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Canada

Women in Communist Culture in Canada: 1932 to 1937

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Abstract

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many artists, writers, and dramatists joined the Communist Party of Canada and its cultural wing, the Progressive Arts Club. They produced plays, and contributed articles, poems and stories to socialist magazines, such as *Masses* and *New Frontier*. As the depression deepened and radical politics became less sectarian, women played a more prominent role in the cultural realm of radical politics. Their increased participation changed the way women were represented in art and literature; women's roles became less stereotypical, and women artists and writers combined both socialist and feminist concerns in their work. The journal *New Frontier*, founded by Jean "Jim" Watts and edited by two women and two men, provides numerous examples of socialist-feminist writing. Dorothy Livesay, one of the editors and a member of the Communist Party from 1932 to 1937, deserves special attention for her contribution to Canadian literature of social protest.

Resumé

Pendant la crise économique des année 30, plusieurs artistes, écrivains et auteurs d'ouevres dramatiques se sont joints au parti communiste du Canada et à son groupe culturel, le "Progressive Arts Club". Ensemble, ils ont produit des pièces de théâtre et ont contribué à la rédaction d'articles, de poèmes et d'histoires pour des revues à caractère socialiste, par exemple: le *Masses* et la *New Frontier*. Pendant que la crise s'intensifiait, les membres du Front Populaire sont devenus plus tolérants les uns envers les autres et les femmes ont joué un rôle beaucoup plus considérable, sur le plan culturel, au sein de ce groupe. Leur participation plus active a influencé la représentation de la femme dans les milieux littéraires et artistiques. Les rôle féminins sonts devenus, peu à peu, moins stéréotypes et les femmes artistes et écrivaines ont exprimé, à travers leurs oeuvres, leurs préoccupations féministes et socialistes. La revue *New Frontier*, fondée par Jean "Jim" Watts et éditée par deux femmes et deux hommes, nous donne accès à de nombreux exemples d'écrits féministes à caractère socialiste. Dorothy Livesay, qui était une des éditrices et membres du parti communiste de 1932 à 1937, mérite une attention particulière pour sa contribution dans la littérature canadienne au regard des protestations sociales.

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Introduction

Artists and writers help shape as well as reflect society. For the historian, the cultural community thus serves as an important indicator of both sweeping and specific social and political movements and events in a country. In the early 1930s in Canada, when the Depression affected lifestyles profoundly, the writers and artists who cared to examine the plight of the unemployed and unfortunate not only portrayed their subjects sympathetically, but also levelled criticism directly against the capitalist system, which they viewed as a corrupt, evil structure run by wealthy, heartless businessmen and politicians. The more politically-minded artists and writers urged others to use culture "as a weapon".[1] In this, they were inspired by the agitational propaganda being produced in the Soviet Union, and hoped to translate this inspiration into a revolution by the workers over the capitalists. The image of the Soviet Union was powerful and encouraging, and these cultural producers adopted the language and the goals of the Communist International.

From 1928 to 1935, these goals included a policy of "class against class". According to Joseph Stalin, leader of the Communist Party of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, the worst enemies of the communists were the socialists. Labelling them "social fascists", Stalin began a campaign to root out these traitors to communism. For Canadian radicals, the strategy divided an already schismatic and factionalized left-wing. Cultural producers joined in the debate, and for Communist artists and writers, the purpose of their work was explicit: their art was to serve as propaganda against the perfidious socialists and social democrats as well as the capitalists.

By 1935, the rise of fascism and the anti-communist tactics of Hitler and Mussolini in Europe brought about a shift in the Party line. At the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in July and August, the communists urged an alliance of anti-fascist groups into a "People's Front" or "Popular Front". As a result, in Canada, as in the United States of America and Britain, the cultural left flourished. Those who sympathised with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation as well as Communist Party of Canada members contributed to left-leaning literary journals. Under this less sectarian policy, the fight against oppression, rather than workers' revolution, became the dominant theme. This

focus encouraged more women to offer their talents in the cultural realm, and inevitably, their increase in numbers and production changed the way in which women were portrayed. The artists and writers, feeling their way through new methods of socialist realism and agitational propaganda, took some time to develop, or rediscover, their own personality within an ideology committed to subverting personal satisfaction to community glory. Thus, the cooperative Popular Front coincided with the ripening of artistic social protest. The representation of women reflects this evolution.

Women were no longer relegated to the periphery in workers' theatre, socialist realist art, and proletarian literature. More women were featured as protagonists, placed in roles of authority and examined as complex subjects. Women essayists addressed the injustice of patriarchal rule and the fear of violence against women under intolerant fascist regimes. The worker, earlier portrayed as either an anonymous representative of all workers or a particularly rebellious one, (though in both examples still clearly urban, male, and "blue-collar") evolved into a more varied and complex character. Moreover, female social workers, male teachers, "coloured girls" and "Indians" were treated as serious subjects in both literature and art. In the 1930s, the cultural left explored issues of segregation, marginalization, and ghettoization. Women artists and writers were undoubtedly conscious of the positive effect on the image of women in society if their female subjects were portrayed as active and competent, particularly when combined with their more "natural" role as caring and nurturing members of their community. This thesis argues that the increased role of women in the cultural left during the Popular Front reflected important and ameliorative changes in the representation of women in art and literature. It further argues that when women took an active role in the management of cultural productions, the focus on women's issues increased dramatically, and writers paid attention to women's particular oppression in male-dominated society. The encouragement given to young women artists and writers during this period resulted in a legacy of socially-conscious works that depicted the suffering of the age in a sensitive and moving manner.

Chapter One acknowledges and examines the main sources contributing to the study of women, culture, and the radical political communities of Canada during the Depression. The next chapter of this thesis places this community of radicals within the

context of the Depression, from the political atmosphere surrounding R.B. Bennett's Conservative government and his left-wing opponents to the international influences of the Communist International. This aids in bringing the art and literature out of a vacuum, as cultural archives, particularly those charged with political commentary, need to be contextualized. The chapter also examines the societal effects of modernity on the Canadian people, and the rise of symbolic imagery to explain practical problems. The third chapter explores the relationship between radical culture, the working class and identity, as well as an evaluation of the first-phase of the proletarian literature experiment. Chapter Four focuses on *New Frontier*, an important journal for examining the effect of increased participation by women artists in radical culture. Chapter Five narrows in on Dorothy Livesay, whose activities in radical politics and culture went beyond mere flirtation. The thesis concludes with a summary of the important events compelling intellectuals and artists to comment on society, and how their attitudes toward women reflected the reality of the era and their vision of an improved society.

Chapter One - Sources and Methodology

Canadian historical methods have expanded dramatically in the past twenty-five years. This expansion reflects not only an increasingly interdisciplinary approach to the study of the past, but also a recognition that a limited focus leads to hasty generalizations. For instance, when labour historians first identified a mass of the population whose history had been ignored, they nonetheless neglected large segments of the working population in their early works. Similarly, nascent feminist history in Canada tended to concentrate on a small number of elite women in social reform movements, what Gerda Lerner referred to as "woman worthies."[1] Feminist labour historians who took their cue from Susan Mann Trofimenkoff to uncover the "muffled voices" of working women still drew most of their examples from central Canadian industrial centres.[2] More recently, both labour and women's historians have expanded their focus in order to explore diversity, rather than imposing monolithic interpretations of "class" or "gender" history. The expansion brought a renewed focus on the periphery, and raised more questions about the genesis of centre and marginality in history.

Deconstruction of language is one of the more compelling tools for exploring the unequal distribution of power in gender or class or ethnicity. By determining the construction and connotation of language, by studying the discourse, historians produce evidence that language was constructed to justify systems of inequality. The method did not differ greatly from standard literary criticism, a close reading of a literary work to root out the nuances of ideology within language.[3] What differed was the way in which historians understood documents. Primary sources were not unquestioning proof of the "facts" of history, but "texts", created by fallible humans and open to a variety of interpretations. Deconstruction exposes the power relationship inherent in language, and supports the existence of constructed inequality, as opposed to natural hierarchy.

Feminism, Marxism and literary criticism thus shape research on the artistic representation and role of women in the radical left. The first two are more than methods of inquiry. They are ideologies, defined by Ruth Roach Pierson and Alison Prentice as,

> sets of ideas and values which call into question and seek to change a prevailing social system as well as those which work to preserve an existing order.[4]

Because their adherents seek change in political, social and economic systems, all three methods of inquiry have inspired movements as well. Feminists, Marxists, and even literary critics recognize and fight against inequality, whether it is based on sex, class, or image and language, and all have contributed to fundamental shifts in societal perceptions.

While recognizing the debilitating effects of oppression in society, the source of oppression has been an issue of contention for theorists. While Marxists see economic inequity as the fundamental reason for subordination, manifested in a class system, feminists insist that the patriarchal society is most responsible for an imbalance of power. For radical feminists, inequality based on gender is still the central problem. Other feminists, however, acknowledged a combination of power relationships; the result has been a myriad of hybrids, a "hyphenation" of ideologies.[5] Thus, "Marxist-feminists" or "materialist feminists" or "socialist feminists" seek to undermine "capitalist-patriarchy".[6] "Feminist-deconstructionists" or "feminist poststructuralists" try to disprove the existence of "essentialist" differences by pointing to the gendered construction of language, and its effect on women's devalued role.[7] Less convincingly, "Marxist-poststructuralists" have attempted to revise both labour and radical political history by questioning the assumption of structuralism in Marxism.[8] In addition to these and other combinations, an increase in the number of interdisciplinary studies has brought the methods and practices of anthropologists, ethnologists, sociologists, and literary critics to history.[9]

These recent trends in historiographical methods have not been without their critics. "Traditional" historians, perhaps predictably, have dismissed these "trends" as a "flight from fact".[10] Attacks have also come from Marxist and feminist historians, some of whom perceive a dilution of their movement/ideology.[11] At its best, the fracturing of disciplinary boundaries has contributed to greater self-awareness, theoretical sophistication and an expansion of acceptable historical sources. At its worst, the

undermining of history's traditional claim to objectivity and truth has left a crisis of self-confidence amongst some historians.[12]

Ironically, some social historians, those who offered the most successful challenge to "orthodox" history, have demonstrated vehement antagonism to the post-modern approach.[13] The irony in their response is two-fold: for one, the iconoclastic interpretations offered by adherents to "the linguistic turn" have caused fundamental shifts in our perception of history, much as the Marxists and feminists of the "new history" accomplished through their conceptual frameworks. Secondly, the interdisciplinary approach is heavily indebted to the work of social historians, specifically the provocative goal of analyzing historical subjects "in their totality".[14] Poststructuralist historians have thus built on, rather than destroyed, the cornerstones of feminist and Marxist ideology, such as the construction of inequality, (through language as well as patriarchy or capitalism); the active agency of participants in history, (in particular the resistance to oppression); and finally, the multiplicity and fluidity of experience, (for instance, the constant dynamism of power, which shifts according to the interpretation and meaning of language).

The artists and writers of the left during the 1930s are important to this debate because they are antecedents to the "centre/marginality" debate presently dominating historiography. They, too, were iconoclasts, rejecting contemporary modernist experiments in objectivity, such as abstraction and imagism, and scorning the more prevalent sentimental romanticism which suffocated the Canadian cultural scene during this era. Consciously, deliberately, they placed the underprivileged worker in the role of the protagonist, a pre-postcolonial subversion of the dominant discourse. They tried to tell the realistic story of society during the Depression through their perception of the experience and voice of "the worker".[15] As historians of women, workers, ethnicity, and race are quick to point out, however, the key questions to pose here are: whose perception, whose experience and whose voice?

Previous studies of radical politics, women, and even culture, have paid little attention to the "peripheral" activities of the writers and artists of the cultural left. Many books on radical political history exist in Canada, both popular and scholarly, but they

have tended to focus on either the party leaders and their relation to the labour force or on political parties and institutions. Publications in women's history in Canada have grown dramatically since 1980, yet most books deal with women in work (professional and wage-earning), in family and ethnic groupings, and in quasi- and non-governmental organizations, rather than women in radical politics or cultural activities.[16] Studies in Canadian culture, specifically the deliberately performative art, have most often appeared as biography, autobiography, or interview. Only recently have scholars considered literature, visual arts, and drama in one work.[17] Taken together, these sources provide much insight into the **role** women played in the community of radical culture in Canada during the Depression. On the other hand, the **representation** of women in radical cultural expression has been left unexplored.

The study of radicalism, women and cultural history all grew out of the "new" or "social" history movement of the 1960s. Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson inspired one radical set of labour historians to apply Marxist methodology to their research in politics, economics and society.[18] With the rise of this "New Left" in universities came an interest amongst historians and political scientists to discover the roots of socialist thought in Canada. In 1968, William Rodney published Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada.[19] To his own question, "Why...write about such a small, obscure party?" Rodney wrote,

> the CPC is undeniably an integral part of Canada's recent history, and no study of the 1920s and 1930s is complete without taking into consideration the persistent political nagging of the extreme left.[20]

While Rodney restricted his account of the first ten years of the CPC to political activity, he acknowledged the participants' preference for discussing trade union matters and labour policy instead of theoretical debate. He suggested the reason for this was because most of the party members,

> were practical men who drew primarily upon their experiences in the labour movement [and thus] Marxist theory and its Leninist interpretations were sophisticated abstractions that were distinctly secondary in the spectrum of their thoughts.[21]

Other researchers were less condescending, but four books published at approximately the same time also stressed the association of labour militancy with political radicalism: The Trade Union Movement in Canada, 1827-1959 by ex-Communist member Charles Lipton appeared in 1967, while Gad Horowitz' Canadian Labour in Politics, Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-1965 by Stewart Jamieson, and Martin Robin's Radical Politics and Canadian Labour were all produced in 1968.[22] In all four accounts, radical politics in general, and Communism in particular, were secondary to the study of labour. Radical politics was narrowly defined, almost indistinguishable from the context of union leadership. In 1973, Irving Abella further emphasized this close association in Nationalism, Communism and the CIO.[23] In this book, too, Communists existed as a negative force against national union strength.

This first foray into radical political history and labour created the distinct impression that workers' militancy involved a male, immigrant workforce working in primary industries in either British Columbia or Ontario.[24] With the exception of trailblazing union leaders such as Madeleine Parent or CCF/labour leaders such as Eileen Tallman and Myrtle Armstrong, these accounts ignored women.[25] The close association between organized labour and politics, moreover, did little to foster the examination of many other groups involved in the "totality of the working experience."[26]

During this period of renewed interest in the radical left, the Communist Party of Canada produced their own history, The Road to Socialism in Canada.[27] As well, Progress Books, the Communist Party Press, published autobiographies by Party members Tom McEwen and A.E. Smith;[28] biographies of Tim Buck and Annie Buller;[29] and political tracts on capitalism and socialism.[30] The proletarian background of the Party members was stressed in both the autobiographies and biographies, while the historical and political writings offered Marxist-Stalinist interpretations of Canadian history. Greg Kealey's appraisal of the publications by Progress is astute and succinct: "party writing on Canadian workers led only to the CPC, and party writing on the CPC itself never rose above hagiography."[31]

The most exhaustive scholarly monograph on the Communist Party appeared in 1975. Still valuable for its comprehensive, if somewhat critical account, Ivan

Avakumovic's The Communist Party in Canada is heavily weighted toward the leaders of the CPC and the party's relationship to the Soviet Union, though he accords some attention to women and intellectuals.[32] He accounts for the relative absence of intellectuals from the Party until the 1930s, citing the Depression and the rise of fascism as major factors attracting them to radicalism.[33] He provides a paragraph on the radical journals *Masses* and *New Frontier*, and a brief list of writers and artists who contributed their work, such as Leo Kennedy, C. Day Lewis, Dorothy Livesay and E.J. Pratt, A.M. Klein and Jack Parr, Avrom and Laurence Hyde.[34]

Also in 1975, Lita-Rose Betcherman published The Little Band: the Clashes Between the Communists and the Political and Legal Establishment in Canada, 1928-1932. The focus is almost solely on Toronto, a not unjustifiable choice given the theme of the book and the time period. For their tireless efforts against "Communist foreigners", Toronto's Chief of Police Draper and his "Red Squad" became legendary in both conservative and radical camps.[35] Betcherman followed the gradual expansion of the Communists from Toronto in the late 1920s to a nation-wide movement due to the Depression. Depending heavily on the records of the CPC as well as party members' memoirs, Betcherman does not attempt to hide her sympathies. Though she is concerned only with "high party politics" and ignores the peripheral community entirely, her description of police reactions to public meetings helps explain why certain members of the cultural and intellectual community felt they could no longer be silent.

Another monograph of the CPC was produced in 1988 by Norman Penner, son of party member Alderman Jacob Penner and himself active in the party from the 1930s to the 1950s. He first examined the CPC together with the CCF and labour in The Canadian Left: A Critical Analysis (1977). He narrowed his focus with Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond.[36] As Jean-Paul Sartre suggested, and American Communist historians have clearly demonstrated, "insider" accounts of the Party, however scholarly, are heavily influenced by their feeling about the party during the time of writing.[37] In the case of Penner, his sympathy with the CPC in this book is far more apparent than in his earlier work on The Canadian Left,[38] and he provides excellent summaries of the stages of Communist development under Stalin and the CPC leadership. Furthermore, he

continually compares the actions and reactions of the Canadian Party with those of the Communist Parties of the United States of America and Great Britain.

Comparisons to the Communist Parties of Great Britain and the United States are illuminating. In Great Britain, the party never reached a membership over 10 000 during the 1930s,[39] yet, as in Canada, they were active in the formation of unions, in violent strikes and riots, and in cultural activities such as the workers' theatre. In the early years of the decade, the Communists managed to attract, or just as likely became attractive to small groups of radical students at the universities of London, Oxford and Cambridge.[40] Prominent English writers also publicly claimed their radical bias, such as George Orwell, Stephen Spender and C. Day Lewis.[41] Most studies of the Communist Party of Great Britain have concentrated on political leadership and their relationship to the trade union movement, and thus the lives of the rank-and-file members have been downplayed, including attempts by the cultural left to attract them to revolutionary action. The exception is the workers' theatre, a subject covered extensively by British theatre historians.[42] One book has explored the British socialists' response to the "woman question" during the Depression, Susan Bruley's published dissertation from the London School of Economics, Leninism, Stalinism and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939, in which she argues persuasively that the Popular Front was also a positive era for women's involvement.[43] Morag Shiach's Discourse on Popular Culture does include a chapter, entitled "Workers'/Popular Theatre 1919-1945", in which she makes several allusions to the comparative absence of women either as characters in or creators of this form of drama.[44]

While the American phenomenon carries many obvious similarities to Canada, such as an increase in overall membership and a rise in the numbers of intellectual and cultural figures during the early years of the Depression, only Penner's Canadian Communism makes explicit acknowledgement of their common evolution. One major difference, and one which can explain the relative absence of Canadian work on the cultural left, is the prominence of intellectual and cultural figures who joined the CPUSA compared with those who joined the CPC. In terms of historiography, Canadian historians can benefit from recent work in American Communist history which is reaching

beyond the subject of leadership and Soviet Union control to include the more peripheral world of communist communities. According to Michael Brown, in his introductory essay for New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism, disaffected ex-member Theodore Draper's interpretation of American Communists has dominated since 1957, when he stated that

> something crucially important did happen to this movement in its infancy. It was transformed from a new expression of American radicalism to the American appendage of a Russian revolutionary power. Nothing else so important ever happened to it again.[45]

Brown suggests that newer studies move away from the interpretation of the CPUSA as unquestioning agents of the Soviet-directed Comintern. The "new historians" of American Communism stress the North American context, rather than the external directives. "In this regard," writes Brown,

> there is no choice but to write a history that includes the activists who formed the party, those of various backgrounds and persuasions who joined it in preference to other political options, those of varying degrees of commitment who worked within and around party organizations, and the greater number of people--whether officially members or not--whose experiences of agency, moral urgency, and politics were influenced by it in the various settings in which they lived and felt the need to take action.[46]

This is a move away from what Eric Hobsbawm identified as "orthodox history" with its emphasis on "the great actions, the great public actions,"[47] and toward a history "in which settings socialise and give content, form, and direction to the collective practices that constitute experience."[48] By moving the study of North American radicalism away from the Soviet Union, it can be better appreciated for its diverse character, rather than its stasis as a monolith. According to Brown,

> the conduct of individuals as members must be understood in two ways: (1) as oriented toward the locally diverse conditions of participation (that is, as situated--and therefore deliberative--in regard to the rationalities of any given situation), and (2) as ambivalent toward the practical alternatives that present themselves at any given time (that is, as capable of deciding for good reasons to behave one way rather than another and then reflecting upon the decision).[49]

This move toward local diversity has proven to be a fruitful one, but perhaps can be guilty of promoting too extreme a regionalism. Although Draper's interpretation sometimes borders on the paranoid, clearly the Soviet Union specifically, and international politics in general, played a significant role in the lives of party members. At the very least, international figures served as icons, and the Soviet Union was not only surviving, but reports showed it to be flourishing during a time of economic stagnation in western countries. Why wouldn't the American communists support the directions laid out by the Comintern? Furthermore, party cells across North America were designed with the sole intention of discussing politics. Regardless of Brown's contention that individuals gravitated toward radical solutions because they perceived few other options, once in the party, they were immersed in the literature, the politics and the language of Stalinism. It would be naïve to suggest that these constant images of international communism could, or would be ignored by the isolated communities of radicals.

Nonetheless, despite the need to acknowledge the undisputed prominence of Soviet direction on the party line, this "orthodox" approach contributes little to understanding the intricate complexities facing individuals in the party. Furthermore, almost nothing was done to advance the study of women in radical politics in the U.S.A.[50] Despite the rise of women's history in the 1970s, explorations of women in radical movements did not begin in earnest until the 1980s, generally connected to the Marxist-feminist movement arising from the New Left.[51] Yet, even these studies tended to emphasize the extraordinary women in the party leadership, rather than the less visible. Only very recently have American historians begun to study the implications of the cultural representation of women in the radical left.[52]

In Canada, the history of Canadian women in socialist movements has been linked not only with Marxist-feminism, but with studies in ethnicity as well. With the exception of thesis work and a few articles, however, a study of women in radical politics remained unaccomplished until 1989. That year, Joan Sangster and Linda Kealey edited Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics, a collection of essays which included two sections devoted to women in non-traditional parties.[53] Sangster also published Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950.[54]

Beyond the Vote focuses more on communities of women than it does on their specific role in radical politics.[55] In the essays by Varpu Lindström-Best, Ruth Frager, and Frances Swyripa, ethnicity dominates over class and gender as the most influential factor drawing women into socialist and communist organizations.[56] Sangster's book, on the other hand, provides a more equal balance between the attitude of left-wing parties to women, and women's attraction to these parties. Arguing throughout that "although hidden from written history, women were an important force in the making of Canadian socialism and communism", Sangster also broadens her interpretation of politics beyond participation of women as politicians, and gives an analysis of groups such as the Women's Labour League and its short-lived journal, *The Woman Worker*. She argues that these separate or auxiliary women's groups helped women organize and eventually forced the "woman question" into the platform of left-wing parties.[57] Nonetheless, Sangster herself avoids a close analysis of the representation of women in the party, an issue as important as their actual role.

Included in Joan Sangster's many goals she hoped to achieve while studying socialist-feminist women from the past, three pertain to women in the cultural left: the vision held by women socialists compared to men's version of socialism; the roles women assumed in socialist parties, particularly in comparison to division of labour and ideology of women's role in the wider society and finally, how socialists perceived the "woman question" and what their solutions to oppression were.[58] Nonetheless, the artistic left is given only a few short pages of notice.[59]

It is surprising that Sangster, with her acute awareness regarding the male response to the woman question, made little of women's role in the intellectual and cultural left, and nothing of the representation of women by the artistic community. Unlike political meetings, letters, interviews, or even policy directives, creators of culture are invariably aware of how they help mould, as well as react to, contemporary perceptions of life. Maria Tippett's historiographical essay on "The Writing of English-Canadian Cultural History, 1970-1985", emphasizes this point:

> One must realize...that the cultural artifact, like the historical 'event,' is shaped by both circumstance and the intention of its creator, and that it is

> received, interpreted, and made functional in a society at a given point in time in ways largely determined by the political, economic, social, and institutional framework of that society.[60]

In the case of socialist realists, proletarian writers, and members of the workers theatre, their self-conscious attempts to educate their audience through "agitational propaganda" meant not merely a depiction of the unhappy state of the world, but a desire to change it. Less politically-aligned, but no less socially-committed writers, artists and dramatists practised more subdued experiments with realism, but nonethe-less evinced a desire to criticize existing society. Intellectuals in Canada also joined in the debate.

The League for Social Reconstruction, by Michiel Horn, sheds a great deal of light on the intellectual world of the Canadian left during the Depression: the numerous clandestine and public meetings, the small, innovative journals and gradual evolution of *Canadian Forum* into a vehicle for the League for Social Reconstruction, the impetus for the intellects to get involved in Canadian development and the eventual decline of their role in the left. Though he dismisses the CPC, and is even hostile to the party,[61] he does make clear the radical departure from convention these forays into social commentary represented in Canada. His statements are often provocative, such as his contention that

> Canadians expected their intellectuals to be "useful" or "constructive" in an auxiliary capacity, or else decorative and possibly entertaining. They did not expect them to be critical or radical.[62]

Nonetheless, other studies support this assertion. Essays in Norman Bethune: his times and his legacy stress the unique character of Bethune's social conscience in comparison to the generally complacent attitude amongst leading Canadian intellectuals.[63] This collection includes essays from David Shephard, Lee Briscoe Thompson, and Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson, who all note that only a small group of comin-mentators, galvanized by the awful plight of the poor and the vision of world-wide conflict, rebelled against convention and criticized their country.

It was an historical moment in Canada, and one which was ignored, or down-played, for many years after. The Canadian habit of suppressing rebellious movements, then exonerating and even lionizing the participants later, is not limited to political figures such as William Lyon Mackenzie, Louis-Joseph Papineau, and Louis Riel. Dorothy

Livesay, despite being one of Canada's best-known poets from late in the 1920s until the present day, was left out of Canada's first collection of modernist poems, New Provinces (1936). The collection included work by Leo Kennedy, A.M. Klein, E.J. Pratt, Robert Finch, F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith and was to herald the arrival of a new age of in Canadian poetry. Her political affiliations may have affected their choice.[64] In 1944, when the CPC was no longer an illegal organization and the Soviet Union was Canada's ally, Livesay was given the Governor General's award for "Day and Night," a collection of poems written in the 1930s. Louis Muhlstock formed his own society of artists, as his social art and non-conformist attitude prevented him from becoming a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Artists despite his national and international renown.[65] Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson, a member of the CPC from the early 1930s until 1968, had his career as an historian seriously hindered: his contract at Sir George Williams College was not renewed in 1937, and as Gregory Kealey has suggested, he was unjustly overlooked by Carl Berger in The Writing of Canadian History in 1976.[66]

Despite, or maybe because of the controversy and paranoia surrounding radicals and expressions of radical culture in North America, very few critics in Canada offered contemporary commentary on these socially conscious works of art and literature. The most serious appraisal came from Ruth I. Mackenzie, in the *Dalhousie Review* in 1939. As an indication of Canadian critical reception, her "Proletarian Literature in Canada" is an important piece, but it is even more valuable because she includes a definition of proletarian literature as

> literature which describes the life of the working-class from a class-consciousness and revolutionary point of view. It is literature in which the worker is regarded as the victim of capitalistic exploitation; as the instrument of revolution by which a new social order will be ushered in.[67]

With this definition in mind, and through an examination of numerous journals, Mackenzie judges the writers as either contributing to proletarian literature or simply voicing social protest. Overall, Mackenzie finds little in the way of "true" proletarian literature. No worthy novels of this genre had been produced (Irene Baird's Waste Heritage was published during the same year as Mackenzie's article), only a few short

stories could be mentioned and even fewer poems. Theatre enjoyed comparative success, and particular attention was given to "Eight Men Speak."[68]

A belated interest in this era accompanied the resurgence of the left in Canada during the 1970s. Dorothy Livesay seized the moment to publish Right Hand Left Hand in 1977, an account of the Depression years.[69] In 1975, as part of an oral history project for the Ontario government, Don Rubin interviewed Toby and Oscar Ryan about their involvement in left-wing, socially-rooted theatre work during the Depression. Finding them a rich source of knowledge, Rubin pressed Toby Ryan into active research, and in 1981 she produced Stage Left: Canadian Workers Theatre, 1929-1940.[70] Both Livesay and Ryan adopted a collage approach to history; neither authors professed to be historians, thus they presented the age through a series of vignettes, memories and images. Though Livesay is the more practised writer, she is remarkably absent from her "scrapbook", and Toby Ryan also released control as a narrator, allowing the photographs, programme facismiles and interviews to pre-dominate. Though rarely explicit in confronting the "woman question", the two books illuminate much about the perception of women, as well as their role in the culture.

New Hogtown Press also brought renewed interest in this period by reproducing plays and short stories from the Depression: Eight Men Speak and Other Plays from the Canadian Workers Theatre (1976) and Voices of Discord (1979). The first collection, edited by Richard Wright and Robin Endres, reprinted plays from *The Canadian Labour Monthly*, *Masses* and *New Frontier*. Equally important was the introductory essay by the editors, which placed workers' theatre not only in the context of the Canadian Depression, but in the history of international working-class theatre.[71] Donna Phillips, the editor of Voices of Discord, compiled twenty-six short stories from the 1930s, and the introduction by Kenneth J. Hughes, while less informative on literature than Wright and Endres are for theatre, is also valuable.[72] Others were less impressed by the success of left-wing theatre in the 1930s. Betty Lee's Love and Whiskey, The Story of the Dominion Drama Festival and the Early Years of Theatre in Canada, ignored the reception given to Vancouver Progressive Arts Club's production of Clifford Odet's Waiting for Lefty in 1937.[73]

Maria Tippett's Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission is one of the few scholarly works to examine cultural history in Canada before the 1950s. She acknowledges this age of social art and literature as an important part of Canadian cultural expression, and she provides ample evidence that cultural activity and production flourished everywhere in English Canada before the Massey Commission.[74] She examines high culture, low culture, popular culture and folk culture, though she gives little concern for the intrinsic merit of each. The wide-scope of her study prevents her from treating radical culture in detail, but she does record the highlights of the age, and accords Dorothy Livesay a prominent place in the cultural history of the Depression.[75]

As a well-educated, widely-travelled, and politically-committed writer who experimented freely with many genres and addressed numerous themes over a sixty-year writing period, Dorothy Livesay has been identified as a proponent of numerous literary, political, and social "isms" which have surfaced in Canada in the twentieth century (with the notable exception of right-wing political beliefs such as fascism or Naziism).[76] Due to her diversity and longevity, her poetry and life have been analyzed in various periodicals ranging from feminist journals to socialist publications.[77] She has been interviewed on numerous occasions and one magazine, *A Room of One's Own*, devoted an entire issue to her career.[78] She is the subject of two biographies and a collection of essays.[79] Livesay recorded her own life in three autobiographies: the previously mentioned Right Hand Left Hand, as well as Beginnings: A Winnipeg Childhood, and Journey With My Selves. She regards even her poetry as testimony, prefacing her major anthology, Collected Poems (1971), with the declaration: "These poems written between 1926 and 1971 create an autobiography: a psychic if not a literal autobiography."[80] In sum, her life is as well chronicled as any writer's in Canada.

Few of her critics have ignored her Depression years, perhaps because of Livesay's Right Hand Left Hand and her insistence on how it shaped her writing and heightened her social awareness.[81] Nonetheless, most commentators have identified her experience as merely a "phase" in a young woman writer's life which faded as she matured. They prefer to find thematic unity in her work, such as her intimate relationship with seasons

and humans. Because her poetry, particularly her love poetry, is full of candid and often unflattering descriptions of her own life, critics also hail her sincerity (but not necessarily her veracity) as a quintessential part of her voice.

George Woodcock, long-time editor of Canadian Literature, notes "the extra-ordinary honesty with which, in the various phases of her life, Dorothy Livesay has lived and perceived and recorded experience."[82] Poet Robin Skelton accepts the defects of language, rhythm and image of her poetry in the face of "such passionate honesty of feeling and such consistent moral courage."[83] Her primary biographer, Lee Briscoe Thompson, states that "[h]er candor is astonishing"[84], and while Peter Stevens avoids such evaluations in Dorothy Livesay: Patterns in a Poetic Life, he had written in earlier essays that The Documentaries "is a remarkably honest book,"[85] and "[h]onesty and candour are essential components"[86] in her love poetry.

In A Public and Private Voice: essays on the Life and Work of Dorothy Livesay, the editors voiced the same sentiment. The introductory essay states that "[t]he common basis of her interest in poetry and society is honesty of feeling."[87] The admiration and respect for both her work and her commitment to ideals is evident throughout this collection. David Arnason argues that "there is no doubt that Livesay has proved central to the development of a modern voice in Canadian literature,"[88] while Joyce Wayne and Stuart Mackinnon conclude their essay, "Dorothy Livesay: A Literary Life on the Left," with the claim: "A review of her life is essentially a study in the determination of the human spirit and a writer's will to create, whatever the obstacles."[89] Literary critics have used the idea of metonymy to examine Livesay's writing from the 1930s as a part of her whole life of writing. This tends to gloss the effect of her formative experiences during her twenties into a smooth continuum. According to Livesay, however, these were turbulent times.

In various interviews and articles, Livesay has emphasised the unique effect the Depression had on her and others in the artistic community.[90] But while Livesay sheds a good deal of insight into this age, interviewers have their own agenda. Marsha Barber probed Livesay's feelings of gender identity, from the first statement: "Your poems indicate a strong interest in androgyny. Do you feel that you are in touch with both the

male and female aspects of your being?"[91] to her final question: "Do you consider yourself a feminist?"[92] Livesay answered in the affirmative to both. In 1980, Branching Out, a short-lived feminist magazine, published an interview with Dorothy Livesay and Joyce Marshall. Under the title, "Dorothy Livesay: a Blue-stocking Remembers," Marshall's first question, too, reflected the views of both the periodical and the interviewer: "Do you feel, as I do often, that young women today think of the feminist movement as something that started about 15 years ago?"[93]

This Magazine is About Schools, a leftist publication from the 1970s which regularly featured articles on strikes in Canada and revolutions abroad, published an interview with Livesay entitled: "Being a Writer in the Thirties." Appearing under a lithograph featuring a dozen or so women, children and men huddled together in a queue, (entitled "Breadline"), the interview began: "Can you talk about your involvement with left wing cultural movements?"[94] This question clearly set the tone, direction, and subject matter for the entire conversation. Canadian Forum, a less overtly socialist, more scholarly publication than This Magazine, featured Livesay in an interview with Bernice Lever in 1975. Editor of York University's Waves magazine, Lever conducted a well-balanced interview on Livesay's family, her writing, her involvement in the Progressive Arts Club and numerous journals, as well as her move to the West Coast and her experiences with men and women writers.[95]

While interviewers often set the agenda, however, Livesay certainly guided them in the direction she wanted. This was most apparent in an interview with Susan Wood in 1977.[96] Although Wood's primary focus on Livesay was the music in her poetry, Livesay was most interested in talking about the 1930s. The result for Wood was of little value for her Masters Thesis, but for an exposé of the radical cultural community in the 1930s, the interview was a huge success.

When most critics examine her work, of course, Livesay cannot interject.[97] In many cases, the result has been a failure on their part to account for exogenous factors, particularly during the 1930s, and instead they have often viewed her work from this period as naïve, experimental, and sparse. This failure to consider her many "selves" in this period: student, lover, traveller, social worker, wife, mother, editor, and writer, in

order to highlight her later achievements, has created the impression that Dorothy Livesay is either a poet, a social worker or a mother, for instance, but never all three at once. Maria Tippett's view of the object of cultural analysis applies to the study of Dorothy Livesay in particular, and to other women artists and writers from this period in general:

> historians, sensitive to the interplay of several sets of factors--social, economic, institutional, political, and of course, cultural--can do much to enrich its study....In and behind the painting, play, poem, and musical composition lie causes and conditions, intentions and functions which historians are especially well-fitted to illuminate.[98]

While the historian can shed light on the context of the Depression, more illumination comes from contemporary documents, personal recollections, interviews with participants, and most importantly, the works left by the artists, writers and dramatists. Obvious sources, such as Debates in the House of Commons and newspapers from the major city centres, are important not strictly for fact-finding, but for insights into the priorities and obsessions facing the government and the reading audiences. Another fascinating source is Greg Kealey and Reg Whittaker's compilation of R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins from the years 1933-34. From open meetings to picnics, and from youth journals such as *Always Ready* to publications from the Soviet press, the R.C.M.P. carefully scrutinized the activities of a handful of citizens.[99] Michiel Horn's collection of documents, The Dirty Thirties, is also important for his introductory essay and an eclectic array of sources, particularly the more informal and personal letters and memoranda.[100]

Recollections of the Depression are many. The most important sources for this thesis are Peter Hunter's Which Side Were You On, Boys: Canadian Life on the Left and those who contributed to Norman Bethune: his time and his legacy, son époque et son message. I met with a few active members of the left-wing communities of the 1930s: Dorothy Livesay, Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson, Irene Kon and Louis Muhlstock. All four mentioned above, and many more who were involved in the cultural community during the Depression, have recorded interviews previously. Merrilee Weisbord's The Strangest Dream contains the most exhaustive collection.[101]

It is, of course, dangerous to put too much weight on oral history. By the same token, however, it is equally unsafe to rely strictly on documentation, or secondary reading. I tried to provide an examination of the representation and role of women during this period by exploring the existing conditions and the methods of coping with the depression. Throughout, my research reflects the belief that while party politics played an important part in the changing perception of women in the cultural left, the women artists and writers themselves were responsible for manifesting these changes in their work.

Chapter Two - Responses to the Depression

For Canadians, the repercussions of the Great Depression reached far beyond the economic. Political rhetoric between left and right became more dichotomized, and the frustration and anxiety caused by the Depression elicited both radical action and reactionary measures. Socially, the financial pressures on individual and family economies reached so large a scale that the assumed (and gendered) economic roles were unattainable. Evidence of the "male breadwinner" became increasingly elusive, and as politicians scrambled to devise methods of recovery for the nation, single people, families, and communities struggled not only with the economy, but with their sense of self-worth and value in society.[1] During this decade of discord, the rise in radical third parties, the new economic reality of scarcity for much of the population, the changing roles for men and women in society, and the lack of practical solutions all contributed to a significant rise in the use of symbols to promote stability in Canada. At the same time, scientific and medical innovations, increasing urbanization, and technological advancements in communication and transportation pushed Canadian society into modernity.

Of course, politicians did not live solely in a world of rhetoric and symbols. Economic solutions and emergency legislation were both implemented. But, as Michiel Horn has pointed out in his introduction to The Dirty Thirties,

> with the notable exception of T.D. Pattulo's administration in British Columbia after 1933, government in Canada at all three levels were generally unwilling, and at the local level often unable, to expand their programmes and increase expenditures as a matter of deliberate policy.[2]

Governments did borrow, and they did provide the minimum services to prevent people from starving to death, but the only major economic policy change was a steep increase in tariffs in 1930, to maintain employment and profit in Canadian manufac-turing industry.[3] Relief work camps and the utilization of Criminal Code section 98 (the deportation of aliens), also demonstrated that the heavy rhetoric led to implementation.

But without any noticeable alleviation of suffering through emergency measures, and in order to try to give direction to the rapidly changing nation, the conservative element preached a return to prosperity through faith in solid traditional values.

Anglophone conservatives directed the rhetoric decidedly toward the benefits of belonging to the British Empire. On the other hand, the more radical element found inspiration in change. Members of Parliament for the Progressives and later the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation were not afraid to propose dramatic social restructuring, while Communist Party leader Tim Buck spoke of a Soviet Canada, with a redistribution of wealth to favour the workers. Local and national governments sought to protect the safety of Canadians from "subversive aliens" and "political agitators", which prompted left-wing politicians to point out that the only people who truly received protection were the industrial capitalists. The House of Commons was filled with vibrant, vigorous and vitriolic politicians, such as Henri Bourassa, J.S. Woodsworth, and A.A. Heaps, as well as less bombastic, but equally talented political tacticians such as Mackenzie King. The myriad of special interests: Québec *nationalistes*, Prairie farmers, and militant labour groups and radical politicians in British Columbia and Ontario, all raised the level of political debate far beyond mediocrity. It also drew out startlingly reactionary legislation from Conservative Prime Minister R.B. Bennett.

The drama of both international and local events gave some intellectuals the impetus to explore revolutionary solutions, and committed artists and writers began depicting the reality of ordinary workers' lives. The more politically-minded aimed an attack on the symbols of capitalism, while offering a new vision for an egalitarian society.

The age was ripe for criticizing both the symbols of communism and capitalism. On November 9, 1932, in the middle of the bleakest winter so far during the Depression, Prime Minister Bennett rose to the platform of the York Hotel in Toronto, and launched a scathing attack on "socialism, or its deep-tinted sister, communism."[4] He implored the men and women present at the annual meeting of the Conservative Association of Ontario "to put the iron heel ruthlessly on propaganda of that kind."[5] This type of reactionary choler was more advertising than the radical press could hope for, and the weekly Communist paper, *The Worker*, responded with three headlines of counter-attack and an editorial, including: "Bennett's Iron Heel Speech Presages Increased Terror, Reactionary Rallying Cry."[6] His speech had provided them with a new nickname, "Iron Heel"

Bennett, and more material to convince the workers of Canada that they were living under a dictatorship that was intolerant to opposition.

The Mail and Empire, partisan to the Tories, covered the Conservative convention in depth. The Prime Minister and the Conservative Premier of Ontario, George Henry, were quoted in the top two headlines: "Political Attacks Spell Doom for Hydro, Henry Warns," and "'Ottawa Parley Not Built For Foreigners', Bennett Declares."[7] An equally inflammatory speech from Ontario's Attorney General Colonel W. H. Price also appeared on the front page: "Price Calls for United Front Against Insidious Propaganda Threatening Canadian System."[8] Obviously buoyed by a captive audience, in a hall adorned with a banner reading "Our Slogan, Optimism," Conservative speakers revelled in the opportunity to boast of their accomplishments while sending out a warning to the opposition.

After Bennett's happy report on the Imperial Conference, and his anticipation of the fifty-year life for trade agreements with Great Britain, he struck out against the left, including soap box orators, J.S. Woodsworth of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, and even the Liberal Party, which he described as "now being led by the co-operative commonwealth."[9] He asked his audience,

> What do they offer you for dumping you in the mud? Socialism, communism, dictatorship! Some of them are commending to you the history of Russia. I know that from right in this city propaganda to that effect is being carried on throughout this Province, and we know in part propaganda in Canada is being put forward by organizations in foreign lands desiring to destroy institutions.[10]

The convention included all the cabinet members of the Conservative Provincial government, and several were encouraged to feed fuel to Bennett's fire. Price declared:

> When we have foreigners from those less fortunate parts of the world, the Finlander, the Russian, or the Ukrainian, come to us overburdened with long years of oppression and, because they may be out of employment, or our system of government does not suit them, begin to agitate that we should tear down our institutions, tear down our foundations of Government to suit them, then I think we should call a halt.[11]

Premier Henry, though less xenophobic in his address, added:

> And those opposed to us have played, and are playing, upon all the difficulties with which we are confronted, inflaming those who are unfortunate and sowing the seeds of distrust and even insurrection in the form of communism.[12]

By emphasizing the foreign soil from which the "seeds of insurrection" had been planted, Bennett's speech sounded a loyal colonial appeal to "God, King and country." He equated economic truth with the parable of the talents: "It was the positive scriptual injunction," ran Bennett's sermon, "that man should invest his genius and reap the reward....It is the duty of government that there is equal division of all the measures that come from being a British subject," and he told his audience to "remember the words of the Man of Nazareth, 'The poor we have with us always.'"[13] The appeal to Christian morals and individual responsibility was an attempt to heighten the danger of the alternative: "godless" communism and socialist economic solutions.[14]

In the mainstream press, reaction to the speech was less dramatic. *The Globe*'s editors, for instance, relegated this section of his speech to page seven of the November 10, 1932 edition, as part of the local report. The two front-page headlines, on the other hand, emphasized politics of a different nature: "New Empire Treaties Good for 50 Years, Predicts Bennett" and "Woman May Be Labor Secretary in U.S. Cabinet."[15] *The Globe*'s sense of priorities reveals a response once considered typical of Canadians: Canada's relations with the British Empire dominated, American affairs, even speculative ones such as this, placed second, yet sweeping and startling statements about Canada's domestic situation showed up on the back pages, nestled between photographs of the C.N.E. essay competition winners and an address by Sir Robert Falconer to the Women's Auxiliary to the Upper Canada Bible Society on "Reading the Bible in the Modern Home."[16] The context of Bennett's reactionary speech reveals a crisis of identity and a loss of stability for the conservative rulers. Bennett chose his time and setting carefully, Toronto in November 1932 was as restive a city as any during the Depression, yet the reaction to his address in three ideologically distinct papers provide insight into the state of the entire nation in the early 1930s.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, debates in the House of Commons often presented "Toronto the Good" as the focal point of Canadian radical political organization

and police repression. Holding a convention in the same city Maurice Duplessis had gleefully taunted to Tories in the House as "the home of all known bolsheviks!"[17] the Conservative political machine was surely asserting the power of federal and provincial authority against insurgents. In fact, it was another instance in a long line of attacks against radicals: Communist Party leader Tim Buck had been imprisoned exactly one year earlier, the Communist Party had been declared illegal in February 1932 and Toronto's own "Red Squad" had been breaking up public meetings and assemblies since Chief Constable Draper took control on May 1, 1928. Yet the fear of "bolshevism" in Toronto continued to grow as the winter months brought even more hardship.[18]

Bennett must also have been feeling the pressure of shifting public opinion. In the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt had defeated Herbert Hoover in a landslide victory just two days before the Conservative convention in Toronto. The comparisons between Hoover and Bennett were obvious, and had even been cultivated in Bennett's early years as Prime Minister. Hoover's inability to solve the economic crisis, mainly due to his *laissez faire* approach to politics and the economy, would thus taint Bennett's reputation as well. The rising popularity of Roosevelt's liberalism was another indication of a rising interest in social change in North America. The role of women in public office reveals the shifting tide. On November 10, 1932, reporters for *The Globe* predicted the selection of Frances Perkins as the first woman cabinet minister in the U.S.A. On that same day, the reporter at the Conservative convention recorded this exchange:

> Some amusement was occasioned when Mr. Ireland, the President [of the Ontario Conservative Association], in presenting for approval the motion that the minutes of the last meeting be taken as read, was interrupted by Mrs. Joshua Smith, who asked: 'What became of the resolution that was handed in last year in connection with equal representation for men and women?'
>
> Mr. Ireland--'If you will be kind enough to draft that resolution today and hand it to me, I will take it up with the executive tomorrow morning, because I do not know what happened to it. That is being quite honest.'[19]

In effect, this served public notice of the Conservatives' indifference to women's political involvement at the very time the new President of the United States of America supported a trailblazing step for women in politics.[20] The Conservatives, of course, were not the

only party in Canada which failed to embrace women's right to hold office. Political parties in Canada were a long way from accepting equal political representation for women, even the radical parties who publicly denounced the oppression of women. Nonetheless, for the Bennett and Henry governments, it was a prominent example of their failure to support measures which reflected change in society.

In retrospect, the Conservative governments in Canada during the early years of the Depression appear bewildered by the problems, and frightened by talk of socialism or even social-democracy. Ontario Premier Henry spoke of Liberal leader Mitch Hepburn as a politician who failed to understand the reality of politics. "If he is going to come to leadership in this Province," Henry told the audience, "he will have to swing a little closer to the right."[21] Bennett delivered his own understatement: "Be of good cheer. Of course we have troubles. We wouldn't be happy without them."[22] For an increasing number of Canadians, however, there was very little to make them cheerful, and happiness was not simply a matter of attitude. The economic system seemed to have failed, and despite impressive examples of rising modernity: increased air and auto travel, the rapid spread of communication devices such as talking movies and radio, and the growth of cities; over a quarter of the population were unsuccessful in their search for employment.[23] Increasingly, Canadians were being bombarded with exciting innovations, yet for many, these changes were outside their economic grasp.

Moreover, responses to technological change reveal an uncertainty in the direction "modern" Canadian society was taking. While the Conservative convention was highly publicized as the first event ever to be broadcast from one side of the Ontario border to the other, motor cars from one side of the country to another were causing fatalities at an alarming rate. In the same month Bennett reached his widest audience ever to warn them about the perils of socialism, the automobile, undoubtedly the supreme "symbol of capitalism", caused at least one death every day in Canada.[24] The lack of editorial comments about unsafe roads, particularly when compared with articles warning about "dangerous foreigners" implies that scientific progress, tempered with ideological caution, had more merit for those in control of the mainstream press than socially progressive ideas fuelled by ideological radicalism. Despite the slowdown in the economy, Canada

was on its way to becoming a nation dependent upon speedy communication and transportation, regardless of the cost.

Medical innovations were no less significant. Montreal was the Canadian centre of neurological research, with an international reputation for excellence and experimentation in "genetic engineering". The "advancements" made in this field had frightening implications, yet other doctors, such as Norman Bethune, were seeking more humane and socialistic solutions to the increasing health problems brought on by the Depression and inner-city slums.[25] For women specifically, the economic situation made taboo subjects such as abortion and birth-control matters of more public concern, prompting politicians, particularly those on the left, to fight for more liberal legislation which would enable women to prevent unwanted pregnancies.[26]

No decade in the twentieth century has ushered in such dramatic change during a period of such deprivation. A return to better economic conditions, already long overdue when Bennett thundered out his denunciation of creeping communism, did not occur the next year as promised. By the time Bennett lost the election to Mackenzie King's Liberals in 1935, Canadians had experienced five full years of a nation-wide depression. Family sizes decreased, with or without legal means of birth control, marriages occurred at later ages, and communities depended more and more on government relief and systems of barter, rather than wage-earning, in order to survive. The political left-wing, always small but very vocal in Canada, became more and more attractive to segments of the population who had previously ignored them. Artists and writers began to explore society for images of realism, and could not help but be swayed by the subjects they sought to portray. For some, art and literature was a means to an additional end beyond the depiction of suffering, it served as a projection for a better society, and became more didactic in purpose.

At the time of Bennett's speech, some artists and writers were already parodying capitalists and promoting workers as heroes. Inspired by Soviet and American experiments in new art forms, literary genres, and class-conscious theatre, politics became an important part of their art. The world was divided between the workers and the capitalists, and all other divisions were superficial. For the most part, both the workers

and the capitalists were male. Women played secondary and even antagonistic roles to the struggling male workers.

Eventually, however, "the worker" became less important and the notion of community response to the injustices in society grew. The "single, unemployed male" became inseparable from the rest of society with whom he interacted. At the same time, world events such as the rise of fascism brought a heightened awareness of the suffering inflicted on innocent people. A sensitivity to the unique oppression of women and their own active responses to change their condition is seen in the increased participation by women in the radical cultural community and their effect on the representation of women. Capitalists were still enemies, but equally culpable were those who oppressed others, or even those who failed to stop oppression.

For conservatives and radicals, women and men, workers and capitalists, Karl Marx' observation that "all that is solid melts into air" rang true in the 1930s. Authority of all types were increasingly pressured to justify their position: employers, governments, churches, heads of households. The Depression forced conservatives to acknowledge the need for changes, while at the same time it encouraged radicals to promote more drastic solutions. The discourse of power became more pronounced, and manifested itself in the implementation of repressive legislation and aggressive police action. It was becoming impossible for any Canadians to ignore the apparent crumbling of the once-solid foundations of the BNA Act, "peace, order, and good government"; and with youthful enthusiasm, cultural radicals sought to build a better world.

Chapter Three - The Conjunction of Culture and the Working-Class

In the early 1930s, Canadian radicals experimented with proletarian culture as a message of propaganda to promote societal change. "Culture", in this sense, refers to artistic expression created with the conscious attempt to, in Horace's words, "delight and instruct" an audience. The audience's delight came from the combination of aesthetic pleasure with community bonding. The instruction was obvious: to perceive injustice and to find ameliorative solutions. The cultural left drew their inspiration from European and American precedents, and they echoed the motto of Soviet agitational propaganda: "art, in the hands of the workers, is a weapon against capitalism,"[1] Accepting the confrontational nature of this dictum, proletarian artists and writers stressed the class struggle, and they emphasised social conflict and the economic, emotional and cultural problems facing common people. More particularly, they followed the Soviet policy of attacking the social democrats, labelling them "social fascists" and spurning any association with them. Later, during the Popular Front period, the Communist Party line softened. The social democrats were acceptable allies against the rise of fascism, and art was used less as a weapon against capitalists and more as a window into the world of deprivation and suffering. No less revolutionary, however, this stage of social criticism reached beyond the worker/capitalist dichotomy, and women responded eagerly to the opportunity to expose oppression of their sex.

Prior to this phase of proletarian literature and socialist realism, Canadian working class culture was rarely so doctrinaire, instructive, or self-consciously performative. Admittedly, songs from the International Workers of the World or the "Internationale" promoted class solidarity and reinforced the division between workers and capitalists, but performances in workers' community meetinghouses or ethnic halls accentuated the common national origins or sectarian bonds of the assembly rather than one class against another.[2] By and large, agitational propaganda was transported into Canada, aided by an increase in membership of intellectuals and youth into the Communist Party of Canada and an adherence to Comintern policies, from the divisive "class against class" strategy

initiated by Stalin in 1929 to the inclusive Popular Front phase. Once introduced to Canadians, however, it took on its own character, as local events inspired and shaped subjects of art and literature. Though the messages varied during these two distinct periods, the targeted audience remained the same: urban workers and the rising number of unemployed, who became increasingly receptive to the cheap theatre, free art exhibits, and street performances spiced with a generous sprinkling of revolutionary propaganda.

Until the 1930s, the intellectual as a social critic was a rare phenomenon in Canada. According to Michiel Horn, "few intellectuals questioned the institution of private property, the dominance of capital over labour, or the benefits of a market economy."[3] Using Seymour Martin Lipset's definition of intellectuals as "all those who create, distribute and apply *culture*, that is, the symbolic world of man, including art, science and religion," Horn suggests that, "probably the great majority of them shared the prevailing ideas and beliefs without thinking much about them. It was the safe, sensible, natural course."[4] In this, Canadian intellectuals did not differ greatly from the United States and Britain, although there had been a long tradition of radical intelligentsia in continental Europe.[5]

The economic downturn, however, had lasted for so long, to such devastating effect, that faith in the progress of capitalism was being questioned seriously. Intellectuals in capital-driven nations such as Britain, the USA and Canada saw value in their own analytic power as a practical skill which could help direct the economy of Canada. They prepared themselves to take the lead roles away from business and business-oriented politicians. Intellectuals who shifted toward leftist thought did not, of course, all join the Communists. Social democratic organizations such as the Fabian Society in Britain or the New Republic crowd in the United States also experienced a growth in popularity during the Depression. In Canada, a group with a similar social-democratic ideology, The League for Social Reconstruction (LSR) was spearheaded by David Lewis in 1931. The national president was a University of Toronto history professor, F.H. Underhill.

Some of those who joined the LSR had been attracted by some form of socialism: Christian, Fabian, even Marxist, well before the Depression, but they did not link up or try to recruit others until 1930, as Canada and the world fell deeper into the crisis.[6]

Believing in economic cooperation rather than competition, they formed a very close association with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Their creative and political writings appeared in magazines such as *Privateer*, *Canadian Mercury* and *The McGill Fortnightly Review*, but they gravitated to *Canadian Forum*, a journal which became increasingly antagonistic to the Conservative government during the Depression.[7] For those who turned to the left, the comparative attraction in the social democrats, as opposed to the Communists, was due to the "aura of conspiracy, disloyalty, criminality" about the CPC, and,

> in view of this and of the low incidence of radicalism among Canadian intellectuals before the Depression, it is unsurprising that very few of them found their way into the CPC. It was a bit daring to join even the LSR![8]

This may be true, but at the same time, the party had done little to make itself attractive to socialist intellectuals. The CPC included few intellectuals amongst its founders, and even in its first ten years as a party, gave low recruitment priority to intellectuals, university graduates, and despite the formation of the Young Communist League (YCL) in 1924, put little effort into indoctrinating the youth in general. When the CPC experienced growth in the 1930s, its own willingness to accept a greater variety of members was as important as the increased radicalism of a group of intellectuals. According to Ivan Avakumovic:

> To begin with, there emerged a nucleus of young intellectuals who identified themselves publicly with the CPC.... Those intellectuals who were not wholly involved in the party apparatus or the Com-munist-led trade unions were active in the Progressive Arts Club.... Communist influence among intellectuals also increased when the CPC made a determined effort to gain the sympathy of a broad spectrum of non-Communists who were disturbed by certain developments at home and abroad.[9]

While the number of intellectuals involved in the LSR was proportionately higher than those in the CPC, the vast majority of intellectual and cultural figures stayed out of politics in Canada. Most were far less interested in placing a specific social purpose to their work, and lengthy disputes in the newspapers, journals, and universities of the day bear witness to the many divisions amongst intellectuals on their role in society. The

central debate focused on the need for active agency versus passive analysis, while the cultural community argued between "art for art's sake" and "art as social commentary."[10]

Concurrent with intellectuals' public proclamation of support for the CPC was the rise of youth movements. Despite the YCL's long-time existence (including its predecessor the Young Workers League, formed in 1922), according to Avakumovic, the YCL "had vegetated with fewer than 1500 members in the 1920s."[11] During that decade, their membership was characteristically Jewish, Ukrainian, or Finnish, and over 80 percent of them were working class. By 1931, however, the working-class background had dropped to one-half of their membership, and while the YCL still attracted few Anglo-Celts, the ethnic youth members were more fluent in English and better educated than their parents.[12] Youth became the core contributors to proletarian culture, and the city centres of Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg, as well as numerous smaller cities and towns, formed communities of actors, playwrights, artists and writers, calling themselves PAC, or the Progressive Arts Club.

In the fall of 1931, thirty-five young artists, writers, and dramatists created the Toronto Progressive Arts Club. They published a number of poems and articles in the workers' press, mainly in the Communist newspaper *The Worker*, but also in the Canadian Labour Defense League organ, *The Labour Defender*. Encouraged by the reception of their work and their growth in numbers and production, in the spring of 1932 they published the first edition of *Masses*, a cultural magazine dedicated to bringing art to working people. The editors stated their goals clearly in the lead article, "Our Credentials". Though steeped in rhetoric, the sense of energy and urgency, as well as the level of diction, belies a youthful, intelligent membership:

> It is young. It is dissatisfied. It strives. It searches. It works.... It rejects the theory that art can have nothing in common with politics, that art functions only by and for art. It asserts that all art, whether by the conscious will of the jingo intellectual, or by the self-styled aloofness of the ivory tower recluse, is under capitalism.... Art is propaganda, or more precisely, a vehicle of propaganda.[13]

This piece drew a specific relationship between intellectuals and the workers, asking

> Are there any honest intellectuals, who will study the life of the workers, who will make the aims of the workers their aims, who will consciously lead their art to the cause of the working class?[14]

Still, *Masses* placed their faith in the workers' abilities, warning even the "honest intellectuals" that "[t]he workers will produce, and are today producing, their own writers, their artists, their revolutionary intellectuals,"[15] and urging "the cultural section of the Canadian proletariat to produce open propaganda." For this, the Progressive Arts Club was to give a distinct lead.[16] In addition to providing an outlet for working-class expression, the editors sought two additional goals: to provide support and material for the Progressive Arts Clubs across Canada, and to displace other left-leaning cultural magazines, namely, *Canadian Forum*.

To facilitate the spread of proletarian culture, *Masses* included full scripts of agitational propaganda plays[17], order slips for workers' songbooks[18], and articles/ advertisements for art exhibitions, local theatre productions, and other group meetings.[19] They drew their subject matter for plays, poetry and art from either local events concerning workers, such as violent strikes, arrests of workers, and the implementation of repressive government legislation, or events and images from the Soviet Union meant to inspire their readers (and themselves) to achieve the same in Canada. In an effort to emphasise the universal goal of communism, parallels were drawn between the character and actions of both local and international capitalists, fascists and workers.

During the publication period of *Masses*, three local events dominated the journal: first and foremost, the arrest of CPC leader Tim Buck and seven other prominent members of the party in November 1931 for sedition. Within six months, the CPC was declared illegal and the deportation of aliens was used with increasing frequency. Secondly, Nick Zynchuk, an unemployed worker in Montréal, was shot during his eviction, and his funeral procession was broken up by police on horseback. Finally, violent strikes, in particular those at Estevan and Stratford, led to angry denunciations in poems, song, art and theatre. For contributors to *Masses*, these events were premonitory of rising fascist action in Italy, Germany and Japan.

The communists used these events as ammunition against the social democrats, whose policy of co-operation implied a partnership with capitalists and dictators. To become the sole voice of the cultural left, the editors of *Masses* adopted the Soviet policies of the Third Period, labelling socialists and social-democrats as "social fascists", whose duplicity made them more hateful enemies to the workers than were the capitalists. In the May-June issue, 1933, *Masses* began a series of articles to "investigate" *Canadian Forum*'s reaction to unemployment, the use of force and violence against the workers, and the decreased standard of living for the workers. The *Forum*, predictably, was found sadly lacking in its concern for the workers. *Masses* branded the *Canadian Forum* the magazine of "petty bourgeois intellectuals," and "'pink' professors" who "have signally failed to take their stand on the side of the working class"[20] Another article in the series was more vitriolic, criticizing the *Forum* for its clear affiliation with the C.C.F., "a political party whose entire program expresses the hopes, the prejudices and the fears of the Canadian petty bourgeoisie" and further charging some contributors with "Fascist tendencies".[21]

At the same time, contributors to *Masses* engaged in public debates on the nature and purpose of culture for the workers.[22] High diction, reference to Soviet intellectual writing, and theoretical arguments about the nature of art and culture in a capitalist versus a communist world all emphasised the intellectual leaning of the journal, but the editors and contributors were constantly aware of the need to draw "the true worker's voice" into the cultural world. Appeals were made,[23] songs and poetry from workers was highlighted[24] and those contributors from a more educated background made conscious efforts to use the cadence and idioms of workers' language.

The search for authentic voices of the oppressed began to reveal not only the widening gap between the powerful and the poverty-stricken, but prejudices not limited to class. The high percentage of members regarded as "ethnics", as well as section 98 of the Criminal Code, and events in the United States such as the Scottsboro trial led to art and literature that condemned ethnic and racial elitism as well as class supremacy.[25] The same could not be said, however, for their sensitivity to women's struggles. In this, the

magazine's editors quite literally followed their leaders.[26] Party building was the major goal; therefore the particular nature of women's oppression under capitalism existed almost solely within that context. The attitude reflected a focus on women's issues only as part of a strategy for indoctrination in revolutionary ideology and recruitment into a revolutionary party whose primary focus was the worker.[27] Thus, proletarian artists and writers took aim against capitalists both local and international, while the working man became the main subject and hero. Depicting women was more problematic. Admittedly, wealthy women presented easy targets for caricature and misogynic attack, but the role of the working women in proletarian art and literature varied only slightly more.

Masses displayed a willingness to paint women who worked within the capitalist system with wide brush strokes as the "fallen woman" or the ineffectual society woman.[28] As with much of their inspiration, the caricature of capitalism came from Soviet examples. The same Soviet artists and writers depicted working women as righteous and virtuous comrades, and made a conscious effort to place them on an equal footing.[29] The North American context, however, with its focus on the realistic life of the unemployed male and his need to become radicalized, most often portrayed the working-class woman as a cynic: a beleaguered, embittered wife of the failed "breadwinner" or a working-girl whose dreams could no longer include an unemployable boyfriend. On one occasion she became the unlikely source of socialist doctrine.[30] The (predominantly male) artists and writers failed yet again to answer the "woman question", and working-class women who did appear were inevitably the wives of working men as opposed to working women.

For instance, a lithograph by Franklin in *Masses*, September 1933, "Our Voices Grew Louder!" depicts a man with a patchy jacket holding a petition with "1200000 JOBLESS, WE DEMAND INSURANCE" as its contents. In the background, wearing the initials RBB on his back, and typically outfitted in top hat with his briefcase in hand, Prime Minister Bennett is striding up to Parliament Hill. Behind and to the left of the unemployed male protestor, a women wearing a kerchief joins the angry protest. In itself, the blocking of the subjects is revealing, but when compared with Soviet examples of the

same time, it highlights the secondary role of women next to the ubiquitous unemployed male.[31]

The socialist realist poetry in *Masses*, by chance or by design, contained wide-ranging vignettes of urban life during the Depression, but despite the attempt to project universal images, the male appears as the norm. The North American version of socialist realist poetry was a combination of Soviet revolutionary propaganda, modernist imagism, and diction-conscious social poetry. Though *Masses* contained only a few poems, they ranged from inspirational agitation with "Moscow Gold"[32] and "Here on the Square"[33] to machine-centreed images in "Idle Stands the Linotype" and "Sky Scrapers" to the dialogue-filled "'Salesmen' Come to Your Door."[34] With few exceptions, the subjects were anonymous, not only did the poets attempt to hide their own voice, but humans were characterized simply as "soldier" ("Proud Soldier"), "children of hunger" ("Hunger"), "man" ("Sky Scrapers"). Even the narrator in "Idle Stands the Linotype" downplays his importance by referring to himself as an uncapitalized "i".

Feminist deconstructionists have pointed out, however, that even these attempts at impersonality are gendered.[35] The "norm" is still male: the "soldier", complimented by the captain, has done "Good work, my boy"; the worker on the skyscraper is urged to "Come on / you man", and the peddlars who knock on doors are "salesmen", even though one of them is identified as "mary" [sic]. It is undoubtedly true that women were not as visible in certain sectors of the workforce, and therefore hidden from the view of some writers and artists. But in a genre dedicated to the creation of "unsung heroes", working women should be natural subjects. The appearance of one poem, "Workless Sister", crystallizes the unemployed working women of the Depression:

> Gentle, quiet, workless sister;
> Lonely, starving in retreat;
> You are even shunning breadlines
> Of your brothers on the street.
>
> In your misery and hunger,
> It is they who are to blame;
> They who grasped the means of living,
> Knowing no restraint or shame.

Do not weep in silence, sister!
Bring your tears and bitters sighs
As a message in the open
That will reach the very skies!

And replace the sickly pallor
Of your cheeks, with burning rage!
And demand your rightful sharing,
In the riches of the age.[36]

The poem was written by "A. Nesbitt", the pseudonym of Abraham Nisnevitz. The operator of a small upholstery plant and author of poetry in Yiddish and English, Nisnevitz hosted Saturday afternoon discussion circles at his home beginning in 1928, and these meetings led to the formation of the Progressive Arts Club.[37] The existence of this poem, in the very first issue of *Masses*, demonstrates a sensitivity to women's distinct suffering, but it is notable as well for its lack of companion pieces. Only a very few poems, and only one short story, featured women as subjects.[38]

Most short stories, such as "Breadline" and "Rainbow Chasing", explored the defeated psyche of the unemployed father/husband. "Breadline" demonstrates again the apparently superfluous role of women in the world of breadlines and unemployment. "John, for John Smith was our hero's name (good name too, for it fits almost anyone),"[39] attempts petty theft in order to bring food home to his three children. He has a wife, unnamed and unimportant. In "Rainbow Chasing", the main character "Smoky" (husband and father), must confront a series of problems. Listed in the opening paragraph: he is broke, his relief has been cut off, and the unemployment organization no longer exists, Smoky's problems are exacerbated by the actions of his (also unnamed) partner,

> Worst of all, Smoky's wife was beginning to nag him. She had started again last night when Smoky came home late from the meeting, and she was lying awake, waiting."You think more of the reds than you do of your wife and kids--you're flogging a dead horse, I tell you--everybody's getting a job but you--first thing you know you'll be a regular bum-- Smoky couldn't stand nagging.[40]

In *Masses*, September 1933, a short story from Britain called "King and Country" by Robert Hall, is far less subtle and far more disturbing as an instructive story. A flashback to India during World War I, the plot centres on an army corps filled with

working men. They are beginning to reach social awareness, and understand their plight as the oppressed servants of the ruling class. Despite their position as "the oppressed", however, one character expresses his racial prejudice, complaining that "They have no right bringing Indians into a white man's war"[41] and fears "They'll get into the habit of killing white men."[42] Equally uncharitable views were directed toward women. In an effort to cheer up his despondent friend Bill, the unnamed protagonist answers Bill's question "What started the damn war anyhow?" with,

> "Oh," I said cheerfully, "Somebody shot somebody else, then the Huns cut the breasts of all the French girls, then--"That one still has breasts," said Bill eyeing the barmaid. I smiled, "You're beginning to look around, eh?"[43]

The story's message is mixed, as rough men though they may be, the reader is supposed to sympathize. Sympathy, while not specifically condoning the men's thoughts and actions, is meant to inspire pity in the reader.

From its first article, *Masses* articulated its mandate to "address itself to the workers, to the poor farmers, to the jobless man in the breadline."[44] These short stories, drawn from Canada, the U.S. and Britain, achieved this goal (though admittedly more urban than rural in setting),[45] but at the cost of devaluing the role of women in work, on the farm, and as unemployed workers in need of relief. Like Nesbitt's "Workless Sister", however, a short story by Ruby Ronan, "One Day Service", stands out.[46] Set in a "woman's" industry of laundering service, the ratio of men to women in the story is about equal. The roles are typical, the women workers clean while the working men deliver. The boss is male. The story is full of detail, the process of factory line production as well as specific attention to laundering work. The characters speak very little, and even their thoughts are mere snapshots. Though the class tension is evident throughout, gender tension is also present.

The story begins with the regular patter and banter of a service industry. Orders are taken, the boss continually harps on workers, and drivers complain about orders. By the second paragraph, a driver has already snapped at the girl taking orders, she has retorted in kind. The setting and the job create tension and resentment:

> Four girls are working in the choked atmosphere. . . . They do not speak to each other. Speed and overtime in the summer must make up for the slack winter season, when they work in half-time shifts. Now all they say to each other is "Make it snappy!"[47]

Charlie, "an undersize boy of fifteen or so" is the gopher. His one entrance in the story is punctuated by his thought, "Wish I was a girl. . . .They get ten a week for all this sweat. Wish I was a girl. Five dollars don't go far."[48] Within this atmosphere, the boss is clearly the enemy, one who receives "black looks cast at him by the workers."[49] Unlike other stories, however, the narrator never ceases to remind the reader that the boss is male, while the cheap labour is female. The notion of the "double bind" comes out very clearly in the most didactic paragraph of the story,

> A subdued babble of voices follows, but every girls turns diligently to her work. They seem to be merely tired, hot and worthless machines. But they are thinking, silently. They are unorganized. But day after day these incidents grow, loom larger. There is a silent tension among them, solidarity. Very few among them are getting the Minimum Wage. Yet in the minds of one or two there is the knowledge that "The boss will not enforce the law. We must enforce it." Knowledge grows.[50]

The story summarizes the case of women workers during the Depression. There is a minimum wage, which men do not have, but it is rarely enforced. As a norm, women work in unorganized occupations, and few union leaders were willing to involve themselves in what appeared a losing cause. The Communists had made great gains in these areas of labour organization, at first under the banner of the Workers Unity League and later by adopting the banner of the American Committee of Industrial Organization.[51] Despite the ready-made formula for conflict, few short stories picked up on this setting. In theatre, which thrived on conflict but with few props, political issues could be fought on the street, in the workplace, or on the battlefield. The Workers Theatre used all three, but the most natural setting seemed to be the home, and this emphasized a different tension.

Political plays such as Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson's "War in the East" and Dorothy Livesay's "Joe Derry" kept the divisions clear: in the first instance, a line was drawn between Japanese workers (conscripted to fight against the Chinese) and the religious, military, political and economic leaders of Japan; in the second, the exportation of Young

Communist League member Joe Derry pits the YCL against the authorities. Ryerson's play is not subtle, even a bit naïve. The Japanese workers begin to realize the futility of fighting their comrades, the Chinese workers, when they should be warring against the ruling class. The singing of the Internationale from the Chinese camp convinces them of their class solidarity.[52] Livesay's play, a mass chant exhorting fellow YCL members to "DEFEND JOE DERRY!", is also explicitly propagandist, and YCL members are portrayed as heroes against the evil forces of government. The same clarity of conviction between good and evil, however, did not exist in plays of a more domestic nature. Although females played more important roles, they were generally antagonistic characters in the working man's life.

"Unemployment", by Trevor Maguire, is set "in the kitchen of a poverty stricken working-class home."[53] The list of characters begins with "Arthur Dickson, an unemployed labourer." Next listed is "Mrs. Dickson, his wife." The third character listed is "Nellie, their daughter, a girl of seventeen." The scene opens with "Mrs. D" rocking an infant to sleep, watching outside as her husband enters the front door. His clothes clearly depict a "working man". The dialogue is short, written in a style known as stychomythia, or verbal sword-play. Unlike the witty, urbane exchanges of domestic comedies, however, the words here are meant to cut deeply. Arthur, or "A.D." is the protagonist, while Mrs. D. plays out her role as a character foil.

The brevity of the play results in a story-line full of tension and quickly rising to a climax. Their first exchange, over A.D's theft of two fish and some bread, sets the tone of conflict:

> **Mrs. D:** Where did you get them?
> **A.D.:** I pinched'em. Fry'em up quick. I'm hungry as a wolf.
> **Mrs. D.:** Pinched them! You'll be landin' in gaol one of these days.
> **A.D:** You should worry! We got to eat, ain't we? And if I get caught and sent down they'll have to feed me.
> **Mrs. D. (sneeringly):** Oh, yes. And what will I do then, me with a young baby?
> **A.D.:** Never mind about that now. Get busy and cook up these fish.[54]

Arthur sends him away with no money and a series of wisecracks, Mrs. Dickinson belittles him for his attitude and for waking up the baby, as well as his inability to prevent their eviction. She spits, "Put up a fight! What a brave man you are!"[56] Their bickering does not slow down the action, and in the rapid fire entrance and exit that typified this theatre, the collectors reclaim the unpaid-for property, the Dickinson's daughter enters, sees her furniture gone, and leaves home for good.

With only the Dickinsons and a small crying baby left on stage, the conflict rises quickly to its violent climax, as Mrs. Dickinson "becomes hysterical",[57] calls Arthur "a dirty brute"[58] and taunts him to "hit me! You're a brave man! Go on, beat your wife!"[59] Arthur slaps her, and the play ends with Arthur "advancing slowly towards her."[60] He

> grabs her by the neck and bends her backwards. Amid the noises coming from her throat and the crying of the baby his voice is heard shouting "You God damn b----! You--God--damn---- [CURTAIN].[61]

The Canadian Labour Monthly first published this play in May/June 1928. Chronologically, therefore, it is not strictly a "Depression play", yet it is an obvious example of "working-class realism". It may even earn some kudos for depicting the working-class in all its ugly manifestation. Yet the play is meant to be didactic as well. Arthur is a beaten man, and he has been beaten by the system. He has built up his defences: petty thievery, acceptance of a Spartan existence, and, above all, sarcasm. What he does not have the defences for, however, is the loss of support from his partner. Though his violence is not explicitly condoned, the audience is meant to understand his actions. Mrs. Dickinson (whose first name is never used) becomes the target of his violence, not as a passive victim, but because she is a needling, taunting, vindictive woman.

Frank Love's "Looking Forward" is also set in a small apartment. A member of the Progressive Arts Club, Love wrote this as entertainment for a hunger march on Ottawa by the unemployed workers in 1932.[62] Unlike the mother in "Unemployed", in this play the mother has no fight left, and has resigned herself to a life of misery. Her daughter Betty, on the other hand, "a girl of twenty two"[63] is full of life and rhetoric. She

denounces the system which has brought about their desperate financial situation, spitting out the words "CHARITY. The dividends of the working class. I wish I was a man."[64] Her mother instantly attributes Betty's independent, political talk to "that young man of yours, that's who it is who is putting them wild notions in your head."[65] Betty replies, "This is no time for the women to be sitting at home moping. Their place is in the streets with their men fighting shoulder to shoulder."[66] Typically, the play ends on a pathetic note, with an eviction notice from the bailiff, read aloud by Betty.

Given the genesis of the play, as propaganda for marching workers, Betty's diction is intended to be less realistic and more agitational, but again there are many layers of messages attached to the play. She is described as "modernistic. Short bobbed hair, of course,"[67] a depiction full of negative connotation. Implicitly, the audience is made to agree with her mother. Obviously Betty's ideas have come from her "man"; her words sound as hollow as a slogan. Significantly, her diction is coarser when she drops the rhetoric in order to belittle her father for not protesting the cuts in rations:

> I'll bet when you were in France and the rations failed to come up and you knew the Germans had lots of grub on their side you wouldn't have gone hungry very long. I don't know what's happened to you men since the war.[68]

In all plays, the intention of the playwrights was two-fold: to create a relationship with their audience based on shared, recognizable experiences, and to give direction to an already converted crowd. In a short note accompanying the play, however, Frank Love accounts for an unintended reason for its success. Watching a performance before an audience of about six hundred workers, Love found that "When the play ended they were literally rolling in the aisles and I was among them."[69] He notes the bathos elicited by the familiar scene with unfamiliar actions by the characters, but although he credits the acting ability of Julius Smyth as the defeated man, it seems far more likely that Betty, with the majority of the lines and an abundance of incongruous diction, was the burlesque character. Whatever Love's intentions, audiences were not prepared to be educated by a girlish flapper, and her appeal to bring women into the fighting fold of the unemployed, when "strong, skilled men" had already failed, would not have been taken seriously.[70]

As with the short stories, when theatre involved the capitalist class, women were either morally loose or sexually barren reformists (implicitly "bourgeois feminists"). Canada's most notorious agit-prop play, "Eight Men Speak"[71] opens on a "lovely and expensive 'landscaped' garden of the Warden of the Penitentiary, Major Stone".[72] The opening scene is described,

> As the curtain rises, a TORCHSINGER, standing on the terrace, sings the last few bars of "Give me Liberty or Give me Love". She is a blond siren, expensively dressed, and though evidently paid by the Stones to entertain at their week-end party, is quite at ease in the company in which she finds herself. She flirts openly with the SUPERINTENDENT of the Penitentiaries, who is seated at the table on the terrace. . . and it is quite evident that the Superintendent is by no means indifferent to her charms. (I.i)

Amongst these "men of high authority" are two other women. One, Mrs. Berkeley, is "a sleek adventuress from England" (I.i). According to the description, "other people's husbands are her meat" (I.i). The other woman is Mrs. Stone, "white haired and matronly [who] acts as the perfect hostess" (I.i). Other women to appear in the play include the stenographer, "quite an attractive young lady" (I.iii) whose directions include her sitting down and arranging her skirt "so that a good view can be had of her knees" (I.iii); a "sobsister" writes the society column (II.ii); a girl and a woman appear in separate scenes learning politics from their respective men, (II.iii & iv.) Against this stereotypical trend, however, is the Canadian Labour Defence League organizer, who is attorney for the prosecution on behalf of Tim Buck, leader of the CPC. She is described as being "dressed quietly, in a neat suit; her attitude is one of entire confidence in her case".[73] She demonstrates intelligence, wit, sympathy and efficiency. Though she remains unnamed, the strength of her character outweighs any of the negative implications of making her another unidentifiable woman.

The local genesis of the play may have influenced the casting of a female character in this role. It required a large cast, up to thirty people, where most of these plays involved no more than four or five. The "Kingston Eight", the Minister of Justice, Major Stone, the guards, all these characters were played by men. Yet, many women were involved with Canadian workers' theatre in the 1930s. In fact, the prominence of

their activity is quite overwhelming. In Montreal, Lilian Mendelssohn directed the New Theatre. Jean "Jim" Watts was the very soul of the Progressive Arts Club Workers Theatre in Toronto, and directed the early rehearsals for "Eight Men Speak." When, according to Toby Ryan, "the load became too big," Watts "turned over the job to me but continued as assistant."[74] With such a strong female presence in the acting, directing, and writing of the play (Mildred Goldberg's name is, in fact, the only one to appear on the first publication of "Eight Men Speak" in *Masses*, September 1934), the casting of one prominent, impressive, thoughtful female role is not surprising. As more women became involved in the culture of radical expression, the representation of women began to alter more noticeably.

The gradual rise in the number of women artists and writers who joined left-wing groups coincided with a shift away from rigidly-defined goals of proletarian literature and toward broader themes of social realism. An increasing importance of the community over the workplace grew as the Depression weakened workers' ties to their jobs. In true Marxist fashion, moreover, control of the "means of production" also contributed to a more sensitive portrayal of women in the latter half of the 1930s. With the advent of *New Frontier*, women played prominent roles as editors and contributors. This had a significant impact on the representation of women in social realist writing, art and drama.

Although the transported genres of proletarian literature and socialist realism did not rise to prominence in the early years of the depression in Canada, the growing numbers of unemployed workers, combined with ineffective government solutions, still inspired radical artists and writers to express their sympathy for the underprivileged and their anger against prospering capitalists. The growth of protest parties and organizations for the unemployed coincided with the Popular Front against the rise of fascism. The new focus turned to oppression of all types, rather than a strictly class-inspired protest. As a result, socially-conscious cultural producers responded positively to the less restrictive Soviet doctrine of agit-prop. The successor to *Masses*, *New Frontier*, reflected the policies of the Popular Front and the broader focus of subjugation in any form. In particular, women artists and writers seemed encouraged to pursue an examination of women's special oppression under patriarchy.

Chapter Four - *New Frontier*: A Separate Case

On March 16, 1936, a young activist named Beatrice Ferneyhough wrote to the *Daily Clarion*, expressing her desire for a magazine which

> would describe, with realism and compassion, the conditions of life for most women -- including low wages and unemployment -- and could help women to see these problems as social rather than personal.[1]

Existing bourgeois magazines, complained Ferneyhough, instructed women "in anti-intellectual and submissive attitudes. . . implying we are mentally inferior, instinctual and emotional."[2] She envisioned a magazine which

> would speak to our needs. . . to know about women elsewhere. . . to understand our role in public life, receive guidance and learn from the experience of others.[3]

Although this dream was never realized, two weeks after Ferneyhough's article the first edition of *New Frontier* was published. The brainchild of Jean "Jim" Watts, who invested her inheritance to finance the journal, *New Frontier* served as a model of equity between the sexes. At the administrative level, Jocelyn Moore served as the business manager, while the four chief editors included social worker Margaret Gould and social worker/poet Dorothy Livesay along with Leo Kennedy and J.F. White. Watt's husband, William Lawson, was given the job of managing editor. During its short life, from April 1936 to 1937, no other magazine in Canada published as many articles, poems, short stories and plays written by women, not even *Chatelaine*.

There was, however, no stated goal of "affirmative action" in the magazine. In the first editorial, the stated aims of *New Frontier* were twofold:

> 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.[4]

The domestic scene dominated, but as with *Masses*, *New Frontier* paid special attention to the Soviet Union. In time, the Spanish Civil War became a far more pressing issue. Yet over its seventeen month period, three women's issues figured prominently in *New*

Frontier: women's role in communities, in society in general, and as a necessary factor in a redeemed social condition.

The change in Comintern policy in 1935 was a major influence in fostering a wider appeal for socialist activity. Norman Penner suggests that it "changed the main direction of the Communist parties, especially the European and American sections, from the "class versus class" theme to the fight against fascism"[5] and that Communist tactics were completely revamped "to emphasize the common issue and objectives that would unite the Communists and Socialists."[6] The United Front against War and Fascism gave a magazine such as *New Frontier* the impetus to explore a variety of issues, all under the inspiration of preventing another conflict of the magnitude of World War I.

The first edition contained an impressive list of contributors: A.M. Klein, John Strachey, Mary Quayle Innis, Herman Voaden, Dorothy Livesay, C.B. Macpherson, and Morley Callaghan, and it was heavily weighted in favour of an open forum rather than a publication of writers' and artists' work. Nonetheless, of the three short stories published, two were written by young women whose careers would blossom in later years: Mary Quayle Innis and Dorothy Livesay (publishing under the pseudonym Katharine Bligh). The other came from an equally promising young writer, A.M. Klein.

Klein's story, "Friends, Romans, Hungrymen," is written in first person narrative. His use of vernacular, "So one day, way back in the time of the fairytales, the boss called me into his cave and said that he was sorry but he was going to lay me off,"[7] and his protagonist, an unemployed worker, is standard fare for proletarian literature. Also typical is the sarcastic humour, seen in comments such as "I would like to be a sweeper in the mint"[8] or exchanges like: "why don't you throw yourself from a sky-scraper? I haven't enough weight to hurt myself."[9] The tremendous sense of self-importance and self-delusion in the protagonist is compensation for his sense of worthlessness.

Keeping up appearances is also the controlling idea in Dorothy Livesay's "Six Years." Unlike Klein, however, Livesay is far more aware of the effects that working, or lack of employment, had on the whole community. Through her own experiences as a social worker, she picked up on the many coping devices families developed in order to keep themselves going through the tough times. Livesay set her story in a factory

town, susceptible to mass unemployment through a shut-down. Told by one of the housewives, the story stresses the apparent dichotomy between blue and white collar workers, and how false the division is when all are affected by the Depression.

The story revolves around the stand-offish Mrs. Dakins and her husband, a bank-clerk, who avoid contact with the neighbouring blue-collar families. Despite some attempts by the women to woo Mrs. Dakins into their company, such as invitations to euchre or a social, she shuns them. Yet the women all know Mrs. Dakins' husband has lost his job, and that the couple are destitute. In a slightly unrealistic conclusion, the narrator persuades Mrs. Dakin to bring her husband Everett to a meeting with the working-class Unemployed Association.

Despite the static pace and homiletic style, Livesay's portrait of the community is authentic. Given the prevalence of poverty, people made their own entertainment, and communities often held social gatherings. Furthermore, the white-collar worker, such as a clerk or a low-level bureaucrat, was on an economic par with a "skilled" blue-collar worker, and equally unprotected.[10]

"Staver" by Mary Quayle Innis, involves a complex relationship between a housewife, "Edith", and a young, unemployed man, Staver, who comes to her in desperate need of work. The third person narrative records the thoughts of Edith, making her by far the most developed character. The story is three times as long as Klein's, mainly due to a lengthy exploration of Edith's thought process. Her obsession with Staver dominates the story:

> Edith thought about him all day. She imagined his wife--very young, with blond hair and his fat, dark haired baby. He must have had a good job before the depression, he walked as if he had had everything.[11]

Like an infatuated lover, Edith fixated on his presence in her lonely world. She tells herself that it is "ridiculous how she looked forward to Staver's coming", and acknowledged it was "like a child waiting for Christmas."[12] She tried to impress him, "in her new blue dress and hat, walking in her shining white shoes over the crisp, sharp-smelling grass she wished childishly that Staver would notice her."[13] Paying Staver from her own pocket-money, however, eventually Edith can no longer afford him. His requests

for work tail off, until one day, walking downtown with her husband, she sees Staver in a new overcoat and new hat, obviously having procured work elsewhere. The story ends, at it began, with Edith's thoughts:

> He would never need her again. She felt her world go black but she made so little sign that Francis was not interrupted in the remark he was making. But he had to repeat it twice before his wife answered him.[14]

The most remarkable aspect of these three short stories is the criticism offered by Morley Callaghan. Asked by the editors of *New Frontier* to comment, Callaghan completely misses the nuances of Livesay's and Innis' stories. His opening paragraph is astounding:

> These three stories have one good quality in common; they are honest. Unfortunately the three of them are to some extent variations of the same theme--the man out of work.[15]

He notes that "Mrs. Innis writes very sensitively", but "in this particular story the emotion is too diluted, especially in the body of the piece."[16] Katharine Bligh's piece leaves "no doubt that the author's heart and even her head maybe is in the right place, but which for all that is singularly devoid of feeling."[17] He offers a valid criticism on the use of colloquial speech, suggesting that it only be used if it will give the story "added freshness and life."[18] He believes "the brightest and most amusing of the three pieces" is A.M. Klein's.[19] Reiterating his complaint about the theme of "the man out of work," Callaghan suggests that "we ought to be hearing a lustier crowing, soon someone ought to tell us that there is some passion in the land."[20] Callaghan's interpretations serve as a poignant reminder of the gap between authorial intention and reader response.

Perhaps the most peripheral issue in Innis' "Staver" is the problem of unemployment. Callaghan complains about the dilution of emotion without understanding Edith's psychological state; a complete infatuation with a young, attractive man who has invaded her world of isolation and desperation. Written twenty years before Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, this story's strength is the very sterility of Edith's emotions; though Staver has unwittingly struck a chord in Edith, she has become so deadened in her world as to make her respond sluggishly. Her introverted, self-doubting personality reveals clearly the crippling effects of isolation on her mind.[21]

Livesay's piece explores this same psychological state in the character of Mrs. Dakin, but because the story is told by a woman in the community, the central insight is the benevolence and healing qualities of a community during times of crisis. Livesay's approach to literature in the 1930s, as will be discussed in the next chapter, reaches a much higher level of didacticism and political propaganda than most writers from this period attained, but her years as a social worker contributed to a sensitive treatment of community relationships during crises.[22]

As Kenneth Hughes points out in his introduction to Voices of Discord: Canadian Short Stories from the 1930s, experiments in realism such as these three stories all shared the concept of the individual character as type. That is,

> because a writer deals with apparently isolated characters, and seeks to deal in psychological depth with those characters, does not mean that the writer necessarily upholds bourgeois individualism.[23]

Nor does it mean, as Callaghan assumes, that the only issue important to the writers of this time is "the man out of work." Each character is a synecdoche, a part of society meant to represent a much wider segment.

J.K. Thomas' "Production" is one story which not only answers Callaghan's complaint by focusing instead on women working at a tomato canning plant, but also by revealing a political agenda.[24] Like Ruby Ronan's "One Day Service", this story shows the exploitation of women's labour and the gendered hierarchy. Both the inspector and the foreman are male, as is the boss. The women are paid by piece rate (four cents a basin of peeled tomatoes) and are legislated to work no more than nine hours while the men get an hourly wage of twenty cents and work fifteen hours a day. Unlike Ronan's story, however, this one is narrated by a female worker, and more significantly, gender, not class, is the key factor.

The plot revolves around Helen, a twenty-four year old who is again late for work. Only the three "girls", the narrator, Maggie and Sally, know the reason: "Morning sickness gets'em like that, you know."[25] As soon as they knew about her condition, Maggie and Sally "had helped her by slipping tomatoes they had peeled into her basin when she felt low."[26] This day, though Helen slips in unnoticed, she is eventually caught by the

foreman, Blore. He fires her, but not without a verbal parry from both Sally and Maggie. He yells at them to mind their own business, and again tells Helen to get out. She answers by throwing up on the floor. Sally and Maggie help her to the door.

The story contains numerous indicators of a socialist-feminist response to the Depression. Though both male and female workers are exploited, the author clearly feels that Canadian legislation is favouring men. By focusing on the particular state of Helen, there is an acknowledgement of women's special case as workers. Furthermore, there is a sense of women's collective consciousness and understanding, and of male brutality and insensitivity.

More didactic is Marion Nelson's "What's Wrong With Us, Webb?"[27] Gender issues play an important role in this story of a young school teacher's decision to quit his job at a boarding school. The only woman in the story, Webb's ex-partner Frances, left Webb due to his inability to take the precipitous state of the world seriously. In a move reminiscent of agit-prop plays, Frances had tried to enlighten Webb by giving him pamphlets and a string of novels about people on relief. She "accused him of having a Platonic belief in the perpetuation of a trained governing class".[28] His responses, that "he didn't give a hoot in hell who governed so long as *he* was left undisturbed," and "as for the working class, poor devils, he couldn't feel strongly about a section of the community so far removed from himself"[29] both serve as unsubtle attacks by the author on those who felt themselves above the problems of the Depression.

The world Webb lives in smacks of the removed and self-important world of British public schools. A fellow teacher, Paley

> had the merest suspicion of a burr, which Webb had at first hated as effeminate. But in reality there was nothing womanish about Paley--his sport were beyond reproach. . . as one grew to know him, the burr ceased to be noticeable.[30]

In an odd juxtaposition, Webb muses on how the masters did not greatly care for Paley because "his questioning of their complacency was irksome." Then, "Webb had often thought that Paley would be more popular among women than with men."[31] The observation is an uneasy one; Webb talks of socialism, organizing the teachers into unions, even teaches history as a mockery of wars and "without a laudation of famous

heroes".[32] Why does this make him more popular with women than men? Is it perhaps his desire to change existing systems of inequality, or maybe his sensitivity to the fate of the unfortunate, or might it simply have to do with his own "femininity"? Unlike her explicit criticisms of capitalism, however, Nelson's own view on the roles of women and men is less obvious.

The theoretical underpinnings of Marion Nelson's short story can be better understood by looking at a book review she wrote for *New Frontier* entitled "Why Women Write."[33] Primarily an analysis of Margaret Lawrence's The School of Femininity, Nelson broadens her review to examine the wider social implications of women under patriarchy. She attacks Lawrence's thesis that women write out of biological and psychiatric necessity, "to escape the fate of womanhood" and instead argues that "this is fundamentally a social rather than a psychological situation."[34] Where Lawrence proposes that a woman chooses to live with a man who is financially secure in preference to one who contents her sexually as "a matter of race", Nelson counters with the claim "It may be, more radically, an affair of commonsense economics."[35]

When Nelson leaves aside the particulars of the book by Lawrence to place these issues in the context of society, she becomes even more strident. She writes: "Women have by no means yet reached their goal. The position of women in society is not stationary; the struggle goes on."[36] Pointing to the Soviet Union, Nelson states,

> Women's biological load *can* be eased by a society that requires women to thrown off their tradition-ingrained lethargy because it has a use and a place for them that no society had before.[37]

Returning to Lawrence, Nelson writes, "This book will serve as a glorification of that middle-class woman who feels 'that femininity is a sheer and lovely quality'."[38] Clearly unconvinced, she concludes with the declaration:

> But, along with such, there are today hundreds of thousands of women who, without any biological hurt at all, would be only too ready to risk the chiffon-beauty of their femininity for the sake of the real job of work.[39]

Although this review does not define her representation of Paley in "What's Wrong With Us, Webb?" Nelson's sentiments clearly place her on the side of those who question rather than those who accept the mores of society.

The review by Marion Nelson demonstrates that while the first issue of *New Frontier* set a precedent that would continue to value women's writing equally with men's, their contribution was not to be limited to short stories. Women wrote stories, reviews, and articles without hiding their socialist, feminist or socialist-feminist beliefs. In *New Frontier*, the solution to the "woman question" was no longer to wait for the revolution of the working class, it was to root out and expose the oppression of women.[40]

Repeatedly, women commentators attacked social conditioning rather than simple economics (and never "biological determinism") as the reason for women's subordination in society. Marjorie King takes a purely feminist stance in her ironically titled essay "Women are Mugs."[41] King argues that the middle-class woman has been made into a "mug" by social conditioning, such as the need to marry and keep house for a living, leaving her "cut off from the conditions of the world" and "to realizing her ambitions vicariously, through husband or children."[42] She notes how home life and children make them unhealthy and apolitical; because their home is their work, they get neither variety nor stimulus nor relaxation there. Without a job, "women's urge to work and create goes into clothes, house and food."[43] The middle-class woman becomes cold, "warped by unsatisfactory sexual life" and out of touch "with friends and activities which formerly stimulated and developed her."[44] For middle-class women, concludes King, "the only ultimate escape is economic equality."[45]

Working-class women, on the other hand, are not caught with "the claptrap of stereotyped, meaningless and social obligations and conventions in house-furnishing and table-setting and food."[46] Theirs is a different oppression, though King does not address the case of working women in this essay. By specifying their different economic status, however, she is implicitly uniting their shared gender status.

Editor Margaret Gould's "Women: Bound or Free"[47] is another step-by-step analysis of women's role in society, and an attack on "essentialist" differences. She opens the essay with the assertion,

> The placid acceptance of a "woman problem" should be spiritedly resented by those it is supposed to concern. . . . There should be, of course,

> provision for protecting the child-bearing function; but when this is rightly regarded as a function rather than a personal disability, it is a problem, not woman but all society.[48]

Explicitly rejecting women's insecurity and dependence on men as "natural", Gould declares, "Women are held back by various social and economic considerations from doing what they might do and becoming what they might become."[49]

Using a contemporary study, Women in the Civilized State, by John Presland (an English woman writing under a pseudonym), Gould undermines a series of arguments used against working women. She points out that women do not take men's jobs: "the majority of women are still in traditional women's occupations."[50] To the argument "women do not regard their jobs as a life-work" because they quit when they marry, Gould cites Presland's findings that 60% of the single women support dependents, and 14% of the women workers are married, statistics we now know are conservative.[51] Finally, to the charge "that the employment of women has been injurious to the marriage rate, to society and to women themselves, that it has made child-bearing more dangerous and the infant death-rate higher,"[52] Gould, through Presland, sees this as placing effect before cause; employment of women is positive for society as marriage becomes more equal and women have a higher sense of worth and achievement.

Citing other studies, however, Gould points out the contradiction:

> On one hand, the contention that women and society have been the better for women's economic independence, on the other, the tragic conditions which exist for them in employment outside the home,[53]

and she places the blame for this contradiction squarely on "our society", which "is designed not to encourage their advance, but at best only to tolerate it."[54] As a result, instead of providing the means for proper conditions of work, "we tolerate a condition of affairs in which women are driven by actual want and starvation into ill-paid, slavish work."[55]

Demonstrating both a socialist and feminist ideology, Gould is quick to point out that:

> This is not only a woman's problem. Men also suffer from low wages, from the inadequacies of the educational system, from a burdened, limited life and outlook. We are aware that if employers are blocked in their

> exploitation of women, they turn and exploit the men workers in the same degree. . . . The problem of freedom and security for women is part and parcel of the problem of freedom and security for the whole of society.[56]

According to Gould, the solution is neatly and succinctly provided in Mrs. Kirkwood's "lucid little pamphlet" called Women and the Machine Age:

> We need, she says, a system of economic security, a new morality for marriage, education against idleness, a social conscience, and the elevation of the standards of human character.[57]

Margaret Gould then voiced one of the prime motivations for Canadians to join the Communist Party of Canada, or other organizations such as the Friends of the Soviet Union: where oppression once existed, suggests Gould, it exists no longer in the Soviet Union. Evidence was found in women's right to work, the Institute for the Protection of Mothers and Children, easy divorce laws, and a consciousness amongst women about social conditions, all of which have contributed to a utopian society.[58]

Gould's admiration for Soviet Russia, however, concludes with a socialist, rather than specifically a feminist demand:

> It is sufficiently clear that what is needed here and now is no narrow sectarian struggle for special legislation and education merely to ameliorate women's lot. We need, rather, an understanding of the social and economic conditions which have produced the so-called woman problem. We have the incentive, we need now the will and courage to action.[59]

Her respect for the Soviet experiment led to a trip there in the autumn of 1936. When she returned, she reported on her findings in *New Frontier*. Not surprisingly, Gould saw it as "an exciting place to a student of social history and social science" and also:

> an exciting place to a social worker who is dealing with practical social problems, with family problems, with health and children's problems. It is an exciting place to me, because it is the world's first social laboratory where plans for human betterment are being applied, at one stroke, to the whole population, on a national scale and national plan.[60]

Like Fourier and Marx before her, Gould sees the state of women as the key indicator of society.[61] Amongst the eight social conditions happening "for the first time", Gould asserts: "equality between men and women as workers, as persons, as citizens, is in operation," and "a nation is proving that wealth can be produced without the exploitation of one man by another, without the subjection of women and children."[62]

Less utopian, but no less praiseworthy, is her second article on the Soviet Union, "Those Poor Russians!" Asked to compare the Soviet standard of living with the Canadian, Gould admits that Soviet workers have few "luxuries" such as ties and silk stockings. Instead, she stresses the state provisions, health protection, employment protection and security of income for old age. To Canadians, whose memories of the Bennett regime were fresh, and whose present Prime Minister Mackenzie King seemed slow to implement his promises, Gould's articles were deliberately provocative, and served to undermine negative perceptions of the Soviet Union.[63] Her statements on the role of women in Soviet society, however inaccurate subsequent studies have demonstrated, still served as an impetus for women in Canada to challenge the injustices of society.[64]

Placing Canadian society in the context of international events was a key feature of the journal. *New Frontier*'s November 1936 edition featured material on the Spanish Civil War, including an article entitled "Three Spanish Women" by Sybil M. Gordon. With the role of women in revolution as the theme, she began,

> To those for whom the revolutionary woman is typified by the wild-eyed Madame Therese of Charles Dickens, sentimental chronicler of the French Revolution, La Passionaria is "the Red Carmen". To the people of Spain, Dolores Ibarruri, Communist deputy for Oviedo and wife of an Asturian miner, is the voice of humanity. And the voice of humanity in Spain and throughout the world is a woman's voice.[65]

Gordon refers to Ibarruri's radio message, "All women! All men forward for democracy and the Republic" as "the voice of the new woman, calling upon her sisters first..., not the voice of hate, but the voice of compassion" and she implores her reader (implicitly assumed to be a woman?) that "the women of the world know that more than sympathy is needed to save the children of Spain, even if the democratic governments of the world do not."[66]

Despite women such as Ibarruri and Martinez Sierra appealing to the Spanish to avoid civil war, "they were drowned out by the thunder of fascist guns," but "here in Canada the women can speak. And Maria Sierra has written the words we must cry aloud."[67] An astonishingly radical essay, Gordon eschews connotations of bourgeois

tendencies associated with the term "feminism" to declare "[t]he clearest analysis of the Spanish feminist movement...was written by the well-known Spanish feminist and socialist, Margarita Nelkin."[68] Nelkin clearly won over Gordon, who quotes her *La Condicion Social de la Mujer en Espana* at length, including Nelkin's final declaration:

> Only economic necessity will make our feminist movement rise rationally to consider the social and legal aspects which have been ignored in principle and which are indispensable for the complete liberty to work, and for which all those who work are obliged in their own interests, if they are women, to be feminists.[69]

Jean Watts, who went to Spain with the Mackenzie-Papineau battalion, contributed two articles to her own magazine on the situation there. Using a style known as "reportage", Watts' "Spain is Different" is an examination of Madrid under the shelling of fascist bombs.[70] Reportage "required a certain discipline: a balance between editorializing and artistry, an eye for vivid and telling detail."[71] It lent itself to wry observation, such as "living so close to death, you don't take it seriously anymore."[72] She carried this wit through in her next article from Spain, "Gentleman of the Press," a brief encounter with a brash reporter whose actions were suspiciously reminiscent of Ernest Hemmingway.[73] From outright attacks on male oppression to subtle admonishments, women who wrote for *New Frontier* displayed an enthusiasm for discussion on women's unique place in society.

Yet, while female writers willingly attacked chauvinism in society, men still scripted stories that objectified and stereotyped women. These were by no means prevalent in the journal, but one author, a much-touted and regular contributor named Jack Parr, continually placed women in roles of subordination or as antagonists. In light of articles such as "Three Spanish Women", "Women--Bound or Free" and "Women are Mugs", Parr's stories are doubly shocking for their treatment of women.

In "Proletarian Literature in Canada," Ruth I. Mackenzie focuses one section on those who are "clearly Communistic and whose subject matter is primarily proletarian."[74] According to her:

> Outstanding among these is Jack Parr. His stories show the worker to be a good fellow, likeable and human, while the employer is a villain, a cheat, prone to having faulty machinery which results in bloody accidents to

> innocent workers. . . .Parr's stories bear the stamp of authentic experience and sincere conviction.[75]

The danger in Mackenzie's review lies in her final assertion. Jack Parr's prose belittled, objectified and subordinated women as teases and sex objects who lacked composure. Its "authenticity" reveals a disturbing attitude toward women.

In "Rush This One, Muxer," the first person narration quickly reveals a no-nonsense communications operator.[76] "Muxer" comes from Multiplex Telegraphy, a job requiring a reasonable command of the English language and typing skills. When he arrives at work, his first thought contains an expletive directed at a fellow worker, Ann, and he continues in that vein for the entire story:

> Where the hell is Ann? The little so-and-so has beat me to it and come up early for an hour's overtime. . . ."Well," I murmur, bending low the way it makes her sore, "did darling pappa die this morning come at once love to all? She ducks her shoulder so I can't blow in her ear and makes a nice womanly little remark loud enough for Mack to hear. It riles him, the way we play around, Ann and me.[77]

Having finished "playing around" with Ann, the narrator (Jack) is vexed to discover that he's working with Freda:

> Days like this the women get just a little ratty and Freda loses plenty of sleep in the summer. "Why the hell," I grouch to myself as I limber up my fingers, waiting to take my place, "doesn't she get married if she can't take the racket?"[78]

It would be easy to dismiss the misogyny as too specific a charge against a misanthrope, but two insights into Jack's mind precludes this view. When he first comes into the office, he comments on "the old Morse men":

> [T]hey sit up here at the keys, pounding out the wires to the small towns or cocking their ears at the sounders, seemingly unconscious, live machines. If you ever trouble to dig under their stolid patience you'll find human beings, ready to tell of the time when the western rails were young.[79]

On the other hand, when he notices a typo in a telegram, he "curse[s] the girls down in the office."[80] Obviously, the women aren't worth the time needed to find out their human qualities.

The real bitterness is reserved for Freda. When she hears Jack cursing, she immediately reacts:

> "I'm awfully sorry, Jack," says Freda, as if it was her fault, and looking over at Ann to see if she's watching us, "they're terribly sloppy, those phone girls." But I don't happen to belong to this dame's stag harem. "You better watch your own stuff, sweet-heart. . . . Jeez, does that get her green![81]

Jack's lustful hatred for Freda pervades his thoughts. "Now Freda's no dead number; I've seen her throw a look at old Phil and make him take his pipe out just to smile at her. . . .Her dress is one of those close transparent outfits, and if there's anything under it, it's cellophane".[82] When Jack takes a break, he comes up from the locker-room to notice that "Our lusty beauty is still punching".[83] Freda's agitation mounts, and Jack continues to give her a hard time about it.

Finally, "Freda has made the worst mistake a Muxer ever can"[84] and everyone in the office waits for her reaction:

> It comes all right. I've seen them go before, but not like this. They'll start to bawl or take a pass at someone near; or a man will rip the tape and curse. But Freda, she jumps right up and turns to me. Grabs hold of her dress at the neck and strips it down. Right down. "Go ahead!: she screams, "look at me, you been trying to all night, you lousy ape! Get an eyeful, you. . . ." After all, Muxer or not, I'm a gentleman.
> They drag her out this Muxer who cracked her brains on Deadheads, this baby who told us a union was a waste of time; they pull her away, a feast for half a hundred pairs of old men's eyes.[85]

In the penultimate paragraph, Parr earns his authorship as a "Communist writer". Claiming that his profession is under-rated, he asks his reader, "Tell me, did you ever hear of surplus value? A guy named Marx."[86] The final line in the story mimics the mass chant, a telegram reading: "PEOPLES [sic] FRONT GOVERNMENT TAKES OVER ALL COMMUNICATIONS".[87]

Viewed in relation to the rest of *New Frontier*, Parr's style is decidedly regressive. The magazine delivered on its promise to serve as "an open forum for all shades of progressive opinion" and was particularly concerned with the role of women in society. Articles and stories in particular, and poetry less so, revealed sensitivity to race and

ethnicity as well. Artistic representation of women was equally progressive, both in terms of the images and critical commentary.

Sophie Livesay, Dorothy's sister, published a critical review of the artistic community of Canada in the first edition of *New Frontier*.[88] Giving praise to the early landscape work of the Group of Seven, Livesay suggests that by 1936, however, "the refrain is barren as some of those grey rocks." She sees nothing of interest in the remaining landscape paintings, with the exception of Emily Carr, a "more sensitive painter... who has developed some of the delicate qualities of modern French art."[89]

Special attention, and the most praise, went to Pegi Nicol:

> Here is someone who has freed herself from old standards: she has a definite plan, her forms flowing into one another, her colours alive, and over all a sense of balance and restraint.[90]

Her commentary on Nicol's ability to improve reveals a great deal about the qualities Livesay valued, qualities that were anti-modernist:

> She is interested in people and is not inhibited from expressing group feeling. There is already a feeling of mass, a blending of the human and artistic experience.[91]

Both Nicol and Livesay saw obvious value in community-oriented, socially-aware art. Paraskeva Clarke agreed, and offered her own opinion on the state of art in Canada with "Come Out From Behind the Pre-Cambrian Shield."[92] Referring to F.H. Underhill's statement:

> the finer spirits among the European artists are deciding, one after another, that in our troubled generation the artist must be red or dead,[93]

Clarke recalled Elizabeth Wyn Wood's reaction, a public expression of "her annoyance and indignation at the use of such vulgar and earthy words as "red or dead" in connection with the divine nature of the artistic personality"[94]. Wood's aloofness from real life irked Clarke.

"The throb of the people's struggle toward a better life appears to be of no importance to art and the artist"[95] complained Clarke. She felt "it was time to come down from your ivory tower, to come out from behind your pre-Cambrian Shield and dirty your gown in the mud and sweat of conflict."[96] She implored artists to "paint the

raw, sappy life that moves ceaselessly about you. . . depict happy dreams for your Canadian souls"[97] and she called on the "isolated artist" to

> think of the human being, take actual part in your own times, find their expression and translate it, help your fellow man in the struggle for the future, and dream of the art which this future will produce."[98]

Ultimately, Clarke appealed to the artist to join others "who are giving their lives for a new social order".[99]

Commentary such as Paraskeva Clarke's support Mackenzie's assertion in 1939 that *New Frontier* was a magazine with "definitely revolutionary aims."[100] It stands out as a journal of innovation, both in technique and subject matter. Novel styles such as reportage became the foundation for a journalistic standby, the human interest story. Charcoal sketches by Louis Muhlstock, Ellen Simon and Nathan Petroff were published as finished products, and featured African American women, women at work in sweat shops, and destitute mothers trying to care for their children. Largely through the work of women, the previously unanswered "woman question" was posed in numerous ways, in short stories, art, or essays and book reviews. The demise of *New Frontier* in 1937 due to financial difficulties robbed us of more contributions from many young artists and writers who would become very different practitioners by the late 1940s, when economic conditions made publication and exhibition once again possible. The journal demonstrates the positive effect on radical culture when the Popular Front was adopted by the communists. It further illustrates the dramatic and constructive change in the representation when the contribution of women rose. Finally, the journal infers a causal relationship between women in powerful management positions and the more serious attention given to the role of women in society.

While many women had prominent positions in the production of *New Frontiers* and in many other sectors of the cultural left as managers, directors, artists, actresses and writers, only very few reached the level of achievement, and even notoriety, attained by Dorothy Livesay. Her sensitivity to social causes came to her at an early age, as did her reputation as a talented poet with finely-crafted skill. Her energetic commitment to exposing inequalities of gender, race, and ethnicity, combined with her ability to write

with control, led to examples of social poetry that subtly and successfully inverted the underprivileged into positions of strength. They did not necessarily become physical or economic victors, but always displayed moral and emotional power.

Chapter Five - Dorothy Livesay: Writing for the Left

In 1939, Ruth I. Mackenzie evaluated the Canadian experiment with proletarian literature, and suggested that "although a number of our leading poets are oppposed to the existing capitalist system, Dorothy Livesay is the only one who is explicitly proletarian."[1] Even beyond her writing, Livesay's life offers a unique insight in the role of women in radical culture in Canada. As a social worker, writer, and communist, Livesay met with, and wrote about, the "hidden problems" of North America: "subversives", the unemployed, the destitute, natives in Canada and blacks in America. Both her writing and her activities reveal important preoccupations for women who joined socialist causes in the 1930s: the need for public political and social action due to the economic crisis, an awareness of gender inequality rooted in economic relations, and the belief in radical solutions as opposed to gradual adjustment.

Most commentators have identified Livesay's experience during the Depression as merely a "phase" in a young woman writer's life which faded as she matured. Right Hand Left Hand and her numerous interviews, however, reveal this period as one of heightened social awareness and genuine belief in a cause.[2] Over a period of five years, from 1932 to 1937, Livesay was an active member of the Communist Party, in both Canada and the United States. She joined cells in Toronto, Montréal, and New Jersey, wrote poetry for the Communist journal, *Masses*, and edited and contributed to *New Frontier*. In addition, she was a committe member for the Canadian League Against War and Fascism, and a member of the Communist trade union centre, the Workers Unity League. Livesay turned away from her introverted poetry and nascent modernist experiments in order to serve the cause of social revolution, and produced socialist realist poetry, reportage, and agit-prop theatre scripts. During the 1930s she achieved both literary and "socialist" success with poems such as "Day and Night", and "The Outrider" and she became Canada's foremost practitioner of reportage.[3] Her agit-prop contributions and most of her socialist realist poems have generally been considered artistic failures, however, spawned from the *zeitgeist* of the Depression and the urgency to produce a voice for the people.[4]

Livesay came to communism and the Progressive Arts Club in Canada through her experiences in Europe.[5] In the summer of 1931, her close friends Jim Watts and Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson travelled through France and Spain, listening to and learning from Otto van der Sprenkel, a professor of economics at the University of Toronto, and also a communist who had been to the Soviet Union.[6] When Livesay met Watts and Ryerson in Paris in September, they were committed and enthusiastic communists, and their passion naturally affected Livesay. Moreover, she saw the effects of the depression in Paris, and the rise of Nazi movement as well.[7]

When she returned to Canada, Livesay had the opportunity to express her newly-discovered Marxism in workers' theatre and plays. "Joe Derry" was part of the Canadian-made group of workers' plays, and she produced poems for *Masses* which revealed her conscious commitment to the Comintern line, such as "Pink Ballad", "Broadcast to Berlin", and "Canada to the Soviet Union." Her first work to appear in *Masses*, "Pink Ballad", came out in the December 1932 issue, just two weeks after her mother, Florence Livesay, was the key speaker at a local meeting of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire.[8] Small wonder Dorothy Livesay signed her poem "D.L."!

In Right Hand Left Hand, Livesay wrote: "the poem *Pink Ballad*... represents the hard line against social democracy and magazines like the *Canadian Forum*."[9] It is perhaps her most polemical poem. Though it does not appear in The Documentaries, Livesay's description of social poetry from that book is fitting. She suggests: "the plain language...the traditional iambic metres, and ideology expressed in these poems were characteristic of that period in Canada."[10] The poem begins with a "lingo" that attempts to be street-smart, up-to-date, and snappy: "Hot stuff, baby! Hot stuff, baby! / A crack and a joke and a smile."[11] But starting in the second stanza, when the attack on the social democrats begins in earnest, the upbeat meter coupled with the frivolous criticism of CCF leader J.S. Woodsworth's appearance, join together to form little more than a trite complaint: "Take a look at Woodsworth-- / See his nice goatee."[12] Unfair as the *ad hominem* attack was, it also served to undermine the more elevated aims of journal. Though name-calling with a rhythm is still name-calling, Livesay's dedication to her

cause, the urgency to create a voice for the workers against their enemies, and her adherence to CPC strategy all shaped this poem into a polemical diatribe rather than a persuasive piece.

In "Canada to the Soviet Union,"[13] she adopted the *sprechchore*, or mass chant, a form developed by Erwin Piscator, the founder of the Blue Shirt Workers' Theatre. The chant begins with the address: "I believe in the beauty of your faces, brothers and sisters / I receive the challenge from your eyes, and tremble with joy."[14] The appeal to universality and the optimistic tone continues through the first stanza. Although proletarian poetry was supposed to reflect the language of the common people, the diction is high as the speaker "trembles with joy" and describes "degenerates" who are forced to live in hostels "crawling with vermin." In the second verse, Livesay shifts to more topical events in order to stress dichotomy between Soviet hope and Canadian woe: "In this country a certain Harry Spencer / Committed suicide on Prince Arthur Street".[15] By the third verse, the glorification of the Canadian worker is equally a call to arms in the class struggle:

> Yet I believe in the beauty of your faces, brothers and sisters!
> It is reflected in light over the dull prairies,
> It is caught up in the eyes of my people, there,
> who are Polish, Finnish, Hungarian, men of the
> Ukraine;
> It glows in the gaunt, hard look of my men who are miners
> From the hills and forests of Nova Scotia away west to
> Drumheller!
> It is in the cities--your strength and determination!
> It shows itself at an eviction struggle, when Zynchuck is shot
> in the back,
> At Stratford it flares up sharply, a row of sharp faces
> unyielding --
> At Rouyn -- fifty below zero -- men are marching
> because of you![16]

Livesay does not resolve the tension between bringing topicality to poetry while maintaining the tenor of universality, but the urgency of purpose carries the poem. The final lines of the poem point to the Canadian goal of proletarian literature: "our children will have songs at last / To spur their eager feet!".[17]

Like other poets who published in *Masses*, Livesay reflects a male gender bias in "Canada to the Soviet Union". Though she believes in the beauty of the faces of "brothers **and** sisters", the workers are male. Admittedly, she chose events in which the subjects **were** male: miners, furniture workers and Nick Zynchuck, but in her later work, such as the report on the mining town of Corbin, Livesay paid equal attention to the supportive and active role of women in the mining community. The major factor affecting this shift in her writing is her actual experiences as a social worker and party activist through the mid-1930s. This also allowed her to bring in a more personal voice which resulted in more effective poetry.

Her longest poetic contribution to *Masses*, "A Girl Sees It" (1933),[18] exemplifies the difference between impersonal "prolit" and the personalized voice of social protest. In it, she attacks her own background, the isolated, protected girl who grew up in "green solariums" and Livesay exposes another common, but ignored, issue of gender oppression. The narrator is a domestic servant who falls in love with the young son of her employer. Although she says she is "proud. To be sweeping for his likes"[19] the "girl" accepts his advances, and is impregnated. Fired from her job, disgraced and distraught, she wanders the street: "Ready to die / Or go out whoring, whichever comes along."[20] Witnessing police brutality, the girl is incensed, but is held back by a hardened socialist, who "taught me the hard fact / That one lone rebel does no good at all."[21] In "A Girl Sees It," Livesay is more reflective and observant than in her other poems, yet each contribution to *Masses* was driven by the same goal: workers' revolution against the capitalists, as the poem concludes with:

> We will march up past green solariums
> With no more fear, with no more words of scorn
> Our silence and the onrush of our feet
> Will shout for us: the International's born![22]

Unlike her punchy, urgent poetry, Livesay's prose tended to be long, detailed, and slow-paced. As Callaghan noted with Livesay's first short story, "Six Years", honesty and authenticity were dominant traits. Her second short story, "Case Supervisor", reflected her experiences as a social worker, and drew attention to the minimal support given through relief. She also draws attention to social issues such as gender and ethnicity.

The only men mentioned at all are two businessmen, they do not appear in the story, but merely register their complaints with the case supervisor as to the relief agency's excessive expense report. But where men control the higher finances, in the world of social workers and their clients, women dominate as the actors. Livesay's story reflects the reality of the Depression, for even though an R.C.M.P. officer noted in 1932 that "the married man is the three governments [sic] greatest worry for the reason that he is not alone as a relief case,"[23] the financial managers during economic crisis have traditionally been the wives. Similarly, social work was an acceptable occupation for single women.

Livesay reveals her sensitivity to ethnicity when a social worker tells her supervisor, "Mrs. Caporetti doesn't want me to see her relatives. She hasn't had anything to do with them since she married an Italian. They were so mean about it before."[24] More subtly, the social workers all have Anglo-Celtic names: Miss Cherry, Miss Chilton, Miss Dogherty and Miss McQueen. Whether this is a deliberate device or based on Livesay's memory, either reason translates into realism.

Though Livesay admits that prose has never been as easy for her as her poetry, she began to develop an expertise in "reportage". Another European form, it became well-suited to North American literature: fast-paced, short in length, and "newsy". For Livesay, whose father was a journalist and had herself been a cub reporter,[25] she obviously understood the image sought by the editors of Proletarian Literature when they described it as:

> three-dimensional reporting. The writer not only condenses reality; he must get his reader to see and feel the facts. The best writers of reportage do their editorializing via their artistry. They do not themselves tell you why these men acted thus and so: the characters they describe do that job for them. And all this is done swiftly, surely, for the editors are impatient, the copy boy is waiting at the door.[26]

As a form of revolutionary literature, reportage never purported to be objective. In "Corbin--A Company Town Fights for its Life," Livesay records what she sees, but interprets with a didactic purpose.[27] As with her political poetry, she attempts to bring contemporary language into the art. She begins *in media res*, as she and a fellow communist are crossing the Alberta border on their way to a small mining town. She

interviews some of those who had recently participated in a violent strike. One of the strike leaders described the scene:

> The womenfolk were grouped in the middle and some were up front. Suddenly, as a signal, the full detachment of police ran out from the hotel and grouped themselves in two squads on either side of the caterpillar, flanking the picket line....Before we could understand anything the caterpillar was moving forward, straight at our women. And the police, instead of clearing the way, suddenly closed in, hemming us in on both sides, beating miners and their wives with pick handles and riding crops....[28]

"Mrs. W.", who had been at the front of the mass picket line, tells her story:

> There was nobody killed, though the papers made out there was. The police, some of them just youngsters, started all the violence. Before that happened I used to be patriotic. I'd stand up on my little Maple Leaf in front of anyone. But I learned my lesson. We all did. The police were sent down by the government to protect the American company--not the Canadian workers. Yet all we were asking for was a decent existence. We couldn't go on the old way any longer....Well, one thing it done, was to bring all the miners together--solid. We've never been separated since.[29]

Following this, another woman, "Mrs. C.", described as "a young, lithe, European woman,"[30] tells the reporter that she had been beaten by police officers with a riding crop, she concludes her story with some healthy propaganda:

> I sure learned something about governments during those days, something I never would have believed before. My husband used to get *The Worker* and I just couldn't believe the stories I read in it. After the riot, "You see, I was right," he says to me.... Before, I never would have believed they would attack defenceless people. I guess the moral is, go armed.[31]

The R.C.M.P. security bulletins published by Greg Kealey and Reg Whitaker confirm the use of violence. One of the phrases seen throughout the reports on the Depression years, is "Communist given a lesson in manners."[32] Livesay may have taken some liberty in relaying the story, and thus her decision to give the two women the majority of her report to tell their own story demonstrates a distinct difference in her approach to the worker from her poem "Canada to the Soviet Union." On the other hand, if these women did the majority of talking during the interview, then equally the story reflects the reality of women's active presence on the picket lines. In either case, the report again displays the unique character of *New Frontier* as a magazine that was sensitive to equality.

In the short life of *New Frontier*, Dorothy Livesay published twelve poems, three short stories, three reportage-style articles, and two essays.[33] In her poetry, themes of love in a time of crisis dominated. Her short stories attempted to portray the good-nature and positive energy of people in a community, regardless of their economic status and against ethnic or racial stereotypes. She had a keen eye for detail, and a trained intellectual mind, which suited her as a reporter and an essayist. Throughout her work, however, she was committed to bringing out the "authentic" voice of the working-class.

For the historian, the importance in these works lies in the general context of the time and the specific circumstances of Livesay's life rather than their literary merit, or their significance in shaping her later works. In both her work and her life, Livesay faced the continual contradictions of a middle-class, university-educated young woman in a movement which focused its energy on working-class men, or as the Depression deepened, unemployed single men. Her writing reveals that contradiction, as well as a clear sense of women's positive contribution to a regeneration of society. But it is difficult to separate the life and writings of Dorothy Livesay during the Depression from the subsequent commentary offered by her own reflections, as well as those of literary critics and biographers. Because the literary community in Canada was so small, Livesay's activities attracted interest. With an even smaller group of writers involved in social protest, the focus was even greater, and has led to distortions and varying interpretations.

Livesay has always emphasised the importance of this era for herself and Canadian society. Even during interviews on aesthetics, she returns to her days of political involvement. When Susan Wood asked her in 1977: "Do you consider the oral aspect of your poetry most important now?" Livesay replied:

> Well, we weren't in any way using oral poetry except in the Thirties agit-prop plays of which I have a number. They will be appearing this fall. There is one already out. I am republishing some of these poems -- a children's mass chant among them. They were all very oral.[34]

To Woods' suggestion that perhaps the 1970s were like the 1950s because the change in society that writers had hoped for hadn't happened, Livesay instead asserted that

> Well, the Seventies are more like the Thirties. There is a possibility of change. We fought against fascism and against war. There was a strong anti-war movement in Canada.[35]

In what was rapidly becoming a case of intersecting monologues, Wood followed this answer by asking Livesay why she edited Forty Women Poets. Though Livesay did not bring up the Depression in that answer, she did at the very next opportunity. When Wood asked, "What about CV/II?", a journal which was started in 1975, Livesay again reached back four decades to answer:

> It is just one amongst many of my entries into editorship. I wrote for Leo Kennedy's magazine. I wrote for the Canadian Forum, and then in the Thirties I broke away from the Forum, saying it was far too mild and pink. We wanted something that represented the United Front of Intellectuals with the Working Class Against Fascism.[36]

Significantly, Right Hand Left Hand appeared very soon after this interview. In it, Livesay tried to recapture the spirit of the age as the members of the left-wing cultural community had perceived it, as well depicting the Depression through the eyes of an impressionable and artistic young woman. Subtitled *A True Life of the Thirties: Paris, Toronto, Montreal, the West and Vancouver. Love, Politics, the Depression and Feminism*, she described it as a "collage" of the decade.[37] It is an intriguing "autobiography", replete with socialist realist art from Louis Muhlstock, Charles Comfort and Miller Brittain, photographs of strikes and theatre groups that do not include Livesay, and essays from other writers such as Margaret Gould and Marjorie King.[38] Livesay simply punctuates the memorabilia with terse, contexualizing commentary. Both the title and the sub-title intend to reach beyond Livesay's subjective experience, as they contain references to the general role for women during the Depression. The main title comes from an observation of hers:

> Such were the dichotomies I found in male-female relationships in the thirties. In theory, we were free and equal as comrades on the left. In practice, our right hand was tied to the kitchen sink![39]

Though the "true life" refers to the memorabilia found in the collection: poems, plays and stories, letters and diary entries, photographs, clippings, theatre programs, and articles, all help reveal the contradiction between the youth and love that Livesay enjoyed compared

to the deprivation experienced by many during the Depression and subsequent radicalism that accompanied the economic downturn. It is more difficult to ascertain what Livesay means when she refers to "feminism". As Patricia Morley contends in her review for Atlantis,

> Right Hand Left Hand is not a story of feminism in the thirties but of one woman's sensibility in the face of mass suffering and social unrest. References to women's problems are peripheral.[40]

In fact, the first paragraph of the book sheds doubt on Morely's interpretation. Livesay explains that:

> I always had the feeling I was struggling alone to make a woman's voice heard. I admired the men -- particularly those who encouraged -- Knister, Klein and (for a time) Smith, but I felt curiously detached from them in a literary and life-style sense.[41]

While Morley's account of the book was guarded, Livesay's willingness to include letters displaying her naivete, to admit that she was "duped" by the Communists, and to reproduce unpolished poetry such as "Pink Ballad", prompted most reviewers to praise her forthright style.

Lee Thompson applauds Livesay's "passionate commitment to truth" in which the "artist is not there to prettify but to document in the most sensitive way s/he can."[42] Ron A. Kiverago's review of the book points out that

> there is more of interest here than the illustration of the events which took place during those years: the subject matter of the book, the particular choice of events, and Livesay's reactions to them, and even the actual layout of the book give a strong impression of the 1930's sensibility.[43]

He views the book as a realistic recollection of events which "indicate the harsh realities of the Depression"[44] yet with ill-concealed elitism he contends that

> Livesay never allows herself to slip into that jingoistic party-line jargon that appeals to the barely literate. Instead, all of her accounts are clear, concise descriptions that address the intellect as well as ideals of justice, leaving emotion to be expressed by the reader.[45]

More importantly, Kiverago notes that "[p]erhaps the most significant feature of Right Hand Left Hand is the expression of Livesay's concern for the individual"[46] and he ends

his review with the suggestion that "it is at this level that Livesay best shows the personal commitment of those active in the thirties."[47]

One reviewer criticized Right Hand Left Hand as "misleading, incomplete, ultimately colonial and sloppy-liberal in its thinking;"[48] yet the most insightful question raised about the book came from a positive appraisal by Henry Kreisel. In a lengthy review which appeared in CV/II, prairie novelist Kreisel asks simply, "What kind of autobiography...is Right Hand Left Hand?" Keisel's answer is that the book is

> [i]n part, but only in part...the recollection of events many years after their happening. But Dorothy Livesay clearly wants to minimize, not only the vagaries of memory, but also the natural tendency of writers to reinterpret the past or even, consciously or unconsciously, to alter it.[49]

Noting Livesay's liberal use of "anonymous photographs and other reproductions" which submerges her own work of the period into a part of the collective experience, Kreisel concludes that "autobiography becomes documentary."[50]

Livesay includes only two of her contributions to Masses, "Canada to the Soviet Union" and "Pink Ballad", and while she accords a full chapter to New Frontier, she adds just three of her articles to the many letters, newspaper clippings, art, and featured articles which illuminate both the outer appearance of New Frontier and the inner workings of its management. While the poems for Masses are most likely chosen to represent the importance that the Communist Party of Canada had in her life, her work for New Frontier, "Proletarianitis in Canada" and "They Shall Inherit the Earth, a review" and "Fascism in Quebec" (the latter published under Livesay's pseudonym, Katharine Bligh) demonstrates the more literary tone and broader focus that this magazine was striving for as well as the new Comintern policy.

In rejuvenating these poems, Livesay buttressed her reputation as a frank and forthright social commentator. While in some ways this book does document Canada's response to the Depression, Livesay's Right Hand Left Hand serves as a reflection of what she deemed the most important decade of her life. In her effort to demonstrate the momentous effect that the 1930s had on shaping her psyche, she includes radio plays, poems, and short stories that were produced much later, but that offer autobiographical situations from her time in Montréal, Toronto, New Jersey, and Vancouver.

Yet despite the need Livesay seems to have had to chronicle her life, and the interest that she has in particular with the 1930s, others have treated her political involvement as a youthful, even immature phase, as if it is best seen as an unwitting harbinger for later developments. For Thompson, the period of Livesay's socially-committed writings in the 1930s and 1940s is given a full chapter, but in the following chapter Thompson "pursues this social orientation as it modulates into a more general humanism from the 1950s through to the present."[51] Jonathon C. Pierce, in his essay "A Tale of Two Generations: the Public and Private Voices of Dorothy Livesay," lumps her in with other Canadian poets of her generation, such as E.J. Pratt, A.M. Klein, F.R. Scott, and Earle Birney, to suggest

> as a whole, I think it is fair to say that these poets' increased social consciousness and political awareness during the 1930s had, in the long run, a salutary effect on their overall development, including the development of their personal poetry.[52]

Even Wayne and Mackinnon's paper, "Dorothy Livesay: A Literary Life on the Left," though it focuses on her years in the Communist Party and her battle with what Wayne and Mackinnon refer to as the "literary establishment"[53] in the 1930s, concludes

> between 1941 and 1951, Livesay was able to develop as a mature poet, as well as a committed political activist who independently shaped her poetic and her humanitarian and socialist ideas.[54]

The title of Rota Herzberg Lister's work alone reveals this tendency to view Livesay's life in the 1930s as simply a lower evolutionary stage before her eventual development into maturation: "From Confrontation to Conciliation: the Growth of Dorothy Livesay as a Political Dramatist."

For literary critics, the reason for downplaying this period is relatively simple; it is an aesthetic rejection of Livesay's experiment with proletarian literature. Socialist-realism, in the English-speaking world, in the hands of all but a very few people, was a dismal failure as an experiment in melding politics and poetry. George Woodcock, though he is one of the few critics to examine her proletarian verse for its aesthetic value, questions Livesay's dedication to the cause with the assertion that

> [f]or poets who were attracted to communism during the 1930s, this kind of acceptance of party dogma as applied to writing was likely to be a

> passing phase, unless they had undergone the deep psychological experience of something resembling a religious conversion, as a few of them did. Livesay was not one of that few.[55]

He further suggests that in these poems

> we recognize that though they are still historically interesting, they do not compare in poetic effect either with the early lyrical verse or with the mature later poetry which Livesay began to write in the middle of the 1950s.[56]

He summarizes this period of Livesay's writing as "an interlude."[57]

Contemporary critics offer the most important commentary on Livesay's proletarian writing. Along with Mackenzie's previously quoted declaration of Livesay as "the only truly proletarian writer in Canada," fellow Marxist W.E. Collin examined her writing in his White Savannahs (1936).[58] Identifying her as a "metaphysical",[59] Collin introduces the reader to her poetry through an examination of her first two chap-books of Imagistic poems, Green Pitchers (1932) and Signposts (1934). He compares this "brooding" "sequestered" "feminine" poetry to H.D., Elinor Wylie, and Emily Dickinson, and he applauds her "pretty and feminine" poem "Green Rain".[60] Collin quotes a line from the poem "Sea Flowers", "I dread the sun / For his fierce honesty" then plunges into a vivid analysis of her work:

> *Honesty*! These words have a new sound a rather odd silver timbre as though they were foreigners, but, in contrast to the Imagist use of words, they do not refer immediately to some new object in order to present a new analogy. They are Latin, not Saxon words, used in an intellectual, not merely poetic, sense. Dorothy Livesay so completely repudiates the romantic tradition that she abhors words which are supposedly poetic.[61]

However, sensitive to the conditions of the Depression, he appreciates Livesay's more contemporary social poems above her early work.

Acknowledging Eliot's influence on poets such as A.J.M. Smith, Collin criticizes it as a "deceptive mirage."[62] suggesting instead that

> nearer to our day of writing the depression has deepened and hardened the notion of bread and water as the essential realities of life; they have lost their sacramental value as symbols and the religious impulse, which manifests itself in a 'tendency to abstraction,' fades away as the desert view changes into a picture of factories and machines. Although the newer poets were brought up under Eliot, he can no longer lead them. The

> economic and social realities of life have hounded them, driven them to bay, and they have had to face them. Now it is from this courageous facing of our human condition in the intimate present that Dorothy Livesay's latest poems derive their strength.[63]

In this somewhat lengthy yet eloquent passage, he defends Livesay's choice to "develop beyond her egocentrism to devote herself to a human cause."[64] He astutely notes that "[t]he change in the complexion of her poetry is parallel to the change in her outlook on life and literature"[65] which occurred during her stay in Paris in 1931-32. Yet he also, perhaps unconsciously, credits male writers, Henri Barbusse, J.M. Synge, Stephen Spender and particularly C.D. Lewis, for providing examples of "vigorous living poetry"[66] for Livesay to emulate. Nonetheless, he takes her conversion to communism and her social poetry seriously, suggesting that "at the moment of writing these two long poems, ("The Outrider" and "Day and Night") [she] is class-conscious in her responses to all experience which she apprehends in terms of exploitation and human or 'earthen' servitude."[67] He is one of the very few critics, as well, to state that in "the communist sense, her work is creative. It is propaganda and it is art."[68]

When these two poems, together with several other social poems, appeared in 1944 in a volume called Day and Night, critics such as E.K. Brown complained that "[h]er preoccupation with radical conceptions of social reform has narrowed her vision as a poet -- and has made her one of our least dependable critics."[69] He revealed the same gender prejudice that Collin displayed, and was shared by male critics from F.R. Scott to Desmond Pacey. While attacking the content of "Day and Night", he admired the form of her poetry, quoting a short passage which prompted the exclamation, "What a threatening flood is just held back by those thin and nervous lines!"[70] Scott's chauvinism was even more thinly-veiled. Though David Arnason has suggested that Scott was "in many ways a kindred spirit" to Livesay,[71] Scott's review of "Day and Night" included acceptance of her as "a part of our world that is in the making," but "the varied, free, occasionally sentimental style that we have known in Miss Livesay's writing" is "a form more suited to her sensitivity and her personal utterances than to the tougher social themes that occupy some of her poems."[72] Only a passing knowledge of Modernism is

needed to recognize the insult carried with the use of "sentimental", while the inference that Livesay was not tough enough to deal with social themes is clearly an attack upon her sex.

In her diary, April 20, 1928, Dorothy Livesay confessed,

> I have not reached any greater beauty than charm. What I long for is power, fire: these perhaps will be gifts of experience, if it happens that experience be given to me.[73]

A little over three years later, Livesay no longer waited for experience to be "given" to her. She travelled, became both politically and socially aware, and joined organizations dedicated to changing society. Her writing during the Depression reveals a sensitivity to the positive energy produced from dialectic confrontation. She exposed prejudice in society, racial, ethnic, economic and gendered, and criticized it both explicitly and implicitly. Above all, her active role in the cultural left had a positive effect on the representation of women. With others, such as Margaret Gould, Jim Watts, Toby Ryan, and Lilian Mendellsohn, Livesay helped raise the woman question very clearly in the radical circles of Canadian society.

Conclusion

The effect that writers or artists have upon society is impossible to define; however, their role is relatively straightforward. Regardless of their audience, their background, or their vision, producers of culture attempt both to imitate and to alter society. For socialist realists and proletarian writers in Canada during the Depression, this translated into highly moral and didactic works, created with the intention of undermining the existing social system and building an awareness of the inequities of class divisions. As the effects of the Depression became more wide-spread, as left-wing politics became more unified under the Popular Front, and as Canadians became more aware of the dangerous unrest in Europe under fascism, radical intellectuals and cultural producers broadened their focus to attack all systems of inequality, and to praise countries which supported equity of all types. During this period, women in communist culture not only flourished as producers, but they also affected the way women were presented.

Despite the small size of the entire cultural community in Canada, and the surprising number of artists and writers who contributed to radical journals, historians have tended to ignore or minimize the role of the artistic left in Canada. Rather, most have viewed the culture of Canada during the Depression as typified by escapism in literature and nature in art.[1] Cultural historians themselves, such as Lee Briscoe Thompson and Maria Tippett, have commented on the overwhelming number of romantic poems and escapist novels produced in Canada during an age of such international ideological radicalism and cultural experimentation. Though acknowledging the existence of the artistic left, little in the way of critical evaluation has been offered. Historians of radical politics, while now eagerly examining "peripheral" aspects such as community involvement or gender differences, have also tended to shy away from an analysis of culture, unless a particularly "ethnic" aspect deserved mention. Regional differences have also been understudied. With such small numbers and paranoid governments continually wary of insurgency, the ability to keep pockets of radical culture alive and thriving across the country is a success that is worth exploring in more detail. With the exception of Bonita Bray's thesis on Vancouver's "theatre of resistance" and the production of

"Waiting for Lefty", the dramatic success of Vancouver's Progressive Arts Club and other regional clubs has been ignored due to a focus on the work done in Toronto and Montréal. This, in major part, is due to the production of radical journals there.

What makes the "cultural artifacts" from the journals *Masses* and *New Frontier* important for critical evaluation is the issue of gender, both in terms of the artists and writers and the work they produced. A comparison of the two journals suggests that when women played a more active role in the production of culture, both as artists and as editors, women were not only more fully integrated into both literature and art, but women's issues were also given exclusive coverage at times.

Masses, the organ of the Progressive Arts Club, contains few contributions from women, and rarely featured women in any of the stories, plays, or artwork. When women did appear in writings, they were most often portrayed through negative images. Even working-class women, typically housewives, seemed to act as irritants, getting under the skin of the working-class male hero. On the other hand, *New Frontier* published contributions from many women, including prominent artists and writers such as Paraskeva Clark and Mary Quayle Innis. Three other notable public figures: Margaret Gould, Dorothy Livesay, and Jean "Jim" Watts, all played important administrative roles, with Jean Watts as the production manager and virtual financer of the journal. Though Dorothy Livesay's contribution has been explored here, more work can be done on the others. Jim Watts deserves special attention, as those who knew her never stop praising her dedication and ability.

While the two journals represent a fascinating shift in the representation of women, they also contrast the two major periods of Comintern directives: "class against class" and the Popular Front. Though for many of the artists, writers, and dramatists who aligned themselves with the radical left during the Depression, the "Party line" was of less significance to them than the desire to depict the social realities of economic crisis and to project images of a more just society, the effect of the "class against class" period is evident in the early years of "proletarian culture". Examples of art and literature were often geared toward the "workers' revolution" and scathing representations of social democrats. The more inclusive Popular Front period, on the other hand, allowed for a

less doctrinaire and dogmatic control of expression. Different goals, both aesthetic and social, helped to evolve proletarian culture from a weapon into a tool of social protest. This evolution occurred in part because the majority of the Canadian working class did not respond to insurrectionary dictums, but in large measure because the artists and writers preferred to portray ordinary Canadians as resourceful and capable crisis managers. Although the desire for radical change is evident in their work, a positive response, such as community organizations and gatherings, or appeals to solidarity, became a more prevalent message than the individual lashing out in anger.

This shift in focus further affected the representation of women in society. It also coincided with an increase in the number of women involved in the cultural left, the Popular Front and the League against War and Fascism. This increase in numbers alone does not necessarily equate with a change in focus. Many of these women, such as Dorothy Livesay, became involved in radical politics with no feminist agenda at all. The gradual shift toward women-centred political consciousness, however, most likely occurred as these women became sensitized to the multiple types of oppression experienced by members of their sex.

Not only did women artists and writers involved with the cultural left in Canada significantly affect the representation of women, but they also left a profound effect on Canadian culture as a whole. They were, in fact, more successful practitioners of social commentary on the 1930s than were men. Few contemporary novels capture the plight of the unemployed worker in Canada during the Depression better than Irene Baird's Waste Heritage (1939). Dorothy Livesay's award-winning "Day and Night" and "The Outrider" are still considered the quintessential, and most technically successful, poems of social protest from the Depression era. Anne Marriott's "The Wind Our Enemy," characterizes the hopeless optimism of the prairie farmers; Michiel Horn referred to it in his introduction to The Dirty Thirties.[2] Significantly, the front cover of Bryan Palmer's Working-Class Culture features Paraskeva Clark's *Petroushka*, a painting done in 1937 and part of the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Canada.

The intellectual debate did not leave a similar legacy, yet there were important steps taken to bring increased focus on women. While contributors to *New Frontier*

concentrated on the manifestations of inequality in society, they often proposed ameliorative solutions by pointing to the Soviet example. In this, women's place in society was a crucial issue. The belief that Canadian women ceased to strive for changes in the inequality of the political, social and economic system after they got the vote has long been undermined. However, the stridency and urgency with which radical women of the left fought has not yet been acknowledged sufficiently. Despite the more conciliatory political stance of the late 1930s, the art and literature was no less revolutionary in its aims. In fact, it was more encompassing, more sensitive to a wide range of injustices than were the actions and words of radical political leaders.

This does not imply that radicals in the early 1930s were more galvanized and committed to the cause of the workers than in the later years of the Depression. Prolonged and violent strikes and the riots in Vancouver in 1937 indicate the unsettled nature of Canadian society. Nor does this indicate a gradual "feminization" (whatever that now means) of radical culture during the Depression. It does suggest, however, that women not only played an active role in radical political culture, but that their increased activity altered the representation of women profoundly. As women became more visible in society, art reflected their presence. By the same token, as artists and writers featured more women, this helped instigate acceptance of an increased public role. Finally, the financial and editorial control held by women in the magazine *New Frontier* put increased focus on the competency and confidence of women to create culturally and socially significant expressions of the Canadian world. In this, drama, literature and art in society served as both a representation of reality and a model for the future.

Endnotes

Endnotes to Introduction

1. The phrase was applied to specific artistic forms throughout the short history of Soviet socialist culture in Canada. In the first edition of *Masses*, a socialist realist drawing featured a stalwart worker, in full stride with one arm raised high, under the caption "Theatre is a Weapon". Numerous articles referred to music, poetry, and art as weapons of propaganda for the workers' revolution. They will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three.

Endnotes to Chapter One - Sources and Methodology

1. Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History: a 1975 Perspective," in Berenice A. Carroll (ed.) Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays (Urbana; University of Illinois, 1976), 357.

2. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "One Hundred and Two Muffled Voices," Atlantis 3 Fall 1977, 66-83.

3. Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York; Columbia University Press, 1988): 54-56.

4. Ruth Pierson and Alison Prentice, "Feminism and the Writing and Teaching of History," Atlantis 7 (2) Spring/Printemps 1982, 37.

5. Rosemarie Tong, Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction, (Boulder and San Francisco; Westview, 1989), 71. Tong argues that feminism "like most broad-based philosophical perspectives, accomodates several species under its genus." She lists "liberal, Marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, existentialist and postmodern." (1)

6. Ellen Carol Dubois, "Woman Suffrage and the Left: An International Socialist-Feminist Perspective," New Left Review 186 1991, 20-45; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Socialist-Feminist American Women's History," Journal of Women's History 1 (3) 1990, 181-210; Roberta Hamilton and Michele Barrett, eds., The Politics of Diversity: Feminism, Marxism, and Nationalism, (London; Verso, 1986); Liz Kennedy and June Lapidus, "Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism: A Review Essay," Feminist Studies 6 (3) 1980, 571-582; Nancy McDonald, "Working Together for Equality and for the future," World Marxist Review 30 (June 1987), 129-33; Sheila Rowbotham, "The Women's Movement and Organizing for Socialism," Radical America 13 (5) 1979, 9-28; Joan Sangster, "The Making of a Socialist-Feminist: The Early Career of Beatrice Brigden, 1888-1941," Atlantis 13 (1) 1987, 13-28; Eli Zaretsky, "Socialist/Feminist Women in America: 1870-1920," Reviews in American History 10 (3) 1982, 417-426.

7. Feminist Studies devoted an issue in 1988 to deconstruction. The editors, Judith Newton and Nancy Hoffman, described the relationship between feminism and deconstruction as "tense" (4). Mary Poovey, "Feminism and Deconstruction," Feminist Studies 14 (1) 1988, 51-65 identified herself as a materialist-feminist, and predicted that "feminism will so completely rewrite deconstruction as to leave it behind" (55). Joan W. Scott, in "Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Post-Structuralist Theory for Feminism," 48, suggested that "equality rests on differences that confound, disrupt and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition." In Gender and the Politics of History, Joan Wallach Scott argues that

> a more radical feminist politics (and a more radical feminist history) seems...to require a more radical epistemology. Precisely because it addresses questions of epistemology...post-structuralism...can offer feminism a powerful analytic perspective (4).

See also Kathleen Canning, "Feminist History after the Linguistic Turn: Historicizing Discourse and Experience," Signs: Journal Women in Culture and Society 19 (2) 1994, 368-404. Barbara Godard, "Mapmaking: A Survey of Feminist Criticism," in Gynocritics/Gynocritiques: Feminist Approaches to Canadian and Québec Women's Writing ed. Barbara Godard (Toronto; ECW Press, 1987): 16, cites the deconstruction of Derrida as essential for feminist writers, and that "his Writing and Difference (1978) has given a new understanding of difference, no longer conceived as repressed object, but as deferred meaning and significance, in a process of perpetual dialectic."

8. Michael Brown's essay "The History of the History of U.S. Communism", in New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism, eds. Michael E. Brown, Randy Martin, Frank Rosengarten, George Snedeker (New York; Monthly Review Press, 1993): 23, points to, though does not specifically define, post-structuralism in approaches to American Communism, suggesting that

> Instead of identifying the history of the party exclusively with the "formal" or official aspect of its organizations--that is, with its centralist and hierarchical forms...the new emphasis on participation invokes informal and interactive aspects of organizational life.

A more provocative argument can be found in Lenard Berlanstein, Rethinking Labor History: essays on discourse and class analysis (Urbana; University of Illinois, 1993). See in particular: Berlanstein's introduction and Donald Reid, "Reflections on Labor History and Language," 39-54.

9. Brown, 27.

10. Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Telling It As You Like It: Post-modernist History and the Flight from Fact," Times Literary Supplement, October 16, 1992, 15. Himmelfarb cynically projects that:

> a disaffection with post-modernism [will occur] if only because the appeal of novelty will wear off....Out of boredom, careerism (the search for new ways to make a mark in the profession), and sheer bloodymindedness (the desire to *épater* one's elders), the young will rebel, and the vanguard of today will find itself an aging rearguard--much as the "new history" (social history) of an earlier generation has been displaced by this newer history.

11. For examples of resistance, see Angela Miles, "Dissolving the Hyphen: From Socialist-Feminism to Feminist Feminism," Atlantis 9 (2) 1984, 77-94. It is not so much a resistance as a reminder to socialist-feminists "that to continue addressing marxists rather than feminists is to remain confined within the marxist questions." (93) Celeste Schenk, in "All of a Piece: Women's Poetry and Autobiography," in Life/Lines: Theorizing Women Autobiography, eds. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenk (Ithaca; Cornell University Press, 1988), 288, suggests that women writers, particularly autobiographers, cannot afford the "luxury" of deconstruction, of "problematizing authorship". The Journal of Women's History, 5 (1) Spring 1993, engaged in a dialogue on the thorny issue of women's and gender history. Essays include: Sonya Rose, "Gender History/Women's History: Is Feminist Scholarship Losing Its Critical Edge?" 89-101 (in which she refers to new perspectives given by post-structuralists and women of colour as "assaults", 91); Kathleen Canning, "German Particularities in Women's History/Gender History" 102-114. Responses by the panel included: Anna Clark, (115-120); Mariana Valverde, (121-125) and Marcia Sawyer, (126-128). A balanced synopsis of the debate can be found in Ruth Roach Pierson's, "Experience, Difference, Dominance and Voice in the Writing of Canadian Women's History,". Bryan Palmer's Descent into Discourse: the Reification of Language, (Philadelphia; Temple University Press, 1990) is not only a direct reaction to Joan Wallach Scott, but is an attack on labour historians in general for "failing to theorize more completely". In his case, Palmer decries the lack of **Marxist** theory in labour history. Furthermore, in "Poststructuralist Gender Historians: Are We Those Names?" Labour/Le Travail, 25 (1990), 227-36, Mariana Valverde objected to being objected to by Bryan Palmer. More recently, Nancy Isenberg rebutted the position of the Left against post-structuralists in "The Personal is Political: Gender, Feminism, and the Politics of Discourse Theory," American Quarterly, 44 (3) September 1992, 449-458.

12. In the context of English Canadian history, this crisis of self-confidence can be seen in Carl Berger's own lament for a nation, The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900 2nd ed., (Toronto, University Press, 1986).

13. For Canadian social historians, see David Gagan and Harry Turner, "Social History in Canada: A Report on the 'State of the Art'," in Contemporary Approaches to Canadian History (Toronto; Copp Clark Pitman, 1987), 89-114. The social historians' slogan, "to leave no stone unturned", took on new significance when Lawrence Stone became the centre of controversy between social historians and postmodern/poststructuralist historians. The debate involved Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," Speculum lxv (1990), 59-86; Stone's recommendation of Spiegel's article in "History and Post-Modernism," Past and Present 131, (May 1991) 217-218; critiques of Stone and Spiegel by Patrick Joyce and Catriona Kelly separate but equal responses, "History and Post-Modernism," Past and Present no. 133 (November 1991) 204-209 and Stone's and Spiegel's separate rebuttals with Lawrence Stone, "History and Post-Modernism III" in Past and Present no. 135 (August 1992), 189-194 and Gabrielle Spiegel's "History and Post-Modernism IV", Past and Present no. 135 (August 1992), 195-208.

14. Greg Kealey, "Labour and Working-Class History in Canada: Prospects for the 1980s," Labour/Le Travailleur, 7 (Spring 1981): 69.

15. Given the prevailing views of the radicals in the 1930s, however, it is quite possible that they would have outright rejected any of the hypotheses forwarded by post-structuralists. Stalinism, Marxism, and even the basic beliefs of social democrats were heavily structuralist. Nonetheless, many of the artists and writers, while they attended meetings and read the "proper" literature, still answered their inner voice and responded to their direct environment rather than the more abstract, universal message of proletarian literature or social realism. To that end, their exploration of the marginal in society is inherently, if not explicitly, both a recognition and a rejection of the centre as a dominant and undeserving force.

16. Bettina Bradbury, "Women and the History of Their Work in Canada: Some Recent Books," Journal of Canadian Studies, 28 (3) Automne 1993 Fall: 159-178; Rosemary Gagan, "Putting Humpty Together Again: the Challenge of Canadian Women's History," British Journal of Canadian Studies 4 (1) 1989: 276-295. Women in radical politics have not been altogether ignored, however. Janice Newton and Ruth Frager produced dissertations on the turn-of-the-century socialist women and Jewish radical women respectively, while both Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster published articles exploring the role of women in radical politics, culminating in Sangster's Dreams of Equality. All four will be discussed in greater depth further into this chapter. For Québec historiography, see Andrée Lévesque, "Historiography: History of Women in Québec Since 1985," Québec Studies 12 Spring/Summer 1991: 83-90. In it, she includes a list of twenty-five books and thirty-three articles published between 1985 and 1990 on Québec women. Lévesque divides the article into four sections: work, motherhood, education and politics, but she stresses that "[a]s important as the subjects of feminist research are, so are the different approaches to women's history". To that end, she notes, "[w]hereas most of the work being published qualifies as feminist, it falls in all the various categories of feminism" (materialist, liberal, and radical) [88]. By this assessment, the major difference between studies in Québec and studies in English-speaking Canada is race/ethnicity.

17. Maria Tippett, "The Writing of English-Canadian Cultural History," Canadian Historical Review, LXVII, 4, 1986: 548-561. According to Tippett, because specialists have undertaken the task of categorizing and describing the elements in English Canada's cultural history, there has been little produced from a broader perspective. Books on Canadian cultural history include: Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission (Toronto; University Press, 1990); Paul Rutherford, When Television was Young: Primetime Canada, 1952-1967 (Toronto; University Press, 1990), Mary Vipond, The Mass Media in Canada 2nd. ed. (Toronto; J. Lorimer, 1992), and Paul Litt, The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission (Toronto; University Press, 1992).

18. On Ryerson's influence, see Gregory Kealey, "Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson--Part II," Studies in Political Economy 9: 144-145 and Desmond Morton, "*E.P. Thompson dans des arpents de neige: les historiens canadiens-anglais et la classe ouvrière*," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amerique française* 37 (2) *septembre*, 1983: 165-184. Ryerson's politics hindered public acknowledgement of his contribution to Canadian history until the March 1980 McGill Conference on "Class and Culture: Aspects of Canada's Labour Past." With the introduction of Ryerson, it is natural to acknowledge work on the left in Québec. On the Communist Party in Quebec, see: Marcel Fournier, Communisme et Anticommunisme au Québec (1920-1950), (Laval, 1979); Claude Larivière,

Albert Saint-Martin, Militant D'Avant Garde 1865-1947 (Laval, 1979); and Robert Comeau et Bernard Dionne, Les communistes au Québec, 1936-1956 (Montréal, 1980). For the left during the Depression, see Andrée Lévesque, Virage à Gauche Interdit: Les communistes, les socialistes et leurs ennemis au Québec, 1929-1939, (Montréal; Boréal Express, 1984). Almost exclusively focused on the politics, there is no mention in any of these works of experiments in proletarian cultural expression. For culture, see Ben-Zion Shek, Social Realism in the French-Canadian Novel (Montréal; Harvest House, 1977) and from eds. Jorn Carlsen and Jean-Michel Lacroix, Canadian Society and Culture in Times of Economic Depression - *Culture et Société au Canada en périodes de crise économique*, (Ottawa; Association for Canadian Studies/*Association des études canadiennes*, 1987) see Esther Trépanier, "*Crise économique/crise artistique: parallèle ou convergence?*" 179-192; David L. Parris, "*Images de la crise économique dans la littérature québécoise*," 219-228; and Pierre Gobin, "*Valeurs-refuges et xénophobie en temps de crise: le répertoire dramatique québécois des années 1930*," 229-240.

19. William Rodney, Soldiers of the International: A History of the Communist Party of Canada, 1919-1929 (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 1968). His preface belies his sympathy as he begins,

> This book attempts to trace the origin and development of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), a small political unit which, since its formation in 1921, has never wielded power or fundamentally affected the order or pattern of Canadian development. (*v*)

He suggests that "the party was a failure", and that "the Canadian party's failure to move the Canadian masses must be attributed to Marxist ideology, which, based as it is upon class relationships, proved to be an obsolete, ineffective tool." (*v*)

20. Rodney, *v*.

21. Rodney, 38.

22. Gad Horowitz, Canadian Labour in Politics (Toronto; University Press, 1968). Preceding his study is an essay explaining why socialism was more acceptable to Canadians than Americans. Horowitz' argument for the presence of socialism in Canada but its failure in the United States determines his discussion of the CCF and the CPC in his book. By his argument, the CCF was a "natural" party, growing out of a unique political ideology, a "tory touch". The existence of this "noblesse oblige" philosophy rests in the political beliefs of the founding nation (Britain), which, somewhat paradoxically, did not exist when the United States formed its own polity separate from Britain. The communists, on the other hand, were an unnatural presence in both countries. The bias against the Communists as an "outside force" becomes increasingly apparent in Horowitz' book: they "captured" the Canadian Labour Party (60), they "exploited" the unionists at the CCL convention in 1943 (79) and Chapter 3 is entitled, "The Struggle with the Communists, 1943-48." The "Communist as agitator" matches Robin's interpretation as well in Radical Politics and Canadian Labour (Kingston, Ont.; Industrial Relations Centre, 1968): 157-160. The most valuable section of Stuart Jamieson's Times of Trouble: Labour Unrest and Industrial Conflict in Canada, 1900-66, (Ottawa; Task Force on Labour Relations, 1968) contains several Appendices, which list the most highly publicized protests from the Depression, such as

the "Unemployed Demonstrations and Riots in Vancouver During the Early 1930's," 487-8 and "The On-to-Ottawa Trek" of the Relief Camp Workers' Union, June 1935," 493-497. Charles Lipton's The Trade Union Movement in Canada, 1827-1959 (Montréal: Canadian Social Publications, 1967) is remarkable for its complete **failure** to mention the Communists at all in Chapter 15, "The 'Hungry Thirties': 1929-1939: 254-265, even though he covers the Depression crisis, the formation of the Committee of Industrial Organization in Canada, and the fight to prevent World War II!

23. Irving M Abella, Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: the CIO, the Communist Party and the Canadian Congress of Labour, 1935-1956 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973): particularly pp. 213-221.

24. For the West, see A. R. McCormack, Reformers, Rebels, and Revolutionaries: the Western Canadian radical movement, 1899-1919 (Toronto; University Press, 1977). For British Columbia, see Paul Phillips, No Power Greater: A Century of Labour in B.C. (Vancouver; Federation of Labour and Boag Foundation, 1967) and Robins, 291-294. Stuart Jamieson's Appendices in Times of Trouble also emphasizes the radical West.

25. Gad Horowitz praises Myrtle Armstrong, secretary of SWOC, for her M.A. dissertation "which reflects the left-wing antipathy to labour in the Ontario party" (150), but gives no mention of others. Irving Abella refers to the invaluable contribution Charles Millard received from Margaret Sedgwick and Eileen Tallman in the CCL (66-91), and Charles Lipton gives credit to Madeleine Parent for her role in the Dominion Textile Strike of 1946 and the Lachute Strike in 1947 (272, 273, and 292). For women's active life in labour during the Depression, see Gail Cuthbert Brandt, "'Weaving it Together': Life Cycle and the Industrial Experience of Female Cotton Workers in Québec, 1910-1950," Labour/Le Travailleur, 7 (Spring 1981): 114-131; Ruth Frager, Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto: 1900-1939, (Toronto; University Press, 1992); Marie Lavigne and Jennifer Stoddart, "*Les travailleuses Montréalaises entre les deux guerres*," Labour/Le Travailleur 2 (1977): 170-183; and Joy Parr, The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950, (Toronto; University Press, 1990).

26. In some ways, this assessment echoes David Bercuson's charge in "Through the Looking Glass of Culture: An Essay on the New Labour History and Working-Class Culture in Recent Canadian Historical Writing," Labour/Le Travailleur, 7 (Spring 1981), 95-112. He suggests that the "new labour history" did not differ significantly from the old labour history in that both approaches concentrate on industrial relations, working class leaders, and craft unions. This paper was first presented in a debate with Greg Kealey at the McGill Conference, "Class and Culture: Dimensions of Canada's Labour Past," 7-8 March 1980." Kealey's paper, "Labour and Working-Class History in Canada: Prospects for the 1980s," was published alongside Bercuson's in the same issue of Labour/Le Travailleur, 7 (Spring 1981), 67-94. Bercuson's criticisms had either been anticipated or struck a chord, as the next issue contained Peter de Lottinville's "Joe Beef of Montreal: Working Class Culture and the Tavern, 1869-1889," Labour/Le Travailleur 8/9 (Autumn/Spring 1981/82): 9-40, Ian Radforth and Joan Sangster's "'A Link Between Labour and Learning'": The Workers Educational Association in Ontario, 1917-1951," (41-78) and especially

Jonathon Wagner's "Songs of Protest from Edenwald," (269-275) all demonstrating the enriching addition such divergence from the "floor shop" could give to working-class history.

27. Communist Party of Canada, The Road to Socialism in Canada; the program of the Communist Party of Canada, (Toronto; The Party, 1972).

28. Tom McEwen, The Forge Glows Red: From Blacksmith to Revolutionary (Toronto; Progress Books, 1974) and (posthumously) A.E. Smith, All My Life: an Autobiography (Toronto; Progress Books, 1977).

29. Oscar Ryan, Tim Buck: a Conscience for Canada (Toronto; Progress Books, 1975) and Louise Watson, She Never Was Afraid: the biography of Annie Buller (Toronto; Progress Books, 1976). Progress Books had earlier published a biography of Bella Hall Gauld, by Catherine Vance, entitled, Not by Gods but by People: The Story of Bella Hall Gauld (Toronto; Progress Books, 1967).

30. These include: William Kashtan, Toward Socialism: selected writings, 1966-1976 (Toronto; Progress Books, 1976); Frank Cunningham, Understanding Marxism: a Canadian Introduction, (Toronto; Progress Books, 1978); John Fox, Understanding Capital: a guide to volume I, (Toronto; Progress Books, 1978); and Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson's Marxist interpretations of Canadian history with The Founding of Canada; beginnings to 1815 (Toronto; Progress Books, 1972) and Unequal Union; Roots of Crisis in the Canadas, 1815-1873, (Toronto; Progress Books, 1983).

31. Gregory S. Kealey, "Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson--Part II," Studies in Political Economy 9: 144.

32. Ivan Avakumovic, The Communist Party in Canada: a history. (Toronto; McClelland and Stewart, 1975): 247-250.

33. Ibid., 126-7.

34. Ibid. Avakumovic makes special mention of Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson, paying particular attention to his Upper Canada College and Sorbonne education. His own approach to this group of intellectuals is relatively dismissive. Their interest in causes was fortuitous and their dedication was suspect, as he suggests when he writes:

> While intellectuals in the Canadian League for Peace and Democracy expressed, on Canadian soil, their hostility to fascism, nine hundred party members and over three hundred sympathisers went to Spain in an attempt to prevent General Franco from winning the Civil War (129).

Here he fails to mention the work of Dr. Norman Bethune, although in his chapter "Beyond the 1950s," he acknowledges Bethune as "a member of the CPC and a veteran of the Spanish Civil War", a comment made in passing (260). This, as the many histories of the Spanish Civil War will attest, is an understatement. Among them, Victor Hoar's The MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion (Toronto; Copp Clark, 1969): 10, lists the first two Canadian volunteers in Spain as Dr. Bethune and Henning Sorensen, a journalist who abandoned his job with the *New Commonwealth* in Spain

in order to work with Bethune in medicine. Sorensen's experience as a journalist and an associate of Bethune's is also found in John Gerassi's The Premature Antifascists: North American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939, (New York; Praeger, 1986): 104-106, 203. Another prominent cultural figure is Jean "Jim" Watts, who volunteered to drive hospital trucks for the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion. See "Spain is Different," and "Gentlemen of the Press," *New Frontier*, 2 (2) June 1937, and 2 (3) 1937.

35. Lita-Rose Betcherman, The Little Band. Betcherman writes with the type of sardonic wit that typifies reminiscences from Depression radicals. For instance,

> Since most Communists were known to be foreigners, it was erroneously assumed that most foreigners were Communists: in the case of both groups, prejudice and antipathy were compounded. General Draper could never believe that a Communist could be an Englishman (7).

Her one-sided account is never disguised. She described Tim Buck as having "the slight build of many English working men, stunted by generations of premature toil" (8). Compare this with her description of Draper:

> Brigadier-General Denis Draper was the prototype of the law-and-order policeman, although he had never been on a force until he became Chief Constable of Toronto on May 1, 1928. In the first place, he could not have met the height requirement of five foot ten. His short, stocky appearance even belied the five foot eight and a half inches he claimed (1).

For an example of the biting sarcasm of written memoirs, see Peter Hunter, Which Side Are You On, Boys: Canadian Life on the Left (Toronto; Lugus, 1988).

36. Norman Penner, Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond, (Toronto: Methuen, 1988).

37. Jean-Paul Sartre,

> Anyone who writes the history of the Communist Party from the outside, from legal evidence, documents, and first hand accounts, risks being hampered by his prejudices, in any event he lacks one irreplaceable experience. If he has left the party he chokes on his own rancor and dips his pen in bile. If he writes from the inside, in collaboration with the leaders, he becomes an official historiographer, and either lies or dodges questions according to the positions of the day.

Quoted in Gregory S. Kealey, "Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson: Canadian Revolutionary Intellectual--Part I," Studies in Political Economy 8 Summer 1982: 7. On American Communist historiography, see Michael Brown, "The History of the History of U.S. Communism." *passim.*

38. In The Canadian Left: a Critical Analysis, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1977): 169 and 216.

39. Penner, Canadian Communism, 28. During the early 1940s, when the Soviet Union became allies with Great Britain in World War II, membership in the CPGB reached 65 000. See also Hugo Dewar, Communist Politics in Britain: the CPGB from its origins to the Second World War (London; Pluto Press, 1976).

40. Neal Wood, Communism and British Intellectuals, (New York; Columbia University Press, 1959): 50-53.

41. Alan Munton, Seven Writers of the English left: a bibliography of literature and politics, 1916-1980 (New York; Garland, 1981).

42. See David Bradby and John McCormick, People's Theatre (London; Croom Helm, 1978); David Bradby et al. eds., Performance and Politics in Popular Drama (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1980); Colin Chambers, The Story of Unity Theatre (London; Lawrence and Wishart, 1989); Howard Goorney and Ewan MacColl, eds., Agit-Prop to Theatre Workshop: Political Playscripts 1930-1950 (Manchester; Manchester University Press, 1986); Raphael Samuel, Ewan MacColl, and Stuart Cosgrove, eds., Theatres of the Left, 1880-1935 (London; Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1985); and Richard Stourac and Kathleen McCreery, Theatre as a Weapon: Workers' Theatre in the Soviet Union, Germany and Britain, 1917-1934 (London; Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

43. Susan Bruley. Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939. New York: Garland, 1986.

44. Morag Shiach, Discourse on Popular Culture: Class, Gender and History in Cultural Analysis, 1730 to the Present (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 1989): 139-170 *passim*. No single book deals with women in radical politics in Britain during the Depression, though Christine Collette's For Labour and for Women: the Women's Labour League, 1906-1918 (Manchester; Manchester University Press, 1989) and a collection of essays edited by Lucy Middleton, Women in the Labour Movement: the British Experience do provide some insight into the culture of working women, radical politics and labour militancy.

45. Theodore Draper, The Roots of American Communism, (New York; Viking, 1957): 395. Quoted in Michael E. Brown, "Introduction: The History of the History of U.S. Communism," 18. Draper did not fight a lone battle, supporters of this interpretation include his colleague, J. Starobin, with American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957 (Cambridge MA; Harvard University Press, 1972) and his protégé Harvey Klehr, The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade (New York; Basic Books, 1984). Fraser M. Ottanelli, The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War II (New Brunwick; Rutgers University Press, 1991): 4, admits that Draper's views were too dominant and too top heavy, but is equally unsatisfied with the social history of U.S. Communism. Ottanelli tries to find a middle ground between grass roots and overall policy.

46. Brown, 17.

47. E. Hobsbawm, MARHO interview in MARHO (eds.), Visions of History, (New York; Pantheon, 1984): 41-42. Quoted in Brown, footnote 3: 35.

48. Brown, 19.

49. Ibid., 19.

50. Recent books such as Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself (Toronto; Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1992) and Guenter Lewy's The Cause that Failed: Communism in American Political Life (New York; Oxford University Press, 1992) have done little to correct the orthodoxy of this approach. Klehr and Haynes manage to dispense with the "woman question" in the second chapter, "Origins and First Decade, 1919-29," noting that

> although the party pledged itself to total sexual equality, in its internal habits it followed traditional patterns. *Several women Communists holding high party posts were linked romantically to male party officials....Of the six central committees from 1921 to 1929, three had women members at all, and the highest percentage of the remaining three was 8 percent*" (56) (my emphasis).

51. Robert Shaffer, "Women and the Communist Party, U.S.A., 1930-1940," Socialist Review 9 (May-June 1979): 73-118. For an earlier period, see Mari-Jo Buhle's Women and American Socialism, 1780-1920 (Urbana; University of Illinois Press, 1981), Meredith Tax, The Rising of the Women: feminist solidarity and class conflict, 1880-1917 (New York; Monthly Review Press, 1980) and Penelope Johnson, "Women and Socialism in Early Twentieth Century America: A Study of the Progressive Woman." Lilith 1 1984: 43-53. On women and the Depression, see Joan Jensen and Lois Scharf Decades of Discontent: the Women's Movement, 1920-1940 (Westport, Conn; Greenwood Press, 1983). From this volume, of particular interest to women and the left is Norma Pratt's "Culture and Radical Politics: Yiddish Women Writers in America, 1890-1940": 131-152 and Sherna Gluck's, "Socialist feminism between the two world wars: Insights from Oral History,": 279-297. See also Judith Sealander and Bernard Sternsher, Women of Valor: the Struggle Against the Great Depression as told in their own life stories (Chicago; I.R. Dee, 1990). Socialist-feminist studies include: Elsa Dixler, "Women and Socialist Movements: a Review Essay." Feminist Studies 10 (2) 1984: 315-322; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Socialist-Feminist American Women's History" Journal of Women's History 1 (3) 1990: 181-210.

52. Kathleen Rae Downs, "Women in the Plays of the Group Theatre, 1931-1941." Ph.D diss., Kent State University, 1992. Colette Anne Hyman's, "Culture as Strategy: Workers' Theatre and the American Labor Movement in the 1930's." Ph.D diss., University of Minnesota, 1990, Chapter Six, "Ethnicity, Race, Gender and Unionism in Labor Plays" (218-265); Ken Kirkpatrick and Sidney F. Huttner, "Women Writers in the Proletarian Literature Collection, McFarlin Library," Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 8 Spring 1989: 143-53; Candida Ann Lacey, "Striking Fictions: women writers and making of a proletarian realism," Women's Studies International Forum 9 (4) 1986: 373-385; Rubinstein, Annette T. "The Radical American Theatre of the Thirties." Science and Society 50 no. 3 (1986): 300-320; Linda Ray Pratt, "Woman writer in the CP: the case of Meridel LeSeur," Women's Studies 14 (3) 1988: 247-64; and Deborah Silverton Rosenfelt, "Getting into the Game: American Women Writers and the Radical Tradition," Women's Studies International Forum 9 (4) 1986: 363-372.

53. Linda Kealey and Joan Sangster, Beyond the Vote: Canadian Women and Politics, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1989), Part Three: **The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation** and Part Four: **Labour, Socialist and Communist Women**.

54. Kealey and Sangster had been virtually alone in producing articles on socialist women in Canada. In 1984, Kealey published an article on the "Woman Question" and socialists during the first decade of the nineteenth century until World War I. Sangster's doctoral thesis examined the Communist Party of Canada's response to the "Woman Question" in the 1920s, a shortened version of which appeared as "The Communist Party and the Woman Question, 1922-1929," Labour/Le Travail 15 1985: 25-56, and she wrote a biography of Beatrice Brigden, whom she defined as a socialist-feminist. By the time that article appeared in Atlantis, three PhD students at York University added their theses to the exploration of socialist women. Janice Irene Newton, "Enough of Exclusive Masculine Thinking: the Feminist Challenge to the Early Canadian Left," (Ph.D. diss., York University, 1987); Varpu Lindström-Best, "Defiant Sisters: A Social History of the Finnish Immigrant Woman in Canada, 1890-1930," (Ph.D. diss., York University, 1986); and Ruth Frager, "Uncloaking Vested Interests: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-1939), all dealt in some manner with the issues of women and socialism. These latter historians all contended that feminist issues were always relegated to secondary, or tertiary importance for women who were involved in radical politics, as causes such as the "class struggle" or "ethnic solidarity" took precedence. In all cases, these historians relied on newspapers and journals in order to defend these claims.

55. Jill McCalla Vickers, "Feminist Approaches to Women in Politics" in Kealey, Beyond the Vote, 20, argues for an examination of the visible presence of women in male-created and male-controlled political institutions, and "we must also look at their participation in community-based groups and organizations where a voluntaristic tradition of politics flourished."

56. Varpu Lindström-Best, "Finnish Socialist Women in Canada, 1890-1930": 196-216; Frances Swyripa, "The Ideas of the Ukrainian Women's Organization of Canada, 1930-1945": 239-257; and Ruth A. Frager, "Politicized Housewives in the Jewish Communist Movement of Toronto, 1923-1933": 258-275, in Kealey, Beyond the Vote.

57. Sangster, 8. Despite noting the benefits of self-organization, Sangster admits the inherent weakness of separate groups, effectively erasing the gains. Referring specifically to the Women's Labour Leagues, she states:

> WLLs provided women with a separate space to build their confidence and explore socialist issues from a woman's perspective. Their auxiliary work gave important support and sustenance to the movement; unfortunately, it also kept women in a sex-stereotyped domestic role that isolated them from power and perpetuated women's secondary status in the Party. (52)

58. Ibid., 9.

59. Ibid., 157.

60. Maria Tippett, "The Writing of English-Canadian Cultural History, 1970-1985," 549. With regard to the shaping of a cultural artifact by circumstance and intention, Tippett acknowledges Peter Gay's Art and Act: On Causes in History -- Manet, Gropius, Mondrian, (New York, 1976): 3, 7.

61. Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction (Toronto; University Press, 1980): 65, 136, and 169-170.

62. Ibid., 205.

63. David A.E. Shephard, "Creativity in Norman Bethune: His Medical Writings and Innovations," 92-105; and Lee Briscoe Thompson, "Norman Bethune and His Brethren: Poetry in Depression Montreal," 104-113; and Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson, "Political Commitment in the 1930s," 145-149 in Shephard and Lévesque, Norman Bethune.

64. This may be an exaggeration. Livesay was never afraid to speak her mind, and may have isolated herself from this Toronto-Montreal alliance of poets. Nonetheless, E.J. Pratt did try to get her works published in the volume, and failed. It is probably with bitter satisfaction that Livesay watched New Provinces, one of very few books of poetry published during the Depression, sell only 87 copies.

65. Ignored, that is, until 1990. In recognition for his outstanding contribution to Canadian art, the Academy was willing to offer him a position, and waive all membership fees. He politely declined, stating in his letter that "the offer comes sixty years too late." Conversation with Louis Muhlstock, July 20th, 1994.

66. Kealey, "Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson -- Part II," 149.

67. Ruth I. Mackenzie, "Proletarian Literature in Canada," Dalhousie Review XIX (1) 1939: 49.

68. Ibid., *passim*.

69. Dorothy Livesay, Right Hand Left Hand, (Erin, Ont.: Porcépic, 1977).

70. Toby Gordon Ryan, Stage Left: Canadian Workers Theatre, 1929-1940. Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1985. See also Don Rubin's "Introduction": 8-9, for the history behind the making of this book.

71. Richard Wright and Robin Endres, eds. Eight Men Speak and Other Plays from the Canadian Workers Theatre (Toronto; New Hogtown, 1976).

72. Donna Phillips, ed. Voices of Discord (Toronto; New Hogtown Press, 1979).

73. Betty Lee, Love and Whiskey, The Story of the Dominion Drama Festival and the Early Years of Theatre in Canada, 1606-1972 (Toronto; Simon & Pierre, 1982). Directed by Jim Watts, this production ran for six weeks solid in Vancouver before packed houses. From this

success, it was chosen as the representative for B.C. at the Dominion Drama Festival in 1936, and was chosen as the runner-up for best play. See Bray, "The Weapon of Culture."

74. Maria Tippett, Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts Before the Massey Commission. See Chapter One, "From the Campfire to the Concerthall": 29-34 in particular.

75. Ibid., 33.

76. Her first two chap-books "Green Pitchers" (1928) and "Signpost" (1930) defined her as an "Imagist" and a "Modernist". See Desmond Pacey, "Introduction," in Selected Poems, 1926-1956 by Dorothy Livesay (Toronto; Ryerson, 1957): 14-15. Her Communist affiliations will be explored in this essay. Livesay's feminism is particularly evident in the interviews (see Chapter Four). Expressing her concern for the future, and reflecting on her past, she defined herself as an "unwitting" environmentalist when she was a teenager in woody Ontario, adding another "ism" to her beliefs. See "Symposium: On the New Decade, *Canadian Forum*, January 1990: 9.

77. Feminist articles include: Patricia Morley, "Learning and Loving During the Lost Years," Atlantis 3 no. 2, pt. 1 (Spring 1978): 145-50; Mary Lee Morton, "Livesay Distorted," Branching Out 5 no. 3 (1978): 41; while socialist reviews include: Philip Resnick, "Ontario Story," Canadian Dimension 6 (July 1969): 38.

78. Important interviews for Livesay's life in the 1930s include: Bernice Lever, "An Interview with Dorothy Livesay," Canadian Forum (September 1975): 45-52; Joyce Marshall, "Dorothy Livesay: A Bluestocking Remembers," Branching Out 7, no. 1 (1980): 18-21; and Helen Mintz and Barbara Coward, reprint interview as "Being a Writer in the Thirties: An Interview with Dorothy Livesay," This Magazine is About Schools 7, no. 4 (January 1974): 19-21. Finally, Marsha Barber with "An Interview with Dorothy Livesay" in Dorothy Livesay Issue [Room of One's Own] 5, nos. 1-2 (1979): 13-34.

79. Autobiographies include: Beginnings: A Winnipeg Childhood (Winnipeg: Peguis, 1988); Journey With My Selves: A Memoir, 1909-1963. (Winnipeg; Peguis, 1988); and Right Hand, Left Hand, Edited by David Aranson and Kim Todd. (Erin, Ontario: Porcépic, 1977). Biographies include: Lee Briscoe Thompson, Dorothy Livesay, (Boston; Twayne, 1987); and Peter Stevens, Dorothy Livesay: Patterns in a Poetic Life, (Toronto; ECW Press, 1992). The collection of essays is edited by Dorney, Lindsay, Gerald Noonan, Paul Tuessen, and entitled A Public and Private Voice, (Waterloo; University Press, 1986).

80. Dorothy Livesay, Collected Poems: the two seasons, (Toronto; McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972): *Foreword, v.*

81. Desmond Pacey, in his "Foreward" to Selected Poems, 1926-1956, is one who tries to bowdlerize the poetry he despises, suggesting that she produced **no** poetry at all during the 1930s, *xv.*

82. George Woodcock, "Sun, Wind, and Snow: The Poems of Dorothy Livesay," in Dorothy Livesay Issue: [Room of One's Own] 5 no. 1-2: 48.

83. Robin Skelton, "Livesay's Two Seasons," Canadian Literature 58 (Autumn 1973): 77.

84. Thompson, Dorothy Livesay, 138.

85. Peter Stevens. "Ideas and Icons," Canadian Literature 40 (Spring 1969): 76.

86. Peter Stevens, "Dorothy Livesay: The Love Poetry," Canadian Literature 47 (Winter 1971): 32.

87. Lindsay Dorney, Gerald Noonan, Paul Tuessen, eds., A Public and Private Voice, (Waterloo; University Press, 1986): 2-3.

88. David Arnason, "Dorothy Livesay and the Rise of Modernism in Canada," in Dorney: 18.

89. Joyce Wayne and Stuart Mackinnon, "Dorothy Livesay: A Literary Life on the Left," in Dorney: 41.

90. Together with interviews previously referred to, see "A Writer in the Depression," in Paul Knox and Philip Reznick, eds. Essays in B.C. Political Economy (Vancouver; New Star, 1974): 65-73; Dorothy Livesay, "Women Writers and Society," Atlantis 4 (1) Automne 1978: 144; and Right Hand Left Hand.

91. Marsha Barber, "An Interview with Dorothy Livesay," 14.

92. Ibid., 32.

93. Marshall, 18.

94. Helen Mintz and Barbara Coward, 19.

95. Bernice Lever, 45-52.

96. Susan Jane Wood, "The Poetry of Dorothy Livesay, 1928-1975," Masters Thesis, Concordia University, 1977.

97. Although she did, in fact, interject on occasion during a conference in Waterloo given in her honour. See Dorney, 10.

98. Tippett, "The Writing of English Canadian Cultural History," 561.

99. Greg Kealey and Reg Whittaker, R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins. The Depression Years, Part I, 1933-1934 (St. John's; Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1993).

100 Michiel Horn, The Dirty Thirties: Canadians During the Depression, (Toronto; Copp Clark, 1972).

101. I first met Dorothy Livesay in March, 1992 at a reading she was giving at Hawthorne's Book Store in Victoria. Not surprisingly, she was reading poetry which decried the atrocities of the recent Gulf War. I met her again in July, 1993, but by December 1994, when I returned to Victoria, she was too ill to see anyone but family. I also met with Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson twice, on December 9, 1993 with Millie Ryerson, and again on Tuesday, February 8, 1994. His mind is not only as keen as ever, I felt as though I was truly being tested on my understanding of a Hegelian world. Irene Kon invited me to her home on February 25, 1994. She spoke to me of the dreams that her father Louis inspired in her and the unquestioned knowledge of her role as an equal to anyone in society. Louis Muhlstock, who is now ninety years old, also invited me to visit him at his home. He showed me some of the original sketches he drew in the 1930s, as well as his poetry and letters. He also showed me Dorothy Livesay's inscription in his personalized copy of Right Hand Left Hand, in which she corrects the comments implicating Louis as a Communist. Toby Ryan responded to my letter, but we could not meet, she was busy "working on an exciting project about indigenous theatre."

Endnotes to Chapter Two - Responses to the Depression

1. Ruth Roach Pierson, "Gender and the Unemployment Insurance Debates in Canada, 1934-1940," Labour/Le Travail 25 (Spring 1990): 77-103, explores this issue in depth. She suggests that

> In the narrative of the Great Depression, both as told at the time, and in the main by historians after the fact, it is the men who fill the ranks of the unemployed--men who ride the rails, men who stand in the bread-lines, men who sell apples on street corners. Single unemployed women have a shadowy presence at best (77).

She notes that the only MPs to express concerns in the House of Commons about the plight of unemployed women were A.A. Heaps, Agnes Macphail and Charles Grant MacNeil (*Ibid.*). She concludes that "gender pervaded the 1934-1940 debate on unemployment insurance, and inscribed in every clause of the resulting legislation" (102).

2. Michiel Horn, The Dirty Thirties, 4.

3. Ibid., 6.

4. *The (Toronto) Globe* 10 November 1932, 7.

5. *The (Toronto) Globe* 10 November 1932, 7 and *The Mail and Empire* 10 November 1932, 1.

6. *The Worker*, November 19, 1932, 1 and 6.

7. *Mail and Empire* 10 November 1932, 1.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 7.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. House of Commons Debates, 2329 demonstrates similar rhetoric in the House, such as Mr. Morand's declaration in the 3rd session of the 16th Parliament,

> I say that if we have come to the stage where atheistic communists are prepared to boo the name of God in public places it is time we ceased talking socialism and other similar theories and became really aware of conditions as they actually exist around us,

as well as Armand R. Lavergne's comment, "Everywhere the world over we are faced with an agitation to prepare for the overthrowing of our civilization, and more than that, of Christianity" (2371).

15. *The Globe*, 10 November, 1932, 1.

16. Ibid. 7-8.

17. Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. House of Commons Debates. 2nd session of the 16th Parliament, (1927-28), 3450.

18. Lita-Rose Betcherman, The Little Band: The Clashes Between the Communists and the Political and Legal Establishment in Canada, 1928-1932 (Toronto; Deneau, 1975). On Draper, see Chapters 1 and 2 in particular.

19. *The Globe*, 10 November 1932, 8.

20. Mrs. Joshua Smith's reputation preceded her at the Convention. For months, the Ward 2 Conservative Women's auxiliary had been in an uproar. According to the *Mail and Empire* report, November 9, 1932, 4:

> Swinging into action after being openly defied by a group of Ward Two Conservative women, headed by Mrs. Joshua Smith, the central body last night carried out its threat that unless the women's organization handed over its books to Central and allowed the men to run the forthcoming election, a new women's association would be formed.
>
> Meeting jointly with the executive of the Woman's Central Association in the Albany Club, a new Ward Two Women's Liberal-Conservative Association was

brought into being and the defiant group composing the old association now becomes an independent body without any official status in the eyes of the Central Associations.

21. Ibid., 2. Hepburn, of course, did both.

22. Ibid., 7.

23. Canada, *Dominion of Canada Census* 1 June 1931, listed Canada's wage-earners at 2 564 879, of whom 81.39 percent were at work. Of these, 2 017 606 were male, and 547 273 were female. Of the former, 422 994 were not at work, and of the latter, 48 674. By November, the number of unemployed had risen considerably. Women, who had earlier tended not to include themselves as "out of work" in the census, became much more noticeable amongst the unemployed on relief as the Depression deepened. See "Relief Problems in Western Cities: Foreigners, Single Men, Single Women and Graduating Students," from "Unemployment and Relief in Western Canada, June-August 1932, Report for the Prime Minister's Office, U.N.B. Library, *Bennett Papers*, vol 781," in Horn, The Dirty Thirties, 263-270.

24. See *The Globe*, *The (Montreal) Gazette*, *The Winnipeg Free Press*, and the *Vancouver Sun* for the month of November. During this period, even non-fatal accidents were considered newsworthy, further evidence of how accidents involving vehicles are today seen as normal, but how they were viewed as deviant even with high numbers in the 1930s.

25. For McGill's history of medicine up to World War II, see H. Rocke Robertson, "Edward Archibald, The "New Medical Science" and Norman Bethune," 71-78; for Bethune's attitude to public health, see Libbie Park, "The Bethune Health Group," 138-144; and to see what Bethune was up against, Terry Copp, "The Health of the People: Montreal in the Depression Years," 129-137 in David A.E. Shephard and Andrée Lévesque, Norman Bethune: his times and his legacy, *son époque et son message*, (Ottawa; Canadian Public Health Association, 1982).

26. See Angus McLaren, The Bedroom and the State, (Toronto; McClelland and Stewart, 1986), Chapter Three: "Socialist Feminists, Maternal Feminists, and Family Limitation," pp. 54-70.

Endnotes to Chapter Three - The Conjunction of Culture and the Working-Class

1. The originator of the phrase "a weapon in the class struggle", (variously applied to art, theatre, poetry and song) is unknown. While both Plekhanov and Lenin defined agitation and propaganda as separate, they were wedded under Stalin as "agitprop". In the United States, consciously political writing, art and theatre was introduced by the John Reed Clubs and the travelling troupes of John E. Bonn's Prolet-Buhne and E. Piscatator's Blue Shirts. See Harry Justin Elam Jr. "Theatre for Social Change: The Artistic and Social Vision in Revolutionary Theatre in America, 1930-1970." Ph.D diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1984: 165 and Virginia Carol Hagelstein Marquardt, "Louis Lozowick: Development from Machine Aesthetic to Social Realism, 1922-1936." Ph.D diss., University of Maryland, 1983: 151, *fintes* 9&10. There is no record of either the Prolet-Buhne or the Blue Shirts themselves

performing in Canada, but according to Toby Gordon Ryan, in Stage Left: Canadian Workers Theatre, 1929-1940, Canadians were aware of American theatre experiments, including the now-much-maligned Stanislavski method. Some, such as Ryan herself, studied in New York during the late 1920s and early 1930s, and brought these innovations back with her (12-23). The work being produced in the John Reed Clubs, published in *New Masses* and *The Anvil*, also filtered north. See *Masses*, *passim*.

2. The search for "working-class culture" was inspired by E.P. Thompson's definition of culture as

> culture and something that is not culture. We must suppose the raw material of life experience to be at one pole, and all the infinitely complex human disciplines and systems, articulate and inarticulate, formalised in institutions or dispersed in the least formal ways, which ''handle,' transmit, or distort this raw material to be at the other. ("The Long Revolution, I," New Left Review 9 (May-June, 1961): 33.

It led people such as Bryan Palmer to uncover examples of working-class culture as an indication of working-class consciousness. In Canada, Palmer's work is the most detailed, including A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914 (Montreal and Kingston; McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979); an explanation and defence of his approach in "Classifying Culture," Labour/Le Travailleur, 8/9 (Autumn/Spring 1981/82): 153-183, and an exploration of "Discordant Music: Charivaris and Whitecapping in Nineteenth Century North American," Labour/Le Travailleur 3 (1978): 5-62. Bonita Bray's "Theatre as a Weapon: The Culture of Resistance in Vancouver" Master Thesis, University of Victoria, 1990, is also heavily indebted to Thompson's concept of culture. See Chapter 2, "The Culture of Resistance": 26-76.

3. Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction, 11.

4. Ibid., 6 and 13.

5. On Britain, see Neal Wood, Communism and British Intellectuals. For the United States, a contemporary and participant analysis from Granville Hicks, "Communism and the American Intellectuals," in Irving D. Talmadge, ed., Whose Revolution? A Study of the Future Course of Liberalism in the United States, (New York; Howell, Soskin, 1941): 78-115. His eloquent and succinct reminiscences include the four main attractions to the party: a program of action, a disciplined organization, a body of doctrine and a working model in the USSR (82) and, important to the study of proletarian culture and North American communist parties, he states "that literary men... were not regimented.... [P]arty discipline was never exerted to influence what [Hicks] wrote or said." (104). See also Frank A. Warren, Liberals and Communism; the "red decade" revisited (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1966). On the more radical views of the few John Reed Clubs still extant during the Popular Front, see Terry A. Cooney, The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and its circle (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986). French thought clearly affected some members of the CPC, notably Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson, Dorothy Livesay and Jim Watts, all of whom lived in Paris during the early 1930s. Moreover, its influence on Québec, even in the 1930s, can be exaggerated but never

completely ignored. See David Caute, Communism and the French intellectuals, 1914-1960 (London; Deutsch, 1964); Antoine Casanova, Les intellectuals et les luttes de classes (Paris; Editions Sociales, 1970) and Danielle Bleitrach, Le music-hall des âmes nobles: essai sur les intellectuels (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1984).

6. Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction, 10.

7. The evolution of *Canadian Forum* can be traced in Peter Stevens and Jack Granatstein's Forum: Canadian Life and Letters, 1920-1970: selections from the Canadian forum, (Toronto; University Press, 1972). For a view of *Canadian Forum* from the 1930s, see Ruth I. Mackenzie, "Proletarian Literature in Canada," 50.

8. Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction, 13.

9. Avakumovic: 126-127. According to Avakumovic: 127, "attempts to curtail the civil rights of Communists in Toronto...had brought party members into contact with Protestant clergymen, professors at the University of Toronto and pacifists grouped around the Fellowship of Reconciliation. These people provided a nucleus of intellectuals who were prepared to join forces, or sympathize with, the Communists when party members organized a Canadian Congress against War and Fascism in Toronto in October, 1934."

10. Lee Briscoe Thompson, in "Norman Bethune and His Brethren: Poetry in Depression Montreal", 104, expresses her surprise at the lack of socialist and modernist poetry in Canada during the Depression. When she began her research she "expected to find...a throng of poets angry with the conditions of that terrible decade and railing against the status quo with all their poetic strength". She discovered "quite the contrary: crisis did not necessarily encourage innovation" (Ibid.). She extended this observation to include members of the scientific community, using Bethune as a foil against the less socialistically inclined. In this same volume of essays dedicated to the memory of Bethune, David A.E. Shephard, "Creativity in Norman Bethune: His Medical Writings and Innovations" (100-101) points to Bethune's desire to implement a health care system in Quebec with art and literature appearing as a regular aspect of everyday life, part of his continually humanistic approach to an increasingly scientific profession.

11. Avakumovic, 122.

12. Ibid.

13. *Masses*, "Our Credentials", April 1932.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., December 1932.

17. *Masses*, May/June, 1933: "Unity"; September 1933: "Joe Derry"; "Eight Men Speak" and March/April 1934: "War in the East". In December, 1932, *Masses* published "Theatre--Our Weapon," a Mass Recitation from "New Red Stage", the organ of the British Workers' Theatre Movement.

18. *Masses*, November 1932, Toronto's PAC published the "Masses Song Book" available for 5¢ a copy. In March-April 1934, "The Second Workers' songbook appeared: 15 workers' songs, old and new, 5¢".

19. *Masses*, November 1932, "Press Concert at the Ukrainian Labour Farmer Temple: Gymnastics, Choir, Mandolin Orchestra and play by PAC. 25¢."

20. *Masses*, May-June 1933, "The Canadian Forum: (a) The Forum Editorials.

21. *Masses*, January 1934, "The Canadian Forum: (c) General Articles".

22. See the debate on the nature of art between T. Richardson, "In Defense of Pure Art," *Masses*, July-August 1932, and E. Cecil-Smith, "What is Pure Art?" *Masses*, July-August 1932. Cecil-Smith continued the debate with "Propaganda and Art," *Masses*, January 1934, which led to a response from S.R. [Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson] in the March-April 1934 edition, "Out of the Frying Pan...", and yet another from Cecil-Smith in the same edition, "Let's Have More Discussion...". Letters augmented the debate, see "Criticism", *Masses*, July-August 1932.

23. *Masses*, "Our Credentials," April 1932.

24. *Masses*, "Rebel Workers Sing" December 1932; "Five Minutes in Hallman and Sable" September 1933, signed, "by a Striker".

25. *Masses*, June 1932, an article entitled "Lynch the Niggers" summarizes the Scottsboro trial, and concludes "We as part of the cultural movement of the working class, demand equal rights for negroes and protest the legal lynching of the nine boys." November 1932 includes a short story by Dan Faro, "Colonist Freight," about immigrant Italians and the prejudice they faced upon their arrival.

26. Joan Sangster, "The Communist Party and the Woman Question, 1922-1929," and Janice Irene Newton, "'Enough of Exclusive Masculine Thinking!'"

27. Sherna Gluck, "Socialist Feminism Between the Two World Wars." According to Gluck, this attitude was contrasted with socialist feminism, which

> espoused the belief that the fight had to be on two fronts simultaneously, for socialism and for women. Fighting for women's causes was a basic part of their revolutionary strategy *and* philosophy. . . .Though feminism and socialism were viewed as inseparable, the two were never fully integrated into a single, coherent ideology (280-281).

28. *Masses*, July-August 1932, contains a film review by E. Cecil-Smith. The movie, entitled "Sunshine Susie" involves "a virtuous, plump-faced country wench (heroine)" who "arrives in the big city, intent on selling her virginity to the highest bidder." Referring to her as "our little whore" who, "by obvious wiles (pulling skirts above knees, undoing zipper fastener on blouse,etc.) she seduces her way...into a job." In his summary of the "anti-working class" film, "Susie" disappears. He writes,

> The moral of the picture is plain. Working class (funny man) is very low and plebian. Gets drunk and hugs lamp posts, dresses funny, looks funny, is a butt. Capitalist (hero) is really a very fine chap, when you get to know him. Only trouble is that underlings (villain) [sic] are corrupt and take advantage of their position when the boss isn't looking.

In the same edition, a review of T. Shapiro's one-act play, "Solidarity, Not Charity," explains the actions of two female characters, a Salvation Army woman, and a Red Cross Nurse. Implicitly middle-class, their only role, as low burlesque caricatures, "is very bureaucratic, tangled up in red tape, concerned largely with retaining its status and its salaries."

29. Feodor Gladkhov's Cement, trans. A.S. Arthur and C. Ashleigh (New York; International Publishers, 1929) serves to illustrate this well. Though the protagonist is the war-hero and worker Gleb, his wife, Dasha "was no ordinary woman...but a human being, equal to [Gleb] in strength" (290). She is not only emotionally stronger and intellectually superior to Gleb, but she demands crêches for children and community kitchens to free proletarian women from traditional restrictive tasks (68). But Gladkhov does not portray her as the only strong and intelligent female. He writes how the women's section meetings would lead to an outburst of noise due to "the excitement of the discussions of their club, which they had brought with them into the street" (242).

For the depiction of women in art in the Soviet Union, see Victoria E. Bonnell, "The Peasant Woman in Stalinist Political Art of the 1930s," American Historical Review 98 (1) February 1993: 55-82 and "The Representation of Women in Early Soviet Political Art," Russian Review 50 July 1991: 267-88. In the latter, Bonnell describes the evolution of "Capital" in Russian iconography. Until the Civil War, socialist artists portrayed "Capital" as a huge, serpentine female monster, with massive breasts. After the war, "Capital" changed its form and sex, and became the familiar fat man with a top hat and a cigar. It is obvious how delighted the Canadian artists were to have R.B. Bennett become the Prime Minister during the Depression.

The role of Soviet events and figures on the party shifted through the years. Articles on the Soviet Union dominated the early editions of *Masses*. The first edition, November 1932, contained six examples: "Soviet Authors" by Maurice Granite; "Daniel Fibich, A Soviet Writer"; "On Imperialist Intervention"; "Fifteen Years, USSR"; and "Maxim Gorky"; and "We Want to Hear Your Voice". These were less prevalent in later editions, but still a notable presence, see *Masses*, March-April 1933. The influences on *Masses* were not limited to the Soviet Union. Many contributions came from the United States and Britain, and they often reviewed the latest works from both those countries.

30. Frank Love, "Looking Forward," in Eight Men Speak and Other Plays: ll. 30-31.

31. Bonnell, "The Peasant Woman in Stalinist Political Art of the 1930s," 55. She suggests that Soviet artists represented collectivization of the farms as the female idiom. "She sometimes stood alone or in front of the male peasant; she was occasionally even portrayed in the larger-than-life format formerly reserved for heroic male workers and soldiers".

32. *Masses*, "Moscow Gold", May-June 1933.

33. Ibid.

34. *Masses*, "Poetry", November 1932.

35. For historians, no one has written more evocatively, persuasively, and to such a hostile reception as Joan Wallach Scott. See her Gender and the Politics of History (New York; Columbia University Press, 1988), and Bryan Palmer's reaction to it in Descent Into Discourse: the Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History (Philadelphia; Temple University Press, 1990).

36. *Masses*, "Workless Sister", November, 1932.

37. Wright and Endres, xxiii. The identification of Abraham Nisnevitz' pseudonym comes from Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson.

38. Dorothy Livesay's "A Girl Sees It" is a notable exceptions, and will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four.

39. *Masses*, June 1932.

40. *Masses*, July-August, 1932 "Rainbow Chasing" by George Winslade.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. *Masses*, "Our Credentials," November 1932.

45. While *Masses* was a decidedly "urban" journal, North American writers and artists experimented in the genre of "prairie realism." In Canada, the most successful of these writers was Frederick Philip Grove, who had started as early as 1925 with Settlers of the Marsh and later with Fruits of the Earth (1933). Sinclair Ross was also a prominent practitioner. See ZhongMing Chen, "The Politics of Fiction: Social Realism in English-Canadian Novels, 1920-55," Ph.D diss., University of Calgary, 1989.

46. *Masses*, "One Day Service", September 1933.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Abella, *passim*.

52. The charge of "naivete" is an easy one to make over fifty years after something has been written. It is far more difficult to defend the charge in the case of someone like Stanley Bréhaut Ryerson. Even in his youthful exuberance, his belief in Japanese workers to "see the light" was not sheer fantasy. Japanese soldiers did rebel, and joined the Chinese troops who were trying to force the Japanese Imperial Army to give up Manchukuo. See The Globe, November 2, 1932, p. 1 columns 4,5.

53. Trevor Maguire, "Unemployment," in Eight Men Speak and Other Plays, Wright and Endres, 5.

54. Ibid., 6.

55. Ibid., l. 15.

56. Ibid., l. 60.

57. Ibid., l. 132.

58. Ibid., l. 139.

59. Ibid., l. 145.

60. Ibid., l. 162.

61. Ibid., l. 163-164.

62. Frank Love, "Looking Forward," in Eight Men Speak and Other Plays: 15.

63. Ibid., 15.

64. Ibid., l. 35.

65. Ibid., l. 36-37.

66. Ibid., l. 60-62.

67. Ibid., 15.

68. Ibid., l. 77-81.

69. Ibid., 16.

70. Mark Fearnow, "A Grotesque Spectacle: American Theatre of the Great Depression as Cultural History," (Ph.D diss., Indiana University, 1990), suggests that one of the reasons for the success of plays such as "Waiting for Lefty" had nothing to do with the appeal of resistance culture, but instead gave the audience slapstick humour, such as the bathetic spectacle of a lowly secretary dramatically presenting her ever-present copy of "The Communist Manifesto" to educate an angry young job-hunter.

71. Oscar Ryan, E. Cecil-Smith, Frank Love, Mildred Goldberg, "Eight Men Speak" in Eight Men Speak and Other Plays: 27-89. The play was prevented from being shown in both Toronto and Winnipeg as the theatre operator's licence was lifted by the police commission. See Wright and Endres, xxviii.

72. Ibid., 27.

73. Ibid., 50.

74. Ryan, Stage Left, 44.

Chapter Four - *New Frontier*: A Separate Case

1. *Daily Clarion*, March 16, 1936. Quoted in Sangster, 129. Beatrice Ferneyhough was closely involved with the creation of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation in 1932. In 1933 she joined the Communist Party. While Ferneyhough's involvement in radical politics was never a secret, her cultural life was. A complete collection of her poems was published in 1994, "Singing in the Night," (Vancouver; Rankin, 1994), with poems written from 1925 to 1992.

2. Ibid.

3. *Daily Clarion*, March 16, 1936.

4. *New Frontier*, 1 (1) April 1936.

5. Penner, Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond, 20.

6. Ibid.

7. *New Frontier*, 1 (1) April 1936, 16.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. One of the most poignant novels to examine this predicament is Hans Fallada's Little Man What Now? (London; Putnam, 1934).

11. *New Frontier* I (1) April 1936.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ruth Mackenzie, 57, identifies this story as typical of Innis' criticism of the "foolish, bored, and vain middle-class wives, not as proletarian literature."

22. Because Livesay's life and work are worthy of a separate chapter, her other contributions to *New Frontier* will also be dealt with in Chapter Four.

23. Kenneth J. Hughes, "Introduction," in Voices of Discord (Toronto; New Hogtown Press, 1979): 14.

24. *New Frontier*, 2 (3) July-August 1937, 24-25.

25. Ibid., 24.

26. Ibid., 25.

27. *New Frontier*, vol 2 (2) June 1937: 8-11.

28. Ibid., 8.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid. 9.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., 10.

33. *New Frontier*, 1 (3) June 1936: 33.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 33.

37. Ibid., 33.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., 33.

40. In another review by Marion Nelson, "Footnote to Revolution," she approves of Sylvia Townsend Warner's efforts in Summer Will Show because Warner, "has turned the full battery of her intelligence and scholarship on the problem before her, that of the middle-class convert to socialism, and the result is undubitably [sic] a piece of novel-writing that, despite the limitations of her scope, is artistry of a high order." *New Frontier* 1 (6) October 1936: 24.

41. *New Frontier* vol. 1, no. 10 April 1937: 23-24.

42. Ibid., 23.

43. Ibid., 24.

44. Ibid., 24.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. *New Frontier*, vol. 1 (4) July 1936: 18-22.

48. Ibid. 18.

49. Ibid. 18.

50. Ibid., 18.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., 20.

56. Ibid., 20.

57. Ibid., 20.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., 22.

60. Ibid.

61. Charles Fourier, "The degree of emancipation of women is the natural measure of general emancipation in our society," quoted in Sangster, Dreams of Equality, 7; and Marx, "Anybody knows, if he knows anything about history, that great social changes are impossible without the feminine ferment; social progress can be measured exactly by the social position of the fair sex," quoted in Yedlin, "Women in the U.S.S.R: The Stalin Era," Atlantis 3 (1) Fall 1977: 22.

62. Ibid.

63. For unemployment relief, see James Struthers' No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State 1914-1941 (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 1983).

64. On women in the Soviet Union during the Depression, see Yedlin, "Women in the USSR", 22-47.

65. *New Frontier*, 1 (8) November 1936.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. *New Frontier*, 2 (2) June 1937.

71. F.W. Watt, "Literature of Protest," in Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English Carl Klinck ed. (Toronto; University Press, 1976): 487.

72. *New Frontier*, 2 (2) June 1937.

73. *New Frontier*, 2 (3) July 1937.

74. Mackenzie, 58.

75. Ibid.

76. *New Frontier* 1 (5) Sept. 1936: 16-17.

77. Ibid., 16.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid., 17.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid., 18.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid., 18.

87. Ibid.

88. *New Frontier* 1 (1) April 1936: 26.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. *New Frontier* 2 (1) May 1937: 16-17.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.

100. Mackenzie, 51.

Endnotes to Chapter Five - Dorothy Livesay: Writing for the Left

1. Mackenzie, 56.

2. In Desmond Pacey's "Foreward" to Selected Poems, 1926-1956, he suggests that she produced **no** poetry at all during the 1930s, *xv*.

3. Both "The Outrider" and "Day and Night" were first published in 1936, though they first appeared in a volume of poetry in 1944, Day and Night. F.W. Watt, "Literature of Social Protest," in Carl Frederick Klinck, Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English 2d ed. (Toronto; University Press, 1990): 473-489.

4. "Joe Derry" was first published in Masses, September 1933. According to Toby Ryan, Stage Left: 36-37, it was performed during the Progressive Arts Club Summer tour of 1933. Livesay's mass chant, "Struggle", first appeared in Right Hand Left Hand: 97-100.

5. She had, however, already been exposed to leftist thought. In 1928, Emma Goldman came to Toronto, Livesay's father took Dorothy and Jim Watts to hear her talk on Tolstoi. The two went on their own to following lecturs by Goldman on birth control and feminism. In Right Hand Left Hand: 21, Livesay suggests,

> Undoubtedly Emma Goldman's dynamic interest in anarchism and rebels of literature led us, by the time we were at university, to George Bernard Shaw's The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Communism and to Ibsen's The Doll's House.

6. Livesay, Right Hand Left Hand: 37.

7. Ibid., 36.

8. *The Mail and Empire*, November 15, 1932: 10.

9. Livesay, Right Hand Left Hand, 176.

10. Livesay, The Documentaries, 5.

11. *Masses*, 1 no. 7 (December 1932), ll. 1-2.

12. Ibid., l. 5.

13. *Masses*, 2 No. 12 (March-April 1934), 9.

14. Ibid. ll 1-2.

15. Ibid. ll. 10-11.

16. Ibid. ll. 17-26.

17. Ibid., ll. 36-37.

18. *Masses* 1, No. 8 (March-April 1933).

19. *Masses*, "A Girl Sees It," l. 36.

20. Ibid., ll. 68-69.

21. Ibid., ll. 97-98.

22. Ibid., ll. 124-127.

23. "A Mountie Reports the Social Effects of Unemployment and Relief," from Royal Canadian Mounted Police Reports Concerning the Unemployment Situation in Edmonton, 1932, U.N.B. Library, *Bennett Papers*, vol. 780, in Horn, The Dirty Thirties, 268.

24. *New Frontier*, 1, No. 4 (July 1936): 7.

25. Lee Briscoe Thompson, "A More Public Voice: Poet as Journalist," 67.

26. Granville Hicks, ed. Proletarian Literature in the United States: An Anthology (New York; International Publishers, 1935): 211.

27. *New Frontier*, June 1936: 4-6.

28. Ibid., 5.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., 6.

32. Greg Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds. R.C.M.P. Security Bulletins. The Depression Years, Part I, 1933-1934, *passim*.

33. Alan Ricketts, "Dorothy Livesay: An Annotated Bibliography," in The Annotated Bibliography of Canada's Major Authors, Jack David and Robert Lecker, vol. 4, (Downsview, Ont; ECW, 1983): 129-203.

34. Wood, "Interview".

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Reprints of Louis Muhlstock's art appears on pages 156, 197, 214; Charles Comfort's on pages 113, 199 and Miller Brittain's on pages 170, 86. Margaret Gould's and Marjorie King's articles appear on pages 124-125.

39. Livesay, Right Hand Left Hand, 124.

40. Patricia Morely, 145.

41. Livesay, Right Hand Left Hand, 19.

42. Lee Briscoe Thompson, Dorothy Livesay (Twayne's World Authors Series: Canadian Literature 784. Boston; Twayne, 1987), 12.

43. Ron A. Kiverago, "Thirties Revisited," Essays on Canadian Writing 10 (Spring 1978): 101.

44. Ibid., 101.

45. Ibid., 101-102.

46. Ibid., 103.

47. Ibid.

48. Mathew Robins, "Right Hand Left Hand: a review," Ontario Report 2 no. 6 (April 1978): 34.

49. Henry Kreisel, "The Poet as Radical--Dorothy Livesay in the Thirties." CV/II 3, no. 1 (Winter 1979): 20.

50. Ibid., 20.

51. Thompson, Dorothy Livesay, viii.

52. Jonathon C. Pierce, "A Tale of Two Generations: the Public and Private Voices of Dorothy Livesay" in A Public and a Private Voice, 23.

53. Wayne and Mackinnon, "Dorothy Livesay: A Literary Life on the Left" in A Public and a Private Voice, 36.

54. Ibid., 40.

55. George Woodcock, "Sun, Wind, and Snow: The Poems of Dorothy Livesay," A Room of One's Own 5 nos. 1-2 (1979): 56.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., 56.

58. W.E. Collin, "My New Found Land," in his White Savannahs. Toronto: Macmillan, 1936: 147-73.

59. Ibid., 156.

60. Ibid., 151.

61. Ibid., 152.

62. Ibid., 158.

63. Ibid., 158-159.

64. Ibid., 159.

65. Ibid.

66. Michael Roberts, Critique of Poetry, Cape, 1934, p. 245, quoted in Collin, 171.

67. Ibid., 170.

68. Ibid.

69. E.K. Brown, "Letters in Canada: 1944. Poetry." University of Toronto Quarterly 14 (April 1945): 262

70. Ibid., 263.

71. Arnason, 18.

72. F.R. Scott, "Day and Night," First Statement, 2 no. 10 (Dec-Jan. 1944-45): 23.

73. Quoted in Right Hand Left Hand, 23.

Endnotes to Conclusion

1. See, for example, the summary of culture in Canada during the 1920s and 1930s in Nation: Canada Since Confederation, ed. J.L. Granatstein (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1993): 325-26 for a relatively standard appraisal.

2. Horn, The Dirty Thirties, 1.

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