EMMA GOLDMAN: A GUIDE TO HER LIFE AND DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

THE WORLD OF EMMA GOLDMAN

In 1969, nearly sixty years after it first appeared, Dover Publications published a paperback edition of Emma Goldman's *Anarchism and Other Essays*. A quarter-century later Dover still sells fifteen hundred copies annually, and its 1970 paperback edition of her autobiography, *Living My Life* (1931), also remains in print—testimony to the continuing interest in Goldman's life and ideas. With the publication of the microfilm edition of *The Emma Goldman Papers*, researchers will be able to supplement these volumes and other collections of Goldman's work with facsimiles of her correspondence, government surveillance and legal documents, and other published and unpublished writings on an extraordinary range of issues.

The purpose of this essay is to assist users of the microfilm who are unfamiliar with Goldman's historical milieu by alerting them to books—secondary sources identified in the course of the Project's fourteen years of research—that will provide context for the documents in the collection. It is not intended to be a comprehensive bibliography; it is confined for the most part to books, excluding, for example, articles in scholarly journals as well as anarchist newspapers and pamphlets. Included, however, are accounts by Goldman and her associates of the movements and conflicts in which they participated that are essential for an appreciation of the flavor of their culture and of the world they attempted to build. Over the years, many of these sources have been reprinted; others have remained out of print for decades (for example, Alexander Berkman's *Bolshevik Myth*). Wherever possible the fullest publishing history has been provided to aid readers in locating books that, despite occasional reprints, can still be difficult to find.

For more extensive bibliographies, readers should consult Paul Nursey-Bray, Jim Jose, and Robyn Williams, eds., *Anarchist Thinkers and Thought: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.:

**GOLDMAN'S WRITINGS**

The starting point for anyone interested in Goldman is her thousand-page autobiography, *Living My Life*, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931; rpt. ed., Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing Company, 1934), which covers her life thoroughly through her departure from Soviet Russia in 1921 but devotes comparatively little space to her activities during the 1920s. Three years in the writing, *Living My Life* did not sell as many copies as Goldman had hoped, a victim of the depression and the high price of $7.50 for the two volumes. Still, Goldman was buoyed by the generally favorable reviews of her work. Friends compared the book to Rousseau's *Confessions*; reviewers saw her life's story as an antidote to complacency. The central theme of the book is the passionate intensity of Goldman's commitment to her "beautiful ideal" of anarchism and her parallel quest for love and intimacy. When the book appeared, however, some readers and reviewers were shocked by Goldman's candor in discussing her personal life, missing its centrality to her political convictions. Her attempt to reconcile the personal and political, however, found a strong resonance in the revitalized women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s. *Living My Life* has been reprinted many times. A two-volume paperback edition is still in print (New York: Dover Publications, 1970). Other modern reprints include a two-volume edition, with an introduction by Sheila Rowbotham (London: Pluto Press, 1986); a one-volume unabridged edition, with an introduction by Candace Falk and a remembrance by Meridel Le Sueur (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, 1982); a facsimile reprint of the 1931 Knopf edition (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970); and a one-volume abridged edition that ends with Goldman's deportation from the United States in 1919, edited with an afterword and bibliographical essay by Richard and Anna Maria Drinnon (New York: New American Library, 1977). The editors of this edition performed an especially useful service by compiling a new and far more comprehensive index to replace the hopelessly inadequate original.


Goldman's monthly magazine, *Mother Earth*, which she published in New York from March 1906 to August 1917, is an important source for those interested in her ideas and the anarchist movement of the period. Often the day-to-day operation of the magazine was in the hands of others, most notably Max Baginski and for many years Alexander Berkman, freeing Goldman to spread anarchist ideas, build a readership, and raise money for the magazine through nationwide lecture tours. But *Mother Earth* bore
the stamp of its founder, especially in its melding of art and politics. In addition to her essays--many of them revisions of lectures--and articles on different aspects of anarchism, *Mother Earth* published original poems and short stories; excerpted works by writers such as Tolstoy, Maxim Gorki, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Oscar Wilde and reprinted poems by William Morris and Walt Whitman; reported on labor and civil liberties disputes; kept its readers abreast of developments in the international anarchist and labor movements; and often featured striking graphics on its cover.

*Mother Earth* helped to revitalize the anarchist movement in the United States, acting as a hub for its intellectual life and attracting readers and supporters from beyond the ranks of the movement by its eclectic contents and especially its unflinching defense of free speech. Its pages provided countless local groups with a forum to advertise meetings and lectures and for endless fund-raising appeals. Each issue carried advertisements for books and pamphlets on anarchism and other topics--advertisements that are a valuable resource for researchers trying to recover the political and cultural locus of the movement.

Finally, the magazine's offices also served as a publishing house: The Mother Earth Publishing Association published some of the most important anarchist books of the period, including Goldman's *Anarchism and Other Essays* and Berkman's *Prison Memoirs.*

All twelve volumes have been reprinted in the "Radical Periodicals in the United States, 1890-1960" series (New York: Greenwood Reprint Corporation, 1968). Unaccountably the reprinted volumes appeared under the title, *Mother Earth Bulletin,* the name of the journal that succeeded *Mother Earth* after the latter was banned from the mails under a provision of the wartime Espionage Act. *Mother Earth Bulletin* was published from October 1917 to April 1918, when it met the same fate as its predecessor. After Goldman's imprisonment and the suppression of the *Bulletin,* Stella Ballantine tried to keep her aunt's voice before the public through a mimeographed newsletter with the wonderfully ironic title, *Instead of a Magazine* (recalling Benjamin R. Tucker's *Instead of a Book*). The newsletter, however, lasted just one issue (a copy of it can be found on reel 61 of *The Emma Goldman Papers* microfilm).


In addition to political topics, from the early 1900s Goldman wrote and lectured on modern European drama. Her essays on playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Gerhart Hauptmann, George Bernard Shaw, and Anton Chekhov were revised and published as *The Social Significance of the Modern Drama* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1914), which has been reprinted (New York: Applause--Theatre Book Publishers, 1987).

Goldman's accounts of her experiences in Soviet Russia and what she saw as the Bolsheviks' betrayal of the revolution were translated into many languages (see reel 49 of *The Emma Goldman Papers* microfilm). When her book, *My Disillusionment in Russia* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923), appeared, Goldman was dismayed that Doubleday, Page & Company had replaced her title, "My Two Years in Russia," without her knowledge. Even worse, the publisher cut the last twelve chapters of the manuscript, omitting her account of crucial events such as the Kronstadt rebellion and an afterword in which she reflected on the trajectory of the revolution after the Bolsheviks seized power. The
publisher attempted to rectify the situation by publishing the omitted chapters as a separate volume: My *Further Disillusionment in Russia* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1924). The complete text in one volume, with an introduction by Rebecca West, appeared the following year: My *Disillusionment in Russia* (London: C. W. Daniel Company, 1925). With the resurgence of interest in Goldman in the 1960s and 1970s, a new edition of the complete text, with Frank Harris's biographical sketch of Goldman from his *Contemporary Portraits* (see below), was published (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Apollo Editions, 1970).


Two collections of Goldman's letters from her years in exile from the United States have been published. Richard and Anna Maria Drinnon, eds., *Nowhere at Home: Letters from Exile of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), is an outstanding, often moving collection of letters. Arranged thematically--under "Communism and the Intellectuals," "Anarchism and Violence," "Women and Men," and "Living the Revolution"--the letters are distinguished by the candor and passion with which their authors engage issues and by the deep bond of affection between two lifelong comrades. David Porter, ed., *Vision on Fire: Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution* (New Paltz, N.Y.: Commonground Press, 1983), includes letters on all aspects of the anarchist struggle in the Spanish civil war. The historical context is established by extensive introductions and commentaries, and the texts of the letters are thoroughly annotated.

**BIOGRAPHIES OF GOLDMAN**

Alexandre Berkman

Anyone interested in Goldman must also consult works by Berkman, her "chum of a lifetime." Their friend and comrade Mollie Steimer described them as "inseparable emotionally and spiritually. Neither of them ever wrote a major article or a book without consulting the other." Berkman's editorial skills were considerable, as evidenced by his work on *Mother Earth* and in the substantial contribution he made to shaping *Living My Life*. Berkman was also a writer of grace and power, as his three major works testify. Regrettably, he never wrote an autobiography, though in the early 1930s he sketched an outline for one through 1919. See Drinnon and Drinnon, eds., *Nowhere at Home*, xxv-xxviii.


Berkman loaned Goldman the diary he kept in Russia to help her write *My Disillusionment in Russia*, though he always believed that her free use of it detracted considerably from the impact of his subsequent account of the two years they spent in Russia, published as *The Bolshevik Myth (Diary 1920-1922)* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925). The publisher rejected the final chapter of his manuscript "as an 'anti-climax' from a literary standpoint," prompting Berkman to publish it separately as *The "Anti-Climax": The Concluding Chapter of My Russian Diary, "The Bolshevik Myth"* ([Berlin]: n.p., [1925]). The complete work has recently been republished, with a new introduction by Nicolas Walter (London: Pluto Press, 1989). Berkman's earliest essays on Russia were published in three pamphlets—*The Russian Tragedy*, *The Russian Revolution and the Communist Party*, and *The Kronstadt Rebellion* in Berlin in 1922. They have been collected and reissued as *The Russian Tragedy* (Sanday, Orkney: Cienfuegos Press, 1976), with an introduction by William G. Nowlin, Jr.

Following the untimely death of Voltairine de Cleyre in 1912, Berkman edited a collection of her writings: *Selected Works of Voltairine de Cleyre* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1914), with a biographical sketch by Hippolyte Havel. The collection has been reprinted (New York: Revisionist Press, 1972). His relationship with de Cleyre was less conflicted than was Goldman's. He held her in high esteem as a writer and fellow anarchist. A faithful correspondent while Berkman was imprisoned, de Cleyre provided emotional and intellectual support after his release and especially while he was writing *Prison Memoirs*.

Berkman's labor weekly, *The Blast*, which he edited and published in San Francisco from January 1916 to May 1917 with the assistance of M. Eleanor Fitzgerald, has also been reprinted in the "Radical Periodicals in the United States, 1890-1960" series (New York: Greenwood Reprint Corporation, 1968).

Under the auspices of the International Committee for Political Prisoners, Berkman compiled and edited a valuable collection of material documenting the Bolsheviks' proscription of civil liberties and persecution of revolutionary groups and parties in the early years of the Soviet state. Comprising correspondence, testimonies, affidavits, and interviews of political prisoners and exiles, *Letters from Russian Prisons* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925), has also been reprinted (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1977).

A useful selection from Berkman's major works plus letters and articles from *The Blast* is Gene Fellner, ed., *Life of an Anarchist: The Alexander Berkman Reader* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1992). Berkman will finally receive the attention he deserves when Paul Avrich completes the biography he is currently writing.

**ANARCHISM**


Goldman wrote at length in her autobiography about the formative influences on her political ideas, from the Russian populists and nihilists of her adolescence—apotheosized for her in the character of Vera in Nikolai Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is to Be Done?*—to the Haymarket martyrs and her mentor Johann Most. As important an influence as the Russian anarchist theorists Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin were, Goldman could also draw upon a native radical tradition in the United States of communitarianism and resistance to government authority—a tradition that found political expression in the utopian and abolitionist movements before the Civil War and resonated especially in the writings of Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman.


**THE AMERICAN YEARS**

The period of Goldman's life in the United States when she was at the peak of her influence is well documented in autobiographies and reminiscences by other participants in the radical, labor, and literary movements of the time. Readers should bear in mind, however, that after World War I the radicals who once had cooperated took different political paths. The accounts they wrote of earlier years sometimes reflect a changed political orientation; others took the opportunity to settle old scores. With reference to Goldman, then, the following books should be consulted with care.


RUSSIA


**THE EXILE YEARS**

Goldman's years in Europe and Canada between her departure from Russia and the beginning of the Spanish civil war were among the most dispiriting of her life, culminating in the death of Berkman in June 1936. During that period she relied on correspondence to stay in touch with family and friends in the United States while she renewed contacts with European associates and exiled Russian comrades and developed new friendships where her work took her.

Friends and family alike among Goldman's American correspondents were connected with the arts, especially the theater. Her favorite niece, Stella, was married to Teddy Ballantine, an actor and occasional director with the Provincetown Players. M. Eleanor Fitzgerald--Goldman's beloved "Fitzi," who occupied many roles at *Mother Earth*--was the moving force behind the scenes of the Provincetown Playhouse during the 1920s after it moved to New York City. See Robert Karoly Sarlos, *Jig Cook and the Provincetown Players: Theatre in Ferment* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982); and Helen Deutsch and Stella Hanau, *The Provincetown: A Story of the Theatre* (1931; New York: Russell & Russell, 1972). Goldman's nephew (Stella's brother) Saxe Commins had a distinguished career as an editor with Liveright and Random House. His most important association was with playwright Eugene O'Neill, much of whose early work was first performed by the Provincetown Players. See Dorothy Commins, *What Is an Editor? Saxe Commins at Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); and Dorothy Commins, ed., *"Love and Admiration and Respect": The O'Neill-Commins Correspondence* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1986).


Goldman's experiences in Britain were especially disheartening. She never warmed to the British character, and her message in the 1920s about the Bolsheviks' betrayal of the Russian revolution drew less than enthusiastic responses from her audiences. Only her lectures on drama brought her any satisfaction. Though her attempt to build support for the Spanish anarchists during the civil war met with more success, she never had the same sense of belonging among her British comrades that she had felt in America. Her efforts to reach British workers were for the most part unavailing, and she gravitated instead toward those who were more appreciative of her international reputation, especially writers and intellectuals.


York: Grove Press, 1963). Although her connections with the French anarchist movement dated from the 1890s—evidenced by her correspondence with Augustin Hamon, editor of *L'Humanité Nouvelle*—Goldman never played an active role during her residence in France, largely one suspects for fear of expulsion. Nonetheless, she had contacts with the anarchists, for example, May Picqueray, who for a time also lived in St. Tropez. See May Picqueray, *May le réfractaire* ([Paris]: Atelier Marcel Jullian, 1979).

Among Goldman's closest friends in England were Paul and Eslanda Robeson. Later in the 1930s her implacable hostility toward the Communists created an unbridgeable gulf between them as Robeson drew closer to the Party. On Robeson, see Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988). Visits from old friends and associates from America always fortified Goldman, but served at the same time as a painful reminder of how much she missed her life there. Still, she was heartened that the movement retained some vitality and was glad to encourage it from afar through correspondence. Among her correspondents was anarchist and ILGWU vice-president Rose Pesotta. See Pesotta's memoir *Bread upon the Waters*, ed. John Nicholas Beffel (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1944), which has been reprinted with a new introduction by Ann Schofield (Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 1987); and Elaine Leeder, *The Gentle General: Rose Pesotta, Anarchist and Labor Organizer* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

Goldman's influence and bonds of friendship encompassed an extraordinary range of people. She corresponded with Ba Jin (Pa Chin), a young Chinese student who was deeply influenced by anarchism. Ba Jin (the nom de plume of Li Fei-kan) later translated Kropotkin and other Western anarchists into Chinese. But it was Goldman, whom he described as his "spiritual mother," who had the greatest influence on both his fiction and political ideas. He recalled in the preface to his collection of short stories, *The General* (1934), which he dedicated to Goldman, that he first encountered her essays in 1919 when he was just fifteen years old. Later the experience of reading her autobiography reinvigorated him, and he modeled Hui, the heroine of two of his fictional works, on Goldman. See Olga Lang, *Pa Chin and His Writings: Chinese Youth between the Wars* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967). In Russia and Germany Goldman renewed her friendship with American novelist and journalist Agnes Smedley, for whom Goldman's career had been a model of courage. By the late 1920s, however, Smedley believed that the Communists offered the best hope to oppressed peoples, especially in China, and chose to end the friendship. On the Goldman-Smedley friendship, see Janice R. MacKinnon and Stephen R. MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley: The Life and Times of an American Radical* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). Goldman admired and was a regular correspondent of Danish novelist Karin Michaelis, who explored in her fiction many of the themes of women's sexuality that interested Goldman. See especially her novel, *The Dangerous Age: Letters & Fragments from a Woman's Diary*, trans. Marcel Prévost (London: John Lane, 1912). Another intense friendship that rested mostly on correspondence was with American novelist Evelyn Scott. On Scott, see D. A. Callard, *Pretty Good for a Woman: The Enigmas of Evelyn Scott* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985).

**SPAIN**


Goldman had close relations with many anarchist women during the Spanish civil war, especially those associated with the journal *Mujeres Libres*, which has begun to attract the attention of scholars. See, for example, Martha A. Ackelsberg, *Free Women of Spain: Anarchism and the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); and Mary Nash, ed., "*Mujeres Libres": España, 1936-1939* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1975). See also Lola Iturbe, *La mujer en la lucha social y en la guerra civil de España* (Mexico City: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1974).

**LITERARY INTERPRETATIONS OF GOLDMAN**

Among the fictional representations of Goldman’s life, three stand out. Ethel Mannin, the British novelist and Independent Labour Party member, worked closely with Goldman in London on behalf of the CNT-
FAI during the Spanish civil war. Her *Red Rose: A Novel Based on the Life of Emma Goldman ('Red Emma')* (London: Jarrolds, [1941]) is a shrewd portrait of its subject, especially the tensions between Goldman and Alexander Berkman's longtime companion, Emmy Eckstein. Goldman's life was so full of drama that inevitably it attracted the attention of playwrights and writers of screenplays. Two outstanding American historians have written plays based on her life. See Howard Zinn's *Emma* (first produced in 1976), in *Playbook* (Boston: South End Press, 1986); and Martin Duberman, *Mother Earth: An Epic Drama of Emma Goldman's Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), a revised version of a script commissioned two decades earlier by the New York PBS affiliate but never produced. See also Carol Bolt's *Red Emma* (first produced in 1974) in *Playwrights in Profile: Carol Bolt* (Toronto: Playwrights Co-op, 1976). Bolt's play was filmed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and broadcast in January 1976. Goldman was the inspiration also for an off-stage character in a play by Eugene O'Neill, whose talent she had recognized early in his career. See Winifred L. Frazer, *E.G. and E.G.O.: Emma Goldman and "The Iceman Cometh"* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1974).

**DOCUMENTARY FILMS**

Two documentaries by Steve Fischler and Joel Sucher are relevant and worth viewing. *Free Voice of Labor: The Jewish Anarchists* (1980) focuses on the lives and ideas of the Jewish anarchists associated with the Yiddish-language newspaper, *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (1890-1977). Participants recall labor struggles, especially in the needle trades, the repression of radicals during the post-World War I "Red scare," and the cooperative ventures they undertook in such areas as housing and free schools. The film includes interviews with the anarchists, rare newsreel and feature film footage, still photographs, Yiddish "songs of struggle," and music from the Yiddish theater. *Anarchism in America* (1982) weaves together archival footage—including a newsreel clip of Goldman on her return to the United States for a lecture tour in 1934—and interviews with participants to tell the history of anarchism in twentieth-century America. Among those interviewed is Mollie Steimer, one of Goldman's closest friends and comrades. Both films are available on video and distributed by the Cinema Guild, New York, N.Y. For an understanding of what was at stake for Spanish anarchist women during the civil war, see Lisa Berger and Carol Mazer's *... de toda la vida (... all our lives)* (1986). In addition to archival footage and stills, this Spanish-language film (with English subtitles) features extended interviews with women who were rank-and-file CNT members in their youth as well as with prominent anarchists such as Federica Montseny and Lola Iturbe. They spiritedly discuss their paths to anarchism, their work during the civil war, and the role of Mujeres Libres. The film is available on video, also distributed by Cinema Guild.

Stephen Cole