



**Above:** Meridel Le Sueur, c. 1940, used by permission of the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN, USA.



**Right:** Dorothy Day c. 1930s, courtesy Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Marquette University Libraries.

# Meridel Le Sueur, Dorothy Day, and the Literary Journalism of Advocacy During the Great Depression

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**Abstract:** Literary journalism thrives in periods of crisis, when conventional ways of reporting seem inadequate to communicate the complexity of the world. One such period is the Great Depression in the United States, when many female social activists, such as Dorothy Day (1897–1980) and Meridel Le Sueur (1900–1996), turned to literary journalism as a way to tell the stories of the poor and oppressed. Literary journalism gave these writers an effective platform to advocate for the dignity and fair treatment of workers and the impoverished. These writers offered a distinctive feminine perspective on poverty. A key aspect of Day’s and Le Sueur’s literary journalism during the Depression years is the degree to which it is informed by participant, immersion research. Both authors’ experience of living in community among the underprivileged inspired some of their best literary journalism. What these two writers of the Depression (and beyond) have in common is their commitment to remake society through their passionately felt literary journalism of advocacy.

Literary journalism thrives in periods of crisis, when conventional ways of reporting seem inadequate to communicate the complexity of the world. Indeed, Thomas B. Connery identifies at least three distinct such periods, which he characterizes as “times of massive change and reform . . . in which progressive ideas come to the front, wars are fought, big changes in media occur”: 1890–1910, the 1930s–’40s, and the 1960s–’70s.<sup>1</sup> Of them all, the era of the Great Depression in the United States is particularly compelling because it was then that many female social activists, such as Dorothy Day, Meridel Le Sueur, and others, turned to literary journalism as a way to tell the stories of the poor and oppressed. Literary journalism gave these writers

an effective platform for advocacy for the dignity and the fair treatment of workers and the impoverished. And, these writers offered a distinctive feminine perspective on poverty (such as Le Sueur's sketch of "Women on the Breadlines").<sup>2</sup> In this essay, I will discuss the work of Day (1897–1980)<sup>3</sup> and Le Sueur (1900–96).<sup>4</sup> Both women often wrote about capitalism's ruinous effect on the unemployed and working people, and they sometimes focused on poverty's impact on women, thus fleshing out a reality that most other writers of the time ignored. Le Sueur also wrote about the Dust Bowl, rural poverty, Native American culture, and "the bourgeois separation of mind and body, the beauty of the landscape and its relation to fertility and birth, and the rewards of communal struggle" to achieve social good.<sup>5</sup>

Day and Le Sueur were among several female journalists who became influential in the 1930s, writing about social reform and labor and peace issues. Others included Mary Heaton Vorse, Josephine Herbst, Agnes Smedley, and Anna Louise Strong. In journalism they found their best opportunity to contribute in a meaningful public way to revolutionary movements such as communism, socialism, and the International Workers of the World (Wobblies), as these groups usually channeled women into behind-the-scenes support activities such as housekeeping and childcare. As Charlotte Nekola has observed, these Depression-era journalists practiced:

varieties of documentary journalism often termed "reportage." The basic technique of documentary reportage during that decade was to describe an individual who was representative of a larger group, and thereby draw larger conclusions from the particular facts of the individual. It was the ideal form of writing for revolutionary and proletarian aesthetic; it was "true," without the distortions or excess of bourgeois individualistic fiction; it used the individual in the service of the mass; it raised political consciousness by linking one person with larger political movements; it replaced private despair with mass action.<sup>6</sup>

Examples of this genre include many pieces of literary reportage—or literary journalism—by Day and Le Sueur. Both writers often centered on individuals whose particular stories could inspire revelations about the larger group they represented. For instance, Day wrote many memorable portraits of the homeless and dispossessed who came to St. Joseph's, the Catholic Worker house of hospitality on New York City's Lower East Side. Throughout her life at the Catholic Worker, she also wrote obituaries for them that moved her readers to contemplate the societal conditions that contributed to such poverty. One especially evocative example began: "Fred Brown is no longer unemployed. He no longer goes to the union hall on Eleventh Avenue every day to see whether his number is called. Fred Brown, seaman, twenty-four

years old, shipped out on his last voyage a few weeks ago.” She continued:

It was a bitter shock; not just his death . . . but because the tragedy of his passing [from malaria] was made bitter by a theft in the house, the theft of his one suit of clothes.

He had nothing, as most seamen have nothing, and just before his death, his one suit had been taken. (There are, of course, those among us of the lame, the halt and the blind, who commit these despicable acts driven by God knows what necessity, but who must be forgiven as we need to be forgiven our own mean sins.) Fred would have forgiven them; wryly, perhaps, and with a shrug, but far more readily than we did on this occasion.

Day ended with a meditation about poverty and this poignant observation:

As we knelt about the open grave, the ground beneath our knees felt damp and springy. All around us was the death of winter, the life of tree, bush and vine imprisoned in the ground. But that good earth beneath my knees, that earth which was accepting Fred into her embrace, that very earth echoed the promise of the Resurrection and reminded us of the words of Job: “I firmly believe that my Redeemer liveth, and that I shall rise again from the earth on the last day and that in my own flesh I shall see my God.”<sup>7</sup>

Le Sueur, too, was a master of this art of “inductive storytelling,” frequently focusing on a specific individual to inspire a more general conclusion. Her literary journalism sparkles with deeply realized characters such as Anna, the impoverished woman who tries to support her whole family on the pittance she earns as a cook, in “Women Are Hungry” (*American Mercury*, March 1934). Day’s and Le Sueur’s liberal use of literary techniques in writing journalism—memorable characterizations, rich sensory description and scene-setting, dialogue, dramatization, use of figurative language, distinctive use of voice, and creative structures that transcend the traditional “inverted pyramid” construction of conventional news journalism—links them to many other literary journalists.

Another feature that unequivocally connects them to the realm of literary journalism is their participant-observer voice. This voice is passionately present in their and their colleagues’ work, as indicated even by the titles of some of the book-length reportage of three writers of the era: Anna Louise Strong’s *I Change Worlds* (1935), Ruth Gruber’s *I Went to the Soviet Arctic* (1939), and Ella Winter’s *I Saw the Russian People* (1945), as Nekola has pointed out. “For women still emerging from a popular ideology of female selflessness and domestic virtue in America,” she writes, “the possibility of using an ‘I’ as a reporter in the world was in itself intoxicating. . . . These women journalists seem to have taken a certain amount of pleasure in pointing out their pres-

ence in world events.”<sup>8</sup> As does Le Sueur in “I Was Marching,” which reports on the 1934 Minneapolis truckers’ strike and her discovery of solidarity with the strikers and the poor.<sup>9</sup> In truth, she was exposed to these sentiments from childhood. Born in 1900 in Murray, Iowa, Le Sueur always called the Midwest home. She also lived in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Her mother, Marian Wharton, and stepfather, Arthur Le Sueur, were active socialists and reformers who exposed her to the Wobblies, the Populists, the Socialist Party, and the Farmer-Labor Party. Moreover, she got to meet Eugene Debs, Alexander Berkman, Helen Keller, John Reed, Mabel Dodge, Margaret Sanger, Theodore Dreiser, Carl Sandburg, Woody Guthrie, and Ella (Mother) Bloor. As a young woman, she lived briefly in a commune with Emma Goldman.

With such a pedigree, it is not surprising that, early in her life, Le Sueur embraced three-dimensional reporting and advocacy journalism that disavowed the “objectivity” of conventional journalism. “I Was Marching” and “Women on the Breadlines” are classic examples of Depression-era reportage. While adhering as much as possible to factual reality, Le Sueur communicates a larger truth about workers’ lives and about her own merging with others in solidarity against oppression. “I Was Marching” richly evokes not only the drama and tension of the truckers’ strike, but a middle-class intellectual’s discovery of the joy that accompanies entry into the workers’ movement. By the end of the piece she is much more than a participant observer, becoming truly one with her fellow marchers:

We were moving spontaneously in a movement, natural, hardy, and miraculous. We passed through six blocks of tenements, through a sea of grim faces, and there was not a sound. There was the curious shuffle of thousands of feet, without drum or bugle, in ominous silence, a march not heavy as the military, but very light, exactly with the heartbeat. I was marching with a million hands, movements, faces. . . . As if an electric charge has passed through me, my hair stood on end. I was marching.<sup>10</sup>

“What distinguishes ‘I Was Marching’ from almost every other piece of reportage,” notes critic and scholar Robert Shulman, “is the way Le Sueur integrates a narrative of personal conversion with a precise rendering of the strike and all this movement comes to stand for. Only Agee in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* handles the ‘I’ with anything like Le Sueur’s depth.” He adds, “If John Reed and James Agee are the Tolstoys of left reportage, Le Sueur is the Chekhov of the form.”<sup>11</sup>

Le Sueur’s “Women on the Breadlines” (*New Masses*, 1932) is one of her best pieces of literary journalism from the 1930s, as is “Women Are Hungry” (*American Mercury*, 1934). Because the public spectacle of a woman stand-



ing in a breadline was often considered shameful, and because there were few flop houses for women like the ones for men where a quarter bought a bed for the night, women suffered hunger and homelessness silently, in private, sometimes in the company of other women with whom they might share their meager resources. Or they might seek out men for lodging or other help. In writing about poor women's experience of the Depression, Le Sueur aimed to tell the story of those who, she said, "leave no record, no obituary, no remembrance"<sup>12</sup>; to transcend "statistics [that] make unemployment abstract and not too uncomfortable."<sup>13</sup> She explained: "The human being is different. To be hungry is different than to count the hungry. There is a whole generation of young girls who don't remember any boom days and don't believe in any Eldorado, or success, or prosperity. Their thin bones bear witness to a different thing. The women have learned something. Something is seeping into them that is going to make a difference for several generations."<sup>14</sup>

Writing in a matter-of-fact voice as participant observer, Le Sueur begins "Breadlines" with a simple statement: "I am sitting in the city free employment bureau. It's the women's section. We have been sitting here now for four hours. We sit here every day, waiting for a job. There are no jobs. Most of us have had no breakfast."<sup>15</sup> These simple declarative sentences serve to underscore their certainty of poverty. Then, through a series of detailed portraits, she limns the composite face of impoverished women during the Depression through several richly realized characterizations. There is Bernice, "a Polish woman of thirty-five"<sup>16</sup> from the Wisconsin countryside, a former kitchen worker with a "face brightly scrubbed."<sup>17</sup> Deprived of food, her "great flesh has begun to hang in folds"<sup>18</sup> from her once-robust frame, testimony to the malnutrition that is now her lot. Another is Mrs. Gray, whose body, at fifty, "is a great puckered scar."<sup>19</sup> She has toiled to clean streetcars and offices for some fifteen hours a day and is, Le Sueur asserts, "a living spokesman for the futility of labor . . . thin as a worn dime."<sup>20</sup>

One of Le Sueur's singular achievements in "Women on the Breadlines" is to bring to our attention characters who are usually not seen in literature, as Shulman has pointed out. "Fat, inarticulate characters like Bernice almost never receive the compassionate, perceptive attention Le Sueur gives her," he observes. But Le Sueur recognizes and values the humanity in Bernice and her other subjects.<sup>21</sup> The characters in "Women Are Hungry" are equally unforgettable. Anna supports her two small sons, her elderly mother, and her sister on her cook's salary of \$45 a month. But there is little money to buy milk for the children, even though "everybody knows" that "you can't make bones with just bread."<sup>22</sup> Through dialogue, dramatization, and a straightforward, participant-observer voice, Le Sueur eloquently demonstrates the

Depression's impact on women and their families.

A key aspect of Le Sueur's literary journalism during the Depression years is the degree to which, like much of her reportage, it is informed by participant, immersion research. She lived often in community with others who shared her vision of society, as did Dorothy Day. For Day, this meant living for nearly fifty years in voluntary poverty among the homeless she served at the Catholic Worker house of hospitality and soup kitchen on New York City's Lower East Side (1933–80); for Le Sueur, this meant living in communal groups of workers and women consisting, during the Depression, of the extended family of her parents, two daughters, and other family members in Minneapolis. They pooled their resources to get by.<sup>23</sup> Le Sueur recounts these experiences in her book about her parents, *Crusaders*.<sup>24</sup> Le Sueur's embrace of communalism grew from her staunch commitment to Communist principles and also from her longing to "extend the love she felt for her children to all of humanity," according to Constance Coiner.<sup>25</sup>

For Day, there was little if any separation between her ideals, the way she lived, and her writing; all centered on the vision of the Catholic Worker movement and its newspaper of the same name that she cofounded in 1933 in New York City. This included living in communitarian, voluntary poverty and working to achieve social justice and peace within a framework of traditional Roman Catholic spirituality.<sup>26</sup> Robert Ellsberg, a *Catholic Worker* editor from 1976 to 1978, called her writing "extraordinary" because "there was absolutely no distinction between what she believed, what she wrote, and the manner in which she lived."<sup>27</sup> She gleaned her mismatched outfits from the common clothing bin and ate the soup kitchen's food du jour, right alongside the homeless. She even shared her room at times with what some derisively call "bag ladies"—the destitute, often homeless women who carry their possessions in shopping bags.

Thus, Day could so effectively reveal insights about the experience of poverty, one of her most common themes. An example is her piece "No Continuing City" from the November 1933 *Catholic Worker*. Written in the style of a play, with frequent dramatization and dialogue, it tells the story of Mary Blount, a working-class woman who visits a city clinic for prenatal care and endures cruelty from the nurses there. She is "a big comfortable woman . . . deep-chested and placid," who "worked hard with her husband." To economize, she plans to give birth in the hospital's public ward and this requires regular prenatal checkups. Her day starts happily; she enjoys "having a holiday from the house at such an unwonted time. . . . To be free and walking the streets when she was usually washing out tiled halls and collecting trash."

But at the clinic when Mary is directed to undress, she discovers that the

sheet she has been given scarcely covers her large frame. Cruelly, the nurses ignore her requests and even laugh at her:

“Please,” [Mary] kept saying, her face red and contorted with shame. “Please, miss—please nurse!” The spirit of perversity among the nurses was contagious. The first two had refused to heed her and the other three did likewise. It seemed as though Mary would have to go out into the examination room with two other women with no other covering but the tiny child’s sheet which by some miserable chance had been given her.

“Please, nurse. Please, doctor. I can’t come out like this,” she begged, her eyes full of tears. She was in an agony of nervousness. Her hands were cold and clammy. She could feel perspiration running between her shoulder blades.

“What’s wrong with her, anyway?” one nurse complained.

“What’s that woman in there beefing about?”

“It’s another sheet she must have. She doesn’t like the fit of that one.”

“Tell her to shop over on Fifth Avenue. Probably she’ll get a better fit over there.”

By the end of the piece, Mary “felt that happiness had gone out of life. All the pleasure she had felt in the new life that was in her had fled. The pride in her increasing girth seemed ridiculous now.”<sup>28</sup>

Day gave further insights into women’s experience of poverty in her column, “Day by Day,” in the June 1934 *Catholic Worker*. Here she described the challenges of young women seeking shelter and work in the throes of the country’s economic bleakness. “You see them in the waiting rooms of all the department stores,” she began. “To all appearance they are waiting to meet their friends, to go on a shopping tour—to a matinee, or to a nicely served lunch in the store restaurant.” She continued:

But in reality they are looking for work (you can see the worn newspapers they leave behind with the help wanted page well thumbed), and they have no place to go, no place to rest but in these public places. . . . The stores are thronged with women buying dainty underwear which they could easily do without—compacts for a dollar, when the cosmetics in the five-and-ten are just as good—and mingling with these protected women and often indistinguishable from them, are these sad ones, these desolate ones, with no homes, no jobs, and never enough food in their stomachs.<sup>29</sup>

Day creates an affecting contrast when she characterizes the misery of impoverished women who work as walking “billboards,” advertising glamor-



ous products. One is a:

woman with bleached marcelled hair who advertises a beauty parlor, a poor wretch haggard with want and in herself a bitter satire directed against the comfortable women who preen and luxuriate in facials, manicures, unguents and ointments, powers and perfumes, while their poorer sisters tramp the streets, ill fed and weary.<sup>30</sup>

This same power is evident in Le Sueur's literary journalism about the Depression, especially in "Women on the Breadlines" and "Women Are Hungry." The authority given by her immersive participation in what she writes about is unmistakable. She lived what she wrote about and her participant-observer voice moves us in a way that the detached perspective of conventional journalism cannot.

Le Sueur wrote a considerable amount of literary journalism as well as short stories, poetry, and essays, and she was acclaimed as a writer in the 1930s. In 1940, when International Publishers brought out her book of fiction and journalism, *Salute to Spring*, Carl Sandburg, Sinclair Lewis, and Zona Gale were among those who wrote jacket blurbs. Then she seemed to disappear for the next twenty or so years. "What happened," Elaine Hedges writes in her introduction to the collection of Le Sueur's work that she edited, entitled *Ripening: Selected Work, 1927–1980*, "was of course what happened to many other radicals of the thirties in the aftermath of World War II. The repressive literary and political climate of the cold war and McCarthyism forced Le Sueur underground, cut off many of her publishing outlets, and often made it impossible for her to find work of any kind."<sup>31</sup> During the McCarthy period, the pacifism of Day and her Catholic Worker movement created challenges for her that included regular FBI visits to the Catholic Worker house in New York City. The word "Catholic" in the name of her movement and paper gave a "protective coloration" that softened public hostility.<sup>32</sup>

For Le Sueur, the repressive climate of blacklisting eventually eased, in the more open political atmosphere of the 1960s. The second wave of the women's movement, ascending in the late '60s, also helped Le Sueur regain public attention and positioned her to enjoy a revival of her work in her eighties. Perhaps this interruption of her publishing career is a reason why scholars have been late to claim at least some of her work as literary journalism.<sup>33</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, women's literary journalism is not always recognized as such, in part because canonical outlets such as the *New Yorker*, *Esquire*, et al., were sometimes closed to them. Instead, women had to find publications that were more welcoming of their work. As Amy Mattson Lauters has explained, these have included "women's magazines that have historically been devalued as media forms" (including *Woman's Day*, *Good Housekeeping*, and

*Ladies' Home Journal*), as well as *Cosmopolitan*, *Sunset*, the *San Francisco Bulletin*, and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, an African American newspaper. Another rich source of women's literary journalism that Lauters found was a group of farming women's magazines such as the *Farmer's Wife*, *Farm Wife News*, and *Country Woman*.<sup>34</sup> Writing in 1987, Nekola reviewed the scholarly literature and concluded: "To judge from the texts available, women journalists at present occupy a marginal position in the history of radical journalism, and radical journalists occupy a marginal position in the history of women journalists."<sup>35</sup>

I've included Le Sueur's writing in my literary journalism classes since at least 1985, after I first heard her read her work to an audience in Minneapolis. But only in 2014 has she actually made the cut in a collection of literary journalism edited by Jeff Sharlet. He anthologized her piece, "I Was Marching," calling it "one of the most interesting" experiments in documentary prose—reportage—that *New Masses* contributors such as Day, Ernest Hemingway, Richard Wright, and Langston Hughes produced during the 1930s.<sup>36</sup> One reason is her "attempt to retain the intimacy of subjectivity even while transcending what another radical writer of those years, Josephine Herbst, called the 'constricted I.'"<sup>37</sup> Herbst was referring here to the strangling emphasis on the first-person voice for its own sake, with the attendant blindness to understanding one's subjects on their own terms. Le Sueur adroitly avoids interpreting the workers' demonstration from the typical middle-class perspective as something strange and exotic; instead, she joins with the marchers and communicates *their* reality, which has now become hers. The result is a vibrant, deeply told, respectful account that bridges the gap between the typical observer and "the other"—that is, a separate self that may seem much different from one's own. Such participant observation frequently bears fruit in Le Sueur's work, as it does in Day's. This perspective, of course, informs literary journalism, particularly when it is written to advocate for a cause in which its author passionately believes.

Another essential quality that qualifies these works as literary journalism is both writers' emphasis on a larger truth or literary truth—or what Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks have famously called "truth of coherence."<sup>38</sup> In the simplest terms, this can be thought of as a more universal truth about human experience. As Lois Phillips Hudson has explained, the order that the fiction writer imposes on the chaotic "wild variety of human experience" yields a distinctive truth of coherence. "The writer of fiction explores that daily *unimaginable* reality we all live in, and tries, according to her/his vision of it, to make a work of art that simply renders some segment of it *imaginable*."<sup>39</sup> Penn Warren and Brooks also identified a "truth of correspondence," as in correspondence to factual (rather than imagined) reality.

But of the two types of truth, they reserved truth of coherence as the “peculiar province of fiction.”<sup>40</sup>

As literary journalists, both Le Sueur and Day also seek to communicate a truth of coherence about their subjects that conventional journalism is usually unequipped to explore by the limitations of its very design. For Day, that truth of coherence is the vision of the Catholic Worker movement, with its emphasis on social justice and peace advocacy. In Le Sueur’s case, a primary focus is criticism of bourgeois society’s major flaw, what she calls “the rot of a maggoty individualism,”<sup>41</sup> which defines success as the possession of wealth and power. At the same time, as journalists, these writers seek factual verifiability (truth of correspondence). This is no easy task, but they accomplish it memorably. Their deeply felt literary journalism is a fact-based, nuanced exploration of one of the period’s most complex and perplexing issues, the persistence of poverty. Day alludes to the compelling nature of this subject:

Poverty is a strange and elusive thing. I have tried to write about it, its joys and its sorrows, for thirty years now; and I could probably write about it for another thirty years without conveying what I feel about it as well as I would like. I condemn poverty and I advocate it; poverty is simple and complex at once; it is a social phenomenon and a personal matter. Poverty is an elusive thing, and a paradoxical one.<sup>42</sup>

For both writers, literary journalism offers an opportunity to transcend the norms of conventional reporting in order to explore, in depth, this complex subject. Literary journalism is well suited to communicating its nuances. Consider, for example, Le Sueur’s description in “Women on the Breadlines,” of how unsettling the receipt of even small amounts of money can be to those unaccustomed to its possession. “If you’ve ever been without money, or food, something very strange happens when you get a bit of money, a kind of madness,” Le Sueur writes. She continues:

You don’t care. You can’t remember that you had no money before, that the money will be gone. You can remember nothing but that there is the money for which you have been suffering. Now here it is. A lust takes hold of you. You see food in the windows. In imagination you eat hugely; you taste a thousand meals. You look in windows. Colors are brighter; you buy something to dress up in. An excitement takes hold of you. You know it is suicide but you can’t help it. You must have food, dainty, splendid food and a bright hat so once again you feel blithe, rid of that ratty gnawing shame.<sup>43</sup>

### Conclusion

I hope that this study inspires many ideas for subsequent research. For instance, research might examine the comparative dimension of these writers’—particularly Le Sueur’s—fiction, which, while not strictly factually veri-

fiable, focuses on many of the same themes as their literary journalism. While Day's early autobiographical novel, *The Eleventh Virgin*,<sup>44</sup> is the sole relevant example, Le Sueur wrote considerable fiction. Her short story "Sequel to Love" (1934) is a work of advocacy that describes the draconian conditions of the 1930s "home for the feeble-minded." The first-person voice of the narrator, a young girl, is credibly vernacular in speech and style. She has just given birth to a baby who has been taken from her and given up for adoption and now, to escape permanent incarceration in an institution, she must undergo sterilization. Le Sueur here critiques capitalist society's denial of maternity to those it considers to be "unfit,"<sup>45</sup> a theme that is congruent with her critique of bourgeois society elsewhere. Further research could also investigate these writers' vision of journalism, particularly literary journalism (which they may have known as "reportage"). Day viewed journalism as a calling and as the social activist's prime tool,<sup>46</sup> while Le Sueur valued journalism's advocacy role. It would be instructive to consult Le Sueur's unpublished letters relative to this subject.

Finally, it would be doubtless be informative to explore the personal connections between these radical writers of the Great Depression. For example, when I asked Le Sueur in the mid-1980s whether she knew of Day and her work, she responded that of course she did: "We women writing about these things [Depression-era poverty and social justice issues] all knew each other. I admired Dorothy Day."<sup>47</sup>

And Day surely must have admired the work of Le Sueur, even though Day ultimately sought to combine the secular radicalism of her youth in the Old Left with the traditional Roman Catholic spirituality of her mature years. What these two writers of the Depression (and beyond) have in common is their commitment to remake society through their passionately felt literary journalism of advocacy.

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## Notes

1. Thomas B. Connery, "Research Review: Magazines and Literary Journalism, an Embarrassment of Riches," in *The American Magazine: Research Perspectives and Prospects*, ed. David Abrahamson (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995), 211. See also John C. Hartsock, *A History of American Literary Journalism: The Emergence of a Modern Narrative Form* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 167–69; Norman Sims, *True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 91.
2. Originally published in *New Masses*, January 1932, 5–7. Gavin Jones has noted Le Sueur's emphasis on poverty's negative effects on body and soul of both genders, in *American Hungers: The Problem of Poverty in U.S. Literature, 1840–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 14. Day similarly underscores poverty's universal harmful impact.
3. See Nancy L. Roberts, "Dorothy Day," in Thomas B. Connery, ed., *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 179–85. Note: Day's papers are archived in the Dorothy Day-Catholic Worker Collection at Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI.
4. Helpful sources on Le Sueur include: Constance Coiner, *Better Red: The Writing and Resistance of Tillie Olsen and Meridel Le Sueur* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Nora Ruth Roberts, *Three Radical Women Writers: Class and Gender in Meridel Le Sueur, Tillie Olsen, and Josephine Herbst*, *Gender and Genre in Literature* 6 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996); Janet Galligani Casey, ed., *The Novel and the American Left: Critical Essays on Depression-Era Fiction* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004); and Neala Schleuning, *America: Song We Sang without Knowing* (Mankato, MN: Little Red Hen Press, 1983). Le Sueur's papers are archived at the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN.
5. Amy Gage, "The Insistent Voice," *Minnesota Monthly* 22, no. 3 (March 1988), 26.
6. Charlotte Nekola, "Worlds Unseen: Political Women Journalists and the 1930s," in *Writing Red: An Anthology of American Women Writers, 1930–1940*, ed. Charlotte Nekola and Paula Rabinowitz (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1987), 194.
7. Dorothy Day, *House of Hospitality* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1939), 233–35.
8. Nekola, *Writing Red*, 195.
9. Meridel Le Sueur, *New Masses*, September 18, 1934, 16–18; and *Ripening: Selected Work, 1927–1980* (New York: Feminist Press, 1982), 158–65.
10. Le Sueur, *Ripening*, 165.
11. Robert Shulman, *The Power of Political Art: The 1930s Literary Left Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 67.
12. Elaine Hedges quoting Meridel Le Sueur, introduction to *Ripening*, 10.
13. Hedges quoting Le Sueur, introduction to *Ripening*, 10; and Le Sueur, "Women Are Hungry," *Ripening*, 143.
14. Hedges, introduction to *Ripening*, 10; also Le Sueur, *Ripening*, 145.
15. Le Sueur, "Women on the Breadlines," *Ripening*, 137.
16. *Ibid.*, 138.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, 139.



19. Ibid., 142.
20. Le Sueur, *Ripening*, 137–39, 142.
21. Shulman, *Power of Political Art*, 48.
22. Le Sueur, *Ripening*, 147.
23. Coiner, *Better Red*, 80.
24. Le Sueur, *Crusaders: The Radical Legacy of Marian and Arthur Le Sueur* (New York: Blue Heron, 1955).
25. Coiner, *Better Red*, 80.
26. Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 76.
27. Robert Ellsberg, introduction to *By Little and By Little: The Selected Writings of Dorothy Day* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), xv.
28. Day, “No Continuing City,” *Catholic Worker*, November 1933, 5.
29. Ibid., 7.
30. Day, “Day by Day,” *Catholic Worker*, October 1934, 5.
31. Hedges, introduction to *Ripening*, 1.
32. Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, 140; and Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 209.
33. William Dow, “Writing Dark Times: Settings, Immersions in Agnes Smedley and Meridel Le Sueur” (paper presented to the second annual International Association for Literary Journalism Studies conference, Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris, May 2007). See also Dow, *Narrating Class in American Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
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