CHAPTER III

THE VOICE OF PROTEST:
AGAINST WAR, VIOLENCE AND INJUSTICE

You who live quietly in sunlit space
Reading the Herald after morning grace
Can count peace dear, when it has driven
Your sons to struggle for this grim, new heaven.

Livesay, “Spain”. (LCP 98)

“Sinister powers”, the ambassador said, “are moving into our rice fields. We are a little people and all we want is to live”.

Wright, “Fire Sermon”. (WCP 276)

The following words of Dorothy Livesay amply reveal her major concerns as a poet:

Poverty, racism and war have dominated my thinking and my emotions. As a social worker during the Depression, witnessing breadlines, riots, police brutality and the mass movements of the unemployed, my feelings were diverted from their primitive urgings—the desire for power, whatever the cost. Now, as powerful governments ignore the black harvest.
conferred on us, by the disaster of Hiroshima and fail to consider the welfare of the environment over economic gain, my poetry remains an expression of my most passionate concerns: the danger of nuclear war, the plight of women politically and socially, the mistreatment of children, and the need for improved health and dietary standards in the third world. (SCT 3)

The Thirties in Canada, a period of massive upheavals as elsewhere, found many unemployed youths striving to find an employment and a dignity in their lives. The Great Depression of the Thirties went a long way in shaping the direction of a poet like Livesay who had by now passed her adolescence into a state of maturity. Deeply affected by the abject poverty she saw around her, she found in Marxism a veritable God capable of ridding the world of its varied ills. The advent of the Depression, attendance in Toronto at lectures by the American anarchist Emma Goldman, and contact with volatile social conditions in Paris all contributed to her interest in communism. As she frankly admits in Right Hand Left Hand, Marxism had "opened up a whole new way of seeing things" and the poetry that came from her during
this period "reflects the complete dichotomy between the old way of thinking and the new" (RHLH 36).

"Old Trees at Pere La Chaise" a poem written during this period reveals her deep sense of sympathy for the unemployed who have been denied the right to live with dignity. Inspired by the violent demonstration which took place in March 1932 on the anniversary of the Paris Commune, this poem shows how the then Paris was depriv ing her. The poem begins with a very brief description of the old trees that "drift silently all down the hill" and stop at the gate, encaged with tombs where "they feel the wind and wait." Soon her attention passes on to the streets inhabited by the living dead:

The crumpled dead lie huddled in these streets
Belleville and Memilmontant, Gambotta
The dead in cold damp tombs slip up and down
The stairs of bleak and shattered houses, grope
Into the bedroom, kitchen, lavabos in one-
Move there, and hate, and bring forth child
And then go creeping from the window's dust
Into the shrouded bed, the heavy sleep
The sulking dead lie huddled in these sheets
Only to wake and stumble through the maze
The choking air of unenlightened streets. (RHLH 41)
Though it is a bleak scenario with man reduced to a mere “junk heap” where the air “chokes” him, hope is not completely dead: green grass still grows in lush patches and a little wind will play “softly amid the canopy of trees”. Though the labourer, the old men and the jobless young find life so unbearable that they “slink downward from the sturdy, living roots / That clutch the earth for sweetness, to find there / the faded taste of dust, the choking air” (LCP 42) the “eager children” running among the “sun warmed grasses” suggests that the spiritual aridity pervading the city can be overcome through a meaningful and harmonious relationship with nature. Despite the obvious prophetic tone and her use of words like “Labourer” and “Unenlightened” this poem cannot however be ranked with the many overtly Marxist poems Livesay wrote later.

Livesay regarded communism as a working class movement, fit to be spread anywhere but within the proletariat. ‘It is alien to the other classes, they do not feel that way and so they cannot think that way. I want to think and belong to, work for, the proletariat...’ She writes in a letter (RHLH 45). “Growing Up” is a celebration of her intense longing to identify herself with and understand the feelings of the ordinary worker. She confesses, how even as a young girl of fifteen, she had wanted
to work in a shirt factory. But it “was stifled for so many years
with leisure, literature, learning” till

Now I am alive, having created
My breath one with yours, fighter and toiler
My hands ready, with yours, young worker
To crush the boss, the stifler
To rise over his body with a surge of beauty
A wave of us, storming the world. (LCP 69)

Breaking the shackles of her middle class upbringing she
identifies herself fully with the toiler and sets out on a crusade
against any kind of injustice. The summer of 1932, back in
Toronto after a year in Paris was a crucial one for friendship
as her letters to Jinnie reveal. “My political convictions became
the dominating obsession of my life. This lost me friends, split
me away from parents, disrupted my relationship with my lover”
she writes (RHLH 48). For her, however, nothing mattered save
her desire to change the world for the better which alone gave
a purpose to her existence. And she found in the unity of the
workers, a potential scope for reshaping the world and bringing
it closer to the heart’s desire. Dennis Cooley has made this
observation about her poetic credo:
Perhaps the distances Livesay herself has travelled as a poet, the terrible risks she has taken in violating literary limits, were in their own way more drastic and potentially more effective than the day-to-day politics she at one time looked to. One thing is sure: Livesay has come to believe she would shape the world. (268)

Livesay believed that her role as a poet was not just to instruct but to convert as well. She says that the growth of proletarian literature and the development of Canadian literature are inevitably interrelated:

There is no proletarian literature in Canada but there is no Canadian literature either. It is my theory (and as one of the thousands of Canadians writing verse I am entitled to have my theory) that until we look to the people, and the industries, and the economics of our social set up, we will have no original contribution to make. Until our writers are social realists (proletarian writers if you will) we will have no Canadian literature. (RHLH 230)
Two important magazines, *Masses* and *New Frontier* were started with a view to promulgating the political views of their members and a Workers Theatre was inaugurated to stage 'agit-prop' plays. Livesay's play *Joe Derry* taught the workers how far oppressed they were and made them conscious of the great power they would come to possess once they were united.

"In Green Solariums" is a poem Livesay wrote inspired by her experience as a field worker at the Infants' Home for Unmarried Mothers in Toronto. The protagonist, a working class girl enters into a pre-marital affair which leaves her with an illegitimate child. The poem clearly brings out her utter helplessness, her anger and her defiance. An unwed mother, she is compelled to work in a restaurant to support her son. There she witnesses the police brutality meted out to the vagrants which leaves her furious: "I was so mad I clenched my fists, grew hot / Ready to fling myself and kick the cop" (*LCP* 74). But the man beside her caught her arm and taught her the hard fact: "That one lone rebel does no good at all" (*LCP* 74). He warns her against rushing impulsively into action and advises her to chalk out a strategum and then act upon it: "You've got to know what you're fighting against, and then / you've got to show others the way. Together you'll swing
/ Out onto the road. That's solidarity” (LCP 74). An enlightened
girl, she now finds in him “a man now who’s not white like
snow/ But who can take me, and be glad of that - / But will
not let himself be lost for love” because “There’s bigger things
than love to be worked out; / There’s darkness, madness to
be fought against” (LCP 75). She realizes that once the workers
attain solidarity, the inevitable result will be the birth of a
world where

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! (LCP 75).

“Pink Ballad”, an oral poem meant for chanting appeared
in the magazine Masses in 1934 and represents the hardline
against social democracy and magazines like the Canadian
Forum. Evidently a parody of rightwing attitudes, this poem
seeks to awaken the proletariat and stresses the imperativeness
of a united struggle to achieve a better standard of living:

O then we’ll all be equal
Free leisure, work, repose
while Woodsworth is our premier
And Aggie hugs her foes. (RHLH 177)
“Canada to the Soviet Union” is Livesay’s tribute to the Russian workers who have inspired her own countrymen to fight for a fairer deal in life. In Canada, a country of “restless millions”, “the women broken”, “stamped on a child’s thin body”, even the church refuses to acknowledge the enormity of the sufferings and privation the people are subjected to. The Church and the State alike refuse to admit that “In this country we do not die of starvation, we live it” (RHLH 72). Livesay is all praise for the Russian workers who have inspired the dispossessed of her own country to action. She ends her poem asserting categorically:

We shall see beauty rising from the roofs of factories
We shall see armies marching through new fields of wheat
We shall be unashamed to face you, comrades!
For our children will have songs, at last
To spur their eager feet! (RHLH 72).

“Day and Night” is a more ambitious poem, the genesis of which is described thus by the poet:

This documentary is dominated by themes of struggle:
class against class, race against race. The sound of Negro spirituals mingled in my mind with Cole
Porter's "Night and Day" and Lenin's words (I quote from memory) "To go two steps forward we may have to take one step back". That phrase captured my imagination for it seemed to me, that the capitalist system was putting that concept reverse. (11)

The poem, a scathing attack on the capitalist system, seeks to recreate through its rhythms the robot-like yet agonized existence of the factory worker:

Men in a stream, a moving human belt
Move into sockets, everyone a bolt.
The fun begins, a humming, whirring drum-
Men do a dance in time to the machines. (LCP 120)

"Images of rotation, of succession, of bolts fitted into sockets, not only create a picture of men driven to a machine-like existence but drag the readers into the orbit of the machine; pull them into the moving human belt" comments Shirin Kudchedkar about this poem (177). The theme of mechanization of human life continues in the second section also. The back and forth movement interrupted by a spinning movement as a "writhing whack" sets the worker "spinning two steps back", draws the reader again into the "dance in time to the machines" (LCP 120).
The third section appeals to all those who work day and night and night and day to stand united and struggle against dehumanization. Love is the singular force that can bring the comrades together. So the speaker appeals to love:

Be with me in the daylight
As in gloom.
Be with me in the pounding
In the knives against my back
Set your voice resounding;
Above the steel's whipcrack. (LCP 121)

Love is looked upon as a vital force with enough power to sustain; the power to "hold up the sunlight" and "tear up all the silence" (LCP 122).

A comradeship that cuts across race in the searing heat of the furnace is the theme of the fourth section:

We were working together, night and day, and knew
Each other's stroke; and without words, exchanged
An understanding about kids at home,
The landlord's jaw, wage-cuts and overtime.

(LCP 122)
The boss feels no qualms when he cuts down a black who is "too smart the way he smiles/And sauces back the foreman". Though he has not stirred up any trouble so far, "they cut him down" for fear that "he might say / Too much one day, to others changing shifts" (LCP 122).

The poem gains in strength when the black's experience is compared to that of the Biblical Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednago / Turn in the furnace, whirling slow" (LCP 122).

The fifth section strikes a positive note as it looks forward to an end to the agony:

Bitter, yes
But listen, friend:
we are mightier
In the end. (LCP 123)

The last section is even more optimistic. Though the worker is "overalled and silent", he defiantly proclaims that he is "far from dead". Despite the physical suffering he is made to undergo, his indomitable spirit remains unbattered: "Into thy maw I commend my body / But the soul shines without" (LCP 124).
The poet is sure that a day will come "when crumpled men" will "pour down the hill" and life will be turned "the other way"

Day and night
Night and day
Till life is turned
The other way! (LCP 125)

Commenting on Livesay's stance in the poem, Kudchedkar says, "The oppressed will win through because of their solidarity, their understanding of social reality and their faith in socialism. Hers is not a vague hope that right will somehow triumph but is rooted in her faith in communism" (199). This view is shared by Sandra Hutchinson:

Affirming the need for an inner spiritual victory as well as a social triumph over the forces of oppression, the poem ends with a vision that combines the opposites proclaimed by Sartre: those of individual liberty and socialist revolution. (88)

While in Montreal, Livesay witnessed a demonstration by the unemployed over an eviction. The unemployed were passing through a very tough time. Evicted from their homes, water and heat cut off, they were given the meagrest amount for food
and other necessities. "That life was one of great despair, and though I myself of course was earning sixty dollars a month and feeling quite safe on that it was heart-breaking to see people who had nothing", admits Livesay (RHLH 83). Nick Zynchuk, an immigrant worker was shot in the back as he entered the building where he was staying, to rescue his belongings during an eviction. At his funeral, angry but peaceful demonstrators were brutally attacked by the mounted police. This event captured the imagination of the writers on the left and became the theme of many plays, stories and poems. Eviction was one such play.

Livesay’s own contribution was a poem entitled Immigrant”. This poem deftly brings out the contrast between the preparedness of the other workers who “stood shoulder close to shoulder” and Nick’s aloofness, his bewilderment and his vulnerability. There is also an obvious dig at the callously indifferent way the poor immigrant’s death is viewed by others:

The crowd stirred restlessly. You passed -
There was a roar and pistol crack.
Nothing had happened in the street -
Only a worker was shot in the back. (LCP 79)
But Nick’s death has not been in vain. Though “wider cracks” appear for some more time “Deeper the fissures by the window sill / And more the feet, parading now, sound out / In wider unison” (LCP 79).

The years that follow witness greater unity and solidarity among the workers:

New voices take command; thin children grow
As willows stiffen in the sun their arms
Stretch out to life; and Zynchuk, smiling quietly
Is part of moving green along the hills;
Is garden for their seed. His breath is blown
Stronger than this March wind upon their lungs.

(LCP 79)

This poem, I believe, should be considered alongside “Montreal 1933” in which the poet speaks of Dufferin Square where men “with unchild like, wrinkled faces” are huddled together talking in low voices. Archbishop Gauthier’s words that no one has died of starvation in Canada ring in one’s ears. But Livesay asks poignantly
Was Nick Zynchuk then murdered for nothing?
Have we no answer for the brutal arm?
Because we live in a city within a city-
At war with itself and its factions. (LCP 76)

Like many intellectuals and poets of her times, Livesay also found in the Spanish Civil War a fresh ray of hope and identity. They found in Spain a potent image of the ideal of democracy being trampled upon by the evil of fascism. As Marcelino Domingo, a Spanish patriot has put it, “Spain is the first trench of a battlefield which extends across national frontiers into all the democratic lands” (RHLH 249).

In July 1936, Spain’s democratically elected government was attacked in military onslaught by the mutinous General Franco in collusion with Germany and Italy. What irked most men was that the rest of Europe lifted not a finger to intervene. Canadians reacted to these events with varying degrees of understanding. Though it was illegal for a Canadian to serve in a foreign cause, 1200 young men and some young women managed to get visas to France and from there set out on a freedom trek across the Alps. But in Quebec, the Catholic Church chose to recruit volunteers to aid General Franco. The Spanish
Civil War had its reverberations in Canada provoking many Canadians to think of their own condition. Poets like Purdy, Acorn and Nowlan directed younger poets like Lane, Lowther and Wayman towards social concern, commitment to change and search for roots. Livesay herself wrote a few poems inspired by the Spanish Civil War. “Catalonia” is one such poem which mirrors the horror and absurdity of war. The poem deserves praise for the graphic description it offers of the retreat of the soldiers and their pain of defeat:

For us horizons reel, groping for a centre,
Stars burn in whirling sockets overhead -
we wrench ourselves over the last trench, down
Down, down in scurrying scramble tossed
Towards lost lines, lost outposts, lost defence...

(LCP 98)

People are seen marching down the roads of Spain “bundled with babies, chattels, straggling tots”. They meet the “tattered tunics” of the soldiers some of whom walk bareback in the cold. These people who are fleeing their homes “stop / And give a shawl, a skirt for covering”. The hope of ultimate victory has not deserted them yet: “Though darkness fall again, / A tattered flag, the men will stand upright, / spirit sustained,...” (LCP 101).
Like some of her contemporaries Livesay also celebrates Federico García Lorca, the Spanish poet shot to death allegedly by Franco’s men. His absence is felt intensely by all who knew him and his work: “When you lived / Day shone from your face / Now the sun rays search / And find no answering torch” (*LCP* 126). Not losing hope, the poet proclaims with great verve

You are alive!

O grass flash emerald sight

Dash of dog for ball

And skipping rope’s bright blink

Lashing the light! (*LCP* 126)

This poem (“Lorca”) is one of Livesay’s favourites as she admits frankly in a memoir published recently:

Writing the poem had excited me because it seemed to come out in a style that was fresh and new for me. I desperately wanted Alan to approve of it. When he told me that he would like to include “Lorca” in all his public readings I was deeply moved. (*JMS* 162)

In “Words Before Battle” also she remembers “Lorca shot like a dog” as well as the soldiers killed in Spain during the Civil War. She pours out here all her sense of disillusionment
at the Civil War. "Energy has been spilled / On the floor, not conserved / In a glass jar for winter" she says unequivocally (LCP 102). Experience has taught her that

It is not enough to be proud
And sure, shouting defiance;
It is not enough to ignore

The enemy’s cunning, his sheer
Weight of steel, his mountains
Of iron and chromium. (LCP 103)

And even the "ominous/Barbed peace" she says is "not enough for us" (LCP 103).

In "The Lizard : October 1939" also she speaks of the "stricken Refugees smothered" after "years of ditch stumbling" and the "thin tunics gored to death / In the country of the bull, in the country of the dragon". She readily joins the others longing

To see bodies bare and flesh uncloseted,
To hear real voices again, to uphold the song
Of one coming from Madrid, Shanghai or Yenan
Bearers of good news
From the fronts we knew. (LCP 105)
Livesay who was very active on the cultural front participated in unemployed demonstrations and political meetings of all kinds. Gradually she became involved in the anti-war movement, a concern she shares with Judith Wright whose poems are analysed in the latter part of this chapter. Livesay had, by now, learnt a great deal about the communist tactics of penetration and camouflage. But it was only years later that she became fully aware of the false actions and factional tactics of the communists. Probably she was too committed to be shocked at these. But she admits

This did not cause me to hate the communists, or to red-bait; rather I was disgusted with myself for having been so duped. But I believe I let myself be duped because no one else except the communists seemed to be concerned about the plight of the people, nor to be aware of the threat of Hitler and war. *(RHLH 74)*

She admits further that she could not hate the communists “who did extend brotherhood to the down and out” and who made accurate predictions of “capitalist depression followed by fascism and war” *(RHLH 74)*. The comment
made by Livesay's friend at St. Mildred's school in Toronto, Ms. Gina is worthy of mention here: "... I don't think Dee was terribly interested in political theory. I don't think she's got that kind of mind, that kind of interest. She was interested in people... . I think her interest is always a personal one. It has to be" (JMS 85).

Besides, Livesay's main credo as a poet was that "poetry must concern itself with an individual response to the beauty and sorrow of the world" (JMS 130). An acknowledged Libran ever eager to fall in love, Livesay had to face much despair in the amatory field. Livesay's confession in her memoir that "I was thrusting myself body and soul into politics, likely to assuage the pain of my lost love affair" is at once puzzling and interesting (JMS 130). Equally interesting is the revelation she makes of the outcome of an unrequited affair she had with a Jew called Ben: "After that shattering experience, I dropped out of the party" (JMS 150).

Plunging head-long into the antifascist movement, Livesay became more and more active in the peace movement. "I suppose more than anything it has been the struggle to stop war which has fired me for the past several decades" Livesay has said
in self-analysis (Meyer and O’Riordan 77). This view she had already expressed in a poem called “Poetry is like Bread”: 

Our poem - everyone’s
must be a message
for survival
Let it sound out clear
Signpost and banner
plain talk
NO MORE WAR. (FTW 59)

“Struggle” is a mass chant requiring two groups, one on each side of the stage. Through this poem she is cautioning people against the dangers of fascism. She tries to expose the hollowness of Hitler’s “fine words and slogans” and exhorts the workers all the world over to destroy fascism by “raising our voices”, by “clenching our fists” and by “struggle, comrades”. If they unite in solidarity, there is nothing they cannot achieve because they are “stronger than Hitler’s bloody arm”, and “stronger than Bennet’s Iron Heel” (RHLH 97-100).

After the Spanish Civil War came the Second World War. This led to a change in Livesay’s vision. Like many intellectuals of the times, Livesay was also in a dilemma - whether to support the war which many thought would really put an end to fascism
or to vote for peace. Finally she decided to withdraw, to settle down to family life on the North Shore. In Livesay's own words,

There, from an old house on a high hill we watched "the bush" change its depression face and become a maze of wartime houses, row on row, for the thousands of shipbuilders who moved in from all over the country... as I then recorded in the documentary poem, "West Coast". (RHLH 278)

Though she had shown the dehumanizing effect of technology in "Day and Night" she now looks at it as a "saving power" fit to change the face of even "a shabby town":

From ship to ship, galley to hold, the pattern makers move
until a new keel's laid, another scaffolding;
till fire and sweat, muscle and oath and jest mingle to launch her down the vaulted ways
a pearl-grey pointer leashed against the quays.

(LCP 141)

This poem shows how the poet continued to be interested in the theme of work despite her disenchantment with communism. As Paul Denham has rightly put it, here, "the industrial nightmare of "Day and Night' has become a force
of renewal and purposeful activity; the unemployed and the dispossessed now have employment” (N.pag). The poem is dedicated to Earle Birney who appears in it as a visionary:

Who knew heaven is coming down the mountain
is stirred with wonder; curious, even he,
who bent eyes bookward in his earliest days
sucking the sunlight from a world of words
dreaming to be word-welder, builder of these.

(LCP 141)

All about him, the poet saw men “flatten out the steel” for building the ship. For a while, he stands non-plussed wondering as to what role he has to play in the new scenario: “He hardly knows; he hesitates” (LCP 141).

However, he accepts the fact that war has completely changed human life. So he too picks up a hammer to take his place in the new order. And out of his work comes a new song:

Song! song from the throat of morning bursting
high above rivet, chipper, torch -
song from the hearts of men at labour
welding their words into the ship’s side. (LCP 143)

The poem ends on a note of hope as Livesay affirms her faith in the future:
Yet still, far, far below those lights pierced sky and water; blue and violet, quick magenta flash from welder’s torch; and still the foreshore roared strumming the sea, drumming its rhythm hard beating out strong against the ocean’s song: the graveyard shift still hammering its way towards an unknown world, straddling new day.

(LCP 145)

One notices an obvious change in her vision now. What to her were political problems once are now human concerns which could be solved with the help of individuals. She now places faith in the power of the individual to conquer the difficulties of life. In the significant interview given to Bruce Meyer and Brian O’Riordan in 1984 Livesay admits: “I have turned away from the political struggle to think of the individual struggle. All my later poetry is mostly dealing with relationships” (76). Her dream of a Marxist Utopia may have faded, but her concern for individuals remained the same. As she says “Poetry is for people. People’s feelings come into the poetry, and one expresses poetry” (Sheirer Lubby, Sarah Sheard and Eleanor Wachel N.pag).
Livesay is against any form of discrimination. An encounter with racial segregation in New Jersey took her to a new area of identification. The hatred that Hitler instigated against the Jews was not confined to Germany alone. Canada too witnessed frequent attacks against Jews and communists branding them as enemies of Christianity. “New Jersey: 1935” is a very powerful attack on racial segregation. Two girls, Luella, a white and her black friend enter the white lady’s garden walking “entrained in moonlight”. They entered the landlady’s house and had supper together upstairs, to the great chagrin of the landlady. After the “colored girl” left, the lady shoved her shoulder: “into mine / and her frog eyes / into my face” (RHLH 131) and warned her not to “let a nigger enter my door again” (RHLH 132). Sudden was Luella’s reaction “Why no!- I never will - / nor a white girl, either” (RHLH 132). And she went upstairs to pack. But what irks her more is the attitude of others who, instead of condemning this incident tells her: “You just don’ understand things, honey” (RHLH 132). True, she certainly does not because as she says, “And I guess I don’t understand / for I have n’t been black” (RHLH 132).

“Call My People Home”, a tribute to the endurance and tolerance of the Japanese Canadians who were uprooted from
their fishing villages and fishing boats on the west coast of British Columbia alleging that they were spying for the Japanese, was written in 1949. Accepting Canada as home was itself a traumatic experience for these “new comers and strangers”. It took a pretty long time before they could become a part of their new home. For them, for many years: “Home was the uprooting /The shiver of separation, /Despair for our children /Fear for our future” (LCP 180).

After thirty years, they become successful in building a home near water:

I was my own master
Must prove it now, today! Stooping over the engine
Priming the starter, opening the gas valve,
I felt her throbbing in answer, I laughed
And grasped th7e flywheel, swung her over
She churned off up the river-my own boat, my home.

(LCP 182).

But this euphoria was not to last long. Pearl Harbour changed all that. The Japanese Canadians became suspects in the eyes of the authorities. So “ours boats were to be examined, searched / For hidden guns, for maps, for treachery…” (LCP 182).
They thought it was all a mistake and that they would be allowed to resume fishing as the time is ripe. But soon they realised

There was no mistake. It wasn't a joke:
At every fishing port more boats fell in.
Some had no wood, no gasoline; and some
Barely a day's store of food aboard. (LCP 183)

Even the children who become conscious of "the colour of the skin" know why no school bell rings for them, but "only the siren". Most families are separated. With just one day's notice to depart hundreds are stuffed into reallocation centres. The mother is continually frightened "Never having lived so, in a horse stall before". To her the present life is a nightmare. The daughter, whose bunk is just above her mother's lies all night rigid lest she should disturb her mother. But she is disturbed:

She has hung her pink petticoat from my bunk rail
Down over her head, to be private; but nothing is private
Hundreds of strangers lie breathing around us
wakeful, or coughing; or in sleep tossing;
Hundreds of strangers pressing upon us
Like horses tethered, tied to a manger. (LCP 187)

Finally, the government came out with two alternatives
either “to be crowded together in government huts”, “fed on
foreign food” and “the family parted”

Or to face the longer, stranger journey
Over the mountain ranges, barred from the sea-
To labour in uncertain soil, inclement weather
Yet labour as one-all the family together? (LCP 190)

They preferred the latter as they had no choice, but one straight
way: “The eastward journey into emptiness, / A prairie place
called home” (LCP 191). But home was a blue print only. They
had to live in a hen coop perched on a farmer’s field, soaked
by the sudden storms and the early vernal showers. They had
nearly given up and wept when their new friend, the neighbour
from the Ukraine encouraged them saying, “see how tomorrow
is fine. You work / Hard, same as me. We make good harvest
time” (LCP 192). His words had an immediate effect and they
brought, as it were a fresh wind over the quickening fields.
Livesay is here stressing the value of work as well as camaraderie.
Towards the end of the poem there is a significant meditation by the Philosopher who asserts that healing will begin only through the act of patience, "the way of waiting":

To be alone is grace; to see it clear
Without rancour; to let the past be
And the future become. Rarely to remember
The painful needles turning in the flesh.

Yes, to remember is to go back; to take
The path along the dyke, the lands of my uncle

So must I remember. It cannot be hid
Nor hurried from. As long as there abides
No bitterness; only the lesson learned
And the habit of grace chosen, accepted.

(LCP 193-194)

No one can miss here the poet's attitude to social oppression. She is no more vehement in protesting against oppression nor is she hopeful of any social revolution that will rid the world of all its evils. Instead it seems she is suggesting the grace of acceptance which leads inevitably to a better understanding of home and of life itself:
Home, we discover, is where life is:

Home is something more than harbour -
Than father, mother, sons;
Home is the white face leaning over your shoulder as well as the dark ones.

Home is labour, with the hand and heart,
The hard doing, and the rest when done;
A wider sea than we knew, a deeper earth,
A more enduring sun. (LCP 194)

In her essay “The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre” Livesay calls the documentary poem, “a genre which is valid as lyrical expression but whose impact is topical, historical, theoretical and moral” (Mandel 281). This is particularly true in the case of a documentary like “Call my People Home” where the poet has made a “conscious attempt to create a dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings” (Mandel 267).

Though this poem deals, at first glance, with the ordeal of the Japanese Canadians, their suffering assumes a universal significance. Their suffering becomes the suffering of all those who suffered during the war. According to Sandra Hutchinson
... in its largest meaning, the poem addresses the question of human suffering itself, its reasons and justifications. In this context, the "search for roots" takes on a larger, existential meaning, and the concept of 'home' as central to the poem becomes a quest for the metaphysical homeland, the home from which no traveller returns. (88)

Livesay's last volume of poems *The Self-Completing Tree*, is really disappointing with its inclusion of many poems that show an almost obsessive concern with sex in its limited physical aspects. There is no poem, worthy of note, which deals with the theme of war or violence. Her memoir *Journey with my Selves* contains at least one poem dealing with the theme of war. While she was in Rhodesia, a young married man Raphael explained to her the political situation there involving the UNIP (United Independent Party) program for one man, one vote and freedom. Livesay celebrates this in a longish poem called "The Second Language". In it she presents a Rhodesian woman, "tall, gaunt, with flexing arms" who shouts "If the men will not act / the woman will! / The woman are fearless" (JMS 209). It is evidently a pointer to the feminist concerns she developed in subsequent years.
The story of how intellectuals like Stephen Spender, Cecil Day Lewis, Louis MacNeice and others, the notable sympathizers with the communist movement, were disillusioned in later years is too well known to be discussed here. The outbreak of the World War left Livesay thoroughly disillusioned. Her poem “Of Mourners”, written in 1944, where she speaks of the great harm done to “man’s building heart, his shaping soul”, best exemplifies the extent to which she was disillusioned with communism (LCP 167). However, as has already been discussed, she continued to be interested in the themes of work and struggle, though there is an obvious lack in the force with which these subjects are treated.

Though Livesay has long been esteemed as a major Canadian poet, there has emerged little serious criticism on her work in general and on her socialist poetry in particular. Denise Levertov, an American poet who resembles Dorothy Livesay in many ways is right when she points to the treatment political poetry receives these days: “whereas critics and the public are not dismayed when autobiography, psychological explorations, or at the other extreme, trivia, appear in lyric semblance, yet the political is often looked at askance and subjected to a more stringent examination” (118).
Whatever be the criticism her poetry receives at the hands of critics and readers, there is no denying the fact that almost every poem of Livesay is a message conveying the purpose of her existence. Despite the great havoc caused by the world wars in various fronts, she is not prepared to brush aside the possibility of a breathtaking landscape. Though her partisan politics gave way to wider social concern in her later poems, she does not run away from her life-long mission to make the world a better place. A deep concern for the world, the future of humanity as well as the environment is reflected in her later poems. A separate chapter has been set apart for a detailed analysis of her treatment of environmental and aboriginal issues, another concern she shares with Judith Wright.

War has been a major theme in Australian poetry throughout the twentieth century. The First World War produced a number of Australian war poems like J.K. McDougall’s “The White Man’s Burden”, Frank Wilmot’s “To God: From the Weary Nations” and Vance Palmer’s “The Camp”. But the Second World War yielded a far richer corpus of war poetry than the First World War. Australians no longer considered themselves as a mouse in a fairly safe hole or as the protected and patronized poor cousin of Britain. The Japanese War and the British Navy’s
poor show made them think of their own safety. Poets like McAuley, A.D. Hope, Francis Webb, John Blight, Kenneth Slessor and Judith Wright recorded their feelings of war in verse in no unequivocal terms.

Judith Wright wrote most of the poems that comprise her maiden volume, *The Moving Image* during the grimmest phase of the Second World War. A person who had lived her most impressionable years and grown into a poet during the interregnum of the two World Wars, Judith Wright developed a metaphysical perspective on the issues of belligerence and violence. The poems in *The Moving Image* discussed elsewhere in this thesis, betray the Platonic concept of time and serve as a most relevant cosmic perspective to reflect on human behaviour that had gone awry. The title poem, with its discussion of evil, time and death, prepares us to accept war with a sort of philosophic composure. One is made to accept the outbreak of violence as just a manifestation of Evil which no amount of human effort can counter completely.

"The Company of Lovers", the next poem in the volume, is essentially a poem on love and death. But a close perusal of the poem will soon show us that the terror that pervades it is the one that has been generated by war. In her Foreword to *Collected Poems 1942-1985*, Judith Wright refers in particular
to this poem which deals with "the great displacements of people during World War II, their snatching into armies and other defence forces, the desperation of lovers faced with the prospect of a separation which might last forever, and the urgency of need which drove the young into each others' arms" (WCP N.pag). An Emily Dickinson may view Death and Immortality as a suitor and his companion, but to the frightened lady in this poem, war is death which "marshals up his armies round us now / Their footsteps crowd too near" (WCP 70). No wonder, she seeks solace in her lover's embrace "Lock your warm hand above the chilling heart / and for a time I live without my fear" (WCP 7).

In "Waiting", the poet wonders how "the sirens of danger" can pierce this air where "from starfrost to starfrost, the folded hills lie bare" and the sheep move grazing or stand". She hardly wonders "What hour ahead waits with a basilisk grin" (WCP 10).

She, like most of the thinking people of her own times, is aware of an imminent catastrophe that may wipe out all peace and normalcy for ever. She, however, is not ready to put blame squarely on time which to her is "the calm surgeon, deciding / Our cancer is not mortal, can be excised" (WCP 10).
On the other hand, she blames our own instinct of betrayal: "turn back ourselves upon us: our own Iscariots / we know the agony we do not know" (*WCP* 10).

This poem reminds us of "Petition", a poem by W.H. Auden where he addresses God casually as a great psychiatrist capable of curing us of the neural itch that has afflicted us. To Auden and company at least for a few years, there was Marxism to turn to, as a panacea for the various ills of society. Judith Wright on the other hand, despite her great concern about these ills and her endeavour to root out at least some of these, does not associate herself with anyone of the major political ideologies.

She is however aware of the eternal spirit of ferocity and belligerence found in man. In many of her poems, she uses the tiger as a symbol of the primitive instinct for violence which modern man has inherited. One cannot easily miss the echo of Blake's poem, "Tiger" here.

In "The Trains", a terse poem where she effectively registers her fear of war, the spirit of ferocity inherent in man is evoked through phrases like "wild summoning cry" and "animal cry" and a direct reference to the "Tiger, you walk
through all our past and future" (WCP 12). The trains go north with guns, "waking the young from a dream" and "over the white acres of our orchards". The trains "racing on iron errands" and "their wild summoning cry, their animal cry" chill the modern Australian's hearts with dread almost the same way his ancestors' hearts were chilled with fear by the roars and whines of ferocious beasts (WCP 12).

In "The Idler", the treasure islands were the protagonist's desired landfall. But he cannot live in peace as "time sprang from its coil and struck his heart, / and all the world shrank small as a grenade" (WCP 13). The "dooms of planes" play havoc with his mind "and all his islands vanished with their palms / under the hostile despotism of night" (WCP 13).

But interestingly enough, unlike in "Waiting", where time is completely exonerated of any positive role in bringing about an atmosphere of war, here, using the serpent imagery with its Biblical overtones, the poet imagines war as the simple uncoiling of time. Another point of interest here is the way it contrasts with the title poem where the world is compared to a "fruit in the hand" unlike in the present poem where the world is spoken of as having shrunk "small as a grenade".
In “Dust”, the final poem of the volume she employs the dust imagery to portray the eerie, irritating and despairing scenario of the Second World War:

Dust has overtaken our dreams that were wider and richer than wheat under the sun, and war’s eroding gale scatters our sons with a million other grains of dust. (WCP 24)

The poem however ends on a note of heroic resolution as they realise that their misery is well deserved because their “dream was the wrong dream” and their “strength was the wrong strength”. This revelation urges them to “make a new choice, a choice more difficult than resignation”. This “new choice” is for setting up a hitherto untried economic order which may ensure a better future to the coming generations: “We must prepare the land for a difficult sowing, / a long and hazardous growth of a strange bread, / that our sons’ sons may harvest and be fed” (WCP 24).

“Pain”, a poem included in Woman to Man, a volume primarily on the themes of love, gestation, and birth, presents a man back home from the wars with his body “bent like a bowl” consequent on a wound sustained in the war. He is in
great pain as is evident from his blazing eyes: "Flaring and fixed, a tiger or a dark star" (WCP 30). His suffering compels the poet to contemplate some ways to prevent the occurrence of any more war in future. So she asks: "What shall we do to save ourselves from pain?" (WCP 31).

The mounting wave of violence which threatens to drown the whole world is the central theme of the poem "The Flood". From the far flung islands are heard the voice:

Laus Domine, salve me

The voices of journalist, priest and politician barrowman, auctioneer and market agent -
I cannot tell their voices from my own
The waters rise quietly. (WCP 43)

This poem deserves praise for the deft manner in which she blends other human vices like selfishness and hypocrisy with the idea of violence:

Lord, in this thy Day
remember my good deeds. Let the others be washed away
but I have done no harm. Remember my good deeds (WCP 43).
These are the voices the poet hears. After the outbreak of the First World War, W.B. Yeats too suffered such traumatic visions that he expressed as "blood-dimmed tide" (99) or "flooded stream" (100). But Judith Wright goes a step further and tries to show us in our true colours where the mask of fraternity and fellow feeling strips off easily.

"Eli, Eli" is an overtly religious poem with its use of the Biblical flood imagery. We are our own Iscariots and we betray not just Christ, but ourselves as well. So naturally we alone can save ourselves. An anguished Eli is helplessly watching: "Soldiers and elders drowning in the river, / the pitiful woman drowning in the river, / the children's faces staring from the river" (WCP 44).

This sight, the poet feels, was His "cross" and "not the cross they gave him". Their choice to perish, rather than let themselves be saved by love and faith gives Christ an agony too deep for words: "this was the wound, more than the wound they dealt him" (WCP 44). The poet sums up Christ's predicament thus:

To hold out love and know they would not take it, to hold out faith and know they dared not take it the invisible band, and none would see or take it,
all he could give, and there was none to take it—thus they betrayed him, not with the tongue’s betrayal.

(WCP 45)

It is strange that man destroys not only Christ but himself as well, that too knowing all its consequences. Each of us is an Iscariot standing pledged to Mephistopheles rather than to Christ.

In “Letter to a Friend” the poet appears as a “fit mourner” for some dead friend of hers, probably a victim of the war. Lines like “Underground death lies. I must tread lightly / the time-bomb world” (WCP 55) amply reveal the fact that the poem has been written in the background of the recently ended war. Though she says “It is because of the joy in my heart / that I am your fit mourner” (WCP 55) she fails to feel secure as she knows

Now all of us who live
are in our lives an elegy;
are in our lives an eternal speech
with the dead; the mourner speaks to the mourned, the murderer speaks to the murdered. (WCP 56)
This poem which parallels Wilfred Owen's famous poem "The Strange Meeting" has a happy ending. Dismissing fear, grief, evil and betrayal as ephemeral, the poet addresses his dead friend: "To you at last I can speak the truth / all is a shadow, except the joy in my heart" (WCP 59).

"Lion" is another short but powerful poem which treats violence and war. At once reminding us of Yeats's "The Second Coming" and Blake's "Tiger", this poem vividly expresses the innate ferocity of man through the lion imagery. Admitting that she is a human being with enough potential to become as ferocious as the lion himself, she braves the beast with the "crystal glance" and is prepared to answer "stare for stare" till its "gaze is blind". But she does not equate the beast fully with violence and ferocity alone, as it has an inherent love aspect also. Thus it is linked with the Lord:

Though you wear the face of the sun,
in the mortal gold of your eyes,
yet till that Lord himself dies
this deeper image will live on. (WCP 87)

"Two Songs for the World's End" is another poem dealing with the theme of war and the violence associated with it. It finds
a parallel in a poem by Yeats called "A Prayer for My Daughter". A ghastly spectacle of imminent violence is laid before us in the first stanza with dramatic abruptness recalling some of Donne's poems:

    Bombs ripen on the leafless tree
    under which the children play.
    And there my darling all alone
dances in the spying day. (WCP 107)

Her worry is chiefly for her darling daughter who is too innocent to know the evil in the world. The second part of the poem, therefore, is a prayer for her daughter. To the sleeping child she says "Should the red tent of the sky / fall to fold your time away, / wake to weep before you die" (WCP 108). But there is another possibility that she will die even in her sleep. So the poet tells her "But if you die before you wake / never think death sweet" (WCP 108).

The Two Fires contains a number of poems, including the title poem written at the time of the Korean war when the world's destruction by atomic war seemed distinctly possible. The title poem asserts the poet's conviction that "And now, set free by the climate of man's hate, / that seed sets time ablaze" (WCP 120). In no uncertain terms she
exclaims “Look, the whole world burns” (WCP 120). “The Precipice” presents a mother who committed suicide along with her children by jumping headlong from some rocky edge. The poet cannot put any blame on this hapless woman as she might have had her own logic in resorting to this drastic step: “To blame her would mean little; she had her logic, / the contained argument of the bomb” (WCP 120).

The same logic that leads to the making of the bombs drives her to take this ghastly step, the poet feels. One cannot but doubt whether she is not reiterating her view that destruction and violence at any level stem directly from man’s innate suicidal aptitude. But this poem stands apart with the moral it conveys towards the end: “and we must hold our weather cock minds from turning / into its drowned gale, towards destruction” (WCP 121).

In “West Wind” the poet admits that she is sad because she is forced to love “in a time of hate and to live in a time of death”. She is not frightened of the “snake in the flowering bush” or the “crow that sharpens his beak for his day”. But “the legions of the living dead blow through me with my breath, / crying, “you will find no rest in time or being; forget to be - / blow as we do down the black wind into an easy grave”
In "Western Star", the poet imagines that Venus is shining clearly but sadly and her light "falls like a thread of dew / to cool the droughts of the heart" (WCP 123). But her still small dew cannot in anyway quench "the hellfire blaze of the heart" (WCP 123). "Two Generations" another powerful poem in this volume also projects the poet's chagrin at "the intolerable bright destruction of all time and place" (WCP 124).

The poet asks her companion, probably her own child

What do you learn of the world? I hold your hand, but even my touch is cancelled by that wind; because the wind is my own breath, whispering that the heart of man condemns the world to death (WCP 124).

"The Harp and the King" presents an "old king without a throne" whose mind is now but a "dry steambed". At one time he "thought there was a truth in time". But now his "terror is eternity". He yearns to believe in his own "mortality" as death shall come as a deliverer to him. The whole situation, with the Second World War in the background and the contemporary degeneration of mankind as the living context makes this poem a mini - Wasteland in the Eliotian style. It depicts a time "When all that lives has died / and withered
in the wind and blown away; / and earth has no more strength
to bleed” (WCP 156). Our own “murderous heart” has stripped
us of our divinity and expelled us from the Eden of bliss lodging
us in the inferno of our age “In time we fail and fall / In
time the company even of God withdraws / and we are left
with our own murderous heart” (WCP 157).

Her next volume Birds shows a pre-occupation with birds. But her succeeding volume Five Senses contains poems which take up the theme of war and violence at least casually. “Judas in Modern Dress” is a case in point. The poem speaks of the dire consequence of disobeying God. The persona in the poem, Judas finds “the human world as dunged as its own sty” and “a foul ante-room to death”. This world, he knows, is “no place for me” as it remains like an “abattoir” where the soil is “soaked” with blood (WCP 197). The abattoir imagery shows the extent to which man can go in his hatred and anger.

The protagonist in “Vision” is a seer who is capable of seeing “that world beyond the world”. He lists pride, greed and ignorance as the world’s three evils. His mystical vision reveals to him that human behaviour is pre-ordained and that man is only a puppet in some unseen hands.
So he was sad for victim and oppressor,
for crying child and brute with the slack mouth
for schemer, clod and safe respectable man
and all who had not seen what he had seen.

(WCP 199)

The Other Half also contains a few poems which point to man's propensity for murder and destruction. The protagonist in "Destruction" is a poet who looks for "love itself" and finds: "the wolf, the lion, the sword, the stormy sea - / those portions of the world's eternity / too great to compass with the eye of man" (WCP 217).

These terrible images walk through his dreams and he realizes that he must find "his death in his desire". The poem ends with his assertion that "so we create the selves we must destroy / before we find the pattern of our joy" (WCP 218).

"Imago" is a study in brutality. The "slugfoot creature" had known happier days and nights in the underworld where "It was the law down there - / eat or be eaten. Slimed, intent and quartering,/ he ate whatever was easy slaughtering" (WCP 218). His ruthless despotism portrayed in the final stanza convinces us that this obnoxious creature was "a kind of king" in his underworld "whom others feared":

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Crouching alone above his former world, he was glad at least of the armour he had grown.
He knew the iron fierceness of his stare; it had been useful in the life he’d known.
He felt his mask, his cuirass, harden to stone.
Light flashed its orders through the perilous air.

(WCP 219)

The images of “armour” and “cuirass” used here reminds one immediately of battles and wars.

In “To Another Housewife”, Judith Wright speaks of “hands with love and blood imbrued”, “the streaming knife/ that serves the feast of death in life, and “the turned down radio” telling of “murder, famine, pious wars”. The grown ups and the young ones alike are in the grip of fear listening to the broadcast: “Our children shrink to see us so, / in sudden meditation, stand / with knife and fork in either hand” (WCP 220).

War brings havoc not only to human beings but to the very ecosystem as well. The harm brought to ecology by war is the subject of her poem, “A Document”. The poet is compelled
to sell an eight hundred strong "coachwood forest" in her name to the government. The poet had no other option but to sign the title deed as "it was World War Two / Their wood went into bomber-planes. They grew / hundreds of years to meet those hurried axes" (WCP 242). This poem which exposes man's ruthless acts of exploitation causing vast imbalances in nature's system, is comparable to Thomas Hardy's "Throwing a Tree" or Gieve Patel's "On Killing a Tree".

"Fire Sermon", a significant poem in her volume Shadow was written during the Vietnam War and in direct response to it. The title shows her indebtedness to Eliot who in his Wasteland had unfolded a dreadful scenario of spiritual barrenness, destruction and human bestiality. It is but ironic that war is being fought on a land of predominantly Buddha worshippers:

In the temple the great gold Buddha smiles inward with half closed eyes
All is Maya, the dance, the veil,
Shiva's violent dream. (WCP 276)

The "great gold Buddha" here is undoubtedly not the real Buddha who had renounced all "gold" and "luxury" and the
halo of greatness only to live as a mendicant. The Buddha here is totally unaffected by the wailing of the "little people" whose ricefields have been blackened by the "sinister powers" when all they "want is to live" (WCP 276). He is incapable of bringing any solace to his suffering worshippers.

The reference to the Krishna - Arjuna dialogue at once connects the present war with the Mahabharata war in which kinsmen killed kinsmen and Krishna defended this in the light of his theory of "action". The oriental strain of the poem is further heightened when the poet interprets the gory spectacle as Shiva's dance, the tandav nritya! However, the war, for the poet is a nightmare from which she wants to escape:

Let me out of this dream, I cry,
but the great gold Buddha
Smiles in the temple
Under a napalm rain. (WCP 277)

The mass-killing of innocent children somewhere awakened the mother in the poet and the result is a touching poem significantly entitled "Massacre of the Innocents" with its Biblical echo. One may also recall here one of Dickens's novels *Hard Times* where a chapter is titled "Murdering the Innocents".
Through the personae of innocent children, Judith Wright in this poem, is voicing her strong protest against the ongoing onslaught of young children:

We are hope, and you kill us.
You will not forget
We will haunt all your future
like regret-like regret
we are love, which soon dies. (WCP 278)

'The theme of war and the resultant havoc are relegated to the background in her next volume Alive. However, in poems like "Habitat" she points to the sad fact that each of us is a party to the sinister atmosphere that prevails today:

Guilt's our inhabitant
pacing all night inside
this well-lit frame
chaos incentres order. (WCP 307)

"The Slope", the last poem in this volume, is perhaps her maturest expression on the suicidal tendencies of mankind. Here she speaks of the "black vortices" of our mind which sets us rolling down the "slope" of death:
"That's your true trial"
cries the great Analogue of us all,
"You are the instrument of this planet's death".

(\textit{WCP 336})

Through the image of the whale, the poet tries to universalize
the theme of death-wish in the three "Interface" poems in \textit{The
Fourth Quarter}:

You may find, deep in there,
the secret of destruction
the tiny burrowing worm,
the virus in the brain. (\textit{WCP 346})

"Party with the Gods" is Judith Wright's response to the
American influence in the Pacific and is an open denunciation
of armed bullying by the mighty nations:

Round the Pacific's moaning shores
dirty with gun boats, loud with planes,
the ancient countries stand and wait
longing to take their shape again. (\textit{WCP 350})

The "ancient countries" on the "Pacific's moaning shores"
are obviously the war ravaged nations of the Far East and South
East Asia. This poem assumes great significance in the context of the recently concluded Gulf War in which America’s self styled superiority and big-brother attitude played a decisive role.

*Phantom Dwelling*, though neglected by many critics, raises ethical and political questions that are just as valid now as they were in the forties. Though no poem in this volume makes a direct reference to the poet’s preoccupation with the themes of war or violence at least a few poems can be considered as clearly supporting her nationalist leanings. These poems clearly show her strong desire for the establishment of a peculiarly Australian identity. “For a Pastoral Family” amply articulates this desire for a break with the imperial order. She wants Europe to be recognised in her country as the antipodes of Australia. But she feels no qualms about her countrymen calling on relatives in England but always keeping “Our Independence”:

> We would entertain them equally, if they came and with equal hospitality—blood being thicker than thousands of miles of water—for the sake of Great aunt Charlotte and old letters.

*(WCP 408)*
"End of a Monarchy", another significant poem figuring in this volume also examines the nature of the Eurocentric tradition in Australia. The only difference, it seems, between the "centre" of the '40s and the present is that the site has changed. The "Centre" now appears to be America, the greatest nuclear power, but the language of America still is very much a European derivative. So she says

No higher court of appeal
will save us, prole and underling,
whatever counsel mav say;
but the king is never undone
A little expedient conjuring

and here he is again...

Today in a different guise,
in a supersonic jet
keeping up with the nuclear set
and the exponential leap. (WCP 401)

Man's propensity for self-destruction is clearly echoed in a short poem called "Caddis Fly" where the fly, the "small twilight helicopter", despite the poet's attempt to save it, dives to the fire's centre. She asks
Why should I mourn, little buddha,
small drunkard of the flame?
I finish my wine and dream
on your fire-sermon. (WCP 418)

One can easily find here an echo of an earlier, better known poem “Fire Sermon” written in the background of the Vietnam War.

In short, it must be admitted that both Livesay and Wright, hailing from two far-flung nations have treated with equal concern the fear and horror of war. War and the human propensity for violence have remained a major concern with them throughout their poetic career. Both of them, whose avowed purpose as poets, is to shape a better world, are aware of the growing occurrence of violence and of the rampant acts of aggression against animals and human beings. Though at times they lament that no force can fully succeed in countering these evils, they do not lose hope altogether. They seem to believe that eventually good will triumph over evil and that the world will emerge a better place to live in.
Works Cited


