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| Livesay, (Kathleen May) Dorothy (1909-1996) |
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| Dorothy Livesay was a Canadian poet, journalist, activist, social worker, instructor, field worker, and author of short fiction, literary criticism, radio plays, and autobiography. Her collection of poetry *Day and Night* (1944) was lauded as a significant socialist, modernist text.  Livesay was born on October 12, 1909 in Winnipeg, Manitoba to journalist parents. She received a B.A., Honours in modern languages (1931) from the University of Toronto. Influenced by IMAGISM, she published her first collection of poetry *Green Pitcher* (1928), a well-received book of lyric poetry, while still an undergraduate student. Livesay studied at the Sorbonne, earning a Diplôme D’Études Supérieures (1932). Her thesis was entitled ‘Symbolism and the Metaphysical Tradition in Modern English Poetry.’ In Paris, she was exposed to Marxism and the effects of the Depression in Europe and developed her left-wing politics in response. Upon returning to Canada in 1932, she published a second book of poetry, *Signpost*, enrolled in the School of Social Work at U of T, and joined the Young Communist League. |
| File: Livesay.jpg  Figure 1 Dorothy Livesay, 1929. Courtesy of the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections.  Link: http://hpcanpub.mcmaster.ca/files/imagecache/generalresize/files/canpub/CP01044.jpg  Dorothy Livesay was a Canadian poet, journalist, activist, social worker, instructor, field worker, and author of short fiction, literary criticism, radio plays, and autobiography. Her collection of poetry *Day and Night* (1944) was lauded as a significant socialist, modernist text.  Livesay was born on October 12, 1909 in Winnipeg, Manitoba to journalist parents. She received a B.A., Honours in modern languages (1931) from the University of Toronto. Influenced by IMAGISM, she published her first collection of poetry *Green Pitcher* (1928), a well-received book of lyric poetry, while still an undergraduate student. Livesay studied at the Sorbonne, earning a Diplôme D’Études Supérieures (1932). Her thesis was entitled ‘Symbolism and the Metaphysical Tradition in Modern English Poetry.’ In Paris, she was exposed to Marxism and the effects of the Depression in Europe and developed her left-wing politics in response. Upon returning to Canada in 1932, she published a second book of poetry, *Signpost*, enrolled in the School of Social Work at U of T, and joined the Young Communist League.  While working as a caseworker in Montreal, New Jersey, and Vancouver, she published poetry, fiction and articles for the socialist Little Magazines *New Frontier* and *Masses* and eventually became the western editor for *New Frontier* upon her move to Vancouver in 1936. In Vancouver, Livesay worked as a caseworker, opened a community centre, married Duncan MacNair, and became an editor for Alan Crawley’s West-Coast literary journal, *Contemporary Verse.*  During the 1940s, Livesay grew disillusioned with communism but retained strong political convictions, writing about labour issues and broaching feminist topics, such as social roles and sexuality. Her collection of poetry *Day and Night* (1944) won the Governor-General’s Award for Poetry and established Livesay’s reputation as a socialist poet. In 1946, Livesay travelled to Europe to work as a post-war correspondent for the *Toronto Daily Star*. The following year she published *Poems for People* (1947)—which garnered the Governor-General’s Award for Poetry—and was awarded the Lorne Pierce Medal by the Royal Society of Canada for her contribution to Canadian literature. Continuing her commitment to political poetry, Livesay composed *Call My People Home* (1950), a documentary poem for radio about the Canadian government’s internment of Japanese families in B.C. during the Second World War.  Following her husband’s death in 1958, Livesay taught in Zambia (1960-1963). She earned a M.Ed. (1966) from the University of British Columbia and held teaching and writer-in-residence positions at U.B.C., University of New Brunswick, University of Alberta, University of Victoria, University of Manitoba, and Simon Fraser University.  As Livesay approached old age, she commenced writing autobiographical prose—notably, *A Winnipeg Childhood* (1973), and *Right Hand Left Hand* (1977), an account of her political life in the 1930s. In 1975, Livesay launched the literary magazine *Contemporary Verse 2*. Livesay received numerous honours for her poetic and activist achievements, including the Order of Canada in 1987. She died in Victoria on December 19, 1996. Livesay’s extensive body of work contributed a strong socialist and feminist voice to twentieth-century Canadian literature. Paratextual Materials: Audio Clip #1: Dorothy Livesay reading ‘Green Rain,’ ‘Time,’ ‘Comrade,’ ‘Serenade for Strings,’ ‘The Mother,’ ‘Fantasia,’ ‘The Three Emilys,’ ‘Bartok and the Geranium,’ ‘Other,’ ‘On Looking into Henry Moore,’ ‘Ballad of Me,’ ‘The Unquiet Bed,’ ‘The Touching,’ ‘Dream,’ ‘The Uninvited,’ and ‘The Snow Girl’s Ballads.’ Recorded in 1979.  <http://digitalcollections.mcmaster.ca/files/L_of_C_Poets_Livesay_1.mp3>  Audio Clip #2: Dorothy Livesay reading ‘Latter Day Eve,’ ‘Disasters of the Sun,’ selections from *Call My People Home*, and ‘Without Benefit of Tape’ with an interview by Andrew Marshall. Recorded in 1979.  <http://digitalcollections.mcmaster.ca/files/L_of_C_Poets_Livesay_2.mp3> Key Biographies of Dorothy Livesay: Stevens, Peter. *Dorothy Livesay: A Writer’s Life*  ---. *Dorothy Livesay: Patterns in a Poetic Life*  Thompson, Lee Briscoe. *Dorothy Livesay* List of Works:Poetry *Green Pitcher* (1928)  *Signpost* (1932)  *Day and Night* (1944)  *Poems for People* (1947)  *Call My People Home* (1955)  *New Poems* (1955)  *Selected Poems, 1926-1956* (1957)  *The Colour of God’s Face* (1964)  *The Unquiet Bed Illustrated by Roy Kiyooka* (1967)  *The Documentaries* (1968)  *Plainsongs* (1969)  *Post-Operative Instructions* (1970)  *Plainsongs Extended* (1971)  *Disaster of the Sun* (1971)  *Collected Poems: The Two Seasons* (1972)  *Nine Poems of Farewell* (1973)  *Ice Age* (1975)  *Seagulls* (1975)  *Winter Ascending* (1977)  *The Woman I Am: Best Loved Poems from One of Canada’s Best Loved Poets* (1977)  *The Phases of Love: Adolescence, 1925-1928* (1980)  *The Raw Edges: Voices from Our Time* (1981)  *The Phases of Love* (1983)  *Feeling the Worlds: New Poems* (1984)  *The Self-Completing Tree: Selected Poems* (1986)  *Awakenings* (1991)  *Poetry Is Like Bread* (1991)  *Archive for Our Times: Previously Uncollected and Unpublished Poems of Dorothy Livesay* (1998) Autobiographical Writing *Right Hand Left Hand* (1977)  *Journey With My Selves: A Memoir, 1909-1963* (1991) Short Stories *A Winnipeg Childhood* (1975) Books Edited *40 Women Poets of Canada* with Seymour Mayne (1971)  *Collected Poems of Raymond Knister* (1949)  *Women’s Eye: 12 B.C. Poets* (1947) Non-Fiction *Dorothy Livesay and the CBC: Early Texts for Radio* (1994) Articles ‘Poet’s Progress.’ *New Frontier* (1938)  ‘This Canadian Poetry.’ *Canadian Forum* (1944)  ‘The Making of Jalna A Reminiscence.’ *Canadian Literature* (1965)  ‘The Polished Lens: Poetic Techniques of Pratt and Klein.’ *Canadian Literature* (1965)  ‘The Sculpture of Poetry: On Louis Dudek.’ *Canadian Literature* (1966)  ‘Aspects of Symbolism.’ *Modern Quarterly* (1967)  ‘Fred and the *Fiddlehead*.’ *Atlantic Advocate* (1967)  ‘A Creative Climate for English Teaching.’ *English Quarterly* (1968)  ‘Search for a Style: The Poetry of Milton Acorn.’ *Canadian Literature* (1969)  ‘Song and Dance.’ *Canadian Literature* (1969)  ‘The Life of Isabelle Valancy Crawford.’ *The Crawford Symposium* (1970)  ‘The Native People in Our Canadian Literature.’ *English Quarterly* (1971)  ‘The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre.’ *Contexts of Canadian Criticism* (1971)  ‘The Hunters Twain.’ *Canadian Literature* (1973)  ‘Tennyson’s Daughter of Wilderness Child? The Factual and the Literary Background of Isabella Valancy Crawford.’ *Journal of Canadian Fiction* (1973)  ‘Livesay’s Choice.’ *Canadian Dimension* (1975)  ‘Two Women Novelists of Canada’s West.’ *Review of National Literatures* (1976)  ‘Crawford’s Stories.’ *Canadian Literature* (1977)  ‘Commentary.’ *West Coast Review* (1977)  ‘‘My Craft and Sullen Art’: The Writers Speak.’ *Atlantis* (1978)  ‘Carr and Livesay.’ *Canadian Literature* (1980)  ‘Two Women Writers: Anglophone and Francophone.’ *Language and Literature in Multicultural Contexts* (1983)  ‘Moving West: A Memoir.’ *This Magazine* (1989) Journal Special Issue on Dorothy Livesay Room of One’s Own (5.1/2, 1979) Documentary on Dorothy Livesay Tucker, David. *The Woman I Am* (1981) |
| Further reading:  (Givner)  (Irvine)  (Kelly)  (Stevens)  (Stevens, Dorothy Livesay: Patterns in a Poetic Life)  (Thompson) |