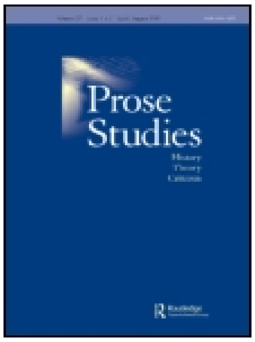

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William Dow

DOROTHY DAY AND JOSEPH KESSEL: ‘A LITERATURE OF URGENCY’

One way of expressing the impact and purpose of the form that has become known as “literary journalism” would be to use the term that Jean-Louis Jeannelle recently coined in reference to Joseph Kessel’s World War Two reportage: a “literature of urgency.” For Jeanelle, this certain kind of literature had to be written, to help sort out the complexities of the time, to express the immediacy of death and war, to chronicle the various tragedies of suffering and deprivation. It is a literature that can only be produced from a specific context and circumstance. And it is a literature that, in its international dimensions, is beginning to displace the emphasis from a body of literature to a mode of reading. This essay seeks to explore and define the mode of reading demanded by two literary journalists, Dorothy Day (1897–1980) and Joseph Kessel (1898–1979), who in their “literature of urgency,” can help us better understand the relationship between the narrative modes – fiction and journalism – the “literariness” of these modes, and the importance of their writings to the history of literary-journalistic forms. In bringing together these two unlikely suspects, I suggest here how the forces of literary journalism actually bring into being a polemical mode of discourse concerned foremost with the material world. In the process, I hope to demonstrate how their respective forms of literary journalism supply a rich potential for literary study, and for narrative and cultural theory.

Keywords Dorothy Day; Joseph Kessel; literary journalism; reportage; literature of urgency; literariness

Alongside the reflective abilities of literary journalism, perhaps one inherency in its form, as Mark Kramer has argued, is that “there is something intrinsically political— and strongly democratic— about literary journalism, something pluralistic, pro-individual, anti-cant, and anti-elitist” (34). But another and perhaps better way of expressing the impact and purpose of the form would be to use the term that French journalist Jean-Louis Jeannelle recently coined, in reference to Joseph Kessel’s World War Two reportage, a “literature of urgency.”[1] For Jeanelle, this certain kind of literature had to be written, to help sort out the complexities of the time, to express the immediacy of death and war, to chronicle the various tragedies of suffering and deprivation. It is a literature that can only be produced from a specific context and circumstance. And it is a literature that, in its international dimensions, is beginning to displace the emphasis from a body of literature to a mode of reading.[2]

This essay seeks to explore and define the mode of reading demanded by two literary journalists, Dorothy Day (1897–1980) and Joseph Kessel (1898–1979), who in their “literature of urgency” can help us better understand the relationship between

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the narrative modes – fiction and journalism – the “literariness” of these modes, and the importance of their writings to the history of literary-journalistic forms.[3] I hope to suggest, in bringing together these two unlikely suspects – Dorothy Day, US novelist, journalist, pacifist, social revolutionary, devout Catholic up for sainthood; and Joseph Kessel, adventurer, French novelist, journalist, and social realist – how the forces of literary journalism actually bring into being a polemical mode of discourse concerned foremost with the material world. In the process, I hope to demonstrate how their respective forms of literary journalism supply a rich potential for literary study, and narrative and cultural theory.

Day’s and Kessel’s literature of urgency highlights what I would define as the “literariness” of their texts.[4] By this term, I mean, following Phyllis Frus, a literariness that would view “the ties between content and form as valuable, instead of something to transcend; the reader would regard the text’s referents as inseparable from its formal means and would make this dynamic relationship central to a reading” (4). But unlike Frus, I would argue that such a literariness does not necessarily “collapse all discourse into one category” (5). Rather than “erode the status of ‘literature’ as a category” (6), the literariness I have in mind in the writings of Day and Kessel highlights the literary and the “factually unverifiable” in order to foreground (the contingencies of) their authorial perceptions and truth claims.[5]

I would argue for upholding the genre status of *literary journalism* but I conceive of genre in its more modern sense, as in Derrida’s “law of genre” (qtd in Pyrhönen 114). As applied to specific texts, the genre of literary journalism, in Derrida’s meaning, “draws attention to the fact that generic designations simultaneously describe a generic reality and participate in constructing it” (Pyrhönen 114). Moreover, no generic classification can cover every element in a given text, so I’m certainly not arguing for an absolute coverage or category. Quite the contrary: a genre definition cannot assume that the content of a text and its genre form (e.g., journalism, literature) are so sufficiently autonomous and separable that “meaning” can be translated or transferred from one genre into another intact. Literary journalism can be seen as problematizing the idea of genre while, paradoxically, claiming its own genre status. It can be seen, in its “generic competence” (Pyrhönen 114), as grounded in a relationship of complicity between author and reader while encompassing the historically verifiable.[6]

Yet, it can be argued, its presentation of historical content sets literary-journalistic texts aside from conventionally defined fictional narratives. In beginning our readings of Day and Kessel by recognizing that the “factive” is the nature of narrative and by accepting the combination of the factive and literary as a genre in itself, the form of literary-journalistic texts must be re-described (and studied) as “form-in-context” (Herman 228). Of special importance to this literariness, types of literary-journalistic narration and narrative modes must be examined not only in terms of formal and cognitive structures, but also as variably situated speech and historical events rich in contextualization evidence.[7] Kessel and Day demand a mode of reading that impacts the way we structure and understand our experience and locate it in historical processes and social orders.[8] In the works I examine here, both writers produced their exposés and disclosures in the public interest. Both wished their narratives to intercede directly in the sociopolitical worlds they inhabited, experienced, and fiercely described.

Joseph Kessel

> "[Joseph Kessel] est de ces êtres à qui tout excès aura été permis, et d'abord dans la témérité du soldat et du résistant, et qui aura gagné l'univers sans avoir perdu son âme."
>
> François Mauriac

Popular author of adventure stories and best-sellers, and described by some as a French counterpart to Ernest Hemingway,[9] Joseph Kessel (1898–1979) was a novelist and literary journalist. His major novels include *La Steppe Rouge* (*The Red Steppes*) 1922, *Les Rois Aveugles* (*Blinded Kings*) 1926, *Belle de jour* (1928), *L'Armée des ombres* (*The Army of Shadows*), 1944, *Le Lion* (*The Lion*), 1958, *Le Tour de malheur* (1950, and *Le Cavalier* (*The Horsemen*), 1967. He has become a legend in the history of French reportage.[10] As Emmanuel d'Astier has noted, "Kessel est une force, un appétit, un coeur...Une espèce de héros d'un temps biblique qui, quoi qu'on en dise, ne sera jamais révolu dans aucun société" [Kessel is a strength, an appetite, a heart, a sort of biblical hero who, no matter what one might think of him, will always exist in any society] (quoted in Courrière 929).[11] The legend and legacy of Kessel has been thoroughly examined in the criticism and in historical biographies on him.[12] My intention, quite different here, is to focus on a collection of Kessel's World War Two reportage (1938–1945) recently republished by Gallimard (2010), as part of a four-volume set. The volume that I examine here, *L'Heure des châtiments* [*The Time of Punishment*], is a collection of articles first published in the French newspapers and magazines, *La Revue de Paris*, *Le Matin, Gringoire, Marianne, France Soir,* and *Détective* between 1938 and 1945.

Like Hemingway, Kessel developed a reputation of testing himself through action (as a pilot during WWI, a figure of the French Resistance, a traveler to dangerous lands), of seeing himself as a perpetual adventurer, and of striving for individual existential meaning in the historical events he experienced and documented. Of primary interest for him is the conflict between the individual and social norms. As Alan D. Ranwez has emphasized, Kessel was "much less of a metaphysical writer than Malraux and less concerned with the dynamics of history." In particular, Kessel realistically portrayed life as he saw it during the two world wars, often emphasizing heroism and solidarity (Ranwez). I would add that Kessel's journalistic approach derives from a French tradition of experiential/immersion reporting and advocacy journalism, established in part by such writers as Pierre Loti, Blaise Cendrars, and André Malraux, Albert Londres, and others. Kessel relied on individual humanistic portrayals over political and historical analyses, and consequently, his immersion reporting gave minimal importance to any collective sense of history. Kessel's "reportage" that I examine here illustrates how he understood that to create a deep impression on his reading public, he would have to remain faithful to fact while emphasizing a compelling literary sensibility. Through such a process he would demonstrate his abilities to create new narrative urgencies appropriate for the specific circumstances of France's position in World War Two. By the time the war ended, Kessel, had become increasingly known as a journalist rather than a novelist, and as one of "les grands témoins" [the great witnesses] and immersion journalists of his generation.

Dorothy Day

A contemporary to Kessel, Dorothy Day was a radical journalist, social activist, and novelist. She wrote for the *Liberator*, *The Masses*, and *The Call*, committing herself to such causes as the Vietnam anti-war protests and the women's suffrage movement. An enormous influence on modern American Catholicism, she founded the *Catholic Worker* in 1933 for which she wrote regularly until her death in 1980. During her years on *The Catholic Worker*, Day was involved in establishing "hospitality houses" for the poor; protesting against fascist forces in Spain; urging pacifism during the Second World War; and opposing the Cold War, the Korean War, and the abuses of McCarthyism.[13] Beginning in the mid-fifties, *The Catholic Worker,* vocal in its support of the Civil Rights movement, also protested against the Vietnam war, and participated in campaigns against the draft in the 1960s (Coles 15; Piehl). *The Catholic Worker* began as a paper appealing specifically to the working class and unemployed but soon developed into a vehicle for important social movements. As historian Mel Peihl notes, "*The Catholic Worker* contributed substantially to the growth of the larger 'Catholic Left' while adhering to its own distinctive witness" (Piehl).

Oddly, the narrative forms of Day's "distinctive witness" have gone largely unexamined in Day criticism.[14] As a journalist and social activist, Day wanted her writing "to move the heart, stir the will to action, to arouse pity, compassion, to awaken the conscience" (Day, *Pilgrimage* 145). "Creating her own best story" in *The Catholic* Worker, "turning it into a unique phenomenon of American journalism and American history" (Peihl), Day's journalism, I will argue, was based on a literature of urgency. Like Kessel's Second World War reportage, Day's radical writing and her reporting for *The Catholic Worker* trace the way her particular style and reiterated themes take the literary away from exclusionary, apolitical, and ahistorical categories. She wrote to correct what she saw as "the injustice of things as they were" (Day, *Selected* xvii) and wished to provide narrative forms adequate to this task, in the tradition of what Paula Rabinowitz has called the "literary radicalism" of the thirties (Rabinowitz 13).

Day's narrative urgencies were inseparable from her political activism and Catholicism. As Robert Ellsberg has noted, "there was absolutely no distinction between what she believed, what she wrote, and the manner in which she lived" (xvii). In her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness* (1952), Day describes the necessity of living with "the unemployed, the sick, the unemployables":

> Going around and seeing such sights is not enough. To help the organizers, to give what you have for relief, to pledge yourself to voluntary poverty for life so that you can share with your bothers is not enough. One must live with them, share with them their suffering too. Give up one's privacy, and mental and spiritual comforts as well as physical. . . . (Day, *Selected,* 239)

Here Day urgently proclaims not simply the instrumentality of devoting one's life to others but her ability to address the particular as it relates to greater cultural dynamics.

Day's writing can be seen as usefully responding to a question that Paul Lauter asks in his recent study on working-class writing: "How do the distinctive experiences of working-class communities and their particular cultural traditions shape the forms and characteristics of literary expression?" (64). But although Day uses the working class as a nucleus for her social concerns, she grounds her narratives in the dual convictions of radical politics and Catholic theology.[15] As developed in *The Catholic Worker*, her politics and Catholicism "opposed the materialism of Communism and capitalism alike, supported the right of private property in a decentralized form; opposed nationalization; supported strikes and unions, but spoke in terms of worker ownership, cooperatives, and a return to the land [and] claimed authority for [her] eclectic platform in the lives of the saints and the tradition of Irish monasticism" (Ellsberg xxxi). Drawing from such convictions, Day's literary journalism can be seen as a platform to show how class and spiritual sensibilities can be expressed in language, in imagery, and in the details that constitute a lived reality. As a literary witness, she constantly "engages in writing and righting" (Elam 680) human experience.

The literature of urgency

Blurring conventional distinctions between fact and fiction; emphasis on personal accounts

Kessel and Day blur the distinction between fiction and journalism, and by so doing, demonstrate their reliance on literary forms to make their truth claims. But neither the form nor the explanatory power of their narratives derives from the specific historical content that they presume to present. In highlighting their historical accounts, they both recognize the fictive elements in their narratives; both reference reality as the "factually unverifiable" in order to foreground the contingencies of their own perceptions and representations. They deal with history – whether 1930s America or Second World War-era France – by making their fictiveness persist in their non-fictional discourses. In an interesting inverse twist of this formula, however, Kessel, positions his best-known novel, *L'armée des ombres* (1943) [*The Army of Shadows*] as an eyewitness chronicle. It is a document that makes a claim for truth but must, almost against its will, force itself to fictionalize (according to Kessel, in order to protect the true identities of his subjects). Kessel states in the novel's preface:

> Il n'y a pas de propagande en ce livre et il n' y a pas fiction. Aucun détail n' y a été forcé et aucun n'y est inventé. On ne trouvera assemblés ici, sans apprêt et parfois même au hasard, que des faits authentiques, éprouvés, contrôlés et pour ainsi dire quotidiens. Des fait courants de la vie française. (5)
> [There is no propaganda in this book and there is no fiction. No detail has been forced and none has been invented. One will find gathered here, without artifice and sometimes even by chance, only authentic facts, tested, controlled, and even to say daily. Everyday facts of French life.]

By drawing a presentation of history closer to "its origins in literary sensibility" (White 208), Kessel is a perfect example for the literature of urgency and how such an urgent social relevance pulls literature into the real world.[16] As Kessel suggests, we can experience the fictionalization of history as an explanation of it and, in his particular case, of the "facts" of contemporary French life. Kessel's reportage, then, is not only about events but also about relationships, narrative representations, and author-reader relations that such events can be seen to figure and dramatize.[17]

Day follows similar precepts in her autobiographical forms and literary journalism for *The Catholic Worker*.[18] She too gains her social effect by her success in making stories out of her chronicles. She establishes certain relationships with her readers by assuming the reader's association in "responding to cues in order to participate in [her fictional/non-fictional] worldmaking" (Keen 11). In *The Long Loneliness*, Day recalls the years in which she lived in a house on Fifteenth Street in New York and her aspirations to become a novelist:

> I was writing a novel. I have always been a journalist and a diarist pure and simple, but as long as I could remember, I dreamed in terms of novels. This one was to be about the depression, a social novel with the pursuit of a job as the motive and the social revolution as its crisis. (160–1)

Day's planned, but never published, novel would chronicle historical actualities and real-life referents – the Great Depression and "social revolutions." As a staunch admirer of Jack London and Upton Sinclair, she could not imagine writing a novel that did not contain important social and political bases, and a kind of social urgency of its own.[19]

In a similar vein, she could not imagine her journalism as separate from her fictional modes, however much these modes might be oblique or disguised. For example, in an article she wrote for *The Catholic Worker* (February 1940), entitled "End of the Line," she encounters a street person, "a strange man" on the Third Avenue El calling out the stations (Day, *Selected* 84). She writes:

> What was the story behind those closed eyes? What were the pictures in that tired brain, as the man called out, "South Ferry, last stop. . .the end of the line, all out for South Ferry." (Day, *Selected,* 85)

Day then proceeds to create his story, to speculate on his origins and present state of existence:

> He must have worked on the Elevated once. He must have had the job of opening and closing the gates, calling the stations, going the end of the line at South Ferry and then up to the Bronx, down and up, all day long. . .Perhaps he thought of the home at the end of the last trip, of a warm house, a meal awaiting him, time to read the paper and listen to the radio. (Day, *Selected*, 85)

Typically Day presents her story – "the story behind those closed eyes"– in a format that announces its fictiveness, blurring the boundaries between documented factual narrative and fiction. Here Day's literature of urgency quickly becomes propositional. As in so many of her pieces from *The Catholic Worker*, she wishes her argument to be a factor in the politics of everyday life she depicts; she wants it to reside in the domain of social experience. She is publicly expressing how change is desired or possible.

Reject objectivity; become persona in their own stories; report on the subjectivities of their subjects; eyewitness accounts and the literature of urgency

Both Kessel and Day each reject the mythology of objectivity by becoming a persona in their own stories. As in his best fiction, Kessel, using this persona, endows his reported subjects with a readily believable consciousness in his reportage. In his New York Great Depression sketches from *Les Jours de l'adventure: Reportage 1930–1936* [*The Days of Adventure: Reportage 1930–1936*], Kessel is the roving inquisitor, testifying to what he sees at Columbia Circle. Here is a passage from "Les lignes de pain" (1933):

> Il y avait là des nègres, des Arméniens, des Irlandais, des juifs, bref les Américains de tous sangs et de toutes origines. Les corps, couverts de vêtements déchirés, tremblaient sous la bise aigre à coté de gens qui avaient encore des manteaux décents. Des faces brutales voisinaient avec des figures marquées par l'éducation et l'étude. On voyait même—par quel miracle !—de col blancs impeccables parmi cette troupe affamée. (Kessel, *Les Jours*, 200)
> [There were blacks, Armenians, Irish, Jews, in short Americans of all races and origins. Their bodies covered with rags trembled against the bitter North wind next to people who still had decent coats, their brutal faces next to faces marked by education and studies. One even saw—as if by miracle—impeccable white collars among the starving troop.]

The persona of these New York sketches (*l'Amérique aux Abimes*, 1933 [*America in the Abyss*]), an outsider, foreigner, anthropological observer, proclaims the distinctive power of the personal, while implicitly demonstrating the inseparability of the personal and public. At the end of the sketch he compares his New York witnessing to his European and Parisian references and has this insight into his own transposing imagination:

> Pour bien saisir le pathétique de cette théorie d'affamés, je la transporterai mentalement à Paris. Je me trouvais au rond-point des Champs-Elysées, ou place de l'Opera, et l'on y faisait queue pour avoir du pain. Et la chose était devenue si familière qu'elle avait reçu une appellation spéciale, que l'on prononçait avec facilité, tranquillité: *breadline*. (201)
> [To best understand how moving the theory of starvation is, I mentally transported it to Paris. I found myself at the round point of the Champs-Elysées, or at the square of the Opera where people stood in line for bread. And this had become so familiar that it had received a special name, pronounced easily and calmly: *breadline*.]

Both Day and Kessel often resort to a "modeling of causality" at the beginning of their texts while the end emphasizes social commentary or objectives (in Kessel's "Les lignes de pain," the bleak tragedy of the breadline; in Day's "End of the Line," a call to action to end this instance of social suffering). Oftentimes, this is the point in their texts when their literary journalism converts into a non-literary, nonesthetic space (if esthetic space is delineated as an "unreal" space).[20] This is the point in which their literature of urgency becomes most potent and necessary.

Day's persona in *The Catholic Worker,* revolving around her "participant" (Roberts, Catholic Worker, 69) journalism, is alternately a non-violent social activist, editor, advocate of voluntary poverty, pacifist, devoted mother, and confessor. This variable persona easily penetrates into the subjectivities of those she describes. In "Day After Day," one of early editorial columns for *The Catholic Worker,* Day makes this plea/confession/self-remonstration to her fellow lay workers:

> Oh yes, my dear comrades and fellow workers, I see only too clearly how bad things are with us all, how bad you all are, and how bad a leader I am. I see it only too often and only too clearly. It is because I see it so clearly that I must lift up my head and keep in sight the aims we must always hold before us. I must see the large and generous picture of the new social order wherein justice dwelleth. (Day, Selected, 87)

A constant witness to the subjectivities, Day's combined Catholicism and radicalism result in a profound sense of social justice. To express this witnessing narratively, she most often positions her narrator within her story world, overtly making her presence felt. Like Kessel, Day participates in the events (strikes, pickets, lock outs, social confrontations) that she covers, giving eye-witness accounts that represent the consciousness of her subjects and the immediate necessities that must be attended to.

The eye-witness accounts that best represent Kessel's literature of urgency are found in his World War Two reportage. While employing conventional information gathering methods –especially interviews and close, extended observation – Kessel's narrative intentions and novelistic writing style combine to form his hybrid literature of urgency. Minute by minute he dramatizes such historical scenes as 1939 London in which Neville Chamberlain, in a 36-minute speech, reveals the recent signing of the German-Russian non-aggression pact and his regret that Britain is being forced into war: "Mais l'amour de la paix ne peut aller jusqu'au renoncement des forces qui la rendent digne d'être vécue" [But the love of peace cannot be taken so far as to renounce the forces that make it a worthy goal] (89). Typical of Kessel, instead of concentrating on the speech itself, he describes the atmosphere, settings, and anticipation surrounding it:

> La foule attend devant la Chambre des Communes, comme elle a attendu ce matin devant la Palais de Buckingham et dans Downing Street. Sa patience inusable semble sans objet. . .Aucun de ceux et de celles qui forment cette frise humaine n'espère voir quelque chose. Et cependant, tant que durera la longue séance, la foule veillera au pied de Westminster comme si elle était en prière.
>
> En vérité, tout concourt à renforcer l'impression qu'il s'agit là d'un acte religieux. Le Parlement est placé à l'ombre de la cathédrale et la salle des séances a l'aspect d'une chapelle et d'un tribunal ecclésiastique à la fois. (Kessel, L'Heure, 86–87)
>
> [The crowd waited in front of the Communal Chamber, as it had waited this morning in front of Buckingham Palace and Downing Street. Its inexhaustible patience seemed pointless. None of those who formed this human frieze hoped to see something. And yet, as long as the session lasted, the crowd stayed at the foot of Westminster as if it were in prayer.
>
> In fact, everything contributed to reinforcing the impression that it's a religious act. The Parliament is placed in the shadow of the Cathedral and the meeting room resembles a chapel and a courtroom at the same time.]

As a direct witness, Kessel relates the scene through his quick descriptive strokes of Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, and Lloyd George ("le masque truculent, vigoureux et puissant de Winston Churchill, le fin profil d'Anthony Eden, la crinière argentée de Lloyd George" [the truculent, vigorous, and powerful mask of Winston Churchill, the fine profile of Anthony Eden, the silver mane of Lloyd George]), all attending the speech (89). His eyewitness account appears more interested in describing Britain's anguished trepidation over the upcoming war and in Chamberlain's "ton de gentleman qui s'entretient avec ses voisins et familiers et ne le quitta plus" [tone of voice of a gentleman meeting with his neighbors and friends which he continues from then on] (90) than in transcribing or commenting on Chamberlain's speech. Kessel's narrative alternately focuses on physical descriptions of the aged Chamberlain ("Le viel homme maigre aux yeux d'enfant") [The thin old man with a child's eyes], the crowd in front of Westminster, and the eerie silence that follows Chamberlain's last words: "Un grand silence silence suivit ce passage. Il était dénué de lyrisme, d'effets" [A long silence followed this passage. It is devoid of lyricism and effect] (90). Relying less on the "certainty of the factual" (Fruss 233) than on his own impressions and beliefs, Kessel produces a version of events that aligns most closely to his own experiences. Following in the tradition of such "grands reporters" as Albert Londres, Kessel saw his journalism as a new form of literature, a kind of ideal newspaper reporting that would combine information and opinion, relying on no standard journalistic practice (Bourcherenc, *L'écrivain*, 43).

Day and Kessel's personas not only participate in the events they cover but also show their commitment to proselytizing for their causes (e.g., for Day, to find shelter for the New York City homeless; for Kessel, to contribute to France's war effort). They both invariably direct their reporting along the lines of their personal beliefs. Their respective literatures of urgency do not favor reading under the dispensations of literature or journalism, fact or fiction, since the literariness of their texts, which fuses the text's referents to its formal means, depends foremost on reader perception, and how a text is read. This is not to say the truth-values and practical relevance of what is said is unimportant to the text. It is of utmost importance. But if Kessel and Day are read solely for fact, as opposed to effect – for both are masters in producing effects of narrative urgency – the reader will be terribly disappointed.[21]

Sensory observation; live in environment; immersion; identification with those they write about

Day's and Kessel's narrative effects trigger their literatures of urgency. In her pre-conversion writings and in those of *The Catholic Worker*, Day constantly relies on evoking the reader's tactile and olfactory senses. In *The Long Loneliness*, she records her own sensory observations from her time as a university student in the 1920s:

> I collected odors in my memory, the one beauty in those drab streets. The odor of geranium leaves, tomato plants, marigolds; the smell of lumber, of tar, of roasting coffee; the smell of good bread and rolls and coffee cake coming from the small German bakeries. Here was enough beauty to satisfy me. (37)

When she finds her first job in New York working for the *New York Call,* a socialist newspaper, she is appalled at the poverty she sees around her. Again, she keys her feelings of alienation and social shock to her sensory impressions:

> The sight of homeless and workless men lounging on street corners or sleeping in doorways appalled me. . .Above all the smell from the tenements, coming up from basements and areaways, from dank halls, horrified me. It is a smell like no other in the world and one never can be accustomed to it. (Day, *Long Loneliness* 51)

Like many other American writers of the twenties and thirties (including James Agee, Erskine Caldwell, Meridel Le Sueur, Tillie Olsen, and Edward Dahlberg) Day was "discover[ing] poverty" (Dickstein 523) and struggling to transpose it into narrative forms and effects. Striving for a mass comprehensibility in her narratives of exposure, Day "enables us to feel the pulse of society from the inside" (Dickstein xv) directly identifying with those she writes:

> When I first wrote of these experiences I wrote even more strongly of my identification with those around me. I was that mother whose child had been raped and slain. I was the mother who had borne the monster who had done it. I was even that monster, feeling in my own breast every abomination. (Day, *Long Loneliness* 78)

Derived from this identification, Day's narrative effects constantly come out of and return to an environment she wishes to change. As an immersed subject in her environment, she positions herself "near the border between factual discourse and fictional discourse but does not propose an elimination of that border." Thus Day's literature of urgency, suggesting that "all forms of language, figurative and non-figurative alike, have material consequences" (Dow 152, 157), locates itself against any socially constructed individualism.

Likewise, as part of the French "grand reportage" tradition, Kessel develops his "you-are-there documentation" from his own sensory observations; he lives in the environments he describes; he intimately identifies with those he writes about. He too wishes to offer his readers access to the innermost feelings of the age while constantly encouraging support and solidarity for the allied cause. Imbued with what Kessel calls "cette approche humaine" [that human approach] (Kessel, L'Heure, 93), "Les hommes des avant postes" ["Men on the front lines"] from *L'Heure des châtiments* is filled with imagistic sensory impressions that describe, for example, his encounter with French troops during "cette hiver terrible" [that terrible winter], 1939 (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 96):

> Une assemblée de visages rustiques, aux traits effaces, comme poncés, m'accuellit dans la grande baraque où tremblotaient des bougie, et dont les coings étaient noyés dans l'obscurité. Des taches d'ombre fantastiques dansaient à la surface des paillasses, sur lesquelles étaient assis, par groupes de cinq à six, des hommes qui semblaient émerger de la nuit. (102)
> [A gathering of rustic faces, with features erased as if sanded down, welcomed me to the large barracks where candles trembled and the corners were drowned in obscurity.

> Stains of fantastic shadows danced on the surfaces of straw mattresses on which were seated groups of five or six men who seemed to have emerged from the night.]

Following Day's first person narrations, Kessel places the experiencing narrative self most often not as the protagonist of the narration but rather as a reactive figure who makes his subjects function as central characters and interprets them through his consciousness:

> Je regardais encore une fois des hommes simple, ces bonnes figures qui se préparaient maintenant à leur fragile repos nocturne. Rien de tendu, de nerveux, dans ces calmes bouches, ces yeux d'enfants sur le bord du sommeil. (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 116)
> [I once again watched these simple men, these good faces who were now preparing for their fragile nocturnal rest. Nothing tense, nothing nervous in their quiet mouths, their childlike eyes on the edge of sleep.]

Resorting to such detailed sensory descriptions, Kessel "represents reality by means of agreed-upon conventions of fictionality, while grafting onto [his] fictive pact some kind of additional claim to empirical validation" (Foley 25). In his concentration of "literary effects," Kessel gets his validation by sympathetically portraying ordinary soldiers, by revealing their fear, dignity, timidity, and calmness. He also gets it by suddenly bringing the reader back into the pressing present historical moment – in the case of "Les hommes des avant postes" just after learning from the troop's captain that the entire area is filled with explosives:

> Ce fut peut-être ce rappel de la guerre... ou la froid... ou le silence... Mais je fus envahi soudain par un sentiment de solitude, de menace, de tristesse. Je compris que j'étais sur une sorte d'îlot perdu, convoité, et de toutes parts guetté par la mort. (118)
> [This was perhaps a reminder of the war...or the cold...or silence...But I was suddenly invaded by a feeling of solitude, of threat, of sadness. I understood that I was on a kind of lost island, coveted, and from everywhere sought after by death.]

But Kessel's moments describing the honor and dignity of ordinary French soldiers and resistance fighters far outweigh such fear and despair. More typically in *L'Heure des châtiments*, Kessel commends French heroism and sacrifice. Along the way, he, like Day, not only "rejects the exclusive identification of journalism and newspaper writing with mass culture, and its consequent sequestration from literature" (Campbell 3); he also refuses to objectify his subjects. Instead, as in "Les hommes des avant postes," he is more inclined to create scenes of creativity and self-assertion, and to emphasize key images ("sleeping soldiers," "shadows," "reflections," "candlelight").

It is therefore no accident that Kessel and Day, in their literatures of urgency, make references to fictional works, authors, literary devices and techniques. Day compares herself with characters in "Dostoevky's books" (Day, *Selected*, 9), and in her journalism and autobiographical writings makes frequent allusions to Steinbeck, Orwell, Dickens, Upton Sinclair, London, Tolstoy, and others.[22] She sometimes places her real life happenings and experiences in the context of what she interprets as their literary counterparts. In *The Long Loneliness*, for example, she juxtaposes her images of the centers of "dispossessed sharecroppers and tenant farmers" (Day, Selected, 238) to Caldwell's and Steinbecks's fictional precedents:

> The picture has been shown in *Tobacco Road*, In *Dubious Battle*, and *Grapes of Wrath*—pictures of such desolation and poverty and in the latter case of such courage that my heart was lifted again to hope and love and admiration that human beings could endure so much and yet have courage to go on and keep their vision of a more human life. (Day, *Selected* 238)

Kessel's literary influences, as noted by his biographer, Yves Courrier, included Kipling, Dickens, Balzac, Dumas, and Tolstoy (Courrier 74–76) but it is important to note how Kessel, like Henri Béraud, Blaise Cendrars, and Saint-Exupéry led a "double carrière" [double career] as a reporter and a writer of fiction (Aron). At one moment in "Le Rhin" ["The Rhine"] from *L'Heure des chatiment* Kessel recounts rejoining his friend, the General de Lattre in 1945. Kessel apologizes for resorting to allegory in his description of occupied Germany:

> Je sais bien que l'allégorie est trop facile. Mais quand on a vu ce nid et cette cigogne dans un paysage spectral de pierres calcinées, signe vivant d'espérance et de résurrection à quelques mètres de l'Allemagne envahie, l'instinct ne peut s'empêcher de tressailler devant le présage.
>
> Et comment se défendre contre l'allégorie lorsque tout, par la suite, et quoi qu'on fasse, tout—les choses, le décor et les hommes—prend figure de leçon, de moralité, de symbole ? (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 201)

[I know that allegory is too easy. But when one has seen that nest and that stork in a spectral landscape of rocks blackened by fire, a living sign of hope and resurrection a few meters from an invaded Germany, instinct cannot keep from trembling before such an omen.

And how to defend oneself against allegory when everything which happens afterward, and whatever one does, everything – things, scenery and men – takes the shape of a lesson, a moral, a symbol?]

Kessel employs allegory to make coherent sense of – on a literary level – the presence of the Allied forces in Germany. By stressing the speaker or maker position, Kessel resorts to the demonstrative in order to signify his second correlated order of concepts (morality) and events (the German occupation of France is inversed). Such an instance not only shows us Kessel's versatile, confessional persona, but it also demonstrates how he impresses journalism's claim on the explanatory power of literature.

Intimate portraits: journalistic narrative intentions and novelistic writing style combine to form a literature of urgency

Day and Kessel are storytellers in the modern world creating intimate portraits of intensity. Governed by a narrator-witness, their portraiture depends on the narrator's involvement in the story; it depends on gestures of self-referencing that question identity as much as they reinforce it. Testifying to her literature of urgency, Day's memorial portraits of Peter Maurin, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Mike Gold instantiate identities as opposed to essentializing them. Day's portrait of the eccentric Peter Maurin (1949), her mid-and-late-life companion and co-founder of *The Catholic Worker*, relies on instantiation: "Peter was the poor man of his day. He was another St. Francis of modern times. He was used to poverty as a peasant is used to rough living, poor food, hard bed or no bed at all" (Day, *Selected*, 123). Day's portrait of Maurin is characteristic of her self-reflectiveness:

> I am writing this in New York, up in my room on the third floor, and all winter, he waited up here for the weather to clear so that he could go to the country... Truly he practiced for death a very long time. (Day, *Selected*, 123).

Embodying a self-reflectiveness – evidenced in such portraits (and in her autobiographical writings as well: e.g., "I might easily have expressed myself along these lines, so imprudent am I, so hasty in speech," Day, *Long Loneliness*, 189) – Day's literary journalism is subjective and personal filled with signs of the presence of the observer or reporter and constantly referring to its own production. In the process, the narrator continuously reconstitutes her identity through self-narration and by comparing herself with someone *else*. This is one of the ways in which Day's literary journalism is made to function as ethical or spiritual knowledge. She reconstitutes herself by telling about *other people*'s lives. On the level of style, with her persuasion as a condition of expression, her linguistic authority is defined by the journalistic language it is seen to supersede.

Day's tribute portraits to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Michael Gold follow similar patterns. Like her portrait of Peter Maurin, "Elizabeth Gurley Flynn: Red Roses for Her" (1964) is presented as a conversational narrative in which Day's story has reportability, news interest, and urgent levels of intimacy that solicit reader empathy. Her portrait "Mike Gold: Farewell Old Comrade" (1967) shows how identity and alterity impact her narrative. As in most of her portraits ("Hugh Madden: Death of a Pilgrim" (1967; "Ammon Hennacy: Prophet without Honor," 1956), her identity becomes notable only when set into relief with one or more other identities. Here Day comments on the differences between herself and Gold over the Spanish Civil War:

> But in those days we got it from both sides; it was a holy war to most Catholics, just as world revolution is holy war to Communists. I call attention to these fundamental differences about religion and the attitude toward force to show how there can be a strong personal friendship between a Catholic and a Communist and constant seeking of concordances and agreements. (Day, *Selected*, 150)

These two portraits end with Day telling us as much about herself as about her subjects. She concludes the Gold portrait with an explanatory statement: "[Gold] indeed had a gentle and loving spirit, but some of his writing was strong stuff, because of the bitterness that the sight of poverty and human distress always inspired in him" (Day, *Selected*,150). After apologizing that her "emphasis is religious" (Day, *Selected*, 146), she ends the Gurley Flynn portrait:

> But it means that in this particular case all the prayers I have said, and will say in the future, will have meant that Gurley Flynn held out her arms to God (and the word God itself means Good, Truth, Love, and all that is most beautiful) at the moment of her death, and was received by Him. And she will be judged by the love that is in her heart. (Day, *Selected*, 147)

Both endings stress Day as a central player conveying to the reader facts that she wishes not to be disputed but rather that will elicit unanimity of response. In these theme-statement tributes, she assumes a thematic impact on her reader.

Kessel's portraits similarly elicit an urgent plea for historical understanding but do so less through an interpretation of causal events surrounding the subject than through the narrator's perceptions of the subject and the subject's immediate surroundings. Based on a April 1933 interview, Kessel's portrait of Roosevelt focuses on Roosevelt's stature and humanity, how he "représentait le seul espoir, le seul appui, la seule deliverance possible d'un cauchmar qui allait toujours s'épaississant [represented the only hope, the only support, the only possible deliverance from a nightmare that continued to thicken] (Kessel, *Les jours*, 247) and not on what Roosevelt actually says. Kessel prefaces his interview with this explanatory comment: "[Roosevelt] avait accepté de me recevoir, mais je savais fort bien que cette entrevue était une pure courtoisie de sa part envers le journal que je représentais, qu'elle serait extrêmement brève et que rien d'important n'y serait dit" [(Roosevelt) had accepted to receive me, but I knew very well that the interview was a pure courtesy on his part towards the newspaper I represented, that it would be extremely brief and that nothing of any importance would be said] (Kessel, *Les jours*, 246). After detailed descriptions of Roosevelt's affability, sense of humor, and hopefulness, Kessel concludes with this account:

> Le devait-il à ses yeux lumineux, à l'énergie du front tempérée de bonté de compréhension, à une expression de vitalité et d'intelligence dont tous ses traits étaient imprégnés ? Je ne saurais le dire, mais, sans effort, sans artifice, oubliant même tout ce que je savais du président Roosevelt, je compris, je sentis que les Etats-Unis avaient une chance immense de trouver en des temps aussi terribles cet étrange et magnifique pilote, paralysé sans doute, mais appuyé sur ses jambes inertes comme sur le plus ferme des socles. (Kessel, *Les jours*, 249)
> [Was it his gleaming eyes, the energy of his forehead tempered with understanding goodness, the expression of vitality and intelligence of which his features were imbued? I couldn't say, but without effort, without artifice, even forgetting everything I knew about President Roosevelt, I understood; I felt that the United States was immensely fortunate to find in these terrible times this strange and magnificent pilot, undoubtedly paralyzed but leaning on his inert legs as if they were the most solid base.]

Like Day's portraits, Kessel's are narrator-centered, highly subjective, and unpredictable in narrative direction, tone, and subject matter. Built on sentences that employ a rhythm suggesting an "effet de direct" [a live broadcast], he creates a convention of simultaneity between narrated events and the time it takes the reader to read the piece (Aron). As Paul Aron has argued in reference to Kessel, "Le reportage ne se borne pas à informer: il joue sur les affects, il dramatise, il fait rêver" [Reportage does not confine itself to informing: it plays with emotions, it dramatizes, it makes one dream]. But Kessel's portraits insist not only on such effects and dramatizations – a you-are-there documentary attitude – but also emphasize, like Day's, an autobiographical account and thematic intentions that go with specific historical circumstances.

Kessel's portrait of Pétain, "Un vieil homme dans un vieux fauteuil" ["An Old Man in an Old Chair"] (1945), demonstrates how his literature of urgency, while expressing the immediacy of Pétain's first hearing for treason (July 23, 1945), links objective journalism with a literary sketch. Kessel begins his portrait by claiming that Pétain's 1945 trial resembles a "pauvre drame bourgeois" [a poor bourgeois drama] in which "tout se mêle, tout se confound" [everything is entangled and confused] (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 215):

> Les avocats aux témoins. Les témoins aux policiers. Les policiers au public. Le public aux journalistes. Les journalistes aux jurés. (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 216)
> [The lawyers and the witnesses. Les witnesses and the police. The police and the public. The public and the journalists. The journalists and the jury.]

Subverting the standard role of the informing journalist, Kessel claims, "Il n'y a aucune perspective à cette croisée des grandes avenues de l'Histoire" [There is no perspective at this crossroads of the great avenues of history] (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 216). In effect, he takes what might be considered as a literary posture by stating from the outset that no concrete answers or facts will be forthcoming, a posture that permeates the sketch. While wishing to make the reader see the event "en direct," he carefully positions his characters:

> Les personnages qui participant de près ou de loin à la tragédie arrivent peu à peu. A cause de l'encombrement, de la promiscuité, on les aperçoit après qu'ils sont entrés et déjà enrobés, englués dans la pâte humaine. (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 215–16)
> [The characters participating closely or at a distance in the tragedy, arrived little by little. Because of the crowding, the physical contact, one caught sight of them only after they entered, wrapped up, stuck in the human morass.]

Equally a reporter and an autobiographer, Kessel puts himself and others on stage. After introducing some of the principal players in the "tragedy" ("Albert Lebrun. . .son dernier president du Conseil" [Albert Lebrun. . .his last chairman of the board] and "Michel Clemenceau. . .l'homme qui, après la guerre de 1914, passa sous l'Arc de Triomphe à la tête de l'armée française et qui, après la guerre de 1939, répond du crime du haute trahison," [Michel Clemenceau. . .the man who, after WWI, passed under the Arc de Triomphe at the head of the French army and who, after WWII, is accused of the crime of high treason] (Kessel, *L'Heure,* 216). Kessel describes Pétain's entrance into the courtroom:

> Soudain, le silence. . .
> Par la petite porte, entre des gens tassés les uns contre les autres et que des gardes écartent, paraît le maréchal Pétain. (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 216)
> [Suddenly silence. . .
> Through the back door, between people pressed up against each other whom the guards kept back, enters the Marshal Pétain.]

Kessel then brings himself in as well, as active witness and participant:

> Un frémissement collectif le nourrit d'une puissance singulière.
> Pitié? Indignation ? Sympathie? Haine?
> Je ne crois pas. . .
> Mais une sorte de gêne, de douleur abstraites. (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 216)
> [A collective shudder fed by a singular power.
> Pity? Indignation? Sympathy? Hatred?
> I don't think so.
> But a sort of unease, an abstract pain.]

So begins Kessel's gradual revelation of Pétain, his creation of a believable consciousness in a specific historical moment. Pétain sits immobile in the old chair, seemingly implacable: "Lui-même, en vérité, il ne suscite aucune émotion vivante. Parce qu'il semble n'en éprouver aucune" [He himself, if fact, does not arouse any living emotion. Because he doesn't seem to feel any] (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 216). Readily, the narrator enters his subject's consciousness: "Le silence dont il est le centre, le foyer, devrait lui être intolérable" [The silence of which he is the center, the heart, must have been intolerable for him] (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 216). Contributing to the drama that the portrait sustains, the narrator vacillates between knowing and not knowing Pétain: "Que se passé-t-il au fond essentiel, au resort veritable du vieux maréchal. . .les yeux de maréchal Pétain ne revèlent rien. . .Une vague curiosité. . . Une vague lassitude peut-être" [What happened deep down inside the old Marshal. . .Pétain's eyes reveal nothing. . .A vague curiosity perhaps. . .A vague weariness perhaps] (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 217). And yet the narrator is so physically close to Pétain, able to distinguish "le grain de sa peau" [the pores of his skin] – he wants to take the reader as close – but yet he cannot interpret Pétain's expression.

The narrator then breaks off his own reflection to announce the entrance of the court – in Kessel's dramatic-staccato fashion: "Trois coups. Le rideau se lève. La Cour entre. Et puis le procurer général Mornet" [Three knocks. The curtain rises. The court enters. And the attorney general Mornet] (217). The language of the portrait is terse and bare. Written in the present tense to maintain the sketch's quick pace, "Un vieil homme dans un vieux fauteuil" can be seen as a series of short tableaux that allows no opportunity for verbal reflection, but emphasizes the need to constantly go forward. It must be noted, though, that the portrait relies on more than documentary accumulation, what Monique Chefdor calls "a deliberate recasting of a pre-existing document" (87). Kessel punctuates its speed and directness with a series of subjective comments and images that provide a counterflow to Pétain's slow movements, obstructions and responses. He ends the sketch by claiming that the historical circumstances might have given Pétain a certain "majesté singulière" [singular majesty] (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 219) but not enough to account for his guilt:

> Car ces paroles ressemblent désespérément à toutes celles que le maréchal Pétain a répétées pendant quatre années et dont une amère expérience a enseigné la vanité. . .
> Cette voix qui appelait à la résignation, à l'humiliation, à la soumission, sous prétexte d'honneur, de courage et de dignité. Cette voix sénile qui a le mieux trompé et le mieux divisé la France. (Kessel*, L'Heure*, 220)

> [For these words desperately resemble all those that the Marshal Pétain has repeated for four years which a bitter experience has taught vanity.
> That voice called for resignation, humiliation, submission, on the pretext of honor, courage, dignity. That senile voice which best fooled and best divided France.]

Kessel's last description – —of Pétain and his képi – brings the portrait to a sudden symbolic close: "Un képi lauré sur une vieille petite table...Un vieillard sur un vieux fauteuil" [A laurelled kepi on a small old table...An old man in an old chair] (Kessel, *L'Heure*, 220) Appropriate to the literature of urgency, Kessel wishes to make sense of the complexities of his time in the most powerful form and mode imaginable.[23]

Conclusion

Kessel and Day were certainly very different from each other in their politics and world views: Kessel, a Gaullist patriot, resistance fighter, popular author of adventure stories, star reporter; Day, a pacifist, communitarian Catholic, social revolutionary, peace and justice activist.[24] Day's doctrine of "personalism," advocating "the transformation of individuals rather than political and economic relationships" (Horsely) certainly contrasts with Kessel's much less radical dispositions and politics. But both were extremely apt at identifying with ordinary people and their needs. Both provided genuine witness derived most forcefully through personal identification with the sufferings of others – be it French soldiers in WWII or the problems of the poor in Depression-era America. Both did so in convincingly realized times and places. As journalists that refused to give "all sides," Day and Kessel had a "feel for facts" (Roberts, Day, 180) that reflected their convictions and powered their literatures of urgency.

The work of Day and Kessel points to the challenge of bringing literary journalism into a fresh focus from the perspective of literary criticism and narrative and cultural theory without assuming we know how to frame the discipline *literary journalism* in advance. To make their literatures urgent, Day and Kessel require the reader to make esthetic judgments that firmly ground their texts in historical and political settings. I think their work also begs these questions: Does narrative theory have the potential to reopen the world outside of texts – to be a necessary means for examining narratives meant to intervene in socio-political realms? Should narrative and critical theory serve as supplements and rejoinders to, say, sociological and historicist readings? If literary journalism cannot be seen as an inherent formal characteristic but as a genre that foregrounds the relationship between content and form – and in Derrida's "law of genre" sense, is constantly problematizing and redefining itself – what impact might this have on our mode of reading? Might the form of literary journalism demand a critical apparatus and reading mode different from those appropriate to non-fictional and fictional texts? Finally, a study of the work of Day and Kessel irrevocably involves the question of national borders. Twentieth-century literary journalists might be read more productively from a comparitivist perspective – that is transnationally, bringing Day, for example, into dialogue with Kessel and the French literary reportage tradition. Their literatures of urgency seen in an international context and in a modal character of "literariness" can only enrich our understanding of this vital narrative prerogative and form.

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Notes

1. See Jean-Louis Jeanelle, “Ecrivains-reporters La littérature de l’urgence: Kessel, le grand témoin.” *Le Monde*, “Cahiers du “Monde,” Vendredi 7 mai 2010.
2. Rather remarkably, many critics trained to recognize the finest grains of formal and generic structures in poetry and the novel, and to interpret their influence with theoretical sophistication, still treat journalistic and literary-journalistic forms as if they expect the texts, based on such forms, to provide transparent access to the thoughts of their writers or, even more oddly, that literary-journalistic texts do not deserve the same degree of critical scrutiny as fictional texts.
3. I am distinguishing advocacy journalism in the tradition of, say, I.F. Stone, Ida B. Wells, Bill Moyers, and Tucker Carlson from the literature of urgency under which I would place certain works by such writers as Dorothy Day, Joseph Kessel, Blaise Cendrars, Meridel Le Sueur, Tillie Olson, Elaine Ellis, Myra Page, John Steinbeck, John Dos Passos, Zoral Neale Hurston, and Richard Wright. By advocacy journalism, I mean a form of journalism that is fact-based but adopts a specific point of view on an issue, usually for some kind of political or social purpose. By contrast, the literature of urgency stresses some kind of authorial *literary witnessing* of a specific social crisis or problem that “calls on readers to reenter the urgency of the moment” (Coles and Zandy xxiii). It is often written and experienced in collective situations asking readers to imagine themselves as participating in the narrated events.
4. I think the standard definition of literariness, in Jakobson’s sense – the sum of special linguistic and formal properties that distinguish literary texts from non-literary texts – is deficient. As postmodern literary critics have convincingly argued, there are no special characteristics that distinguish literature from any other texts. In a similar vein, as Terry Eagleton has noted, “There is no such thing as a literary work or tradition which is valuable in itself, regardless of what anyone might have said or come to say about it” (10). In what follows, I will argue that literariness is a product of a distinctive mode of reading, a mode that is perhaps most readily identifiable in and applicable to literary-journalistic texts.
5. I define “truth claims” in a standard sense: 1. a claim that is made that, potentially, can be countered; 2. any doctrine or concept that proposes it alone is the truth and other positions are false. Of significant note, however, Day and Kessel, in making their truth claims, suggest that the way we see things can be more factual than the so-called facts themselves.
6. I use the term literary journalism – broadly defined as a genre that acknowledges its relation to “fiction” while making a claim for reflecting “fact”– as an umbrella category under which I place the “literature of urgency,” a mode, I argue, that best represents the narrative styles of Day and Kessel.
7. This is not to argue that historical narratives, or narratives based on historical “fact,” are unproblematic. As Hayden White reminds us, “in general there has been a reluctance to consider historical narratives as what they most manifestly are: verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much *invente*d as *found* and the forms of which have more in common with literature than they have with those in the sciences” (White 194) by their readers.

8. Because I consider Kessel and Day to be exemplars of the "literature of urgency," and indeed, as fictionalists/novelists, producers of literary texts in their own right, my argument parts here from Frus's position that "literature is today a primarily esthetic category, its structuring devices are rendered invisible, and we exclude from the canon most political or historical novels and interpretations that emphasize politics or history" (xvii). The structures of Kessel's and Day's literary narratives (including novels) find their groundings in the realities of the actual worlds they interact with and describe. As I will demonstrate, within such worlds, their literatures of urgency position readily accessible meanings inside their narrative surfaces that conduces to specific expectations regarding the reading of their texts.
9. See Brosman. Hemingway was an early admirer of Kessel's *Une Balle perdue* (*Stray Bullet*), 1935, a novel based on Kessel's experience in the Catalan uprisings.
10. French readers were expecting the use of fictional forms and "literariness" from the star writers of the period (including Kessel, Blaise Cendrars, Phillipe Soupault, and Albert Londres) who wrote for the French press. Famous novelists were often solicited by the leading newspapers of the day (*France Soir*, *Le Miroir du Monde*, *Le Petit Parisien*, *Paris-Soir*, *Détective*, *Vu*, *Voila*) to cover the breaking stories and for longer exposés. On this point, see Myriam Boucharenc, *L'écrivain-reporteur au Coeur des années trente*, 10–50.
11. All translations are mine.
12. See for example Yves Courrière, *Joseph Kessel ou Sur la piste du lion*, and Silvain Reiner, *Mes saisons avec Josesph Kessel*.
13. In her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, Day writes of her work for *The Call* in the years just preceding WWI: "My assignments took me to all kinds of strike meetings, picket lines, peace meetings. Many groups were working for peace, trying to prevent our entry in to the war – the Emergency Peace Federation, the I.W.W., the Socialists, the anarchists, an anti-conscription group at Columbia University" (57).
14. For exceptions, see Nancy Roberts's analysis of Day's writing style in "Dorothy Day;" *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism*. 179–88.
15. As Day notes in *The Long Loneliness*, she was attracted to Catholicism because she believed it was the church of the poor: "It was the Irish of New England, the Italians, the Hungarians, the Lithuanians, the Poles, it was the great mass of the poor, the workers, who were the Catholics in this country, and this fact in itself drew me to the Church" (107).
16. See Lennerd Davis's argument that the early English novel has more in common with journalism than with the already prevalent romantic narrative forms.
17. "[Le] reportage inverse le pacte romanesque" [Reportage inverses the romantic pact], Myriam Boucherenc writes, "A la littérature qui s'efforce de reproduire le réel, il oppose l'écriture que en capte la littérarité" [To literature which tries hard to reproduce the real, it opposes a writing that captures a literariness.] (Boucherenc and Deluche 228–9).
18. Like many of the journals which were created in the literary culture of the 1930s, *The Catholic Worker* provided access to a well-defined audience (workers and the unemployed), enabled debate on crucial social matters (strikes, labor disputes, the social role of Catholicism) of the moment, was outside of the realm of revision and retrospection, and offered a valuable contemporary chronicle with which to evaluate contemporary debates and disputes. For an extended discussion of such journals and this literary culture, see Peter Marks, 23–36.

19. Day relates in *The Long Loneliness* how she "absorbed" (41) the radicalism of Jack London and Upton Sinclair: "I read Jack London's books, not only his tales of the North, his wonderful dog stories, but *Martin Eden*, and his essays on the class struggles, his journeys through America and England" (37). "The romanticism and the hardness of Jack London in his stories of the road appealed to me more at that time than the idealism of Upton Sinclair, though I still considered, and do to this day, that *The Jungle* was a great novel" (42).
20. See John Frow, 333–8.
21. For Day's rejection of "any news sense," see Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, 38.
22. For details of literary influences, see Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, 69; and Coles, 143–5.
23. Kessel and Day frequently rely on performative strategies (Kessel: e.g., "Le Sans-Gloire," "Rethel," "Dunkerque," 1939–1940; Day: e.g., "The Use of Force," 1936, "Letter to the Unemployed," 1937, "About Mary," 1943) that cannot be reduced to the realization of preexistent events or scripts. Both writers conceptualize social structure in terms of theatrical/literary imagery in which individuals perform their identities for others. Kessel and Day emphasize material determinants of social identity.
24. Day provides an essential counter-tendency to the otherwise strongly masculinist bias of literary journalistic writing. For elucidating discussions of this bias, see the work of Elizabeth Fraue, Jean Marie Lutes, and especially Jan Whitt.

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