just what started my poem going. He had drawn a page of eyes in various forms of being opened and closed, and I thought to myself -- we never notice these things -- and then he had written in very six year old printing "Shrinking Eyes, watch them shrink". That is what made me write the poem! I think if you go to a display of child arts from all over the world you get an amazing new feeling of seeing the thing clearly for the first time as a child does. I think the poet tries to get back to this, to set everything fresh and new.
Taped Interview with Mrs. Eugenia ("Jim") Watts Lawson, May 9, 1967

CB: One of Dorothy's friends thinks she rebelled against her parents, and this is the source of her early radicalism. Do you agree?

EL: She may have been rebelling against her mother but not against her father. I think her father completely approved of her activities. He wasn't ready to join the Communist Party or anything like that, but he was a born iconoclast. So as far as rebelling against the family as a unit is concerned, no, I don't think so at all. And actually Dee's earlier life was really quite traditional. I remember summers that I would stay out there and sleep in the wood-shed, and we would talk all night. She was being confirmed in the Anglican Church, and I was already an atheist. We had long conversations lasting all night about religion. She was quite traditional then, at how old? Fourteen years? Her main interest wasn't social criticism then. It was purely literary. Only much later she became interested in social problems, and one could hardly help it because we graduated in the 1930's.

Actually, both of us went to a rather small girls' school (Glen Mawr School for Girls -- cb.) We were both completely outside that world of running around with boys which at that time wasn't quite as advanced as it is now. But at fourteen and fifteen neither of us were terribly interested in boys. We were awful "blue stockings."

Like everybody she had a tremendous thing going for someone at the university. He really couldn't see her for the trees. Being a poet... well, maybe it wasn't worse for her than anybody else. Certainly she could verbalize the whole agony of the situation. And so she did.

CB: Did you say that Dorothy Livesay knew Emily Dickinson's poetry when she was fourteen?

EL: Oh, I'm sure, yes. This was the stage we read everything. We went through a tremendous Katherine Mansfield stage. Later one we got on to people like Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, in our university days. But I am sure we read Emily Dickinson at school. I know I liked Elinor Wylie very much, but I can't remember Dee being particularly excited by her. I can't really say why we liked, and I still like Emily Dickinson, and find her fascinating to read. It's just the small, compact, beautiful little structures.

CB: Do you think Emily Dickinson influenced Dorothy?

EL: Of course, everything you read influences you. But it is quite obvious isn't it that in spots Dee is pure Emily Dickinson. Then she doesn't stay within this little mold. Why do you ask? Does Dee think she wasn't influenced by Emily Dickinson? Well I may be wrong. I'm pretty sure we were reading Emily Dickinson long before going to university, because when we got to university we read what were then contemporary writers, just eating up everything. Huxley and Virginia Woolf were at that point bringing out books. We'd passed through the
historical period -- all the ones who were dead. We read them all. Once I had discovered Dee's family I spent all my time there, and read everything they had. Livesay was interested in anybody who read books because he was so interested in books, and he couldn't wait to press books upon you constantly. It was wonderful, it was like having your own private library. And of course he discussed books with you, quite seriously. He would want your opinions. It is really so rare when you are that young that anyone wants to know your opinions, except in a school essay. It was a tremendous thing knowing that family.

Livesay never took up any one friend of Dee's particularly. He was very fond of me because I was the most frequent person there. I spent whole summers there. But he was interested in all of Dee's friends.

CB: Do you think Dorothy ever understood Marxism?

EL: No, I don't suppose so. I don't think she was terribly interested in political theory. I don't think she's got that kind of mind, that kind of interest. She was interested in people. And this is the thing about Africa. She wasn't terribly interested in the politics of Zambia, or what kind of national liberation movement was going on. It was how it affected individuals she knew. I think her interest is always a personal one. It has to be; you can't write poetry and have any other kind of interest.

You couldn't possibly compare Canada in the 1930's with Canada in the 1960's. This continent is untouched by any real kind of political conflict, just like it's untouched by any kind of war. We're innocents. Brecht did political acts. He really involved himself in the Folk Theatre. If you're just writing poetry, you're not involved in this way.

CB: Do you think her later erotic poetry is diminished in effect because of her age?

EL: I don't care if a person writes erotic poetry at a hundred. You don't read poetry thinking how old the writer is, do you? This is not the important thing. After all if you had to look at Dylan Thomas' face while you were reading his poetry, it might take a good deal away from your pleasure because he is so homely. But this is not important.

Postscript:

Mrs. Lawson died one year after this interview, May 23, 1968 and I wish to acknowledge her assistance to me.

I also wish to think her husband, William Lawson, for use of his back copies of New Frontier Magazine (of which he was the editor), and his useful insights into the political character of the Left during the 1930's.
Edited Taped Interview with Seymour Mayne, April 24, 1967.

The best poems in Selected Poems are her lyrical poems, where she deals with herself as a woman and doesn't try to write from the point of view of a man. Her images and rhythms are created from a woman's point of view. They don't have that male drive to conquer a given experience in a certain way. She tries her best to hint at the subtle nuances of her femininity. After her family grew up, she left her sub-urban situation and went to Africa. You have in "Zambia" one or two fine poems. She takes the actual situation of Lenchina, the Prophetess, and makes it more than the situation itself. She becomes the "woman prophetess" of our history. A kind of Cassandra. How a woman can take part in life, which is one of Dorothy's themes. How does a woman not just resign herself to washing dishes but actually become a member of society, not equal to the male in that she does everything he does. But she does things on her own terms, and in that sense is equal. This concern is in The Unquiet Bed.

Being away from Vancouver a long time, and coming back to discover poets like Ginsberg and the Black Mountain influence here led her to discover poetry could work in a much freer way. She listened to the Americans up here. She learned what she really needed; she didn't completely go over.

Personally I have a lot of admiration for Dorothy. The fact that she could take on a number of careers all through her life, and keep writing and changing her style. Most writers in her generation couldn't do it. Dorothy, maybe because she is a woman, has a more supple view of life. She did not allow any one way of seeing or feeling be the only way. She has changed; her life has changed. She has grown up in different parts of Canada. Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver (since the interview also the Maritimes and Edmonton—cb) -- and Paris and Zambia. Her different experiences as student, social worker, teacher, UNESCO worker, wife and mother -- this all does ultimately make a difference because a poet has an open awareness, and experiences do shape and change him. If a poet doesn't change, then his poetry will reflect that he hasn't grown. Dorothy has grown. Her new book shows it. She doesn't have to work in traditional metres; it can also work in natural speech rhythms. She could break her poems off in different ways. She can work with junctures, rhythms, ceasuras and speak more in her poems, not bound by traditional dictates. For example, the title poem, "The Unquiet Bed", is like her other poetry in a way, but even though there is rhyme there you don't find the necessity to invert language for the sake of rhyme -- invert a sentence, use archaic expressions. Ultimately she always wrote songs.

She works with sounds always, inter-locking sounds because she wants to give you the sense that in experience and in our minds, things do link themselves up. There are correspondences which work in our minds. Poetry tries to line as many correspondences as possible and make some order out of it. Sound is one of the most effective ways
possible. More effective than intellect, ideas and wit. Sound is the
most radical form of poetry really. Language springs out of sound and
not out of meaning....

"Without Benefit of Tape" is slightly romantic. The good old
rural Canadian backwoods. Of course poetry is being written there.
Poetry exists anywhere there are human beings. That poem could only
be written in the northern geography of Canada or B.C., possibly
Alberta, where the frontiers of society are very obvious....

The most astonishing thing in this book is that at her age she
could write such tender and moving and quite realistic poems of love.
She writes better love poems than people half her age. She has not
lost touch with that aspect of life. If a poet approaching old age can
write love poems, that poet is someone who is honestly a great poet.
I don't think Dorothy is a great poet, but I think she is one of the
best poets of her generation. She has been unduly neglected due to the
fact that her Selected Poems were published ten years ago. She is not
known to the younger generation. It's a pity that her book is not going
to be in paperback so younger people can read it. Also she is writing
her poetry from the position of a woman which a lot of young people want
to read; they don't want the old fashioned poetry where a woman tries
to write poetry the way a man does. A lot of women poets in Canada have
not broken out of that.

Margaret Avison is good, but she is heavily over-loaded with
allusions. It is very oblique intellectual poetry which only a small
elite want to read. Now anyone can open up Dorothy's poems, read them
for the surface value, for the immediate human experience, and also
look into them and see much more in them. Each poem is like a microcosm
of a whole structure of values and experience. It reveals from immediate
experience not from an intellectual position, an allusion or metaphysical
conceit. This is more genuine today, more real, because poetry has
come out of the small public of university classes of profs and students.
A lot of young people want to know about genuine experiences, want to
hear someone else's record, so they can lead their own lives. Dorothy's
poems, even though written from the perspective of an older person,
are very close to what younger people want to hear and know....

She's been through a hell of lot of things. She grew up in
the East but didn't get bogged down in that Eastern position. There
is something in the East that makes people define themselves in a very
closed way rather than in an open way. They say, "this is me" and then
proceed to inflate their egos. I think West Coast people don't have
to affirm their egos in their writing as much as they do in the East.
There might be historical reasons. Society is older and Easterners feel
they have to declare themselves much stronger against society than they
have to around here. By being yourself you are respected as such. Dee
doesn't have a closed type of mind and closed type of personality I
think is characteristic of Eastern Anglo-Saxons in Canada....

Being a woman and married was not an easy matter in some
ways. But it left her with more room to move in. She didn't get
involved in the full time business of a profession. With a man it becomes
an extension of his desire to be virile to define himself in society.
A woman is not the same way. She had no professional ambitions. Her involvement with politics put her in closer contact with people than one can imagine, with more people than someone at a university would meet. People teaching at the university would meet the people in an elite. Her social work was another way of meeting people who were not just in the closed literary academic world. She lived on the west coast closer to the frontier society than in the East. She didn't fall into the literary academic trap and when she got invited to join it, she was too old to fall into the trap.
APPENDIX F

Edited Taped Interview with Alan Crawley, May 9, 1967

CB: What is your background as a critic?

AC: I went from matriculation in Manitoba to law school. At that time we didn't have to go to university first and take a B.A. So that I haven't had any training except from a private boy's school from which I went right into law school when I was 17. So that I have never claimed that I could tell a person anything on the writing of poetry; I have never pretended to be a critic in a professional state at all. I've just simply said what I liked about poetry, the poems that I liked. If people asked me anything about it (over some years there were quite a number) I just tried to help them to make the poems more acceptable, to stick to what they actually want to say. I've not any qualifications for telling people how to write poetry as in a creative class. I've never been a professor or a teacher or anything of that kind.

CB: How did you know Dorothy Livesay?

AC: I knew both her and Duncan and saw a great deal of them because I was living in Caulfeild (West Vancouver) then, and they were over in North Vancouver and we used to see a great deal of each other. During the war, Dee didn't write very much, she was revising a great deal. She had been very interested of course in the labour movement and she was very interested in the political movements. She was always, what in those days was considered very Left. She was interested in social service work, and very much interested in people.

CB: Margaret Avison says in one of her criticisms of that period that her social concern, manifested in a poem like "Day and Night", tends to become rhetorical and dogmatic, and hence weakens the art of her poetry.

AC: I remember the article but I haven't seen it for a long time. I think Dorothy was better in her writing when she got away from any political slant at all. I liked "Day and Night," very well, which was I think one of the first poems of hers that I saw. She had been working on it for a long time and apart from that, the only one she expresses very strong political feeling was "Lorca", which is one that I am very fond of and which I heard through the whole making. I discussed it with her very much. She was tremendously interested of course in the war in Spain.

CB: Now you talked about "Lorca". I think it is recognized as one of her better poems. Why?

AC: Yes. She was very much affected by Lorca's death. She probably read her poem to me line by line over a number of times and I was very much affected by it. In the fall of 1946, when I went across Canada for three months speaking and bringing Canadian poetry to Canadian clubs, I
always said Lorca. It was nearly always received with a great deal of interest and made quite an impression every time I said it anywhere. It was one of my favorite poems. Just before you came I was thinking back over the poems of hers that I remembered not word for word, but have made a very lasting impression with me. "Day and Night," which was the first one of her's that I remembered, then "Lorca" and "Bartok and the Geranium," and I have been very much impressed with some of the poems in her new book, which I have seen in manuscript and which I have read a number of times lately since the book has come out.

CB: If someone was to ask you why this poem, "Lorca," is a good poem, what would you say about it that moves people?

AC: I was moved because I had heard what was happening in Spain, I had read much about Spain and was very much interested in it. I was very sympathetic to the people who were going there to fight for what freedom there should be. And then I was very much interested in the talks with Dorothy about it, her reactions to it and I think she has expressed her feelings and the feelings of a great number of people who went through that period. Beyond that it is a beautifully written poem, in which, to me, there was no tendency to overdoing anything. To me it simply says what she felt. While there is a political underlining in it, I don't think she stressed that too much at all. It's a real poetic outburst.

CB: So it would say something to my generation as well as to those who experienced Spain then.

AC: It should. It should say something. Yes. It's one of the poems that will stand up as long as the writing of that era does, and will probably go further.

CB: Do you think that is true of "Day and Night" as well?

AC: "Lorca" more than "Day and Night," because it seems to me what happened in Spain, can still happen again. "Day and Night" is dated because the labour situation has lessened.

CB: So you think there is a combination of the personal and the social...

AC: ... in "Lorca," very much. She was influenced by the fact that he was a poet and the terrible thing of his manuscript being burnt and his books being burnt. That this could happen in a civilized nation at the time it did. She was also influenced, as I was, by Spender's and Auden's comments on the war.

CB: What do you think of the quality of her purely personal poetry of that time. Poems such as "Abracadabra," "Nativity," etc. What do they have enduring about them? Do they have anything to say to people today?

AC: They could have to anyone who has any feeling for poetry. There is in them a natural feeling, expressed very differently probably from how they would be expressed now. I think that, let us say a poem such as "The Unquiet Bed" or "Postscript" would not have been as much of the time when she wrote the poems you mentioned as they are now. But I think some of those very personal poems will have a lasting effect even to your generation, although they are written in a different form.
CB: Seymour Mayne says that the traditional forms used by Dee in the 30's-40's period with standard rhymes and rhythms were restricting, as they didn't allow for the full development of her art? Do you think that is a valid criticism?

AC: To a great extent. It seems to me it is restricting to any poet who continues writing over a period as long as she has been writing. It's perfectly natural for her to write as she is doing now, because she is very conscious of what is going on about her, and she reacts to the conditions in which she is living. This goes for her whole life period. If you read the forms in her first book, "Green Pitcher," she was young, very much influenced by the American women poets. I don't think I could read them today except as an example of the poetry that was being written at that time. It hasn't an enduring quality, no, anymore than Rupert Brooke's poems have a lasting quality that will go beyond the end of this century. I know I was very taken with them at the time when they appeared.

CB: What is it then that elevates a poem into great art. Why is "Lorca" more enduring than poems from Green Pitcher?

AC: "Lorca" expresses a feeling that is very natural and is very human. The conditions which prompted the writing of that poem could happen at the present time. And with increased communications, more people are concerned with what goes on in another country, just as we all know now what is going on in Vietnam. The form "Lorca" was written in is strong enough to stand up against competition from the form which is being written now.

"Bartok" will also last. It is a short poem. She has put an awful lot into it. Probably "Day and Night" and "Prelude to Spring" will not last as long as "Bartok" will.

CB: Was it the change in social climate or personal factors which led to her decline as a creative writer during the 1950's.

AC: I think she was very unsettled in the 1950's in her personal life. She was occupied more with her own personal problems and certainly not writing as much. There weren't as many people trying to write or wanting to write or being helped to write poetry, as there have been in the 1960's. We started Contemporary Verse to give writers a place to publish. There weren't any other publications here on the West Coast then. Added to that, there wasn't a reception of poetry in the 1950's that there is at the present day. I know very little about the young people, to tell you the truth. I don't see very many people, don't know many of the young writers personally as I did all over Canada. But I know that there is more poetry being printed and sold and I presume therefore, read. From say 1938 through the 1940's people had to be induced to read poetry. The older people who did read then, are still reading plus the young people who have the opportunity to go to university to read contemporary writing and are writing themselves. Certainly twenty years ago there were no creative writing classes that I knew of. And then if you go back further than that into the 1930's, a man who was not a university professor or a school teacher reading poetry was almost not to be found in Canada.
CB: What do you think is the predicament of women poets in Canada? Do you think they face any special hardships?

AC: Dorothy tended to feel that there was that. That she wasn't actually being given as much hearing, as much chance for hearing, as were the men who were writing at that time. I think it was a carry over from her earlier days when there probably was a feeling against women writers. I am not competent to say whether there was or not. I think that she felt she was being neglected and had been neglected in Canada. Whereas I don't believe she really was. I don't think she was neglected any more than men writers were. In the 1930's Pratt was the big man in Toronto; people read his narrative poems. I came from Winnipeg to Victoria in 1934, and I've lived in British Columbia since then. There was nobody I know in Manitoba who was publishing poetry at all. I don't think there was anybody who was living in the western provinces who was doing anything that was worth anything much at all, except Audrey Alexandra Brown who made a name for herself by writing some poetry about British Columbia which was distinctly Vancouver Island poetry. It got her a great deal of praise. When I came out to Victoria, there was a branch of the Canadian Author's Association and there were a few people writing in 1934-35. I had been reading nothing but Georgian British poetry, and some French, but practically nothing Canadian. I knew nothing about Canadian poets. I was in correspondence and knew several English writers of that time in 1934-35. I spoke to several groups in Victoria about poetry, to the Normal School. I gave three lectures to the library, and I spoke twice for a group of Dorothy Steves and to the Woman's Canadian Club and to the Vancouver Women's Clubs; and I know I said nothing but poetry that had been published in England. At that time I didn't mention any Canadian poetry at all. I found Florence McLaren who has published only one book of poetry but who has scattered poetry in magazines, and Anne Marriot who later published "The Wind Our Enemy." And when I moved my family in 1935, somebody knew Dorothy and asked her to look me up which she did.

Now she was the first woman poet who was known at all in the west, at that time. She persuaded me that Canada needed something more than to be just in the background. She read a lot to me, Knister, and some of the writers she had known in Toronto. Her husband, Duncan, was a very great admirer of Pratt and he read some of his poetry to me. And then I began reading some of it myself. From then on it was only Canadian poetry that I said. That's my background in Canadian poetry.

But Dorothy I think was the only woman who was writing from the 1930's into the early 1940's. Then as you know there was the group formed in Montreal, Preview, and in that was P.K. Page, the most outstanding woman of that group. Then we published Contemporary Verse in 1942. There was a great interest in poetry during the war. It died down; there wasn't the same production in the early '50's.

Of the women in the 1940's and 1950's who were writing, I think Dorothy is the only one still writing. She has been writing the longest.

CB: Do you think there is something unique in women's contribution to Canadian poetry.
AC: There is a difference. There was a time when I thought I could tell the difference between a poem by a woman from man's. Of the men writing, there are a great number of Earle Birney's poems that I liked very much. Others I didn't care for, naturally, as there is in anybody's writing. I liked Abe Klein and read a lot of his. And Art Smith, who writing hasn't changed much since I first met him in the early forties; it gives me a great deal of intellectual pleasure. I knew Louis Dudek. I had some of his earliest poems that he wrote which he sent me from New York, that would be in the early '40's. I felt there was a great talent there; I'll not say that I think he's made the most of it. Reaney I liked for his peculiar impish way of putting things. Coming to the younger ones, there are a number of poems by Leonard Cohen that I have liked and quite a number of Irving Layton's, both of whom whose work as a whole I like better than any other men writing at the present moment. But as I said, I haven't read very much of the ones of say the last ten or fifteen years.

CB: Do you think there is something in all the Canadian poetry that you've read, a recognizable national psychology, consciousness.

AC: I am not sure that I can quite answer that. I don't think Art Smith's poetry is distinctively Canadian, nor Louis MacKay's. Klein, I think, is pretty all-embracing. I really couldn't answer that. I would find it very difficult to tell the difference between poems written in Canada and the United States from one another.

CB: Dorothy says that Walt Whitman was a great influence on her. But there is no question that Walt Whitman is an American. Is there a question about Dorothy being a Canadian do you think?

AC: I think Dorothy is as much Canadian as Marianne Moore is an American, although it is not distinguishable in all their writings. On the whole, if you take all of Dorothy's writing, there is a Canadian influence in it. I think there is something in the geographical pattern of Canada, that is different, that affects all of Canadian life. Because all of them have written about the country, the physical structure of Canada, the vegetation and things of that kind. Take a poem like Dorothy's "Roots", that could only have been written in Canada.

CB: Do you think this is true about her rhythm too?

AC: Now I can't compare her latest poems with any of the American ones. I used to read a great deal of Cummings and some of the people who were writing in his time; I read a lot of Frost for some time. But I don't know of any other American poet at the present time who I would be competent to compare with any Canadian writer. Dorothy has very strong confidence in herself and in her own writing and her reactions. She is very sensitive to what is going on around her, and, I don't think she would mind me saying this, she is very anxious to be of the time, of the present. She wants to do what is being done and in the form that it's being done.
CB: Do you think she is an innovator herself?

AC: In her early life, she had determined what she was going to do at any cost, and she has been very ruthless to herself and to others to achieve what she set out to do. This is necessary for anyone who is going to be a writer of prose or poetry or make a career on the stage -- particularly for a woman. They have to have that very strong purpose ahead of them.

Dee determined she was going to be a writer and have her work published. A very good friend of mine, who writes poetry has declared to me against all my argument that when she has written a poem she is satisfied and she doesn't care if it's ever published. Dorothy is not at all like that; Dorothy's ambition is not a fault. She wants to contribute something of her own to other people. The only way she can do this is by getting her poetry published and have people know it. I admire her for that. It is a struggle, not as much a struggle as it was for men or for women twenty or thirty years ago. It is much more easy to be heard, but it is a struggle.

CB: Do you know her new poems?

AC: The African ones she sent me when she was in Africa. We carried on a fairly strong correspondence, mostly on her side, I must say, because she has her typewriter generally near her. For me it means to have a place for myself and haul out the damn pesky thing which I manage very poorly, and I don't write as many letters as I should. But both my wife and I are delighted to have Dorothy's letters and she writes to us as she would to her own family. So she sent me her poems in various stages of writing. When I read The Unquiet Bed, first Part I, I got enormous pleasure from them, from the individual poems as well as the way in which they are assembled.

CB: Let's look at them specifically. The first one, "Without Benefit of Tape", I have heard described as a rather romantic poem.

AC: It's more romantic than she generally writes, yes. It is a good poem, yes. Dorothy has a very quick ability to make whatever form she wants to write at the moment fairly successfully. She has a tendency sometimes to write too much and leave too little to the reader. The poems in this book she has cut down to what I consider to just about the right length.

CB: What about a poem like a "Ballad of Me?"

AC: Yes, the only thing I would say about that is that I would have been very pleased to have published that poem. It gives something of her personality.

CB: And "Roots".

AC: Well, I like "Roots" and that type of poem. It certainly would make anyone who was reading her book see a side of her that isn't so apparent in her other poems; it is something that would be understood by almost anyone.
CB: Mayne criticizes the poem for being weighed down with detail, slowing the lyrical form. Do you agree?

AC: It reads very well. I don't usually like poems that are too detailed. And where she has used details and names of things and objects in other poems, I think she has used them very well. "Roots" could have been written better in prose probably, but I don't see why it should be. A writer who has had as much experience as Dorothy, has done as much writing, and is as honest as she is in her work, would write what she wrote if she thought that was the way it should be said, and I don't think you can always criticize properly by saying, oh this is the wrong form for it. If you are going to read a person's work, you must give them some feeling that they know what they are doing.

CB: And "Postscript"?

AC: Yes I like that very much because I... well it probably depends on what your own feelings are about life. She hasn't used too many words; she has said just what was necessary. It is about a question many of us ask. She has put it very well. Her answer is satisfactory. She is not being dogmatic about anything there really.

CB: Do you think she is serious when she says she has been "counted out" by her verse?

AC: She had the feeling that she has been. There is sad irony in that line. I don't think Dorothy will ever be satisfied. I am being very personal about that. There is always something she's striving for that she'll never find. It underlies a lot of her writing. It's not that she's changeable, but she goes into things very deeply, and she is much influenced by other people, people she associates with. She doesn't accept anything very easily and yet she has, as I said before, a very strong determination.

CB: Do you think that "The Unquiet Bed" is an appropriate image for her book.

AC: Yes I do. There are very few joyful or what you would call very happy poems in her writing-satisfied poetry.

CB: What do you think of the second section generally of the book?

AC: That group is the weakest of them all. It might be written by almost anyone with a certain amount of talent or ability. I wasn't struck by the originality of the imagery. I thought the poem "The Rat" was very good.

CB: What do you think of Section III, the title poem?

AC: When she first read it to me, I don't know whether I was not in the mood for it or whether I was tired of the reading or what, but it didn't make a very deep impression on me. I found that afterwards when I went to bed and lying down thinking about it, and having heard it four or five times since, that it's one of the best poems of the book.
She has said something that is distinct and very much expressive of her feeling and her attitude. It is a very truthful poem. Its structure is very clever. Her last line is a perfect last line. All kinds of hurdles and things that she's come through and how she feels...it's a very fine poem. I like that and "Postscript" probably the best in the book.

CB: What do you think of her erotic poetry in Part III?

AC: /pause/ They are unusual in her writing. To people in my generation they are distasteful. Not necessarily to me, but to some of the people I know and who know Dorothy have found them distasteful. But they would find any erotic poetry distasteful. I can't give an actual fair criticism of them because our acquaintance with Dorothy has been very intimate and we are probably as close to her as any person is. My wife and I feel there is probably more in them than is right. But then I know that there is a change in the character of poetry at the present time.

In 1951 I was in Toronto and was having dinner with Dr. Pratt and Anne Wilkinson and another woman who was not a writer. We were talking about poetry. Pratt I had known over a long time but it wasn't until nearly the very last issue of Contemporary Verse that he sent me a poem because he didn't feel he should be among those writers. Toward the last he sent me one poem which wasn't very characteristic. But in his talk he said "You know I couldn't write in the style and form and expression of a lot of the poems you publish." He said that's because he was in another generation. I published then thinking there was nothing anybody could complain about. But you would be very surprised if you saw some of the letters I received... Just the same as I am now reading from the tape One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich. That couldn't have been published in 1940 or 1930. Our outlook, the things we read in the newspapers and see on the stage have completely changed. And those poems shouldn't offend anybody in this age. But they do, and I think that Dorothy knew what she was doing when she wrote them. She wanted to write them and that's all. I think they should be in her book. My reaction to them is that's the way she feels... I am an old man now. Probably if I were twenty or thirty, I wouldn't mind them at all. I think it's quite right for her to write that way if that's the way she wants to.

CB: You're a very generous critic, Mr. Crawley.

AC: Don't you have to be in the world we're living in now. She hasn't written anything pornographic or anything in those poems which should not be said if the writer wants to say them. Nobody is compelling anybody to read them. I don't believe in any cencorship of any kind at all. And if I were editing a magazine or if I was one of Ryerson's readers, I certainly would say these poems should be published. I don't know if I would have said it twenty or thirty years ago. But I certainly would today.
CB: Where do you think Dorothy will go now?

AC: Dorothy can go anywhere she likes. She has a great deal of ability and if she doesn't get too caught up in trying to be different, if she sticks to and really believes in the form that she is now writing I think she can go in any direction. She has technique and she knows what a good poem is. She's not jealous of other people and more than anything else, she wants to get poetry written in Canada.