

Good night and good-bye: temporal and spatial rhythms in piecing together Emma Goldman's auto/biographical fragments

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Abstract: Fragments of autobiography are everywhere, particularly when you work in archives with letters, diaries and journals. There is always something missing, either because not everything found a place in an archive, because of serendipity, because of intentional selections and deselections as well as because of specific rules of taxonomy and classification that allow certain documents of life to be preserved and others to become obscure and marginalized. Discontinuous and interrupted as they are, auto/biographical fragments create their own rhythms of archival existence and it is on specific spatial and temporal rhythms that this paper focuses, particularly looking into actual and virtual space/time blocks within which auto/biographical fragments emerge and unfold, thus offering analytical trails for the researcher to follow. In doing this I will draw on archival research with Emma Goldman's papers at the University of California Berkeley.

Key words: archives, fragments, Goldman, letters, space/time rhythms

In her recent book on *The Fantasy of Feminist History*, Joan Scott has configured two fantasy figures in the making of the history of feminism: 'the female orator and the feminist maternal' (Scott, 2012: 54). The revolutionary woman, 'standing at the podium, giving a speech', while later mounting on the scaffold or being deported from her country has set in motion processes of phantasmatic identifications, operating 'as a fantasy echo, replaying in time and over generations the process that forms individuals as social and political actors' Scott, has suggested. (2012: 54)

This paper very much revolves around Scott's fantasy figure of 'the female orator' and Emma Goldman (1869-1940) is a legendary personification of this figure. Over the years, scholars and activists alike have been inspired by Goldman's life, writings and revolutionary work. The reason I got interested in her documents of life is rather unusual however: while doing research on seamstresses' narratives, I was truly surprised to find out that Goldman was a seamstress and it was actually through her sewing that she supported herself as a young divorcee in Rochester first and as a political activist in the radical anarchist circles of New York City, at the turn of the 20th century, before she was finally trained as a nurse in Europe.¹ In the very first chapter of her autobiography, Goldman vividly recounts her first day in New York, where she went determined to start a new life with the support of her sewing skills:

It was the 15th of August 1889, the day of my arrival in New York. I was twenty years old. All that had happened in my life until that time it was now left behind, cast off like a worn-out garment. A new world was before me, strange and terrifying. But I had youth, good health, and a passionate ideal. Whatever the new held in store for me, I was determined to meet unflinchingly.

How well I remember that day! It was a Sunday. The West Shore train, the cheapest, which was all I could afford, had brought me from Rochester, New York, reaching Weehawken at eight o'clock in the morning. Thence I came by ferry to New York City, I had no friends there, but I carried three addresses, one of a married aunt, one of a young medical student I had met in New Haven a year before, while working for a corset factory there and one of Freiheit, a German anarchist paper, published by Johann Most.

My entire possessions consisted of five dollars and a small handbag. My sewing machine, which was to help me to independence, I had checked as baggage. (Goldman, 2006:3)

The sewing machine is perceived as a crucial tool in Goldman's struggle for independence and creates an interesting link with her previous life, which is metaphorically represented as a 'worn-out garment'. Indeed the New York garment industry at the turn of the twentieth century was a bustling business, employing the majority of young Jewish immigrant women immigrant arriving from Russia and other Eastern European countries to escape the murderous pogroms of the 1880s and start a new life in the other side of the Atlantic. Goldman thus joined the New York's Jewish population, which by 1904 had reached 350,000. (Cohen, 1976: 104). Although the garment industry was a sweated industry with ruthless exploitation, its slack periods gave the opportunity to women workers amongst others, to engage with other activities, which is exactly what Goldman did, combining sewing with intense political activism, intense lecturing as well as the publication of the anarchist newspaper *Mother Earth*, which she founded in 1905. Sewing supported her, both materially and mentally, well through her life and particularly through the harsh years of her imprisonment:

My fiftieth birthday I spent in the Missouri penitentiary. What more fitting place for the rebel to celebrate such an occasion? Fifty years! I felt as if I had five hundred on my back, so replete with events had been my life. While at liberty I had hardly noticed age creeping up, perhaps because I had counted my real birth from 1889, when, as a girl of twenty, I had first come to New York. Like our Sasha, who would jestingly give his age minus his fourteen years in the Western Penitentiary, I used to say that my first twenty years should not be held against me, for I had merely existed then. The prison, however, and still more the misery abroad in every land, the savage persecution of radicals in America, the tortures social protestants were enduring everywhere, had an ageing effect on me. The mirror lies only to those who want to be deceived.

Fifty years—thirty of them in the firing line—had they borne fruit or had I merely been repeating Don Quixote's idle chase?

Had my efforts served only to fill my inner void, to find an outlet for the turbulence of my being? Or was it really the ideal that had dictated my conscious course? Such thoughts and queries swirled through my brain as I pedalled my sewing-machine on June 27, 1919. (Goldman, 2006: 381)

Goldman alongside Alexander Berkman, her life long friend and comrade, and other radicals were deported on December 21, 1919 and was never allowed to return to the US apart from a very short trip in 1934, when the U.S. Department of Labour approved a three-month visa, for Goldman to lecture on non-political subjects.² It was only her dead body that was finally welcomed to the US. She was buried in Waldheim Cemetery, Chicago, close to the Haymarket martyrs, whose struggle had inspired her ideas and motivated her politics. *Living my Life* was published in October 1931 while she was living in exile in France. Strangely enough, the sewing machine would become the object binding stormy and unpredictable beginnings and ends in her *political autobiographics*. Here I draw on Leigh Gillmore's (1994) notion of 'autobiographics', a discursive regime, a matrix where narratives of truth and experience are knitted together:

I offer the term *autobiographics* to describe those elements of self-representation, which are not bound by a philosophical definition of the self derived from Augustine, not content with the literary history of autobiography, those elements that instead mark a location in a text, where self-invention, self-discovery, and self-representation emerge within the technologies of autobiography- namely, those legalistic, literary, social and ecclesiastical discourses of truth and identity through which the subject of autobiography is produced. *Autobiographics* as a description of self-representation and as a reading practice, is concerned with interruptions and eruptions, with resistance and contradiction as strategies of self-representation. (Gilmore, 1994: 42)

Gilmore therefore argues that ‘the autobiographical subject is a representation and its representation is its construction [...] it is produced not by experience but by autobiography’ (1994, p.25). It would therefore seem here that Gilmore’s suggestion is in line with Domna Stanton’s proposition of ‘the autographical subject’, who constitutes herself through writing (1987). In employing Gilmore’s notion of ‘autobiographics’ my point is that Goldman’s autobiography is read and conceptualized within the polyvalent network of discursive limitations and constraints that have created conditions of possibility for this particular narrative to emerge. But as I have elsewhere written auto/biographical narratives are effects of discourse at the same time of being themselves sites of discursive production, as well as ‘narrative assemblages of technologies of the self’. (Tamboukou, 2010a) Drawing on a range of genealogical analytics in the constitution of the female self, I have highlighted the importance of material entanglements in the constitution of the self. In my analysis, the self is neither purely textual as in Stanton’s theorization, (1987) nor unproblematically real and readable. It is rather the self that Teresa de Lauretis (1987) has seen as emerging from the interstices and margins of hegemonic discourses, in what can be represented, but also in what is left without or beyond representation. (see Tamboukou, 2003) This movement beyond representation is an effect of what Foucault has described as the arising of reverse discourses, the ‘complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy’ (1990: 101). Autobiography is indeed a discursive regime creating the conditions of possibility for counter discourses to arise and unruly subjects to emerge.

Seen from a genealogical angle, Goldman remembers and recognizes herself as a subject and in doing so, she actively rewrites herself in the discourse of History. Her autobiography is an assemblage of auto/biographical fragments, carefully selected and inserted into the plot of her life story, a document of *political autobiographics* as I have suggested above. Indeed in preparing her autobiography, Goldman asked all her friends in the US and around the world to send her the letters they had received from her over the years, so that she could ‘remember’ significant events and people in her life, drawing on her correspondence. As she was writing to Ben Reitman (1879-1943), a great love in her life on November 20, 1926:

What I really want the letters for is to refresh my mind of the events that took place in the years of our common efforts. That those years will have a very important place in my autobiography I do not have to tell you. They were among the most significant years in my life—bright lights and dark together. Tell me Ben if I may have the material ... (EG to BR, in Falk, 1984: 352)

Her call to her friends was warmly responded and ‘I was soon put into possession of over one thousand specimens of my epistolary effusions’ she wrote in the appreciation page of her autobiography. (Goldman, 2006: xx) But in gathering together fragments and pieces of her life in the form of the many letters that she had sent to her friends, comrades and lovers over the years, Goldman made careful selections and deselections. Here, decisions were made on the basis of her very clear authorial intentions: her autobiography would be a political document of the anarchist movement notwithstanding how controversial her politics had been even amongst the anarchist circles of her era and beyond.

The way Goldman had always fused the personal and the political is of course a particularly critical site of contestation, an arena where she battled fiercely against her comrades and sometimes even against herself.³ As Goldman wrote, re-reading past letters was in itself a painful experience ‘for at no time does one reveal oneself so much as in one’s intimate correspondence.’ (2006: ixx) As many commentators, as well as her biographers have noted however, very few of these intimate experiences found their way in the body of her autobiography. (see Falk, 1984) Goldman herself has written that the final manuscript was carefully re-read and edited by herself and Berkman, her beloved Sasha:

Many misgivings beset me when we began the revision of my manuscript. I feared he might resent seeing himself pictured through my eyes. Would he be detached enough, I wondered, sufficiently objective for the task? I found him remarkably so for one who is so much a part of my story. For eighteen months Sasha worked side by side with me as in our old days. Critical, of course, but always in the finest and broadest spirit. Sasha also it was who suggested the title, *Living My Life*. (Goldman, 2006: xxi)

In Goldman’s understanding then, writing her autobiography was a political task that she carried through with Berkman in the way they had worked together since they first met in the New York anarchist circles. It goes without saying that Goldman’s ‘autobiographics’ were further transposed in the many biographies, as well as other forms of biographical sketches or representations that have been written about her.⁴ There are many different ‘Emmas’ emerging from these biographies, assemblages as they are of particular discourses, ideologies and authorial intentions, as well as carefully selected extracts and fragments from her letters and political writings.

As it has been widely argued and theorized, biographical representations are always, already discursive and ideological constructions, Liz Stanley’s (1992) metaphor of the kaleidoscope, having been an important early contribution in the rich literature of deconstructing biographical discourses. When we look at different biographies of the same person, Stanley has argued, we see that most writers disagree; what is more, if we scrutinize biographical writings we often see that the same biographer holds different views about their subject. In this light, biography should be taken as a ‘kaleidoscope’: ‘each time you look, you see something rather different, composed certainly of the same elements, but in a new configuration’ (Stanley, 1992:158). The ‘kaleidoscope’ approach to the biographical process involves accumulating layers of understanding and misunderstanding about the biographical subject. But where are these layers to be found? This is how we come full circle to the consideration of the constitution, rules, taxonomies, constraints, but also possibilities of the archive.

In writing her autobiography, Goldman actually started creating her first epistolary archive. Moreover, the archival practices that she initiated have had an important historical continuity: her letters and papers have been kept and preserved in a number of archives around the world, but what has brought them together is an equally amazing initiative: the *Emma Goldman Papers Project*, that I am going to discuss next.

Archive Pleasures, contingencies and serendipities

I first encountered the *Emma Goldman Papers Project* on the web (<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/goldman/>), while trying to identify archival sources of some very interesting letters, fragments of which I had read in Alice Wexler's 1984 biography: *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life*. What I did not know at the time I read Wexler's biography, is that in 1984 another important biography was published, Candace Falk's, *Love, Anarchy and Emma Goldman*. I found out about Falk's book when my on-line research brought me to the *Emma Goldman Papers Project* (EGPP), housed at the University of California, Berkeley. Apart from being the founding editor and director of the EGPP for the last 35 years, Falk is also the editor of a major four volume series: *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*. (Falk et. al., 2003, 2008, 2012) What I also learnt from my on-line research was that the EGPP was turned into *The Emma Goldman Papers: A Microfilm Edition*, comprised of 69 reels (Chadwyck-Healey Inc., 1991), available to a number of libraries in the US as well as in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam.

As I had planned to go to Berkeley in the summer of 2012, I thus grasped the opportunity to visit the archives and meet the editor of the project and its publications. The Berkeley visit turned out to be one of the rare surprise experiences that only research can offer. I was going there thinking that I would pay a visit to the editor and then work at the Berkeley Digital Library, reading the reels of the microfilm edition. But after meeting Falk, I was welcomed to use the paper files of the project instead of the reels and I was given full access to all Emma Goldman related papers, not just those included in the micro-film edition. Although I was focusing on Goldman's correspondence with Ben Reitman, I also had the opportunity to become aware of the wealth of archival material that Falk and her collaborators have brought together in the last 35 years, including material from archives and extremely rare anarchist publications from all over the world.

What I was even more surprised about, was to find out that the whole project of amassing Emma Goldman's papers was in itself a serendipity: an event that emerged unexpectedly, but had a long-lasting influence upon the life and career of Candace Falk, the founder of the project. In a conversation I had with Falk about the creation of the EGPP, this is how she recounted the story of how it all started:

[...] we were driving back across the country in a little green Saab and we stopped at Hyde Park in Chicago, where I had been a student for many years [...] so we went to a guitar shop of a friend [...] and my dog, Emma, instead of staying by the door went racing in, knocked over several music stands, I was deeply embarrassed, made a joke that this was an anarchist dog and he said, 'actually, what's her name?' and I said 'Emma, Red Emma Goldman' and he scratched his head and he thought for a moment and then he said, 'that's really funny, five years ago at the

back of the shop, I think I saw some letters of hers' [...] and within, you know, might have taken at least 20 minutes for him to find them [...] he came out with this huge boot box, full of letters that were all from Emma Goldman to her lover and manager, Ben Reitman. (Conversation with Candace Falk, August 17th, 2012)

During the time of this unexpected encounter, Falk was studying for a PhD at the *History of Consciousness Program*, University of California, Santa Cruz under the supervision of Herbert Marcuse, who enthusiastically endorsed the project and this is how it evolved as a PhD first and a life-long project of collecting, archiving and publishing Goldman's papers. As Falk has explained in private communications we have had, what is particularly unique about the EGP project is that it is composed of over 30,000 documents that have been traced in and collected from over a thousand archives and private collections. Fragments as they are, these documents have been identified and organized chronologically and by type of document, following the conventions of a documentary historian's archive. As Falk has pithily put it, 'otherwise you would have gone from archive to archive/ or find and reconfigure fragments on-line to piece together the narrative/ and its nuances.' (personal communication, 7/2/2013)

In doing this amazing work of amassing documents from a thousand archives around the world, Falk and her collaborators have made an invaluable contribution in opening up vistas and paths for future researchers in gaining a deeper and multi-faceted understanding of the unfathomable complexity and richness of the life and work of an important revolutionary woman in History. Thus, if we will never be able to seize the truth about 'who Emma Goldman really was', or 'how she really felt' about her life and about others, her archive is a rich territory that facilitates multiple explorations in search of Emma Goldman.



My own journey in the maze of Goldman's papers has indeed been fascinating. Working with 'papers' rather than the microfilm in a small cramped archive space full of Emma Goldman's images and memorabilia, sharing an oval table with other researchers and literally feeling the proof reading fever of the editor in the next room, while the third volume of the *Emma Goldman Documentary History* (Falk and Pateman, 2012) was going into print, was a rare moment of what I have discussed and theorised in my work as 'the space/time matter archival experience'. (see Tamboukou, 2010b)

Fig. 1: *Emma Goldman Papers Project*, University of California, Berkeley.

But while I was trying to find my own rhythms within the material conditions of the Berkeley archive, I was also retracing Goldman's space/time rhythms, while

agonizing with her newly found love, Ben Reitman. The following are extracts from letters she was writing to Reitman in March 1908, the very first month that they met. The strong waves of tension from their correspondence of the first month would go on and on till the very end; I gradually learnt how to swim with them, patiently following what Stanley (2004) has flagged up as crucially important in epistolary research: the seriality of the correspondence, a theme that I will discuss in the next section.

Good bye and good-night: space/time entanglements in love

I have tried so hard and so very hard to sleep, to forget that awful scene at the Restaurant, but I can not [sic], I can not! My head feels, if fire had been set to it, and my heart, my heart is convulsed in agony over the abyss between our lives [...] I shall never be able to tell you how much, how very much you have grown to mean to me, how much I appreciated the love and devotion you showed me [...] But all the love in the world could not induce me to deny my principles, my work, my self respect- Believe me it is best for you to keep away from my World of war, bitter relentless war, ever lasting strife and battle until death. Thank you dear for your great devotion and esteem. For your courage and assistance. It has meant so much, so very very much to me to have met you to have been taken by you in a land of dreams, of flowers and beauty, but in the world of my brave comrades in Paris that I have quoted 'I have no little business there.' GOOD NIGHT, GOOD BY [sic] (EGP, EG to BR, 24/3/1908, from Minneapolis)

The above extract from an agonizing letter that Goldman sent to Reitman after realizing that he was on friendly terms with police officers in Chicago, sets the scene of a stormy love relationship that went on for more than ten years, which were also amongst the most energetic and productive in Goldman's life as an agitator and activist in the US political scene. Apart from being a big love in her life, Reitman was also Goldman's very effective manager. He organized her lecture tours across the country and oversaw the publication and selling of anarchist literature that supported and sustained Goldman's political activities. And yet the Goldman-Reitman amorous relationship was bursting with eruptions and tensions, high and low points, continually interchanging as the following extract from a letter written on the day after the 'Good night, Good by' letter above forcefully shows:

Ben dear, I know my letter of last night has caused you great pain. I cannot tell you how terrible I feel that I had to write in such a tune, but frankness and honesty have been the guiding stars on my stormy path. If not for their light I should have stumbled never to rise up again. I know you love me dear with a great and pure love and though I fear I do not regret to have awakened such a love [...] I therefore welcome your past, it has cleared you from greed and [...] You mean very much to me, more than I care to express in paper and possibly can express in words. But [...] my principles will never permit me to do anything [...] I only want you to know my attitude [...] As a man you will not want me to say pretty things if I do not mean them [...] write me and tell me of yourself, all you want me to know, I wish I could write you all I feel but I cannot and must not. I must remain strange [...] for I would rather never, never see you again, than to go through last night's experience once more. I know if you were here and could look into my eyes, you would understand [...] Good bye dear, your friend, E. (EGP, EG to BR, 25/3/1908, en route to Milwaukee)

Just a day after her harsh letter of rejection, Goldman would reconsider her attitude and would write in a more conciliatory tone to express her sorrow and understanding, offering friendship while still being determined to stay apart from Reitman. This is a letter written on the move, while she was travelling to Milwaukee for a lecture.

Indeed, as the correspondence of this very first month unfolds, it seems that space/time distances would create a milieu wherein Goldman's love and passion for Reitman would rise from 'the abyss'⁵ of the differences that initially seemed to keep them apart:

Ben, my dear. It is foolish of me to expect a letter from you, after I sent you such a one from Milwaukee, is it not? I respect your silence, it only shows that you do have a deep sense of honour, though you denied it. This only makes you dearer to me. Though I waited consciously and so anxiously for a line from you, I understand that you could not write.[...] I want to hear from you so very, very much yet, I do not wish you to write unless you feel like it [...]

May life bring you joy, great joy. Your, E (EGP, EG to BR, 26/3/1908, from Minneapolis)

Goldman's letter above fills gaps of silence in communication. The initially disgraced beloved has been transposed to a man of honour, whose feelings have been hurt and thus his silence is both understood and accepted as a latent mode of apology. Goldman's change of mood is vividly expressed not only in the tone and discourse of her letters but also in the changing form of her salutations: the cold 'Goodbye and Goodnight' of the first letter (24/3/1908) has been transformed into 'your friend E.' on March 25, to finally become 'Your E.' on the 26th, just in the course of two days being away from the beloved. As I have noted elsewhere, epistolary salutations emit signs of emotional and psychological states (Tamboukou, 2010c: 22), but in the case of a revolutionary woman like Goldman, epistolary salutations should also be read as active technologies directing and shaping the relationship of the two parts of the correspondence. By the end of the month the tone of the correspondence had reached emotional heights again. Love had taken over and Goldman had let herself in its whirl:

Ben, my Ben, my beautifully tender and brutal sweetheart. With your own often repeated wound what shall I do? Where shall I go? My God, I love you so so much I can exclaim. Where shall I find peace? How can I continue my work with peace and calm and concentration? [...] I simply can not [sic] gather my thoughts to write, you are before me dear, so beautiful and kind. You thrill me so and my soul is full of my intense longing. I feel so very, very lonely without you dear. Affectionately, Your E. (EGP, EG to BR, 30/3/1908, en route to Winnipeg)

When Goldman finally arrived to Winnipeg on March 31st, 1908, the experience of being away from the beloved had become unbearable and it would continue to be so for the next ten years of their life together:

Ben my dear. I wrote to you en route and mailed it this morning on my arrival. I have nothing new to tell you except that I long for you very, very much. [...] I shall be very anxious until tomorrow, when I hope to hear from you. It's almost unbearable to be torn away from you so suddenly and then to wait for a line from you (EGP, EG to BR, 31/3/1908, from Winnipeg)

A week is clearly a very short time span for a revolutionary woman like Goldman to experience and express acute emotional upheavals for a man she had just met, or was it? What is important to consider in the seriality of the letters above is not just time, but also space, as well as movement between places and spaces. In the course of a week Goldman had moved from Chicago to Minneapolis and back and had ended up in Winnipeg, Canada, where the last letter of the month was written from. It is therefore not just time or space that is crucial in understanding Goldman's swift emotional changes, but actually space/time entanglements within which a revolutionary woman falls in and out of love. As I was following Goldman's change

of moods and rhythms from day to night and from city to city my reading was becoming more and more focused on themes that were running like red threads throughout her amorous correspondence: Goldman's agonistic relation to issues of solitude, comradeship and love; the importance of work and action, the tensions of inhabiting multiple and uneven power positions vis-à-vis the beloved, contradictions between revolutionary ideals and uncontrollable passions, the struggle with the asocial and anti-political aspects of love. Short and fragmented as they are, the extracts from Goldman's letters above allow glimpses into the harshness of gender restrictions that have been historically imposed upon women's experiences of love.

As I have discussed at length elsewhere (Tamboukou, 2010a), love and Eros have been thematic recurrences in women's auto/biographical narratives. There is a lot of work involved for "the *Scene of the Two*, which is love" to be more than a miraculous event and exist in duration, Alain Badiou (2009: 70) has argued: 'it has to be on the breach, it has to be watched out; it has to meet up with the other; it has to think, act, transform.' Goldman's love letters to Reitman burst with signs of a lot of hard work on love. Her passion for Reitman was indeed the 'asocial' kind of love that Badiou (2009: 68) has configured: love opposing social contracts and normative regulations, staging little wars and micro-revolutions in the order of things they were surrounded by. Goldman was thirty-nine years old and Reitman was ten years younger when they met. She was a leading figure in the anarchist movement of her era and he was a wandering figure, the 'hobo-doctor' of the Chicago underworld, a rough a-political womanizer that her anarchist friends never really welcomed. (See Falk, 1984) Indeed, Goldman's love letters to Reitman leave textual traces of 'the struggle of hazardous love against the necessity of the law', as Badiou has lucidly put it. (2009:75) Lovers always stage a struggle against the law of the family 'supported by the Church and the State' according to Badiou. (2009: 76) But how more difficult is this struggle of love when the conflict is not with the family, the state, or the church, but with their very opponents, the anarchist movement in Goldman's case?

Despite being fully aware of all the differences that were tearing them apart from the very beginning, Goldman nevertheless immersed herself in the play of forces that love was energizing around her: as a revolutionary spirit she was more than willing to submit to the whirl of these forces, no matter how destructive they could actually become. Goldman's amorous epistolary narratives seem to reinforce Badiou's endorsement of the Portuguese poet's Pessoa enunciation that 'love is a thought.' (2009: 74) Love as a thinking process here is not disembodied or idealistic; it is taken as a force intervening in the regulatory violence of life's common sense: to think [and therefore to love] is to experiment with life's possibilities, with 'good' and 'bad' encounters between bodies and minds. Love for Badiou is also 'a procedure of truth', that is an experience within which a certain type of truth is being constructed (2009: 39) and in this sense it has to be declared: 'To declare love, is to pass from the event-encounter to the beginning of a construction of truth. It is to fix the contingency of the encounter in the form of a beginning.' (2009: 42) Goldman's letters to Reitman forcefully unfold this 'procedure of truth', written as they are on the move, in strange hotel rooms or on train compartments as she was travelling from one city to another: 'write me and tell me of yourself, all you want me to know' she was writing, en route to Milwaukee. (EGP, EG to BR, 25/3/1908) Apart from shedding light on the dark paths of women's troubled relationships with love, Goldman's love letters to Reitman

have also created a plane of consistency in one of the many archives of my current genealogical projects: complex interrelations between love, gender and agonistic politics. (see Tamboukou, 2013)

Fragments and thickness in auto/biographical research

While we can follow Goldman's rhythms of mood, affects and emotions in her letters to Reitman, what is missing from the seriality of her March 1908 letters as discussed above, is actually the other side of the correspondence: Reitman's response in the beginning of the relationship, although some of his later letters have been preserved. (See, Chadwyck-Healey Inc., 1991) Goldman's love letters are thus inevitably fragmented in terms of how they carry traces of her amorous relationship with Reitman. But as Scott has suggested, it is the researcher's task to listen carefully to these fragmented epistolary stories and insert them in the discourse of auto/biographical histories, but also in the discourse of History itself:

[...] the word 'women' becomes a series of fragmented sounds, rendered intelligible only by the listener, who (in specifying her object) is predisposed to listen in a certain way. 'Women' acquires intelligibility when the historian or the activist looking for inspiration from the past attributes significance to (identifies with) what she has been able to hear. (Scott, 2012: 53)

It goes without saying that 'the listener's task' as configured by Scott above is neither easy, nor definitive. Drawing on my experience of working with women's auto/biographical fragments for the last twenty years, I will make the following tentative propositions by way of conclusion.

a. Auto/biographical research is fragmented through and through, unity is only a fantasy. There are three layers of fragments that I have discussed in this paper: a) autobiographies as fragmented documents of life, b) letters as fragmented traces of life histories and human communication and c) research stories or biographies as fragmented ways of analysing, knowing and understanding.

b. This acknowledgement of fragmentation leads to the position of flat ontologies and flat epistemologies or what Karen Barad (2007) has theorised as diffractive modes of analyses, methodological approaches that draw on diverse theoretical insights as they interfere with each other. My work so far has shown that there are different disciplinary, theoretical and epistemological positions that can inform and inspire the processes of how we deal with fragments of life. (see Tamboukou 2010a) More specifically in this paper I have diffractively drawn on: a) Scott's (2012) recent work on the role of fantasy in the making of history and particularly the role of echoes and repetitions, b) the importance of analyzing women's autobiographical narratives within discursive constraints and limitations (Gillmore, 1994) and c) the role of space/time/matter entanglements in archival research (Barad, 2007)

c. Through its inevitably fragmented nature, archival research retains elements of thick autonomy, in the light of what Edward Casey (2000) has theorized as 'the thick autonomy of memory'. According to Casey, the study of memory reveals a thickness: 'possessing a depth not easily penetrable by the direct light of consciousness' (2000: 265) And yet, despite its thickness 'remembering retains its identity as a recognisably

memorial event' (2000: 263). Drawing on Casey's influential suggestion about the 'thick autonomy of memory' (2000), what I have argued in this paper is that the archive is a space par excellence for the study of the thickness of memory, a laboratory of memory with specific spatio/temporal rhythms that intensify auto/biographical research and in doing so they open up new vistas in the analysis of documents of life and consequently in our understanding of the human condition.

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Notes.

¹ In 1895, Goldman travelled to Europe, visiting anarchist friends in England and France and finally ended up in Vienna, Austria where she formally trained as a nurse before returning to the US in the spring of 1896.

² They were initially sent to the newly founded Soviet Union, but both Goldman and Berkman left their beloved mother country in the beginning of 1922, disillusioned by the route of the Bolshevik revolution they had so enthusiastically endorsed. They then lived in various European countries as stateless persons, although the UK was the only country that did give Goldman a passport in 1925 through marriage to a British citizen, the anarchist trade unionist James Colton. In the end of her life, Goldman resided in Canada, where she died.

³ See Hemmings, 2012 for an interesting discussion of the personal and the political in Goldman's revolutionary politics.

⁴ See amongst others: Drinnon, 1961; Falk, 1984; Moritz, 2001; Solomon, 1987; Wexler, 1984, 1989;

⁵ This is a phrase that Goldman repetitively used in her correspondence to describe the huge differences between her and Reitman