Female Support Networks and Political Activism:
Lillian Wald, Crystal Eastman, Emma Goldman

In Vera Brittain's Testament of Friendship, the biography of her beloved friend Winifred Holtby, the British activist and author wrote that

From the days of Homer the friendships of men have enjoyed glory and acclamation, but the friendships of women, in spite of Ruth and Naomi, have usually been not merely unsung, but mocked, belittled and falsely interpreted.

Part of the problem is general in scope and involves a distorted vision of the historian's craft that is no longer operable. Historians of my generation were trained to believe that the proper study of our past should be limited to the activities of great men — the wars of kings, the hero's quest for power. We were taught that the personal was separate from the political and that emotions were irrelevant to history. Recent history and the movements of the sixties, the decade of our professional maturing, have revealed the absurdity of that tradition. It has become clear that in history, no less than in life, our personal choices and the nature of our human relationships were and remain inseparable from our political, our public efforts. Once the personal impact of such confined historical perspective emerged, the need for revision became clear.

In my own work, 10 years of work on the historical peace movement — studies that included such significant women as Lillian Wald, Jane Addams, Crystal Eastman, and Emma Goldman — I had focused entirely on women's political contributions. I wrote about their programs for social justice and their opposition to international war. Nothing else. Whenever I came across a love letter by Lillian Wald, for example, I would note "love letter," and move on.

This paper is the result of a long overdue recognition that the personal is the political: that networks of love and support are crucial to our ability as women to work in a hostile world where we are not in fact expected to survive. And it comes out of a recognition that frequently the networks of love and support that enable politically and professionally active women to function independently and intensively consist largely of other women.

Lillian Wald, Crystal Eastman, Emma Goldman

Beyond their commitment to economic and social change and their opposition to America's entrance into World War I, Lillian Wald, Crystal Eastman, Emma Goldman, and Jane Addams had very little in common. They are of different generations, represent contrary political solutions, and in their private lives reflect a broad range of choice. Yet all four women expanded the narrow contours of women's role and all four left a legacy of struggle against poverty and discrimination.

Jane Addams and Lillian Wald were progressive social reformers.* The most famous of the settlement-house crusaders, Wald created the Henry Street Settlement and Visiting Nurse Service in New York while Addams founded Hull House in Chicago.

Crystal Eastman, a generation younger than Addams and Wald, was an attorney and journalist who investigated labor conditions and work accidents. In 1907 she authored New York State's first workman's compensation law, which became the model for most such laws in the United States. One of

* Because of the complexity of Lillian Wald's life and the fact that the only significant biography is dated 1938, I will focus on Wald rather than Jane Addams -- about whom many people have written and are now writing.

More outspoken and less respectful of authority than Addams and Wald, Eastman nevertheless worked closely with them in the peace movement. Wald was president of the American Union Against Militarism, the parent organization of the American Civil Liberties Union, and Eastman was its executive secretary. Addams was president of the Women's Peace Party (renamed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom), and Eastman, also one of its founders, was president of the New York branch. Their differences of temperament and tactics tell us much about the nature of the women's movement during the rapidly changing era of WWI.2

Emma Goldman was outside their company, but always in the vanguard of their activity. Addams, Wald, and Eastman worked to improve immigrant and labor conditions.

Goldman, an anarchist immigrant worker, sought to recreate society. They worked within the law to modify it. Goldman worked without the law to replace it with anarchist principles of voluntary communism.

Goldman frequently visited the Nurses' Settlement on Henry Street and liked Lillian Wald and her co-workers, particularly Lavinia Dock, well enough. She thought them "women of ideals, capable of fine, generous deeds." But she disapproved of their work and feared that their activities created "snobbery among the very people they were trying to help." Although Jane Addams was influenced by anarchist writings, Goldman regarded her even more critically. She thought Addams an elitist snob.3
Emma Goldman's work with Crystal Eastman on behalf of birth control, the legalization of prostitution, and free speech in wartime was also disheartening. They agreed on more issues: but when Eastman and her circle were on the same picket line or in the same park distributing birth-control literature with Goldman and her allies, only Goldman's group would be arrested. That was the nature of class in America.

Wald, Eastman, and Addams worked to keep America out of war through the American Union Against Militarism (AUAM). They dined at the White House with Wilson and his advisors. They hired professional lobbyists to influence Congress. Goldman worked through the Anti-militarist League and spoke throughout the United States on the capitalist nature of war and the cruelties of the class system. When she was arrested, the Civil Liberties Bureau of the AUAM defended her; but the members of the AUAM were not themselves arrested. Goldman's wartime activities resulted in her deportation. Wald and Addams received commendations from the government because, in addition to their anti-war work, they allowed their settlement houses to be used as conscientious centers.  

As different as their political visions and choice of strategies were, Addams and Wald, Eastman and Goldman were dedicated to a future society that guaranteed economic security and the full development of individual potential for women and men on the basis of absolute equality. Reformists, socialist, anarchist, all four women made contributions toward progressive change that are today being dismantled. The playgrounds, parks, and school lunch facilities they built are falling apart all over America because of lack of funding and a callous disregard for the needs of our country's children. The free-speech and human-rights issues they heralded are today facing a reawakened backlash that features the needs of "national security" and a fundamentalist Christianity that seems more appropriate to the 17th century.

The historical denial of lesbianism

The vigor and strength of these four women, born daughters in a society that reared daughters to be dependent and servile, cannot be explained without an understanding of their support networks and the nature of their private lives. Their lifestyles varied as dramatically as did their public activities from the prescribed norm of "wife-mother in obedient service to husband-father" that their culture and their era valued above all.

Of the four women, only Emma Goldman relied predominantly on men for emotional sustenance and political support. Although she was close to many anarchist and radical women, there were few with whom she had intimate and lasting relations. The kind of communal and noncompetitive intimacy of the settlement houses or the younger feminist movement Crystal Eastman was associated with was never a feature of Goldman's life.

Yet throughout her life, Goldman wrote, she "longed for a friend of my own sex, a kindred spirit with whom I could share the innermost thoughts and feelings I could not express to men....Instead of friendship from women I had met with much antagonism, petty envy and jealousy because men liked me." There were exceptions, and Goldman listed them in her autobiography. But basically, she concluded, "there was no personal, intimate point of contact."

Like Goldman, Crystal Eastman was also surrounded by men who shared her work, her vision, and her commitment to social change. Unlike Goldman, she had a feminist support group as well. Her allies consisted of her husband (particularly her second husband, Walter Fuller), her brother Max, and the women who were her friends, many of them from childhood and Vassar until her early death in 1928. Eastman's comrades were the "new women" of Greenwich Village. Radical feminists and socialists, they considered men splendid lovers and friends, but they believed that women needed the more egalitarian support of other women. For Crystal Eastman and her associates this was not only an emotional choice, it was a political necessity. Jane Addams and Lillian Wald were involved almost exclusively with women who remained throughout their lives a nurturing source of love and support. Henry Street and Hull House were staffed by their closest friend, who, night and day, made possible their unrelenting schedules.

In the past, historians tended to ignore the crucial role played by the networks of love and support that have been the very sources of strength that enabled political women to function. Women's friendships were obscured and trivialized. Whether heterosexual or
Homophobia has... erased a variety of role models whose existence would tend to obliterate crude and dehumanizing stereotypes. The very existence of networks of women such as the creative community that flourished in France between 1880 and 1940 and beyond was unknown to us. Only recently have we begun to recover the work and correspondence of such independent women as Margaret Anderson (founder of the Little Review), poet and essayist Natalie Barney, artist Romaine Brooks, poet Renée Vivien, and novelist Djuna Barnes. Except for the recent and severely flawed biography of Romaine Brooks and the more recent and also flawed biography of Natalie Barney, no serious study of that generation of self-styled Amazons, the expatriate lesbians of America, has yet been attempted.

This denial has persisted over time. The figures that serve as the frontispiece for Dolores Klasch's book Woman + Woman symbolize the problem. We see a sculpture, dated c. 200 B.C., of two women in a tender and erotic embrace. It has been called by the curators of the British Museum, "Women Gossiping."

Similarly, compassionate women who have lived together all their adult lives have been branded "lonely spinsters." When their letters might reveal their love, their papers have often been rendered unavailable. * Interpreting Freud through a Victorian prism and thinking it enlightened, male historians have concluded that the settlement-house reformers were asexual women who sublimated their passionate energies into their work. Since they were not recognizably "dykes" on the order of Radclyffe Hall or Gertrude Stein, and they always functioned too successfully to be called "sick," the historical evidence was juggled to deny the meaning of their lifestyles altogether.

So, for example, William O'Neill can refer to the 40-year relationship between Mary Rozet Smith and Jane Addams as that of "spouse-surrogates" and then conclude: "Finally, one suspects, the very qualities that led [Addams] to reject the family claim prevented her from experiencing the human

* See Dolores Klasch, Woman + Woman: Attitudes Toward Lesbianism (Morrow, 1974). The recently successful pressure to open the Mary E. Woolley Papers at Mt. Holyoke is a case in point. The famous college president lived with the chairwoman of the English Department, Jeannette Marks, for many years. They were lovers. When that fact was discovered their papers were closed.

At Mt. Holyoke alumni meeting called to discuss this issue, the comments ranged from queries as to why the papers were not simply burned to wonder as to what the fuss was about. When it was suggested that tales of lesbianism on campus might decrease enrollment, an older woman who knew Woolley and Marks reassured her young younger sister: "That's ridiculous! They worried about that when they agreed to end compulsory chapel." See also Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in 19th Century America," Signs (Autumn 1975), pp. 1-29.
Allen Reznick, for example, assures us that life did not elude Lillian Wald. His 1973 dissertation is the only study that deals with Wald’s personal life, and Reznick is eager to inform us — which he does in the title of his forward — that she was made “Not of Glazed China, But of Flesh and Blood.” But Reznick is entirely unprepared to deal with the implications of women’s relationships. In his view, the fact that Wald answered so many admiring letters and made no “documented effort at denial or discouragement” hints that she accepted female affection, even solicited it. Then, he concludes, she was undoubtedly too busy for social relations anyway.

In their analyses, Davis and O’Neill distinguished between Victorian attitudes and our post-Freudian “enlightenment.” Yet the denial of lesbianism is literally Victorian. The Queen herself was appalled by the inclusion of a paragraph on lesbianism in the 1885 Criminal Law that sought to penalize private homosexual acts by two years’ imprisonment. She “expressed complete ignorance of female inversion or perversion and refused to sign the Bill, unless all reference to such practices was omitted.”

More sensitive than most male historians, Allen Davis notes that although the romantic words and the love letters “can be easily misinterpreted,” what is important is “that many unmarried women drew warmth and strength from their supportive relationships with other women.” But he concludes that “whether or not these women were actually lesbians is essentially irrelevant.”

If we lived in a society where individual choice and the diversity of our human rhythms were honored, the actuality of lesbianism would in fact be irrelevant. But we live in a society where children are taken away from lesbian mothers, where teachers are fired for bedroom activities, where in June 1976 the Supreme Court endorsed the imprisonment of consenting adults for homosexual relations, and where as I sit typing this paper — in June 1977 — the radio announces that Dade County, Florida, by a vote of 2:1, has supported Anita Bryant’s hate campaign against homosexuals.

Such legal and social manifestations of bigotry and repression have been reinforced and are validated by the historical rejection and denial of diversity in general and of independent and alternative lifestyles among women in particular. It is the very conventionality of women like Jane Addams and Lillian Wald that is significant. Not until our society fully accepts as moral and ordinary the wide range of personal choice will differences be “essentially irrelevant.”

As I think about Anita Bryant’s campaign to “Save Our Children” from homosexuality, my thoughts turn to Lillian Wald, who insisted that every NYC public school should have a trained nurse in residence and who established free lunch programs for the city’s school children. My thoughts then turn to Jane Addams, who, in an essay called, “Women, War and Babies,” wrote:

*As women we are the custodians of the life of the ages and we will not longer consent to its reckless destruction. We are particularly charged with the future of childhood, the care of the helpless and the unfortunate, and we will not...*
longer endure without protest that added burden of maimed and invalid men and poverty-stricken women and orphans which war places on us. We have batted by the patient drudgery of the past the basic foundations of the home and of peaceful industry; we will not longer endure that hoary evil which in an hour destroys or tolerates that denial of the sovereignty of reason and justice by which war and all that makes for war today render impotent the idealism of the race. 12

And in the wake of the first mid-20th-century American vote to discriminate against an entire group of people, my thoughts turn again to Lillian Wald and Jane Addams, who campaigned for the creation of the United States Children's Bureau. That bureau set up programs throughout the United States to care for battered wives and battered children; it crusaded against child labor and for humane child care. Yet Anita Bryant would demand that we save our children from Jane Addams if

*The campaign, featuring “KILL A QUEER FOR CHRIST” bumper stickers — and couched in fundamentalist rhetoric urging TV America to understand that “God hates homosexuality” and that “the Bible says homosexuals should be put to death and their blood shed over their heads” — was supported by millions of dollars of free press coverage with pictures in all the glossy magazines. It was supported by a Newsweek editorial insisting that “The homosexual subculture based on brief, barren assignations is, in part, a dark mirror of the sex-obsessed majority culture.” 13 It was even supported by an ambivalent New York Times editorial (24 May 1977) that reluctantly agreed homosexuals might be teachers, despite “feelings of repugnance and hostility... especially among parents concerned about their children’s development.”

The assumption that gay people do not love and do not work persists. The fact that hard-working and deeply loving lesbians and homosexual men lead a great variety of the most ordinary lives is hidden because they themselves have been hidden.

Anita Bryant knew that Jane Addams slept in the same house, in the same room, in the same bed with Mary Rozet Smith for 40 years. (And when they travelled, Addams even wired ahead to order a large double bed for their hotel room.)

Because difference arouses fear and condemnation, there are serious methodological problems involved in writing about women who, for political and economic reasons, kept their private lives as secret as possible. The advent of the homosexual “closet” at the end of the 19th century was not accidental. Oscar Wilde had, after all, been released from prison on 19 May 1897. In addition to the criminal stigma now attached to homosexuality, a sudden explosion of “scientific” publications on “sexual disorders” and “perversions” appeared at the turn of the century. Nancy Sahli, historian and archivist, reports that in the first series of 16 volumes of the *Index Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon General’s Office, U.S. Army*, covering the years 1740 to 1895, only one article (“A Case of Man-Impersonation”) dealt specifically with lesbians. In the second series, published between 1896 and 1916, there were over 90 books and 566 articles listed that related to women’s “perversions,” “inversions,” and “disorders.” 15 Secrecy is not a surprising response to this psychoanalytic assault. How then, male historians continually ask, do you know these women were lesbians? Even if we were to assume that Adams and Smith never in 40 years in the same bed touched each other, we can still argue that they were lesbians because they chose each other. Women who love women, who choose women to nurture and support and to create a living environment in which to work creatively and independently, are lesbians.

It may seem elementary to state here that lesbians cannot be defined simply as women who practice certain physical rites together. Unfortunately, the heterosexist image — and sometimes even the feminist image — of the lesbian is defined by sexual behavior alone, and sexual in the most limited sense. It therefore seems important to reiterate that physical love between women is one expression of a whole range of emotions and responses to each other that involves all the mysteries of our human nature. Woman-related women feel attraction, yearning, and excitement with women. Nobody and no theory has yet explained why for some women, despite all cultural conditioning and societal penalties, both intellectual and emotional excitement are aroused in response to women.

Lillian Wald

Besides, there is evidence of these women’s lesbianism. Although Lillian Wald’s two volumes of memoirs are about as personal as her entry in *Who’s Who Among American Women*, her letters underscore the absurdity of a taxi conversation that Mabel Hyde Kittredge reported to Wald after a meeting at Henry Street:

1st man: Those women are really lonely.
Second man: Why under the sun are they lonely?
1st man: Any woman is lonely without a man.

Unlike Jane Addams, Lillian Wald seems not to have had one particular “great friend,” and the chronology of the women in her life, with their comings and goings, is impossible to follow. There are gaps and surprises throughout over 150 boxes of correspondence. But all of Lillian Wald’s companions appear to have been friends for life.
Wald's basic support group consisted of the long-term residents of Henry Street, Isabella Waess, Anne Goodrich, Florence Kelley, Helene MacDowell, and Lavina L. Dock. They worked together on all projects, lived and vacationed together for over 50 years, and, often in company with the women of Hull House, travelled together to Europe, Japan, Mexico, and the West Indies.

But the letters are insufficient to tell us the specifics of her life. There are turmoil that we will probably never know anything about — upheavals that result, for example, in a 10-year hiatus in Wald's correspondence with Lavina Dock. This hiatus, combined with the fact that in November 1915, after 20 years, "Docky" moved out of the Henry Street Settlement and, in an icy and formal note of March 1916, even resigned from the Henry Street Corporation, remains unexplained.

There is also the puzzling fact that Dock, the ardent suffragist, feminist and social worker, a pioneer of American nursing education and organization, appears to be R. L. Duffus' major source of information — beyond Wald herself — for his 1938 biography, Lillian Wald: Neighbor and Crusader. The first letter to appear in the collection after Dock's 1916 resignation is dated 1925 and implies that the two women have not had a long-term falling out at all:

\[\text{why-dear-I was imagining you radiating around the town telling about Mexico and here you are in the hospital just like any commonplace person — oh dear oh dear! . . . Dear I would scrape up some money if you need — you have often done the same for me . . . . and I am not telling anyone that you are ill and in the hospital for I know how you would dislike being thought just a mere mortal . . . .16}\]

It is clear from another letter that Dock went to New York to be with Wald during her first operation. She wrote Wald's nurse that she was so relieved the tumor turned out to be benign that "for the first time my knees wobbled as I went down the steps to go to the train . . . ." The next week Dock wrote to Wald:

"Dearest — I'm not sure whether to give you letters yet so I haven't written before and just send this line to tell you that you do your illnesses and recoveries in the same dazzling form and with the same vivacity and originality as all your other deeds! With Love Ever yours Docky"

Why then did Dock leave? Was there a personal reason? A new lover? An old anger? Or was it connected with the political differences that emerged between them in 1915 when Wald became more absorbed by antimilitarist activities and Dock, also a pacifist, joined the radical suffragist movement of Alice Paul's Congressional Union? All the evidence indicates that the only significant differences between these women at this time were political. Their lives were dedicated to work each regarded as just and right. When they disagreed so intensively that they could no longer support and nurture each other's activities, they temporarily parted.

In 1914 Dock joined the Advisory Council of the Congressional Union. But she was the only member of the Henry Street community to do so. She wrote to Alice Paul that "you know I love everything you do," but "the people I live with here all have so many undertakings that they are involved up to the neck." Specifically, Lillian Wald "cannot ally herself exclusively to any suffrage group because she has close friends in all — for instance your invitation . . . . was balanced by women in the National Association asking her not to [join] — this is confidential. She decided to remain independent of all and my own judgment for her is that it is best for her to do so — she has first and foremost her own immense responsibilities . . . ."

During the war, while Wald was meeting with President Wilson and being as conciliatory as possible on behalf of the peace movement, Dock and the militant suffragists were infuriating official Washington, getting themselves arrested, and generally aggravating the very people Wald was attempting to persuade — and for a different purpose.

Dock considered Paul's Congressional Union "fresh-young-glorious." She wrote to Paul in June 1915:

"Pay no attention to criticism. Go right ahead with your splendid daring and resourcefulness of youth." Dock reacted furiously to criticism that the Congressional Union's confrontational tactics not only harmed the suffrage movement but threatened the peace movement. And Lillian Wald was one of the leading critics of such tactics. On this issue they disagreed utterly. Dock was adamant: "And what is this terrible burden of responsibility and anxiety now resting on the American Men's President? Is it arising from anything women have done or are going to do? Not at all . . . . I can't see it — surely there could be no more appropriate moment for women to press forward with their demand for a voice — women — who are at this moment going on errands of peace, — and who are being called a national menace for doing so — followed wherever he goes, by the demand which, so long as it remains unanswerd shows a painful insincerity in those rounded and sonorous paragraphs on American ideals and American freedom that he utters so eloquently . . . ."17

Five months after this exchange, Lavina Dock moved permanently
out of her Henry Street home of 20 years. I have not yet found one correspondence between her and Wald that deals with the event.

And all Wald says about Dock in Windows on Henry Street is that “Everyone admired her, none feared her, though she was sometimes very fierce in her denunciations. Reputed a man-hater, we knew her as a lover of mankind.”

Wald’s other support network
There were two other categories of women close to Wald and the settlement. The first consisted of affluent women such as Irene and Alice Lewisohn and Rita Morgenthau. Younger than Wald, they admired her and regarded her as a maternal figure. She in turn nurtured their spirits, supported their ambitions, and provided them with sustaining and secure friendship. They, together with Wald’s “friend of friends” Jacob Schiff, contributed tirelessly and abundantly to Henry Street. The Lewisohns founded the Neighborhood Play House and supported the famous music and dance education projects that continue to this day. They were also coworkers in the Woman’s Peace Party and the American Union Against Militarism. Occasionally they travelled with Wald. And they wrote numerous letters of affection and devotion to their dear “Lady Light.” Alice Lewisohn frequently signed her letters “Your Baby Alice.” One letter from Irene, conveying love and gratitude after a trip the Lewisohn sisters took with Ysabella Waters and Wald, is replicated in the collection by scores of others:

Why attempt to tell a clairvoyant all that is in one’s mind? You know even better than I what those months of companionship with you and Sister Waters have meant. For way and beyond even the joys of our wanderings I have some memories that are holier by far than temples or graves or blossoms. A fireside romance and a moonlight night are among the treasures carefully guarded. . . . As an offering for such inspirations, I am making a special vow to be and to do. . . . [Much of my heart to you!]

Wald’s closest friend among the younger nonresidents appears to have been Rita Wallach Morgenthau, who generally signed her letters with love from “Your Daughter,” “Your Foolish Daughter,” or “Your Spoiled Child.” However much Wald may have spoiled her “adoptive daughters,” the very fact of her nurturing presence helped establish the nature of their life’s work; and their work focused on social change and the education, dance, and theatre programs they created.

In 1906 Rita wrote to Wald that “everything that has stood for beauty has been inspired by you, and the thankfulness I feel for my share of you, and the dear settlement can never be whispered . . . .” During Wald’s final, protracted illness in the 1930’s, Rita wrote following Wald’s operation:

You always have been and always will be my “Leading Lady” and I have a feeling of deep gratitude and humility that there will spark in me that fire kindled by your flame . . . .

All of Wald’s friends and correspondents wrote of how he inspired them, fired their imaginations, and directed their lives to greater heights of consciousness and activity. Lavinia Dock referred to this quality in a letter to Duffus for his biography of Wald: “She believed absolutely in human nature and as a result the best of it was shown to her. People just naturally turned their best natures to her scrutiny and developed what she perceived in them, when it had been dormant and unseen in them before. I remember often being greatly impressed by this inner vision that she had. . . .”

The last group of women involved with Wald and the settlement differed basically from the other two. Although they also served as residents or volunteered their time to Henry Street, they were “society women” perhaps more interested in Wald than in social change. Such long-term residents as Dock, Waters, and MacDowell, and Wald’s younger friends, Morgenthau and the Lewisohns, supported Wald emotionally and politically and shared collectively in all her interests. The society women, however, attempted to possess or monopolize Wald, lamented that her activities kept her from them, and were finally rebuffed in what must have been thoroughly specific terms. Generally they fell into that trap that Margaret Anderson defined so well: “In real love you want the other person’s good. In romantic love you want the other person.”

Lillian Wald had structured her life to avoid becoming anybody’s possession. While she did get involved in emotional enthusiasms, as soon as the woman involved sought to redirect her priorities Wald’s enthusiasm evaporated.

The clearest representatives of the society group were Mabel Hyde Kittredge and Helen Arthur. Both women were rich “uptowners” who spent many years “downtown.” Both were highly educated, hard-working, and demanding. Both devoted their time to good works, in large part because their friendship with Wald encouraged them to think politically, and not because social change was their life’s commitment. But they were loyal. Kittredge, for example, evidently left Henry Street because Wald encouraged her to do so. Yet she continued to be involved in settle-
ment activities, helped organize the free lunch program in public schools in 1908, and founded the Association of Practical Housekeeping Centers that operated as a subsidiary organization for many years.

To understand Lillian Wald fully, it is necessary to deal with her relationship with Mabel Hyde Kittredge. Kittredge's demands seem on occasion outrageous, and her biases are transparent. Yet it is clear that for a time Wald was not only smitten by this lady, but relied upon her for comfort and trusted her deeply.

A Park Avenue socialite who frequently played bridge whilst all night after she had played in a golf tournament all day, Kittredge was the daughter of Reverend Abbott E. Kittredge of the prominent Madison Avenue Church. After she had lived at Henry Street for several years, she wrote to Wald on 28 April 1904 that she understood Wald's objections to what appears to have been a moment of flagrant ethnic bigotry: "I believe that I will never again say 'my people and your people.' It may be that even though I have no prejudice I have used words and expressions that have done something to keep the lines drawn between the two peoples..."

Whatever her views, it appears that when Wald was troubled she turned for a time to Kittredge. In a long letter of tender assurance and sensible advice to Wald concerning a bereaved friend, Kittredge wrote:

...I seemed to hold you in my arms and whisper all this... If you want me to stay all night tomorrow night just say so when you see me. Please don't feel that I keep before me the signs of sorrow that you trusted me enough to let me see — of the things of Thursday evening that are consciously with me are first the fact that in a slight degree I can share with you the pain that you suffer. Then I can hear you say 'I love you' — and again and again I can see in your eyes the strength, and the power and the truth that I love — but the confidence in yourself not there. All this I have before me — never a thought of weakness because you dared to be human. Why dear I knew that you were human before Thursday night — I think though that our love never seemed quite so real a thing before then. Good night.

But after 1904 most of Kittredge's letters became competitive — Kittredge vs. humanity in their claims on Wald's attentions. Wald evidently reserved one night in the week for Kittredge and then occasionally cancelled their date, infuriating her friend:

Just because you have reformed on Tuesday night — I haven't got to give you entirely to humanity. I am human too and tonight I'd keep you up until — well later than Miss McDowell would approve of — if I had you. ...

On a similar evening Kittredge wrote that she had just done two very sensible things, not telephoned to say good night and torn up a whiny letter:

But what business has a great grown woman like myself to sit up in her nightclothes and write nothing. ... I am getting altogether too close to you Lady Wald — or it is... all those doors that you have pushed open for me? Half open-dear just half open. And then I come up here and grow hungry for more knowledge... And I feel that my strength ends and love you so... I can feel your arms around me as you say I really must go.

When Wald cancelled a visit to Kittredge at Monmouth Beach, she wrote: "And so the verdict has gone forth — I can't have you... But even you must want the ocean at times instead of Henry Street..."

Wald did want the ocean at times. More than that, she sought the relaxation and comfort of Kittredge's friendship. During a business trip that was evidently particularly hectic, Wald wrote to Kittredge from Chattanooga that she looked forward to long, quiet, cozy evenings on the back porch. Kittredge replied that Wald's letter was "a real life-giving thing." But she no longer believed that Wald would actually make such free time possible and wrote: "When Lady Lillian is that easy time to be? Miss McDowell says not after midnight and your humanity would not let me have you before. 'Long evenings on the back porch' — it sounds fine — and improbable..."

Eventually Kittredge's jealousy extended from humanity in general to the other residents of Henry Street in particular:

If you think that I want damned mad today it is simply that I have inherited so much self-control and sweetness from my minister parent that the fact was hidden.... There are times when to know that Miss Clark is standing behind one curtain, Miss MacDowell behind another and to feel an endless lot of people forever pressing the door or presenting unsigned papers makes me lack that perfect sympathy with "work for others" as exemplified by a settlement. No wonder I am called "one of your crushes"... It is kiss and run or run without kissing — there really isn't time for anything else..."

After what appears to have been for Kittredge a particularly difficult
Christmas season, she gave up entirely the competition for Wald’s affections:

These may be “Merry” days but they stave one to death as far as any satisfaction in calm, every day loving and talking goes. . . . I would very much like to meet you on a desert island or a farm where the people cease from coming and the weary are at rest — will the day ever come? Or is that white ring, those long, lazy drives, the quiet and the yellow trees only a lost dream? And yet you love me — the plant on my table tells me so. The new coffee tray tells me so. . . . and a look that I see in your eyes makes me sure. . . .

Refusing to participate, evidently for the first time, in Henry Street’s Christmas festivities, Kittredge wrote that she was

. . . not loveless nor lonely. I am free and strong and alive and awfully happy — But somehow as I think back over this year, I believe that I needed you — it may be as much as the others — . . . I know that it would be a loss out of my life if my thoughts of you, my love for you and my confidence in you were taken away — I don’t believe they ever could be less than they are tonight. . . .

Judging from the letters, whatever gap the loss of Mabel Hyde Kittredge’s friendship may have opened Wald seems to have filled by that summer. Wald vacationed through August and September 1906 with another society woman, Helen Arthur, an attorney and director of the research department of the Woman’s Municipal League. Helen Arthur seems to have been more spontaneous and less complaining than Kittredge; and she had a sense of humor: “. . . I have a report to write yet tonight and read to a bunch of elegantly attired ladies who do not care a darn so long as they get home for luncheon.

What a farce this old world is — remember Oliver Herford’s dedication to the world at large,” ending up with “why is the world at large?”

Arthur was also more dependent on Wald, and in this relationship Wald’s maternal aspects were more evident. She coaxed Arthur out of repeated depressions, encouraged her law practice, managed her finances, and kept her bankbook so that she would not overspend.

This last made Arthur pout, especially during one Christmas season when she wrote to Wald that she tried to buy “exactly 28 presents for $10 worth of currency without visiting the 5 and 10 cent store which is, I regret to say, not on the Consumer’s League list! If you were at 265 Henry Street — I should hold you up for my bankbook — What’s vacation money compared to Christmas toys — Surely it is more blessed to give than to receive interest on deposits! Couldnt you be an old dear and let me rob it for a month? Please, momony.”

When Wald travelled, Arthur wrote long newsy letters about her law cases and activities; but they all concluded or began with a note of despair that her good mother had left her sad or naughty “son” all alone: “Such a strange feeling — no one to telephone me no ‘Hello-dee-ar’ to listen for — Rainy horrid day outside and a lonesome atmosphere within. . . .” At another time she wrote: “I am as near blue tonight as green can ever get and if I just had my nicest mommy to snuggle up to and talk it out straight for her son, I’d feel less like a disbarred judge. . . . Couldnt you write me a note and tell me — something?”

Eventually, Wald’s busy schedule resulted in disappointments, cancelled dates, loneliness for Arthur, and what must have been
for Wald familiar letters of discontent:

Dearest, nothing could have relieved the gloom of this day except the presence of the one person her secretary notified me not to expect. . . . Now that I am being severely left alone — I have much time to spend in my own room — the walls of which formerly saw me only from 2 until 7 a.m. . . . I’ve put you — the dear old you in your silver frame on my desk and close to me when I write and I shoved my decanter and cigarette case to the other side — If I had you, the real you instead of one-tenthousandth part of you I might shove the unworthy things way off — Summertime has spoiled the judge who longs to get back to your comfortable lap and the delights of kicking her pajamaed legs in peace and comfort instead of being solicitously hustled from your room at 10 o’clock. . . .

In another letter, Arthur, like so many others, expressed her desire to live up to Wald’s expectations of her: “If only I could pull out of my easy ways — the pleasant vices which hinder me so. . . .” But her physical longing for Wald was equally powerful. The two combined to explain Wald’s magnetism: “If only August and September, 1906 were all the year round for me, but their memories stay by and perhaps some day you’ll be proud of your small judge. . . . I think so often of the hundreds who remember you with affection and of the tens who openly adore you and I appreciate a little what it all means and I’m grateful to think that your arms have been close around me and that you did once upon a time, kiss me goodnight and even good morning, and I am your lonesome little Judge.”

Arthur, more than many others, was genuinely mindful of Wald’s time and her emotional needs. On 30 January 1907, she wrote that “Little by little there is being brought in upon me, the presumption of my love for you — the selfishness of its demands, the triviality of its complaints — and more slowly still, is coming the realization of what I ought to bring to you and what I mean it shall. . . .”

Whatever special friend came or went in Lillian Wald’s life, the women of Henry Street, the residents who called themselves her “steadies,” were the mainstay of her support. The women in Wald’s communal family served each other as well as society. There was nothing self-sacrificing about that community: It was a positive choice. For Wald it was the essential key to her life — and the only aspect of her personal life about which she wrote clearly. On the 40th anniversary of the settlement, Wald wrote: “I came with very little program of what could or should be done. I was perhaps conscious only of a passionate desire to have people, who had been separated and who for various causes were not likely to come together, know each other that they might sympathize and understand the problems and difficulties of each other. I made no sacrifices. My friend Mary Brearly [the first coworker at Henry Street] and I were engrossed in the edifice which was taking form and in which my friends and I might dwell together.”

Wald and her friends lived together for over 50 years. At the end, during long years of pain and poor health, she was surrounded by love and support. After her first operation, Mabel Hyde Kittredge wrote to Wald that “at least you must feel that this is a world full of friends and love and sympathy. I hope all the bread you ever cast upon any waters has come back fresh and lovely and so much as to be a surprise. . . .” On the morning of her death, Lillian Wald turned to her nurse and said, “I’m a very happy woman. . . . because I’ve had so many people to love, and so many to love me.”

The letters in the Wald collections document only a fragment of her life, and they raise as many questions as they answer. Because we can never know the intimate details of people’s lives if they are censored, withheld, or destroyed, we are confined to the details we have. But the details we have make it abundantly clear that Lillian Wald lived in a homosocial world that was also erotic. Her primary emotional needs and desires were fulfilled by women. She was woman-supported, woman-allied. Once that has been established, it becomes entirely unnecessary to pursue evidence of a specific variety of genital contact. Beyond a certain point, we get into fairly small-minded questions of technique. Since society’s presumption of heterosexuality stops short of any inquiry as to what the husband and wife do atop their conjugal bed, it is only to indulge our prejudices that we demand “evidence” of lesbianism from conventional or famous women. Insistence on genital evidence of proof for a lesbian identity derives from a male model that has very little to do with the love, support, and sexuality that exist between women.

Emma Goldman wrote vividly about the difficulties faced by people who attempt to express themselves in harmony with their own nature. In a 1906 essay, “The Child and Its Enemies,” she wrote that society employs all its forces to mould out of all our human differences a thing of dehumanized,
patterned regularity: "Every institution... the family, the state, our moral codes, sees in every strong, beautiful uncompromising personality a deadly enemy." Every effort is made, from earliest infancy, "to cramp human emotion and originality of thought" in order to create "a patient work slave, professional automaton, taxpaying citizen, or righteous moralist." To that end, all the child's questions "are met with narrow, conventional, ridiculous replies mostly based on falsehoods." Thus uniformity and order, rather than "eternal change, thousandfold variation, continual innovation," have become the hallmarks of our culture.

The full implications of our brutally deforming institutions were clear to Goldman: "Since every effort in our educational life seems to be directed toward making of the child a being foreign to itself, it must of necessity produce individuals foreign to one another..."23 Urged to deny the secrets within our natures and to reject the differences of others, we are taught to be fearful of ourselves and contemptuous of others. Separated from ourselves and isolated from each other, we are encouraged to huddle together for comfort under the socially acceptable banners of racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. While people are called "human resources" in advanced industrial societies, we are discouraged from seeing the ways in which we are all connected. We are thus rendered powerless and immobilized by our prejudices. This is not an accident.

Emma Goldman

Ardent feminists and fiercely independent, Emma Goldman and Crystal Eastman depended on men for the comradeship and pleasure Lillian Wald and Jane Addams sought from women. Far more specific about their sexual orientation, Eastman and Goldman wrote about their private lives and their commitment to free love. They made it clear that they refused to be trapped by conventional or legal arrangements such as marriage.

Both were, in the larger sense, maternal women. Crystal Eastman considered the status of the unmarried mother and decided to get married largely for the sake of the two children she would have. Emma Goldman nurtured all her friends and associates. According to Kate Richards O'Hare, Emma Goldman while in prison was, above all, "the tender cosmic mother."

Contrary to popular notions of "free love" as promiscuous and amoral, Goldman's long-term relations with the men she loved — Sasha Berkman, Ed Brady, Ben Reitman, Max Baginsky, and Hippolyte Havel — were nurturing and tender on her part and devoted and supportive on theirs. They worked for her and cared for her. Ed Brady enabled her to go to Europe to study. Ben Reitman, her manager, served as her "advance man"; he raised money for Mother Earth and arranged her speaking tours. These men did not possess her, control her, dominate her, or expect from her more than she would give freely because she loved them as a free woman.

Free love, for Emma Goldman and Crystal Eastman, meant simply love given freely to the lover of one's choice. Both rejected the notion that love was a limited commodity. They believed that it was an undefinable sentiment that expanded in proportion to the number of people who evoked it. Possession and jealousy were anathema to them. They rejected the notion that women were love objects to be married into the service and control of men.

Despite the clarity of their writings, their views were frequently misunderstood. The refusal of Eastman and Goldman to separate the personal from the political, their contempt for sham and hypocrisy, and their unfaltering openness about the most intimate subjects horrified their contemporaries. Among the social reformers with whom Crystal Eastman worked, she acquired a reputation as a reckless revolutionary. Her attitudes on free love and her frank affirmation of women's right to physical sexuality appeared hedonistic and horrible. A frequent contributor to feminist journals, her attitudes and behavior — notably her "affairs," divorce, and remarriage — were perceived as scandalous. After years of leadership in the peace movement, as founder and president of the Woman's Peace Party of New York and as executive director of the American Union Against Militarism, she was blocked from attending the second meeting at the Hague in 1919 by a committee chaired by Jane Addams, specifically because of Eastman's radical socialism and her espousal of free love.26

The reaction of the older social-reform women such as Jane Addams to Crystal Eastman's lifestyle is not explained by the simple fact that the sword of bigotry is many-edged. The failure of Jane Addams and most social-reform women to analyze traditional assumptions about marriage and sexuality is another byproduct of the societal pressure that kept alternative lifestyles of any kind in the closet for so many years. The settlement-house women were supplicants to the rich on behalf of the poor. Steadfast about their priorities, they frequently made political decisions which were not in harmony with their lives and which locked them into a conservative public position regarding such issues as sexuality.
Crystal Eastman’s vision

Emma Goldman was adamant in her opposition to marriage, which she considered an economic arrangement. Since a wife’s body is “capital to be exploited and manipulated, she came to look on success as the size of her husband’s income.” For Goldman marriage was the very antithesis of love. Why, she asked, should two people who love each other get married? Marriage is an arbitrary, mercenary, legal tie; while it does not bind, it fetters. Only love is free. Love for Emma was “the strongest and deepest element in all life... love, the freest, the most powerful moulder of human destiny; how can such an all-compelling force be synonymous with that poor State-and-Church begotten weed, marriage?” 27

Although Crystal Eastman shared Goldman’s views on marriage, she married twice. But she was not limited or stifled in these marriages and arranged them to suit both her work and her emotional needs. According to one of her closest friends, Jeannette Lowe, Crystal Eastman was free — “You would not believe how free she was.” 28

Vigorous and bold, Crystal Eastman discarded her first marriage with acrality and then sought to revolutionize the institution. In her own life she extended the contours of marriage beyond recognition. During the first years of her second marriage, she and her husband, her brother Max, and several of their friends lived communally.

After the war she, her two children, and her husband, Walter Fuller, lived in England “under two roofs” as ordinary lovers. “He keeps a change of clothes and all the essentials for night and morning comfort at my house, as might a favorite and frequent guest.” They phoned each other daily and often met for the theatre or dinner or at a friend’s house. After the evening’s entertainment they decided, “like married lovers,” whether to part on the street or go home together. “Marriage under two roofs makes room for moods.” As for the children, “without a scowling father around for breakfast, the entire day began cheerfully...” 29

Crystal Eastman was, above all, a feminist. She considered the true feminist the most radical member of society. The true feminist, Eastman wrote, begins with the knowledge “that the vast majority of women as well as men are without property, and are of necessity bread and butter slaves under a system which allows the very sources of life to be privately owned by a few, and she counts herself a loyal soldier in the working-class army that is marching to overthrow that system.” But she had no illusions about where men in that army placed women. “If we should graduate into communism tomorrow... man’s attitude to his wife would not be changed.” For Eastman, the creation of a communist society based on sex equality was the task of the organized feminist movement. 30

Unlike Emma Goldman, who lived almost exclusively among men, Crystal Eastman always had a feminist support group of considerable importance to her life. She was supported by women with whom she had deep and lasting relations: many of the ardent suffragists of the Congressional Union, her friends from Vassar who worked with her in the Woman’s Peace Party of New York and who were part of her communal family in Greenwich Village. On several occasions she lived with one or more of these friends, and her experiences enabled her to write in “Now We Can Begin”:

Two business women can “make a home” together without either one being overburdened or overbored. It is because they both know how and both feel responsible.

But it is a rare man who can marry one of them and continue the home-making partnership. Yet if there are no children, there is nothing essentially different in the combination. Two self-supporting adults decide to make a home together: if both are women it is a pleasant partnership, more fun than work; if one is a man, it is almost never a partnership — the woman simply adds running the home to her regular outside job. Unless she is very strong, it is too much for her, she gets tired and bitter over it, and finally perhaps gives up her outside work and condemns herself to the tiresome half-job of housekeeping for two.

Crystal Eastman evidently solved that problem for herself by spending her summers in the south of France with Jeannette Lowe and their children, leaving her husband under his separate roof and in his separate country.

Throughout the postwar years Eastman had planned to write a book about women. But in 1928, one year after returning to New York to look for new work, she died of a kidney ailment. She was 47 years old, and her death came as a shock to her friends. Claude McKay wrote: “Crystal Eastman was a great-hearted woman whose life was big with primitive and exceptional gestures. She never wrote that Book of Woman which was imprinted on her mind. She was poor, and fettered with a family. She had a grand idea for a group of us to go off to write in some quiet corner of the world, where living was cheap and easy. But it couldn’t be realized. And so life was cheated of one contribution about women that no other woman could write.” 30
Emma Goldman's lack of a feminist support group did not affect her adversely until the postwar years. Before and during the war she was surrounded by her anarchist comrades and Ben Reitman. But even then her friends found Reitman distasteful and tended to admonish Goldman for her choice of lovers. Sasha Berkman in particular hated Reitman because he was not dedicated to the revolution, anarchism, or even social change. Margaret Anderson thought that the "fantastic" Dr. Reitman was not "so bad if you could hastily drop all your ideas as to how human beings should look and act..." But Emma loved him and wrote that he "gave without measure or restraint. His best years, his tremendous zest for work, he had devoted to me. It is not unusual for a woman to do as much for the man she loves. Thousands of my sex had sacrificed their own talents and ambitions for the sake of the man. But few men had done so for women. Ben was one of the few; he had dedicated himself completely to my interests."

During her last years in America, Goldman spent a good deal of time with Margaret Anderson and the women associated with *The Little Review.* In *My Thirty Years War,* Anderson described the days Emma Goldman spent in Chicago, with her and Harriet Dean, and in California, where she lived with Jane Heap. She presents a unique portrait of a gentle Emma Goldman, who was "gay, communicative, tender" and who sang Russian folk songs "in a low and husky voice" on the beach at night.

Goldman's reaction to *The Little Review* was intense: "I felt like a desert wanderer who unexpectedly discovers a stream of fresh water. At last a magazine to sound a note of rebellion in creative endeavor!"

Although she was disappointed in the magazine's lack of clarity on social issues, she delighted in the fact that it was "free from the mawkish sentimentality of most American publications. Its main appeal to me lay in its strong and fearless critique of conventional standards, something I had been looking for in the United States for 25 years."

And Goldman's feelings about her generous new friends, "who were rarely away from my side for very long," were cordial:

*Harriet Dean was as much a novel type to me as Margaret, yet the two were entirely unlike. Harriet was athletic, masculine-looking, ... Margaret, on the contrary, was feminine in the extreme. Constantly bubbling over with enthusiasm, ... Underneath her apparent lightness was depth and strength of character to pursue whatever aim in life she might choose, ... I regretted their lack of social consciousness, but as rebels for their own liberation Margaret Anderson and Harriet Dean strengthened my faith in the possibilities of my adopted country.*

In this case it was Emma who had been adopted. She, for herself, had emotional support only from Reitman, with whom she was to break over his vacillation concerning the war, and Berkman, who was involved with others. That lack was keenly felt during the latter years of her life in exile.

But before the war Goldman idealized heterosexual relations. In many of her writings she scorned the bourgeois American feminists whose "narrow puritanical vision banished man as a disturber and doubtful character out of their emotional life...." In a March 1906 essay, "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation," she argued that the "greatest shortcoming" of the feminist movement was "its narrow respectabilities which produce an emptiness in woman's soul that will not let her drink from the fountain of life." In September 1915 she published a similar editorial in *Mother Earth* by one "R.A.P.," who argued that "American feminists are the exponents of a new slavery," which denied sexual activity, encouraged inhibition, and crusaded against the "sexual victimization of virtuous females by some low, vulgar male." R.A.P. judged the bourgeois feminist movement classist and hypocritical and of "no interest except as an amusing and typical instance of feminine intellectual homosexuality." 32

This is not to imply that Emma Goldman was homophobic in any intellectual or traditional sense. On the contrary, she was the only woman in America who defended homosexuality in general and the conviction of Oscar Wilde in particular. Although she was absolute about a person's right to sexual choice, she felt a profound ambivalence about lesbianism as a lifestyle. She believed that "the body, in all its splendid sexuality, had to be reclaimed from the repressive hands of the prudes and the phillistines." When she was criticized by her comrades for dealing with such "unnatural themes as homosexuality," thereby increasing the difficulties of the already misunderstood anarchist movement, she persisted. "I minded the censors of my own ranks as little as I did those in the enemy's camp." Censorship from her comrades had, she wrote, "the same effect on me as
police persecution; it made me... more determined to plead for every victim, be it of social wrong or of moral prejudice."  

There is even some evidence that Goldman may have experimented with a woman herself. The 1912 letters of an anarchist worker, Almeda Sperry, to Goldman are very one-sided. They consist in part of affirmations of passionate love by Sperry and apparent rebuffs by Goldman. These do not deter Sperry, who evidently luxuriated for a time in a state of unrequited yearnings: "God how I dream of you! You say that you would like to have me near you always if you were a man, or if you felt as I do. I would not if I could..." In response to Goldman's queries about Sperry's feelings toward men, she replies: "If you mean have I ever loved a man I will frankly say that I never saw a man. No, I have never deeply loved any man." Sperry was, however, married, and several letters refer to her affection for her husband.

Then, in the summer of 1912, the letters take a different turn. Sperry thanks Goldman for addressing her with terms of endearment, and she evades Goldman's suggestion that they spend a week in the country together by noting that "I am with you in spirit, at any rate." But she tells Goldman to know, just before she sleeps, that "I kiss your body with biting kisses -- I inhale the sweet pungent odor of you and you plead with me for relief." A month later Sperry refers to the week they spent together after all in the country:

Dearest, I have been flitting about from one thing to another... to quell my terrible longing for you... I am... seized with a fire that races over my body in recurrent waves. My last thoughts at night are of you... and that

hellish alarm clock is losing some of its terrors for me for my first waking thoughts are of you.

Dear, that day you were so kind to me and afterwards took me in your arms, your beautiful throat, that I kissed with a reverent tenderness...  

Do you know, sweet cherry-blossom, that my week with you has filled me with such an energy, such an eagerness to become worthy of your friendship, that I feel that I must either use my intensity towards living up to my best self or ending it all quickly in one last, grand debauch...  

How I wish I [were] with you on the farm! You are so sweet in the mornings -- your eyes are like violets and you seem to forget, for a time, the sorrows of the world. And your bosom -- oh, your sweet bosom, unconfined.  

There is nothing simple about Goldman's attitude toward lesbianism. She never refers to Almeda Sperry, and it is impossible to know the significance of this correspondence in her life. Her absolute commitment to personal liberty and her total respect for individual choice prompted Magnus Hirschfeld, a leading homosexual rights advocate in Germany and the founder of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, organized in 1897, to write that Goldman was the "only human being of importance in America to carry the issue of homosexual love to the broadest layers of the public."  

But in a long article in the 1923 Yearbook of Hirschfeld's committee, Goldman criticizes an earlier article on Louise Michel in puzzling terms. Goldman reaffirms her political commitment to free

sexual choice and affirms her disinterest in "protecting" Louise Michel from the charge of lesbianism. "Louise Michel's service to humanity and her great work of social liberation are such that they can be neither enlarged nor reduced, whatever her sexual habits were." Then follows a long tirade against minorities who claim for themselves all the earth's significant people, and a longer analysis of why it would be "nonsensical" to assume that Louise Michel was a lesbian. In an ultimately vague and paradoxical paragraph, Goldman concludes: "In short, Louise Michel was a complete woman, free of all the prejudices and traditions which for centuries held women in chains and degraded them to household slaves and objects of sexual lust. The new woman celebrated her resurrection in the figure of Louise, the woman capable of heroic deeds but one who remains a woman in her passion and in her love."  

It appears that, in Goldman's mind, to be a lesbian was an absolute right, and nothing nasty about it. But it was also to be rendered somehow less a woman.

Emma Goldman in exile

In the long years of Emma Goldman's exile, years made lonesomely by her political isolation, she wrote a series of letters that explored the difficulties and the pain of being a free and independent woman without a support group that provided emotional nurturance as well as a shared vision of the work to be done. After two years of disappointment in Soviet Russia, Goldman travelled back and forth between England, France, and Germany, seeking to rebuild her shattered life and attempting to
convince her friends on the left that her critical analysis of the Soviet experiment was correct. In these letters she revealed the toll on her spirit taken by her personal loneliness and her political isolation. Also revealed is the brutal double standard to which even advanced women in progressive anarchist circles are subjected if their friendships are limited to men. On 28 May 1925 she wrote to Berkman:

I agree with you that both men and women need some person who really cares. The woman needs it more and finds it impossible to meet anyone when she has reached a certain age. That is her tragedy. . . . I think in the case of one who gave out so much in her life, it is doubly tragic not to have anyone, to really be quite alone. . . . I am consumed by longing for love and affection for some human being of my own. . . .

It is significant that the above passage ends a letter otherwise devoted to Goldman’s visit with Edward Carpenter, one of the first British crusaders for homosexual rights, and his younger lover, Goe, who had been his companion for 35 years. Carpenter at the time was 82, and, Goldman noted, Goe had his own younger lover, the cook. But, she observed, Goe “takes good care of Ed. . . . and Ed treats Goe every bit as a man treats his younger wife. It really was funny.”

At this time Goldman was torn apart by her own truncated love affair with Arthur Swenson, a much younger man. There was something tragic in her dismissal of Carpenter’s relationship as “screamingly comic . . . really dear, life is a circus if only one has enough sense of humor, which I do not. . . .” But the derision was possibly mixed with envy as she noted, “Well, as long as EC has a pleasant and comfortable (old) age, what is the difference?”

As Goldman looked back over her life while in exile, even the good times seemed bitter. In a heartbreaking letter to Sasha she deals with the sexist double standard of her closest comrades:

Where did you ever get the idea that I suspected you of being jealous of Ben in any sexual sense. . . . What I did suspect — more than that what I knew — was that you are a pig who constantly worries about what the comrades will say and how it will affect the movement when you yourself lived your life to suit yourself, I mean as far as women are concerned. It was painful to me, at the time, as it has been on many other occasions, to see you fly the movement in the face a hundred times and then condemn me for doing the same. . . . Do I mean to deny Ben’s faults? Of course not, my dear. . . . I knew Ben inside and out two weeks after we went on tour; I not only knew but loathed his sensational ways, his bombast, his bragadocio, and his promiscuity, which lacked the least sense of selection. But above all that there was something large, primitive, unpremeditated, and simple about Ben which had terrific charm. Had you and the other friends concerned in my salvation recognized this . . . instead of writing to the university to find out about his medical degree (which the boy never could forget). . . . Ben would not have become a renegade. . . . The trouble with you was . . . as with all our comrades, you are a puritan at heart. . . .

I have been too long in the movement not to know how narrow and moral it is, how unforgiving and lacking in understanding toward everyone different from them. . . . You will repeat your objections to Ben were because . . . he did not belong in our ranks.” All right, but what were your objections to Arthur Swenson? He never was in our ranks. Why did you treat him like a dog after he came to Berlin? Why did you fail to understand the terrific turmoil the boy created in my being? . . . Of course it is nonsense to say that the attitude of men and women in their love to younger people is the same. . . . It is nothing of the kind. . . . Hundreds of men marry women much younger than themselves; they have circles of friends; they are accepted by the world. Everybody objects, resents, in fact dislikes a woman who lives with a younger man; they think her a god-dammed fool; no doubt she is that, but it is not the business or concern of friends to make her look and feel like a fool. . . .

In another letter Emma tried to console Sasha after the sudden departure of his former lover Fitzie. Secretary of the Provincetown Players, Eleanor Fitzgerald had been Sasha’s companion until his arrest during World War I. In 1928 she arrived in St. Tropez to be with Djuna Barnes and to visit Berkman. Although the events are unclear, Goldman’s letters of explanation for Fitzie’s behavior over several years formulate her own reflections on the struggle of women to be liberated: "Here we have been worrying about who should meet Fitzie, then that crazy Djuna kidnaps her. Damned fool. . . . Really, the Lesbians are a crazy lot. Their antagonism to the male is almost a disease with them. I simply can’t bear such narrowness. . . ."

By implication, Goldman denied that Fitzie’s affair with Barnes might have been a positive choice. To understand Fitzie, Goldman wrote, it was necessary to understand that all her relations with men had been disastrous. Her tragedy “is the tragedy of all emancipated women, myself included. We are still rooted in the old soil, though our visions are of the future and
our desire is to be free and independent... It is a longing for fulfillment which very few modern women find because most men too are rooted in the old tradition. They too want the woman as wife and mother in the old sense, and the new medium has not yet been devised, I mean the way of being wife, mother, friend and yet retain one's complete freedom. Will it ever...? 38

Emma Goldman doubted it. Ultimately she even doubted that women could enjoy real satisfaction even physically with men. After a lifetime of celebrating woman's absolute right to full sexual pleasure, there is something intensively poigniant about a letter to Dr. Samuel D. Schmulhausen in which she implied that all through the years the pleasure she received from the man she loved had been inadequate. Schmulhausen had written Woman's Coming of Age, and on 26 January 1935 Goldman wrote that ever since her "intellectual awakening" she had had the same thought. Namely,

the sex act of the man lasts from the moment of its dominant motivation to its climax. After that the brute has done his share. The brute can go to sleep. Not so the woman. The climax of the embrace, far from leaving her relaxed or stupefied as it does the man, raises all her sensibilities to the highest pitch. All her yearning for love, affection, tenderness becomes more vibrant and carries her to ecstatic heights. At that moment she needs the understanding of and communion with her mate perhaps more than the physical. But the brute is asleep and she remains in her own world far removed from him. I know this from my personal experience and experiences of scores of women who have talked freely with me. I am certain that the cause for the conflict between the sexes which continues to exist regardless of woman's emancipation is due to the differences in quality of the sex embrace. Perhaps it will always be that way. Certainly I find very few men who have the same need, or who know how to minister that of the woman's. Naturally, I felt elated to read your analysis... which actually expresses what I have felt and voiced for well nigh 45 years... 39

Despite anger, isolation, and disappointment, Emma Goldman remained active and enthusiastic to the end of her life. After her despondent years in London, several friends presented her with a cottage on St. Tropez: "Georgette LeBlanc, Margaret Anderson, Peggy Guggenheim, Lawrence Vail and many others came for an hour or a day to discuss serious matters or in jolly company." Life in St. Tropez, Goldman wrote, restored her health and her "fighting spirit." It was there that she decided to write her memoirs, tour Canada, and cable friends in the United States for loans to continue her important work, now focused mainly in Spain. 40 But she never found the one great friend who could understand her empty places, and she never acknowledged the value of feminist alliances for active women whose very activity, depths of passion, and committed independence alienated them from the men with whom they worked and struggled.

Lillian Wald, Jane Addams, Crystal Eastman, and Emma Goldman all had visions of social change and economic justice that, 60 years later, we have yet to see fulfilled. They

Even today the myth persists that women unattached to men are lonely, bitter, and without community...
lived as they did at a time when, as Vera Brittain noted, women were programmed to monopolize their husbands, dominate their sons, possess their daughters, and make fetishes of their kitchens and shrines of their homes. These four women present a range of choices and affinities that were charged with courage, experiment, fulfillment, and intensity. In viewing women of the past it has been a common practice to assume that feminists, spinsters, woman-related women, and most women engaged in social reform were asexual, self-denying, and puritanical, sublimating their sexual passions in their work. Even today the myth persists that women unattached to men are lonely, bitter, and without community; that women who are political activists working with men can function effectively without a support network of women. In the lives of Wald, Addams, and Eastman, we see clearly the energy and strength they received from feminist networks. Crystal Eastman’s feminism drew upon and allowed her to appreciate the woman-identification of her lesbian friends. On the other hand, despite Emma Goldman’s intellectual and political identification with the oppressed, including women and homosexuals, she never did understand or identify with the feminist movement, and she never did find a friend of her own sex, “a kindred spirit with whom she could share her innermost thoughts and feelings.”

For Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, service to humanity and leadership in public life were constantly fueled by their female support communities and by personal relationships with women who gave them passionate loyalty and love. The power of communities of independent women, and of the love between individual women, expressed not only sensually but in a range of ways, is part of the history that has been taken from us by heterosexist culture. To recognize this history is to recognize our own personal forces of energy and courage and the power to change.

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Endnotes
1. See Vera Brittain, Testament of Friendship: The Story of Winifred Holby (London: Macmillan, 1947), p. 2: “Within the framework of this biography I have tried to tell . . . the story of a friendship which continued unbroken and unspoilt for sixteen incomparable years. . . .”


7. William O’Neill, Everyone Was Brave: Feminism in America (Quadrangle, 1969), p. 120.


16. Lillian Wald's correspondence is divided between the New York Public Library and Columbia University. See Dock to Wald, 27 April 1925; 10 May 1925; 10 March 1916, Columbia University.

17. Lavinia Dock's correspondence with the Congressional Union is in the Woman's Party Papers, Library of Congress. See especially Dock to Paul, 8 September 1914, tray 1, box 6; 28 June 1915, New York, tray 1, box 6; Dock to C.U., 22 May 1915, tray 1, box 5.


26. A long correspondence to block Eastman's participation at the Hague may be found in the Balch and Addams Papers at the Swarthmore College Peace Collection; see especially Lucia Ames Mead to Emily Green Balch, Balch Papers. See also Nan Bauer Maglin, "Early Feminist Fiction: The Dilemma of Personal Life," *Prospects* (1976), pp. 167 ff, for an overview of the reformists' unwillingness to deal with changing social and sexual mores.


29. Crystal Eastman, "Marriage Under Two Roofs" (1923); "Feminists Must Fight" (1924); and "Now We Can Begin" (1920) — all reprinted in Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Toward the Great Change*.


