Meridel Le Sueur's Feminist *Bildungsroman*: When Class Meets Gender

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Abstract
American and communist, Meridel Le Sueur's legacy is hardly known. On the contrary, Mikhail Bakhtin's work is currently being reread by feminist critics. Through a feminist Bakhtinian critical perspective, this article examines Le Sueur's forgotten The Girl as the feminist Bildungsroman Bakhtin only sketched out in an unpublished book.
Résumé
Le legs de l'Américain et communiste' Meridel Le Sueur est peu connu. Au contraire, l'œuvre de Mikhail Bakhtin est présentement relu par des critiques féministes. Au moyen d'une perspective féministe Bakhtinienne, cet article se penche sur The Girl, l'œuvre oubliée de Le Sueur, comme étant le Bildungsroman féministe dont Balkhin n'avait fait que l'esquisse dans un livre non publié.

At an early stage of her career, the American author Meridel Le Sueur (1900-1996) wrote a novel entitled The Girl, which was not published until its author turned seventy-eight. One of the reasons for this editorial rejection is not difficult to guess from a feminist perspective. As Constance Coiner asserts, the editors of Le Sueur, who were mostly male, "did not question their ability to read; instead, they criticized women's ability to write" (1995, 130).[1] At the midpoint of his career, the Russian critic Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895-1975) wrote a book entitled The Novel of Education and Its Significance in the History of Realism, which also remained unpublished. One of the reasons for this event is that the editorial house to which Bakhtin sent the manuscript was destroyed during the German invasion of Russia during World War II (Holquist 1990, xiii).[2] Clearly enough, Le Sueur's and Bakhtin's oeuvres share politically-derived publication problems. However, while Le Sueur's working-class novel was simply dismissed by editors, Bakhtin's book was lost as a consequence of the war. Part of the reason for writing this article is to show the differences between the lives of men and women, as well as among the latter. Above all, as I expect to show, Le Sueur and Bakhtin are worthy of critical study for literary theory and criticism as well as for women and gender studies. I will provide a preliminary example of this.

In the remaining introduction to his unpublished book, Bakhtin identifies five types of Bildungsromane or novels of education. Such novels, which can also be called of emergence, of apprenticeship, and of becoming, are those whose protagonists educate themselves throughout in order to learn and become wiser, usually as they emerge into adulthood. In an introductory note to distinguish among the five novel-types, Bakhtin contends:

> [In the first, second, third, and fourth sorts of Bildungsromane,] man's emergence proceeded against the immobile background of the world…Man's emergence was his private affair…[and] the world, as an

> experience and as a school, remained the same…In [the fifth type of Bildungsroman,]…however, human emergence is of a different nature. It is no longer man's own private affair. He emerges along with the world…It is as though the very foundations of the world are changing, and man must change along with them.
>
> (1936-8, 23)

Since neither Bakhtin nor Le Sueur were able to publish their works when they wanted, questions arise such as: which novels could fit into Bakhtin's schematic categorization? Which kind of novel is Le Sueur's The Girl? In order to argue that Meridel Le Sueur's The Girl is an example of Bakhtinian's fifth type, I employ works of feminist criticism, especially those of Bakhtinian (or dialogic) feminism.[3] My attempt starts from changing the word "man" quoted above for "woman," since I argue that Le Sueur had to invent a new genre in order to fictionalize a working-class woman protagonist.

Because of its portrayal of a hero/heroine's "(self-)making," the Bildungsroman constitutes a vital genre for feminist literature. Together with this is feminist writers' wish to create a community of feminist readers, who might identify themselves with the "learning" heroines of such novels. An illustrative example of this "writing-reading relationship" is Erica Jong's Fear of Flying (1973), which contributed enormously to the raising of a feminist consciousness during the Second Wave. However, it must be noted that, from Hegel to Felski, critics have pointed out the alliance of the Bildungsroman and a particular group of readers-writers from the middle class. Along with other specialists in working-class literature,[4] Ann Pancake argues that 1930s authors satirized the conventions of the Bildungsroman for serving a particular middle-class ideology that "valorized individual change" (1998, 292). Pancake continues that most scholars dealing with proletarian novels concentrate much on the "individual" and little on the "change" portrayed in them. Instead, she focuses on the "change" because of a concern that "the myth of an ever-ascendant class trajectory for those who strive hard enough has consequences in justifying American class inequities" (293). In Pancake's view, both Le Sueur's The Girl (1978) and Tillie Lerner Olsen's Yonnondio (1975) defy conventional ideas about "change" and assumptions of "teleology, linearity, vertical narrative movement, and temporal order" (1978, 292). I will come back to these ideas below. At this stage, I would like to stress that Bakhtin makes clear the existence of a non-individualistic Bildungsroman - his fifth type. Hence my comparison between two subtypes of feminist Bildungsromane that, in broad terms, correspond to the "middle-class" and the "working-class." Comparisons can be made between not only the "male" and "female" protagonists but also among the latter. I also wish to explore the question of the "individual" Bildung and how it interacts with the community, which Pancake does not write about.

Like Bakhtin, contemporary critics of the female Bildungsroman point out that a particular plot, based upon the protagonist's life and quest, is a key feature of the genre (Kester 1995; Labovitz 1988; Pin-chia 1998). Accordingly, I begin with a close reading of the development of the The Girl's plot, whose protagonist is called, simply, "Girl." Girl's Bildung process starts from the moment she leaves her home in the countryside for the city of St. Paul (Minnesota), where she starts to work as a waitress. Girl's change of environment is not her own choice. This is one of the main differences between the Bildungsromane of middle-class female protagonists and the Bildungsromane of working-class female ones: the middle-class "heroine undergoes experiences which she both seeks and demands, either through goals set by herself or by an ideal she follows" (Labovitz 1988, 245); on the contrary, the lower-class protagonist pursues more materialistic goals, such as her own survival. Girl leaves home out of pure economic necessity: "...papa was driven to a fury sitting down with all the mouths to feed. We had to eat in relays" (Le Sueur 1978, 30). Furthermore, present scholars of the "female" novel of education argue for an important differentiation from the "male" one. In the "female" Bildungsroman, the narrator is no longer an omniscient voice, distanced from the text, but an "I," a "first person narrator." Once again, this characteristic might be applicable only to middle-class heroines. Writers of proletarian literature enhance the vitality of the community in the formation novels of working-class protagonists: they "rewrite the individual quest as a collective one" (Pancake 1998, 292). This is coherent with Bakhtin's quoted description of the emergence of

a whole "world" in his fifth type of Bildungsroman. Through Le Sueur's characterizations, we finally learn about the voices and opinions of the "other," of lower-class women, who are marginalized in many literary texts, even in feminist ones. In The Girl, the main character grows to maturity with the help of her "ABC" or her three good friends: Amelia, Belle and Clara.

Amelia, an active veteran member of the Workers Alliance, tells Girl "stories [she] had never heard before," such as how they "smacked tar feathers on [her son] and set fire to him" (Le Sueur 1978, 136). Belle, the owner of a bar called the German Village where Girl works as waitress, tells her of her thirteen abortions (1978, 12) and of her abusive husband, who occasionally gives her one "black eye" (1978, 20) and "beat[s]" her (1978, 75). Clara - waitress, prostitute, and Girl's best friend - teaches her "how to wander on the street and not to be picked up by…police matrons…[who would] sterilize [her]" (1978, 1). Toward the end of the novel, Amelia, Belle, Clara, Girl and other women form an all-female community. The self-segregation of this community is not a casual or unconditioned choice. On the contrary, the women go to live together for many reasons, one being to escape abusive treatment by men, such as battering (1978: 81, 83, 113) and rape (1978: 51, 72, 130). Most importantly, Le Sueur's community of proletarian women prove to have a different set of values and practices that can be related to the "ethics of care."[5] As we will see, thanks to the ethics of care, Girl "grows" to understand and believe in herself as a woman, a girlfriend, a worker and a mother.

The characters of The Girl have nominally "other" foreign origins. For instance, Girl's last name (Schaffer) sounds German; Butch says their future baby is "Irish" (1978, 78); and Belle comes from Wales (1978, 54). As in Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic novel, Le Sueur's Bildungsroman attempts to contain all the "other" (everyday, marginal) languages: slang - "Black Maria" (1978, repeated throughout); speech representations - "pardner" (1978, 66); idioms - "[s]he gave me the willys" (1978, 128); and so forth. These are the voices that, denied artistic privilege, demand their inclusion in the symbolic (see note 6), and that reveal their importance from the novel's beginning. When Girl arrives at the German Village, the other characters say she is "a virgin from the country" (1978, 2), an "infant," "green," "too young" (1978, 19), "little," a "kid" (1978, 28), and they agree that she needs to learn (1978: 1, 9, 17, 77), as corresponds to a novel of becoming. In Bakhtinian thought, a person's dialogic maturity is achieved through a struggle between the "authoritative word" and the "inner personal voice." As an example, Bakhtin makes a certainly unintended feminist association between the "authoritative word" and the "word of the fathers" (Bakhtin 1934-5, 342). From a feminist dialogical perspective, the female subject "emerges" by disidentifying herself with patriarchal discourse. Therefore, in her "(re)education" process, Girl's consciousness is formed by leaving aside some voices (such as her boyfriend's) and choosing among others (such as her female friends').

Shortly after their first date, Butch keeps obsessively going "after [Girl]" till they have an unpleasant argument (1978, 34). During the row, Butch's and Girl's use of language is quite different: he swears, "Lordgodchrist and the seven angels" (1978, 48), and insults her and she pleads with him to keep quiet. Most often, Girl feels bewildered and unable to counteract his remarks (1978: 6, 7, 11). Their relationship is representative of what some feminist dialogical critics consider the speech hierarchy present in (most) male-female conversational exchanges (Pearce 1994). There is a moment when Girl desperately reads "all the sandwich signs" of the cafeteria, where they are sitting, as if looking for a better way to communicate: "american cheese, chickenhamporkcoffemilkbuttermilklettucetomatohotbeef. They looked like signs like lovehatejealousymarriage" (1978, 49). Like the antimodernists, working-class authors are said to consciously rebel against the language system, yet through traditional styles of writing (Crawford 1990, 53-4). In the quoted fragment, Le Sueur's experimentation with writing is more than an aesthetic exercise. The Girl is set in the Depression, when people like these characters could not afford to buy much, let alone food in restaurants. Le Sueur attacks capitalist devices, such as advertisements, which ignore as well as hide people's misery. Girl's discussion with Butch concerns his wanting to have sex with her on the spot. Their disagreement works as an example of the different voices and ideas of the men and women represented in Le Sueur's novels. Felski says that "[the] interactions and antagonisms between the

values of female community and…[those of a] male-defined society emerge as a defining feature of the feminist Bildungsroman as a genre" (1989, 141).

In The Girl, men do not seem to know women's needs. Butch says to Girl: "[w]hat the hell do you want?" (1978, 50). They also ignore what it is they should give women, or how to give it; Hoink says to Belle: "I'm giving you all I can" (1978, 50). Unable to give, they beat them. Girl reflects that while growing up, "[m]y father planted a longing in me" (1978, 50): "[h]e only had to look at me to want to hit me good and plenty. I thought it was because he saw that wanting in me" and he could not fulfil it (1978, 30). As corresponds to a class-conscious Bildungsroman, Girl's mature reflection offers a socio-political critique of the establishment. Girl and Butch continue their relationship, which ends in an unexpected pregnancy. Fortunately, in the community of women Girl finds the necessary dialogic understanding, the words of comfort and unconditional support she needs while becoming a woman and a mother.

If the others' voices have a crucial role in the formation of the subject, the extra-linguistic also plays a part. Traditionally, bodily contact, play, and so forth have been placed in the semiotic (or imaginary) domain, as if they were not part of the real (Morson and Emerson 1997, 187).[6] More optimistically, Bakhtin includes the semiotic domain within the daily, prosaic world, enjoyable and accessible to anyone anytime. As questionable as it might seem, Le Sueur attributes semiotic abilities and practices only to proletarian women. In her narratives, middle-class mothers and daughters have neither close nor warm relationships (Le Sueur 1939). Further, the medically-treated labours of birth for middle-class female characters are absent of care or emotions (Le Sueur 1984). In The Girl, working-class women's semiotic signs are explicit in their manifestations of love. When Girl is already pregnant, there is a bank holdup, in which Butch, her baby's father, is killed. As a witness to Girl's emotional breakdown, Amelia tells her:

> You are going to have a child now? she smiled…Yes, I said…Why, she said, you will have a child and then you will belong to the whole earth…She was the first person who seemed to be glad of it…I feel lonely, I said…why you aren't alone now, she laughed, he will dog your heels now all right, day in and day out. Try and be alone now Ho! she cried laughing, she'll be kicking around like a sack full of kittens in no time…You had to laugh. She was so comical peering into my face, stroking my arms…I know how it is, she said…But lubchick, look! we [Belle, Clara and herself] are all here. (1978, 112)

Expressing signs of affection, through terms of endearment ("lubchick") and caresses, strengthens female bonding and provides a means of spiritual survival. For some feminists, practices like these belong to the "ethics of care" (see note 5), whose outcomes, such as sympathy and "use-value," have been considered "private" and/or "feminine." As I will show later, contemporary theorists of the "ethics of care" intend to promote these values in the "public," so-called "human," realm so as to extend them to everybody.

Another well-known semiotic/somatic element is laughter. For class-conscious writers, moving the reader is a vital dialogic device through which they try to convert the audience. In the words of Bakhtin, "[l]aughter is a...prerequisite for fearlessness wit[h] which...to approach the world realistically" (Bakhtin 1941, 23). The use of irony and laughter, for instance as a means to overcome a difficult time, is central in what Bakhtin would call "double-sidedness" as opposed to the usage of a "one-sided" approach (Bakhtin 1940, 55). Bakhtinian double-sidedness may also be a feature of the "ethics of care," which promotes going beyond a simple rational approach to events. This sort of double-sidedness is often employed by Le Sueur. Beaten by the Depression, Girl and her friends have to go on welfare. At the "relief office," Girl is advised to follow a healthy diet during pregnancy. But the irony is that only wealthy women can follow it: "well, oranges don't grow in the fine tropical climate of Minnesota" (Le Sueur 1978, 117). When Girl's pregnancy is already advanced, she and Clara wander around the streets in fear, cold and hunger. Nevertheless, they once go to a café to have a soda and "laug[h] about the oranges and one quart of milk a day…[Girl recalls] I never laughed so much" (1978, 120). These examples are evidence of what is most impressive about this female community, which is their resilience: amusing, self-ironic

creative resistance. In other words, being marginalized by gender, and by class, implies oblivion and segregation. Nonetheless, the margin can be a space for resistance and creation. But beyond romanticizing the periphery, one should look at the institutional treatment of it too.

In the real America of the 1930s, lower-class women were pursued by people who worked as "spies" for the institutions. In this novel, the protagonist is assigned to one Anna Bradley, who has to make sure that Girl does not commit "any immorality" (1978, 127). If the patriarchal discourse of morality is relentless for upper-class women, it is even more so for the women of the lower classes. At a certain point, Girl is assisted by the social agencies as a result of her economic hardships and her pregnancy. After studying her case, the social worker writes a report suggesting that Girl "should be tested for sterilization after the baby is born" (1978, 129). Social workers such as these represent the kind of Le Sueurian middle-class women who are unable to understand dialogically and help poor women, and who are thus unable to do any other work but "state work."[7] The report itself constitutes a horrifying piece of historical evidence of the policing and sterilization of the poor.[8] Historians have demonstrated that the practice of sterilization "must be seen both as an attempt by the state to regulate the terms of family life and as a repressive weapon against the poor" (Shapiro 1985, 27). Hence, it is not surprising that pregnancy is considered a "Treasure" among these proletarian women, though not so among proletarian men (Le Sueur 1978, 134). Butch takes Girl to an abortionist, but she manages to escape. Having secured her pregnancy, Girl thinks: "I had to smile. I had robbed the bank. I had stolen the seed. I had it on deposit. It was cached. It was safe…I had the key" (1978, 85). Her thoughts are related to the differences in the values of the male community, who organize a bank robbery, and the values of the female one, who are more concerned with care. As part of her Bildung process, Girl's consciousness is thus starting to awaken to new values like maternity, care, and class.

In contrast with governmental discipline, both the workers' labour and the labour of birth constitute and produce "work" (Falcón 1994). Besides, a labour of birth appears as real labour, work without the (possible) obstacles of economic exchange and alienation. In this sense, giving birth is a form of "use-value" labour, whereas, in the capitalist system labour is only considered under "exchange-value" forms. Displaying the generosity that characterizes these dispossessed women characters (Le Sueur 1978, 22 & 76), they all care for each other and provide emotional support for Girl while she is in labour. Her experience of giving birth, Girl contends, is

> the realest dream. I saw Amelia leaning between my legs looking at me saying breathe - push - wait - breathe. It was like being run over by a truck when the pains came. But the women were pressing around now, I could look into their faces. They seem to breathe with me, like a great wind through their bodies like wind in a woods…I felt like all the river broke in me and poured and gave and opened. Was it my cry, the cry of the women, the cry of a child?…Covered with a kind of slime and dark [Amelia] lay the child on me. A girl, she cried … [and the baby] turned golden as Clara. (1978, 147)

The ethicists of care acknowledge that "self and other are interdependent and that life...can only be sustained by care in relationships" (Gilligan 1982, 127). As I am trying to show, Le Sueur's novel illustrates Gilligan's theory in various ways.[9] Unfortunately and as a result of electroshock treatment, Clara dies at the birth of Girl's daughter. As if a continuation of Clara's life, the baby is named after her (Le Sueur 1978, 148).

As Clara's best friend, Girl is concerned about what to do in order that she and the rest of the downtrodden are "spoken for" (1978, 145). Parallel to her class trajectory, from "working-class" to "poor," Girl becomes a witness of and a listener to the complaints of the downtrodden. Even so, the poor are not used to protesting: "There are maybe two thousand people…living right out there, hungry," but "people are always very quiet about hunger" (1978, 114). As previously denounced by Le Sueur, in the time of both Al Capone and Joseph McCarthy, "everybody [seemed] afraid to think" (Le Sueur 1953, 136). Under such living conditions, one wonders how "the world" can publicly "emerge" in the way described by Bakhtin. For

the readers nonetheless, Girl's Bildung process turns her into a "self-producing narrating subjec[t]" (Kester 1995, 5), whose "subjectivity…[is] contingent, collective, and historical" (16). The (hi)story of a person/collectivity is related to two further questions Le Sueur poses about memory and dreams.

Memory and dreams are essential for proletarian authors, who intend to rewrite "History" as well as to build a better future. The Girl's characters remember, dream and daydream a lot. For instance, Girl dreams about the shooting at the bank before it actually happens (Le Sueur 1978, 87). The intrusions of memory and dreams interrupt the chronological flow of events. Ann Pancake associates the classical (or middle-class) Bildungsroman's belief in time with "the American belief in unfettered upward mobility" (Pancake 1998, 295). In Pancake's opinion, class-conscious writers' rejection of chronological time implies an attack of capitalism. In The Girl, capitalist ideology is mocked as hypocritical through the erosion of the male characters' dreams of success - for instance, the ones they have while planning the hold-up. Contrary to these (temporal) frustrations, Pancake emphasizes "the role of cyclic woman's time" in Le Sueur's novel (1998, 302), which confirms that female biological rhythms subvert temporal expectations. What Pancake does not say is that at the birth of Girl's baby the three references to noontime (Le Sueur 1978, 141-5), the time of the demonstration discussed below, make up thirty-six. In thirty-six weeks, a woman such as Girl could possibly carry out a healthy pregnancy. In the end, the female body is not completely chaotic, which again deconstructs another masculinist and temporal myth. As already advanced, the values and community-life of Le Sueur's women characters are far from other patriarchal expectations.

In this female community, even the deaf, like Alice, can communicate effectively, as in the following example: "[Alice writes], Don't cry[, Girl]. We, the common people, suffer together...How did she know I felt sad [Girl thinks]?...Nothing can hold us apart... even deafness...or loneliness...or fear" (1978, 133). Alice adds: "I am with the Workers Alliance...They demand food, jobs...[Girl] looked at the word demand. It was a strong word." Identity is partly linguistic, so Girl keeps on "growing"/learning new concepts as she undergoes a new experience - "[i]t's crowning, Amelia cried, I never had heard that. The crown of its head" (1978, 147). The language/experience connection is related to the fact that Le Sueur had to produce a new genre, the feminist proletarian Bildungsroman (or Bakhtin's theorized fifth type), in order to account for a particular female experience. With Alice's help, Girl starts to become conscious of her identity as a worker: "I worked all my life [Girl writes]…[Afterwards, Girl] took the pad. [She] was excited. [She] read We are both workers!" (1978, 133). This awareness is vital to introduce the idea of "woman" as a "working subject" in our (patriarchal) vocabulary. The recognition of woman as a working subject should lead to her inclusion and recognition in the public sphere, from which she has been excluded. It should also lead to woman's participation in the symbolic as a possible agent of change. Actually, the didactic aims both of class-conscious literature and the Bildungsroman genre pursue this agency outside the text (Kester 1995; Pin-chia 1998).

In addition to her interest in consciousness raising, Le Sueur urges marginalized female groups to form coalitions of feminist action. During Clara's illness, the female community organizes a demonstration demanding "Milk and Iron Pills for Clara" (Le Sueur 1978, 145). At the moment Girl thinks: "I couldn't get over it, that they all should care…the men kind of hung back but the women gathered…the great Mothers…" (1978, 146). Once more, Le Sueur attributes maternal qualities of love and care to all proletarian women but not to men. No doubt, Le Sueur's exclusion of men and some women, the middle-class ones, might seem unacceptable (except within the context of this novel). The Girl can be said to celebrate an "ethics of care," in which the lower-class mother is a symbol of salvation for the poor. What contemporary ethicists of care primarily demand is the abolition of the hierarchy of "public (masculine) / private (feminine)" values; and, the inclusion of the private values within the public sphere, so that everybody (also men) can enjoy them - as stated in Camps' proposal (1997). Patriarchy has turned into "values" the achievements of the public realm, such as having "professional" success/money. At the same time, these values have been identified as "masculine," since, until fairly recently, men were the only ones allowed to participate in the mentioned realm. The ethicists of care propose to start with a change in our values. From here we could move onto

the abolition of the "public"/"private" hierarchy, so as to move further onto the dialogic exchange between the mentioned two spheres. During her feminist and socialist conversion, Girl changes her mind with respect to what "Butch want[ed]...He was playing the wrong game. They were all trying to win - what? It was the wrong holdup...I had just outfoxed the cops...with the loot under my belly. I am the Treasure" (1978, 134). About to give birth, Girl stops believing in the values of competition promoted by capitalism (1978, 147).

After Clara's death, the women organize "a mass meeting" (1978, 146), in which to write down their petitions and protests, at "the Labour Temple."[10] Finally, the Bakhtinian "world," to which I allude at the beginning of this article, starts to become: "Take all suggestions down...All accusations…Who didn't care if [Clara] died? Who doesn't care that we are hungry?…Clara never…got rich on the labour of others…Who killed Clara? Who will kill us?…O it was something to hear and see their anger. And their power" (1978, 146, emphasis added). The (ethics of) care reclaimed by Le Sueur and other feminists is not the "care" conceptualized by patriarchy, which (re)imprisons the middle-class woman as the Angel in the House. Le Sueur certainly resists enlarging this prison to house working-class women as well. Thus, she reclaims a care that needs to be "worked for"; a care that both remembers and re-members or gathers people together; a care that speaks for justice and shelters revolutions.

The community's social consciousness and Girl's daughter "emerge" at the same time. Consequently, the youngest heroine will grow to be self-conscious that the "foundations of the world [must] chang[e]" (Bakhtin 1936-8, 24). Furthermore, the newly born girl's "creative initiative" will be able to build a class-consciousness for herself and others because her "becoming" will no longer be "h[er] private affair" (1936-8, 23). With all its promises of becoming and newness, it appears that Bakhtin's Bildungsroman of type five was designed neither for a "male," nor for a "female," but for a feminist working-class female protagonist. All in all, The Girl tells us that there is much to be learned from marginal people, such as proletarian women, as a change in society's values/practices would certainly make us more ethical. We also learn that the working-class woman is not only oppressed through gender by patriarchy, but also through class by the upper classes (including other women). Hopefully, in the future, new feminist subjects will emerge to think cross-class, cross-gender, and to overcome the blindspots of Bakhtin and Le Sueur. Hopefully too, these feminist subjects will also join, whenever needed, to avoid the subjugation of any person/any woman.

Endnotes

1. Finished in 1939, The Girl was rejected for publication probably because of its feminist socialist content. Parts of the book were reprinted as short stories in 1935, '39, '40, '42, '45, and '47. Given the historical moment - late 1950s McCarthyism, the feminist backlash, the Cold War, and so on - the whole novel was only published in 1978, during the second feminist revival. Le Sueur was affiliated to the Communist Party at twenty-four, and remained in it all her life. In an interview recorded with Joe Cuomo, Le Sueur recalled with irony being blacklisted by the McCarthy administration: "Ah, that was an honour." Nowadays, Le Sueur is more known for her anthologized short story, "Annunciation."

2. The so-called father of "dialogics" (see endnote 3), Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin endured part of his life in Stalinist Russia, a regime which even forced his temporary banishment to Kazakhstan. Michael Holquist has provided further details about the almost complete disappearance of his book: "Bakhtin retained only certain preparatory materials...[and] due to the paper shortage, he [turned] them up page by page…to make wrappers for his endless chain of cigarettes. He began smoking pages from the conclusion of the manuscript, so what we have is a small portion of its opening section" (1999, xiii), which is partly quoted at the beginning of this article.

3. Identified as a "new school of criticism" (Pearce 1994, 102), "dialogical feminism" (re)reads Bakhtin's work in order to correct and expand upon it. It obviously is impossible to summarize dialogical thought here. For the purposes of this article, I shall say that "dialogics" comes from "dialogue" and uses dialogue as a form of ethics. Dialogics promotes having many "voices/ideas," which form a vital "compound," instead of a single one and taking into account the others, whom we address, and who respond to us. Some current works of dialogical feminism are Bauer and McKinstry 1991; Hohne and Wussow 1994; and Yaeger

1988.
4. Also termed "class-conscious" and "proletarian" literature, Paul Lauter defines "working-class literature" as "texts by and about the working class that coincide with other literary categories such as literature by women and people of color" (Coiner 1990, 163). Le Sueur is considered along "working-class authors" like Josephine Herbst, Richard Wright, Tess Schlesinger, Sherwood Anderson and Tillie Olsen. Some "classical" scholarly works on proletarian literature are: Rideout 1992; Thompson 2001.
5. Briefly put, the "ethics of care" has been identified with practices historically performed by women such as looking after their direct and in-law families, and creating bonds of love and friendship among people. Given women's marginalization in patriarchy, their practices have not been valued as highly as those traditionally performed by men - such as carrying out tasks involving physical strength. For further information see below and also Benjamin 1995; Cardoni 1998; Gilligan 1982.
6. This terminology comes from Lacan's distinctions between the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. The Imaginary (or Semiotic) corresponds to the pre-Oedipal fusion of mother and child and gives way to the Symbolic with the formation of language and the subject. Extensions to Lacan's definitions associate the symbolic with the spirit, rationality and consciousness, whereas the semiotic is linked to the body, emotions and unconsciousness.
7. Case workers are caustically represented in working-class literature: "It took us eight months to get [my daughter] released home, and only the fact that she gained back so little of her seven lost pounds convinced the social worker" (Olsen [1954], 7).
8. Apparently, women's sterilizations at the time depended on their ability at, nominally, intelligence or "class tests" (Hoy 1995, 56). Le Sueur objected to such methods because lacking an academic education does not entail being unable "to birth a baby or cook meals." For further accounts on sterilization, see her "Sequel to Love."
9. Gilligan's theoretical model is discounted by detractors who argue, for instance, that it "reinscribes patriarchy" (Heyes 2000, 114) or universalizes women and maternity, privileging the figures of white middle-class females. Contrary to these critiques, in Le Sueur's narratives care ethics works much better (and against patriarchy) in lower-class environments than in middle-class ones.
10. Continuing with the redefinition of women's work, this Temple is a place in which to produce (critical labour) and to re-produce (give birth).

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