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***Attentat* and Autobiography:**

**The Political Action of Emma Goldman’s *Living My Life***

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Abstract: The Emma Goldman of *Living My Life* stands between two traditions: the revolutionary violence that motivated her early participation in Alexander Berkman’s *attentat* on Henry Clay Frick, and the consciousness-raising of second-wave feminism that would welcome her autobiography’s re-release in 1970. I argue that *Living My Life* can be read as the culmination of Goldman’s lifelong focus on *social consciousness* as the solution to her anarcha-feminist goals of opposing the state and patriarchy, and that the text thus links her earlier politics to those of the feminists to follow her. The chapter structures this argument through three claims: (1) the genre of autobiography appeals to anarchists and late 19th century American radicals due to its interrogation of external authority and representation of the individual outside state institutions, (2) Goldman’s writings on revolutionary action, the relation between elites and masses, and feminism reveal a consistent focus on social consciousness as a goal for politics, and (3) *Living My Life* as a narrated critique of authority and violence provides readers both an account of Goldman’s coming to social consciousness and practices consciousness-raising by biographizing the sufferings and strivings of radical networks at the turn of the century.

I was born, I have lived, and I have been made over. Is it not time to write my life's story? I am just as much out of the way as if I were dead, for I am absolutely other than the person whose story I have to tell. Physical continuity with my earlier self is not disadvantage. I could speak in the third person and not feel that I was masquerading.

I can analyze my subject, I can reveal everything; for *she*, and not *I*, is my real heroine.

My life I have still to live; her life ended when mine began.

* Mary Antin, *The Promised Land*[[1]](#footnote-1)

Suppose truth is a woman – what then?

* Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* [[2]](#footnote-2)

Emma Goldman, anarchist and feminist, finds herself between two revolutionary traditions. Before her stands the 19th century radicalism of Sergey Nechayev’s *Revolutionary Catechism*, for whom politics and revolution required the eradication of the private individual for an objective cause: “The revolutionary is a doomed man. He has no personal interests, no business aﬀairs, no emotions, no attachments, no property, and no name. Everything in him is wholly absorbed in the single thought and the single passion for revolution.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Here, in this tradition, was the young anarchist Alexander Berkman. In *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, he described his state of mind before attacking enemy of the people Henry Clay Frick: “The feeling is quite impersonal, strange as it may seem. My own individuality is entirely in the background; aye, I am not conscious of any personality in matters pertaining to the Cause. I am simply a revolutionist, a terrorist by conviction, an instrument for furthering the cause of humanity.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Here too was Leon Czolgosz, William McKinley’s assassin, who was first known in radical circles as “Nieman,” a name with etymological roots in the German for “new man” (and close to *niemand*, “no man”).[[5]](#footnote-5) In his final words he retained that he did not regret his crime, that “I killed the President because he was an enemy of the good people.”[[6]](#footnote-6) A man with no stated accomplices or past, just a cause, his anonymity was gladly granted by the state. He was electrocuted, his body dissolved in acid, and his emptying casket buried in an unmarked grave. This tradition allotted revolution no time for the individual. Some decades later, Maurice Merleau-Ponty would call this tradition a mistake, that “one does not become a revolutionary through science but out of indignation.”[[7]](#footnote-7) That in violence “the consciousness of self and the other which had animated the enterprise at the start had become entangled in the web of mediations separation existing humanity from its future fulfillment.” This, it would seem, was a tradition ill-fitted for autobiography: for what life does a cause have, and why would he write it?

On the other side was the 20th century radicalism that would greet the Emma Goldman of *Living My Life*’s 1970 re-release, American second-wave feminism. For this tradition, dating back to both Marxist politics and the feminist successes of the turn of the century, reform sought not to eradicate the personal but to politicize it, to erode the distinctions between private and public not by hollowing individuals but raising consciousness. In her 1999 memoir, Susan Brownmiller recalled Anne Forer’s coming up with the term:

In the Old Left, they used to say that the workers don't know they're oppressed, so we have to raise their consciousness. One night at a meeting I said, “Would everybody please give me an example from their own life on how they experienced oppression as a woman? I need to hear it to raise my own consciousness.” Kathie was sitting behind me and the words rang in her mind. From then on she sort of made it an institution and called it consciousness-raising.[[8]](#footnote-8)

This was a tradition that did not plan action from an objective distance but through subjective accounts of oppression. The practice of consciousness-raising, according to the 1969 “Redstockings Manifesto,” was “the only method by which we can ensure that our program for liberation is based on the concrete realities of our lives.”[[9]](#footnote-9) To raise one’s consciousness was to confront sexual domination through the lives of others. Though a strategy pioneered long after Goldman’s death, here was a tradition far more fitting for autobiography.

At the center of these disparate traditions was the problem of social consciousness: how to turn the masses, the underclass, to an awareness of their own domination. This chapter is an attempt to place the Emma Goldman of *Living My Life* between those two traditions, as an account and practice of social consciousness-building in the autobiography’s author and readers.

Long before she wrote *Living My Life,* Goldman’s political activism from around 1889 to 1921 sought the fusion of two radical movements in late 19th century America: anarchism and feminism. Born in Lithuania in 1869, Goldman had emigrated from St. Petersburg in 1885 first to Rochester and then New York, where she would build ties and work along radicals such as Alexander Berkman, Johann Most, Max Baginski, Roger Baldwin, and so on.[[10]](#footnote-10) Goldman’s anarchism, with inspiration from both the individualist strands of Max Stirner and the collectivist influences of Peter Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin, focused largely on championing labor movements, defending free speech, and opposing war and mandatory conscription. Goldman’s feminism, though largely in contestation with liberal and conservative movements of the day, opposed suffrage in favor of defending prostitutes, critiquing marriage, pioneering birth control, and articulating a politics of free love and female sexuality.

In her early years, Goldman was captured by the revolutionary tradition of violence, helping Berkman to attempt Frick’s life in 1892, and through most of her career she resisted the practice of autobiography. Like Frederick Douglass and others before her, Goldman thought radicalism had no time for a genre that assumed a transcendence of politics, saying once that action was “the actual living of a truth once recognized, not the mere theorizing of its life element.”[[11]](#footnote-11) In the preface to *Living My Life*, Goldman recalled earlier thoughts that “one should write about one's life only when one had ceased to stand in the very torrent of it. 'When one has reached a good philosophic age,' I used to tell my friends, 'capable of viewing the tragedies and comedies of life impersonally and detachedly - particularly one's own life - one is likely to create an autobiography worth while.'”[[12]](#footnote-12) Douglass had published two autobiographies at the peak of his radicalism; Goldman’s colleagues too published memoirs during their political careers, including Berkman’s 1912 memoirs and Kropotkin’s 1899 *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Goldman’s writing *Living My Life* in the late 1920s was a culmination of events, beginning with her deportation from the United States in 1919 after her 1917 arrest for lecturing against the war and conscription. Despite Goldman’s origins and exile, she described her life frequently as a dedication to the working class in America. In lectures she quoted Emerson and Thoreau, in writings she invoked the Revolutionary War and John Brown. In her final statement for the 1917 trial, she told the court that "I know many people – I am one of them – who were not born here, nor have they applied for citizenship, and who yet love America with deeper passion and greater intensity than many natives.”[[14]](#footnote-14) Following deportation, Goldman spent two years in the fledgling Soviet Russia, where she asked Lenin to organize a “Russian Friends of American Freedom.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Like many radicals, the early 20th century global context had marooned Goldman between the Scylla and Charybdis of market liberalism and state socialism.[[16]](#footnote-16) Disillusioned with Russia by 1921, Goldman bounced between European states and Canadian territories for the next ten years. Like many anarchists, Goldman could find a home neither in nations suspicious of Russian leftism or with communists who rested her views on Russia. After a decade of touring largely on the subject of modern drama, Goldman settled down in Saint-Tropez, France, to write her massive *Living My Life*.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Though she had left, *Living My Life* was very much a text about radicalism in America. According to a letter to publisher Alfred Knopf, Goldman had originally intended the autobiography to end at her deportation; it was only at his behest that she included the final part focused on her time in Russia, an experience already recorded in the 1923 *My Disillusionment in Russia*.[[18]](#footnote-18) Upon publication, the autobiography assisted Roger Baldwin’s campaign to have Goldman permitted back into the States for a brief tour on modern drama.[[19]](#footnote-19) Goldman would enter the country once more for her burial near the graves of the Haymarket martyrs in Chicago’s Waldheim cemetery. Her epitaph read “Liberty will not descend to a people. A people must raise themselves to liberty.”[[20]](#footnote-20)

Though Goldman wrote *Living My Life* at the end of her political career, without a home in the changing global landscape, the autobiography was a culmination of her lifelong political development and the Cassandra for feminist politics of the mid-20th century. *Living My Life* was a solution to a political problem consistent in Goldman’s anarcha-feminism. The process of writing her autobiography, she described in its preface, “did not mean merely writing. It meant reliving my long-forgotten past, the resurrection of memories I did not wish to dig out from the deeps of my consciousness.”[[21]](#footnote-21) A consistent thread throughout Goldman’s political writings is the concept of social consciousness, crucial to her leftist politics: the idea that the structural oppression of the state, capital, or patriarchy prevents the underclass from knowing its own suffering. Goldman highlights the problem of social consciousness and its various solutions on topics as varied as suffrage, modern drama, communist Russia, and American intellectualism. Action, according to Goldman, needs to stir the masses from false consciousness while maintaining their radical autonomy. Autobiography would be one form of that action. As a genre whose author is both self-authorized and dependent on a reading public, *Living My Life* provides both an *account* of Goldman’s social consciousness and *practices* social consciousness-raising by contextualizing her efforts among the vast radical movements active during her life.

In terms of the literary genre, then, autobiography for Goldman was as much a practice of biography: for the self-authorization assumed or practiced by the genre here is predicated upon Goldman’s need to historicize, memorialize, and contextualize the radical movements of her time and those who represented them. On the one hand, this distinguishes *Living My Life* from earlier chapters’ autobiographies. Its democratic function is unlike Douglass’s *My Bondage and My Freedom*: whereas the latter was to represent injustice and implication throughdescriptions of Douglass’s own life, much of Goldman’s autobiography focuses on documenting the challenges and sufferings of even those with whom she shares little experience or acquaintance. And unlike Henry Adams’s *Education*, which saw in modernity only the infinite fragmentation of American citizenship, Goldman’s efforts in *Living My Life* are to converge anarchist and feminist ideals at a time when American citizenship is increasingly a contested, surveilled, global concept.[[22]](#footnote-22)

On the other hand, *Living My Life* is then a link from an old left preoccupation with violence, action, and social consciousness to a new left, second-wave feminist interest in truth-telling that reveals structures of oppression. Its politics then stand removed from those of its author, but it is best understood as both a representation of Goldman’s political development and achievements and a discursive object for the revolutionary politics that would succeed her.[[23]](#footnote-23) In short, it is a text that could move between those two revolutionary traditions: from the objective distance of revolutionary violence to the subjective claim-making of consciousness-raising.

To argue that *Living My Life* presents a model for social consciousness, I structure the chapter in three succeeding claims: First, I look at the broader canon of anarchist political theory to articulate the appeal of autobiography to late 19th century radicals. As a genre distinct from the confession, trial testimony, and reliant on a reading public, anarchist autobiography staged alternative forms of authority and forms of representation outside of the state. For feminism, autobiography was both the assertion of women’s authority and part of a larger project to erode public-private distinctions. Second, I briefly review Goldman’s political thinking to locate her consistent interest in social consciousness, these areas particularly relevant to the genre of autobiography: radical action, the relation between elites and masses, and Goldman’s feminism. Finally, I provide a reading of *Living My Life* as a convergence of those trends in radicalism and Goldman’s political theory. Looking at the autobiography’s critiques of authority, critiques of violence, and narrative structure, I argue that Goldman configures the text both to recall her coming to social consciousness and to practice a form of consciousness-raising that biographizes the domination and radical action of others. An important element of this argument, as in chapters past, is that the politics of *Living My Life* concerns not simply its substantive political claims but generic dimensions of the text. Goldman’s autobiography practices social consciousness-raising not simply in the content of its claims, but inasmuch as its narrative structure positions her authority in relation to the representation of others.

**The Appeal of Autobiography for Late 19th Century Radicalism**

For American radicals writing at the end of the 19th century, autobiography appealed for many of the reasons it had before: it was the genre of individualism and self-authorization, yet a medium that required public spheres for its circulation. Like Benjamin Franklin’s before, it was a means of constructing identity through the virtues and characteristics of a democratic readership. Yet unlike Franklin – and more like Douglass – radical politics’ interest in autobiography was its ability to assert authorities alternative from the white Protestant men of the founding fathers or their heir, Henry Adams. The use of autobiography as a critique of authority was prevalent in the late 19th century beyond simply those of anarchists and feminists; it was a stage as well for the contesting authorities of W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* or Booker T. Washington in *Up From Slavery*.For anarchists and feminists, autobiography was an appealing genre for contesting prevailing regimes of authority and representation. These alternative authorities could be distinct in *what* they represented, in terms of an anarchist critique of the state, or in *who* they represented, in terms of the feminist push to publicize women as citizens and not homemakers.

The goal of this section is to theorize the appeal of autobiography for the radical movements central to Goldman’s politics, focusing primarily on anarchism and partially on late 19th century feminism. Here I define the history of anarchist thinking as in part anti-authoritarian, anti-statist, and focused on popular action, acknowledging that many self-proclaimed anarchists might ascribe to only one or two of these ideas.[[24]](#footnote-24) In the first two-thirds of this section I argue that autobiography appealed to anarchists for two conceptual reasons: First, autobiography as a genre seeks a form of individual authority validated by the community in lieu of objective truths (be they of religion or the state). Second, autobiography as a publication offers a venue for exploring forms of non-state representation distinct from trial testimony, electoral politics, or the mainstream press. Thus the appeal of autobiography for anarchism can be summarized in distinguishing the genre from confession and testimony. Finally, I briefly consider the precedent for women’s autobiography in late 19th century America as a genre predicated on testing the public-private divide fundamental for conservative approaches to gender in American traditions of “republican motherhood.” As in the chapter on Douglass and the abolitionists, this section seeks to illuminate the epistemic stakes of autobiography for two political movements, not to argue that Goldman was then bound by these generic conventions but to draw a conceptual parallel between the genre’s reception at the time and Goldman’s politics. By illuminating these stakes we can better understand how Goldman wrote *Living My Life* as not only a response to these political problems but as a merging of anarchist and feminist politics.

Although relatively few anarchists adopted the revolutionary rhetoric of Nechayev’s “doomed man,” autobiography still seems a strange genre for anarchism. Lecture tours and journals: these were the communicative media of radicals. And yet autobiography appears consistently in anarchist thought, in Bakunin’s 1851 *Confession* and Kropotkin’s 1899 *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*. The first positive endorsement of anarchism is, in ways, an autobiographical declaration, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s 1840 "'What are you, then?' – 'I am an anarchist.'"[[25]](#footnote-25) In the late 19th century anarchist autobiographies would include those of the Haymarket martyrs and the memoirs of Berkman, as well as those by radicals with anarchist sympathies such as “Big Bill” Haywood and Mary Harris “Mother” Jones.[[26]](#footnote-26) It would be simplistic to say that autobiography is the onlygenre of anarchist discourse, for they relied too on journals, drama, oratory, and modernist art.[[27]](#footnote-27) Yet something about anarchist thought, and in particular its American defenders, made the genre a desired form of discourse.

Anarchism as a positive theory of politics emerges not long after the development of the modern autobiography, the former often attributed to Proudhon’s declaration in 1840, and the first use of the term “autobiography” in 1797.[[28]](#footnote-28) Roughly speaking, the emergence of modern anarchism builds on two inheritances of the Enlightenment: the coherence and autonomy of the individual, and a concept (though not necessarily an endorsement) of state sovereignty.[[29]](#footnote-29) Varying interpretations of the individual and state result in differing anarchisms – from the mutualism of Proudhon to the communism of Kropotkin to the individualism of Benjamin Tucker – and thus distinct theories of revolutionary action or the world to follow. For example, Max Stirner’s investment in the ego results in an anarchist theory as critical of society as it is the state, whereas Errico Malatesta’s analysis of state violence grounds his justification for minor retaliation in kind.[[30]](#footnote-30) Contests with other inheritors and critics of the Enlightenment (most prominent of which is Bakunin and Marx’s disagreement over the politics of will at the International’s 1869 meeting[[31]](#footnote-31)) pit anarchists often against both proponents of state socialism and market liberalism, particularly those working in the early 20th century. What unites most anarchists, however, is a general optimism for individual capacity and a distrust of authorities by fiat.[[32]](#footnote-32) Though characteristic of much of post-Enlightenment thought, anarchism features the strongest push to transition authority from external sources, be they of religion or the state, to the individual, society, commune, or some other radical organization.

Thus anarchism shares with autobiography an Enlightenment-era distrust of authority, though unlike many American autobiographers, anarchists rarely see economic independence or industrialism as an alternative to the state. As mentioned in the introduction to the manuscript, autobiography also emerges in the 18th century from Enlightenment conceptions of the rational individual, inspired in part by the Protestant Reformation and developments in science and philosophy, and from the sociological development of European and American reading publics. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson describe this inheritance as “the concept of the self-interested individual of property who was intent on assessing the status of the soul or the meaning of public achievement.”[[33]](#footnote-33) Similar to anarchism, autobiography relied as well on the ever-increasing literacy of publics in the United States and Europe.[[34]](#footnote-34) Though I have demonstrated in previous chapters how the genre may articulate authority to drastically different political outcomes, important for anarchists is the simple fact that autobiography prioritizes individual authority but predicates it on a public sphere of circulating readers. This distinguishes autobiographical authority from that of biography, or even the private writing of the journal and diary.

It is autobiography’s departure from the confession that best captures its appeal for anarchist anti-authoritarianism. Smith and Watson define confession as “an oral or written narrative… addressed to an interlocutor who listens, judges, and has the power to absolve.”[[35]](#footnote-35) Though for Augustine was God, the confession can look to the state’s absolution as well, as in trial testimony or in pseudo-confessions like 1831’s *The Confessions of Nat Turner*.[[36]](#footnote-36) Both a genre in literature and religious epistemology, confession defines the individual in relation to an external, objective truth.[[37]](#footnote-37) A Catholic confession determines and expiates its author by way of God, morality and clergy; a court confession does so by way of the state, law and attorney. The historical transition from confession to autobiography thus shifts authority from an external source to one internal, whereas its publication requires public validation in kind.[[38]](#footnote-38) The transition from confession to autobiography’s individual and public authority is clear in Rousseau’s 1770 *Confessions*, often considered the first autobiography. He introduces the book as an exposition of its author not to God (as the title would suggest) but “to my kind.”[[39]](#footnote-39)

In at least two instances, anarchists’ critiques of authority take up and turn down confession: Godwin’s 1793 *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness* and Bakunin’s 1849 *Confessions*.[[40]](#footnote-40) In the former text, Godwin uses confession as an example of how society might turn religious authority to one more individual and communal; in the latter, Bakunin subverts the genre in favor of his own authority.

In the 1793 *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, Godwin lays out three principles for what Isaac Kramnick calls his “utopian anarchism”: “political simplicity,” “public inspection,” and “positive sincerity,” resulting in a decentralized system of small, autonomous parishes bound not by law but public opinion.[[41]](#footnote-41) Godwin envisions the best form of society as one in which behavior is regulated by members’ complete sincerity and honesty.[[42]](#footnote-42) The benign power of neighborly critique will make obsolete not only law but jurisprudence and crime.[[43]](#footnote-43) Sincerity, according to Godwin, is an ethic of complete personal transparency:

Did every man impose this law [of sincerity] upon himself, did he regard himself as not authorized to conceal any part of his character and conduct, this circumstance alone would prevent millions of actions from being perpetrated in which we are now induced to engage by the prospect of secrecy and impunity.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Godwin takes up confession so as to turn from a monarchical or theistic authority to one popular. Continuing from his earlier defense of sincerity, Godwin turns confession from an hierarchical, religious discipline of the individual to one communal and social:

It has been justly observed that the popish practice of confession is attended with some salutary effects. How much better would it be if, instead of an institution thus equivocal, and which has been made so dangerous an instrument of ecclesiastical despotism, every man were to make the world his confessional, and the human species the keeper of his conscience?[[45]](#footnote-45)

Godwin’s description of anarchist utopia fits well the historical transition from confession toward autobiography: instead of truth validated by god or king, sincerity – and autobiography – provides truth validated at once by individual authority and the public’s reception.

Similar to Godwin, Bakunin’s *Confession* also complicates the genre. The short text was originally written after Saxon authorities arrested Bakunin in 1849 for his involvement in the Dresden uprising and then handed him over to Russia in 1851.[[46]](#footnote-46) Eric Voegelin describes the specific impetus for the *Confession*:

After two months the door of his cell opened, and he received a call from Count Orlov, aide-de-camp to the Tsar and chief of the Third Section. The caller informed Bakunin that he was sent by the Tsar personally, and was ordered to invite him to write a confession of his sins to the Tsar. "Tell him," the Tsar had ordered, "that he shall write to me like a spiritual son to his spiritual father."

What emerged from this request is a brief, personal narrative of Bakunin’s introduction to anarchism, accompanied by the confessional accoutrements expected by the Tsar’s paternal injunction: Bakunin addresses his confession to “Your Imperial Majesty, Most Gracious Sovereign!"[[47]](#footnote-47) Understandably, an anarchist’s confession of guilt could be damning for his reputation. While there is evidence that the later Tsar Alexander II prepared a brochure of passages from the *Confession* to discredit Bakunin publicly, for whatever reason they were never released at a politically opportune moment.[[48]](#footnote-48)

A closer look at the text suggests that Bakunin is self-consciously critical of confession, particularly because he is not seeking absolution. For one, a smuggled letter to his sister Tatiana suggests that Bakunin was suffering mental anguish and feigned repentance to escape and rejoin the revolutionary cause.[[49]](#footnote-49) Yet more clever is how Bakunin takes on the idea of confession as a personal grievance expiated between subject and authority to protect those comrades the Tsar had hoped he would reveal. Bakunin includes early within the text a condition for his repentance: "I implore you for only two things… Sire, do not demand that I confess to you the sins of others. For in good conscience no one can bare the sins of others, only his own.”[[50]](#footnote-50) From the Tsar’s notes, we know that Bakunin’s confession was unconvincing. Writing in the margins on that same section, the Tsar writes that "precisely by this he destroys all confidence: if he feels all the weight of his sins, then only a PURE, complete confession, and not a CONDITIONAL one, can be considered a confession."[[51]](#footnote-51) Perhaps as a result of this, Bakunin remains in the fortress after writing his letter.[[52]](#footnote-52) All of Bakunin’s apologies are deflections. He sarcastically laments that he has “lost the right to call myself a loyal subject of Your Imperial Majesty.”[[53]](#footnote-53) Voegelin notes too that these elements undermine the work as a confession, adding that Bakunin’s regret was not for his actions but his inability to follow through on his work in Paris, Berlin and elsewhere.[[54]](#footnote-54)

Given the history of the genre and these two critiques of confession, anarchist autobiography could be read as providing the sort of public transparency of Godwin’s utopia, or as subverting traditional, external authorities as in Bakunin’s text. The appeal of moving beyond confession for anarchists is that autobiography envisions a different understanding of the individual and her authority. A more transparent iteration of Bakunin’s confession to the Tsar would be Kropotkin’s account of life in tsarist Russia in his *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, written not to appease any authority but to reckon with the conditions of the state that bore on the author’s upbringing. The autobiographical genre concerns itself with a form of authorization unlike the confession, invested in both the individual and her community.

A second appeal of autobiography for anarchism is the genre’s ability to represent individuals outside state institutions. A constitutive element of anarchism’s critique of the state is its suspicion of representative institutions.[[55]](#footnote-55) In his 1870 “The Illusion of Universal Suffrage,” Bakunin critiqued the notion that “that a government and a legislature emerging out of a popular election must or even can represent the real will of the people.”[[56]](#footnote-56) As I discuss below, Goldman’s critique of suffrage as the “fetish” of feminist movements in the United States focused on those movements’ overlooking the severity of economic conditions at home and the inefficiency of the vote abroad.[[57]](#footnote-57) And yet largely because of this principled opposition to political representation, American anarchists in the late 19th century found themselves consistently at the mercy of judges, juries and lawyers that had few qualms making defendants the movement’s martyrs.[[58]](#footnote-58) Various autobiographies responded to these trials as a way of circumventing the narrow ideology and audience of court testimony, including the *Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs* and Alexander Berkman’s *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*.[[59]](#footnote-59) These texts not only sought to circumvent representative institutions, but provided a venue by which authors could critique the state itself. In this way, the use of autobiography by late 19th century radicals was not unlike the abolitionists’ use of slave narrative to circumvent the inadmissibility of black testimony in the early 19th century. For both groups, the autobiographical genre could relocate the adjudication of testimony from illegitimate courts to the popular eye.

Few events in the late 19th century shook American radical movements like the massacre at Chicago’s Haymarket Square in 1887. In *Living My Life*, Goldman recalled the event. [[60]](#footnote-60) At the peak of American labor strikes for an eight-hour workday, a mass meeting in Chicago’s Haymarket Square turned violent when “something flashed through the air and exploded” from demonstrators to the police. The bomb killed at least one officer immediately (several more dying from wounds sustained), and in the pursuant gunfire many more on both sides would be killed or mortally wounded.[[61]](#footnote-61) Of the 31 radicals indicted, eight anarchists stood trial.[[62]](#footnote-62) The trial was a transparent indictment of anarchism, State Attorney Grinnell’s closing statement: “Law is on trial. Anarchy is on trial. These men have been selected, picked out by the grand jury and indicted because they were leaders. They are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. Gentlemen of the jury; convict these men, make examples of them, hang them out and you save our institutions, our society.”[[63]](#footnote-63) Months after the trial and one month before the sentence, on October 9, 1886, the Chicago journal *Knights of Labor* serially published the autobiographies of the eight men convicted for conspiracy of murder in the riots.[[64]](#footnote-64) The advertisement began “*THE STORY OF THE ANARCHISTS TOLD BY THEMSELVES*. *PARSONS SPIES FIELDEN SCHWAB FISCHER LINGG ENGEL NEEBE*. *The only true history of the men who claim that they are* *CONDEMNED TO SUFFER DEATH for exercising the right of Free Speech*.”[[65]](#footnote-65) The autobiographies followed months of radicals’ contesting the alleged involvement of the accused. Justice, if not blind, was swift. Four of the eight were hanged, one committed suicide in his cell after the sentence, and three would be eventually released by the Governor in 1892.[[66]](#footnote-66)

*The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs* were thus published to supplement attempts for the defendants’ amnesty. At the end of the trial, their sentences granted, the convicted delivered final statements for three days.[[67]](#footnote-67) Philip Foner explains how August Spies charged the state “with deliberately plotting to use the Haymarket tragedy as an excuse to assassinate the leaders of the working class,” optimistic that the flames of radicalism would not be stamped out by their silencing.[[68]](#footnote-68) Those in favor of pardoning the convicted included Samuel Gompers, William Dean Howells, Henry Demarest Lloyd, George Bernard Shaw, and others.[[69]](#footnote-69) The autobiographies would provide another means of representing the anarchists beyond the false trial, their advertisement describing the contents of the autobiographies as follows: “their association with Labor, Socialistic and Anarchistic Societies, their views as to the aims and objects of these organizations, and how they expect to accomplish them; Also their connection with the Chicago HAYMARKET AFFAIR / Each man is the author of his own story.”[[70]](#footnote-70) Each autobiography, though varied in style, thus focuses on providing both an account of the author’s political development and his hand in the 1886 protest. As a genre, these autobiographies replaced the authority of the jury and judge with that of their authors and readers of *Knights of Labor*, thus replacing *political* with *popular* representation.

But the publication of anarchists’ life stories was intended for more than demanding representation: it served as a venue for critiquing the state itself. In the 1886 introduction to the Haymarket autobiographies, W.P. Black urged readers to ask of each narrative: “Is the scheme these men espouse practicable? Is there occasion with us for this agitation?”[[71]](#footnote-71) For the Haymarket martyrs, these texts gave voice to their critiques of the false trials that had supposedly done them justice. This parallels a common strategy among radicals of the late 19th century to either refuse participation in court justice or to use testimony to stage radical claims against the state (refusing the court’s interest in the speaker’s crime).[[72]](#footnote-72)

Berkman’s 1912 *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (and to a lesser extent, his underground “Prison Blossoms”) provide a particularly good example of how autobiography replaced testimony as a form of representation: not only does Berkman give us an account of his false trial, but the bulk of his memoirs concerns his maltreatment by the state in prison afterward. Written in 1910, the text follows Berkman’s attack on Henry Clay Frick, his prison sentence of fourteen years, and charts his early development as an anarchist. Goldman describes the full background of Berkman’s transgression in her autobiography:in July 1892, with Andrew Carnegie in Scotland and Henry Clay Frick in charge, the Carnegie Steel Company shut down the mills in Homestead, Pennsylvania in response to the newly proposed contract of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers.[[73]](#footnote-73) Confronting the emerging strike, Frick called on Pinkerton agents to move on strikers, killing many in the skirmish.[[74]](#footnote-74) In light of public outcry against Frick, Goldman and Berkman looked at this as the perfect moment for an *attentat*, a deed that would raise consciousness against the state and its oppressed.[[75]](#footnote-75) Breaking into his office in Pittsburgh, Berkman failed to kill Frick despite shooting him twice and stabbing him.[[76]](#footnote-76) Berkman is sentenced to 22 years, ultimately serving fourteen. The memoirs, which Goldman called a “brilliant study of criminal psychology,” represent Berkman popularly rather than institutionally, and contain some of his clearest accounts of state violence.[[77]](#footnote-77)

This is evident both in Berkman’s depiction of his trial as well as his account of prison conditions. Characteristic of anarchist attitudes to the court system, Berkman refuses a legal defense, instead beginning his self-defense "I address myself to the People."[[78]](#footnote-78) He continues that "the real question at issue is not a defense of myself, but rather the *explanation* of the deed. It is mistaken to believe *me* on trial. The actual defendant is Society - the system of injustice, of the organized exploitation of the People."[[79]](#footnote-79) As I discuss later, Berkman’s goal in the trial was to explain the propaganda of his *attentat*. But at the trial he does not get a chance to provide this context, to pronounce Frick an enemy of the people. He is delivering his defense in German, but his interpreter is having difficulty reproducing his written notes: the translator is blind. Berkman protests, and the judge silences and suspends his statement. *Prison Memoirs* thus fills in as testimony by giving Berkman room to explain his deed and confirms Berkman’s priority to be his critique of the state and *not* his absolution before it.

By publishing his memoirs not before his sentence but after he had served it, Berkman can use the text to stage additional critiques of the state, examining the prison as a system of breaking down individuality through conformity, punishment and solitude, contradictory to what the prison doctor had assured him was a “democratic institution.”[[80]](#footnote-80) Though positioned as a system of moral reform (so says the placard on the wall of Berkman’s cell), prison presents a competitive field of domination: "A perfected model it is, this prison life, with its apparent uniformity and dull passivity… Hidden by the veil of discipline rages the struggle of fiercely contending wills, and intricate meshes are wove in the quagmire of darkness and suppression.”[[81]](#footnote-81) These descriptions of prison life build on what other anarchists had critiqued of prisons, as both the epitome of the state and the best producer of dissent against it: Kropotkin called prisons “universities of crime.”[[82]](#footnote-82) Finally out of prison toward the end of the book, Berkman reflects that "daily contact with authority has strengthened my conviction that control of the governmental power is an illusory remedy for social evils."[[83]](#footnote-83) Prison is depicted as a microcosm of state oppression and the condition for emancipation: it is both exemplar of state domination of the individual *and* an institution in which consciousness of that oppression may convert one to anarchism. Autobiography, as a form of representation outside the state, both showcases that conversion as well as providers readers the material for their own incitement.

In summary, the appeal of autobiography for anarchists at the end of the 19th century was both that it *practiced* acts of individual and communal authority and *recounted* the corrupt authorities of state institutions. As a critique of external authority, autobiography offered a mode of narration simultaneously reliant on individual and communal authority. An autobiography could *narrate* experiences with and against authority, meanwhile providing a *published*, discursive text that requires a community of readers. Thus like the many strands of anarchism, authority in autobiography could be located on a scale between the individual author and its collective readers. As a critique of state representation, autobiography’s circulation through the public could function not only to overcome unjust state representation but to stage critiques of state domination. The genre as a whole then permitted anarchists to theorize modes of authority and representation not reliant on god or state for their legitimacy. This tapped in as well to a longstanding history of American individualism that sought ultimate individuality and uniqueness filtered through independence or community rather than the government.

Much like the proliferation of autobiography among anarchists and radicals around the turn of the century, many works of women’s self-writing appeared in the period before *Living My Life*. Several of these were the autobiographies of women with whom Goldman or her politics had been in dialogue. In 1898 Elizabeth Cady Stanton published an autobiography, and in 1910 Jane Addams as well.[[84]](#footnote-84) 1903 saw the release of Helen Keller’s autobiography, the author of which Goldman praises at length in *Living My Life*.[[85]](#footnote-85)Dancer and friend Isadora Duncan published her autobiography in 1921.[[86]](#footnote-86) Margaret Sanger, who would found Planned Parenthood and was a leading proponent of birth control alongside Goldman, published her autobiography several years after Goldman’s in 1938.[[87]](#footnote-87) Other women’s autobiographies paralleled Goldman’s labor interests or immigrant origins, including autobiographies by Anne Ellis and Mary Antin.[[88]](#footnote-88) Goldman’s autobiography was one among a mass proliferation of women writing their lives.

As Estelle Jelinek explains, many of these texts were motivated by the past several decades’ successes in women’s emancipation, the theories and practices of which had pushed women into the public sphere.[[89]](#footnote-89) Thus on the one hand, the genre of autobiography appealed to feminist movements for interests held by other radicals: it was a clear assertion of individual authority in the public eye. But more than that, women’s autobiography championed a political voice that was neither public nor private, eroding a distinction that had long served as a bulwark against women’s political participation. Much like the move from confession or testimony distinguished autobiography’s stakes for the author’s authority, the genre also appealed to American women in the 19th century for providing a public version of genres previously considered inferior and womanly. As Smith and Watson point out, diaries, journals, and letters were “understood as properly feminine forms of the autobiographical for literate women.”[[90]](#footnote-90) Contrasted with the heroic statesmanship of a Franklin or Douglass, women’s writings were expected to focus on the personal, the quotidian, the intimate. These works were “circulated within a vibrant private circuit of exchange among sisters and friends, rather than the marketplace.” Reflecting the political successes of the late 19th century, women’s autobiography validated and made public what had been always a deeply political mode of connecting experience and injustice: speeches by Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, for example, “referenced their own experience as representative of that of enslaved African woman,” whereas postbellum texts by Elizabeth Keckley and Anna Julia Cooper continued similar themes.[[91]](#footnote-91)

As I explain below, Goldman’s feminism was far more beholden to her anarchist inheritances than any involvement with women’s movements. But the significance of women’s autobiography at the end of the 19th century is that it emerged from a similar desire to interrogate authority through literature. Added to this was the substantive political problem of moving past the public-private divide, even those authors that insisted on valorizing a woman’s role in raising patriots and supporting statesmen. Though Goldman would not draw on the rhetoric of distinguishing between public and private, her efforts to champion femininity and free love over patriarchal institutions of marriage, prostitution and motherhood demonstrate a similar need for genres that clarified the personal as always already political.

**Goldman’s Anarcha-Feminism and the Problem of Social Consciousness**

Goldman’s *Living My Life* was written in an intellectual and historical context fit for autobiography – but it was her substantive political views that established the need for a genre that aimed to authorize its author only through representing and responding to its readers. Goldman’s anarcha-feminism, as she described in a 1908 essay “What I Believe,” was not a product but a process, her work drinking deep of varied anarchist inheritances, from Proudhon on property, Bakunin on violence, and Kropotkin on community.[[92]](#footnote-92) In much of the scholarship on Goldman she is ungenerously marginalized as a mere propagandist of these ideas, as a doer rather than a thinker. [[93]](#footnote-93) As many feminist scholars have shown, this depiction of Goldman frequently rests on her marginal status as one of the few women working in anarchist circles, a fact that also frustrated Goldman’s radicalism during her life. In contrast, it was Goldman’s great strength as a political theorist to proximate the two poles of anarchism: individualism and collectivism.[[94]](#footnote-94) In addition to this, Goldman drew on anarchism to argue for women’s emancipation, despite the resistance of her many colleagues: Goldman famously contested Kropotkin’s hesitations over discussing sex in the anarchist *Free Society*.[[95]](#footnote-95)Goldman’s ability to combine these diverse forces stemmed largely from her wide inheritances. She drew not simply from individualist anarchist Max Stirner but Nietzsche and Thoreau, and not only from collectivist Kropotkin but playwright Henrik Ibsen and Freud. Her theory of anarchism was thus mutually concerned with the individual and society, and it emphasized a variety of reforms and revolutionary practices in response to the state. In perhaps her most well-known early essay, the 1910 “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For,” she described anarchism as “the philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary.”[[96]](#footnote-96) Without the state, society could be at once more individualist and communal: she described this convergence as "the individual is the heart of society, conserving the essence of social life; society is the lungs which are distributing the element to keep the life essence – that is, the individual – pure and strong.”[[97]](#footnote-97)

Consistent throughout Goldman’s political thought was an emphasis on the need for social consciousness. This section provides an overview of Goldman’s thinking on three areas in which this is particularly relevant for autobiography: her advocacy for political action in the context of other anarchist solutions, her commentary on the relation between elites and masses, and her feminism. In “Anarchism,” Goldman wrote that it was “the only philosophy which brings to man the consciousness of himself."[[98]](#footnote-98) Her project throughout life would be to stimulate that social consciousness; her project in *Living My Life* was to recall her social consciousness while expanding that of her readers.

Goldman’s anarcha-feminism is part of a long history of thinkers contending with the types of traditions that introduced this chapter. Every anarchist, reformist or revolutionary, needs a plan of action for moving from present conditions to the coming community. As the anarchist historian Daniel Guérin describes it, anarchism draws on two different sources of revolutionary energy: the individual and the spontaneity of the masses.[[99]](#footnote-99) As Goldman could adapt to both individualist and collectivist anarchisms, her ideas on action were attuned to both sources.

For many anarchists interested in the individual, change would occur not through revolution but reform. This was true of Godwin’s withering of the state through gradual, top-down enlightenment, but it is also characteristic of the individualist Benjamin Tucker’s work, as well as many of the anarcho-capitalists that emerged in the mid-20th century.[[100]](#footnote-100) Change through individual reform could aim for the enhancement of society alongside the individual, but it could also mean withdrawal: Max Stirner theorized emancipation as the individual’s triumph over both state and society.[[101]](#footnote-101) For those anarchists like Goldman who resisted a harsh distinction between present conditions and a future utopia, radical forms of education could ameliorate oppression and nurture individuality from childhood. In the 20th century the Modern School and the Francisco Ferrer Association were major attempts at anarchist education, both of which were inspired by the Spanish radical Francisco Ferrer y Guardia, who had been shot in Barcelona’s Monjuich fortress in 1909 for establishing libertarian schools.[[102]](#footnote-102) In the United States, more than 20 Modern Schools sprung up from 1910 to 1960, wherein Goldman served as a charter member for the Modern School Association of North America.

Other approaches to change insisted on fostering communities emergent among workers’ collectives. The best example of this was syndicalism, a system of organized industrialization associated with Rudolph Rocker, practiced by the Confédération du Travail in France and the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo in Spain, and endorsed by Goldman.[[103]](#footnote-103) Anarcho-syndicalism counted among its modes of action both the General Strike and “direct action.” Voltairine de Cleyre contrasted political from direct action, the former coercive, “even when the State does good things,” the latter cooperative, experimental, and emancipatory.[[104]](#footnote-104) Direct action did not necessarily result in anarcho-syndicalism: in “Anarchism” Goldman claimed direct action as responsible for universal suffrage, citing the American revolutionary war and John Brown.[[105]](#footnote-105) Anarchists focused on the elimination of capitalism emphasized the need for organic labor collectives, and in some cases action could even involve mild assistance of the state: Proudhon’s mutualist anarchism envisioned democratic neighborhood associations springing up and pressuring the state for decentralized control of utilities before its elimination.[[106]](#footnote-106)

But the major problem for anarchist action, as Guérin puts it, was the tenuous relation “between the masses and the conscious minority.”[[107]](#footnote-107) One way to think of this problem is as a means-ends issue, wherein anarchist action should parallel those practices envisioned once the state is gone. But a better way of depicting action’s focus on the relationship between actors and the acted upon is to depict it as an issue of social consciousness: if anarchist utopia is radically democratic, by what means can a select few bring society there without resorting to coercion?[[108]](#footnote-108) This reflects a traditional leftist concern with false consciousness, and indeed this problem for anarchists has its roots in the dispute between Bakunin and Karl Marx over the relevance of will for revolution: put crudely, Bakunin’s critique was that Marx’s dialectical materialism meant radicals must be patient, and that it held an ambiguous attitude toward the role of the state.[[109]](#footnote-109) As a result, many anarchists lack faith in the broader theories of history that help to solve the problem of false consciousness, yet they are similarly hamstrung by their resistance to replacing a corrupt state with one communist. Thus theories of anarchist action hinge on assumptions or analyses as to *whether* the masses are conscious of state oppression, and then *what* must be done to actualize or reveal that social consciousness. Though it would be incorrect to draw a harsh line between Marxists and anarchists (just as it would be to suggest that Marx and Marxiststhink identically), it is this philosophical distinction that results in such diverse theories of action among the various strands of anarchism.

Of those varieties, it is the *attentat* that is most frequently associated with anarchist approaches to revolutionary action. The *attentat*,or “propaganda of the deed, was at one point in their careers associated with Bakunin, Kropotkin, Berkman, and Goldman, to name a few, and it was practiced by many more.[[110]](#footnote-110) Kathy Ferguson defines the *attentat* as "an assassination intended to eliminate an oppressor of the people, demonstrate the vulnerability of the elite, and rouse the masses to revolt,” “often acts of revenge for prior assaults on protestors or last desperate acts of defiance.”[[111]](#footnote-111) Discussed in detail below, this was Goldman’s earliest defended solution for the problem of action and social consciousness. In her later writings on action, Goldman would continue the language of social consciousness, yet envision it in different modes. Defending syndicalism, she defined direct action as the “conscious individual or collective effort to protest against, or remedy, social conditions.”[[112]](#footnote-112) Even in Goldman’s writings on art she advocated theatre as a potential venue for social consciousness. In *The Social Significance of Modern Drama*, Goldman described modern dramatic art as “the dynamite which undermines superstition, shakes the social pillars, and prepares men and women for the reconstruction.”[[113]](#footnote-113) Goldman’s defense of the Modern School and critiques of contemporary education were as well grounded in concerns for consciousness.[[114]](#footnote-114) Action, for Goldman, was not only the venue in which to exercise her combination of various strands of anarchism and feminism, but theoretically hinged on issues of social consciousness. Proper action adhered not necessarily to a means-ends problem, but to the need to motivate in society an awareness of oppression. It was with the spread of social consciousness that real change could begin: either a motivated mass public with dismantle the state, or the mere fact of their social consciousness would invalidate the state as antiquated and superfluous.

Cast in another light, the problem of action for anarchists and Goldman was the relation between the radicals and the masses. If one common critique of anarchism labels it the bomb-throwing variety of Nechayev or Czolgosz, a second sees it as an elitist form of radicalism. In many anarchisms such as Godwin’s there is an explicit call for radicals to enlighten those ignorant.[[115]](#footnote-115) Goldman too is often depicted as an elitist, scholars noting her dispiriting remarks on the masses following McKinley’s assassination.[[116]](#footnote-116) Depending on one’s approach to philosophy and aesthetics, an argument like this could also cite Goldman’s interest in Nietzsche and the modern drama as elitist. Indeed in many of Goldman’s essays she communicates a skepticism of the masses similar to Nietzsche’s.[[117]](#footnote-117) In her 1910 essay “Minorities Versus Majorities,” Goldman declared that “the living, vital truth of social and economic well-being will become a reality only through the zeal, courage, the non-compromising determination of intelligent minorities, and not through the mass.”[[118]](#footnote-118) Here Goldman is clearly inserting herself into an American intellectual history that includes the conservative critiques of Tocqueville but also the more emancipatory (if still potentially elitist) injunctions against homogeny typical of Emerson and Thoreau.

And yet much of Goldman’s writing demonstrates either a more nuanced understanding of the people ora critique of elites. Critiques of the masses like those articulated above were most commonly voiced in claims of persecution (this is also where the inheritance from Nietzsche is clearest). In her 1917 trial or Voltairine de Cleyre’s defense of the anarchist, Goldman is aligned with the “untimely” stature of Socrates or Jesus Christ, put to death by an unconscious majority.[[119]](#footnote-119) Again, in perhaps her last published piece, 1940’s “The Individual, Society and the State” (originally a 1914 speech), Goldman distinguished between individuality and the homogeny or aggression of “rugged individualism,” defending creativity and self-consciousness against industriousness or majority politics.[[120]](#footnote-120) This is part of a larger discourse in American political thought that saw much of the language of individualism as counterintuitively *homogenizing* citizens, again going back to Tocqueville and Emerson, yet here confronting the rhetoric of Herbert Hoover. Yet in both of these examples Goldman’s critique is not “the people” but their representation either through state-oriented modes of justice (her trial) or capitalist ideology.[[121]](#footnote-121) The problem here again is one of lacking social consciousness.

In other areas of Goldman’s thinking she is completely critical of elite disregard for the masses. In “Intellectual Proletarians,” Goldman criticizes artists for their expressed elitist sentiments over laborers.[[122]](#footnote-122) Her argument is that many intellectuals and artists suffer similar to laborers under the state, yet due to their egoism refuse to see their mutual subjection. Intellectuals cannot provide wisdom to the masses, rather “the truth is, the people have nothing to learn from this class of intellectuals, while they have everything to give to them. If only the intellectuals would come down from their lofty pedestal and realize how closely related they are to the people!”[[123]](#footnote-123) There Goldman aimed to erode the distinction between intellectuals and laborers, a line reinforced not only by the state but the intellectuals’ self-esteem.[[124]](#footnote-124) According to Goldman, both laborers and intellectuals were alienated and disenfranchised under the state.[[125]](#footnote-125)

As Christine Stansell notes, Goldman’s appeal to intellectuals was one of her greatest strengths as an anarchist, for the artist and intellectual were categories unavailable in a classic and classist Marxian analysis.[[126]](#footnote-126) By appealing to these categories and those who defended them, Goldman could convert the bourgeois to a social consciousness more appropriate for change. It helps explain as well Goldman’s interest in modern drama, a medium she saw as a mirror for society to improve the social consciousness of its elite audiences.[[127]](#footnote-127) Goldman was not simply concerned with the specific elite-mass relations: she hoped to eliminate the hyphenation between them. Indeed, in the thousand pages of *Living My Life*, Goldman never mentions any critique of the masses in language typical of those earlier essays. In a quote that I will repeat again below, Goldman told Anne Inglis upon the publication of the autobiography that “I am anxious to reach the mass of the American reading public… because I have always worked for the mass.”[[128]](#footnote-128) The appeal of autobiography for Goldman would be that it not only tapped into previous interest in anarchist autobiography as a workshop for authority and representation, but that it could be a means of generating consciousness and thus overcoming an elitist radicalism.

Finally, Goldman’s feminism confirms her interest in raising the social consciousness of those suffering sexual domination; it also clarifies the stakes of combining an anarchist and feminist account of consciousness in *Living My Life*. In the late 19th century, American women were confronted by two primary means of representation: the “republican motherhood” ideology of conservatism and its private-public distinction, and the suffrage movement’s emphasis on rights.[[129]](#footnote-129) Goldman’s feminist politics sought to emphasize femininity and free love against those two modes of representation, writing in “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation” that "emancipation should make it possible for woman to be human in the truest sense.”[[130]](#footnote-130)

Goldman’s sexual politics were part of broader efforts to criticize the concept of “republican motherhood” that had characterized American gender depictions of the 19th century.[[131]](#footnote-131) The republican mother, as Linda Kerber argues, represented “the classic formulation of the Spartan Mother who raised sons prepared to sacrifice themselves to the good of the polis.”[[132]](#footnote-132) An example of this ideology, published shortly before Goldman’s activism, was Orestes Brownson’s “The Woman Question,” a critique of women’s suffrage that feared its destruction of the family and its threatening the role of women as citizen-makers and statesmen-supporters.[[133]](#footnote-133) A main obstacle for critics of this ideology was thus the long-held divide insisted upon between the public and the private, defended both in republican terms of virtue but also in liberal concepts of economic dependence.[[134]](#footnote-134)A strength of Goldman’s feminism was that she linked these oppressive ideologies to both capital and the state. Her excoriation of marriage, while not unoriginal, drew a clear line from Mary Wollstonecraft through John Stuart Mill to a critique of the institution as a binding contract over women’s freedom. Such as “rugged individualism” prioritized power and the purse over creativity, marriage joined men and women in contract and not love.[[135]](#footnote-135) In *Living My Life*, Goldman’s experiences with marriage and courting men provide the bedrock of her critiques of authority and sexism. Goldman’s rendering of marriage in terms of capitalist and state contract mirrors her critiques of prostitution. In “The Traffic in Women,” Goldman explained prostitution as the commodification of sex, and reveals moral opposition to prostitution as equally wedded to a capitalist fixation on contracts.[[136]](#footnote-136) For the moralist, the problem with prostitution did not originate in care for the woman, but that her body was sold “out of wedlock” – out of a contract.[[137]](#footnote-137) Finally, Goldman criticized supposed valorizations of motherhood marshalled in defense of marriage and critique of contraceptives, those who would say “the race must be preserved, though woman be degraded to a mere machine,” as she wrote in “Marriage and Love.”[[138]](#footnote-138)

A common critique of Goldman is that she often arrived at her feminism by critiquing other feminists rather than the state. Goldman is well known for taking aim at the women’s suffrage movement, in particular for its ignoring issues of poverty. Describing the suffrage movement as a “tragedy,” she wrote that “woman is confronted with the necessity of emancipating herself from emancipation, if she really desires to be free.”[[139]](#footnote-139) Goldman’s critique of the suffrage movement was deeply invested in her anarchism: much of her umbrage concerned the fact that suffrage necessarily sought freedom *through* the state. Women, Goldman thought, could not “purify politics.”[[140]](#footnote-140) Suffrage, according to Goldman, was a “fetish” that concealed economic issues in America.[[141]](#footnote-141) Much like she saw proponents of republican motherhood as falsely exhorting women’s role in the private sphere, Goldman saw suffragists as representing women solely through the public – namely, the state.[[142]](#footnote-142)

Central to Goldman’s feminism, like her writings on action and elite-mass relations, was the problem of social consciousness. In “Victims of Morality” Goldman described women’s subjection as an issue of false consciousness under capitalism and the state. In the American public it was the “Property Morality” that blinded its victims, that “condemns woman to the position of a celibate, a prostitute, or a reckless, incessant breeder of hapless children.”[[143]](#footnote-143) The problem was not simply that men put women in positions of contract (be they wives, mothers, or prostitutes), but that women were unaware of their subjection due to the consistent language of contract and exchange throughout the American state. This then prevented women from their full individuality, of which a primary problem was sexual repression. Goldman wrote that prostitution keeps women “in absolute ignorance of the meaning and importance of sex.”[[144]](#footnote-144) The solution here, as with other forms of oppression, was a widened consciousness: it was an “educated public opinion” that would improve the conditions of prostitutes.[[145]](#footnote-145) A key component of Goldman’s critique of suffrage movements is that they too concealed issues of subjection under false representations of injustice. In “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation,” Goldman wrote that advanced women “never truly understood the meaning of emancipation. They thought that all that was needed was independence from external tyrannies; the internal tyrants, far more harmful to life and growth – ethical and social conventions – were left to take care of themselves; and they have taken care of themselves.”[[146]](#footnote-146) The problem with the suffrage movement was that it simply recast women’s liberation in terms of bourgeois liberalism: women become *autonomous*, *independent*, *solvent*, without noting how attendant concepts of rights or contracts themselvesperpetuated sexual dominations like prostitution or poverty.

In much of her political theory, Goldman emphasized the need for social consciousness. It was the root of anarchist action, the solvent between elites and masses, and the end of patriarchy. This short review of Goldman’s thought is only to thread her interest in social consciousness throughout her major writings, suggesting that it would be a central focus of *Living My Life*. Goldman discusses social consciousness in many of the topics not covered here. In her critique of prisons, Goldman offered social consciousness as illuminating the criminal as “a reflex of the tendencies of the aggregate,” a product of the state rather than an agent.[[147]](#footnote-147) In her writings on Russia, Goldman mentioned as well the need for a broader social consciousness, echoed as well in her writings on modern drama.[[148]](#footnote-148) Social consciousness for Goldman was not enlightenment or purely intellectual development. Rather it was a protean type of knowledge that seeks injustice while highlighting the scaffolding that supports hierarchies of capital, state and patriarchy. In this way it resembles Douglass’s emphasis on the injustices of the plantation yet without any references to natural rights or transcendent justice. What is left to explore is how the narrative and focus of *Living My Life* can give us an account of Goldman’s own social consciousness and an example of social consciousness in practice.

1. Mary Antin, *The Promised Land*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Arnold Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sergey Nechayev, *The Revolutionary Catechism* (The Anarchist Library, 1869), 1, http://files.uniteddiversity.com/More\_Books\_and\_Reports/The\_Anarchist\_Library/Sergey\_Nechayev\_\_The\_Revolutionary\_Catechism\_a4.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (New York: New York Review of Books, 1999), 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 290. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “ASSASSIN CZOLGOSZ IS EXECUTED AT AUBURN; He Declared That He Felt No Regret for His Crime. Autopsy Disclosed No. Mental Abnormalities -- Body Buried in Acid in the Prison Cemetery.,” accessed February 12, 2014, http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F40613F63F5B11738DDDA90B94D8415B818CF1D3. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror: An Essay on the Communist Problem* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: Dell Pub., 2000), 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Isaac Kramnick and Theodore J Lowi, eds., “Redstockings Manifesto,” in *American Political Thought: A Norton Anthology* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 1353. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 1:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Emma Goldman, “What I Believe,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 1:v. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. In this chapter I generally treat memoirs and autobiographies as synonymous genres, though differences are important. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson write: “a mode of life narrative that situated the subject in a social environment, as either observer or participant, the memoir directs attention more toward the lives and actions of others than the narrator.” As we see below, this is only partially true of Berkman. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Emma Goldman, “Address to the Jury,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 370. In an interview with Paul Avrich, Goldman’s lawyer Arthur Ross told him "most people would find it hard to believe, but [Goldman] loved America deeply, in spite of what it did to her. She could talk and breathe freely here, where in Russia they pent her up.” Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. 2 (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), 767. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Though often allied with socialists, even before her experience in Russia would Goldman describe socialism as seduced by the State: “The aim of Socialism today is the crooked path of politics as a means of capturing the State. Yet it is the State which represents the mightiest weapon sustaining private property and our system of wrong and inequality.” Emma Goldman, “Socialism: Caught in the Political Trap,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Miriam Brody, “Introduction,” in *Living My Life*, by Emma Goldman, ed. Miriam Brody (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Oz Frankel, “Whatever Happened to ‘Red Emma’? Emma Goldman, from Alien Rebel to American Icon,” *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 3 (December 1, 1996): 907. Goldman also published *My Further Disillusionment in Russia* in 1924, though the two texts had originally been one text, “My Two Years in Russia.” Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 2:953. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Frankel, “Whatever Happened to ‘Red Emma’?,” 909. Although Blanche H. Gelfant suggests that Goldman wrote *Living My Life* “to establish her as a citizen worthy of readmission to the United States,” this seems far too simplistic for a text that retains much of its radicalism, as I argue below. Blanche H. Gelfant, “Speaking Her Own Piece: Emma Goldman and the Discursive Skeins of Autobiography,” in *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Paul John Eakin (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Herbert A. Leibowitz, *Fabricating Lives: An Anatomy of American Autobiography* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 1:vi–vii. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For a discussion of Goldman’s anarchism in the context of American state surveillance, see Elena Loizidou, “This Is What Democracy Looks Like,” in *How Not to Be Governed: Readings and Interpretations from a Critical Anarchist Left*, ed. Jimmy Casas Klausen and James R Martel (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Oz Frankel discusses at length the differences between the Goldman of biography and of *Living My Life*, noting in particular its increased emphasis on American thinkers, the attenuation of some of her earlier violent activism, and its smoothing over of a few particular private issues. SeeFrankel, “Whatever Happened to ‘Red Emma’?,” 906. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. I borrow this simplified definition in part from Peter Marshall, whose history stresses anarchism as a series of conceptual family resemblances. As Marshall points out, many self-appointed anarchists share only some of these ideals: for example, some thinkers such as Kropotkin see science as a legitimate authority, whereas Proudhon sees some small role for the state in the transition to anarchism. See Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), chap. 1. Other influential definitions include Daniel Guérin’s conception of anarchism as a libertarian, anti-statist socialism. See Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, trans. Mary Klopper (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Property Is Theft!: A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, ed. Iain McKay (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), 133. According to Iain McKay, Proudhon (who would also write *Confessions of a Revolutionary*) would shift from socialism to anarchism in the 19th century with that declaration, alongside his “Property is theft!” See Iain McKay, “Introduction,” in *Property Is Theft!: A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, ed. Iain McKay (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Philip Sheldon Foner, ed., *The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969); William D. Haywood, *Bill Haywood’s Book: The Autobiography of William D. Haywood* (New York: International Publishers, 1929); Mother Jones, *Autobiography of Mother Jones* (New York: Arno, 1925). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. A more exhaustive intellectual history of anarchism would point to a wider lineage of anti-authoritarian writings, back through Heraclitus, through Taoists and Etienne de la Boétie. See Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*. Most histories of anarchism resist constraining it to modern thought and, more importantly, resist canonizing it through individual leaders (for clear political reasons). See, among others, Guérin, *Anarchism*; Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism*, ed. Heiner Becker, trans. Ida Pilat Isca (London: Freedom Press, 1996); George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. I take this simplified account of anarchism’s inheritance from the Enlightenment from a conversation among Melvyn Bragg, John Keane, Peter Marshall, and Ruth Kinna on the radio show “In Our Time” in a segment on anarchism. Melvyn Bragg, “Anarchism,” *In Our Time* (BBC Radio 4, December 7, 2006), http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0038x9t. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 223, 354. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Ibid., 282. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid., 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. For more on the public reading spheres that surrounded Emma Goldman and other anarchists, see Kathy E. Ferguson, *Emma Goldman: Political Thinking in the Streets* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), chap. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Kenneth S Greenberg and Nat Turner, *The Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1996). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. For this reason, the confession features famously in both Foucault’s and Weber’s respective treatment of sexual knowledge and modernity. See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990); Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. It’s worth mentioning that the publication of confessions also complicates its audience (for God would clearly not need the Penguin edition of Augustine’s text). See Garry Wills, *Augustine’s Confessions: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 21–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. J. M Cohen (London: Penguin Books, 1981), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Though Proudhon in 1849 wrote *Confessions of a Revolutionary*, this is primarily a philosophical reflection on the French revolution of 1848, written more from an abstracted or collective perspective despite his participation there. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “Confessions of a Revolutionary,” in *Property Is Theft!: A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, ed. Iain McKay (Edinburgh; Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011), 395–477. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Isaac Kramnick, “Introduction,” in *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness*, by William Godwin, ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 24–25. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid., 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ibid., 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 311–312. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Eric Voegelin, “Bakunin’s Confession,” *The Journal of Politics* 8, no. 1 (February 1, 1946): 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin, *The Confession of Mikhail Bakunin: With the Marginal Comments of Tsar Nicholas I*, ed. Lawrence D. Orton, trans. Robert C. Howes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Lawrence D. Orton, “Introduction,” in *The Confession of Mikhail Bakunin: With the Marginal Comments of Tsar Nicholas I*, by Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin, trans. Robert C. Howes (Cornell University Press, 1977), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid., 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Bakunin, *The Confession of Mikhail Bakunin*, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Voegelin, “Bakunin’s Confession,” 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Bakunin, *The Confession of Mikhail Bakunin*, 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Voegelin writes: "Bakunin did not repent for a moment his revolutionary existence as such. He repented its futility. And he repented because his observation of the revolutionary events in Paris and Berlin, in Frankfurt, Baden, Dresden, and Prague had filled him with a solid disgust for the freedom- loving republicans who turn and betray their revolution as soon as they feel their property interests at stake, and are only too glad to return to the fold of conservative power." Voegelin, “Bakunin’s Confession,” 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin, “The Illusion of Universal Suffrage,” in *Anarchism: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)*, ed. Robert Graham, vol. 1 (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005), 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Emma Goldman, “Woman Suffrage,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Again, Goldman’s autobiography provides an excellent record of these trials, including her multiple arrests, Leon Czolgosz’s, William Buwalda’s, Bill Haywood’s, and so on. Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 1:127, 316, 445, 480. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Though my focus here is on autobiography as a response to American institutions of representation, the genre could certainly be used in other contexts of diminished free speech. See below and my discussion of Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923); Emma Goldman, *My Further Disillusionment in Russia* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1924). [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 1:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ibid., 1:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Philip Sheldon Foner, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs*, ed. Philip Sheldon Foner (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Quoted in Ibid., 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ibid., 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Ibid., 11–12. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid., 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ibid., 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ibid., 8–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Ibid., 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibid., 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. W.P. Black, “Introduction,” in *The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs*, ed. Philip Sheldon Foner (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Goldman's book includes many accounts of her and Berkman's symbolically refusing trial procedure, with the best description that of the 1917 trials that would end in their deportment. See Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 2:613. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 1:83. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Ibid., 1:86. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ibid., 1:87. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 1:483. This is of course true not simply of anarchist authors but other radical prison writings, most notably those of various Black Power movements in the mid-20th century, including Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice*, Assata Shakur’s *Assata*, or the writings of Angela Davis. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, 89. Similar events are described by Goldman for her and Berkman’s 1917 trials in Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 2:613. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Ibid., 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Ibid., 269, 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 314. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. John William Ward, “Introduction,” in *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, by Alexander Berkman (New York: New York Review of Books, 1999), 475. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years and More (1815-1897): Reminiscences of Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (New York: European Publishing Company, 1898); Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House, with Autobiographical Notes.* (New York: Macmillan, 1910). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Helen Keller, Annie Sullivan, and John Albert Macy, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Norton, 2003); Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 2:648–649. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Isadora Duncan, *My Life* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927). [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Margaret Sanger, *Margaret Sanger: An Autobiography* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971). [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Anne Ellis, *The Life of an Ordinary Woman* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1929); Antin, *The Promised Land*. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Estelle C. Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women’s Autobiography from Antiquity to the Present* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, “Introduction: Living in Public,” in *Before They Could Vote American Women’s Autobiographical Writing, 1819-1919*, ed. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 8–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Ibid., 12–13. Smith and Watson note that women’s autobiography in the 19th century endured much of the epistemic framing as described of slave narrative in chapter II: works by American Indian women, for example, were usually written in collaboration with a white amanuensis or editor. Ibid., 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Goldman, “What I Believe,” 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. For an excellent overview of Goldman’s treatment by scholars, see Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger, “Digging for Gold(man): What We Found,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman*, ed. Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 3–18; Jason Wehling, “Anarchy in Interpretation: The Life of Emma Goldman,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman*, ed. Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 19–37. Perhaps the best of these approaches is the comparison between Kropotkin’s and Goldman’s canonization in Jonathan McKenzie and Craig Stalbaum, “Manufacturing Consensus: Goldman, Kropotkin, and the Order of an Anarchist Canon,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman*, ed. Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 197–216. In case there is any confusion over whether these gendered readings of Goldman still take place, see the recent dust up between Don Herzog and Lori Jo Marso in *Political Theory*. Don Herzog, “Romantic Anarchism and Pedestrian Liberalism,” *Political Theory* 35, no. 3 (2007): 313–33; Lori Jo Marso, “The Perversions of Bored Liberals Response to Herzog,” *Political Theory* 36, no. 1 (2008): 123–28.One solution to the theory-practice divide long critiqued by feminists is Kathy Ferguson’s description of Goldman’s working in a “located register,” that she did her thinking “in the streets.” Ferguson, *Emma Goldman*, 3, 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Kathy Ferguson makes this point far more comprehensively than I do here. See Ferguson, *Emma Goldman*, 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 1:253. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Emma Goldman, “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Ibid., 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Guérin, *Anarchism*, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. See David D. Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom: Guide to a Radical Capitalism* (Santa Clara: Open Court Publishing Company, 1989); Murray Newton Rothbard, *For a New Liberty: The Libertarian Manifesto* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1985); Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, 191–2.Other examples include Sébastien Faure’s “La Ruche.” For Goldman’s involvement, see Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1970, 1:408–9, 459, 475. For Goldman’s arguments on education, see Emma Goldman, “The Child and Its Enemies,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012); Emma Goldman, “The Social Importance of the Modern School,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 140–49. For a contemporary critique of the Modern School’s combination of rebel culture and revolutionary politics, see Florence Tager, “Politics and Culture in Anarchist Education: The Modern School of New York and Stelton, 1911-1915,” *Curriculum Inquiry*, 1986, 391–416. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Emma Goldman, “Syndicalism: Its Theory and Practice,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 87–100. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Voltairine De Cleyre, “Direct Action,” in *Anarchism: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)*, ed. Robert Graham, vol. 1 (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005), 167–8. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Goldman, “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For,” 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. McKay, “Introduction,” 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Guérin, *Anarchism*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. A common depiction of Goldman on social consciousness is to focus on the means-ends debate: "One thematic red thread running throughout her chapters [of the autobiography] would be the key insight that the means used must be appropriate to the ends in mind." Richard Drinnon, *Rebel in Paradise: A Biography of Emma Goldman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. For an in-depth list of *attentats* performed in the name of anarchism, see Ferguson, *Emma Goldman*, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Ibid., 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Goldman, “Syndicalism: Its Theory and Practice,” 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Emma Goldman, *The Social Significance of Modern Drama*, ed. Harry Gilbert Carlson and Erika Munk (New York: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1987), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Goldman, “The Child and Its Enemies.” [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Isaac Kramnick, “On Anarchism and the Real World: William Godwin and Radical England,” *The American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (1972): 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Brody, “Introduction,” xviii. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Goldman’s influence by Nietzsche runs deep through much of her political writing, though Nietzsche himself had actively criticized anarchism. See Ferguson, *Emma Goldman*; Kevin Morgan, “Herald of the Future? Emma Goldman, Friedrich Nietzsche and the Anarchist as Superman,” *Anarchist Studies* 17, no. 2 (2009): 55–80. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Emma Goldman, “Minorities Versus Majorities,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Voltairine De Cleyre, “In Defense of Emma Goldman,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman*, ed. Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 301–10. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Emma Goldman, “The Individual, Society and the State,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. For a comprehensive overview of Goldman’s distinctions between individuality, individualism, and mass man, see Janet E. Day, “The ‘Individual’ in Goldman’s Anarchist Theory,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman*, ed. Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 109–36. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Emma Goldman, “Intellectual Proletarians,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Ibid., 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Ibid., 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Goldman, “The Individual, Society and the State,” 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Goldman, *The Social Significance of Modern Drama*, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Drinnon, *Rebel in Paradise*, 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. As several scholars describe the period, feminists at the time had two concepts to appeal to: rights and virtue. Goldman’s strength was in aiming for a third, passion, that focused more on women’s autonomy through free love and without state assistance. See Kate Zittlow Rogness and Christina R. Foust, “Beyond Rights and Virtues as Foundation for Women’s Agency: Emma Goldman’s Rhetoric of Free Love,” *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 2 (March 17, 2011): 149, doi:10.1080/10570314.2011.553875. Alix Kates Shulman also provides an excellent overview of the various strands of women’s activism of Goldman’s day. See Alix Kates Shulman, “Dancing in the Revolution: Emma Goldman’s Feminism,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman*, ed. Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 241–54. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Emma Goldman, “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 159. There she wrote “True emancipation begins neither at the polls nor in courts. It begins in woman’s soul.” Ibid., 167. As Lori Jo Marso points out, Goldman’s definition of femininity is fairly minimal: she gives little indication as to whether the concept concerns biology, psychology, social or political hierarchies, etc. Lori Jo Marso, “A Feminist Search for Love: Emma Goldman on the Politics of Marriage, Love, Sexuality, and the Feminine,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman*, ed. Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 83–84. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Keally McBride, “Emma Goldman and the Power of Revolutionary Love,” in *How Not to Be Governed: Readings and Interpretations from a Critical Anarchist Left*, ed. Jimmy Casas Klausen and James R Martel (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Linda Kerber, “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment-An American Perspective,” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976): 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Orestes Brownson, “The Woman Question,” in *American Political Thought: A Norton Anthology*, ed. Isaac Kramnick and Theodore J Lowi (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 854–60. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. McBride, “Emma Goldman and the Power of Revolutionary Love,” 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Emma Goldman, “Marriage and Love,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Emma Goldman, “The Traffic in Women,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Goldman, “Marriage and Love,” 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Goldman, “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation,” 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Goldman, “Woman Suffrage,” 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Although Goldman strove to erode the public-private divide, many feminists following her have criticized the various contradictions between her feminist principles and her compromises in life, particularly in terms of her love life. See McBride, “Emma Goldman and the Power of Revolutionary Love,” 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Emma Goldman, “Victims of Morality,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Goldman, “The Traffic in Women,” 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Ibid., 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Goldman, “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation,” 164–5. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Emma Goldman, “Prisons: A Social Crime and Failure,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 342. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Emma Goldman, “Afterword to My Disillusionment in Russia,” in *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. Alix Kates Shulman, 3rd Edition (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2012), 384. Goldman, *The Social Significance of Modern Drama*, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)