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6 Emma Goldman, Gender Related Protest, and Anarchist Radicalism as a Crime

Introduction

In an interview for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch Sunday Magazine* in 1897, the Russian-born American anarchist Emma Goldman was asked, “What does anarchy hold out to me—a woman?” Her answer was relatively short but precise: “More to woman than to anyone else—everything which she has not—freedom and equality.”¹ Goldman, who was also referred to as the “priestess of anarchy”² in the same article, was a radical anarchist, a fact that obviously aroused the imagination of the public, especially since she was unexpectedly woman-like: “She is in every sense a womanly looking woman, with masculine mind and courage.”³ In the late 19th century, the fact that a woman like her could actually be a political activist, even a radical anarchist, was obviously something that contested the existent gender norms of the United States, and Goldman having been imprisoned due to her political activism before turned her into a well-known ‘celebrity’ in the US context as well. For some, she was a “real champion of freedom”⁴ who demanded more rights and more equality for women. Her statements about women’s suppression within the patriarchic society and particularly by the yoke of marriage,⁵ on the other hand, turned Goldman into a feared radical in the public mind. The anarchist argued that the modern woman “is the slave of her husband and her children. She should take her part in the business world the same as the man; she should be his equal before the world, as she is in the reality. She is ca-

1 Emma Goldman, “What Is There in Anarchy for Woman?,” in *St. Louis Post-Dispatch Sunday Magazine*, October 14, 1897, 9, in: Candace Falk et al., eds. *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*, vol 1: *Made for America, 1890–1901* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 289.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 292.

4 Emma Goldman, “An Anarchist Looks at Life,” Text of a speech by Emma Goldman, held at Foyle’s twenty-ninth literary luncheon (London, UK), March 1, 1933, Emma Goldman Papers, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam (henceforth EGP-IISH), No. 191, 3.

5 Frank Jacob, “Marriage as Exploitation: Emma Goldman and the Anarchist Concept of Female Liberation,” in *Marriage Discourses: Historical and Literary Perspectives on Gender Inequality and Patriarchic Exploitation*, eds. Jowan A. Mohammed and Frank Jacob (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 133–158.

pable as he, but when she labors she gets less wages. Why? Because she wears skirts instead of trousers.”⁶ Goldman pointed the finger at gendered inequalities that still exist in the United States today, a fact that made her thoughts even more dangerous for the mainstream newspaper reader of her time, expressly making an accusation against the suppression of women by men, i. e., by a patriarchic society: “The woman, instead of being the household queen, told about in story books, is the servant, the mistress, and the slave of both husband and children. She loses her own individuality entirely, even her name she is not allowed to keep.”⁷

For many Americans of her time, Goldman⁸ had an “aura of menace around [her],”⁹ and she was often considered to be the “personification of anarchism in America.”¹⁰ The anarchist is also often considered by modern-day historians, feminists, and feminist historians alike to have been a proto-feminist or an anarcha-feminist in particular.¹¹ Nevertheless, Goldman had many facets and different political identities that should be taken into consideration: she was a free speech advocate,¹² a revolutionary intellectual,¹³ an anti-imperialist,¹⁴ a fierce anti-bolshevik

6 Goldman, “What Is There in Anarchy for Woman?,” 291.

7 Ibid.

8 The main biographical works about Goldman are Joseph Ishill, *Emma Goldman: A Challenging Rebel* (Berkeley Heights, N.J.: Oriole Press, 1957); Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life* (New York: Pantheon, 1984); Kathy E. Ferguson, *Emma Goldman: Political Thinking in the Streets* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011); Vivian Gornick, *Emma Goldman: Revolution as a Way of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011); Paul and Karen Avrich, *Sasha and Emma: The Anarchist Odyssey of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Frank Jacob, *Emma Goldman: Ein Leben für die Freiheit* (Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2021); Frank Jacob, *Emma Goldman: Identitäten einer Anarchistin* (Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2022).

9 Kathy E. Ferguson, “Discourses of Danger: Locating Emma Goldman,” *Political Theory* 36, no. 5 (2008): 743.

10 Donna M. Kowal, “Anarcha-Feminism,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, eds. Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 274.

11 For works with such a perspective on Goldman, see Wexler, *Emma Goldman*; Candace Falk, *Love, Anarchy and Emma Goldman* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990 [1984]); Lori Jo Marso, “A Feminist Search for Love: Emma Goldman on the Politics of Marriage, Love, Sexuality and the Feminine,” *Feminist Theory* 4, no. 3 (2003): 305–320; Kathy E. Ferguson, “Gender and Genre in Emma Goldman,” *Signs* 36, no. 3 (2011): 733–757; Donna M. Kowal, *Tongue of Fire: Emma Goldman, Public Womanhood, and the Sex Question* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2016).

12 Bill Lynskey, “‘I Shall Speak in Philadelphia’: Emma Goldman and the Free Speech League,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 133, no. 2 (2009): 167–202.

13 Frank Jacob, “An Anarchist Revolution? Emma Goldman as an Intellectual Revolutionary,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 15, no. 2 (2021): 29–48.

activist,¹⁵ an anti-fascist,¹⁶ and many things more.¹⁷ Wherever she spotted inequality and hierarchical exploitation, Goldman would immediately start a campaign and advocate for anarchist democracy and individual rights, in particular for women. Wherever she spotted hope for a revolution on behalf of a better society, she was, sometimes too enthusiastically and even before knowing the details, fully engaged.¹⁸ Her antagonism toward the state turned her into a personal enemy of the young J. Edgar Hoover¹⁹ and eventually into an exile when she was expelled from the United States in 1919.²⁰ For a whole generation, the name Goldman probably conjured up the image of the “world’s most dangerous woman,”²¹ which, in a way, caused an imagined connection of her political radicalism with her gender identity as a woman, two aspects that made her a particularly “dangerous individual”²² for the mainstream American public on the one hand and an interesting figure on the other.²³ Always contesting the state and often considered its adversary,

14 Frank Jacob, “Anarchistische Imperialismuskritik und staatliche Repression: Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman und die Kritik an der politischen Ökonomie des Ersten Weltkrieges in den USA, 1917–1919,” *PROKLA* 201 (2020): 681–695.

15 For a detailed analysis of Goldman’s attitude toward the Russian Revolution and bolshevism, see Frank Jacob, *Emma Goldman and the Russian Revolution: From Admiration to Frustration* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2020). For a shorter introduction, see Frank Jacob, “From Aspiration to Frustration: Emma Goldman’s Perception of the Russian Revolution,” *American Communist History* 17, no. 2 (2018): 185–199.

16 Frank Jacob, “Emma Goldmans Blick auf Bolschewismus, Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus: Eine anarchistische Perspektive auf den Totalitarismus der 1920er- und 1930er-Jahre,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 68, no. 10 (2020): 833–847.

17 For instance, Goldman can also be considered a “capitalist publicist.” See Frank Jacob, “An Anarchist Has to Live off Something: Emma Goldman as a Capitalist Publicist,” *Anarchist Studies* 30, no. 2 (2022): 8–30.

18 An example of this would be her involvement in the Spanish Civil War. See David Porter, *Vision on Fire: Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution* (New Paltz, NY: Commonground Press, 1983).

19 J. Edgar Hoover, “Memorandum for Mr. Creighton,” U.S. Department of Justice (August 23, 1919), 2, cited in Ferguson, “Discourses of Danger,” 735.

20 Frank Jacob, “The Russian Revolution, the American Red Scare, and the Forced Exile of Transnational Anarchists: Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman and their Soviet Experience,” *Yearbook of Transnational History* 4 (2021): 113–134. Only three women were expelled in 1919. See *Freiheit: Berliner Organ der Unabhängigen Sozialdemokratie Deutschlands*, December 23, 1919: 1.

21 Theresa and Albert Moritz, *The World’s Most Dangerous Woman* (Vancouver: Subway Books, 2001).

22 Ferguson, “Discourses of Danger,” 736.

23 See, for example, the front page of *The San Francisco Call*, September 11, 1901; “Woman Well Called Queen of Anarchists,” *The Chanute Times*, June 19, 1908: 2; “Poverty and Prostitution Stalk Hand in Hand,” says Emma Goldman,” *The Day Book*, July 17, 1914, noon edition: 22. In one German newspaper, Goldman was named the “Luise Michel of New York’s autonomy group” and “mistress of the assassin Berkman.” *Hannoverscher Kurier*, January 21, 1893: 3.

especially when Goldman was connected with the assassination of US President William McKinley in 1901,²⁴ the female anarchist was known for connecting political and social protest with questions about gender and sex.²⁵ Like many other anarchists at the end of the 19th century, Goldman was “[l]iving and thinking beyond convention, [and she and other anarchists] offered a unique viewpoint on their times and experienced tensions that illuminated American society. Uncomfortable with the present, they remained torn between the simpler past and the possible future.”²⁶

The first part of the present chapter intends to show the extent to which Goldman’s protest against existent gender norms, in a way, gendered her crimes, as she was perceived as a dangerous female anarchist as a consequence of her demands with regard to women’s emancipation and sexual liberation. The second part will show how far the media that reported about Goldman and her gendered forms of protest also created an image of a “femme fatale,” especially in relation to the news coverage of Alexander Berkman’s assassination attempt on Henry Clay Frick in 1892 and the assassination of McKinley by the young anarchist Leon Czolgosz in 1901. The chapter will consequently show how Emma Goldman’s image as a “dangerous woman” in the US context was related to her demands and her perception by the mass media of her time. Her protest was naturally gendered due to these aspects and offers an example of how women who demanded social change were branded as dangerous and seductive troublemakers within the US context of the long 19th century.

Gendered Crimes and the Protest of a Female Anarchist

Regardless of the anti-hierarchical core values of the anarchist movement that also seemed to be particularly promising for women, soon after joining it and her first

24 Her arrest in relation to the assassination drew international attention. For Norway, for example, see *Bergens tidene*, September 10, 1901: 2; *Trondheims Folkeblad*, September 12, 1901: 2. In Germany, the *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung* called Goldman the “spiritual originator” (*geistige Urheberin*) of the assassination. *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, October 8, 1901: 4.

25 Loretta Kensinger, “Radical Lessons: Thoughts on Emma Goldman, Chaos, Grief, and Political Violence Post-9/11/01,” *Feminist Teacher* 20, no. 1 (2009): 53; Blaine McKinley, “‘The Quagmires of Necessity’: American Anarchists and Dilemmas of Vocation,” *American Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (1982), 503; Alix Kates Shulman, “Introduction,” in *Red Emma Speaks: Selected Writings and Speeches by Emma Goldman* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 11–12.

26 McKinley, “The Quagmires of Necessity,” 503–504.

political activities, Goldman would find out that “[e]ven radicals do not differ from the Christians; they do not wish their wives to become radical; even they deem themselves necessary to her protection.”²⁷ Nevertheless, Goldman envisioned a revolution that was supposed to change society, especially since it was based on women’s political and sexual emancipation alike.²⁸ She also wanted to ensure women had full control over their lives and bodies, which is why she advocated on behalf of birth control, another gendered crime that brought her in conflict with the law and the US state.²⁹ Goldman knew from experience that women were often at a disadvantage due to giving birth to numerous children, and “having worked as a nurse-midwife for poor immigrant women in the 1890s, Goldman saw firsthand the painful consequences that arose when women lacked the ability to care for their reproductive health.”³⁰ To her, birth control naturally seemed to be more than a health-related factor for women; it was a path to empowerment as well. Consequently, Goldman was willing to take up the fight against the authorities and the patriarchic system and used all means available to her to publicize her views.

In 1905 she founded *Mother Earth*, which was published, from 1913 as a bulletin, until April 1918. Although the journal could not attract a large number of readers or, probably more importantly, subscribers, Goldman, writing with Alexander Berkman, considered its positive results to be more important:

Mother EARTH is such a success. Without a party to back her, with little or no support from her own ranks, and consistently refusing to be gagged by a profitable advertising department, she has bravely weathered the strain of five years, stormy enough to have broken many a strong spirit. She has created an atmosphere for herself which few Anarchist publications in America have been able to equal. She has gathered around her a coterie of men and women who are among the best in the country, and, finally, she has acted as a leaven of thought in quarters least expected by those who are ready with advice, yet unable to help.³¹

27 Emma Goldman, “The New Woman,” *Free Society*, February 13, 1898: 2, in *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*, vol. 1: *Made for America, 1890–1901*, eds. Candace Falk et al (Urbana/Chicago: Illinois University Press, 2008), 322. See also Lucy Nicholas, “Gender and Sexuality,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism*, eds. Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 605.

28 Clare Hemmings, “Sexual Freedom and the Promise of Revolution Emma Goldman’s Passion,” *Feminist Review* 106 (2014): 56.

29 “Emma Goldman out of Prison: Will Continue Birth Control Speeches,” *Daily Capital Journal*, May 6, 1916: 14.

30 Kowal, “Anarcha-Feminism,” 274–275.

31 Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, “Our Sixth Birthday,” *Mother Earth* 6, no. 1 (1911), accessed February 26, 2020. http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/goldman/ME/mev6n1.html.

Goldman and Berkman, in their review of the journal's initial years, also emphasized why *Mother Earth* had initially been brought to life:

As to the original *raison d'être* of MOTHER EARTH, it was, first of all, to create a medium for the free expres[si]on of our ideas, a medium bold, defiant, and unafraid. That she has proved to the fullest, for neither friend nor foe has been able to gag her.

Secondly, MOTHER EARTH was to serve as a gathering point, as it were, for those, who, struggling to free themselves from the absurdities of the Old, had not yet reached firm footing[.] Suspended between heaven and hell, they have found in MOTHER EARTH the anchor of life.

Thirdly, to infuse new blood into Anarchism, which—in America—had then been running at low ebb for quite some time.³²

Next to her endeavors as a publicist, Goldman was a political activist who held speeches and appeared at public demonstrations, such that, to quote Kathy E. Ferguson, “her strategic parrhesia combined frontal assault with carefully calculated rhetorical arts and tactical silences.”³³

She considered two aspects to be essential for the liberation of women: an end to marriage as a hierarchical institution and sexual freedom. These two demands, in a way, gendered her image as an anarchist radical, as she was not demanding the end of any hierarchical form of rule but the liberation of women as a precondition for a better society. From this perspective, however, Goldman realized the existence of a tragedy that limited such demands: “Liberty and equality for woman! What hopes and aspirations these words awakened when they were first uttered by some of the noblest and bravest souls of those days.”³⁴ For Goldman, “[e]mancipation should make it possible for woman to be human in the truest sense[, e]verything within her that craves assertion and activity should reach expression; all artificial barriers should be broken, and the road towards greater freedom cleared of every trace of centuries of submission and slavery,” but it seemed that these demands would remain unanswered by society. Instead of reaching these goals, “the results so far achieved have isolated woman and have robbed her of the fountain springs of that happiness which is so essential to her.”³⁵ Due to her observations and personal perception of the previous attempts

³² Ibid.

³³ Ferguson, “Discourses of Danger,” 738. The term *parrhesia* is a reference to Foucault, who described it as “a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself).” Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 19.

³⁴ Emma Goldman, “Tragedy of Women’s Emancipation,” *Mother Earth* 1, no. 1 (1906): 9–17.

³⁵ Ibid.

to achieve emancipation, Goldman was rather disillusioned and considered the emancipation achieved thus far a tragedy, which naturally brought her into conflict with those who represented this previous process and considered themselves leading forces of female emancipation within US society, e.g., leading members of the suffragist movement.³⁶ In contrast to the latter, Goldman argued that “the emancipation of woman, as interpreted and practically applied today, has failed to reach that great end. Now, woman is confronted with the necessity of emancipating herself from emancipation, if she really desires to be free. This may sound paradoxical, but is, nevertheless, only too true.”³⁷ For the female anarchist, emancipation did not go far enough:

The narrowness of the existing conception of woman’s independence and emancipation; the dread of love for a man who is not her social equal; the fear that love will rob her of her freedom and independence, the horror that love or the joy of motherhood will only hinder her in the full exercise of her profession—all these together make of the emancipated modern woman a compulsory vestal, before whom life, with its great clarifying sorrows and its deep, entrancing joys, rolls on without touching or gripping her soul.³⁸

In 1925, she wrote a letter to Alexander Berkman about this situation, which, even two decades on, did not seem to have improved much:

The tragedy of all of us modern women ... is a fact that we are removed only by a very short period from our traditions, the traditions of being loved, cared for, protected, secured, and above all, the time when women could look forward to an old age of children, a home and someone to brighten their lives. ... The modern woman cannot be the 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?³⁹

In contrast to more conservative female protest, Goldman was naturally perceived as radical, in particular because she contested existent gender norms and the traditional role of women as wives and mothers. Marriage was especially criticized as a form of patriarchic control and an element of social hierarchization by the female anarchist. She called out “the twin fantasies of protection and social mobility

³⁶ Emma Goldman, “The Tragedy of the Modern Woman,” n.d., EGP-IISH No. 266, 1. Goldman argued that “woman in politics is by no means better than man and her right of suffrage has helped her as little as it did most men to overcome outworn political, social, or moral values.” *Ibid.*

³⁷ Goldman, “Tragedy of Women’s Emancipation.”

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Letter to Alexander Berkman, September 4, 1925, in *Nowhere at Home: Letters from Exile of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman*, eds. Richard Drinnon and Anna Maria Drinnon (New York: Schocker, 1975), 130–133, cited in Ferguson, “Gender and Genre,” 736.

through marriage"⁴⁰ and demanded to change the way girls were informed about it and "trained" to become supportive wives for exploitative and abusive men.

In an article published in 1897, Goldman argued that "[f]rom its very birth, up to our present day, men and women groan under the iron yoke of our marriage institution, and there seems to be no relief, no way out of it."⁴¹ From her point of view, "marriage relations, are the foundation of private property, ergo, the foundation of our cruel and inhuman system" that "always gives the man the right and power over his wife, not only over her body, but also over her actions, her wishes; in fact, over her whole life."⁴² As long as marriage existed, women could hardly achieve freedom, and it was the existence of marriage that not only made the inequality between the two sexes possible but further inscribed this inequality into the society of the future. Boys' and girls' different upbringings and the values that are taught to them, as well as the expectations the two sexes are supposed to live up to, prevent true equality, as

the boy is taught to be intelligent, bright, clever, strong, athletic, independent and selfreliant; to develop his natural faculties, to follow his passions and desires. The girl has been taught to dress, to stand before the looking glass and admire herself, to control her emotions, her passions, her wishes, to hide her mental defects and to combine what little intelligence and ability she has on one point, and that is, the quickest and best way to angle a husband, to get profitably married.⁴³

Young women of the working class were particularly exploited by marriage, which was chosen to achieve social and financial security rather than for love. In contrast to men, women are eventually trapped in their relationships because "[b]oth, the man and the girl, marry for the same purpose, with the only exception that the man is not expected to give up his individuality, his name, his independence, whereas the girl has to sell herself, body and soul, for the pleasure of being someone's wife; hence they do not stand on equal terms, and where there is no equality there can be no harmony."⁴⁴

Women, as Goldman would argue in 1906, gave away their freedom too easily "because of the chains of moral and social prejudice that cramp and bind her na-

⁴⁰ Clare Hemmings, "In the Mood for Revolution: Emma Goldman's Passion," *New Literary History* 43, no. 3 (2012): 527–545.

⁴¹ Emma Goldman, "Marriage," *Firebrand*, July 18, 1897, 2, in *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*, vol. 1: *Made for America, 1890–1901*, ed. Candace Falk (Urbana/Chicago, IL: Illinois University Press, 2008), 269–273, here 269.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 271.

ture.”⁴⁵ It was the conservative Church and the state, holding up a patriarchic regime, that Goldman challenged by her demands to end marriage as a hierarchic tool of control and to liberate, even sexually, the modern woman. Naturally, the conservative authorities represented by the government and the Church considered such a woman dangerous, to say the least. However, the anarchist made enemies not only of these forces but also of the bourgeois parts of the women’s movement, who were, in a way, indirectly accused of misunderstanding emancipation as such: “[M]any advanced women ... never truly understood the meaning of emancipation. They thought that all that was needed was independence from external tyrannies; the internal tyrants, far more harmful to life and growth, such as ethical and social conventions, were left to take care of themselves; and they have taken care of themselves.”⁴⁶ In contrast to the existent gender roles and limiting norms that kept women from growing as individuals and achieving emancipation in all areas of life, Goldman “envisioned anarchist love as creating bonds between free individuals that would enhance rather than confine each person. Similarly, she envisioned an anarchist society as a voluntary community of free, self-directing individuals, where individual growth and empowerment are nurtured through collective life.”⁴⁷

To achieve such a utopian ideal, women had to overcome their fear of disappointment and their belief that men were superior, especially since “woman’s political equality with man has contributed precious little to her inner emancipation.”⁴⁸ According to Goldman, educated women in particular “are neither met with the same confidence as their male colleagues, nor receive equal remuneration.”⁴⁹ This was also made possible by the acceptance of such inequalities, but the anarchist herself had experienced that the workers’ movement was often not interested in providing equal labor rights to women, who were also considered competition for the working men.⁵⁰ Goldman demanded an end to the sacrifices women were willing to accept to “perform” according to gender roles that had been imposed upon them by a conservative society whose male rulers were unwilling to accept independent and self-supporting women.⁵¹ In contrast to representatives of other organizations that demanded women’s rights, Goldman considered

45 Goldman, “Tragedy of Women’s Emancipation.”

46 Ibid. Similar criticism can be found in Goldman, “The Tragedy of the Modern Woman,” 1.

47 Ferguson, “Gender and Genre,” 751.

48 Goldman, “The Tragedy of the Modern Woman,” 8^{1/2}.

49 Ibid., 12.

50 For a more detailed analysis, see Sonya O. Rose, “Gender and Labor History: The Nineteenth-Century Legacy,” *International Review of Social History* 38, 1 (1993): 145–162.

51 Goldman, “The Tragedy of the Modern Woman,” 16.

only her vision to be radical enough to actually achieve a change because “[e]very movement that aims at the destruction of existing institutions and the replacement thereof with something more advanced, more perfect had followers who in theory stand for the most radical ideas, but who, nevertheless, in their every-day practice, are like the average philistine, feigning respectability and clamoring for the good opinion of their opponents. The suffragist and feminist movements made no exception.”⁵²

Due to the supposedly existent radicalism of the demands for female liberation, those who demanded a drastic change of the existent gender norms and roles through different forms of protest were labeled as immoral elements of society: “Every member of the woman’s rights movement was pictured ... in her absolute disregard of morality. Nothing was sacred to her. She had no respect for the ideal relation between man and woman. In short, emancipation stood only for a reckless life of lust and sin; regardless of society, religion, and morality.”⁵³ Without the “courage to be inwardly free,”⁵⁴ the modern woman would be able neither to counter such accusations nor to challenge the existent repressive elements of patriarchic rule. For Goldman, it was foolish to support men, especially since they would often exploit women’s naive dreams about love and romantic marriage to drag them into a relationship based on dependency and exploitation. Freedom for women could only be achieved through protest and eventually a break with the existent order that, according to Goldman, suppressed women and men alike in many ways.⁵⁵

The liberation the anarchist demanded was based on a female choice to do what women themselves considered best. In addition to lectures about birth control rights, the end of marriage, and female self-control, Goldman often spoke about sexual freedom. This was another aspect that would be used by the authorities to frame the anarchist as a “dangerous woman,” especially since the things Goldman spoke about would rile the public, who considered such speeches or lectures a form of nuisance and a threat to a supposedly pious society. Goldman, who claimed to be an expert on sex-related issues as she had “been familiar with ... work on sex psychology for a number of years,”⁵⁶ insisted in her works related to the sexual liberation of women that the latter’s “experiences and sexual free-

52 *Ibid.*, 18^{1/2}.

53 *Ibid.*, 19.

54 *Ibid.*, 29.

55 *Ibid.*, 41.

56 Emma Goldman, “A Refutation Addressed to Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld,” Berlin 1923, EGP-IISH No. 208, 1. One of the specialists Goldman actually knew personally was Magnus Hirschfeld. See Magnus Hirschfeld to Emma Goldman, Paris, November 24, 1933, EGP-IISH, No. 98.

dom must be incorporated into the heart of any sustainable revolution.”⁵⁷ A revolution, Goldman hoped, would eventually abolish existent inequalities and offer women complete access to choices that could be taken freely and individually without any interference from society or men. Sex was consequently understood as something highly political by Goldman, and the possibility to freely express one’s sexuality without any form of limitation was the element that would prove if a real liberation of the individual took place or not. According to Clare Hemmings, Goldman’s “embrace of sexual freedom as both means and (one) end of her anarchist Utopia interrupts the temporal features that govern this relationship of sexuality and capitalism, suggesting alternate ways of understanding and writing that history.”⁵⁸

For many prudish and self-assuredly pious elements of US society, however, her claims represented everything that was considered evil. Her approach to anarchism, which was based on an emotional interpretation, had already caused problems with other anarchists, who demanded that Goldman better “behave” so as not to damage or misrepresent the cause of the anarchist movement,⁵⁹ so one can only imagine how her demands and arguments were perceived by the more conservative members of society. Everything that was considered “traditional” and “valuable” according to conservative-patriarchic standards was being openly attacked by a female anarchist whose status as a well-known radical offered her a way to communicate her ideas to larger audiences when she traveled throughout the country to inform women about everything that was supposedly wrong with society in its current state. Only a change to the existent roles for women and the establishment of gender equality would guarantee a better future, but this, according to Goldman, also demanded the sexual liberation of the modern woman and the female body.

As sex “is woven into every fabric of human life and lays its finger on every custom,” it was reasonable from the anarchist’s perspective to say that “in the free sane acceptance of the human body, in all its faculties, lies the master-key to the art of the future.”⁶⁰ Regardless of the necessity to know about sex, knowledge about this important element of human life was restricted for women, as the common social evaluation seemed to agree upon the assumption that “[s]ex is disgraceful for nice girls.”⁶¹ Goldman’s demands were consequently too radical for many when she asked for the following: “Let us get rid of the mock modesty so prevalent

57 Hemmings, “Sexual Freedom,” 44.

58 *Ibid.*, 45.

59 Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (New York: Knopf, 1931), ch. 5 Accessed December 17, 2018. <https://www.theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-living-my-life>.

60 Emma Goldman, “The Element of Sex in Life,” n.d., EGP-IISH No. 213, 7 and 12.

61 *Ibid.*, 21.

on the surface of polite society, let us liberate sex from falsehood and degradation.”⁶² It is therefore hardly surprising that Goldman’s protest and demands were particularly perceived as a form of gendered radicalism, and even some anarchists were repelled by such far-reaching calls for social change. The authorities had considered Goldman to be a dangerous individual before she began lecturing about gender-related problems and inequalities within US society, but the latter aspects of her activism intensified her perception as a “dangerous woman.” The fact that she was supposedly involved in acts of anarchist violence eventually turned her into some kind of “femme fatale” who would seduce men to commit violent acts on behalf of anarchist ideas. The following part of this chapter will take two such events into closer consideration and show how the press turned Goldman into a public outlaw and probably the most dangerous woman in the United States.

Goldman’s Perception as a “Femme Fatale”

A woman who demanded more equality, free love and a liberated sexuality, the end of marriage, and the right to birth control for women naturally appeared dangerous not only to conservative circles of the late 19th century but to a majority of the country. Goldman was far ahead of her time, and many of the debates she initiated and stimulated have still not been concluded today; women are still fighting for rights (or fighting for them again) that the anarchist demanded over a century ago. However, Goldman, who was perceived within the public sphere as a “radical woman,” would, due to some kind of press craze in relation to two famous incidents in US history, ultimately be turned into a “femme fatale,” the “queen” of American anarchism.⁶³

In 1892, Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman decided to assassinate Henry Clay Frick⁶⁴ because he was responsible for the use of violence against workers during the Homestead Steel Strike⁶⁵ in Pennsylvania. Private security guards, the

⁶² *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶³ *The Evening World* (New York City), October 16, 1893, 1. See also Shari Rabin, “The Advent of a Western Jewess: Rachel Frank and Jewish Female Celebrity in 1890s America,” in “Gender and Jewish Identity,” special issue, *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues* 22 (2011): 121; Andrea Rich and Arthur L. Smith, *Rhetoric of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Moore, 1979), 60.

⁶⁴ On Frick, see Kenneth Warren, *Triumphant Capitalism: Henry Clay Frick and the Industrial Transformation of America* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996); Quentin R. Skrabec, *Henry Clay Frick: The Life of the Perfect Capitalist* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010).

⁶⁵ Paul Krause, *The Battle for Homestead, 1890–1892: Politics, Culture, and Steel* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992).

so-called Pinkerton Boys, were sent to the Homestead Works of the Carnegie Steel Company and killed several workers during the incident.⁶⁶ Since Frick had become a famous figure representing the suppression of workers' rights, Berkman attempted to assassinate Frick on 23 July, while Goldman would use the attention this action was supposed to generate to explain why Berkman had used violence to respond to the exploitation of the workers. The anarchists' strategy was consequently based on shared work and responsibilities. While Berkman would go to prison for 14 years, Goldman's task was to coordinate the propaganda, and she gave interviews related to the assassination attempt in which she defended her friend's actions. For instance, she stated that it was Berkman's "belief that if the capitalists used Winchester rifles and bayonets on workingmen they should be answered with dynamite."⁶⁷ While Goldman was not directly involved in the assassination attempt, she became more well-known throughout the country due to her relationship with Berkman and respective reports about the events, which claimed, for example, that the "Goldman woman" was "worse than Berkman."⁶⁸ Some newspaper reports went further and explained how Goldman had seduced her fellow anarchist to make him take action. The *New York Tribune* reported the following on 25 July:

To Berkman's intimacy with Emma Goldman could be ascribed his fearful Anarchy; for she is probably the most bitter and best known woman Anarchist in New York: She is a strong-minded woman, and would naturally exercise a great influence over a weak man like Berkman. ... Many persons who are familiar with the Anarchists of this city remember having seen Emma Goldman and Berkman together frequently. Socialists were seen yesterday who did not hesitate to hold this young woman responsible for Berkman's murderous attack on Mr. Frick.⁶⁹

Other newspaper reports presented Goldman as the "most vicious anarchist in New York"⁷⁰ and further analyzed her relationship with Berkman, although many of these newspaper articles mainly provided a collection of hearsay and speculation about the private lives of the two anarchists.⁷¹ Goldman was also presented as some kind of "anarchist mastermind," a central figure who controlled

⁶⁶ Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (New York: Mother Earth, 1912).

⁶⁷ "Goldman's Cry Against Society," *Pittsburgh Post*, November 27, 1896, in *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*, vol. 1: *Made for America, 1890–1901*, ed. Candace Falk et al (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 249.

⁶⁸ *Pittsburg Dispatch*, July 28, 1892: 1.

⁶⁹ *New-York Tribune*, July 25, 1892: 1.

⁷⁰ *Pittsburg Dispatch*, July 29, 1892: 1.

⁷¹ *Morning Journal and Courier* (New Haven, CT), July 27, 1892: 4.

the men within the anarchist movement and decided who was considered to be a “good anarchist.” An article in the *Portland Daily Press* from 1 August 1892 states in this regard:

Emma Goldman and Johann Most [another famous German-American anarchist active in New York City, F.J.], owing to the fact that they have not been arrested, have regained some of the bravado, and the Goldman woman especially, who has become known as “Queen of the Reds,” now makes no effort to hide either herself or her endorsement of Berkman as a “brave man” and a “good Anarchist.” The Queen has not yet given her definition of a bad Anarchist, but she says Johann Most is one, because he has never done anything. Berkman, her example of a good Anarchist, has done something.⁷²

Even more attention was paid to Goldman’s influence after President McKinley was assassinated by Leon Czolgosz in early September 1901.⁷³ Since the latter had mentioned Goldman as an intellectual source of inspiration for his actions, the famous female anarchist was arrested as well, but she was not actually directly involved in the assassination at all. Nevertheless, newspapers worldwide reported on the incident and the fear the female anarchist had caused among the US police and governmental authorities.⁷⁴ For the press, Goldman was responsible for the death of the president, and the *San Francisco Call* referred to her as the “Chief in [a] Foul Conspiracy” on 11 September 1901.⁷⁵ It only took a short while before papers provided proof of the involvement of the “high priestess of anarchy,” who had been arrested in Chicago, in the assassination. Around a week later, the *Honolulu Republican* reported that the “President was the victim of an anarchist plot.”⁷⁶ While many papers reproduced the apparently central role of Goldman within a larger anarchist conspiracy to kill the president, descriptions of her usually included prejudices and stereotypes about the well-known radical woman. An article from 25 October 1901 in the *Camden Chronicle* (Tennessee) describes Goldman in detail and shall therefore be quoted here at some length:

⁷² *The Portland Daily Press*, August 1, 1892: 1. Such a categorization would also be related to the idea of the “propaganda of the deed.” On concepts and key texts related to it, see Mitchell Abidor ed. *Death to Bourgeois Society: The Propagandists of the Deed* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2015).

⁷³ Sidney Fine, “Anarchism and the Assassination of McKinley,” *The American Historical Review* 60, no. 4 (1955): 777–799; Scott Miller, *The President and the Assassin* (New York: Random House, 2011).

⁷⁴ In Germany, Kurt Eisner reported about the events in the *Sonntagsplauderei, Unterhaltungsblatt des Vorwärts*, No. 33, February 16, 1902: 130–131, in Federal Archives of Germany (Bundesarchiv) Berlin (BARch Ber), Kurt Eisner Papers, NY 4060/34, 221–222.

⁷⁵ *The San Francisco Call*, September 11, 1901: 1.

⁷⁶ *The Honolulu Republican*, September 19, 1901: 1.

Emma Goldman is thirty-three years old, short, pudgy of figure, hard featured and frowsy in appearance. Her hair is light brown and her eyes bluish gray. Her chin shows determination. She is a remarkably fluent talker, and never fails to excite her Anarchist hearers to a high pitch. She speaks Russian, German, English and French and writes Spanish and Italian. She was born in Russia and educated in Germany. She was married when she was seventeen, and according to report has had several husbands since. When she is in New York the Goldman woman makes her home on the East Side. She spends much of her time in back rooms of saloons where Anarchists gather. A crowd of admirers constantly surrounds her. She hates women, and her life has been passed mostly among men. Her features are almost masculine. She formerly worked in a sweat-shop and is said to have been a trained nurse.⁷⁷

Such articles further reproduced and intensified Goldman's image as a "dangerous woman" who mainly lived a life that did not suit a woman while surrounded by male anarchists who listened to her ideas. This image fit the narrative of the seducing "femme fatale" or "evil witch" who controlled men and made them act according to her wishes. The image of Goldman was consequently extremely gendered, and the fact that a woman protested against the patriarchy perfectly fit the narrative that was established and spread within the mass printings of the late 19th century, in particular in relation to the reports about Berkman's attempted assassination of Henry Clay Frick in 1892 and the violent death of President McKinley in 1901.

Conclusion

Although Emma Goldman "wanted a world without jealousy, insecurity, or possessiveness,"⁷⁸ she was unable to achieve these goals. In the US context, she was perceived as a "dangerous woman" who controlled even more "dangerous foreign men" who would act according to her wishes. The leading anarchist of the country, according to the press reports in the 1890s and early 1900s, was a woman. Her protest was consequently gendered in different ways. Of course, Goldman's demands for gender equality, sexual liberation, and an end to marriage as an exploitative instrument to further secure the role and influence of the patriarchy was a form of gendered protest, but during the press campaigns against her person after the (attempted) assassinations by Alexander Berkman and Leon Czolgosz, the whole anarchist movement was gendered. Anarchist radicalism was turned into a gendered crime because although it could not be proven that Goldman

⁷⁷ *The Camden Chronicle*, October 25, 1901: 6.

⁷⁸ Ferguson, "Gender and Genre," 751.

was involved, it was her “seductive spell,” a negatively gendered perception, that was supposedly responsible for the tragedy of a US president’s violent death.

Considering this, one could argue here that gender-related reform demands discredited Goldman as a “dangerous woman” whose ideas had to be kept in check, while the violent acts described here and by the contemporary press added a gender component to the perception of anarchism as a radical crime, orchestrated within a national syndicate that was led and directed by Emma Goldman, the “high priestess” of American anarchism.

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