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Whatever Happened to “Red Emma”?
Emma Goldman, from Alien Rebel to American Icon

Oz Frankel

Over the past quarter of a century, the anarchist Emma Goldman (1869–1940) has assumed a unique position in American politics and culture. “One would be hard-pressed to find another woman of the past who enjoys her privileged status . . . who is emblazoned on as many tee-shirts and postcards,” one observer commented a decade ago.1 The 1960s generation rediscovered and embraced her as a voice for its political concerns and cultural sensibilities, from the struggle against the draft to women’s equality, free love, and defiance of authority—any authority. Radical feminists, the first in the women’s movement to adopt her as an icon, sought to emulate her self-assertive political militancy no less than to embrace her gender critique. In later decades, the impassioned spirit of the 1960s perhaps waned, but the process of canonizing Goldman only accelerated. The deradicalization of the generation who rescued Goldman from collective amnesia facilitated new possibilities for renderings of her, yielding a surplus of meaning and the drifting of Goldman into unexpected corners of the political and public arena.

By the 1990s the icon had “fractured,” offering an appropriate (or an appropriated) version for myriad constituencies. Goldman may be presented as a fighter for free speech, a communitarian, a libertarian, an anticommunist, an extreme individualist, a precursor of modern feminism, or simply expressing a deeply felt sense of intimacy.2

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2 Or it may be the case that the “feminine” name Emma (phonetically reminiscent of forms of the word...
More than fifteen books and over fifty magazine and academic articles about Emma Goldman have been published since the 1960s. She has been featured in more than six plays and in documentaries, children's books, a high school curriculum, Ph.D. dissertations, a mural, and even a computer game. Clicking her name into cyberspace generates an avalanche of texts and images. Most intriguing, since the early 1980s two federal agencies, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission of the National Archives (NHPRC), have supported the Emma Goldman Papers Project as part of an effort to document the lives of notable figures in American history. In 1992, the project published a microfilm edition of more than twenty-two thousand letters, writings, government documents, newspaper clippings, and reminiscences by and on Emma Goldman.3

That the federal government that deported Goldman in 1919 erected a monument in her honor—if only in the form of an academic project—is an extraordinary feat, especially considering that Goldman, a Lithuanian-born immigrant, was incarcerated three times and that her name was entangled in the assassination of President William McKinley and other incidents of lawbreaking and political violence. Enemy of the state, prophet of anarchism, proponent of free love and birth control, and all-purpose rabble-rouser, Goldman was stripped of her American citizenship and eventually deported as an alien for campaigning against the World War I draft; she then reportedly predicted that she would be called back to "Soviet America." This is not the material American heroes are ordinarily made of.

Goldman's posthumous career presents not merely another example of the malleability of memory, collective or other, but also a clear trajectory: an incredible journey from the militant fringes of the extreme Left, from exile, to a safer place approaching the political center or, if you wish, the Americanization of the un-American. In this essay, I explore the circumstances of Goldman's (highly partial) "rehabilitations" since her deportation in 1919 and measure the links between those rehabilitations and a continual, open and implicit, debate over what can qualify as "American." Rather than pointing to amorphous collective memories and images, I examine depictions and understandings of Goldman without losing sight of the institutional and individual agents that mediated them, the literary and visual techniques they employed, as well as the particular communities that have celebrated Goldman. Political affiliation, gender, ethnicity, and, no less important, generation are essential categories in any attempt to characterize producers and consumers of images of Goldman. How has the iconic presence of Emma served small oppositional groups as, over an extended period of time, they transformed themselves? How did representations of her alter as they were mediated by less radical

"mother" in various languages) has been unconsciously preferred to the more masculine (and ethnic) Goldman. For the purpose of this paper, I intend to use Emma Goldman and Goldman interchangeably to refer to the historical figure and Emma to denote a mythologized presence.

forces in society: centrist liberals, federal officials, the press, and mass-produced culture?

This essay thus has two subplots: first, an ostensibly autonomous account of images of Goldman, their sometimes contradictory permutations but ultimately observable patterns and intrinsic rationale; second, the history of the society and political movements that have interpreted and commemorated her. For them Goldman served, I argue, either as a model for emulation or, conversely, as a symbol whose lessons circumvent her specific ideology. But beyond any practical purposes linked to interpretations of Goldman, the former subplot is not merely derivative of the latter. It has a discrete engine of its own: present understandings must be continually, and sometimes uncomfortably, negotiated not only with previous conceptions and images of Goldman but with the objects she left—pamphlets, letters, photos, and her memoirs. The case of the commemoration of Goldman therefore undermines a view of the history of memory as simply a reflection of contemporary needs and concerns.4

I first focus on an episode from Goldman's own lifetime, when the subject, although present, was considered a figure from the past: her short visit to the United States at the beginning of 1934, fourteen years after her deportation and by special permission of the Roosevelt administration. This visit exemplified the limited gesture a government and a society may make toward a onetime seditious enemy, and the official and popular responses to that visit prefigured many depictions of Goldman in later decades. By demonstrating how Goldman and her friends were implicated in the continual rediscoveries and refashionings of her over the last seven decades, I challenge the distinction between actual and posthumous careers. The second and major part of this article explores what happened to "Red Emma" from the late 1960s to the present by following representations of Goldman in popular culture, her role in feminist politics, and the intricate politico-cultural negotiations that facilitated her incorporation into the pantheon of American "founding fathers."

The changing perceptions of Emma Goldman and their impressive diversity are not just products of cultural practices of interpretation that render a person's life open to various readings as if a text. In Goldman's case, the act of reading has a literal and literary object as well. Goldman's autobiography, *Living My Life* (1931), has

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assumed a pivotal role in rediscoveries of her. Providing an enormous wealth of detail besides profound ambiguities, it has enticed rereading and reinterpretation. Historically, the autobiography functioned in contradictory ways: it presented Goldman as an uncompromising radical role model but suggested an opening for making peace between the anarchist rebel and the American mainstream. Moreover, it offered itself and Goldman's private self as alternative subjects for scrutiny and identification, separable from Goldman's rich political writings and public career. Since the autobiography has often subsumed Goldman's identity, this essay is as much the history of Living My Life as it is the story of Emma Goldman in American consciousness.  

Encouraged by friends and after gathering old letters and some financial support, Goldman began writing her memoirs in 1928, working long hours at her temporary home in Saint-Tropez, France. Writing provided the exiled Goldman with a purpose and promised some income and recognition. It had been almost a decade since she and 248 other anarchists and radicals were deported. Life as a wandering deportee was a stifling, at times dangerous, existence that the energetic woman, nearly sixty years old in 1928, found almost unbearable. Her rupture with the Bolshevik government in the early 1920s produced what was probably the first damning account of that regime, My Disillusionment in Russia (1923), which had significantly marginalized her within the American and the European Left. Away from old friends, family, and, most important, the loyal audiences that had flocked to her lectures, Goldman expressed her hope of returning to the United States. She articulated this wish of her "hungry heart" in the language of desire, claiming she "longed for America like a woman to a man." Early attempts to secure her return ended in failure.  

In 1931, after more than two years of strenuous work, the book was brought to print by Alfred Knopf. In two volumes, of nearly a thousand pages, Goldman provided an epic narrative woven around the protagonist's quest for an ideal society and her self-sacrifice in struggles against the oppression of governments or on the frontier of personal relations. Living My Life detailed, mostly in emotional rather than graphic terms, sexual experiences and intimate relationships with men. Later observers would note that, despite its defiant candor, the autobiography often smoothed over knotty political as well as private issues, downplayed the European influence on Goldman's anarchism (which she now preferred to associate with the legacy of Thomas Jefferson and Henry David Thoreau), and obscured the extent of her early support for political violence. In plotting out her life, Goldman was influenced by the new genre of sexual biographies—Frank Harris's My Life and Loves (1923–1927) was one prototype—but as significantly, she followed the conventions of sentimental fiction and of such popular American novels as Theodore

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Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900). Goldman thought that the life she lived, the life worth committing to writing, was lived in America. She alluded to her childhood in Lithuania and Russia predominantly in flashbacks. During the last stage of writing, exhausted and with her eyesight rapidly deteriorating, she decided to conclude the book with her deportation, and she only reluctantly succumbed to Knopf's persistent demand that she add chapters about her experiences in Lenin's Russia and western Europe.\(^7\)

The autobiographical narrative as text and the retrospective reflections by author and readers as mutual gestures generated new understandings of Emma Goldman after years in which she had been largely forgotten. Major newspapers and magazines, including the *New York Times*, the *Saturday Review of Literature*, and the *New Yorker*, warmly recommended *Living My Life* as one of the best books of the year. Illustrating the age's obsession with "personality," the *New York Times* advised readers to pay less attention to Goldman's politics and to read the book "as a human document of the most absorbing interest. Its dogma becomes of lesser importance as one considers its characters." The writer R. L. Duffus concluded his review there with the observation that Goldman "belongs to a species which is at least temporarily vanishing . . . an original and picturesque personality." In the same vein, *Time* magazine commented, "Everybody admires a fighter who has heart. Now that Emma Goldman's fighting Red career is finished, you may even find it possible to add a kind of warmth to your disapproving admiration of her. . . . That is, after you have read her own story of her stormy life."\(^8\)

Goldman and her memoirs became objects of a professionally organized marketing campaign. On the eve of publication, Knopf told the press in larger-than-life style that *Living My Life* is "a narrative that omits nothing, that defends nothing, that aims to do nothing except to tell the whole truth."\(^9\) By the turn of the century, Goldman had learned to appeal to wide American publics and to manipulate the press. In the 1930s, however, she could exercise little control over her image, in part because the government that had vilified her in predictable ways was no more. Moreover, Goldman's main strength was her wizardry on the stump, fusing fervid rhetoric with a spectacular delivery marked by a theatrical presentation and


The autobiography removed her from such direct contact with her audience and, contrary to her own expressed wishes, allowed readers to decouple and reconstruct the relationship between the life she had intensely lived and her political convictions. Reviewers tended to collapse Goldman's ideology into her character and consequently to relegate anarchism to the cemetery of political thought. "Her emotion is both intense and universal," wrote the sympathetic Freda Kirchwey in the Nation, "her expression of it—in words and actions—unrestrained, her courage completely instinctive. . . . Always she feels first and thinks later—and less." The New Republic commented on her "instinctivism" and "eccentric emotionalism," and even a friend, John Haynes Holmes, remarked that parts of her book are "screaming with feeling, sobbing uncontrolled temperament, explosives, eruptions, like from a volcano." Some argued that anarchists all carved their politics out of unbridled feelings, which the critics juxtaposed to the supposedly cool-headed scientism of the Communists. These reactions were, on the one hand, stereotypically gendered responses, depicting the female subject as a hysterical woman. On the other hand, the critics were guided by the manner Goldman chose for recounting the story of her life. To give one famous example, the young Goldman became an anarchist around 1886-1887 during the trial of the Haymarket martyrs, the five anarchists falsely accused in conjunction with the bomb that had killed seven policemen in Haymarket Square, Chicago. In Living My Life, Goldman described her initiation into anarchism as an epiphany. The sudden conversion was provoked by a disparaging remark about the men made by a distant relative on the night of their execution. Goldman first launched at the woman's throat, then chased her out of the house, and eventually fell to the floor in a fit of rage and tears.10

Emotionalism, hysteria, instinctivism—these categories testified to the emergence of a new discourse in American life. Indeed, the pro-Communist playwright Laurence Stallings, who titled his hostile review "The Unmarried Life of Emma & Co., or Goldman, Goldman, Goldman Uber Alles," commenced it with a bid for psychoanalysis:

It is my belief that a good analyst would make out of Emma Goldman's Living My Life the almost perfect analysis, in the sense of the subconscious controlling the outward ego—particularly in the Freudian school of preponderant emphasis being directed to sexual love—and could show with absolute conclusiveness that this sexual force can be attached to every move of her long, disputatious, theatrical life.11

Other writers regarded the memoirs' susceptibility to psychoanalytical interpretation as inherently redeeming. Duffus speculated that Goldman was "conditioned" by a miserable home life dominated by an unhappy and tyrannical father.

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11 New York Sun, Nov. 20, 1934.
Similar childhood predicaments shaped the character of other anarchists, he maintained: Johann Most was turned against society by his classmates' ridicule of his disfigured face, and Alexander Berkman, Goldman's lifelong ally, companion, and onetime lover, was supposedly driven to anarchism by the death of a favorite uncle. These simplistic psychological readings drew portraits of radicals with human faces. Goldman's own engagement with psychology (she heard Sigmund Freud lecture in Vienna in 1896, and she was intrigued by the sex psychologies of Havelock Ellis and others) rendered *Living My Life* highly suggestive for such a treatment, a possibility later scholars would discover and exploit. Furthermore, her apparent obliviousness to the full implications of her own attempts to probe her inner self made psychological readings still more inviting.12

As for the small anarchist community, its members read *Living My Life* with great ambivalence. Several of Goldman's old comrades privately expressed disappointment at what they considered an exaggerated focus on her sex life and unfavorable depictions of fellow anarchists. Lucy Parsons, widow of the Haymarket martyr Albert Parsons, reportedly found the book "disgusting." But another old friend, Roger Baldwin, published one of the most generous reviews of the memoirs. Writing in the *New York Herald Tribune*, Baldwin acknowledged his intellectual and personal debt to Goldman ("the eye opener of my life"), crediting her as the inspiration for the establishment of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which he chaired. Even though anarchism was eclipsed by communism and had "dwindled into comparative insignificance throughout the world," neither Goldman's importance nor the strength of her philosophy of freedom had been diminished. The publication of *Living My Life* expedited the rapprochement between the two, following tension when Baldwin, like other American liberals, had undermined her testimonies on the atrocities of the Soviet state.13

In the summer of 1933, Mabel Carver Crouch, a writer with ties to the new Roosevelt administration, visited Saint-Tropez and committed herself to campaign for Goldman's return. Diligently, she recruited Sinclair Lewis, Evelyn Scott, Sherwood Anderson, Josephine Baker, John Dewey, and others to act as a committee in favor of admitting Goldman for a short visit. Baldwin spearheaded the negotiations with the Department of Labor in Washington. Convinced that the final decision on Goldman's case would be made at the presidential level, Baldwin confidently informed Goldman that he had heard that Eleanor Roosevelt read *Living My Life* with "great interest. She spoke highly of it to a friend of mine." He used the autobiography in his dealings with the administration, claiming that "it would seem a little absurd to exclude from the United States one whose words in print have had so large an audience here."14

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12 For an analysis of the influence of Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis on Goldman's thinking, see Bonnie Haaland, *Emma Goldman: Sexuality and the Impurity of the State* (New York, 1993), 123–43.


14 Roger Baldwin to Goldman, Dec. 27, 1933, in *Emma Goldman Papers*, ed. Falk, Zboray, and Hall, reel
By mid-December Goldman arrived in Montreal, expecting to cross the border soon. During the frantic negotiations, replete with setbacks, the Labor Department insisted that she must not address "immediate political issues" in her planned United States lecture tour. The department rejected a list of proposed lectures with provocative titles such as "Dictatorships Right and Left—A Modern Religious Hysteria." Baldwin and Arthur Leonard Ross (Goldman's attorney) pressured Goldman to acquiesce. Ever attentive to the New Deal administration's political sensitivities and at times defending Washington rather than representing Goldman, Baldwin kept the ACLU out of the campaign and never attempted to transform the visit into a test case for civil liberties. He explained his own role as that of an old friend.

Only after a new sanitized list of lecture titles, mostly on literature and drama, was drawn was Goldman granted a three-month visa. In a press release issued on that occasion, the Department of Labor attempted to minimize the political significance of the visit, dryly noting that Goldman was sixty-four years old, a British subject, married to a "Scotch coal miner." For the first time in her political career, Goldman reached an agreement with the United States government that restricted her freedom of speech. She did so reluctantly, however, and reproached Baldwin for his everlasting "naive faith" in official promises.

The administration's decision received wide publicity in the press. Reminiscences about the years when "Americans intimidated their children by threatening to turn them over to Emma Goldman unless they were good" often engendered a newfound sympathy for the woman who had made a career of being a public menace. "Odd it is to think that the name of this valkyre of anarchism has little power to move us now, save with a strangely tolerant reaction that verges on sentimentalism," observed the Portland Oregonian the morning after Washington's announcement. "Yes, there are times, after the passage of years, when to meet an ardent old enemy is distinctly like meeting an ardent old friend. . . . the times when we thought Emma spelled trouble were truly the halcyon days. We knew not the meaning of trouble." The Omaha World Herald predicted, "It certainly will seem like old times

29; Baldwin to Daniel McCormack, Dec. 28, 1933, ibid. That Christmas, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared an amnesty for American citizens and alien residents who had been prosecuted for obstructing the draft during the war. Since Goldman's citizenship was revoked in 1909, she could benefit from the amnesty only indirectly. See Ross to Goldman, Dec. 29, 1933, ibid.; and Goldman to Stella Ballantine, Dec. 29, 1933, ibid.

15 The administration was concerned that granting Goldman a visa might provide a weapon for forces in Congress opposed to a new liberal immigration bill. Baldwin to Goldman, Jan. 5, Jan. 8, 1934, ibid. Baldwin wrote to Mabel Carver Crouch, "I wish we could have accomplished Emma Goldman's admission without any restrictions, but I can quite understand the Department of Labor's caution in exposing themselves to criticism that she might agitate the very propaganda for which she was deported." Baldwin to Mabel Carver Crouch, Jan. 10, 1934, ibid.

again with Emma Goldman back in the country, even though she returns as the news dispatch tells us a 'gayer and a mellower' Emma.'\textsuperscript{17}

The bleached presentation of the old Red Emma (now simply Emma) as harmless, powerless, and even pitiful was enhanced by the efforts of government officials and friends to present the visit as a humanitarian deed on behalf of a political retiree, a gesture of family reunion. Her reported "homesickness" was also perceived as a sign of public repentance: "She had been rather lonesome for America . . . for despite of her preaching she liked us." The general tone of the press was amused. Numerous journalists, tongue in cheek, "calmed" their readers, playing with the absurdities of a potential public scare. Under the title "Who's Afraid of Emma?" the \textit{Rochester Journal} assured the citizens of Goldman's hometown, "Anyone who would construe this brief visit as anything resembling a menace to the country would be likely to be frightened by the pursuit of his own timid shadow."\textsuperscript{18}

Mixing nostalgia with rather sardonic but, significantly, repetitious dismissals of potential fears induced by the old radical, the newspaper reports may have been symptomatic of public nervousness about the radical innovations of the day. Commentators did not overlook the political ironies accentuated by her return to the land of the New Deal. Were the newly minted governmental policies more dangerous than Goldman's anarchism had ever been? Journalists skeptical of the New Deal found themselves, if only as a rhetorical device, on the same side of the barricade with the old anarchist, for whom they otherwise had remarkably little sympathy. After postulating that "Miss Goldman has led a singularly futile life," the \textit{Press Register} could not resist the opportunity to taunt Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration:

The opponent of government in any form has seen government in every country assuming a consistently stronger hold on the individual. We do not know what comfort she can derive from a visit to the shores of the NRA, the CWA, the PWA, the AAA, and a myriad of other alphabetical combinations, all denoting the submergence of the individual and the ascendancy of the government. Still, if she wants to look, the land of the more or less free should let her.\textsuperscript{19}

Also sarcastic, but less hostile, the \textit{Baltimore Sun} expected her to find a remarkably different United States on crossing the Canadian border. "The nation of anarchists which she knew of old changed to a nation clamoring for regimentation; all the dissenters sitting behind deep desks in Washington being paid for having disquieting ideas. It will be interesting to get Emma's 'reaction' to all this." "Poor Emma," declared the \textit{Saginaw News}, "[She] is likely to be somewhat lonesome.

\textsuperscript{17} Canton Repository, Jan. 11, 1934; Portland Oregonian, Jan. 11, 1934; Omaha World Herald, Jan. 14, 1934. See also "A 'Wolf' We Fear Not," \textit{Hartford Daily Times}, Jan. 11, 1934. A few newspapers interviewed journalists who had covered Goldman's speeches at the beginning of the century; see \textit{Lynn [Massachusetts] Item}, Jan. 11, 1934; and \textit{Columbus Dispatch}, Jan. 14, 1934.


\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Press Register}, Jan. 14, 1934; see also \textit{Toledo Blade}, Jan. 13, 1934.
when she starts getting about in this country again. There are so very few capitalists left to denounce."20

The visit offered newspapers an opportunity to sensationalize Goldman's career, recasting its subversive elements—now deemed irrelevant or "antediluvian" as Heywood Broun put it in the New York World-Telegram—as titillating, gossipy adventure stories.21 In its Sunday edition the St. Louis Post-Dispatch carried a full-page feature titled "High Priestess of Anarchy Back in America—Emma Goldman, Once Considered the ‘Most Dangerous Woman in the United States’—and Her Exciting Career." Accompanied by severalillustrations depicting the most spectacular events in Goldman's life—including her time behind bars, deportation, and smuggled journey, by boat and at night, from Sweden to Germany—the article had a comic book quality. In most of the drawings, she appeared in what was by the 1930s old-fashioned apparel: long dress, round hat, and, of course, rimless pince-nez spectacles. "There are few women in the world today who have had careers as turbulent and adventurous as Emma Goldman's," declared the journalist Arthur Strawn. Her life provided endless episodes of heroism and suffering whose impact Strawn attempted to read on her body:

She is a short, dumpy woman of sixty-four now, her hair gray and faded. Her face bears the marks of disappointment and hardship, and her manner suggests weariness. But the pale eyes behind her thick, rimless glasses can still light up with the old fire, and her voice can cut with its old incisive clarity at the mention of such distasteful subjects as war, tyranny, Government, Hitler, Mussolini and similar restraints on personal liberty.22

The gratuitous remarks on Goldman’s age and her aging female body that saturated press reports often suggest Goldman’s de-masculinization: insinuating that time and tribulations exposed a previously hidden feminine side. A more subtle technique juxtaposed portraits of the young and old Goldman, as did the editors of the Waterbury American under the headline “Yesterday's Anarchist: Today's Visitor.” Goldman’s marriage to the Welsh coal miner James Colton, evidently a formal move designed to give her a British passport, was highlighted in almost all the reports either as a curiosity (“'Red' Emma will enter the U.S. as Mrs. Colton”) or, with ridicule and scorn, as an indication that she had lost her strength and vigor along with her name and legal status. The preacher of free love was coming back defeated, a married woman.23

Fourteen years after she had boarded the ship Buford at Ellis Island under the watchful eyes of police and government agents, Emma Goldman could still intrigue

20 Baltimore Sun, Jan. 11, 1934; Saginaw News, Jan. 12, 1934; see also “Poor Emma Goldman! Poor rugged individualists!” Waterbury [Connecticut] Republican, Jan. 13, 1934; and “A Disillusioned Radical Returns,” Galveston News, Jan. 12, 1934.
21 “Anarchists have gone the way of antediluvian mammals. They lacked mobility and have become extinct.” New York World-Telegram, Jan. 18, 1934. Heywood Broun, a sympathizer, later chaired several of Goldman’s lectures.
22 St. Louis Post-Dispatch Magazine, April 1, 1934, p. 4.
23 Waterbury [Connecticut] American, Jan. 16, 1934; Syracuse Post-Standard, Jan. 12, 1934; see also Canton Repository, Jan. 11, 1934; and Philadelphia Inquirer, Jan. 11, 1934.
the American public. Most newspapers recognized the event to be of some symbolic interest. Indeed, Goldman was so thoroughly cast as an exotic celebrity that an impresario offered her two thousand dollars a week to appear in vaudeville theaters giving a six-minute talk three times a day; she rejected the bid reluctantly since the money was much needed. The overwhelming majority of newspapers distanced themselves from her past politics, although many journalists had a hard time explaining to their readers the precise nature of her ideology. If in the past anarchism had been recognized as a branch of communitarian or Communist thought, in the January 1934 press coverage it was often associated with individualism, a confusion befitting the new label assigned to Goldman, “rugged individualist.”

Most were convinced that there was no harm in her ninety-day sojourn, although there were a few strong critical voices, especially the Hearst newspapers. A Rhode Island newspaper reminded its readers that “this woman is an Anarchist, and the country is in no temper to listen to the harangues of agitators of her type.” The harshest reception awaited her on the pages of the Communist party papers. Under the headline “Emma Goldman, Here to Make Some Cash, Sneers at USSR,” the Daily Worker condemned Goldman as a press-loving archdefamer of the Soviet Union eager to make money after the royalties from her books attacking Communists had dwindled. “She has grown stocky,” reported Sender Garlin (this time her body testified to her supposed indulgence in capitalistic pleasures), and she "spoke of her past with the reminiscent braggadocio characteristic of a retired prima donna.” The Daily Worker refused to accept any advertisement of Goldman’s lectures and advised its readers to shun her. Interestingly, the very day when the Department of Labor consented to Goldman’s tour, Washington and Moscow exchanged ambassadors, following formal United States recognition of the Soviet regime.

No one better captured the ironies of Goldman’s arrival in New York City than the reporter for the New York Sun who waited on the morning of February 2, 1934, at Penn Station with dozens of colleagues for the celebrity’s train to pull in.

In her grayish dress, with a figured scarf, predominantly red, over her shoulder, her black shoes’ tips peeping from under brown gaiters and barely touching the floor, there was a grandma air about her. Then, she might have been an important industrialist, a member of the nobility, a noted economist of capitalistic ideas instead of Comrade Goldman, famed for agitation, blamed for violence.

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24 On the vaudeville bid, see Goldman to Ballantine, Dec. 29, 1933, in Emma Goldman Papers, ed. Falk, Zboray, and Hall, reel 29; Goldman to Rudolph and Milly Rocker, Jan. 2, 1934, ibid.; and Goldman to Berkman, Jan. 6, 1934, ibid. Liberal newspapers questioned the limitations imposed on Goldman’s visit. See, for example, New York Herald Tribune, Jan. 19, 1934.

25 For warnings against Goldman’s visit, see Pawtucket (Rhode Island) Times, Jan. 12, 1934; and Seattle Times, Jan. 12, 1934. New York Daily Worker, Feb. 3, 1934; see also “Emma Goldman ‘Dangerous’ Even to Communists Here,” Brooklyn Citizen, Feb. 3, 1934. The Paul Jones Council 115 of the United American Mechanics wrote to the president to protest Goldman’s readmission. The most notable objection to the visit came from Eugene Cantin, a member of the jury that convicted Goldman in 1917. Falk, Zboray, and Hall, eds., Emma Goldman Papers, reel 66. Baldwin instructed the members of the Emma Goldman Welcome Home Committee and other friends to write or to wire Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins and the newspapers, endorsing the department’s action. Baldwin to Crouch, Jan. 10, 1934, ibid., reel 29.
sardonic thoughts must have run through her mind, among them the bitter thread that she was thus treated for the same reason that persons smile with mild interest at a Damascus blade which is in a museum case and not in the hands of a man determined to chop people in two with it.26

Goldman was slightly disappointed to find on the queue more journalists than comrades, but during her first hours in New York, she proved that she had lost neither her fervent spirit nor her sharp tongue. "I am disgustingly healthy," she told the reporters in what was noted as "a slightly British accent." Broadly smiling, she added, "I was always considered bad, my friends, but now I am worse." The enchanted journalists from the Herald Tribune, Evening Journal, and World-Telegram filed lengthy anecdotal reports on Goldman's arrival and buoyant style. The New York Sun predicted that members of bridge clubs all over the country would change the dates of their weekly meetings to attend her lecture, so they could go home to tell their husbands, "I saw Emma Goldman this afternoon and she's just too interesting." A few days later, only 350 of the 1,000 who "begged to be included" were admitted to her welcome reception at the Town Hall Club. Roger Baldwin, John Dewey, Henry G. Alsberg, and John Haynes Holmes, among others, greeted the exile returning home, and the atmosphere was euphoric. The Nation reported that the speeches and "the mood of the audience [were] marked by an almost religious ardor." At her next public appearance at John Haynes Holmes's Community Church, Holmes introduced Goldman as a martyr, "crucified on the cross of a nation's scorn," and pleaded that "we award her the crown which her fidelity deserved before it is too late."27

James Pond, the professional lecture tour manager hired by Goldman, omitted controversy from his advertisements. The ads for her lecture at the Mecca Temple in New York City on February 13 ("Welcome Home to Emma Goldman") defined her as an "idealist" and "humanitarian" who was punished and persecuted for her hatred of coercion and empathy with all forms of suffering. The audience was invited to hear Goldman speak on Living My Life, and the handbill praised her love of America. It peddled the homecoming theme by quoting a 1930 interview in which she had declared, "I owe my growth and development to what is best and finest in America. . . . I should lie if I said I did not love America."28

Goldman's 1934 visit provides us with important insights into the young New Deal administration. It furnishes yet another example (of which we have many) of


28 An advertisement for a "vigorous address" on "The Collapse of German Culture" in St. Louis's Odeon Theater (April 5, 1934) informed the public that "This great woman has thrilled audiences from Maine to California. . . . Don't fail to hear her during her present visit." Falk, Zboray, and Hall, eds., Emma Goldman Papers, reel 30.
the limits of its commitment to civil liberties. Goldman reportedly enjoyed the sympathy of numerous prominent figures in Washington, including the presidential couple, but this sentiment was curtailed by other considerations, most important, the desire to avoid controversy and bad publicity. Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, who was directly responsible for all decisions in Goldman’s case, was undoubtedly the most vulnerable member of Roosevelt’s administration. In the year of Goldman’s visit, she became the target of a vicious whispering campaign that accused her of disloyalty to the country and culminated in an attempt to impeach her in Congress. Perkins reacted with indignation when it was suggested that she preside over one of Goldman’s meetings. The less progressive branches of government were even more antagonistic. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) sent surveillance
agents to follow her tour, collected samples of her lecture invitations, and kept records on the members of the committee who arranged her return.\textsuperscript{29}

The ACLU eventually worked to secure Goldman's freedom of speech, but only after she was denied the use of the Schenley High School auditorium and the Carnegie Institute Music Hall in Pittsburgh. While the local board of education argued that its policy was not to have controversial issues discussed in public schools, the Pittsburgh branch of the ACLU contended that Goldman had the constitutional right to express her ideas in those facilities. Its chairman, George Evans, declared, "We have no interest in what Miss Goldman has to say, but we are ready to defend her right to say it." Was he unaware that the head of his organization had cooperated in the effort to restrict what Goldman had to say? Baldwin's friendship with Goldman should not be underestimated, but he too, it seems, like so many others, regarded her as a significant, controversial, but politically unviable relic of the past.\textsuperscript{30}

Goldman was fuming. Throughout the sixteen-city lecture tour she complained about being "gagged." In private, she threatened to cut the visit short, demanding that her friends fight the administration to lift restrictions. She was eager to talk about the situation in Europe, especially Nazi Germany, but she had to conceal her political message behind ambiguous "literary" titles such as "The German Tragedy." Uneasily, Goldman realized that her agreement to lecture on \textit{Living My Life}, what she herself called "ancient history," muted her political voice. Had she compromised too much?\textsuperscript{31} Her 1934 tour, which began on such a high note, ended with two personal disappointments. First, Goldman did not receive a permanent permit to stay in the United States or even an extension of her visa; second, the audiences for her public addresses quickly shrank. Despite the enthusiastic reception in New York and the tremendous turnout for her speeches there, the public ceased coming, and her meetings in New Haven, Boston, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Columbus yielded heavy financial losses. The failure of the commercial lecture tour (those lectures organized by comrades, especially Jewish anarchists, were successful) could be explained by bad management or overpriced tickets (as she thought), the decline of lectures as a popular form in the age of the radio, the de-


\textsuperscript{30} On the Pittsburgh incident, see \textit{Pittsburgh Press}, March 4, 1934; and \textit{New York Times}, March 5, 1934. Baldwin to Goldman, May 28, 1934, in \textit{Emma Goldman Papers}, ed. Falk, Zboray, and Hall, reel 31. Baldwin attempted to conceal the extent of his agreements with the Labor Department, claiming publicly, "While the Department of Labor did not directly impose any restrictions on her, she was informed that the authorities would be unlikely to permit her to engage in political controversy during her visit." See \textit{New York Times}, Feb. 4, 1934. See also \textit{New York Times}, Feb. 9, 1934; and \textit{Brooklyn Eagle}, Feb. 4, 1934.

\textsuperscript{31} The German embassy lodged a protest when Goldman described Germany as a "nation led by degenerates." Baldwin to Goldman, Feb. 15, 1934, in \textit{Emma Goldman Papers}, ed. Falk, Zboray, and Hall, reel 30. For Goldman's growing impatience, see Goldman to Berkman, Feb. 7–9, 1934, \textit{ibid}. 

A poster advertising Emma Goldman's 1934 lecture tour. Despite initial enthusiasm, the tour was not as well attended as she had hoped, in part because President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration had restricted her lectures to "literary" topics such as her autobiography. Interestingly, none of her lectures engaged the issues of free love, contraception, or women's liberation.32

During the visit, the Nation observed that the crowd that came to welcome her in New York's Town Hall was predominantly middle-aged and middle-class and that, although she was a "pre-war revolutionist," she was now admired by "pre-war

32 Her lectures in Chicago and Rochester were successful; see "'Your City Made Anarchist of Me,' Emma Goldman Tells: Record Crowd Applaud Her Luncheon Talk," Rochester Sunday American, March 18, 1934. In Akron, however, her lecture on the virtues of Peter Kropotkin was deemed to be "dull stuff" that did not suit her stormy reputation. Akron Beacon Journal, Feb. 14, 1934.
lifers." In a world divided among increasingly belligerent, highly centralized governments, Goldman gave liberals hope and courage since the "stubborn warrior" embodied freedom. She would be the last "human machine to be coordinated, controlled, regimented, or even socially planned." Goldman thus signified the "ultimate social cleavage, of differences that cannot be bridged. She is a living and a very acid test of tolerance." The often crossed but still anxiety-ridden line between radicals and liberals would become the subtext of much commemoration of Goldman later in the century.

In the second half of the 1930s, the civil war in Spain infused new élan into Goldman's political life. She crossed the United States border again only after her death in 1940, when the authorities allowed her body to be buried in Waldheim Cemetery in Chicago next to the graves of the Haymarket anarchist martyrs.

From her death until the early 1960s, Goldman was the subject of a few published eulogies and short biographical sketches, most by old friends and comrades. The British writer and labor activist Ethel Mannin, a close associate of Goldman in the late 1930s, wrote Red Rose: A Novel Based on the Life of Emma Goldman ("Red Emma") (1941). Mannin added to biographical details familiar from the autobiography material about Goldman's life in the 1930s. The novel centered on the triangular relationship of Goldman, Berkman, and his younger lover Emmy Eckstein rather than on the campaign for the anarcho-syndicalists in Spain. It was probably the earliest attempt to reproduce and "complete" Living My Life, of which there would be many more.

In the political environment of the Cold War, interest in egalitarian ideologies and their American proponents was marginal, except, of course, for persecuting and silencing purposes. Richard Drinnon's Rebel in Paradise (1961) was the first attempt at a scholarly account of the anarchist's life and eventually linked postwar concerns to the revival of interest in Goldman in the late 1960s. In the preface, Drinnon admitted that when he began researching Goldman's life for his dissertation (completed in 1957) he regarded her anarchism "as a particular form of political lunacy." As suggested by the title, the book explored the relationship between society and the pariah, between the archetypal Rebel and a complacent society, "Paradise." Goldman's life offered powerful historical examples of America's
intolerance, but it also suggested that society may gradually accept the rebel and allow "real disagreement"—two potent lessons for the post-McCarthy era.

The riotous climate of the late 1960s resuscitated interest in anarchism. A 1970 broadside proclaimed that the New Left "comes upon Anarchy like Schliemann uncovering Troy." Sixties radicals, like nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century anarchists, repudiated electoral and institutional politics and sought to develop new modes of political expression that might maximize individual participation and thereby foreshadow the utopian communities of the future. Goldman's antiwar activities during World War I (the last war before the 1960s to generate substantial opposition) spoke volumes to the Vietnam generation. But, in anarchist thought as in opposition to war, Goldman's political heritage overlapped with those of other, better-known, historical figures.

It was the budding woman's movement of the late 1960s that recruited Emma Goldman in an effort to define its place in history and to promote captivating models and symbols. During the early months of 1970, feminist pamphlets and magazines rapidly proliferated. Produced on a low budget, often consisting of only a few pages, these publications attempted to formulate fresh theoretical paradigms and practical paths. The fourth issue of the socialist *Women: A Journal of Liberation* (Spring 1970) was dedicated to "Women in History: A Recreation of Our Past." The editorial essay justified the journey into history as part of a larger project: adjusting Karl Marx's theory to women's emancipatory struggle by applying categories of (class) consciousness and "superstructure" to modes of human reproduction and "socialization." The back cover vigorously announced, "Our history has been stolen from us. Our heroes died in childbirth, from peritonitis, overwork, oppression, from bottled-up rage. Our geniuses were never taught to read or write. We must *invent* a past adequate to our ambitions. We must create a future adequate to our needs." However, most of the essays did not explore or "invent" the history of women as a class, but instead focused on the biographies of individuals: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Margaret Sanger, Emma Goldman, Harriet Tubman, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, seeking to identify a group of early feminist thinkers and activists, forerunners of the modern movement.

"Some parts of Emma Goldman's program sound as though they were thought up last month," enthused Alix Kates Shulman. Shulman, a writer and cofounder of the feminist group Redstockings, regarded Goldman as the ultimate feminist, a woman who employed her anarchist ideology to explain women's oppression and subordinated her anarchist loyalties whenever they clashed with her feminism. Goldman was the first to explicate how women internalized their oppression in the form of unconscious "internal tyrants" that prevented them from taking their destiny into their own hands. Shulman's excitement about Goldman was clearly informed by disputes over various aims and means that divided the new movement from its inception. Goldman derided the suffragists' struggle for the vote, contending that

equality and emancipation should begin at home with the restructuring of the most oppressive institution for women, marriage. Goldman, Shulman seemed to argue, heralded modern feminism's major theoretical innovation: unmasking the political nature of the private sphere. The following year, 1971, Carol Hanisch succinctly elucidated that idea in one of the period's most enduring slogans, "The personal is political." Shulman urged feminists to adopt Goldman's legacy instead of embarking on yet another futile effort to modify laws and state institutions as advocated by liberal or "bourgeois" feminists such as those of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and Ms. magazine: "The changes which have actually occurred over the past fifty years—the suffrage amendment, legal and social reforms, even the so-called 'sexual revolution'—have in practice, as Emma Goldman predicted, hardly liberated women. The Revolution she called for is still to come."38

Three new editions of Living My Life were published in 1970, in addition to many of Goldman's essays on women's issues and anarchism.39 Goldman's pamphlets and autobiography were required reading for emerging feminist groups, an integral part of consciousness-raising meetings and the first academic courses on feminism and the history of women. Goldman was excavated from historical oblivion—practically dehistoricized—to instruct a young generation of women activists. Her resurrection involved virtually no nostalgia. Goldman's new disciples believed that she could assist women to conquer their future. This leap from history to the future, so typical of revolutionary movements, paralleled the way radical feminist writers of the early 1970s looked to the past in general. In history they discovered one unchanging, ahistorical master theme: men's oppression of women.

The newly palpable presence of Goldman was best summarized by the columnist Colman McCarthy, who wrote in 1973, "[Goldman's] ideas of fifty years ago, bouncing back at us in history's echo chamber, are in a language that has had to wait a half century for translation." Members of the feminist movement called their daughters, health collectives, and even pets Emma. An Emma Goldman Clinic for Women was established in Iowa City, an Emma-troupe in New York City, and an Emma Brigade in Chicago. In August 1970, when the first large feminist demonstration paraded down Fifth Avenue in New York City, one group marched behind a red and black banner as the Emma Goldman Brigade. As a part of a "feminist action," Shulman read into the record of a New York City legislative hearing on prostitution Goldman's pamphlet, The Traffic in Women. Thus, the woman who

38 Alix Kates Shulman, "Emma Goldman: Feminist and Anarchist," ibid., 22. At this point Shulman ignored Goldman's own contribution to the "sexual revolution." Wexler argues that Goldman conceived the unchaining of women to be an inseparable part of human liberation and did not necessarily privilege women's issues. Alice Wexler, Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life (Boston, 1984), reprinted as Alice Wexler, Emma Goldman in America (Boston, 1986), 94–95, 193–98. For a different perspective, see Martha Solomon, Emma Goldman (Boston, 1987), 77. For Goldman's glorification of the Haymarket martyrs as historical models, see Blaine McKinley, "A Religion of the New Time: Anarchist Memorials to the Haymarket Martyrs, 1888–1917," Labor History, 28 (Summer 1987), 386–400.

dismissed the suffrage feminists in the beginning of the century and who was shunned by much of the American Left in the 1930s as a devout anticommunist became the symbol of the second wave of the feminist movement and idol of the New Left.40

The championing of Goldman as the author of modern radical feminism was supplemented by presentations of Goldman’s political behavior and public style as concrete models for emulation. This version of Goldman—fiery, rough-edged, “bad girl Emma”—was popularized by Shulman in a book written primarily for adolescents, *To the Barricades: The Anarchist Life of Emma Goldman* (1971). Goldman’s heroic, inexhaustible, and uncompromising challenge to official authorities (that make people “go on doing the things they hate to do”) served Shulman’s effort to inculcate radical stamina. Naming one chapter “Superwitch,” the author evoked an image then popular among radical feminists: the woman warrior, inducing fear and terror in a society that could never fully comprehend her ideals. All Emma had to do was to appear in a city or town, and she was likely to be arrested—sometimes, as the police told her, “just because you are Emma Goldman.” And the contemporary lesson: “Now in the 1970’s, a new generation of radicals is taking up Emma Goldman’s fight. Like her, they are willing to face jail, exile and even death because they believe that the world must be made over according to a new vision.”41

No other historical figure, woman or man, more comprehensively exemplified the decade’s bumper sticker creed “Question Authority.” Goldman had the (mis)fame to defy both the United States and the Soviet governments, not to speak of other less tangible but equally formidable enemies: marriage, religion, middle-class mores, censorship, and the suffragists. The reverse side of Goldman’s defiant militancy was her martyrdom: Goldman as the ultimate victim, the oppressed, the sufferer: behind bars, exiled, gagged, forever persecuted and ostracized for her sex, class, and politics.42 In the early 1970s, Goldman’s suffering seemed integral to her life as a rebel in pursuit of liberation; later, her victimization occupied a more prominent place in her portrayals. Over the last quarter of a century, therefore, the multifarious political readings of Goldman’s political career have been aligned primarily within a discourse that generated two venues for recounting her life: oppression / defiance / liberation or innocence / victimization / suffering.

Concurrently, a second group of Goldman images emerged. These representations replaced ideology and public behavior with personality traits, less clearly defined, less obviously political, and somewhat more “feminine.” Goldman was con-
ceived of as a paradigm of vitality, unconventional choices, and even enjoyment and optimism; not just Goldman the prophet of free love, but Goldman the passionate lover. Goldman's name was linked to a famous retort she leveled at puritanical old guard anarchists who reportedly reproached her for indulging herself, "If I can't dance I won't take part in your revolution." This was understood as an expression of joy and vitality, of uncompromising individuality that a revolutionary may uphold even while joining hands with others to fight for a cause. The slogan resonated with the (counter)cultural flavor of radical politics at the turn of the 1970s. The Old Left's austerity was contested by a young generation that conceived of rock music, sexual freedom, and other forms of self-gratification as part of its youthful challenge. Regrettably, Goldman never uttered those precise words. According to Shulman, the slogan was concocted from an anecdote in Living My Life (and, indeed, preserved its spirit) by Jack Frager, an anarchist printer, who in early 1973 was eager to produce T-shirts for a Central Park festival celebrating the final withdrawal of U.S. fighting forces from Vietnam. This early batch of T-shirts probably also contributed to the enduring popularity of the portrait of Goldman with the round-brim hat, whose vintage aura lends fresh contrast to the youthful slogan.

Goldman (most often the young Emma) the advocate and practitioner of free love was complemented by more mature personas, softer, motherly: Goldman the nurse, Goldman the head of a tribal network of friends and admirers, Goldman of the magazine Mother Earth, an aging grandmotherly woman whose childlessness only renders her nurturing more spiritual and profound. Inconsistent as they may seem, none of these images are outright fabrications. None of them would be alien to Goldman's self-perception or to the public image she toiled hard to cultivate. Still, the process of remaking, remodeling, iconizing Emma is that of selecting a set of characteristics and privileging them over others, especially those that might undermine a coherent representation.

The two clusters of images—the harsh militant versus the vivacious and vital spirit—appear to correspond roughly with the two schools of thought classified by Alice Echols as radical feminism and cultural feminism. Echols maintains that since the mid-1970s, cultural feminism has eclipsed the radical (and more conventionally political) version until the former has virtually disappeared. If the radicals wanted to render gender irrelevant and to mobilize women on the basis of their equality with men, the cultural feminists sought "to celebrate femaleness." Importantly, Goldman herself pointed to the tension between the personal and the political, between "the yearning for a personal life and the need of giving all to my ideal," as the source of the extraordinary heterogeneity of her life, of her many faces. As she wrote in her memoirs: "I had long realized that I was woven of many skeins, conflicting in shade and texture." Contrasting her fragmented self with the masculine singularity of purpose and uniformity of personality of Berkman and other

43 Alix Kates Shulman, "Dances with Feminists," Women's Review of Books, 9 (Dec. 1991), 13. Other versions of the slogan were recorded, including "If I can't dance, I don't want to be in your revolution" and "If I can't dance to it, it's not my revolution."
monumental “heroic figures,” she also suggested that hers was a particularly feminine trait.44

Once again, Living My Life eased Goldman’s “border-crossing” into early 1970s America; this time, as a viable political text. The book combined an accessible, albeit at times vague, radical ideology with a flesh-and-blood political heroine. It was the autobiography that provided the much-sought-after slogans and quotations, the anecdotes, the Emma around which a cult has been built. No less important, the book was written in a simple yet colorful English for an American audience and featured many ingredients of an “American story”: immigration, generational conflict, the lonely individual against an obtuse society, the revolutionary Chaplinesque trickster fooling the mighty forces of the establishment (mostly policemen and local officials) on her subversive lecture tours, a philosophy of freedom. European writers, whether Simone de Beauvoir or Virginia Woolf, could not appeal to the same cultural sensibilities. Other American biographies and autobiographies could match neither the passion and turbulence of Goldman’s life nor the powerful narrative of Living My Life.45

It was not long before Goldman emerged from the world of feminists and collegiate new leftists to the attention of a wider public. E. L. Doctorow’s best seller Ragtime positioned her comfortably in the company of J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, Harry Houdini, and other representatives of turn-of-the-century Zeitgeist. In this gallery of characters, Goldman was the token radical. With the historical scene screened through a thick filter of irony and seen from the comfortable distance of three-quarters of a century, New York of the first decade seemed amusingly naïve, vibrant, and full of great passion and expectations, dancing to the music of ragtime but also threatened by social and racial cleavages just waiting to rip apart. Doctorow’s Goldman is a caricature of herself and of modern feminists. The details undoubtedly were heavily drawn from Living My Life.

At the Workingmen’s Hall on East Fourteenth Street, Goldman is ostensibly lecturing on Ibsen but soon turns to preaching the liberation of women. “Comrades and brothers . . . can you socialists ignore the double bondage of one-half of the human race? Do you think the society that plunders your labor has no interest in the way you are asked to live with women? . . . Is our genius only in our wombs?” Soon enough, the police burst into the hall, break up the meeting, and disperse the crowd. In a back room, Doctorow brings together Goldman and Evelyn Nesbit, another historical figure. Nesbit was a society beauty, perhaps America’s first sex symbol. In Ragtime she comes incognito with a Jewish immigrant and his daughter to listen to Goldman’s sermon. The confrontation of these two precursors of twentieth-century female archetypes opens with a harsh reproach from Goldman.


("You are nothing more than a clever prostitute") but awakens a deep emotional fraternity ("But there is correspondence you see, our lives correspond, our spirits touch each other like notes in harmony, and in the total human fate we are sisters"). The encounter culminates in a ceremony of physical and sexual liberation. Goldman releases Nesbit from her tight corset ("Look at me, even with my figure I have not one foundation garment, I wear everything loose and free-flowing, I give my body the freedom to give and to be") and the heavy garments blocking her blood vessels, lace underwear, garters, and stockings ("Breath, Goldman commanded"). She then applies an astringent to restore blood circulation to the beautiful, aching body and rubs it with massage oil, not skipping Nesbit's most intimate parts. The scene concludes with Nesbit on the verge of a climax ("the young woman began to ripple on the bed like a wave on the sea"), while her mysterious male admirer, who (like the reader) peeps at the ceremony from a closet, was manipulated into a full one. Thus, Doctorow exploits his "Goldman" character to exhibit two of the most common stereotypes of 1960s feminists: bra burners and lesbians.

Goldman occupies center stage in Red Emma: Queen of the Anarchist, a musical play written by the Canadian Carol Bolt in 1974, set in New York on the eve of Alexander Berkman's attempt to assassinate the industrialist Henry Clay Frick during the Homestead strike of 1892. Although more overtly political than Ragtime, it deflects attention from political violence to personal growth. The plot combines serious drama and nonsensical, operatic burlesque. Goldman and her comrades are a cheerful, well-meaning lot, full of pathos, at times pathetic. This is the story of a revolutionary Pygmalion with a twist. It commences with the agitator Johann Most introducing Goldman to the secrets of anarchism and ends with the enraged Goldman, now politically mature, publicly whipping Most for condemning Berkman's attentat—a famous anecdote from Living My Life. Bolt's play was produced on stage and broadcast on radio. At least four other plays based on Goldman's story have been written over the last two decades.

Goldman was also featured in Warren Beatty's popular 1981 film Reds. The movie's portrayal of her stands in stark opposition to the one in Ragtime. Doctorow's sexual liberator is replaced by a dead serious ideologue, Red Emma. In Reds, Goldman keeps aloof from, indeed, appears to disapprove of, the bohemian fun-loving existence of John Reed, Eugene O'Neill, Louise Bryant, and

46 E. L. Doctorow, Ragtime (New York, 1975), 60. Eventually, Goldman's liberating rite fails miserably. Nesbit returns to her high-society routine and the young admirer remains possessive and even contemplates suicide, despite Goldman's preaching of free love.

47 Carol Bolt, Buffalo Jump. Gabe. Red Emma (Toronto, 1976), 183-84; Sanford A. Lakoff, Mother Earth: Emma Goldman and Free Speech in San Diego (n.p., 1977); Jessica Litwak, "Emma Goldman: Love, Anarchy and Other Affairs," in Women Heroes: Six Short Plays from the Women's Project, ed. Julia Miles (New York, 1987); Howard Zinn, "Emma," in Playbook, ed. Maxine Klein, Lydia Sargent, and Howard Zinn (Boston, 1986); Martin Duberman, Mother Earth (New York, 1991). Duberman wrote his play in the early 1970s for the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) New York affiliate. Originally he was commissioned to write a teleplay on Susan B. Anthony but chose to substitute for that "dray horse of the suffrage movement" the far more dramatic figure of Goldman. He maintained that his play was not broadcast because of political pressure from the Nixon administration to tone down the station's "excessively radical" programming. Ibid., vii–viii. Goldman inspired several characters in Eugene O'Neill's plays. See Winifred L. Frazer, E.G. and E.G.O.: Emma Goldman and the "Iliomen Cometh" (Gainesville, 1974). Goldman is also the protagonist in a few dramatic works in foreign languages.
Whatever Happened to “Red Emma”?

their circle of friends. In a typical scene, Goldman the hyperintellectual revolutionary chides the carefree Bryant for lacking a clear purpose in life and for not reading any interesting books. She is grim, resolute, almost humorless, but despite her radical commitments, she is independent minded and cautious when Reed, facing the great Soviet experiment, appears to lose his judgment. Beatty's Goldman is also gifted with a penetrating eye into intimate relationships, although she seems to have none herself. The actor-director integrated into the film interviews with the aging and wonderfully colorful Communists, anarchists, and Greenwich Village bohemians. Reflecting the atmosphere of the pre-Reagan late 1970s, it was a forgiving tribute to romantic dreamers and the love affair with the infant Soviet regime from which they emerged painfully sober. Maureen Stapleton was awarded an Oscar for her performance as Goldman.48

Depictions of Emma Goldman in 1970s popular culture combined deceptively benign and nostalgic textual surfaces with potentially threatening undertows that indicated a lingering cultural unease with women's power and with sex and sexuality despite, or because of, the early successes of feminism and the sexual revolution: Goldman was represented as an omnipotent female figure, a competitor of men and a danger to other women. Her seditious power had strong sexual as well as intellectual dimensions. If Goldman was still dangerous, it had exceptionally little to do with igniting an anarchist revolution.49

Like other political and cultural assets of the women's movement, Goldman eventually found refuge in the halls of academia. The fervent, forceful rhetoric of the early years was much restrained by new demands; the politicos of the past were replaced by, or became, the Goldmanologists of the present.50 Goldman, now a field of research, was bound to be recognized as a more complex, multidimensional figure. Thus Candace Falk's Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman (1984) revealed that many of Goldman's strongest denunciations of monogamy and sexual jealousy were forged and articulated in the midst of her own agonizing struggles against such possessiveness. Her speech against jealousy was composed during the most jealous phase of her tumultuous love affair with Ben Reitman.51 In correspondence


49 Michael Kammen singled out the 1930s and the 1970s (as well as the 1890s) as periods of heightened public nostalgia prompted by national self-doubt. See Michael G. Kammen, A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination (New York, 1978), 12-13.

50 Academia has been an important force in the renewed interest in Goldman ever since Drinnon's dissertation (1957). See, for example, Elizabeth W. Berr, “Rhetoric for the Cause, the Analysis and Criticism of the Persuasive Discourse of Emma Goldman, Anarchist Agitator” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1969); John Anthony Bart, “The Rhetorical Constraints of American Anarchism, 1880–1920” (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1991); and Valerie Fox, “Sex with Jesus and Other Clichés” (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York, Binghamton, 1990). A collection of poems, Fox's dissertation includes a poem in which the speaker is Goldman. She employs this device to attain an intimacy with iconic figures such as Jesus, the Virgin Mary, Elvis, and Goldman.

51 Falk, Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman, 237. Their love affair stretched roughly from 1908 to 1917.
The film *Reds* (first screened in 1981) combined two themes typical of 1970s cultural concerns: American history and progressive politics. Here John Reed (Warren Beatty, who also directed the film) visits Emma Goldman. Maureen Stapleton won an Academy Award for her portrayal of Goldman as a strong-willed anarchist. 

*Courtesy Paramount Pictures.*

with Reitman, a doctor ten years her junior and the manager of her lecture tours, Goldman displayed great dependency on a man who constantly betrayed her with other women and stole money from her lecture earnings. With him as with others, she cultivated relationships with unmistakable incestuous dimensions. Both Reitman and her last lover Frank Heiner (a married blind sociologist whom she met in Chicago during her 1934 tour) called her “Mommy.” She appeared to ignore her troublesome choices in partners as well as her own ambivalence toward the concept of free love.52 *Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman* was based on correspondence uncovered by the author and located outside the traditional repositories that house Goldman’s documents. Scholars now had information to use in examining not just her conduct but also the veracity of her self-presentation in *Living My Life*.

Yet the best example of the distance American feminism had traveled in merely a decade is Alix Kates Shulman’s reappraisal of the woman she had once helped mythologize. The breathless intensity of yesteryear was replaced by a temperate

52 A somewhat similar attempt to expose the inconsistencies between a feminist icon’s ideology and life was recently assumed by Deirdre Bair, *Simone de Beauvoir: A Biography* (New York, 1990). Bair contrasted the often humiliating role of servitude Beauvoir had in Jean Paul Sartre’s life against the vision of *The Second Sex*. 
tune, exclamation marks with footnotes. In 1982, Shulman was quite troubled by Goldman’s tendency to blame women for their own oppression. Goldman seemed to argue that if women suffer in marriage, it is their own fault for getting married. They should leave their husbands and set themselves free. Similarly, if they claim to be lonely, they should get out and seek free love. This inability or unwillingness to recognize the limited options for women in her time and the psychological binds that the commandment “Set yourself free!” cannot untangle seemed especially disingenuous in view of the striking disparity between Goldman’s preachments and the miseries of her private life. The plight and ambitions of turn-of-the-century middle-class feminists were utterly incomprehensible to her. “It was this unfeeling attitude,” asserted Shulman, “that must have both shocked and angered many feminists [of her day].”

Further scrutiny of Goldman’s writings also exposed a less than consistent feminism. At times she seemed to regard women as innately inferior, blamed masculine chauvinism on mothers, and preferred the company of men. Was she indeed, as contemporaries had claimed, a “man’s woman”? In a 1984 review of new biographies of Goldman, Karen Rosenberg maintained that the dismantling and demystifying of Goldman’s mythical status demonstrated the maturity of the feminist movement and the “impressive research and interpretive skills of contemporary American feminist historians.” In my view this shift, although part of academic feminism’s coming of age (and symptomatic of the debunking biographical style of recent decades), resulted from new sensibilities, dilemmas, and anxieties that have preoccupied feminists since the early 1980s. Moreover, it neither aimed at, nor necessarily resulted in, the dismantling or demolishing of Goldman’s status as an icon.

The transforming interest in Goldman reflected the ambiguous legacy of the personal as political. The movement that grew less radical and more pessimistic about the possibility of liberation turned its attention from the overtly political back to the personal. If previously Goldman had armed feminists with her revolutionary vision, over the last fifteen years, she has been asked to offer herself, her body and her past, to be dissected, analyzed, and taught. But the rough edges that so endeared Goldman in the past were now troublesome. In a political climate in which feminists (mostly white and middle-class) were accused of ignoring the plight of other women (especially women of color), “blaming the victim” became a major offense and sensitivity to others’ “feelings” an imperative.

At the same time, the growing attention to “sensitivity” offered a solution to...

54 Rosenberg, “Emma’s Ambiguous Legacy,” 8–9.
the dissonance between Goldman's ideology and behavior, a possible closure. Goldman could be understood as a victim too, and her suffering could be a source of inspiration for other women as well as the key to her ultimate redemption. Falk's book furnishes a good example. While exposing Goldman's inconsistencies, it is one of the warmest, most sympathetic accounts of Goldman's life, written by an author who deeply identifies with her subject. Falk did not remove herself from Goldman after completing her book. In the early 1980s she became the director of the Emma Goldman Papers Project, and she has dedicated her professional life to commemorating Goldman. Moreover, the tormented relationship between Goldman and Reitman had such a dramatic quality that it could be qualified as the apocalyptic battle between the superfeminist and the super–male pig, an ordeal from which Goldman arguably emerged triumphant. According to an article based on an interview with Falk, "Goldman confronted Reitman's deviltry head-on, wrestling with it as Jacob wrestled with the angel. She must have sensed that if she ignored his darkness, it would only become a much more destructive force." Falk's book reconstructs the motif of pain and personal martyrdom in Goldman's life. Rather than the victim of the state and society, Goldman is the victim of her own private history, stretching back to her childhood in Russia. "Emma's ability to recognize, articulate, and transform the pain of others was motivated by the sadness and lovelessness of her early life. She had survived her own pain by superimposing upon it a vision of total harmony." Thus, the causal chain was reversed: It was not that incongruities between ideals and reality entailed pain and anxiety; pain was the fountain of inspiration without which Goldman could never have formulated her ideals.

The book received rave reviews and was recommended by the New York Times as one of the most important books of 1984. A few readers wrote to Mother Jones and Ms. magazines voicing disapproval of an exposure of Goldman's erotic life that, they thought, befitted Playboy. (The book details sexual practices, including the names the two lovers assigned to their genitalia.) These responses echo criticisms leveled at Living My Life when it first appeared and point to a broader similarity between Living My Life and Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman. More than any other biographical account, Falk's functions as an extension of the autobiography, not as a piece of heresy. It emulates the autobiography's willingness to divulge details of private experiences, not to unmask its subject, but to endow Goldman's life story with greater coherence and a compelling theme.

Shulman too follows her initial critique with an attempt to rescue Goldman. "I am convinced anew," she writes, "that not only was she a feminist, but in some ways she was one of the most radical feminists of her era." She maintains that Goldman's

advice to women to take responsibility over their lives rather than to change men should remain a major principle of the women's movement. Shulman proposes a new basis for the relationship between feminists and their icon:

Indeed, it may be as much for her own militancy as for her views that she is admired by radical feminists today; especially today, when feminism seems to be growing softer, safer, less political. Just as EG herself admired the militant English suffragists the Pankhursts, who put themselves in chains, went on hunger strikes, and endured forced feeding for their cause, though she thought their efforts misguided, so we admire Goldman.58

Shulman no longer described Goldman as a “superwitch” but as a model of the “superwoman.” The superwoman is an ambiguous ideal since her immense success is likely to serve for some “women of lesser accomplishments” as “a rebuke, making [them] ask [themselves], what’s wrong with me?” Shulman problematizes not just Goldman's status among feminist heroines but implicitly the function and even the possibility of any “role model” in a postradical era. Her point may be taken even further. In an age becoming “softer and safer,” the drive to revolt has been replaced (or displaced) by the worship of the revolutionary.

Thus, yet another rediscovery of Emma Goldman in the 1980s bred two alternative responses: a greater personal identification and empathy with a multifaceted, human, and troubled historical figure or a more judgmental verdict and a degree of distancing. Shulman displayed both, publishing shortly after the re-evaluation an article that detailed her symbiotic relationship with Goldman under the revealing title, “Living Our Life.” An article by another Goldman biographer, Alice Wexler, also combines the two approaches: Emma impersonation and Goldman distancing. The piece commences with musings about the previous year's anarchist congress in Venice, Italy. During lunch with Arturo Bortolotti, a veteran antifascist and a close associate of Goldman in her last years, Wexler attempts to look at the congress through Goldman's eyes. (“I could not help thinking that Emma... would have relished this gathering.”) But the main thrust of the essay is a candid attempt to identify the weaknesses in Goldman's feminism.59 More recently, in an anthology dedicated to feminist biographers' relationships with their subjects, Wexler confesses that when she began writing on Goldman, she regarded her as a substitute for her always “timid and dependent” mother, at the time stricken with Huntington's disease. Wexler explicates numerous intimate connections and tensions between Goldman and Living My Life, on the one hand, and her own family and self, on the other. After grappling with Goldman and producing a comprehensive two-volume biography, Wexler reports that despite her gradually falling “out of love” with Goldman, “[Goldman] has taken up permanent residence in my

life as part of a feminist network of the imagination, an alter-ego, an/ Other/
Mother with whom I continue to argue and identify."60

Much recent biography of Goldman focuses on the lessons of her private travails. Goldman experienced them all and recounted most in her memoirs: a misogynist father who wished for a boy and could not forgive his wife or his daughter for this deficiency, a domineering mother who repressed young Goldman's sexuality, rape as a first sexual encounter, an impotent first husband, a marriage of convenience, a failed attempt at prostitution, and more. Writers seem to litigate and arbitrate, offer or refute justifications for specific decisions she made and her behavior in general. At times, Goldman biographical scholarship appears to be a self-referential, self-contained terrain. This impression is enhanced by the prominence of psychological interpretations in recent writings about Goldman. Reading Goldman through this prism has a tradition that goes back to reviews of Living My Life in the early 1930s and is based on a somewhat questionable (maybe circular) rationale. Goldman's own flirtation with psychoanalysis should have arguably rendered her memoirs, a source for much of the psychological analysis, suspicious material for excavating her inner self.61 In today's cultural landscape, when therapy and personal politics are further conflated, every audience and each individual may find a private Emma as a reflection of their own troubles. But perhaps the fracturing of Emma into myriad private icons may keep her a living, breathing presence rather than a town square's monument.

By the early 1990s, Goldman's status as a figure of historical importance had inspired at least five new full biographies.62 Goldman also figures in numerous textbooks, monographs, dissertations, and articles on an impressive variety of topics: radical politics and, in particular, anarchism; the history of women, gender, feminism, and sexuality; turn-of-the-century intellectual life; American bohemians; pacifism; political rhetoric; cultural criticism; history of reform movements; the rise


61 Wexler argues that Goldman's devotion to Berkman and other persecuted men may have originated in part in an unconscious guilt over the death of her younger brother (she was seven or eight at the time), which she displaced onto various symbolic "brothers." Wexler, Emma Goldman in Exile, 147-48. See also Alice Wexler, "The Early Life of Emma Goldman," Psychobiography Review, 8 (Spring 1980), 7-21; and Thomas Peabody, "Creativity and Crisis in Adulthood: A Psychobiographical Study of Emma Goldman in Mid-Life" (Ph.D. diss., Wright Institution, 1993). Peabody examines Goldman's "mid-life crisis," which culminated in a reported depression with "severe suicidal ideation" in 1915.

62 Wexler, Emma Goldman in America; Wexler, Emma Goldman in Exile; Martha Solomon, Emma Goldman (Boston, 1987); David Waldstreicher, Emma Goldman: Political Activist (New York, 1990); John Chalberg, Emma Goldman: American Individualist (New York, 1991); Motron, Emma Goldman and the American Left; Martin Gay, The Importance of Emma Goldman (San Diego, 1996). Falk's Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman was revised and republished in 1990. See also Paul Avrich, Anarchist Voices, 45-86.
of the "modern condition"; history of psychology and psychoanalysis; and even the history of nursing. For many scholars who specialize in these and other subfields, her life, career, and writings are a necessary reference point. Her admirable versatility—Goldman fought or sat in jail for, published a pamphlet, delivered a speech, or wrote a letter on most of the issues that have become central to contemporary progressive agendas (with one significant omission, race relations and racism in the United States)—coupled with her lucidity and wit rendered her especially appealing for research, reference, a chapter, a paragraph, a quotation, or a footnote. This is the process of canonization at work.63

A major institutional contributor to that process is located on the Berkeley campus of the University of California. The Emma Goldman Papers Project is part of a large academic effort, hosted by universities and research institutions around the country, to collect and publish correspondence and other writings by prominent Americans. The project was assisted by federal agencies, the state-sponsored university, a host of foundations (including the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and Milken Family Foundation), and individuals.64 The contribution of the federal government to creating better scholarly resources for the study of a radical deportee is intriguing, especially considering that most of the support was allotted during the conservative 1980s. Its importance, however, should not be overstated. The United States government under Ronald Reagan and George Bush did not embrace Goldman the anarchist rebel but assisted Goldman the scientific project; and microfilm reels, as we well know, are read by bleary-eyed academics in dimly lit archives for the purpose of writing their papers and books. Repositories are not known to ignite the masses. Funding the Emma Goldman Papers Project proved not nearly so controversial as sponsoring a public exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe's homoerotic photography.

Nevertheless, this official support was possible because Emma Goldman's legacy was conceived of, or presented as, within a broad American consensus. In many representations of Goldman over the last fifteen years, the innocence of those of her ideals that have become widely accepted has been contrasted with the cruelty of the persecution, imprisonment, and eventual deportation she endured. If Goldman conceived of herself as a martyr to the revolutionary cause, in the 1980s her legacy was translated into a language of rights and her bitter battles thus relocated in a constitutional discourse where she often figured as a martyr to the First Amendment. That in 1919—the year of her deportation—history pitted the young J. Edgar Hoover against the aging anarchist now serves as a potent symbol that fascinates

63 For bibliographical details, see Hardy, American Women Civil Rights Activists, 164–75; and Paul Nursey-Bray, ed., Anarchist Thinkers and Thought: An Annotated Bibliography (New York, 1992), 39–47.

64 The irony of the government's support did not elude the editors of the project. The crucial assistance of federal agencies was explained by Falk as a 1960s-inspired "new appreciation for the diversity of America's documentary heritage." Falk, Cole, and Thomas, eds., Emma Goldman, 8. During the early 1990s National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) support for the project has been severely curtailed, a move that may have been politically motivated (the NEH was then headed by a Bush administration appointee, Lynne Cheney). Since publication of the microfilm edition, the project has been working on a book edition of Goldman's correspondence and writings.
many writers: the man who came to epitomize the villainy of excessive power and his first victim.65

The microfilm edition produced by the project is a remarkable collaborative work. The hefty guide (1995) that accompanies the sixty-nine microfilm reels is a model of its kind.66 The essays in the guide present a balanced view of Goldman's multifaceted career. The project has also functioned as a center for enterprises that disseminate Goldman's spirit and word. These extracurricular activities stemmed from the need to raise additional money to sustain a modestly funded project and from a strong personal and institutional commitment to commemorate Goldman and to familiarize a wider public with her, a devotion and enthusiasm rarely found in similar projects.

These efforts entailed a selection of images and messages. In 1989, for example, the project sponsored an exhibition presented at several college campuses and public libraries around the country under the title "Celebrating Emma Goldman's Role in Establishing Free Speech and Reproductive Rights." The display emphasized Goldman's part in organizing the first Free Speech League of 1903 and her consequent contribution to the ACLU. As for "reproductive rights," Goldman was described as the pioneer of the birth control movement, Margaret Sanger's mentor.67 Selecting these two themes tied Goldman's legacy to the political sensibilities of the day. Both were phrased in the vocabulary of civil liberties. The exhibition's brochure smoothed over the thornier edges of Goldman's revolutionary creed by highlighting her role as an "educator."

The project's director, Candace Falk, whose resourcefulness secured the longevity of the project and the completion of its professional task, launched a lecture tour of her own, appearing in high schools and women's clubs, and on radio and television. A consortium of twenty-eight Los Angeles schools requested that the project develop a curriculum showing "how Goldman maintained a vision of hope while expressing the alienation felt by a marginal member of society."68 In fall 1990 the project initiated a concert by the singer Michelle Shocked (known for her "female folk music") with dramatic readings from Goldman's writings. Fifteen women and


67 Emma Goldman Papers Project, Emma Goldman: Exhibit Notes (Berkeley, 1990). Margaret Sanger was the first to doubt Goldman's commitment to her campaign. Goldman made it clear that diffusing knowledge about birth control was important mainly because it was taboo. In April 1916 Goldman was sentenced to fifteen days in jail for promoting birth control. By then, there was an open rift between Goldman and Sanger. Wexler, Emma Goldman in America, 210–13. Morton claims that Goldman used birth control as a teaser in her lectures since it guaranteed "good box-office." Morton, Emma Goldman and the American Left, 76–77. Feminists debate whether Sanger or Goldman contributed more to the advancement of birth control. See Susan Brownmiller, "The Queen of Anarchists and, also, a Fool for Love," Newsday, Oct. 28, 1984, pp. 55, 60.

men representing a mélange of radical and liberal Bay Area organizations read, including Judi Bari from Earth First! (only a few weeks after a mysterious explosion inside her car, Bari went on stage with crutches); peace activist Brian Wilson; and representatives from the United Farm Workers, Amnesty International, the ACLU, and the Bay Area Coalition against Operation Rescue. It had been a while since Goldman drew such an enthusiastic crowd of activists and students.

There was an atmosphere of excitement and camaraderie that evening, not disturbed by—or perhaps predicated on—the lack of any concrete political content. Most of the passages read offered Goldman's keen observations on people and institutions or amusing episodes from her career on the stump. The material was highly entertaining: from Goldman's sneer, "Lenin sure knew his Marx but knew nothing about sex," to the obligatory, though erroneous, "If I can't dance I won't take part in your revolution." The audience laughed and cheered. Just before the intermission, the spectators were surprised by a middle-aged woman who emerged from a back entrance wearing Emma's apparel (a long old-fashioned dress, round hat, pince-nez) and, in a fake Yiddish accent, urged the audience to purchase the Emma Goldman Papers souvenirs that awaited them outside.

These souvenirs, nicknamed Emma-rabilia by the project, included a Goldman button ("The most violent element in society is ignorance") and a coffee mug decorated with two police mug shots taken of Goldman soon after McKinley's assassination and the quotation, "Sooner or later the American people are going to wake up. (EG, Detroit, Michigan, Nov. 23, 1919)." A poster for sale presented a black and yellow silhouette of Goldman on which the artist had superimposed thick vertical lines to generate the appearance of a prison cell. The coffee mug and this poster evidently employ the "oppressed" motif, although the combination of the mug shots and the slogan on the coffee mug is intentionally entertaining. The project also printed a greeting card. On the cover is a picture of the determined-looking, grandmotherly Goldman sitting with three comrades around a set dining table on the terrace at Saint-Tropez (some thirty years before this French Riviera fishing village was made world famous by another twentieth-century female icon, Brigitte Bardot). The four seem slightly dazed after consuming an outdoor meal under a withering grapevine. The inscription reads, "I wish you were here for I am making blintzes." Inside the card there is a blintze recipe that Goldman sent to a friend.69

Emma Goldman paraphernalia, from whatever source, range from the playfully political to the mundane and trivial. Most are quaint and harmless, utilizing Goldman's penchant for oratorical rhythm and wit. Perhaps more than any other radical figure in American history, Goldman is susceptible to such affirming, refreshingly nonacademic, celebration. But there is irony in the fact that the radical who saw great political value in high drama and frowned on commercial entertainment remains a presence in American life because she herself—body and punch line—has become popular culture. It may vouch for her durability and future ap-

69 The recipe is from Goldman to Emmy Eckstein, Aug. 28, 1934, in Emma Goldman Papers, ed. Falk, Zboray, and Hall, reel 30.
peal to new devotees, at least as long as the stocky pince-nez profile and the wonderful sharp quips garner affection and retain their power as "a style."\(^{70}\)

Over the years, the project involved academics, volunteers, and approximately one hundred graduate students. Women and ethnic and sexual minorities were well represented in this group. The multifarious legacy of Emma Goldman and the diversity of the Emma Goldman Papers Project's personnel were often presented to the public as interchangeable. "Many of the student researchers find something in Goldman that resonates with what they are," maintained Falk, "whether they are socialists and feel like outcasts, or gay and want open sexual expression."\(^{71}\) In its blend of serious, highly professional academic endeavor and the purveying of Emma-rabilia, the project seems to embody, if not all facets of *Emma*, at least the variety of techniques used to commemorate her.

How far can *Emma* reach into nonradical and nonfeminist America? A 1991 biography, designed for college history courses and published in the Library of American Biography series edited by the historian Oscar Handlin, is ultimately a positive account of Goldman's life. In that biography, *Emma Goldman: American Individualist*, author John Chalberg (who confesses in the preface that his middle-class, midwestern life has been as far removed as possible from Goldman's) argues that Goldman should be viewed as a quintessential product of American individualism. She had her share in the American dream no less than an Andrew Carnegie or a Woodrow Wilson. Goldman's ambition significantly overlapped with the egotistical visions of other relentless individualists of the late nineteenth century, since she "focused on achieving equality and individuality for all—and on possessing power and fame for herself." Chalberg identifies Goldman's desire to be the "center of attention, to be someone who mattered, to be known," as the core of her American identity and maintains that "at some point the messenger (Goldman) became more important than the message (anarchism)." She kept her vision of anarchism vague and futuristic and never committed herself to any single organization or regimented political movement. If in 1970 Shulman saw in Goldman a feminist first and an anarchist later, in 1991 Chalberg asserts that she was an American first, an anarchist second, and an American anarchist always. Goldman and other proponents of free speech contemporary with her, he claims, self-servingly established their credentials as Americans by holding other citizens to the high standards of the Bill of Rights.\(^{72}\)


Chalberg's and other centrist interpretations of Goldman's life have not entirely supplanted radical voices that claim Goldman as their own. Proponents of anarchofeminism still maintain that women's liberation is contingent on radical equality for all members of society. The tiny groups who adhere to more traditional anarchism regard Goldman exclusively within the framework of a revolutionary ideology and are intolerant of other interpretations. Under the title "Selling Emma Goldman," an article in a Detroit-based anarchist publication ridiculed the Emma Goldman Papers Project's Emma-rabilia, arguing that "domesticated Emma, now in service of the state, is unrecognizable to us." The article also criticized the manner of introducing Goldman to students in post-riot Los Angeles. Rather than offering students a model to cope with marginalization, they argued, students should be taught about her support of direct and, if necessary, violent action.73

Today, the radical and the tamed Goldman cohabit in virtual space. Although increasingly serving commercial purposes and certainly not accessible to all, cyberspace still has a leveling, almost anarchic, quality to it, ostensibly removed from the editorial might of "cognitive elites." There, many of Goldman's original pamphlets are posted together with excerpts from *Living My Life*, anarchists' "broad-sheets," cheeky poems that allude to Goldman's role in the sexual avant-garde, ads for T-shirt vendors (one presents Goldman in the "trouble makers" section), as well as a Goldman Papers Project's home page that allows the visitor to browse through images and original documents. Goldman is even featured in an "All Star Philosopher Series" modeled on baseball cards and such inevitable specimens of academic humor as "Latke vs. Hammentash: A Materialist-Feminist Analysis." Perhaps, rather than teaching us about the bric-a-brac nature of postmodern reality, this diversity of images corresponds (anarchists notwithstanding) to the diversity of tastes in collegiate markets.74

In this paper I have presented Goldman's actual and posthumous careers as two cycles of intensified radicalism (the pre–World War I era, the long 1960s) followed by periods of moderation (1930s, 1980s) during which she became more palatable to the American public. This is admittedly a construct, employed here to highlight similarities in the actual and symbolic negotiations that arbitrated the terms on which Emma Goldman could find a place (actual and symbolic) on American soil, in American curricula, in American institutionalized memory. Most important,


both rehabilitations involved reconfigurations of Goldman's "public" and "private" selves. Her politics brushed aside, Goldman's personality remained a focus of curiosity in 1934. Fifty years later, among feminists, her private experiences became (or subsumed) her politics; outside feminism, Goldman's life of persecution epitomized an ideal of freedom against the background of historical intolerance.

The gestures solicited and extracted from governments on Goldman's behalf were always tentative and qualified, whether it was her ninety-day visa or federal support for the Emma Goldman Papers Project. Ultimately, and despite her enduring ability to intrigue larger audiences, Goldman's presence in American society and culture over the last sixty-five years engaged distinct communities of progressives, however loosely defined: radicals, liberals, and radicals-turned-liberals. In the 1930s the most significant were the prewar liberals and radicals who became New Deal supporters and some aging comrades and friends. Over the last quarter of a century, much commemoration and celebration of Goldman has involved feminists, academics, intellectuals, and formerly radical baby boomers. The modest power these admittedly small groups wield is exerted primarily over curricula, publishing, segments of popular culture, and other domains of intellectual production. But it seems fair to assume that a larger cohort outside academic ghettos and beyond particular progressive constituencies shares some of their cultural and political sensibilities.

There is a strong Jewish element among Goldman's loyals and an increasingly, albeit stereotypical, Jewish flavor to her imagery, manifested in grandmotherliness, outspokenness, or love of food and feeding. This dimension of her commemoration is even more pronounced when one considers how purged of anything distinctively Jewish images of Goldman were in the 1930s.

More is involved than imagery. In recent years there has been an expanding serious literature on Goldman in the context of Jewish history and heritage, a context she would be very reluctant to associate her legacy with. In studies about Jewish radicalism and Jewish women radicals in particular, writers discern affinities between Jewish traditions and political radicalism. Other scholars claim that Jewish women's radicalism was a reaction to common experiences of female oppression that prompted Goldman and others to renounce both Jewish tradition and bourgeois life. The current scholarly interest in Goldman's ethnicity (or abandoned faith) may be considered as yet another permutation of identity politics in academia, but Goldman's Jewishness is fundamental to any attempt at understanding Goldman's loyals.

73 Throughout the 1930s (including the 1934 visit), she still addressed Jewish audiences in Yiddish, speaking at times on Jewish issues such as "The Jew in English Literature," a December 1939 lecture to the Jewish Woman's Cultural Club in Winnipeg. See Goldman to Jeanne Levey, Dec. 9, 1939, in Emma Goldman Papers, ed. Falk, Zboray, and Hall, reel 46; Goldman to Ben Reitman, Dec. 9, 1939, ibid.; and Goldman to Milly Witcop Rocker, Dec. 13, 1939, ibid.

her hold on the American Left over the last twenty-five years. Moreover, Goldman’s position as a prophet and an icon of modern feminism may be emblematic of the ways in which Jewish political engagement, regardless of political stance, has journeyed from the outskirts of the American political arena to a safe place inside. Many of the feminists who write about Goldman are themselves Jews. The Jewish presence in the modern feminist movement has yet to be fully examined.

Those who celebrate Goldman today (which may mean simply buying a T-shirt or attending a concert) conjure memories of two distinct pasts: nominally, they invoke Emma Goldman, the turn-of-the-century historical figure; but they and younger devotees, frequently their children or students, also reenact the mythical 1960s, their own past. The photomontage (on the cover of this issue) of Goldman, Peter Kropotkin, and Michael Bakunin wearing biker’s gear exemplifies by its cut-and-paste style the bifurcated historical imagination that characterizes so many contemporary allusions to Goldman and other radical figures from the past. This representational style has its roots in the 1960s multifaceted playfulness and irreverence toward historical accuracy no less than toward social conventions. By now though, defiant attire, whether inspired by James Dean or the Hells Angels, has acquired a history of its own, which in this case has become indistinguishable from the political and historical contents of the picture, however one construes them. Two historical epochs are therefore meshed together, a duality enhanced in this photomontage by the two men’s hairstyle.

Nostalgic allusions to a recent history were evident during the 1934 episode, and they too had a strong generational character, but baby boomers’ gestures to their past are not entirely a matter of sentiment. A segment of this generation (as well as younger followers) clings to the indigenous idioms of politicking from the 1960s—T-shirts and buttons, grass-roots activism, a style of defiance—while exercising their newly acquired (although often self-effacing) power as an “interpretive elite” manifested in books and articles. Consequently, the commemoration of Emma Goldman in the 1980s and 1990s appears to challenge the distinction made by John Bodnar between official and vernacular types of public memory, not so much by collapsing these categories as by demonstrating that official and vernacular modes of remembering may peacefully coexist within the same group rather than engage opposing interests and communities. Indeed, the “mainstreaming” of Goldman has been largely a reflection of this group’s political transformations, phenomena that have corresponded to inner processes rather than to external pressures. After all, conservatives have not been much engaged in “reading” Emma Goldman. The disengagement of many baby boomers from radical politics altered, rather than eradicated, the generation’s distinct political and cultural identity.77

These ambiguities are further accentuated as we realize that feminists are the constituency most responsible for the prominence and permanence of Goldman’s stature. Over the last two decades, there has been much discussion about the

77 Bodnar, Remaking America, 13. See also the distinction between collective memory and popular memory in Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory.
uniqueness of women’s approach to history (re-vision, to use Adrienne Rich’s term) as well as the proper feminist treatment of the female subject, biographies included. But is there a particular feminist way of commemorating? Feminists have often treated the history of their movement much as other progressive groups that have become more centrist treat their histories (hence, the Goldman Papers Project), but there are also marked differences. Did women writers agonize so over Goldman’s legacy in the 1980s only because of the pitfalls of subjectivity and personal politics, or was their struggle derivative of feminists’ inherent ambivalence,
driven by egalitarian ideology, toward the formal elements of their movement; toward hierarchy, leadership, authority (including that of historical "founding mothers"); toward their own power? If there is a particular feminist way of commemorating, does it prefer narratives, stories, tales to erected monuments in iron and stone? These questions, I believe, can be discussed separately from the debates over "essentialism" and female epistemology.

Packaging and repackaging historical figures for various purposes, ideological and even commercial, is a well-documented phenomenon. Exonerating old enemies is also not rare in United States history; indeed, it may be a feature of the American way of forgetting and remembering. Consider, for example, that the leader of the American Socialist party Eugene V. Debs was hosted in President Warren G. Harding’s White House upon his release from prison. On the other side of the political spectrum, Gen. Robert E. Lee, his lieutenants, and the entire officer corps of the Confederacy have been so incorporated into the ranks of American military heroes that one almost forgets they ever fought against the United States Army. The process that facilitates the rehabilitation of old subversives and at times their museumification does not, I believe, involve exclusively centrist, conservative, or patriotic agents and discourses. Contestations over what is American, what is American heritage (a debate that—regardless of content—may be very American) may yield the same Americanizing effect. When Leon F. Litwack, chair of the Faculty Advisory Board of the Emma Goldman Papers, argues that "Even as Emma Goldman's life documents intolerance in America, it addresses some of the best qualities of this nation. The indispensable strength of America is not simply the right to dissent but more importantly the exercise of that right. . . . For much of her life in America, Emma Goldman defined the limits of political dissent," he situates Goldman, perhaps quite reasonably, in some discourse deemed American.

The NEH’s and the NHPRC’s support of academic enterprises that target previously unrepresented groups and individuals encourages placing them within a re-constructed “American History” that is bound to recast not only what is acknowledged to be American but also the historical “repatriates” themselves. Today, more often than not, Americanizing discourses are associated with civil liberties and civil rights, but there are other methods of inclusion. In the early 1930s it was Goldman’s own publicized desire to return to America and a corresponding nostalgic strain in the press that sanctioned her acceptance as part of a collective, re-

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78 Commemorations of woman suffragists have followed a more traditional path. For example, Congress recently debated which statue of female historical figures to display in the rotunda. New Republic, April 29, 1996, p. 9.

cent, yet removed and innocent past. Then, as now, labeling Goldman a rugged individualist or an archetypal New York Jew—accent, attitude, blintzes, and all—or employing other recognizable cultural constructs insinuates a gesture of inclusion. Above all, it was precisely as a litmus test of tolerance or a definer of the limits of disagreement and dissent in society that the Nation understood Emma Goldman in 1934, that Drinnon studied her in the 1950s, and that Litwack comments on her in the 1990s. In contrast to the diversity of images explored in this essay, this otherwise unsurprising liberal perspective may suggest a certain stability. Perhaps for most of those who have bothered to construe Goldman over the last seventy years she has not been (to employ an overused trope) a “contested terrain” after all.80

Portraying Goldman as a martyr for rights may reflect the prevalence of “rights talk” over the past fifteen years. While the emphasis on civil rights and liberties is reminiscent of the wide consensus on the commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1980s, a more intriguing pattern may be provided by comparing renderings of Goldman with the recent resurrection of Malcolm X. Both commenced their careers with an implacable militant activism. Both were first and foremost public speakers whose main political asset was a talent for accessible, captivating oratory. Both also anticipated their own martyrdom. Most significant, they left us autobiographies saturated, not with theoretical contemplation, but with a moral vision derived from extraordinary personal experiences of suffering and overcoming adversity. In today’s therapeutic vocabulary, these are “ inspirational” narratives; stories of becoming, of “the education of. . . .” Late in their political careers, Goldman and Malcolm X opened doors for reconciliation, if not with the establishment, at least with more moderate sensibilities. Their gestures facing the American center facilitated numerous, and often conflicting, interpretations of the two radicals’ legacies. Like Goldman’s, Malcolm X’s militancy and defiance is understood today in highly personal terms as an American story. The main difference is that as an icon Malcolm X is still politically powerful in ways that Goldman is simply not.81

As for the possible future imprint of Emma Goldman on American consciousness, one prospective direction is her pioneering role as an advocate of gay rights, a topic enhanced by the debate among feminist scholars over whether she had lesbian relationships. There are also a few early signs of a possible revival of interest in political anarchism, prompted by the demise and discrediting of the Marxist regimes in eastern Europe and a lingering confusion in the American Left regarding both theory and practice.82 Nonetheless, the most aggressive antigovern-
ment sentiment in America is voiced today by the radical Right rather than by the Left.

It has not been my intention to lament the lost purity of Emma Goldman’s radicalism nor to claim that the guises under which she has been remembered are an affront. But I do argue that her struggle for freedom of speech has often been conflated with (or, arguably, misrepresented as) nonviolent politics. In the effort to win her a place in the national pantheon, there has been little discussion of the more controversial elements of her legacy—especially her flirtation with political violence, her ambivalence toward the “masses,” her vision of anarchism, and her basic disagreement with the ideologies and practices of Western liberal democracies—much as recent tributes to Paul Robeson, W. E. B. Du Bois, or Woody Guthrie (in an album by Bruce Springsteen) gloss over their links with Soviet communism. Stephen Sondheim’s musical Assassins stands out as a unique attempt to capture Goldman’s influence on McKinley’s assassin, Leon Czolgosz. This depiction seems ironically daring, since many of the more radical Goldman scholars and devotees have emphatically denied that she had any responsibility for McKinley’s death. Arguing that Czolgosz simply misconstrued her fiery speeches, they consider her ordeal in the wake of the 1901 assassination another instance of her persecution. Although her role in the musical is quite minor, in one production of Assassins the director placed Goldman at the scene while Leon Czolgosz is preparing his gun. Historically incorrect but thought-provoking, this staging, as the director acknowledged, was likely to terrify most Goldmanologists.

The instances in which old enemies have been glorified do not, I suggest, provide sufficient evidence for a consensus history of American collective memory: the political center does not always deploy a gravitational might that pulls and melts the extremes. Not every peripheral historical figure is a candidate for the sort of inclusion granted Goldman. Some simply slip away, forgotten; others never lose their seditious otherness. Alexander Berkman, for example, is unlikely to be incorporated into any set of founding figures. A few facts and comparisons suggest an explanation: Berkman’s intellectual work is mostly tangential to the agendas of feminism in particular and late-twentieth-century progressive politics in general; he attempted an assassination for which he spent fourteen years in jail; he was the rigorous European-style ideologue of communist-anarchism while Goldman was

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83 Goldman recounted that when the painter Robert Henri expressed his desire to draw her portrait, she intoned, “But which is the real one? I have never been able to unearth her.” Goldman, Living My Life, II, 529.

the (American-style?) popularizer of ideas and tastes; and, finally, after his deportation with Goldman in 1919, Berkman expressed nothing but contempt for America. What does his experience suggest about the limit of dissent in the United States?85