INTO THE SPOTLIGHT: An Introductory Essay

The following introductory essay attempts to re-create the experience of being immersed in a documentary archive where themes and variations surface and resurface to create a textural weave where those who are little known are valued no less than those who are well known in the assembling of a flesh-and-blood portrait of one woman's life. As in volumes 1 and 2 of **Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years,** *each of the sections—1. The Arc of Her Story, 2. A Historical Context, 3. Chronological Narrative Weaving Through the Texts: Year by Year, and 4. A Long View: Light Defining Shadows—of the introductory essay stands alone and begins anew, allowing the reader to become familiar with the stories within the stories, as they are told and retold.*

1. THE ARC OF HER STORY

Emma Goldman could not have known at the time that the years from 1910 to 1916 would be her most prolific, perhaps the most celebrated period of her entire life.[1] Reveling in love and in anarchy, immersed in visions of social harmony, dissent against injustice, and interest in the new, Goldman blossomed as a political theorist, writer, and orator. The circles of her influence radiated away from the predominantly immigrant radical culture of New York City's Lower East Side and moved across town just a few blocks west to the milieu of the bohemians and radical intellectuals of Greenwich Village. The setting was, in some ways, reminiscent of her youth in St. Petersburg, where she read revolutionary novels that prefigured new ways of living, loving, and theorizing, and where militants plotted the assassination of the tsar. Goldman, a cultural hybrid, strove to create an American counterpart to the vanguard intelligentsia of Russia, one grounded in the free flow of ideas, a sense of imminent change, and an indefatigable quest for justice. In the process she attempted to forge a place in the American consciousness that

1. See Candace Falk, "Let Icons Be Bygones!—Emma Goldman, the Grand Expositor," in *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman,* eds. P. Weiss and L. Kinzinger (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2008), especially pp. 43–44.

tapped her remarkable ability to articulate the wrongs of the time and to offer an almost unfathomable, but nonetheless appealing, vision of how to right them.

She traveled across her adopted country, speaking in cities and towns in an effort to dispel preconceptions of anarchism as dangerous and foreign and instead promote the idea that anarchism was indigenous to the American spirit of individual liberty and its national pledge to freedom and justice for all. In so doing, Goldman often temporarily succeeded in convincing her audiences that she was neither fearsome nor dangerous.

Anarchism was a cause widely misunderstood. Although anarchist ideas were intended to be a catalyst for the realization of a more harmonious world, many of its adherents, anxious for a more immediate reversal of injustice, resorted to violent tactics to instill terror in the hearts of those who abused their power. Stories of assassination attempts on the tsar remained etched into Goldman's soul, the shadowy edges of ever-present violence regardless of how brilliant the light of her glorious vision. She was well aware of the dangers that accompanied her commitment to anarchism—arrest, imprisonment, expulsion, or even death—and seemed unfazed by the improbabilities of its realization in her lifetime. Like most visionaries, however, she sometimes experienced the melancholy chasm between what was and what could be—and wondered, in a country that strives to guarantee life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—"Who can boast of happyness?"[2]

BRUTALITY AND BENEVOLENCE IN AN ERA OF PROGRESSIVE REFORM

Whatever one's interpretation of the actual intent and impact of the Progressive era, at its best it signaled a world of new possibility to liberals, who were moving into the White House, Congress, and both state and city governments and enacting historic reform legislation. Earnest reformers tried to implement good government laws and practices, and women experienced new freedoms and the promise of fuller participation in the public sphere.[3] Social welfare reforms like improved sanitation, transportation, and access to education could be felt across a large spectrum of the population.

It was also the heyday of muckraking—with sensational exposés of the underside of industrial capitalism a consistent feature in the daily news. People were shaken by tragic events across the country. Among the most horrific was the fire that broke out in 1911 in the Triangle Shirtwaist Company's factory on the top floors of New York's Asch Building, where 146 mostly immigrant women garment workers, locked in by their bosses, died in the fire or jumped from factory windows to their deaths. The fire's cause,

2. EG to Max Nettlau, 17 October 1907, see vol. 2, *Making Speech Free*, pp. 250–51 (also in Max Nettlau Archive, IISH and *EGP*, reel 2); see also Candace Falk, *Love, Anarchy and Emma Goldman*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999), chap. 3, p. 43 (abbreviated hereafter as *LA&EG*).

3. See section 2 of this introduction for background on the variety of issues and trends critical to an understanding of the changing conditions and attitudes of the time.

according to Goldman,[4] was "economic and social pressure—the squeezing of souls into dollars. The slave-driving employer squeezes his sweatshop employees into coin, but he likewise wrings his own soul from his body in that ever-lasting greed. It is this which permits him to erect ten-story sweatshops, where 100 helpless girls can lose their lives in less than half an hour." Reported widely in the city's newspapers, the event shook many middle-class readers out of their complacency to the plight of industrial workers. Existing laws mandating safer working conditions and barring child labor were enforced with a new sense of urgency. Workplace battles for unionization spread across the country like a prairie fire.

At the same time, however, the era was marked by rampant industrial violence and the frequent presence of company-hired agents of the Pinkerton Detective Agency and Burns Detective Agency, working in tandem with federal troops to suppress and defuse countless strikes. Unequal access to work was affected by many factors. Segregation, with its purported separate-but-equal ideology, limited rights and possibilities of African Americans, especially in the South where conditions were predominantly separate-because-unequal.[5] Anti-immigrant laws, too, created uncertainty among those who encountered prejudice in a country that had been upheld as the land of opportunity. Their tenuous status was well understood by African Americans, who, unlike many of the European immigrants, could never blend into the culture of white privilege, even if they had achieved economic or intellectual status within their own race. Class differences cut across the lines of race, leaving the poor vulnerable to unsafe workplaces and widespread disease, while the privileged enjoyed lives of relative security.

These countervailing and inconsistent tendencies created the dynamic tension that characterized this era of change, with its mixture of inclusion and exclusion, of benevolence and brutality, of community and alienation, of hope and despair.

THE ANARCHIST TAUNT: CAPITALISM EXPOSED

As an anarchist Goldman was convinced that the practice of gradualism diminished the possibility of lasting constructive change; it masked the destructive dynamic of unrelenting, seemingly ever-adaptive profit-driven capitalism. She was certain that no significant economic or political transformation was possible without a grand-scale social and cultural shift embodied in individual enlightenment. Like many of her anarchist

4. "Emma Goldman Blames Greed for Holocaust," *Omaha World Herald,* 27 March 1911, Emma Goldman Papers, office newsclipping files.
5. In the context of the African American experience the gradualism of reform, while generally benefiting sanitation, transportation, and other areas, was also deemed to be too slow moving by many African American radical reformers. In many cases loopholes in the laws allowed for the exclusion of African Americans. Separate reform groups emerged from within the black community to address the problems often disregarded by white reformers. See, for example, Dorothy Schneider and Carl J. Schneider, "Black Women on the Move," in *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900–1920* (New York: FactsOnFile, 1993), pp. 115–26. See also the Bibliography for other sources.

comrades, she feared that reforms would ameliorate underlying problems (including inherent income gaps), resulting in short-term improvement with little long-term effect.

To Goldman, compromise in the name of pragmatism seemed to be the fatal flaw common to even the most well-meaning politicians, liberal reformers, and socialists. Most liberal reformers not only dismissed the anarchist's blanket rejection of the state as unrealistic and essentially impossible (even if they acknowledged the worthiness of its intent), but also resented the disparaging critique of their hard-won pragmatic changes. With the government more open to reform, even the socialists whose credo included an eventual withering away of the state participated in party politics. From Goldman's critical perspective the leadership hierarchies of the Socialist Party and most union organizations mimicked the prevailing corporate structure that ultimately would undermine the spirit of cooperation.

Yet it was the spirit of reform that set the stage for Goldman to speak to those beyond the relatively small clusters of anarchists in the United States and other parts of the world who were engaged in the politics of change. With charisma and eloquence she voiced that which underlies the impetus for reform. Her ability to articulate despair and offer hope, and to expose the corrupting influences of capitalism, affecting almost every realm of personal life, was inspiring. She spoke of longings for love, for community, for freedom from constraint, feelings that echoed her audience's experience and encouraged them to challenge the authority of existing social and political norms.

The times provided inquisitive audiences, many from the radicalized American middle class. These were people Goldman hoped would become a vanguard of intellectuals who would inspire a revolution in values to transform the social order. In tandem with the comrades on her magazine, *Mother Earth*,[6] she would reach the "intellectual proletariat"[7] and satisfy her own need to be taken seriously as a thinker. Although Goldman's sharp critique of the limitations of many reform efforts may have alienated some, she did succeed in galvanizing a remarkable number of people to imagine alternative ways of living and to adopt the habits of critical thinking. And even though anarchists, socialists, and liberal reformers differed in ideology, organizational configuration, and tactics, their desires to fight against injustice often were remarkably similar.

GRADUALISM—SHUNNED IN POLITICS, EMBRACED IN PERSONAL LIFE

Although Goldman rejected gradualism in politics, as a lecturer and writer she expressed her belief in each person's evolving capacity for change, for opening the mind to criti-

6. Most notably close among the editors was Alexander Berkman, who shared her sense of being part of the vanguard of change and the importance of directing their message to the middle class, though his constituency of choice was primarily the unemployed poor and the working class. While he had organizational patience with militant intent, she had the capacity to elicit and sustain the interest of a wider audience across the nation.
7. See Emma Goldman, "Intellectual Proletarians," *Mother Earth*, February 1914.

cal thinking and developing the ability to question the authority of established beliefs and ideas. It was in the interpersonal realm that Goldman inadvertently bore witness to the positive aspects of gradualism as a daily affirmation of individual control inextricable from the transformation of society as a whole—the way in which small shifts in attitudes and behavior were important building blocks of change. While she never hesitated to condemn gradualism in government, capitalism, and even labor union reform in the realm of the individual, she affirmed the power of incremental effort to embody the values wished for in the world.

She never expected people to immediately abandon the familiar or cast off the longstanding institution of marriage. Instead, she offered critical tools with which to judge its constraints, to imagine love in complete freedom. Her critique of the family and advocacy of birth control were based not on a belief that the dissolution of the family was imminent but rather on her belief in a woman's right to control her own destiny, especially on the issue of choosing when or whether to have a child. In her talks on "The Tragedy of Women's Emancipation" she was not assuming that suffragists would give up fighting for the vote; instead, she spoke of the limitations of voting itself, the false expectations of the complete transformation it was purported to bring. And so it was with many of the issues she addressed, including anarchism itself. She consistently strove to break the boundaries of convention, to encourage people to see beyond the immediacy of their situations, to recognize the inadequacy of even the most well-meaning reforms and aspire toward a vision of freedom and cooperation, whether or not it was within reach.

THE TIGHTROPE OF PERSONAL FREEDOM: RELINQUISHING THE SAFETY NET OF SOCIAL CONVENTION

The times shaped the challenges Goldman chose to address and were the underpinnings of her victories and defeats. The highs and lows of her life seemed to follow the contours of the political world around her. Although never a mass movement in the United States, anarchism nonetheless struck a resonant chord in the American imagination. Goldman lectured on changing social conventions, on sexuality and marriage at a time when the divorce rate and the number of women who chose not to marry were increasing. In her lectures on modern drama she focused on plays that wrestled with the angst of bourgeois family life as it reflected the corrosive effects of the existing social order.[8]

The suffrage movement was taking hold.[9] After decades of organizing, the swell of support made it clear that national enfranchisement of women was within reach. It would

8. For example, Ibsen's *A Doll's House* dramatizes the frustrations of a woman trapped in the constrictive limits of wife and keeper of the home until she finally slams the door and leaves to reclaim her own will and freedom.

9. By 1916 eleven states and the Alaska Territory had granted women full voting rights (Wyoming, 1869; Colorado, 1893; Utah, 1895; Idaho, 1896; Washington, 1910; California, 1911; Oregon, Arizona, Kansas, 1912; Alaska Territory, 1913; Montana and Nevada, 1914).

be among the greatest victories of the twentieth century for women. Goldman, the anarchist who on principle did not advocate the vote as a palliative to political ills, nonetheless rode the wave of interest the struggle represented. Rather than obstructing the suffrage movement's progress, she hoped to redirect it: "I do not see why women shouldn't have the vote if she wants to, neither can I see why she has anything to gain by the ballot. Women's sphere is the whole world, and there is no moral reason for denying it to her."[10] She challenged women to acknowledge that complete freedom could never take place in a polling booth before it had taken root in a woman's soul. Goldman empowered her audiences with her assertion that personal and political change were inextricably intertwined.

With the growth of urban centers and the influx of women into the work force, more and more Americans were prepared to take their chances on the tightrope of personal freedom from which the social constraints of the past had been withdrawn.[11] The work terrain had shifted as individuals who once had their place in agricultural communities now more easily lost their moorings in the anonymity of the urban landscape. Many middle-class liberals took an interest in the unifying potential of anarchism and socialism as alternatives to the inadequacy of existing social and political organization. They were curious, not only about the ideas but also about the strong personalities who espoused the various political ideologies. Lectures and debates on the differences between anarchism and socialism could draw up to 3,000 listeners.[12] Those who came to hear Goldman also found themselves inspired by her ideas on a variety of challenging, often taboo subjects—free love, homosexuality, and even political violence.

Women were especially drawn to those talks that addressed issues of independence in love and motherhood. Often lectures on cultural, feminist topics were deemed more dangerous than direct expositions on anarchist theory and practice. (For example, one could get arrested more frequently for distributing practical pamphlets on birth control than for publishing accolades about those who bombed a nonunion company or assassinated a president.) Negative consequences for challenging the status quo were sporadically encountered in contrast to the years before.[13] Many (though not all) relished the stimulation of being able to engage in free speech in America—at a time when social critiques and proposals for improvement went hand in hand.

Excited by the new personal and economic freedoms in this time of transition that accompanied their entry into the work force, women no longer felt limited to a life defined by the security of a husband and family; self-reliance laid the groundwork for new configurations of intimacy. Women were drawn to the topics of birth control and

10. "Emma Goldman and Ben Reitman Here," *Omaha World Herald*, 26 March 1910.
11. See, for instance, Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).
12. For example, her debate with the socialist Arthur Lewis on "Direct Action Versus Political Action" took place in Chicago on 3 March 1912.
13. See vol. 1, *Made for America* and vol. 2, *Making Speech Free.*

the relatively new dilemma of choosing between monogamy and "varietism" (multiple intimate involvements), of shifting gender roles, and of the novelty of changing attitudes about sexual orientation and marriage. Among her lectures, those on "Love and Marriage," on "Jealousy: Its Cause and Possible Cure," and on "The Tragedy of Women's Emancipation" attracted large crowds and reached an even wider audience in print.

RECASTING THE IMMIGRANT LIFE

Although the working poor, especially immigrant radicals, found her critique of marriage and love intriguing, usually it was those with more privilege and economic advantage who had the luxury of being able to envision a more fulfilling life. Goldman, who had been born into the middle class, who gravitated toward German high culture with its masterpieces of literature and philosophy,[14] spent her formative teenage years in the intellectual and political swirl of St. Petersburg and gained a vision of life beyond mere subsistence. Thus, she never completely identified with the manual work that, by necessity, she had to perform. It was the anti-Semitism of tsarist Russia that forced her family into relative poverty, but the family never changed its self-perception as part of the educated middle class. In her early years in America, Goldman had little choice but to live in the world of newly arrived immigrants; her direct experience of the oppressive conditions of garment factory life shaped her long-standing relationship to the workers' movement.[15] As time went on, Goldman expanded her horizons; she became more acculturated, having succeeded in mastering the language and assessing the political conditions of her adopted country, and she educated herself in what was considered the best of European literature and the basic tracts of American politics. She attained skills that gave her some degree of independence, which allowed her to shed some of her immigrant stigma and gradually become recognized as a leading proponent of radical ideas.

In lectures and in print Goldman emerged as a powerful voice for anarchism in America. Her magazine, *Mother Earth* (published March 1906–August 1917), with its original emphasis on social science and literature, was part of a trend in publishing. It was one of many little magazines and books on subjects deemed outside mainstream interests. These publications reflected an intense excitement for the new and satisfied a growing readership hungry for information about literature, politics, art, and culture. However, the intellectuals, bohemians, and new urbanites who gravitated to emergent avant-garde literature found only a handful of magazines that, like *Mother Earth,* directly addressed labor issues.[16]

14. See *LML*, pp. 39–40, on Königsberg teacher initiating EG to German culture at the age of ten; and see Introduction, vol. 1, *Made for America,* p. 46.
15. See *LML*, pp. 15–18.
16. Besides *Mother Earth,* see *International Socialist Review* (1907–1918) and the *Masses* (1911–1917; continued as the *Liberator,* 1918–1924). However, many foreign-language newspapers also avidly followed labor issues, especially as they affected their immigrant constituencies; see Directory of Periodicals.

Still, Goldman was a far more talented orator than writer. Some consider her theoretical contribution more a tour de force of accessibly integrating complex philosophical and literary works than of originating novel ideas—a position only partially true and generally advanced by those unfamiliar with the breadth of Goldman's published and unpublished writings, the nuances of her thinking, and a common lack of appreciation for the breakthrough feminist, anarchist, and internationalist discoveries that continue to emerge in close analyses of her work. Nevertheless, *Mother Earth* and the two books she published during this period, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (1910) and *The Social Significance of the Modern Drama* (1914), enhanced her influence on American radical politics, thereby expanding the general readership for anarchist ideas, and on a personal level elevated Goldman's class and social position. Similarly, the international reach of the journal, the exchange of ideas and updates on the state of anarchism across national boundaries, educated American readers and extended the magazine's (and Goldman's) spheres of interest outside the country.

LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF LABOR

The turn-of-the-century boom that had brought so many people into the cities from the countryside and the influx of immigrants, especially to the Northeast, created a sense of possibility as well as disappointment. Pitched labor battles for shorter hours, fair pay, and safe workplace conditions persisted. Business competition among manufacturers, garment factories, big oil companies, and mining enterprises, combined with the rapid mechanization of industry, catalyzed a wave of drastic pay cuts and widespread unemployment. In an era before transnational outsourcing, costs were minimized and wages slashed as profits increased, all in the gaze of the nation's work force. Violent clashes between big business and militant labor provoked the handshakes necessary for winning significant union reforms or losing them all, arrangements that required significant compromises on both sides. Strikes were a constant across the country, especially in mining, the steel industry, and clothing manufacturing. In response to the force and brutality against striking workers, meaningful labor reforms were sometimes implemented and militants' tactic of fighting fire with fire emboldened.[17]

Although Goldman raised funds for strike committees and for legal challenges, her relationship to unions and to the labor movement itself was ambivalent. She distrusted union hierarchical structures and the tendency of union members to cede their will to the leadership, as well as the predominantly socialist leanings of both rank-and-file members and officials. She believed that the unions' attempts to build bridges to government and industry would backfire and could potentially quell labor justice agitation, co-opt the strength of militant unions, and weaken the burgeoning Socialist Party. Some

17. Each incident provided an observation point for those critics of capitalism who genuinely considered the possibility for a reorganization of the relations of production and the redistribution of wealth.

unions were reluctant to be associated with the open use of violence as part of their effort to attract a larger constituency, although it was not unusual for militant sectors of the unions to employ such methods themselves clandestinely. Rather than organizing the workers, Goldman served the cause by spreading awareness, raising financial support, and evoking sympathy from the middle classes for the laboring classes and their struggles. Goldman identified with labor but, unlike many immigrants, never played an integral role in the labor movement.

Immigrant labor itself was a complex issue, permeated by insidious racism in most unions, including the American Federation of Labor.[18] Scab labor often included the otherwise excluded Asian and Mexican immigrants in the West, and African Americans in the Midwest, Northeast, and Southwest. The pervasive exploitation of African Americans in the South heightened racial tensions among the working poor.

"Progressive" impulses—that is, the desire to address the inequities and injustices of a fast-growing industrial society—spread throughout the nation. Labor struggles for decent wages and working hours were accompanied by the fear of being weakened by the huge influx of low-wage immigrant workers.[19]

In the public sphere immigrants had become a vital and challenging component of the work force; yet some natural-born American citizens believed immigrants spread disease, lacked moral standing, drained municipal resources, and were the primary participants in militant labor activity. Impoverished immigrants were a central concern for reformers. Goldman, an immigrant and former garment worker, believed such interest in the welfare of poor immigrants actually created a more efficient means of control through the amelioration of the worst excesses of the system.

From 1910 to 1916 Goldman shifted, though not completely, to addressing these and other concerns of the English-speaking public with the intention of not only speaking on behalf of, but also reaching beyond, her earlier audience of primarily Yiddish-, German-, and Italian-speaking immigrants.[20]

HEAVEN AND EARTH

Religious institutions often were safe gathering places for communities with shared concerns. In times of unpredictable change the apprehensive tend to grasp tightly to the norms of the past while the intrepid often are enlivened with excitement for the unknown. Although Goldman regularly worked with religious liberals who were sym-

18. Generally, AFL members had to apprentice in a trade, something that for most immigrants and African Americans would never have been possible. Also, Olav Tveitmoe, friend of EG and AB and a militant labor leader based in San Francisco, for example, was president of the Asian Exclusion League.
19. See Introduction, vol. 1, *Made for America*, for a discussion of foreign labor; and Introduction, vol. 2, *Making Speech Free*, pp. 17–18, for a discussion of newly enacted immigration laws. The person credited with bringing the issue of white slave traffic into public consciousness was George Kibbe Turner.
20. See Chronology, vols. 1 and 2, for examples of the variety of audiences EG addressed.

pathetic to her humanitarian message, most religious communities, composed as they were of social and political conservatives, were scornful of her critique. Goldman, an atheist, rejected even the slightest hint of positive social and ethical cohesion created under the mantle of religious belief. She shared Marx's position that religion is the opiate of the people.[21] Yet in an effort to separate ethical values from the institution of religion, she appropriated Jesus as a rebel and revolutionary,[22] claiming that his opposition to Roman rule, his belief in the people, and his ethic of kindness identified him as an anarchist. Equally provocative to those who identified with her own Jewish heritage was Goldman's criticism of the double standard of the "chosen people" and the ethical superiority the term implied, mocking those who became small-time capitalists in their frantic efforts to assimilate into a greedy American culture that essentially spurned them.[23]

In spite of her firm anti-religious conviction, Goldman's practice of anarchism had a certain similarity to the religious orthodoxy of her youth: a global ideology, almost Talmudic disputes, and a consistent set of values meant to guide one's personal and public life. She had grown up in a community that, on the surface, seemed to encourage openness to reflection and debate, while at the same time neglecting a fundamental contradiction—the underlying belief in the existence of an all-controlling wrathful god.[24]

BRIDGING THE CULTURAL DIVIDE

Goldman prided herself as a woman whose acquired cosmopolitanism enabled her to bridge the divide between English speakers and German- and Yiddish-speaking audiences.[25] Though completely nonreligious, disdainful of orthodoxy of any kind, and boastful of no "nationalist tendencies," she still felt close to "her people" and considered her personal resilience to be an inherited cultural trait: "[T]he perseverance which I inherited from my race . . . the indomitable will to persevere is peculiarly characteristic of the Jews . . . [and] helped them to survive centuries of persecution."[26] She believed that they "owe their survival only to the capacity of sticking together."[27]

21. See Karl Marx, "Contribution to a Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right,'" *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher,* 1844.
22. See the poem "The First Anarchist" by Victor Hugo. Many anarchists similarly assessed Jesus.
23. Goldman too had assimilated into American culture, pulling away from a primary identification with her Jewish roots, but she prided herself with having rejected the country's dominant economic structure.
24. For more discussion on EG's relationship to her Jewish roots see Introduction, vol. 1, *Made for America,* p. 46; and on the emotional resilience of the Jewish race see Introduction, vol. 2, *Making Speech Free,* pp. 9, 15. And see Candace Falk, "Emma Goldman—Jewish Spokeswoman for Freedom," *Encyclopedia of Jewish History,* eds. S. Norwood and E. Pollack (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), pp. 310–13.
25. Her accent was waning, except for her rolling *r*'s.
26. EG to W. S. Van Valkenburgh, 14 April 1915, *EGP,* reel 8.
27. EG to BR, 24 September [1914], *EGP,* reel 8. In this letter EG also criticized BR's judgmental attitudes, accusing him, playfully, of being anti-Semitic.

Proficient but not fluent in Yiddish, Goldman felt more comfortable lecturing in German, her native language, which was easily understood by her Yiddish-speaking audiences. And although she looked down on those Jews who cared only for "their own," she was grateful for her few Yiddish meetings and the Jewish comrades who hosted her along the way. She felt compelled to warn away those "nationalistic Jews to expect anything from the tsar or any government privileges" in her lecture "The Tsar and 'My Jews.'"[28] Her attempt to adopt a more universal identity often fell short. Newspapers, and even her beloved new American middle-class friends, considered her somewhat exotic. Still, Goldman was adept at piercing through the comfort zone of sameness; she had genuine friendships across cultures. Although she never denied her own culture, she chose not to be limited by it. Yet her cosmopolitanism was coupled with unshakable feelings of displacement. Her desire to bring unity to the world around her also may have been an expression of her own yearning for a sense of belonging.

She selected themes from the public discourse and appropriated whatever she considered meaningful (and useful) for the eventual realization of anarchism, which she envisioned as a social and economic order based on free will, mutual aid, and cooperation. In spite of bitter differences with socialists, capitalists, reformers, and religious congregants, anarchists shared the conviction that their work served the betterment of humankind.

TOPPLING THE HOLY TRINITY OF GOD, THE STATE, AND THE FAMILY

Goldman's challenges to true believers of every stripe added to her reputation as a woman who dared to question the most sacred embodiments of authority. She challenged the "three forces which have held men in bondage—religion, capitalism, and government,"[29] as well as marriage as it was practiced, which she considered a legalistic variant of property rights.

With virulence she stood against the tide of fundamentalism and never hesitated to take on the tripod of social stability, the "Holy Trinity of God, the State, and the Family."[30] In its place she urged her audiences to imagine harmonious self-regulating communities free of coercion, no punitive hand of the law, and no dread of eternal punishment in the hereafter. Her visions of order without government or without the rule

28. Ibid.
29. "Doctrine of Anarchists," *Duluth Herald*, 17 March 1911.
30. A fierce anti-religious atheism had long been part of the theory and practice of anarchism. See, for example, "For my part I say that the first duty of the thinking free man is ceaselessly to banish the idea from his mind and consciousness. . . . Each stop in our progress represents one more victory in which we annihilate the Deity." Pierre Joseph Proudhon, *System of Economical Contradictions, or, the Philosophy of Misery* (Boston: Benjamin R. Tucker, 1888). And again: "The idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, both in theory and practice." Michael Bakunin, *God and the State* (Boston: Benjamin R. Tucker, 1883), p. 15.

of law were perceived by the public at large as misguided, impossible, and the precursor to bedlam and destruction. Even a whisper of advocacy for a people without God and religion would have been considered not only blasphemous but grave enough to boot the offender into eternal hell.

Not only were such critiques considered a threat to traditional religious doctrine, but they also represented a direct counterpoint to stability, to societal well-being, and even to eventual freedom. The God-fearing were terrified by the anarchist rejection of belief in an omnipresent "higher law"; the word "anarchy" was perceived as a portent of unbridled chaos and escalating political violence. Such assumptions were not unreasonable, considering the number of violent acts associated with anarchists. Ordinary people were often as terrified of such attacks as those in power who were targeted by them; they considered civil violence an inexcusable offense, whether or not it was inspired by a glorious vision.

Although Goldman's ideas about violence were considered threatening by many, her critique of the traditional family seemed even more terrifying to others. At a time of widespread fear about the disintegration of the institution of marriage Goldman's interpretation of the meaning of freedom from constraint in personal life included support for universal access to birth control, advocacy of free love, acceptance of the varieties of sexual expression, and the promotion of sex education for children. Although Goldman's theories of complete freedom in all spheres of life were too difficult for most people to live by, some liberals considered her anarchist challenge to the holy trinity of God, the family, and the State thought provoking, engaging, and even vicariously liberating.[31]

Fear of anarchism itself, especially by those who equated the term with chaos—or a lack of order in the public and private domain—was allayed by stringent laws against anarchists.[32] These laws often resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of those who advocated or acted on anarchism's principles. Still, dissent, whether anarchist, socialist, labor, or liberal, could not be repressed entirely; nor could the government contain the aggression of those who perceived themselves to be the victims of officially sanctioned attacks. Consequences of such political dissent never matched the horrifying impact of racial prejudice especially in the South—with lynching the most graphic and egregious expression of racist terrorism in the country (a subject Goldman alluded to but never chose as the focus of her general critique).[33]

31. This margin of openness in the culture, especially among those inspired to imagine and "demand the impossible," was, and continues to be, fertile ground for Goldman's appeal.

32. See, for example, New York State's Criminal Anarchy Act and New Jersey's Criminal Anarchy Act, both passed in 1902. In March 1903 the Immigration Act was passed by Congress. The act barred those who claimed to be anarchists from immigration and naturalization in the United States.

33. See vol. 4, *The War Years*, for examples of the gradations of Goldman's attunement to the complexity of race and of race relations, forthcoming.