

Politics, Gender, and *New Provinces*: Dorothy Livesay and F.R. Scott

by Peggy Kelly

Revolt is essential to progress, not necessarily the revolt of violence, but always the revolt that questions the established past and puts it to the proof, that finds the old forms outworn and invents new forms for new matters. — D.C. Scott 142

The Canadian literary field of the 1930s was marked by debates, dichotomies, and the cultural cringe typical of colonies. The main dichotomy that defines this field is the split between the modernists and the traditionalists, often referred to as Victorians or the Maple Leaf School of writing. The competition between literary modernists, such as the poets in *New Provinces*, on the one hand, and literary traditionalists, such as many members of the Canadian Authors Association (CAA), on the other hand, was reflected in debates over literary standards and the value of popular literature. Most modernists, who emphasized modern diction and new forms, wanted Canadian writers to apply international literary standards to Canadian literature, whereas many traditionalists, who favoured rhyme, metrical forms, and archaic diction, wanted to develop national literary standards specifically for Canadian literature.¹ Furthermore, the entire field of Canadian literature was based on gendered assumptions that feminized and devalued popular literature, at the same time as they masculinized and overvalued literary writing, that is, writing which did not earn money. A case in point is Edna Jaques, who wrote popular poetry about farms, kitchens, and families in Saskatchewan during the Depression, and sold her poems to Canadian newspapers for \$1.50 each ("When I Look Back" n.p.). Positioning himself with high art and modernism, the literary critic E.K. Brown claimed, in *The Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1936*, that Jaques's popularity was "false" and that her poetry was "mediocre" because it "exalt[ed] the cosy things in life" ("Canadian Poetry" 207). Canadian modernists, however, were

outnumbered by traditional poets like Jaques and there was a great deal of crossover between the two camps. For instance, E.J. Pratt, one of the poets included in *New Provinces*, was a [Page 54] transitional figure who appreciated and worked in both Victorian and modernist forms, and the essentially Victorian poet Wilson MacDonald, described by David Arnason as a "bohemian," wrote two poems about the political left, subject matter rarely considered by Victorian writers (Arnason, "Introduction" n.p.).² Although modernists such as F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith criticized the Maple Leaf School for its nationalist tendencies, they also wrote the occasional nationalist poem about nature themselves. Smith's "The Lonely Land," for example, is a landscape poem about Canada which has been canonized, taught at all levels of education, and regularly republished in anthologies.

I rely on a close reading of archival correspondence for the following analysis of the gender, class, and state politics surrounding Macmillan Canada's publication of *New Provinces: Poems by Several Authors*, in 1936.³ *New Provinces* presented new as well as previously published poetry by F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, E.J. Pratt, Leo Kennedy, Robert Finch, and A.M. Klein. In 1976, Michael Gnarowski edited a reprint of *New Provinces* which the publisher, the University of Toronto Press, hailed as "a monument in Canadian literature" (front flyleaf). In his Introduction, Gnarowski describes *New Provinces* as "a singular event in a literary process which stemmed from the origins of Canadian modernism and its beginnings in Montreal" (vii). Others have added to Gnarowski's retrospective canonization of *New Provinces*. In the *Literary History of Canada*, Munro Beattie calls *New Provinces* "a literary milestone," and "a literary signpost" (753, 754).⁴ More recently, Brian Trehearne describes *New Provinces* as "the landmark publication that signalled the demise of the old school of Canadian poetry" (*Aestheticism* 115). Susan Gingell, in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, refers to *New Provinces* more realistically as a "commercially unsuccessful but critically important anthology" (931). Contemporary critics were not as complimentary. Writing in *The Canadian Forum*, Edgar McInnis, a University of Toronto assistant professor of history, claims that *New Provinces* and three other volumes of poetry all lack direction. He singles out the work of Pratt and Kennedy as the best in *New Provinces*, a statement which must have annoyed Smith, who criticized their work in correspondence with Scott (29).⁵ In *The Dalhousie Review*, a reviewer identified only as B.M. recognized generational differences in literary audiences by distinguishing between "those who think only in terms of the 19th century" and "those in the stream of modern poetry" (534). Although B.M. claims that both *The White Savannahs*, by W.E.

Collin, and *New Provinces* "mark a new stage in Canadian literature," she or he only halfheartedly recommends *New [Page 55] Provinces* to the reader (534). Among the poets' contemporaries, only Brown gives high praise to the volume; however, his praise seems tempered by his comparison of the poetry in *New Provinces* to British and American poetry of more than a decade earlier, a comparison which suggests that Canadian modernists were behind those modernists practising in the cultural imperialist centres of the English-speaking world.⁶ "The poems in the anthology," writes Brown in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, "are closer in spirit and technique to the best English and American poetry of the twenties [1920s] than anything that has yet appeared in Canada, except Mr. Kennedy's *The Shrouding* and Miss Dorothy Livesay's *Signpost*" ("Letters in Canada" 341). As Brown notes, Livesay had already published *Signpost*, in 1932, as well as an earlier volume of imagist poetry, *Green Pitcher*, in 1928.

Livesay was part of this literary generation of Canadian modernist poets in Canada in 1936, yet her work was excluded from the only anthology of modernist verse that was able to achieve publication in Canada during the Depression. As already suggested, this essay is designed to question a literary history which has canonized an unsuccessful volume of poetry published by a small group of Canadian modernists who excluded female poets. At least four reasons for the inclusion of Livesay's work in *New Provinces* come readily to mind. First, Livesay wrote and published modernist poetry, prose, and drama well before *New Provinces* appeared. For example, her short story, "Heat," had already been published in the January 1929 issue of *The Canadian Mercury*, a publication of the young modernists of Montreal, yet she was not included by Smith in the group of four friends which he identified as the core of *New Provinces* in his retrospective essay, "The Confessions of a Compulsive Anthologist." The publication of Livesay's prose writing in a short-lived journal which has since been hailed by Gnarowski, Gingell, Louis Dudek, and Ken Norris as central to the development of modernism in Canada is an implicit admission of Livesay's position in the field of Canadian modernist literature.⁷ In fact, the modernist Raymond Knister recognized the value and potential of Livesay's writing and suggested that she submit her work to the editors of *The Canadian Mercury*. The Livesay-Knister correspondence shows that, as a university student in Toronto in 1928, Livesay was aware of the early work of the Montreal group, four of whom appear in *New Provinces*.⁸ Second, contemporary and subsequent literary critics connect Livesay with the *New Provinces* literary generation. In his review of 1937, Brown twice mentioned Livesay in relation to the *New Provinces* poets (341,

347), and thirty years later, Milton Wilson reproduced the poetry of Pratt, Scott, [Page 56] Smith, Livesay and Klein, in that order, in *Poets Between the Wars* (1967). Wilson's anthology was part of McClelland and Stewart's canonizing New Canadian Library series. Third, in a 1944 review of Livesay's *Day and Night*, a review written for the modernist magazine *First Statement*, F.R. Scott describes Livesay as "a contemporary of the growing number of Canadian poets on whom the impact of the present age is direct and not derivative" (23). Derivative was an epithet applied to Victorians by modernists, who believed that the newness of their modernist cultural productions protected them from similar criticism. Fourth, as Gnarowski points out, in the early stages of the production of *New Provinces*, Smith twice explicitly suggested to Scott that Livesay's poetry be included in the volume.⁹ On both occasions, Scott refused, saying that Livesay's work would be appropriate for a second, "more political" edition of *New Provinces* at a later date.¹⁰ That second edition never appeared.

Scott's distinction between two potential editions of *New Provinces* reveals a possible reason for Livesay's exclusion: the differences between socially conscious and apolitical modernism. Livesay's political modernist poetry, concerned as it was with the struggle between trade unions and capitalists, contrasted starkly with the high modernism¹¹ of the poets in *New Provinces*. Although Scott co-founded both the left-of-centre League for Social Reconstruction (LSR) and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), he was unwilling to publish socially engaged modernist poetry in the anthology, while Smith actively pursued that possibility. In a letter to Scott, Smith writes:

I wish we could get some verse that is definitely politically left wing and at the same time good poetry. Has Dorothy Livesay anything of this sort? I am beginning to think we ought to invite her to submit some stuff. After all, it can't be any worse than some of the things we've got. (February 15, 1934)

In spite of the tentative nature of Smith's suggestion, his letter shows that he was open to exploring avenues that, if followed, could have resulted in a very different anthology, one that would have recognized the importance of both socially engaged and non-socially-engaged writing in Canada in the 1930s. In Maria DiBattista's terms, such a publication would have constituted a "zone of convergence" within Canadian modernism, an arena in which the range of material would

contest assumptions underlying narrow definitions of modernism (18).

Besides looking outside the *New Provinces* group to politically committed writers such as Livesay, as I have already suggested, Smith also criticized the work of his colleagues in the volume. In his letters to Scott, [Page 57] he wrote that Finch's "images [were] trite and undistinguished," and some of his lines were "distressingly Emily Dickensian [sic]" (undated 1934). Smith also declared that he did not "trust" Kennedy's "judgement or his taste" (July 14, 1939), and that he believed Pratt to be "the weakest member of the group—judging of course by his inclusions only" (March 7, 1934). When Pratt and Finch vetoed the strongly worded Preface Smith had written for the volume, Smith described Pratt's poetry as "insipid stuff" (February 6, 1936). "Who the hell are Finch and Pratt to object to the preface?" he asked Scott. "If I am willing to let my poems come out in the same book with Pratt's insipid stuff, he can take the preface" (February 6, 1936).

Pratt's position in 1935 as editor of the CAA's new magazine, *The Canadian Poetry Magazine*, was also considered during the debate over Smith's rejected Preface. Pratt objected to the Preface because its radical pronouncements¹² could alienate half his magazine's readers, and Scott wrote to Finch, "We would not willingly compromise him" (December 22, 1935). Pratt's established reputation brought cultural capital and relational power to the *New Provinces* project. Macmillan Canada had published Pratt's poetry in the past, and Pratt approached Macmillan's literary editor Hugh Eayrs on behalf of the *New Provinces* group (November 7, 1934). Pratt's connection to an important publisher of contemporary Canadian literature, his editorial role on *The Canadian Poetry Magazine*, and his established academic record were valuable assets. Nevertheless, when Kennedy balked at Eayrs's condition, that the poets pay \$200 toward the production of 650 to 675 copies of *New Provinces*, Scott looked elsewhere, and submitted the manuscript to the Dent publishing company.¹³ At this point, Pratt threatened to leave the project if Macmillan did not publish it, citing "financial obligation[s]" to Macmillan (November 30, 1934). In the end, Scott paid the bulk of the cost, \$120, while Finch and Pratt each contributed \$40. Smith, who could easily afford the fee, refused to contribute because of the argument over his Preface. Kennedy and Klein were both unable to contribute.

This financial arrangement points to the class differences within the *New Provinces* group. In the early 1930s, Kennedy worked as a writer for advertising agencies, while Klein began a law career. Pratt, Scott, Finch, and Smith were all academics.¹⁴ On the other hand, Livesay was

a student; moreover, she studied a feminized discipline, social work, which was in transition from non-professional to professional status. In Canada, the late 1920s and 1930s saw the rapid development of social work from a philanthropic vocation requiring no training, to a semi-profession requiring a [Page 58] university degree. The sharp increase in both unemployment and homelessness during the Great Depression acted as a catalyst on the professionalization of social work (Struthers 63-65). Both Harry Cassidy, a member of the LSR and a colleague of Scott's, and Charlotte Whitton, "the most influential Canadian social worker of her era," were instrumental in this professionalization process (Struthers 75).¹⁵ From September 1933 to May 1934—that is, while *New Provinces* was being edited—Livesay was an apprentice social worker at the Family Service Bureau in Montreal, as partial fulfilment of a University of Toronto degree in Social Work.

Livesay's memory of the alliances surrounding the production of *New Provinces* differs from my interpretation. In the 1970s, she told David Arnason, co-editor of her memoir of the 1930s, *Right Hand Left Hand* (1977), that Scott wanted her work in *New Provinces* and that Pratt vetoed her inclusion (Personal interview 16 July 1997). There are no archival letters from Pratt to either Scott or Smith on this point, although several letters between Pratt and Scott are available in Scott's papers. Furthermore, the letters between Scott and Smith contradict Livesay's assertion. Others have made similar assumptions concerning Scott's role in the choices made about Livesay and *New Provinces*. Sandra Djwa claims that Smith was opposed to Livesay's inclusion in *New Provinces*. Professor Djwa spoke to Smith at a Canadian literary conference in the 1970s, and she reports that Smith "did not care for her [Livesay's] early political poetry" (E-mail). During a question period at "'Wider Boundaries of Daring': the Modernist Impulse in Canadian Women's Poetry" conference,¹⁶ Marilyn Rose stated that "it was Smith who rejected Livesay, not Scott."¹⁷ Smith may have formed this opinion after 1936, for his 1934 letters to Scott do not criticize Livesay's work, and, in spite of his criticism of Pratt's and Finch's writing, he agreed to their inclusion in *New Provinces*.¹⁸

As primary editor of *New Provinces*, Scott was strongly influenced by his political differences with Livesay.¹⁹ Scott, Kennedy, and Klein were politically active, whereas Pratt, Finch, and Smith focussed on their scholarly, literary, and publishing activities. Brown has pointed out that Smith's "disgust with bourgeois values," is evident in his

satirical poem, "Son and Heir," which appears in *News of the Phoenix* (1943) ("A.J.M. Smith" 85). Smith was critical of liberal and conservative social mores, yet his critique did not translate into social activism, as it did for Livesay, Scott, Kennedy, and Klein. In *Right Hand Left Hand*, Livesay states that she became "committed to communism" in Paris in 1931, and that she "was a confirmed Marxist" by 1932 (34, 73). By the time she moved to Montreal in 1933, Livesay was active in several Communist organizations: the Young Communist [Page 59] League, the Canadian League Against War and Fascism, the Canadian Labour Defense League, Friends of the Soviet Union, and the Workers' Unity League. In the same year, she officially joined the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) (Livesay, *Journey* 81).²⁰ In Montreal, Livesay "work[ed] in a Protestant family welfare bureau," during the day, and organized cultural events and public meetings for the unemployed during her own time (81). Many of these gatherings were assumed by the establishment to be dedicated to communist activities, and they were broken up by the Montreal police in a deliberate campaign of harassment. (Until the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, Quebec was, of course, an anti-radical haven of conservatism, and the Roman Catholic clergy had enormous influence in the fields of politics and education. Communism was anathema and socialism was unwelcome. During the 1930s and 1940s, sectors of the Canadian left competed for the support of the unemployed, trade union members, non-unionized agricultural and industrial workers, and sympathetic members of the middle class. According to historian Walter Young, the CCF and the CPC vied for members during this period [255].)

Scott was politically motivated to avoid any alliance with Livesay for two reasons: his goal of establishing the CCF in Quebec and his academic career. For many years, Scott worked to increase the acceptance of the CCF in Quebec and was never successful. In both 1933 and 1934, different members of Quebec's clergy portrayed the CCF as a communist organization. In response, Scott and the future leader of the New Democratic Party, David Lewis,²¹ wrote a pamphlet that was designed to distinguish the CCF from the CPC (*New Endeavour* xxii). A year before these clerical attacks, the RCMP asked McGill University's Principal, Sir Arthur Currie, whether Scott was a member of the CPC (*New Endeavour* xxvi).²² Scott also had to contend with the public criticism of newspaper editors who believed that university faculty should not be involved in politics of any kind (*New Endeavour* xxvi-xxvii). He was warned by McGill's administration to separate his public activism from his academic position (*New Endeavour* xxvii). As a professional with a young

family, Scott may have felt that he could not risk association with a radical like Livesay, especially in print. In 1934, the year in which *New Provinces* was edited, Scott used a pseudonym, J.E. Keith, for "The Fascist Province," an article that is highly critical of Quebec's political, religious, and corporate establishment.²³ In his Introduction to Scott's 1986 collection, *A New Endeavour: Selected Political Essays, Letters and Addresses*, Michiel Horn states that "Scott occasionally decided not to use his own name if he thought that an [Page 60] article he was publishing might strain his relations with the McGill Board of Governors unduly, or might cause difficulties for the university in its relations with the provincial government" (14).²⁴ Horn claims that discrimination on the basis of political position was systemic in Canadian universities of the period (xxvii). In fact, McGill's teaching contracts with Eugene Forsey and Leonard Marsh, two LSR members, were cancelled in 1941 because of their left-wing politics. Horn asserts that Scott was safe from such treatment because he "was a senior and tenured member of faculty" (xxvii). (Scott became a full-time faculty member of the McGill law department in 1928 and achieved tenure well before this incident occurred; however, he did not advance within the university until late in his academic career, and did not become a dean until 1961, only seven years before his retirement. Apparently, academic disapproval of his leftist politics did hold him back [*New Endeavour* xxvii]). In the 1930s, public connections to communists such as Livesay would only have exacerbated the delicate balance between Scott's academic career and his political commitments. It seems that Scott carefully positioned himself both in the field of power and in the field of cultural production to achieve his goals without loss to the middle-class material reality of his life.

Although he was a radical within the conservative field of law, Scott worked for social reforms from *within* the system, while Livesay challenged the fundamentals of hegemonic systems and worked *outside* them. Scott was not alone in his strategy of separating political activism from aesthetic production. Kennedy did the same. In the 1930s, a definite dichotomy appears in Kennedy's professional writing. He published high-culture modernist poetry on death and dying, such as appears in *The Shrouding* (1933) and *New Provinces* (1936), as well as socially critical modernist prose, such as appears in *The Canadian Forum*.²⁵ Had Smith insisted on mingling the permutations of literary modernism by including Livesay's writing in *New Provinces*, he might have faced a united front from Scott and Kennedy. Livesay differed from her male colleagues in that her writing was an integral part of her activism. In fact, during her early radical

phase, she rejected all modernist poetic forms as bourgeois, and concentrated on proletarian writing. In 1935, she turned again to modernism, integrating a focus on social justice and labour issues. Furthermore, Livesay rejected the CCF until she moved to Vancouver in 1936, met Duncan Macnair and was influenced by him to consider the "pale pink" socialism of the CCF (Livesay, "The early days" 36).²⁶

Just as Scott appears to have faced systemic discrimination in academia, based on his political practices, Livesay seems to have been marginalized [**Page 61**] in the literary field by her radical politics. According to Joyce Wayne and Stuart Mackinnon, "Livesay's politics never stood her in good stead with our [Canadian] literary establishment" (36). Nor did the fact that she was female help. Discrimination on the basis of sex and the discursive devaluation of feminine literary themes were, and are, central to the Canadian literary field. Livesay's ground-breaking work, in 1941, as co-founder of *Contemporary Verse* with Doris Ferne, Anne Marriott and Floris McLaren has not been fully acknowledged by literary critics. Canadian feminist critics "speculate" that the "low profile [of *Contemporary Verse*] in recent histories of Canadian literary magazines" is related to the gender of its founders (Gerson, "The Canon Between the Wars" 208 note 32). "For various reasons," writes Pauline Butling of *Contemporary Verse*, "it did not quite fit the standard (masculinist) definition of the little magazine, established by Louis Dudek and others, as an aggressive, assertive, fighting, militant instrument of the avant-garde" (62).²⁷ George Woodcock's entry in the second edition of *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* perpetuates this lack of recognition by attributing the founding of *Contemporary Verse* to its editor, Allan Crawley, whom Livesay, Ferne, Marriott, and McLaren merely "assisted [...] at various times," according to Woodcock (230). Crawley was the editor of *Contemporary Verse*, but the journal would not have existed without its female collective, whose members invited Crawley to act as editor; furthermore, Ferne's work as business manager kept the journal in print. According to Butling, "Floris McLaren took charge of printing and circulation, Dorothy Livesay wrote reviews; all of them were frequent contributors" (61). Other female Canadian writers of the period, such as Miriam Waddington, also felt repercussions on their literary careers from systemic gender bias.²⁸ Even when female literary producers operate within the public arena of literary production and perform tasks usually performed by men, their work earns less symbolic power.

F.R. Scott's work participates in the discursive devaluation of feminine literary themes experienced by Livesay and other Canadian

women. As several critics have observed, his satirical poem, "The Canadian Authors Meet," the canonization of which maintains the misogynist bias of the Canadian literary field, trivializes female poets and their poetry.²⁹ Moreover, it represents both the battle of the sexes and the battle between literary movements, by attacking the Victorian tradition of nature poetry and the romantic nationalism of canonized Canadian poets. Scott's words infantilize uncanonized women writers by mimicking nursery rhymes. "The Canadian Authors Meet" is typical of the masculinist values of a [Page 62] period when virile was an adjective used by critics to compliment a poet's work. In such a discursive field, the feminine becomes an epithet. The same principle can be seen at work in academic discourse of the period. In 1924, the literary historian Archibald MacMechan, the author of *Headwaters of Canadian Literature* (1924), praised a colleague, "Professor Cappon of Queen's, [for having] perhaps the most masculine judgment in Canada"—apparently a pinnacle for which MacMechan also strove (118). However, devaluation of the feminine was not a discursive monopoly of academic critics or poets. William Arthur Deacon, who wrote for *Saturday Night*, the *Mail and Empire*, and the *Globe and Mail*, praised Sir Charles G.D. Roberts for "set[ting] a virile and austere standard in both verse and prose" (*Poteen* 160). Similarly, Deacon called Tom MacInnes "the virile master of his own variation of the old French ballade," and stated that Pratt's poetry "has fibre and pith, and his frequent humour is robust" (174-176). In contrast, Deacon perceived Marjorie Pickthall to be "an exquisite lyricist at work weaving dainty, lace-like designs with great perfection of detail," and he asserted that "Canadian fiction was to go no lower" than Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne* series, which he described as "sugary" (174, 169).

Perceptions of Livesay's work by critics of the period are mixed. In private correspondence with Livesay, Pratt described her poem "West Coast" as "fine muscular poetry [which] makes that mis-called social verse of Anderson and his *Preview* adolescents look like gelatine."³⁰ Pratt was the first to publish "Day and Night," Livesay's modernist poem about class and race in a Canadian factory. When, in 1944, Livesay collected her politically engaged modernist poems in one volume, also titled *Day and Night*, a reviewer, M.V. Thornton, characterized it as "the mature work of a virile exponent of modern Canadian poetry."³¹ On the other hand, in his review of *Day and Night*, Scott emphasized the personal as a feminine attribution and described Livesay's writing as "sentimental" and "sensitive" (23). Furthermore, in 1931, five years before the publication of *New Provinces*, Scott's use of gender-exclusive language in an essay

published in *Canadian Forum* falls into line with accepted masculinist practices of the time. In "New Poems for Old: the Revival of Poetry," Scott refers to poetry as female and to poets as male (337-338). By distinguishing between poets and "poetesses," Pratt also participated in the masculinization of poetry writers ("Canadian Poetry" 6).³² Implicitly concurring with "The Canadian Authors Meet," Pratt claims that "most of the poetesses are in [the] grip of [Victorian p]oetic diction [which] is the surest sign of amateurishness, of literary inertia or incapacity [...]" (6). The widespread adoption of anti-feminine [Page 63] discourse and highly gendered language reveals the stereotyped expectations of many readers and reviewers of the period, expectations that both conformed to socially sanctioned gender roles³³ and had material consequences for women writers who persisted in their feminine styles. Appreciative of virile poetry written by men or women, and a life-long friend of Deacon, Pratt held a veto over the publication of Canadian poets who submitted their work to the Macmillan publishing company in the 1930s, when he acted as reader and advisor to Hugh Eayrs. Doris Ferne's writing was rejected by Eayrs because Pratt criticized it for lack of virility (Gerson "The Canon Between the Wars" 54). The emphasis on virility as a characteristic of the best writing was not new to this time period, nor has it disappeared from the literary field. Both *First Statement* and *Northern Review* emphasized masculine standards of literary judgment in their editorials (Norris 37, 45).

Considering how widespread and long-lived these sexist discursive assumptions and their material practices were, it is not surprising that Livesay faced exclusion from *New Provinces* in 1934. As Carole Gerson points out,

women's writing was expected to conform to a Romantic/sentimental/domestic model. Those who followed suit and did not practise modernism were then easily dismissed [as Jaques was by Brown] and have disappeared from sight, while those who engaged with modernist methods were seldom taken as seriously as their male counterparts and have been consistently under-represented in the canon. ("The Canon between the Wars" 55)

In "Anthologies and the Canon of Early Canadian Women Writers," Gerson convincingly argues that early Canadian women writers "disappear from history" through systemic barriers and the devaluation of their writing (58). Her analysis of 52 anthologies of Canadian literature shows that early Canadian women writers were gradually

eliminated from the canon by male anthology editors who perpetuated the anti-feminine systemic bias of the field by basing their choices on those of previous anthology editors. My survey of 40 anthologies from the 1920-1950 period suggests that women writers are more likely to be included in anthologies when they act as editors themselves.³⁴ Livesay recognized this problem; she edited two anthologies of Canadian women poets: *40 Women Poets of Canada* and *Woman's Eye: 12 B.C. Poets*.

Although Scott's criticism of Livesay's *Day and Night* follows the gendered viewpoint of earlier male critics, the conclusion to his 1944 review indicates that he eventually included Livesay in his generation of modernist [Page 64] Canadian poets. Livesay was active as a modernist poet as early as any of the Montreal group which Scott and Smith founded, but it took ten years for Scott to publicly acknowledge her work. Assumptions surrounding the sex/gender nexus and Livesay's radical political activism contributed to her neglect by the male group of poets who published their early work in the first edition of *New Provinces* in 1936. F.R. Scott was the leader of that group. His work in Canadian literature is important to our cultural history; however, it is equally important to consider the relations of power on which established histories are based. Open discussion of icons like Scott is essential to the development of an accurate and inclusive Canadian literary history, one that recognizes both the exclusion of female writers from canonized texts and the assumptions underlying such exclusions.

Notes

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1. See B.K. Sandwell's editorial in the *Canadian Bookman*. [\[back\]](#)
2. For MacDonald's left-wing poetry, see "the Song of the Rebel"

- and "The New Communities" in *Out of the Wilderness*. [\[back\]](#)
3. *Correspondence related to New Provinces* is located in F.R. Scott's Papers at the National Archives of Canada, Ottawa (MG30 D211 Vol.1), and in the Macmillan Canada Papers at the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University Library, Hamilton. Throughout this essay, the dates of letters in parentheses refer to the F.R. Scott Papers. [\[back\]](#)
 4. See also Desmond Pacey on A.J.M. Smith and F.R. Scott in *Ten Canadian Poets*. [\[back\]](#)
 5. See the F.R. Scott Papers, National Archives of Canada MG30 D211 Volume 1, microfilm reel H1211, letters from Smith to Scott dated March 7, 1934 and Feb. 6, 1936. [\[back\]](#)
 6. I disagree with the claim that the rise of modernism in Canada occurred thirty years later than the rise of modernism in the United Kingdom and the United States. See Norris 9-11. For convincing arguments that modernism was active in Canada before the 1930s, see "The Precursors (1910-1925)" in Dudek and Gnarowski, and Arnason's "Canadian Poetry: the Interregnum." [\[back\]](#)
 7. See Ken Norris, *The Little Magazine in Canada 1925-1980: Its Role in the Development of Modernism and Post-Modernism in Canadian Poetry*; Michael Gnarowski's Introduction to *New Provinces*; Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski, *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*; Susan Gingell, "The Montreal Movement and Other Thirties' Activities." [\[back\]](#)
 8. The four are Smith, Scott, Kennedy, and Klein. See Smith's "The confessions of a compulsive anthologist" 5. See also the letter dated April 25, 1928, from Dorothy Livesay [**Page 65**] to Raymond Knister in the Raymond Knister Papers, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University Library, Hamilton, Ontario. [\[back\]](#)
 9. See the F.R. Scott Papers, National Archives of Canada MG30 D211 Volume 1, microfilm reel H1211, Letters of February 15 and March 7, 1934. See also Gnarowski, "Introduction," *New Provinces* xi, xii. [\[back\]](#)
 10. See the letters of February 17 and March 26, 1934 in the F.R. Scott papers at the NAC. [\[back\]](#)
 11. David Arnason defines high modernism as "the mainstream of modernist writing [...] typified by T. S. Eliot" ("Dorothy Livesay and the Rise of Modernism in Canada" 16). See Arnason's article for a full and very useful delineation of modernism's characteristics in Canada. [\[back\]](#)
 12. For example, Smith said that Canadian poetry "is dead," that "nobody respects" the Canadian poet, and that the poets in W.W.

- Campbell's *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* and J.W. Garvin's *Canadian Poets* were "neurotic." See "A Rejected Preface," written 1934, published 1965. [\[back\]](#)
13. Scott's negotiations with Hugh Eayrs occur in a series of letters dated January 16, 1936 to February 4, 1936, in the Macmillan Papers, McMaster University Library. [\[back\]](#)
 14. Pratt taught English literature at Victoria College of the University of Toronto; Finch taught French literature at University College of the University of Toronto; Scott taught law at McGill University; and Smith taught English literature at Michigan State College. [\[back\]](#)
 15. Livesay studied with Cassidy in Toronto in 1933 and clashed with him over Marxism; Whitton represents the political right in this trio, with Cassidy at the left of centre and Livesay at the far left. [\[back\]](#)
 16. Held at the University of Windsor, Oct. 25-28, 2001. The conference title is from "We Are Alone," by Dorothy Livesay. [\[back\]](#)
 17. Question period following the panel on Modernity, Gender, and the Nation-State, Oct. 27, 2001. [\[back\]](#)
 18. Djwa was also informed by Scott that Smith personally examined Scott's *New Provinces* file and removed some of his letters before the collection was sent to the National Archives of Canada. It seems just as possible that Smith removed other letters, such as those concerned with his Preface. Unfortunately, Smith is now deceased, and his papers do not contain the missing letters which might help to clarify these questions. My argument is based on the archival evidence which survives, that is, on correspondence in which Smith suggests the inclusion of Livesay and Scott refuses. However, Smith's alleged manipulation of the historical record highlights the dangers facing those of us who research primary sources. As Marilyn Rose put it, "literary history is an invention" ("Wider Boundaries of Daring" Conference 27 Oct. 2001). Had Djwa's and Rose's research before Smith's alleged intervention remained outside the public arena of literary discussion, the range of opinions concerning Livesay's exclusion from *New Provinces* would be dichotomized and un-nuanced. [\[back\]](#)
 19. Brian Trehearne makes a similar point about political differences between Scott and Livesay in *The Montreal Forties: Modernist Poetry in Transition* 48. Thanks to Susan Rudy for this reference. [\[back\]](#)
 20. Thanks to Dean Irvine for reminding me of my earlier reading of this chapter of *Journey with My Selves* (1991). [\[back\]](#)
 21. David Lewis (1909-1981), National Secretary of the CCF, 1936;

- M.P. for York South 1962-1972; leader of the New Democratic Party 1971-1975 (*Canadian Encyclopedia* 1985). [\[back\]](#)
22. The Communist Party was illegal in Canada from 1931 to 1936. [\[back\]](#)
 23. Scott's choice of Keith for his pseudonym serves the double purpose of identifying the writer as an Anglophone Quebecker and avoiding full disclosure. In addition, Scott ends the article with this self-identification: "We Anglo-Saxons are dull fellows beside the French when it comes to politics" (252). [\[back\]](#) **[Page 66]**
 24. Kennedy had similar concerns. According to David Latham, "some of [Kennedy's] socialist writings were published pseudonymously," to protect his advertising career (*Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* 593). [\[back\]](#)
 25. For example, see "A Priest in the Family," in the April 1933 issue of *The Canadian Forum*. [\[back\]](#)
 26. In a memoir of *The Canadian Forum*, "The Early Days," Livesay calls that journal too "pale pink" for her, Kennedy, and editor J.F. White, in the 1930s. For an account of Macnair's political influence on Livesay, see *Right Hand Left Hand* 225. [\[back\]](#)
 27. The modernist scholar Zailig Pollock also sees modernism as essentially oppositional. Concluding Panel, *The Canadian Modernists Meet* Conference, University of Ottawa, May 11, 2003. [\[back\]](#)
 28. During the 1940s, Waddington's writing was devalued for its feminine content. In her essay "Women and Writing," Waddington explains that, during her marriage, she wrote about "childbirth, love, work, and politics" (205). "These were hardly the kind of subjects to engage the interest of academic male critics," she adds. "In those days myth, distance, and so-called objectivity were all the rage" (205). Waddington identifies the life-path of most women writers, that is, the combination of marriage, motherhood, and literature, as an impediment to the accumulation of symbolic power within the literary field. See also her essay "Bias." Livesay was a public figure in the Canadian literary field from an early age, through her parents' literary connections, and she co-founded a literary magazine, but she experienced a marginalization similar to that described by Waddington. Livesay's father, John Frederick Bligh Livesay, was the first manager of the Canadian Press news service, and her mother, Florence Randall Livesay, was a journalist, translator, novelist, and poet who published one novel, *Savour of Salt* (1927) and two volumes of poetry, *Shepherd's Purse* (1923) and *Down Singing Centuries: Folk Literature of the Ukraine* (as translator/editor). Florence Livesay's stories, articles, and poems appeared in *Chatelaine*, *The Canadian*

- Magazine*, *Massey's Magazine*, the *Winnipeg Telegram*, the *Ottawa Journal*, and Harriet Monroe's modernist journal, *Poetry* (Chicago). [\[back\]](#)
29. For an excellent discussion of Scott's poem, see D.M.R. Bentley, *The Gay] Grey Moose: Essays on the Ecologies and Mythologies of Canadian Poetry 1690-1990* 251-272. [\[back\]](#)
 30. See the Dorothy Livesay Collection, University of Alberta, 96-69, Queen's Box 2, File 24, June 26, 1944. Pratt's use of "gelatine" and "muscular" illustrates the masculinist nature of his modernism. If Livesay's poem had been feminine or domestic, Pratt would not have considered it to be "fine." [\[back\]](#)
 31. See the Dorothy Livesay Collection in the University of Manitoba Archives, Mss 37, Box 18, Folder 3 np, nd. [\[back\]](#)
 32. Thanks to David Bentley for this source. [\[back\]](#)
 33. For example, the writers' clubs at the University of Toronto were segregated by sex when Livesay attended in the late 1920s (*Livesay Journey* 95). [\[back\]](#)
 34. See "Anthologies and the Canonization Process: a Case Study of the English-Canadian Literary Field, 1920-1950." [\[back\]](#)

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