

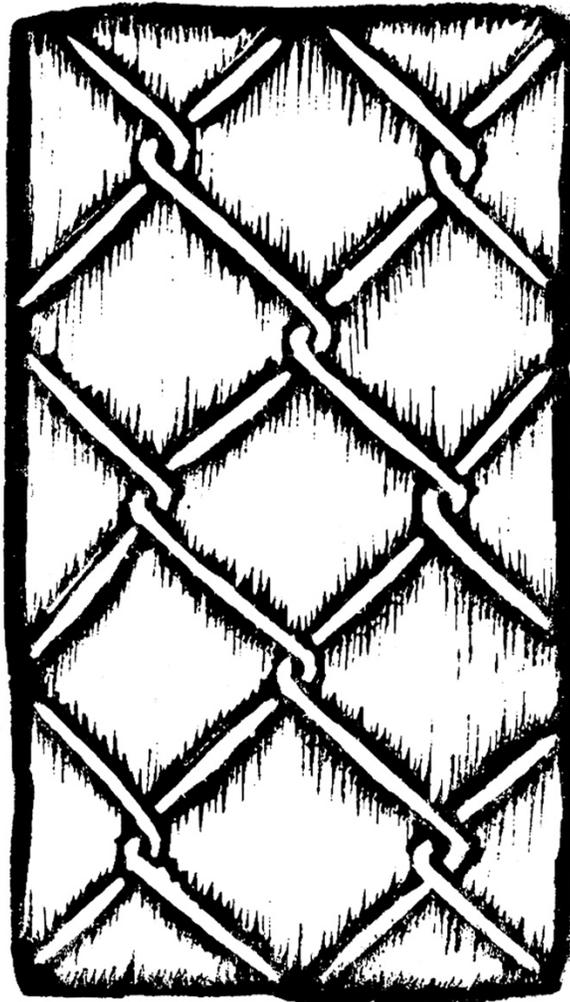
RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Poetry

"Emma Goldman's Ice Cream Parlor" and "To Be a Jew, Anywhere"

by Susan Gubernat



Emma Goldman's Ice Cream Parlor

Ephemeral as ice cream, that store
in Worcester where she wore

a starched apron maybe and scooped
chocolate, vanilla for the duped

workers of Worcester, while
the rest of the radical world—idle,

yet eager, discontented, had no
idea of how to revolt.

And then she cashiered the spoon,
started humming the tune

of The Internationale. Plotted
the death of Frick, besotted

with his own wealth. Riots
would follow. When left and right

disowned her there were years
of exile, exile without tears

because of Russia, then Spain.
Revolution, again and again

while the only emperor seemed
the emperor of ice cream.

(And what of her legacy
in this, the next century?

Could it be now the rich will fall
and the rest of us will have it all

with a cherry on top?)

To Be a Jew, Anywhere

Jaffrey, NH

Old Robicheaux never crossed the street
to speak to us, except that one night,
moonless in memory,
his hunched frame making
toward our house like a small bear
nosing her way out of the forest,
lost amid street signs, rushing
water of the dam site, blackened
windows of the old mill, so he came
to us, the neighbor who never
spoke. And said "You people
have any enemies?" Too quickly
the words leaped out of me:
"J. teaches in the high school. Why?"

Old Robicheaux let out a wheeze,
a whistling sigh from between
his teeth. He said a car had sped by,
opened its window wide,
a hand had tossed the pipe bomb
at our front door. We were away.
It started a small fire in a pile
of leaves we hadn't raked.
Autumn. The beautiful time
of change, of burning.
He had stomped it out himself
said Mr. Robicheaux--see the charred
markings on the front steps.

And that was all. We thanked him
for saving our house from the flames
but he'd already lumbered away
as though we'd caught him doing
something shameful. Robicheaux
never spoke again. And when he waved
it was that dismissive gesture,
a back already half-turned
toward its own business,
the furtive acknowledgment
of one who could wish
your very existence away.



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