Studies in Canadian Literature

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Volume 32, Number 2, 2007

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/scl32_2art03

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Publisher(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0380-6995 (print)
1718-7850 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Vellino, B. C. (2007). Machine-Age Discourse, Mechanical Ballet, and Popular Song as Alternative Document in Dorothy Livesay's "Day and Night". *Studies in Canadian Literature*, *32*(2), 43–58.

Machine-Age Discourse, Mechanical Ballet, and Popular Song as Alternative Document in Dorothy Livesay's "Day and Night"

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> Central to much of the political poetry of the 1930s is an aesthetic of the differential field, through which we read poems not only as discrete objects but also as varied contributions to collective discourses. … Many of the meanings poems acquire are granted through critical prose. Without these supplementary meanings the poems themselves may be strangely silent or substantially curtailed.
> — Cary Nelson, *Revolutionary Memory*, 2001

> I had been quite excited by the American [poetry] documentaries by Archibald MacLeish … and also by the documentary film experiments of John Grierson. Both … returned … to the need for the artist to speak with a public voice. I identified myself with a whole world movement of poets writing politically-oriented social criticism. — Dorothy Livesay, *Selected Poems*, 1986

> "A Poem is an Archive for Our Times"
> — Dorothy Livesay, "Anything Goes," 1983

As one of Canada's foremost public intellectuals, Dorthy Livesay asserted the civic role of poetry from the 1930s to her death in 1996; her engagement with the "documentary modernism central to the literary left" is essential to any cultural history of public poetics in the twentieth century (Rifkind 15). Criticism of Canadian poetry has been compelled to consider the literary left's contribution to the progressive social agenda of the 1930s by Livesay's own canonical contribution to the cultural history of that period, *Left*

Hand, Right Hand (1977), which collects her essays, public talks, and radio broadcasts, as well as many of her documentary poems, which first appeared in leftist literary periodicals and were subsequently published in *Day and Night Poems (*1944*), Collected Poems* (1972), and *Archive for Our Times* (1998). Livesay's critics have repeatedly pointed to her most celebrated and anthologized poem of the period, "Day and Night," as a pre-eminent example of a documentary poem that faithfully witnesses the ardours of Depression-era factory life in Canada (Kelly 63). Beyond a general recognition of the documentary tone and texture of the poem, most of Livesay's critics have had little to say about *what kinds* of intertextual documents are actually cited in this poem and what kind of witnessing work they are doing.[1]

Drawing on Cary Nelson's notion of a dialogic poetics of "revolutionary intertextuality" (154, 157, 173-75), I will discuss the ways in which Livesay's poem expands the range of what counts as document through its saturation in machine-age discourse and aesthetics, culled from a wide field of representation in visual arts, photography, dance, cinema, advertising, and literary culture. Livesay's citation of two pop songs from the early thirties, Cole Porter's Broadway musical number "Night and Day" and Louis Armstrong's blues spiritual "Shadrach," further conveys the contending priorities of the roaring twenties and the dirty thirties. Such an interrogative juxtaposition of these two songs recalls Manina Jones's notion of "documentary collage," but while Jones identifies this effect primarily with postmodernism, I wish to suggest that it is also appropriate to some practitioners of "documentary modernism." Cary Nelson advocates reading poetry of the thirties dialogically: "The map of 1930s culture might be imaged as a series of overlapping intertexts in conversation and debate with one another" (174). I read the above songs as unconventional "documents" that are deployed to advance an ambivalently dystopic critique of industrial-class relations through representations of the impact of the machine on the human body. This critique advocates cross-racial solidarity in the labour movement, and disavows a bourgeois life of romance, leisure, and lyric individualism in favour of collective organizing and revolutionary action.[2]

At first glance, "Day and Night" enacts a familiar narrative of workplace oppression, labour organizing, and utopian imagination of alternative possibilities; this signals its location in a horizon of shared discourse and common purpose with socialist witnesses positioned against the

Fordist assembly-line ethos of speed, efficiency, progress, and profit. However, attending to the discourses, intertexts, and aesthetics around which Livesay builds the poem renders it far more interesting and complex than earlier readings have granted. Significantly, in Sequence iii, Livesay aligns the action of her poem with an anonymous "notebook," which "remembers the record of evil." The notebook metonymically implies the agency of a witness who preserves a radical memory in order to accomplish a disabling critique of capitalist production. The implied witness may be multiply read as a steel-factory labourer or a social worker poet aligned with the working class. Collective worker agency begins with this radical memory and the search for a voice to make it public. I read the notebook as the analogue for the documentary camera which Livesay, along with so many other progressive writers of the period, takes as her model. The entire poem comes to function as an alternative ledger that recontextualizes machine-age discourse and popular culture "documents," creating an archive through which public memory may be preserved. The documentary impulse, generated perhaps by Livesay's social-worker training, often gives the poem the texture of a case study which is aesthetically radicalized by her juxtaposition (through avant garde compositional collage) of diverse voices, documentary and lyric modes, class backgrounds, and racial positions. Livesay's infusion of the lyric form with non-literary machine-age iconography and dance kinetics, as well as pop songs drawn from the Broadway musical and African-American spiritual traditions, situates "Day and Night" at the forefront of internationalist aesthetic experimentation.

Just as leftist Canadians contributed to the International Brigade's fight against fascism during the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s via the McKenzie Papineau Batallion, Livesay was among a group of progressive writers who participated in social and artistic activism related to the motivating ideologies and discourses of the global worker's movement during the first half of the decade. I also define Livesay's affiliations as internationalist because of her study and work in Paris, Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and New York.[3] "Day and Night" was inspired by Livesay's 1934 social work sojourn in Englewood, N.J., where she had access to Harlem and Greenwich Village bohemian cultures, and by her brief but intense immersion in African-American race politics and cross-racial alliances. The international framework of revolutionary intertextuality and interdiscursivity that informs "Day and Night" expands

the parameters Livesay set forth in her well-known 1969 essay defining the documentary poem as an essentially *Canadian* form. While she makes a substantial contribution to Canadian poetics by foregrounding the undeniable role of social documentary in Canadian literary and cultural production, Livesay's poetic practice also participates in the international "revolutionary chorus" of documentary modernism (Rifkind 107). It is plausible to see Livesay as both a Canadian nationalist and an internationalist. This capacity for multiple citizen locations is an important feature of the best of Canadian contributions to both national and global human rights work in the twentieth century within which socialist critique and labour organizing have played such a significant part.

Livesay's "Day and Night" is persistently canonized as the prototype of the Canadian documentary poem, although it incorporates and revises only one documentary intertext directly — Lenin's formulation of revolutionary progress as one step back, two forward — and its informing contexts are all American. While Dennis Cooley aptly comments on the ways in which the poem invokes non-literary discourses, he, along with other critics, does not explicitly engage the discourses that frame and advance the energy of the poem (247). Livesay's evocation of machine-age iconography and acoustics through recurring imagery of gears, wheels, levers, fire, screams and whistles, "smashing rhythms" and "roaring voices," along with the driving pace of alternating iambic and dactylic sections of the poem, is most notable for its kinetic force, which conveys the intense physical impact of the industrial machine on the human body.[4] Beginning with the 1889-1890 Paris Exposition's Palace of Machines, where Henry Adams had his vision of the Dynamo, continuing in major public exhibitions such as the World Fairs in Chicago (1936) and New York (1939), and incorporated into the developing fields of photography, cinema, and advertising, a "machine-age consciousness" permeated North American and European representational styles and values (Wilson 23, Armstrong 159). *The Machine Age in America* claims that "the machine in all its manifestations — as object, process, and ultimately symbol — became the fundamental fact of modernism" (Wilson 23). On the utopian side, machine-age enthusiasts emphasized values of speed, dynamism, movement, and precision in travel, communications, workplace productivity, and a streamlined machine aesthetic (the assembly line, automobile, steam engine, airplane, home

appliances, telegraph, radio, motion picture, microscope, and telescope) (Armstrong 158-61). The Machine Art exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, which took place in the spring of 1934, just before Livesay arrived in New York, is an example of the celebration of the "geometrical beauty" and "kinetic rhythms" of the machine (Johnson n.pag.). The "Precisionist" paintings and photography of Americans Paul Strand, Charles Sheeler, and Alfred Stieglitz celebrated machine and industrial architecture design in cityscapes, bridges, and buildings (Tichi 5).[5] Cubism with its focus on geometric patterns and poetic imagism with its focus on spare verbal lines both participated in the machine aesthetic (Steinman 45). William Carlos Williams defined the poem as a "machine made of words" and practised what Cecelia Tichi calls a "kinetic poetics" (230, 267). The focus of an industrial aesthetic was on the energetic interaction of component parts, which imitated pumping pistons and revolving gear wheels (Tichi x-xi, 5). The compositional impact of a machine-age aesthetic on many modernist poets, including Livesay, is evident in a montage-like juxtaposition of images, multiple voices, intertexts, and poetic registers (Steinman 42).

Fritz Lang's expressionist film *Metropolis* (1927) is a central cinematic influence on the machine-age discourse that permeated Livesay's representation of the machine-dominated factory and its impact on the human body. Like Lang's elaborate expressionist factory settings, Livesay's machine depicted in the opening octave is gargantuan and animate, dwarfing and orchestrating the human body:

> Dawn, red and angry, whistles loud and sends
> A geysered shaft of steam searching the air.
> Scream after scream announces that the churn
> Of life must move, the giant arm command
> Men in a stream, a moving human belt
> Move into sockets, every one a bolt.
> The fun begins, a humming, whirring drum —
> men do a dance in time to the machines. (18)

Similar to the wide-angle long shots used by modernist photographers and cinematographers to emphasize the power of the machine, Livesay's poem begins with panoramic visual and acoustic imagery. She establishes an opposition between duelling voices and kinetic forces; the smashing, roaring, rattling, pounding, hammering, crashing voice and violent force of the machines, metonymic for capitalist industry, are

positioned against the initially dwarfed and silenced voices and bodies of the workers who acquire agency and humanity through the use of dance, song, poetic imagination, and documentary accounting allied with collective organizing.

Livesay joins with many other dystopic social critics of the period who examine the impact of the machine on the human body. Such critiques arose from an ambivalent field of representations in which metaphors of the body *as* machine abounded in medical, philosophical, and artistic theory and practice. Marcel Duchamp's famous "Nude Descending a Staircase" (1912) captures the body in machine-like motion through a repetition of descending angular geometric planes and spheres (Wilson 49). William Carlos Williams was trained as a physician to regard the body as a machine-like aggregate of "separate but integrated parts" as described in such books as Dr. Logan Clendening's *The Human Body* (1927), which drew on "machine analogies to explain the workings of the human body" (Tichi 274). While some of these representations were neutral or celebratory, others were dystopic; in "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903), Georg Simmel laments the human "as a mere cog in an enormous organization of things and powers," emptied of subjectivity, spirituality, and value and ultimately colonized by capital (Armstrong 168-69). Medical psychiatry since the mid-nineteenth century had also begun to diagnose "technology trauma" or nervous exhaustion as a condition in which "the human body was seen as increasingly out of step, in terms of scale and speed with the mechanical world" (Armstrong 169-70).

Dwarfing of the human body and synchronizing of the body with machine parts and movement may function in a utopian, dystopian, or ambivalent manner in machine-age discourse. A specific manifestation of the body-machine interface is the "machine ballet," as exemplified by Ferdinand Leger and George Antheil's surrealist musical cinematic collaboration, *Ballet mecanique* (1924). Mechanistic dance routines were also popularized by the large-scale geometric arrangements of human bodies choreographed in Busby Berkeley's Broadway and film musicals (Wilson 37). Felicia McCarren's study of "machine ballets" in *Dancing Machines* examines the interchangeability of body and machine in productions in which everyday objects "dance" and the dancer's body is choreographed to mimic machine movement and patterns (McCarren 3-8; Wilson 36). While I have not found direct evidence of Livesay's

exposure to the "machine ballet," she is clearly influenced by this aesthetic, which sought to represent and probe the limits of the mechanized worker's body through a bodily dynamism that at least matches if not supersedes machine dynamism.[6] By representing steel-factory work as a mechanical ballet in which the human body both imitates and dances its resistance to the imposition of the machine through imaginative movement that can never be fully commodified, Livesay conveys both a powerful critique and an irrepressible sense of playful agency in the "fun" of the dance rhythms and soundscapes of her entire poem. Like many artists of her time, Livesay is both compelled and appalled by the dynamism of the machine (Armstrong 171). Drawing on the same representational field of dystopic machine-age representation of the worker's body, Charlie Chaplin's film *Modern Times* (1936) (released within four months of the publication of Livesay's poem in E.J. Pratt's inaugural January 1936 issue of *Canadian Poetry Magazine*), counterbalances the constraints and hardships of the Depression with the lyricism of his tramp persona's iconoclastic pantomime and dance as modes of transgression and resistance. Livesay's first stanza uncannily prefigures the opening imagery of Chaplin's factory worker montage and the last lines antedate the tramp's assembly-line ballet. However, Chaplin aligns his tramp with individualistic solo performances, while Livesay renounces lyric individualism for a collective worker protagonist and voice. At the same time, mechanized dance performs a similar function in both pieces as a means of parodic embodied agency against the capitalist machine that would discipline the body and render it devoid of agency. In this way, the resistant body itself becomes a kind of "document" in a cluster of representations that use mechanical ballet as critique in this period. The startling parallels between Livesay's poem and Chaplin's film confirm that both of these artists were drawing from a common pool of machine-age discourse producing art that was an archive of its time and place.[7] It is this field of representation which so powerfully contributes to the documentary texture of Livesay's poem.

Livesay also structures an opposition between two popular songs. The first is Cole Porter's "Night and Day" (1932) from the Broadway musical *The Gay Divorcee*, whose title she inverts and foregrounds to convey the precedence of day-time work over night-time leisure. The second, Louis Armstrong's jazz spiritual "Shadrach" (1931), she improvises upon to suggest the labour movement's investment in race politics

and to return agency and voice to the worker in Sections iv, v, and vi. As unconventional "documents" of their time and place, each of these songs is made to represent one axis of the competing priorities of the 1920s and 1930s, and their competing poetic and ideological affiliations. The title of the poem and Livesay's own commentary on it signal her clear intent to invert the nostalgic world of Jazz Age night life proposed by Porter's hit "Night and Day."[8] The song, written after the market crash of 1929, nostalgically evokes both Porter's own carefree hedonistic time in 1920s Paris, and America's post-war "Jazz Age" of economic, psychological, and sexual release. Just as the Depression sublimates the pleasures of the Jazz Age to the harsh realities of bread lines, unemployment, low wages, and evictions, Livesay's poem reverses and revises the romantic priorities of Porter's song to suggest that the night is no longer the place of sweet dreams and romance, but of secret union organizing that will spark a labour revolution:

> Are you waiting?
> Wait with us
> After evening
> There's a hush —
>
> Use it not
> For love's slow count:
>
> The wheel must limp
> Till it hangs still
> And crumpled men
> Pour down the hill
>
> Day and Night
> Night and Day
> Till life is turned
> the other way! (22)

These concluding stanzas emphatically renounce the pleasure-driven priorities of Porter's song (although there is hope for a revolutionary future in which night will again take precedence over day). In *Journey With My Selves*, Livesay notes that the general Communist Party stance on sexual relationships and family was that the party came first. Many party members did not have children. When employed in Montreal as a social worker, Livesay records her own subordination of maternal and romantic urges (140). While she has several lovers during this period,

she tends to think of them and represent them as comrades in the struggle. In "Day and Night," while the speaker in Sequence iii addresses a prayer in the first person singular to an abstract "love," personified as a voice which may resound "above the steel whip's crack" and help the speaker "find the words I could not say …," by the poem's end, a radicalized voice directed to the collective body of workers instructs them to use night "not for love's slow count."

One way to read "Day and Night" is to notice its vacillation between the singular voice identified with a speaking "I" (here and elsewhere traditionally allied with the lyric priorities of the individualistic solo speaker who gives attention to the pleasures of nature and romance) and the collective voice mandated by socialist priorities, as evidenced in the 1909 "Union Poem" by J.P. Thompson, published by the Vancouver branch of the IWW:

> You cannot be a Union Man,
> No matter how you try,
> Unless you think in terms of "We,"
> Instead of terms of "I." (qtd. in Nelson 30)

In order to identify with the priorities of the socialist left to which she is so deeply committed, Livesay struggles to subordinate the bourgeois lyric individualism she claims in *Right Hand, Left Hand* to have renounced in favour of the priorities of the collective (153). From the evidence of her 1930s poems, this also meant subordinating constructions of female personas and concerns to representations of the male worker hero.[9]

In sequence iv, when Livesay counterpoints Porter's "Night and Day" with Armstrong's "Shadrach," her displacement of the priorities of the 1920s with those of 1930s labour organizing also parallels Livesay's ambivalent renunciation of the bourgeois values as represented in the romantic, pastoral lyric mode. Livesay cites "Shadrach" as an intertextual document to foreground the complexity of the attempted formation of cross-racial alliances in the labour movement in north-eastern industrial cities. She allegorizes the uneven distribution of power relations between boss and worker through the incorporation of a pop song that itself recalls the cultural work of allegorical freedom songs within anti-slavery organizing; thus she harnesses the powerful energy of this earlier cultural work to the labour struggle of the 1930s. Such musical recontextualization was a common strategy of the socialist left, which

frequently appropriated and adapted popular tunes from film, musicals, and radio to the more radical goals of labour songs (Rifkind 109). Particularly reflective of the CP-USA's anti-racist commitments, social poets of the American left like Muriel Rukeyser employed "sympathetic borrowings" of blues, spirituals, and folk songs to signal their "common cause" with black folks and to "refract working-class political issues through the prism of race" (Thurston, "Documentary" n.pag.). Cross-racial solidarity went two ways, as Langston Hughes' many labour-centred poems and frequent contributions to CP-USA's *New Masses* during the 1930s demonstrate (Thurston, *Making* 86-87).

Livesay's "sympathetic borrowing" from Louis Armstrong's "Shadrach" is undoubtedly rooted in her own experience of racial politics as a social worker with African-American and white low-waged and unemployed workers in Englewood, N.J. In *Journey With My Selves*, Livesay recounts how she was shocked by the disparities and enforced social divisions she became aware of through her friendships with two black social work colleagues, Paul and Luella, with whom it was taboo to socialize publicly in Englewood. Paul had an uncle who was lynched and was himself barred from practising law after studying at Harvard, while Luella was banned by Livesay's landlady from visiting Livesay, to which the latter responded by moving out (146-48). These experiences struck Livesay so forcefully that she worked them out in both a poem ("New Jersey: 1935") and a radio play ("The Times Were Different") published in *Right Hand, Left Hand* (131-52). In "Day and Night," Livesay's representation of white and black workers bound by the arduous labour of coal stoking, shared class struggles with landlords, "wage-cuts, and overtime" is another answer to enforced racial segregation. Using declarative slang to convey the vernacular community as protagonist in Sequence iv — "we were like buddies, see?" — Livesay also figures transracial solidarity through interchangeable skin: "We were stoking coal in the furnaces; red hot // They gleamed, burning our skins away, his and mine." Under such conditions, the speaker proclaims that the difference in skin color is erased for the workers, although it is the foundation of a divide-and-conquer strategy by the company bosses: "Therefore they cut him down, who flowered at night // And raised me up, day hanging over night." When Livesay figures the body of the African American worker as a night flower, she draws on the revisionist imagery of many Harlem Renaissance poets who recast "night" as

a place of beauty and agency. Livesay retains the colour association of "day" (whiteness) hanging over "night" (blackness) only in conjunction with the racist social divisions perceived by the company elite. In these two dense lines, Livesay also powerfully implicates this workplace racism within the larger social context of lynching, but she does so with a twist, for when the black worker is "cut down" and the white worker is "raised up," it appears that each is an interchangeable victim of a kind of lynching.[10] In Sequence iv, stanza two, when the singer of the worker's lament claims, "Lord, I'm blacker than my brother" (if read as a continuation of the white worker's witness), he demands recognition *as* a black man to emphasize to the "boss" that they cannot be divided one from the other.

Passionate identification with the unemployed and low-waged worker, figured as a "spatial transgression" of "going over" or downward mobility out of one's inherited social class, was a central desire and problem for bourgeois artists and intellectuals. This difficulty is explicitly expressed by Livesay as "a terrible longing to understand" in her poem "Growing Up," which signals her motivation for training in social work as narrated in *Right Hand, Left Hand* (Livesay 69, Rifkind 92-93, 98). However, Livesay takes the movement across class lines a radical step further to interracial identification: "Going over thus involves a complex desire to join self with other and create a new collective, future-oriented identity that disrupts the binaries most often associated with the period's rhetoric. It is a process of transgression shot through with the intricacies of cross-class, and sometimes cross-race and cross-gender looking" (Rifkind 99). While critics of our own period are highly attuned to the ethical stakes of appropriation attendant on this kind of identity translation, leftist critics of the 1930s such as Philips and Rahv in "Recent Problems of Revolutionary Literature" also warned against "the dangers inherent in the spectator's attitude" and argued for the necessity of worker-oriented literature "steeped in sensory experience" rather than mere observation (544-45). Clearly the documentary mode of Livesay's social work practice — the case study — positioned her as a proxy witness who seeks to apprentice herself to the experience of unemployed and low-wage workers so that she can understand their social circumstances and advocate on their behalf (Rifkind 125, 128). When client representation is transformed into literary representation, parallels may be drawn between the problematic power dynamics of

ethnographic writing in which a socially empowered anthropologist seeks to represent, interpret, and establish knowledge about a culture not her own for an elite audience. Yet we must note that the goals of early ethnography were primarily cultural interpretation and salvaging "dying" cultures, while the leftist cultural worker sought to understand social suffering to the end of ameliorative advocacy. This does not erase the problem of benevolent paternalism underlying the desire to represent the underprivileged, but intention and consequence must be addressed in any consideration of such appropriation.

While the interpolated speaker's notebook registers the record of evil in Sequence iii much like a social worker writes up a case study (and much as Livesay's own notebook must have documented her trip to a Newark steel factory, *Journey* 150), in an alternate reading, stanza two of Sequence iv constructs a place of "authentic" speaking for the African American worker which "performs" a version of Armstrong's "Shadrach":

> Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego
> Turn in the furnace, whirling slow.
> Lord I'm burnin' in the fire
> Lord, I'm steppin' on the coals
> Lord, I'm blacker than my brother
> Blow your breath down here.
>
> Boss, I'm smothered in the darkness
> Boss, I'm shrivellin' in the flames
> Boss, I'm blacker than my brother
> Blow your breath down here.
> Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego
> Burn in the furnace, whirling slow. (20)

Livesay signals her citation of "Shadrach" by retaining the original framing chorus line which begins and ends with a repetition of the names of Daniel's three friends from Armstrong's version. As well, she takes the rudiments of the resistance and liberation story from the Hebrew Bible celebrated in Armstrong's song and improvises upon them. If the three Hebrew men are thrown into the furnace for refusing to bow to the golden statue of a Babylonian king, then these workers are thrown into the allegorical furnace for refusing to bow to the capitalist god of Mammon. While the Hebrew men address their prayers for deliverance to the "Lord," who in the Biblical and Armstrong versions does deliver

them in a David-and-Goliath kind of struggle in which the little guy wins, Livesay ironically shifts the figure of address to the "Boss" in the second verse, who in this allegory is clearly deaf to the workers' pleas for justice. Livesay's improvised version ends with the workers still burning in the furnace, like their Jewish counterparts miraculously not consumed, but unlike them not delivered by any higher power. The rest of Livesay's poem suggests that deliverance lies in the solidarity of the workers. Shifts between the singular and collective voices are important here. While Sequence iii ends with an individual voice pleading with an abstract personified love to "Tear up all the silence // Find the words I could not say" (19), Sequence iv deploys the communal voice of the Negro spiritual as a race/class allegory. The words of the chorus are not those of bourgeois individualism, but of a collective voice which calls forth a collective protagonist in the final sequence.

Sequence v begins with its group protagonist in the cutting room of the steel factory, followed by a revolutionary chant giving instructions to workers to undertake a radical, collective accounting that will result in shutting down the factory:

> Add up hunger,
> Labour's ache
> These are figures
> That will make
>
> The page grow crazy
> Wheels go still,
> Silence sprawling
> On the till. (21-22)

Like the Brechtian Living Newspaper, these stanzas, inspired by the mass chant, perform an alternative living record of accounts. "Day and Night," in the end, doubles as an accounting ledger which "adds up" hunger and aching bones in the last sequence of the poem. A worker's alternative record is counterpointed to the boss's ledger in which he adds up profits and productivity. The conception of the workplace as a place of surveillance in which the boss keeps the ledger is inverted, so that it is now the worker who keeps and, by implication, will settle accounts. Agency in this poem depends upon a different kind of accounting, which ideally results in a different economic balance of power. The witnessing worker is also doubled by the social-worker poet who keeps a notebook that remembers and records the impress of the machine on

the body of the worker and the agency of the performed mechanized body to unsettle the balance of corporate power. "Day and Night" may be documentary, but it asks us to consider machine-age aesthetics and popular music intertexts as alternative documents that perform cultural work to create a radical public archive for that time and ours.

Author's Note

I am grateful to Carleton University for an internal SSHRC grant, which helped make this paper possible, to successive classes of undergraduate and graduate students who offered thoughtful insights into this poem, and especially to my research assistant Pete Laughton for tracking down armloads of materials.

Notes

[1] Recently, Candida Rifkind's exceptional discussion of Livesay's deployment of the "aesthetics [and politics] of leftist documentary" (126), while not treating "Day and Night" at length, has done much to illuminate her contribution to "documentary modernism." Michael Thurston establishes the concept of "Documentary Modernism," noting that the "Depression set off an explosion of a fairly new genre," "social documentary," which he defines as a "distinctive brand of reportage that sought not only to increase our knowledge of public facts but also to 'sharpen it with feeling'" (*Making*, 170). Tyrus Miller further disputes the assumption that documentary aesthetics (with investments in truthful accuracy) and modernist aesthetics (with investments in complexity, abstraction, self-reflexivity, and fragmentation) were necessarily at odds.

[2] When I suggest Livesay's poem mobilizes unconventional documents, I contrast this with the explicit use of non-literary fact-based materials such as verbatim quotation from newspapers in Muriel Rukeyser's *Book of the Dead* (See Thurston on Rukeyser) or courtroom cases in Charles Reznikoff's "Testimony" (See Davidson on Reznikoff). It strikes me as unlikely that Livesay would have been unfamiliar with the two American socialist documentary poets she most resembles — Langston Hughes and Muriel Rukeyser — both of whom published in the successful CP-USA publication *New Masses* at the time Livesay was a committed reader. Rifkind notes that Hughes was also introduced to a Canadian readership in *Masses,* which Livesay helped to edit (122). Others have commented on the disingenuous self-mythologizing rhetoric of Livesay's claim in *Right Hand, Left Hand* that "there was nothing like it [the British leftist poets, Lewis, Auden, Spender, and Macneice, whose work she discovered in a Greenwich bookshop] in America or Canada" and who established for her a "new horizon" and launched a "brave new world" of "revolutionary poetry" (Livesay 153, Irr 215, Rifkind 102).

[3] This includes Livesay's cultural activities within the Progressive Arts Clubs in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, and her editorial work on their publications, *Masses* (1932-33) and *New Frontiers* (1936-37).

[4] See Lee Thompson's insightful analysis of "machine tempos," "pounding dimeter

stresses," and "Rhythms of jazz, foxtrot, and Charleston twostep," which "mimic in scansion the dance macabre of man with machine, man as machine" (46-47).

[5] See *Machine Art* for a typical photo by Ralph Steiner, "Portrait of Louis Lozowick" dwarfed by a giant machine wheel (Fig. 7.47, 10), Charles Sheeler's "Rolling Power," a photo-realist painting of the wheels of a steam train (Fig. 5.23, 10), and Paul Kelpe's 1902 cubist painting of machine gears (Fig. 7.51, 246).

[6] In her New York chapter of *Journey With My Selves*, Livesay notes that she and other undergraduate friends at the University of Toronto had driven all night to New York "just to spend two days filled with films, concerts, and plays: What that metropolis meant to us . . . was the opportunity to see European films like *Dr. Caligari*, *Sous les toits de Paris*, and *Sang d'un Poète*" (144). Given her interest in avant garde cinema, the absence of details about which films she watched during her year in New Jersey is a missing clue.

[7] I am grateful for my six-year tenure as an instructor in the Film Genres Course at Western, without which I would never have recognized the resonances between Chaplin's *Modern Times* and Livesay's poem or Chaplin's indebtedness to Lang's *Metropolis*. The Spring 1935 *First Statement* review of *Modern Times* confirms the sequence of publication and film premiere in the order of Livesay's poem followed shortly by Chaplin's film.

[8] See Livesay's "Commentary on 'Day and Night'": "The sound of Negro spirituals mingled in my mind with Cole Porter's 'Night and Day' …" (17).

[9] For insightful readings of gender tensions in Livesay's life and work, see Peggy Kelly's "Politics, Gender, and New Provinces" and Candida Rifkind: "Some of the brightest talents of the literary left were women, but in order to achieve recognition among the male leadership of socialist modernism they often had to subordinate questions of gender to those of class and ethnicity and replace aesthetics designated as feminine with those valued as masculine"(10).

[10] See Pamela McCallum's admirable discussion of the politics and history of lynching and its relevance to the cultural work of the lynch reference in Livesay's "Day and Night."

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