

**TELL ME A RIDDLE:
CLASS AND GENDER RIVALRY IN MERIDEL
LE SUEUR AND TILLIE OLSEN**

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Writers Meridel Le Sueur and Tillie Olsen span two generations of radical women, those affiliated with the Old Left and those who came of age with the New Left and the most recent women's movement. One of the salient features of the 1930s was the failure of any leftist organization to develop women's militance into a self-conscious feminism. Yet in more or less covert ways, Le Sueur and Olsen's literature from the late '20s and '30s anticipates the concerns of feminists a generation later. We see in their texts a prescient if latent consciousness. During the '30s Le Sueur and Olsen's literature was considered "proletarian," the term generally reserved for working-class literature produced during the Depression decade.

Few scholars have examined American working-class literature since its flourishing in the 1930s. Since then, working-class literature has been generally considered crudely tendentious and aesthetically inferior to bourgeois literature. Impatient with this assumption, Paul Lauter points out that the American literary canon has

been defined by a privileged elite, primarily males of Anglo-Saxon or northern European origin. My approach implicitly supports the effort of Lauter and others (national minorities, women, radicals) to expand the canon and to examine the aesthetic and political bases on which it is constructed. ¹ But my approach is also based on the premise that moments of textual "inferiority" or "weakness" may be historically resonant, sometimes suggesting more about a given historical period than those moments which formalist critics might consider evidence of aesthetic excellence. A piece of working-class literature, as any form of discourse, displays conflicting and contradictory meanings. The critic's task is not to repair or complete the text but to identify the principle of its silences, "flaws," conflicted meanings. In Le Sueur and Olsen's '30s literature, the principle lies in their response to the American Communist Party (CP), an organization to which they were deeply committed.

On the Communist Left, "proletarian" and "manly" were nearly synonymous; the worker-protagonist in proletarian literature "almost by definition was male"; and "proletarian prose and criticism tended to flex their muscles with a particularly masculinist pride" (Rosenfelt 395). The androcentrism of Communist literary policy reflected that of the CP as a whole. Party organizing during the early '30s, for example, focused on the workplace, when only about 20 percent of women worked outside the home, and throughout the decade Party union activity centered on mining, steel, maritime, and auto,

industries in which few women were employed. The Party at least tacitly endorsed the traditional sexual division of labor, and domestic issues, when they counted at all, were not a priority. Two examples from the Left press suggest the obstacles Party women faced. The first is a quote from Michael Gold, who in the late '20s and early '30s was one of the most influential editors of *New Masses*, the CP's literary journal; at the 1935 American Writers' Congress Gold was hailed as the best-loved American revolutionary writer. This quote, from an essay titled "America Needs a Critic," exemplifies what Lauter and Alice Kessler-Harris have termed the Left's "hairy-chested" polemics:

Send us a critic. Send us a giant who can shame our writers back to their task of civilizing America. Send a soldier who has studied history. Send a strong poet who loves the masses, and their future.... Send one who is not a pompous liberal, but a man of the street.... Send no coward. Send no pedant. Send us a man fit to stand up to skyscrapers.... Send no saint. Send an artist. Send a scientist. Send a Bolshevik. Send a man (my emphasis). (9)

A second example actually derives from an official publication of the CIO, the *CIO News*, but would not have been out of place in the Party press. The passage describes "The Sweetheart of the CIO":

... "a good union girl" should only work to support herself or her family, be intelligent, a good house-

keeper, and shorter than her boyfriend. She should use makeup moderately and keep her stocking seams straight. She should go out on the picket line "with her man," because having "girls come on the line... puts more pep in the gas." Although she should listen with interest when a man wants to talk about his union, she mustn't ever "try to get bossy." (cited by Strom 371)

Le Sueur and Olsen were at once loyal CP members and emerging feminists, and their literature variously strains toward and away from Party prescriptions, evincing conflicting impulses which I term "official" and "unofficial." Their texts address the physiological and sexual experiences that shape women's lives—sexual initiation, pregnancy, childbirth, miscarriage, sterilization, battery, rape—at a time when these topics seldom appeared in literature, including working-class literature. Olsen and Le Sueur's texts implicitly question orthodox Marxism's primacy-of-production theory and its concomitant privileging of the workplace and the industrial worker at the loci of struggle. During the '30s the Party generally characterized psychological and emotional categories as unmaterialist, as unrelated to "real" politics, labeling introspective novels as febrile, self-indulgent, and bourgeois. Despite this, Le Sueur and Olsen made familial relations, emotional deformation, and the developing consciousness of children the central subjects of their literature. At points their texts burst their own formal and political limitations, momentarily overcoming the restraints of the very revolutionary organization that fostered them. Le Sueur and Olsen's texts provide a

wedge into history, a glimpse of the Communist Left not otherwise available to us.

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One of the most prominent women writers of the '30s, Le Sueur endured redbaiting, blacklisting, and 25 years of obscurity to become in the '70s a regional folk heroine and nearly an archetypal figure within the women's movement. As old as the Twentieth Century, Le Sueur was born in 1900 in rural Iowa, into a white, middle-class, and educated family. She has written extensively about her maternal grandmother, Antoinette Lucy, a stern "third-generation Puritan" and "one of the first settlers, gun in hand, of the Oklahoma territory" (Hedges 2). Le Sueur's vivid memories of her grandmother, so full of the woman's courage and self-reliance, are nevertheless shadowed by a recognition of her emotional and sexual repression. Lucy always dressed in black, considering bright colors sinful. She bathed while wearing a shift. Her only emotional outlet was singing Protestant hymns, which she did with a telling fervor; through this hymn-singing, Le Sueur has said, her grandmother made love to Jesus. Actually, the hymn-singing revealed many repressed feelings, Le Sueur believes: "Only through these songs did I know her terrible loneliness, her wish to die, her deep silence. Sometimes I heard her cry in the night, but I could not humiliate her by going to comfort her. In the day there would be no sign" ("The

Ancient People" 34).

Meridel was ten when her mother, Marian Wharton, left her first husband, a Church of Christ minister. Le Sueur describes him as "a charming womanizer, the village sex symbol... a raconteur, a vivant," as well as heavy-drinking, violent, and physically abusive.² Marian Wharton later married socialist Arthur Le Sueur. Meridel—through her mother and stepfather, who were both active socialists all their lives—was exposed to Populists, Wobblies, anarchists, union organizers, and members of the Socialist Party, the Non-Partisan League, and the Farmer-Labor Party; through her parents she met luminaries such as Eugene Debs, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, John Reed, Mabel Dodge, Margaret Sanger, Theodore Dreiser, and Carl Sandburg.

On the basis of her long, admirable life as a radical, writer, and feminist, Le Sueur has become an emblematic figure, a "socialist tribal mother," as one admirer puts it.³ Le Sueur both enjoys this status and finds it disturbing, as the following quote from my interview of Le Sueur suggests: "I haven't really revealed the brutality of...my own life, and I think the women's movement has helped me to cover it up....Ms [Magazine, for example] wanted to present me as [a] role model, [as a woman] who made it, who succeeded....They don't tell the horrible violence of women's lives" (interview). When Le Sueur speaks candidly about her life, she reveals details that add rough edges to her public persona.

Le Sueur first publicly expressed her position on how radicals create a literature of resistance in "The Fetish of Being Outside" (*New Masses*, 1935). Written in the twilight of the CP's proletarian period, this essay adopts the Party line that it is not only possible but requisite for enlightened middle-class writers wholly to leave their own class and to become ex officio members of the revolutionary working class. "The Fetish" does not allow for oscillation between complicity and critique with regard to class sympathies. The language of "The Fetish" suggests rebirth, a baptismal cleansing of original sin, a Kierkegaardian leap of faith: "You cannot leave it by pieces or parts; it is a birth and you have to be born whole out of it." The "creative artist" must be willing to "go all the way, with full belief, into that darkness." The writer does "not react equivocally....Why want to be an outsider when...you admit sight of the promised land..." (22-23).

The view expressed in "The Fetish" was popular among Party members and sympathizers. Joseph Freeman's autobiography, *An American Testament*, for example, attempted to show that an intellectual committed to proletarian revolution could break irrevocably with the middle class. Some of Le Sueur's "unofficial" literary texts, however, contradict the position articulated in "The Fetish of Being Outside." As a feminist within a male-dominated movement, she herself experienced, and expressed in her literature, the conflicting impulses for which "The Fetish of Being Outside" does not

allow. In two short stories which I've selected as examples—titled "Annunciation" and "Corn Village"—Le Sueur frankly examines her own experience with the dual vision and divided loyalty which "The Fetish" condemns.

The short story "Annunciation" departs dramatically from orthodox proletarian realism. The title alludes to the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she will give birth to the Son of God (Luke 1:26-38), and Le Sueur originally wrote the story in the form of notes scrawled intermittently on scraps of paper to her first, unborn child. Set in the Depression, this narrative prose poem represents a pregnant woman's dream-like state of mind, imposing a theme of fertility and regeneration upon a secondary theme of contrasting deprivation. Because pregnancy, labor, the moment one's child is born, and nurturing a newborn are among life's most profound experiences, it is striking that they appear so rarely in literature. "Annunciation"'s lush, sensual, evocative language is hardly the stuff of "official" proletarian literature:

I look at myself in the mirror....I look like a pale and shining pomegranate, hard and tight, and my skin shines like crystal with the veins showing beneath blue and distended.... I am a pomegranate hanging from an invisible tree with the juice and movement of seed within my hard skin.I dress slowly. I hate the smell of clothes. I want to leave them off and just hang in the sun ripening....(86)

At the time Le Sueur wrote the story, pregnancy was considered unacceptable as a literary subject, as much by *New Masses* as by the magazines that gave that reason for rejecting her manuscript (*Scribner's* and *Atlantic Monthly*). A favorite Le Sueurian anecdote recalls here retort to the editor at Scribner's who, as he rejected the story, suggested she write more like Hemingway: But "fishin', fightin', and fuckin'," she quipped "are not the sum of my experience" (interview).

A second short story, "Corn Village," also examines Le Sueur's own experience in an evocative, prose-poem narrative. Le Sueur lived what she terms her "impressionable years" in Fort Scott, Kansas, but "corn village" is obviously intended to represent many midwestern small towns that experience harsh winters. The landscape is colorless and lifeless, "as if some malignant power were in the air... the winter madness coming on, the winter death" (11). Sexual and emotional repression are the human equivalent of the barren, frozen landscape. In this rural community only the "foreigners" are "loose" and comfortable with their bodies, their sexuality; only the "foreigners" are allowed to wear bright, expressive colors. The Yankee bodies, in contrast, are "held taut for some unknown fray with the devil or the world or the flesh" (15). Like Le Sueur's grandmother, those at church revival have no love song other than "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." Many of the corn villagers, like Le Sueur, are closed, wary, emotionally deformed:

Like many Americans, I will never recover from my sparse childhood in Kansas. The blackness, weight and terror of childhood in mid-America strike deep into the stem of life. Like desert flowers we learned to crouch near the earth, fearful that we would die before the rains, cunning, waiting the season of good growth. Those who survived without psychic mutilation have a life of cunning, to keep the stem tight and spare, withholding the deep blossom, letting it sour rather than bloom and be blighted. (9)

First published by Scribner's Magazine, "Corn Village" appears in a collection of Le Sueur's work from the '30s issued by the CP's publishing organ, International Publishers (1940, 1977, 1979). But "Corn Village" has little in common with proletarian realism or reportage. In writing in 1930 about midwest farmers, Le Sueur was not writing about workers considered by the Party during the Third Period to be the key to revolution; as already noted, the Party gave priority in this period to organizing efforts among workers in basic industry because of its assumed importance to the economy. In "Corn Village" Le Sueur has consciously or unconsciously almost wholly discarded the Party discourse. What I term "official optimism" and its corollary "official certainty"—both considered stock ingredients of proletarian literature—are noticeably absent in the text. Indeed, mystery, uncertainty, and fear prevail. The text acknowledges the complexity of "the people," who were often romanticized in Party—and in Le Sueur's own—discourse.

Moreover, "Corn Village" is not constrained by the limited

understanding of ideology that characterizes much of the proletarian realism and reportage. For example, in one of Le Sueur's best-known pieces of '30s reportage, "I Was Marching," ideology is merely a superstructure produced by an economic base, a false consciousness obscuring society's "real" structures. In contrast, ideology pervades "Corn Village," prefiguring the more current understanding of it as the way in which we actively but unconsciously perform our roles within the social totality. "Corn Village" supports Gramsci's notion of dominance and subordination as a "whole lived social process" saturating even the most private areas of our lives and consciousness. If we accept Wendell Berry's definition of regionalism as "local life aware of itself," "Corn Village" qualifies as an extraordinary piece of regionalist writing precisely because Le Sueur adopts the double consciousness and the oscillation between complicity and critique that "The Fetish of Being Outside" condemns as neither possible nor desirable for the radical writer (975). Le Sueur resides at once within the corn village culture and outside it, negotiating marginality and inclusion with divided loyalty and consciousness.

This text seems as authentic as it does, I suspect, largely because it examines Le Sueur's own experience. She chronicled the lives of other oppressed people sometimes at the expense of exploring her own oppression as a middle-class woman and a member of the male-dominated CP. Yet we sense that in "Corn Village" Le Sueur's untold story begins to emerge. Le Sueur's motives for adopting the work-

ing class as her literary milieu were overdetermined: Surely a strong sense of justice and collective responsibility sparked her concern; she also disliked the strains of ennui, nihilism, and self-absorption in twentieth-century American literature; and she was influenced by the Party's focus during the Third Period on the proletariat as the key to overturning capitalism and by its contradictory attitudes toward women. Many CP leaders as well as many of the rank-and-file did not consider middle-class women oppressed. When they spoke of the "women problem," they meant "the toiling women and the wives of toilers" (Shaffer 88). Perhaps we should also consider Le Sueur's adopting the working class as partly an act of displacement. Pressure from her family and the Party, as well as her own internal coping mechanisms, may have made it difficult for her to write about her own fear, anger, doubt, defeat. Yet in pieces such as "Annunciation" and "Corn Village," an unofficial Meridel Le Sueur emerges, moving toward the oracular voice she sought but did not achieve in her "official" proletarian literature.

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This complex intersection of feminism and the Old Left is also refracted in illuminating ways in Tillie Olsen's literary texts. Olsen's career, which spans over 50 years, includes two distant periods: the year from 1933-34; and the year since 1953, when the youngest of her four children entered school. Olsen's rebirth was not recorded,

although she has determined that she was born either near Mead or in Omaha, Nebraska in either 1912 or 1913. Her parents, Samuel and Ida Lerner, were Jewish working-class immigrants who had participated in the abortive 1905 Russian revolution. Although the family was poor, the Lerner's active socialism added a rich dimension to Tillie's childhood. In 1931, at 18, she joined the Young Communist League, the youth organization of the Communist Party.

In 1933-34 Olsen wrote propaganda, not to fulfill specific Party assignments but in a passionate, buoyant response to a working class that was on the move. However, as Deborah Rosenfelt suggests, Olsen already felt during the '30s a conflict between two kinds of writing: "the quick, fervent, impressionistic report from the arena of struggle" and the careful rendering that "ironically would require for its full development a withdrawal from the struggle" (385). This tension between discursive models is apparent in Olsen's most important literary effort during the '30s, a short novel titled *Yonnonidio*, which Olsen began in 1932 at age nineteen. She completed the first four chapters, or almost half, of the novel before regretfully abandoning it in 1937 after the birth of her second child.

In 1972-73, Olsen completed *Yonnonidio* in what she terms "arduous partnership" with "that long ago young writer." The first four chapters, in final or near-final form, presented only minor problems. The succeeding pages, which became four more chapters, were increasingly difficult to reconstruct. "But it is all the old

manuscripts—no rewriting, no new writing,” a note appended to the novel explains. Olsen felt she “didn’t have any right” to revise what “that long ago young writer” had intended to print.⁴ Varying tendencies coexist uneasily within *Yonnondio*—some elements adhere to the tenets of proletarian realism while other elements subvert them. These conflicting tendencies hint not only at Olsen’s increasing ambivalence about “the Party aesthetic” but also at fundamental problems within the ’30s CP and orthodox Marxism, itself.

Yonnondio confronts one of the differences within the working class that the ’30s CP minimized—the divisive effects of sexism. At a time when Avram Landry, representing the CP leadership, denied “any conceivable antagonism” between working-class women and men, the novel implicitly emphasizes the way in which the sexual division of labor militates against working-class unity (Shaffer 86). The novel depicts Jim and Anna Holbrook taunting one another and his abandoning the family for days at a time; Jim “struck Anna too often to remember,” and, at one point, rapes her while their young daughter listens in terror (15).

Engles argued that the husband “is the bourgeois, [while] the wife represents the proletariat” (744). This relationship of domination/subjection provides a structural basis for animosity rather than mutual understanding and solidarity within the working class. Indeed, Jim Holbrook’s perception of “wife” hardly includes a notion of her as political comrade, coequal in struggle. Jim vents his

rage at Anna rather than at his capitalist boss. As the other side of this perverse equation, Anna occasionally reduces Jim to a mere breadwinner, blaming him for not adequately supporting the family, a responsibility both of them assume is primarily, if not exclusively, his. Such opposition makes class camaraderie problematic at best, and the Party minimized the consequences of the sexual division of labor at some cost.

Since tensions between Anna and Jim ease considerably during their one brief period of relative prosperity, *Yonnondio* implies that gender-based antagonisms are related in a simple cause-and-effect way to economic oppression. Indeed, according to the prevailing view of the '30s Party members, a socialist revolution would sweep away sexual oppression in its wake. For example, one *Daily Worker* headline proclaimed, in reference to the Soviet Union: "All [Sex] Inequality Abolished by the October Revolution." Party women tended to defer their hopes for a feminist future. Nevertheless, *Yonnondio* provides evidence that the social construction of gender is an entrenched, unconsciously reproduced phenomenon that will overturn itself simply by "tailing" a transformation in economic relations.

Olsen wrote *Yonnondio* over 30 years before the existence of the women's movement that would welcome its publication in 1974. Like Le Sueur's "unofficial" texts, the novel emphasized some of the physiological events that shape women's lives—pregnancy, childbirth, miscarriage, battery, and rape—at a time when these topics seldom

appeared in literature. Moreover, Olsen's unsentimental presentation of institutionalized motherhood forced on the American literary canon a subject hitherto forbidden except in idealized form.

Yonnondio's critique of capitalism is robust, full-blown. Its prescient questioning of some elements of orthodox Marxism—such as productivism and its concomitant privileging of the industrial worker; the separation of public and private spheres; the subordination of gender-related issues to those of class—may be only half-realized, but it is significant, nevertheless. In Yonnondio Olsen strains away from her early '30s "official" proletarian literature. "Reader, it was not to have ended here," Olsen laments in the note appended to the unfinished novel when it finally appeared in print. On the contrary, in Yonnondio Olsen has written "beyond the ending." ⁵

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Le Sueur and Olsen's texts not only resist bourgeois culture but also provide a wedge into problems that have historically plagued the Left. They foreshadow, if only in a muted, provisional sense, questions about Marxism and Leninism that theorists, including feminists, have more recently and more explicitly raised. Politically and culturally, Le Sueur and Olsen's texts represent what Raymond Williams describes as a "pre-emergence," active and pressing but not yet fully articulated.

Their texts resist, for example, orthodox Marxism's reduction of the social terrain's heterogeneity to centers and margins, such as males in the industrial workplace and women in the domestic sphere. At a time when the "proper" subjects and settings of working-class literature were factory workers waging strikes, Yonnondio, for example, focused largely on working-class familial relations and concluded with a baby realizing her power by gleefully banging a fruit-jar lid. The Left has created and ignored such "margins" at great cost, failing to attract numbers to its ranks partly because it has both feared and trivialized people's emotional needs. Le Sueur criticized this dread of intimacy in "Corn Village." She was first exposed to a strain of Protestant asceticism through her stern grandmother. And the inhabitants of the rural community in which Le Sueur grew up were similarly closed, wary, emotionally deformed. But to a degree this asceticism also marked the Communist Party, which did not resist the legacy from Western metaphysics that falsely separates the emotional "realm" from rational intelligence. Yet Le Sueur and Olsen's heterodox texts treat these categories as fundamentally political, dissolving the artificial distinction between public and private, between Party line and personal experience, between political consciousness and emotional need.

Le Sueur and Olsen asserted their difference within the forced unity and closure of not only the dominant culture but also an androcentric Communist Left, prefiguring a younger generation of

feminists. Against the transcendent Party, Le Sueur and Olsen asserted the importance of their own concrete experience, an experience of domination and exploitation which Leninist theory diminishes. They implied that "the personal is political" long before that phrase became a household slogan among younger feminists. By now old news, this slogan is nevertheless still timely. Although it has become "rather an embarrassment as if everyone has heard it all before...hearing and doing are different matters. The questions remain" (Rowbotham 141).

One of these remaining questions—responsibility for children—may be the crucible of the women's movement. This issue has not been a priority for the movement because during the '60s and 70's many feminists forewent or delayed childrearing. With the '80s baby boom, however, even the women whom the movement has most helped to advance, its educated, professional elite, have with a sense of *deja vu* felt that old shock of sudden recognition, that familiar "click": equal professional opportunity collapses around the issue of who will take care of the kids. Tillie Olsen has pioneered in this area as has no other American writer: "Tell Me a Riddle" and *Silences* are virtually unique for their uncompromising look at the anguish of women who must choose between having children and the need to carry on other serious work. Olsen and Le Sueur's '30s literature illuminates the cracks in an idealized, good-housekeeping Comrade/Wife, a creature not unrelated to today's mythic Super-

woman, who, politically mainstream or Left, can presumably “do it all.” That more women than men have valued Le Sueur and Olsen’s iconoclasm reminds us that textual meaning, rather than being absolute, is a consequence of a reader’s being in a particular situation in the world. The CP’s work among women in the ’30s should be carefully evaluated as part of the struggle for women’s liberation in the U.S. Margaret Cowl, head of the CP Women’s Commission during the ’30s, concluded in 1974 that Party leadership had paid only lip service to women’s issues during the ’30s; that mass women’s movements were not genuinely accepted as part of the U.S. working-class movement; and that “male supremacy” played a role in keeping Party women in their place (Ware 122). Elsa Dixler concludes that women’s place was “on the picket line—and in the home” (127). But Peggy Dennis, for 50 years an active Party member, and the widow of Party leader Eugene Dennis, reflects the views of Olsen and Le Sueur, when she summarizes the contradictory experience of Party women: “Male Communists often responded to discussions of the ‘woman question’ with derision or condescension, but there were few other organizations in the country at the time in which women would even consider it their right to challenge such attitudes” (Isserman 141). Many women developed an awareness of their own potential, a sense of collectivity, and an understanding of America’s social system through Party-related activities. That Party leadership was overwhelmingly male and that its bureaucracy functioned

undemocratically "from the top down" is a matter of record. But the history of the rank-and-file, including its women, has yet to be thoroughly explored. The biographies and literary texts of Le Sueur and Olsen, which speak to the contradictory experience of women within the Communist Left, comprise an important part of that history.

The "riddle" which Le Sueur and Olsen's work challenges us to engage requires that we consider political activity as something undertaken not only within a kaleidoscopic social field but also within "the fibres of the self and in the hard practical substance of effective and continuing relationships" (Williams 212). Creating a counter-hegemony by connecting many different forms of struggle, including those not primarily "public" and "economic," leads to a more profound and compelling sense of revolutionary activity.

A longer version of this essay appears in Politics of Literature—toward the 1990s, edited by Lennard J. Davis and Bella Mirabella (Columbia University Press, 1989). This essay is also part of Prof. Coiner's book about women writers at the intersection of U.S. feminism and the Old Left, forthcoming from Oxford University Press (New York).

NOTES

- ¹ see Lauter, "Race and Gender in the Shaping of the American Literary Canon: A Case Study for the Twenties." **Feminist Studies** 9.3 (Fall 1983): 435-63.
- ² Recorded interview of Meridel Le Sueur by Constance Coiner, 26 March 1985, in Los Angeles. Subsequent references to this interview will be made parenthetically in the text with the word "interview."
- ³ This term appeared in "Meridel Le Sueur," a poem by Will Inman included in an unpaginated anthology commemorating Le Sueur's eightieth birthday, **We Sing our Struggle: A Tribute to US All for Meridel Le Sueur**. Ed. Mary McNally. Tulsa: Cardinal Press, 1982.
- ⁴ Debora Rosenfelt's interview of Tillie Olsen, 20-21 December 1980, San Francisco and Santa Cruz
- ⁵ This phrase and concept are borrowed from **Writing Beyond Ending**, by Rachel Blau Duplessis, who defines "writing beyond ending" as "the invention of strategies that sever the narrative from formerly conventional structures of fiction and consciousness about women" (x). However, I believe "strain away from" is often more accurate than "sever."

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DEPRESSION TURNS WELLESLEY LIFE

Decrease in Thoughtlessness
and Selfishness in 5 Years
Noted Among Students.

PRACTICAL RELIGION GAINS

Survey Finds Rise in 'Social
Consciousness' With New
Alertness to World Needs.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WELLESLEY, Mass., Jan. 12.—Five years of depression have caused a considerable decrease in thoughtlessness and selfishness among the students of Wellesley College, according to Stella Brewster, '28, general secretary of the Christian Association.

In a survey of "practical religion," made for the Wellesley Magazine, Miss Brewster states that "social consciousness" has risen in the student body as a result of the depression.

"I find that, on the whole, students are far more alive to the needs of the world than were my fellow-students in 1926," she writes.

"I think I am safe in saying that as social and economic problems have come to the fore in the past five years the student interest in solving them has certainly increased. And I believe that the average girl who graduates from Wellesley today is better prepared to enter our complex world than was the graduate of 1926."

Although relatively fewer girls attend morning chapel, vespers and Sunday services, Miss Brewster finds an increase in those interested in social service, doing volunteer work for the Boston Family Welfare Society, reading for the blind at the Perkins Institute, settlement work and sending in clothes and in hospital and home libraries.

New York Times, Jan. 13, 1935



Batchelor, Sunday News, Jan. 7, 1934

We Planned It That Way



Chicago Tribune, Oct., 1936