FIVE FEET OF FEMININE ANARCHY:
PRESS DEPICTIONS OF EMMA GOLDMAN FROM 1892-1901

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Overall, my research experience at Eastern has evolved over my four years as an undergraduate student. My exposure to a variety of reading materials with the help of Consuls, and databases, helped shape my near and dear relationship to the third floor of the library. It is my hope that I am able to find a similar comfort and research experience in my post-graduate experience at Columbia University.

Thank you for your consideration.
In modern society, Emma Goldman is looked upon as an icon of feminism. Her bold and unwavering desire to obtain women’s rights including access to birth control, abortions and the right to free love, were unprecedented platforms at the turn of the 20th century. Additionally, her unparalleled fervor and bravery as a female activist in a predominately male society is a legacy many still aspire to embody. However, when Emma Goldman first emerged in society her radical feminism, and political preaching were not looked upon with admiration. In fact, when Emma Goldman moved to New York’s Lower East Side in 1889, she quickly became known as, “the most dangerous woman in America” as a result of her radical discourse. Yearning not only for women’s rights but also the rights of homosexuals, workers unions, and the anti-war movement, Goldman’s most despised endeavors were those related to her aspirations for governmental revolution. Goldman’s anti-government views led her to embrace the anarchist movement soon after immigrating to America, quickly making her a societal rebel. As defined by Goldman, anarchism was, “The philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law; the theory that all forms of government rest on violence, and are therefore wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary.” Her detestation for the United States government, outspoken nature, and unprecedented ideals, caught the attention of the press. Newspapers, and journals began to publish articles about her various endeavors: public lectures she was giving, places she was

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marching, information about her trials, and skepticism about her guilt in anarchist scandals.

Press coverage of Emma Goldman from the Haymarket Affair in 1892 to President McKinley’s Assassination in 1901, showed a highly engrossed media that depicted her as a terrorist according to modern definitions. Terrorism, as defined by Robert Kumamoto, includes acts that establish:

A climate of fear through an implied threat of violence or force, which, in turn, effectuate a psychological reaction amongst the members of a wider, targeted community: thus the significant differentiation between immediate victims of an act of terror and the broader intended audience.\(^4\)

In addition, Kumamoto explained that acts of terror include elements of theatre performance or spectacle, and terrorists may use propaganda to promote their cause.\(^5\)

The press, including newspapers and journals, depicted Goldman as a terrorist based on Kumamoto’s definition, without using the word. The word “terrorism”, born from the French Revolution, was not used following France’s Reign of Terror, and did not reemerge into public vocabulary until 1917.\(^6\) Furthermore, according to Adam Roberts of the British Broadcasting Corporation, from the nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century, the word “terrorism” specifically referred to the assassination of political leaders and heads of state and did not encompass violence beyond this until the 1950’s.\(^7\) These facts could account for why anarchists like Emma Goldman were not

\(^5\) Ibid., 4.
labeled terrorists by the mainstream media near the turn of the twentieth century though their characteristics aligned with the definition of terrorism.

Author Candace Falk studied Emma Goldman after discovering letters written by Goldman and her longtime lover and sympathizer in the anarchist cause, Ben Reitman. Falk looked at Goldman’s life with admiration, but also aspired to analyze the not-so-picturesque attributes hidden within Goldman’s writings: the depression, the unforeseen contradictions and secrets hidden within her life, and her personal disappointments. In her book, *Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman*, Falk included quotes from many different newspaper sources including the *New York Times*, the *New York World*, the *Chicago Daily News*, the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, and the *Chicago Daily Times*. Falk used some excerpts to prove how venomous newspaper articles were regarding Goldman. However, Falk did not distinguish that the press falsely represented Goldman, nor did she proclaim the press’s interpretations aligned with elements of terrorism. Furthermore, a majority of the newspaper articles she referenced were published after 1901, which leads to the conclusion that she did not see the press as a catalyst for Goldman’s negative image in society between 1892-1901.

Tracing Goldman’s life from the time she was a child, Richard Drinnon’s book, *Rebel In Paradise* provided readers with an in-depth and comprehensive look at her life spanning across political, social and personal involvements. The novel was equal parts biography as it was an exploration of the opposition and support Goldman received for her public speeches. Drinnon was perhaps the only author to write of the malicious nature of the press towards Emma Goldman. He claimed that, “She was the victim of American

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journalism’s unremitting quest for sensationalism and of its almost instinctive hatred of dissent.”

9 Drinnon also quoted an article from 1901 in the New York World that stated phrases like Goldman, “would kill all rulers” and “She has been in more than one plot to kill.”

10 In conclusion, Drinnon argued that, “the creation of Emma Goldman as a mythical monster was the work of all major newspapers” which showed the press definitely played a role in depicting Goldman negatively but again, Drinnon did not argue that they depicted her as a terrorist.

11 In “Radical Lessons: Thoughts on Emma Goldman, Chaos, Grief, and Political Violence Post-9/11/01”, author Loretta Kensinger drew a close comparison between the writings of Emma Goldman and the general approach to violence and terrorism today. Kensinger analyzed post-9/11 violence by studying Goldman’s written work. Kensinger argued, like Goldman, that violence was justified in revolutionary-based scenarios. Kensinger was the first author to employ the use of the word terrorism in relation to Goldman, describing Goldman’s image as one that was, “dogged by the accusation that she advocated and abetted terrorism despite the lack of direct evidence linking her to any of the violent events often attributed to her.”

12 Though Kensinger did not speak about media depictions of Emma Goldman, she was the first to state the media’s accusation that Goldman was an advocate of terrorism.

Similar to Falk, historian Alice Wexler’s biographical writings on Goldman in her novel, Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life served as an empathetic approach to the

10 Ibid., 87.
11 Ibid., 89.
anarchist. Wexler argued throughout her novel that Goldman was one of the first pioneers to urge Americans to move in liberal directions, though she did not make much impact in converting Americans to the anarchist cause.\(^{13}\) As she tried to unravel the many complexities of Emma Goldman's life, Wexler stated, "Goldman herself was so relentlessly pursued and persecuted that her human limitations seem relatively insignificant in comparison with the injustices inflicted upon her and the tremendous courage with which she defended her convictions."\(^{14}\) This quotation is particularly striking as it implies the harm was done to Goldman, perhaps by the press, as this study intends to reveal. Wexler inevitably examined Goldman's life from a compassionate viewpoint, but neglected to correlate the anarchist's actions to that of terrorism.

This study will expand upon the current research about Emma Goldman by exploring press coverage of her between 1892 and 1901. In doing so, this study intends to reveal that the press depicted Emma Goldman as a terrorist by publishing articles which highlighted her public spectacle events, psychological impact on the wider community, and threat of violence, all of which align Goldman with terrorism according to Kumamoto's modern definition. It will also determine how these three elements were presented in the media, using press headlines, article content and pictures, all of which assisted in creating the image of Goldman as a terrorist.

The press depicted Emma Goldman as a terrorist by publishing articles that highlighted the theatrical elements of her anarchist campaign and the subsequent psychological impact she had on the wider community. The *New York World* published


\(^{14}\) Ibid., xviii.
an article in 1892 that exemplified the negative media portrayal of Goldman titled, "Anarchists in Charge", accompanied by a subheading that read, "A Rabid Female Agitator"—a heading that alone depicted a woman not to be crossed. The headlines defined Emma Goldman as a "rabid" female leader, a word choice that depicted her as something animalistic, unwell, and diseased, and provided readers with an impression that she should be feared.

The article content highlighted an anarchist meeting held at Union Square. The topic of the meeting centered on anarchist, orator, and politician, Johann Most, one of Emma Goldman's inspirations. The newspaper's interpretation of Goldman's speech and demeanor during the meeting mirrored the description of what one might assume a 'rabid female agitator' embodied. One part of the article discussed how law enforcement could diffuse the crowd of anarchists. In an effort to break up the crowd, the police force cleverly hitched Goldman's horse to a wagon to drag her away in the middle of her speech. The article stated, "...just as the female agitator gave one tremendous wail the horse was whipped up and started off, but this did not discourage the speaker, for she kept up her screaming until she was out of hearing distance from the crowd." The press's depiction of Goldman as a wailing, unrelenting speaker, screaming out to a crowd, showed the media's determination to depict her attention-seeking behaviors.

Similarly, in 1897 an article titled, "Anarchy in Spain and New York" from The New York World depicted Goldman as an attention-seeking savage. Two headlines were striking in this article including, "Emma Goldman Excites Cheers by a Wild, Bloodthirsty

16 Ibid., 97.
Harangue” and, “I Glory in the Murder of Canovas,’ screamed the Frantic Woman”\(^{17}\). Similar to the aforementioned article, the inclusion of words like “bloodthirsty” and “frantic” woman depict Goldman as a ferocious and crazed anarchist that incited fear in the public. The article itself spoke of the celebration of anarchists following the death of Spanish leader, Canovas del Castillo. The stanzas that most accurately depicted the relevance to terrorism stated, “A circular that had been widely distributed brought the crowd together. The circular was really an invitation to rejoice over an assassination. It read: ‘Mass meeting to celebrate the death of the leading despot of Spain’.”\(^{18}\) The press’s depiction of Goldman “rejoicing” over an assassination proves two important ideas. First Emma Goldman used propaganda to spread her message, and secondly Goldman invited her followers to assist her in celebrating a victorious assassination. This was a very clear instance of spectacle because it showed her public outreach to garner support for the anarchist movement and in addition revealed her shameful and attention seeking celebration following the assassination of a political leader.

In addition to the press releases regarding Goldman’s theatrical performances, the media also portrayed her psychological impact on the community by publishing articles that showed a widespread fear of Emma Goldman. In 1892, the New York World published an article titled, “Anarchy’s Den”. Near the end of the article, Emma asked the reporters to leave her alone but they refused to listen. In defense of Goldman, one of her


\(^{18}\) Ibid., 275.
followers announced, “that all reporters should be killed.” The author of the newspaper article then included Emma’s physical response to her follower’s exclamation:

She smiled that hollow cavernous smile... A glad and proud look was on her face, and while she made a faint display of quieting her slaves her pale face took on some color and she stood there wreathed in smiles amid smoke and beer fumes...

Analyzing the word choices within this excerpt quickly reveal the psychological torment Goldman had upon the wider community. Describing Goldman’s smile as “hollow and cavernous” depicted a ruler that was heartless and insensitive. Furthermore, the phrase “quieting her slaves” portrayed a dictatorial leadership style – an interesting paradox considering dictatorship was what Goldman felt the United States government represented. Overall, these depictions in the New York World aided in heightening the psychological impact felt by readers as they presented Goldman as a callous tyrant instead of a justified revolutionary.

In 1893, Nelly Bly published an interview she conducted with Emma Goldman to the New York World. Bly articulated that she initially had a negative view of Goldman, which changed after conducting the interview. Bly’s opening paragraph in the article, though it does not reflect her own personal feelings toward Goldman, indicated that Goldman instilled fear within the community. Bly wrote:

You have seen supposed pictures of her. You have read of her as a property-destroying, capitalist-killing, riot-prompting agitator. You see her in your mind a great raw-boned created, with short hair and bloomers, a red flag in one hand, a

20 Ibid., 115.
burning torch in the other; both feet constantly off of the ground and ‘murder!’ continually upon her lips.\textsuperscript{21}

In this excerpt, Bly wrote as though anyone who viewed her article would be in consensus with these stigmatizations of Emma Goldman. If we are to assume readers were in agreement, Bly’s statement implied that the general public had a wretched and traumatized view of Goldman. Words like ‘destroying’, ‘killing’ and ‘agitator’ all serve as ways of indicating that someone is destructive and harmful. Similarly, physical images of Goldman carrying a ‘burning torch’ and saying ‘murder’, portray her as a figure that psychologically tormented all those who laid eyes upon her. Regardless of whether these depictions were true in real life is beside the point. Bly’s vivid description of how people pictured her, despite Bly’s own positive view of Goldman, served as yet another instance where press coverage of Goldman portrayed her as a terrorist by highlighting the widespread fear she instilled in her audiences. Therefore, though Bly did not intend to depict Goldman negatively, she did by emphasizing the psychological torment people possessed. If a negative association did not already exist in reader’s minds, Bly surely implanted it with such vivid descriptions of the anarchist:

In 1895, the Phrenological Journal and Science of Health published an article titled, “Character in Unconventional People” that employed the eugenics that were used nearly five decades later in Nazi Germany. The article described Goldman’s physique, individual facial features and their circumferences, and what they signified in relation to Goldman’s character. Perhaps the most fascinating line read:

The facial signs of destructiveness and alimentiveness are very pronounced in the form of the mouth, and it is chiefly in the mouth and eyes that we may detect the signs of quality and temperament which account for the woman's disposition to attack the present social fabric.\textsuperscript{22}

These assumptions, substantiated by what scientists today realize are unrealistic conclusions, linked Goldman's character to her facial features. Articles like this portrayed Goldman as an anarchist who regardless of what she stated or believed, was innately flawed in character as a result of her physical appearance. This was concluded based on analysis of her facial structures, which explained her "disposition to attack the present social fabric". Another notable passage in this article was the relationship drawn between Emma Goldman and a bulldog which was concluded based on observations of her chin and mouth area.\textsuperscript{23} This association equated Goldman to something subhuman as one of the most infamously feared dog breeds. These comparisons created a negative stigma of Goldman by separating her from the general public solely based on her physical characteristics. Ultimately, this article created the psychological fear Kumamoto believed terrorists spread to their audiences. It is undeniable that articles like this helped to create a fear of Emma Goldman in the general public by depicting her as a subhuman creature.

Though this research study has largely focused on press headlines and article content, it is equally as important to analyze some of the pictorial content included within the articles that often aided in depicting Goldman as a terrorist. Richard Drinnon included a cartoon image of Goldman which depicted the psychological impact she had upon her community in his book \textit{Rebel in Paradise}. The image, shown below, was published in the


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 241.
New York World in 1897 and depicted a manic, and fear-provoking psychopath. Goldman is depicted with wide-eyed fear, though readers may not be able to identify if Goldman is afraid of something she has seen or looks like this naturally. Based on the stereotypes associated with Emma Goldman and anarchists, one would assume the image depicted Goldman in her natural state. Therefore, this image depicted Goldman in a frightening, paranoid manner both of which added to the psychological impact she had upon those viewing the article. Furthermore, the caption that accompanied the image read, “Anarchist, Emma Goldman, who prefers Hell to Heaven.” – a statement that utterly solidified in readers minds Goldman’s character was poor.²⁴

The final piece of evidence that was indicative of Emma’s psychological impact on the community was an interview published in the San Francisco Call in 1898 titled, “Emma Goldman, Anarchist.” The author of this article remains unknown. However, the

²⁴ Drinnon, Rebel in Paradise, 144.
²⁵ Ibid., 144.
author, like Nelly Bly, was resoundingly pro-Goldman and even encouraged readers not to miss out on an opportunity to hear her speak. However, nuanced within the article were statements that slandered Goldman’s character and implied she was dangerously outspoken. For example, the article stated:

Why this five feet of feminine anarchy is the most dangerous enemy society has. Had she lived a century ago she’d have been beheaded. Two centuries ago Emma Goldman, anarchist, would have been given over to the loving embrace of the Jungfrau; while in the sixteenth century she would have been nicely boiled in oil or beheaded and then neatly broken on the wheel.²⁶

Though this author favored Goldman, the determination to show she was a danger to society, followed by a litany of reasons why Goldman would be persecuted in various time periods, implied she was an agitator that would have tormented the general public, regardless of the time period. Tormenting the public classifies as having a psychological impact which in turn, indicated yet another instance where the press effectively represented Goldman, whether intentionally or not, as a terrorist.

The press also depicted Emma Goldman as a terrorist by publishing articles that showed her violent nature. In 1893, the violent depiction of Emma Goldman by the press began when the New York Times published an article titled “One Year for Emma Goldman” following her sentencing to Blackwell’s Island. The article depicted a tension-filled courtroom but no violence. However, the author of the article made it appear as though violence may erupt in the courtroom by depicting the anarchists present in the courtroom in support of Goldman as conniving and potentially dangerous. The article stated,

There was no bomb throwing, nor even speechmaking, nor any other form of Anarchist enthusiasm in evidence. A number of frouzy-haired specimens of the tribe in which the Goldman woman was a leader were present in the courtroom when sentence was pronounced, but they had evidently taken a hint from the published statement that the authorities were prepared to check any evidence of violence with a strong hand.  

This article depicted Emma Goldman as violent for two reasons. First, it portrayed Emma Goldman’s conviction as an occasion that would require protection from “anarchist enthusiasm” including bomb throwing, and speechmaking, both of which would have required police intervention. Second, it depicted Goldman’s followers as potentially violent, however, they remained nameless so their intentions were primarily associated with Goldman. Furthermore, followers of Goldman were referred to as “frouzy-hair specimens” and the “tribe” both of which add to the allusion mentioned previously that anarchists like Goldman are some other form of human, disassociated from what was perceived to be normal. Therefore, it can be said that the press portrayed Emma Goldman and her followers as though they were expected to be potentially violent or dangerous at Goldman’s court case, though none of their behaviors indicated they were even remotely violent during this particular instance. Overall, though violence did not erupt at Goldman’s court case, the article made it appear as though it could have by depicting Goldman’s nameless followers as potentially violent during her sentencing.

In 1901, the year president McKinley was shot by Czolgosz, media depictions of Emma Goldman became increasingly condescending, vicious, and oriented more so than before toward her violent nature. For example, in an article from the Cleveland Plain Dealer titled, “Defends Acts of Bomb Throwers”, Goldman, intending to appear

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peaceful, contradicted herself by showing her use of violence to promote the anarchist cause. The author of the article noticed her mistake and published it. The article stated:

The speaker [Emma] deprecated the idea that all anarchists were in favor of violence and bomb throwing. She declared that nothing was further from the principles which they support. She then went on, however, into a detailed explanation of the different crimes committed by anarchists lately, declaring that the motive was good in each case...28

This excerpt from the article is particularly interesting because it began by highlighting Goldman as a compassionate, anti-violent anarchist. However, the evident contradiction in her words showed otherwise. Why would someone so committed to anti-violence, defend the acts of fellow anarchists and justify their motives as acceptable? This was likely the question readers asked themselves, despite Goldman’s stance regarding anti-violence. Though Goldman may not have realized, this article did not depict her in a positive light because it showed an instance where she supported violence rather than an instance where she was peaceful.

Another article from the Cleveland Plain Dealer used Czolgosz in their headlines which stated, “Emma Goldman Set Me on Fire,” and also, “Her Lecture in This City First Started What He Calls ‘The Craze to Kill,’”29 These newspaper headings were highly indicative of terrorism because they showed Goldman’s teachings inspired others to do great harm. Assassinating the president is no small injustice; it is a crime that ultimately received the death penalty in Czolgosz’s case. Therefore, headlines that quote the president’s assassin frame Emma Goldman as Czolgosz’s comrade which seemingly aligns her with his violent cause.

29 Cleveland Plain Dealer, September 8, 1901.
An image preserved by the Jewish Women’s Archive also demonized Goldman and gave her a reason to escape the public eye following the murder of President McKinley. In the image, Emma Goldman was depicted demurely, her facial features true to size, and a placid but unwelcoming facial expression cast across her face. It is the graphics around her, however, that contribute to her negative image. Two fiery gauntlets, and two gothic-looking crosses at the bottom of the photograph hint Goldman was anti-religion if one is to interpret the crosses as burning in the fires produced by the gauntlets. The fire forms somewhat of a wreath around Goldman’s face, implying that she embodied the intentions implied in the picture. What is even more offsetting is what the trail of fire leads to above the head of Emma Goldman — a face of what looks like a demonic creature that is screaming.

Though this image was not accompanied by much text, the text that is present certainly indicated the meaning behind the drawing. It read: “Emma Goldman High Priestess of Anarchy, Whose Speeches Inspired Czolgosz To His Crime. Speech That Prompted Murderous Assault on the President.” This rhetoric and picture represent a media interpretation of Emma Goldman that was highly accusatory and committed to blaming or at the minimum associating Goldman with Leon Czolgosz’s actions. According to an article published in the 1955 American Historical Review, police authorities were quite certain other anarchists had aided Czolgosz in his crime. Police began to arrest Goldman’s fellow anarchist comrades in Chicago and soon after, Goldman gave herself up, though she was not guilty. Goldman was denied the writ of

habeas corpus, and her bail was set at $20,000 – a figure that is predicted to be equivalent to anywhere between $465,000 to $15,400,000 today.31 Fortunately, Buffalo police released Goldman because they did not possess evidence of her conspiracy and no grounds to extradite her. The picture below was posted in the Chicago Tribune on September 8, 1901. Goldman was arrested on September 10, 1901, and released from prison on September 23, 1901.32 Based on this timeline we can conclude that the Chicago Tribune published a highly accusatory article that framed Goldman as guilty of inspiring the murder of the President of the United States before she was even imprisoned or convicted. As a result of the newspaper rhetoric and their sensationalist graphics of Emma Goldman, she began to adopt the pen name E.G. Smith to avoid public scrutiny.33 In conclusion, the press not only published articles slandering the name of Emma Goldman that implied she was a terrorist, they also published pictorial evidence to incite fear in readers of Emma Goldman, despite the lack of evidence of her role in the McKinley assassination.

33 “Article demonizing Goldman in...”