

and a strong rejection of feminism, even though one of the key founders of the BR, Mara Cagol was female (she and Renato Curcio were married in a conventional church wedding prior to the formation of the BR). This is also evidenced in their attachment to traditional images of resistance such as those from WWII, attachment to the point of fetishization to the high-end industrial worker, and failure to respond to the 'new social subjects' beyond the factory (women, the under- and unemployed, and even students), that were paradoxically becoming central to the competing current of radical thought and practice that had formerly been known as Workerism. This Catholic subjective dimension might also at least partially account for the BR's strangely moralized account of sociopolitical processes in which, beyond the Marxist-Leninist veneer, it seems very much a case of punishing the wicked on behalf of the innocent, in a form of justice that seems as much the divinely inspired early Christian resistance to the Roman Empire as Marxist proletarian justice. Many of these themes will be returned to in different ways in subsequent sections of this chapter dealing with different groups operating in different contexts and via often markedly different media ecologies, beginning with the Red Army Faction and the June 2nd Movement in Germany.

The 'Baader Meinhof Complex' and the June 2nd Movement

The Red Army Faction – the more widely known by the police- and mass-media generated name of the Baader Meinhof Group, or even gang, – can also be understood as produced at the intersection of the post-1968 student movement and repressive policing, albeit in the notable absence of any significant encounter with working-class politics.¹⁵ The West German Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (SDS, German Socialist Student Association), especially known via its charismatic leader Rudi Dutschke, had progressively radicalized over the course of the 1960s, reaching a high point, in line with student movements in other countries, in 1968. As in Italy, this radicalization was catalyzed by key events, the first being the visit in 1967 of the Shah of Iran and his wife, Farah Diba, which was the subject of mass media publicity. This visit was denounced by the student movement and especially in an 'Open Letter to Farah Diba' in *Konkret* by the prominent left-wing journalist and future RAF founder, Ulrike Meinhof.¹⁶ In the ensuing protest, during which the students threw paint and eggs at the Shah, the students were attacked by the Shah's supporters (anti-Shah Iranians had already been suppressed by the German security forces), mainly the Shah's

own security forces wielding large sticks, who the German police did little to restrain. In a later, seemingly unmotivated and equally violent German police attack on the remaining demonstrators, one of the protesters, Benno Ohnesorg, was shot at point-blank range by a German police officer. This event more than any other was taken as a clear sign by some participants of the student movement that the German security state leaned towards becoming a Nazi-style authoritarian state.

The second key event was the assassination attempt on Dutschke one year later; he was shot on the street by Jozef Bachmann, a right-wing and mentally disturbed young man who apparently operated alone. This act, nevertheless, had clearly been encouraged by the populist and right-wing Springer press (Bachman was carrying a newspaper cutting with the headline 'Stop Dutschke Now') and resulted in a far more violent level of protest against Springer than had been seen up to this point. Instead of throwing eggs or paint, the students threw rocks and Molotovs, and also built barricades and set fire to cars. In the words that Meinhof later used in her column, the students had moved, if only momentarily, 'from protest to resistance', a movement that would lead – at least in her case – to the formation of an urban guerrilla group.

This movement towards resistance was already evident within the student movement itself and can be clearly seen in a speech by Dutschke, 'Students and the Revolution', given shortly before this attack on his life.¹⁷ In this speech, Dutschke argued that the postwar period in Germany had been characterized by a new form of neofascism, a diffuse capitalist authoritarianism no longer associated with a specific party or leader, but disseminated via diverse authoritarian institutions, resulting in a 'a structure geared to adaptation, passivity, paralysis, fear' (Dutschke 1971, p. 6). According to Dutschke, both reformist and strictly national political responses to such a situation are ineffectual; he instead pointed to two worldwide alternatives: 'anti-authoritarianism, world-wide revolution and authoritarian, imperialistic counter-revolution' (1971, p. 9). Dutschke reserves terrorism against individuals to states controlled by ruthless dictatorships, since, in advanced capitalist societies, individual functionaries are infinitely replaceable 'character-masks for capital' (1971, p. 14). He insists, however, on a global revolutionary perspective for student politics in which mass actions need to be supplemented by subversive 'revolutionary terror [...] against inhuman machines', such as the Springer enterprise in West Berlin: 'We have consequently begun a broad anti-manipulation campaign with the final aim of directly attacking Springer – not the person but the institution – in order to destroy this machinery' (1971,

p. 14). Both the analysis of the West German and other capitalist states as authoritarian and neofascist, as well as the emphasis on a direct link between the student movement and global anti-imperialist struggles directly informed the ideas of the RAF, which was formed a few years later. This is evident in the initial targets of the RAF, which included US military installations, representatives of the German state and judiciary, and the Springer press. From the beginning, the RAF aimed its actions not only against the heart of the state, but against US imperialism; these actions were also much more costly in terms of human lives on both sides than those of the BR.¹⁸

Arguably, the paradigmatic case of the relations between political violence and radical media would be that of Ulrike Meinhof's transformation from left-wing columnist for the journal *Konkret*, to key participant and ideologue in the Red Army Faction. While this is shown to some extent in the film *The Baader Meinhof Complex* (2008) – via Meinhof's celebrated leap 'through the window' from respected left-wing journalist to outlaw urban guerrilla during the action to release Andreas Baader from prison –, the circumstances preceding and surrounding this leap are only given in a very sketchy form. A more in-depth view can be given by reading Meinhof's texts for *Konkret*, which clearly show the emerging conditions for this leap into direct action; which was more than just the desperate and frustrated act of a psychologically disturbed and sexually unfulfilled liberal journalist as both the press at the time and the film portray her.¹⁹ Meinhof's columns, as presented in the collection *Some People Talk about the Weather ... We Don't* (2008), are concerned with the legacy of Nazi Germany, the relations of the German state with the US and Israel, and the student movement of which she was a participant. Her columns reveal a writer intimately connected with the emergence of new political movements in the 1960s and their radicalization through the specific dynamics of the clashes between these movements and the West German state that would ultimately lead some of its participants, including Meinhof, into political violence. Reading Meinhof's texts also provides a valuable way to circumvent the various mythologies surrounding the RAF and its leaders that the film does little to dispel.²⁰ Such a cult of personality, both reverential and pathologizing, has been extensively applied not only to Meinhof but also to other key RAF members, such as Baader and Gudrun Enslin; however, these cults of personality shed little light on the actual dynamics, politics, and ecology of the group.

A key column in this regard is the 1968 column 'From Protest to Resistance' (Meinhof 2008, pp. 239-243). Following on from an earlier column



Fig. 2: Ulrike Meinhof at the offices of *Konkret*.

entitled 'Counter-Violence' (Meinhof 2008, pp. 234-238), this column states in very clear terms the justifications for the shift in tactics of the student movement from merely protesting about injustices such as the Vietnam War to taking direct action. Referring directly to the protests against the right-wing Springer press in the wake of the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke, this column coolly analyses the shift from protest to resistance in this action enumerating the acts of slashing tyres, burning cars, and destroying editorial offices. At the same time, Meinhof equally dispassionately acknowledges in this column that all of this damage will be easily repaired and that the distribution of *Bild* was only subject to delays rather than stopped altogether. As Meinhof points out, the response to the June 2 killing of Ohnesorg was more of a peaceful protest, which included the screening of a film about making Molotov cocktails (directed by future RAF member Holger Meins); after the Springer events, real fires were started and stones rather than eggs were thrown.

For Meinhof, this passage to direct action is not mindless, impotent, or, significantly, terrorist violence but a necessary form of counterviolence. For her, denunciations of this violence by those in power is hypocritical since this power is directly complicit with multiple forms of political

violence, ranging from the war in Vietnam to postcolonial oppression to hate campaigns directed against the student movement of which the attack on Dutschke was a direct consequence. For Meinhof then, the practice of counter-violence is a sign that there are 'people who have decided not only to name what is intolerable but to oppose it' (2008, p. 241). This shift to resistance is not without its risks and it is worth pausing to consider Meinhof's acknowledgement of these risks in this column: 'Counter-violence risks turning into violence, when police brutality sets the measure for action, when helpless rage takes over from sovereign reason, when the paramilitary interventions of the police provoke paramilitary reactions' (2008, p. 242). This note of caution, which was decisively abandoned after a short period of time when Meinhof became a core member of the RAF, is undercut in the column by the terse statement, near the end of the column, directly preceding the repetition of the two opening sentences: 'the fun is over' (2008, p. 242). What is of interest here is not merely this movement towards the justification of counter-violence, but the tightly structured rhetoric of the text that is not merely a description or representation of violence, but a still hesitant movement towards it.

Several of Meinhof's other columns around this time are equally worthy of analysis, particularly those that evaluate the actions of Enslinn and Baader's department store arson 'Setting Fire to Department Stores' (2008, pp. 244-248); the proto-act of the RAF; and the Kommune 1 'Pudding Incident', in which the bags of pudding they planned to hurl at US Vice President Hubert Humphrey were mistaken, first by the police and then by the press, for explosives and therefore this was considered an assassination plan ('Napalm and Pudding', 2008, pp. 229-233). Once the ludic rather than violent nature of the action was revealed, it was the police and the press who emerged with egg on their faces while the Kommune 1 members were able to obtain some unexpected press coverage. Meinhof was both appreciative and critical of these acts, as she was of so many false starts in the movement from protest to resistance. While she criticizes the Kommunards for their lack of exploitation of their unexpected media attention (Meinhof, 2008, p. 229), the department store arson is rejected politically as actually strengthening rather than weakening processes of capitalist consumption, constituting an equivalent of advertising or built-in obsolescence (Meinhof, 2008, pp. 244-245). However, while she condemns the efficacy of the act of arson which is, 'not to be highly recommended' (Meinhof, 2008, p. 248), Meinhof fully embraces its illegality, the stepping beyond the confines of the law that she would later emulate with her leap into the life of the urban guerilla.

It was perhaps her last column for *Konkret* entitled Columnism (2008, pp. 249-253), however, which was not about political violence, but about writing, that most fully accounts for this leap. Essentially a piece of self-critique that was also aimed at *Konkret* and the hypocrisies of the left-wing press more generally, Meinhof intimately describes the limitations of her own role as a radical columnist as a release valve or alibi for the lack of real political discourse. According to Meinhof, the radical, original views of the columnist are a type of advertising for the commercial publication in which they are located, and one that ultimately reinforces rather than challenges the system opposed by the writer. The column also instantiates a cult of personality in which the views arrived at by many are expressed by a solitary individual and therefore cut off from the movement from which they emerged. Meinhof therefore rejects less the complicity of the publication with market values than the internalization of these values and the pretence of being a site of free journalism, using the radical ideas of columnists as proof. The column as an exception to the authoritarian control of the editor in fact wraps up these anti-authoritarian views in an authoritarian form. For Meinhof, this is not freedom but opportunism:

What if this paper were to really open up to discussions, to really listen to how people across the land are criticising its articles? It is opportunistic to claim to be struggling against the conditions that one is actually reproducing [...] it is opportunistic to limit the anti-authoritarian position to the authoritarian form of the column (2008, p. 253).

While the possible outcome of this critique could conceivably be the formation of more political forms of open communication as was developed, for example, in the 1970s free-radio movements, which attempted just such open discussions, in Meinhof's case it led to the formation of an urban guerrilla group. This cannot, however, be seen as simply an abandonment of discourse for violent action, but was also, in part, the attempt to find a new way of writing, no longer as an individual star, but within and for a militant collectivity. Therefore, despite the break in context and style between Meinhof's career as a columnist and her role as an ideologue for the RAF, there is actually a continuation of the desire to find a mode of communication outside the market and outside the law.

Holger Meins seems to have been undertaken a similar process, but in relation to filmmaking rather than writing. A student at the Berlin film academy, Meins involved himself in several activist activities alongside other radical film students such as Harun Farocki; these activities included

intervening in the Knokke experimental film festival to make a collective statement of filmmakers against the war in Vietnam. He also became involved with Kommune 1 and made the film about making Molotov cocktails that Meinhof referred to in her column, as well as some fascinating short films that are not reducible to a narrow Marxist-Leninism, but rather focus on the excluded of contemporary German society, from the elderly and poor (*Oskar Langenfeld, 12 mal*, 1966), to exploited workers and tenants (*3000 Häuser*, Bitomsky, 1966). He also made films that prefigured the development of more violent and direct tactics on the part of the student movement and was described by one of his colleagues, Thomas Geifer, as 'using the camera like a weapon' (*Starbuck Holger Meins*, Conradt, 2002). While Meins comes across as having a softer, more artistic sensibility than other first-generation members of the RAF group, he nevertheless did not hesitate to become involved in dangerous and violent operations, including robbing banks and setting bombs. During the first RAF prison hunger strike, Meins was subject to particularly cruel treatment and became their first 'martyr', entering a space of fiction rather than creating cinema, in contrast to his contemporaries such as Farocki and Fassbinder. Meins became RAF's 'Starbuck', militantly expressing himself through an involvement in political violence, a political expression that might have been pursued in cinema or his other forms of artistic expression such as painting, writing, and photography that are also presented in *Starbuck Holger Meins*. Farocki's memories of Meins in the short essay 'Staking One's Life: Images of Holger Meins' (Elsaesser ed., 2004, pp. 83-91) consist largely of a breakdown of his short film *Oskar Langenfeld* and a series of images of Meins as a filmmaker, a film student, and even as the older man he never became. According to Farocki, Meins 'mistrusted the political rhetoric we employed at the time' (2004, p. 85) and he speculates on whether Meins' deep love of cinema was disappointed in terms that clearly implicate himself within the same bifurcation between ecologies of cinema and political violence: 'if he could not cope with the claims made by such a love, how could I?' (2004, p. 91). As with Meinhof, it seems that there was a moment of bifurcation, a leap in which political violence rather than radical art was chosen as a means of expression, while his contemporaries stayed within the media ecology of radical or not-so-radical cinema.²¹

While the first text attributed to the RAF was written by Horst Mahler in prison,²² it was thoroughly rejected by the other RAF members as being 'as inflated as a game of cowboys and Indians' (RAF cited in Aust 2008, p. 107). The next RAF text to appear, the leaflet entitled *Red Army Faction: The Urban Guerilla Concept* (RAF, 2005), while anonymous, was undoubtedly

mainly the work of Meinhof, despite the considerable difference in style, as compared to her columns.²³ In this text, there is a strident explanation and justification of the actions of the RAF, famously beginning with quotations from Mao about drawing a clear dividing line between oneself and the enemy (RAF 2005, p. 9). The pamphlet goes on to attack many of these enemies from petit-bourgeois cops to leftist fellow travellers who sympathize with the RAF, but are unable to countenance its acts of violence. Rather than a misguided gang, the leaflet describes RAF members as defining their political identities through a praxis of revolutionary discipline. The leaflet also presents the RAF not as the substitute for other forms of political action, but as its necessary supplement: '*we [...] maintain that a pre-requisite for progress and an eventual victory of revolutionary forces is the armed struggle*' (2005, p. 14; emphasis in original).

Some of the sections of the pamphlet are not so far from the positions Meinhof espoused as a columnist, for example, in her affirmation of the student movement because of its resistance, however, throughout there is an insistence on the necessity of armed struggle as an essential complement to other practices of political resistance in order to demonstrate that the enemies of the movement are only 'paper tigers'. In these and many other respects, this text is not far removed from other expressions

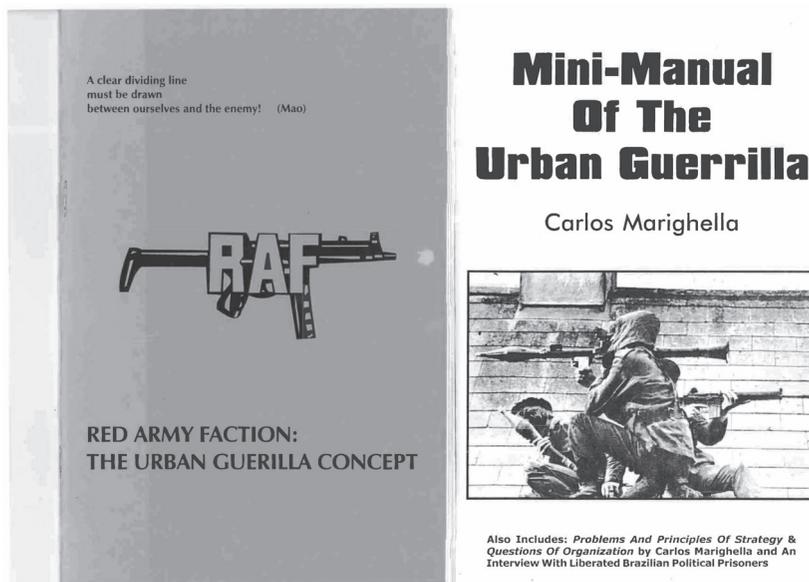


Fig. 3: *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla* and *The Urban Guerrilla Concept*.

of post-1968 European Maoists; other militants and organizations such as Régis Debray and *Il Manifesto* are also freely quoted. The inspiration behind the concept itself, however, is Latin American and, from a pragmatic point of view, essentially endorses the account of the urban guerilla organization developed by Carlos Marighella in his aforementioned *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerilla*, which provided the essential description of the modus operandi of the first-generation RAF. The RAF's *Urban Guerilla Concept* is, however, much more theoretical than Marighella's pragmatic text and is most troubling due to its logic and rationality; once one accepts its premises that immediate guerrilla warfare against the German state is both possible and necessary, the conclusions it reaches on urban guerrilla strategy are entirely convincing. To paraphrase the title of a later RAF publication, they were 'terribly consistent'.²⁴ In other words, it is the kind of fanaticism of excessive reason that Toscano theorizes in *Fanaticism* that leads to necessarily violent conclusions. Of course the initial premises on which this manifesto is based are the weak point in its argument. First, the manifesto assumes that conditions of oppression and resistance in West Germany are essentially equivalent to those in Latin America; in other words, the manifesto assumes that West German democracy is merely a dissemblance of a brutal dictatorship as proved by the violent police responses to the student movement, the introduction of emergency laws enabling the police to use military weapons, and so on. This puts the question of armed resistance into a context in which it is equivalent to resisting a military dictatorship that the RAF openly declares as a continuation of Nazi Germany.

The second doubtful assumption is the existence of a revolutionary movement with which the urban guerrilla cell can be working in tandem, as was the case in Cuba or China. In fact, the leftist movement in Germany was not only a small minority, but one that, unlike in Italy, was both cut off from the working class and in decline; this movement certainly was not prepared to engage even indirectly in an urban guerrilla struggle as the RAF would soon discover to their cost. Nevertheless, the aim of this pamphlet was explicitly to secure this type of support as the culminating slogans of 'Support the Armed Struggle! Victory in the People's War' (RAF 2005, p. 36) clearly indicate. A further and crucial problem was clearly the separation between the guerrilla cell, necessarily illegal and underground, and other radical forces; this is even acknowledged in the text in the stated impossibility of working with grass-roots organizations: 'you cannot combine legal political activism with illegal political practice' (RAF 2005, p. 28). While this might seem to indicate the futility of the whole enterprise, it is clear

in this pamphlet that, while not unduly optimistic about the revolutionary potential of West Germany, the RAF believed that elements of the left would be persuaded to step outside the bourgeois confines of legality and embrace, not only the form of armed organization, but also the supposedly freer type of communication it made possible:

No areas of public life are left which don't have, in some way or another, the main goal of serving the interests of capital. [...] These activities play themselves out in the context of mostly private, coincidental, personal and bourgeois forms of communication. [...] In the public domain a powerful elite has a dominant role [...] the media's message in a nut-shell is [...] *Sell*. Anything that can't sell is considered pukeworthy: news and information become commodities for consumption and the most popular publications become commercially saturated. [...] An urban guerilla can expect absolutely nothing but bitter hostility from these institutions. (RAF 2005, pp. 28-29)

The echoing of the mass-media critique of the Frankfurt School, albeit in more strident terms, can be clearly be heard here as can the extension of Meinhof's own self-critique as a columnist for the radical press. What the RAF were proposing was therefore as much an ecology and theory of communication and subjectivation as new forms of armed resistance, or, rather, these two aspects were intimately linked. It is at this point that one might pose the question of how the RAF was constituted in ecological terms, or how its practice drew upon specific environmental conditions and constituted specific modes of expression. As the above analysis demonstrates, textual expressions were of even more importance to the RAF than to the BR, and like the latter, their actions were frequently accompanied by the production of texts, ranging from communiques to elaborate theoretical arguments. A key difference, however, was that the constituency of the RAF was, by no means, the industrial working class but rather, in addition to radical elements of the student movement, a range of marginalized youth subjects, particularly those from institutes for delinquents and radical experiments in anti-psychiatry. As far as the former goes, Meinhof had already written a television film *Bambule* (1970), about teenage delinquent girls in revolt that was due to be screened on West German television and was only cancelled due to her formation of the RAF.²⁵ Similarly, the community service done by Baader and Enslinn was also with delinquents, several of whom became, as with some of Meinhof's subjects, future members of the organization (see Aust 2008, pp. 46-50).



Fig. 4: Baader Meinhof wanted poster.

At the same time, a radical experiment in anti-psychiatry, the Socialist Patients' Collective (SPK), led by Dr Wolfgang Huber in Heidelberg, had come into conflict with both university authorities and the state ministry of culture, leading to a radicalization to the point of armed struggle. Echoing a popular leftist song of the time by Ton, Steine, Sterben, 'Macht kaputt was euch Kaputt Macht' (1971) ('Destroy what is Destroying You'), Huber encouraged participants of this experiment, which included psychiatric patients, nurses, and interested others, to take up arms for therapeutic purposes: 'The system has made us sick, let us give the death blow to the sick system' (cited in Aust, 2008, p. 110). Study groups of the SPK at that time included, in addition to studying the political constitution of mental illness, the 'Radio Technology Study Group' and the 'Explosives Study Group'. Therefore, the SPK increasingly approached the aims and tactics of the RAF,

which would recruit several key members from the SPK milieu, constituting much of the RAF 'second generation'. One of these new recruits, Margit Schiller, has written of her experiences in the SPK and contacts with the RAF, stating of the radicalized SPK that, 'Everybody was of the opinion that organizing against the state and against capital was necessary and legitimate, as was the use of violence' (Schiller 2009, p. 33). According to Franz-Werner Kersting, in a chapter tracing the relations between German anti-psychiatry and radical movements, in the SPK: 'Illness was explained as a human reaction to the sickening social system of capitalism; and the patients themselves as self-aware revolutionary subjects who should now smash the system' (Kersting 2007, pp. 366-367) by turning mental illness into a weapon. While these positions may seem extreme, as Kersting argues, they should be understood as being in fundamental continuity with the anti-psychiatry of Laing, Cooper, and others, who saw mental illness as a product of both a repressive society in general and the specific repressions and exclusions enacted by psychiatric institutions, a reversal of perspective that the SPK merely took to its ultimate conclusions.²⁶ Needless to say, this experience would have been crushed, leaving few traces, were it not for the contingent encounter, just at the moment when its repression was taking place, between remaining members of the SPK and the newly formed RAF.²⁷ In short, in different ways, both institutions for youth delinquents and the politicized subjectivation practices of the SPK were ideal resources for RAF recruitment, compensating initially for the lack of connection with a substantial revolutionary movement or the industrial working class. However, these were also very limited resources both because of their dependence on chance encounters and affinities, as well as the instabilities and vulnerabilities of several of the members recruited, who joined less out of political commitment than because they had very little to lose. As such, the RAF was addressed to very different, much more marginalized subjectivities than the BR, and also oriented its actions to different, anti-imperialist rather than industrial targets, setting off bombs at US army installations, for example, rather than targeting factory managers.

When it comes to the organization of the RAF, there is no sign of any even fictional brigade structure as in the BR. The RAF, a much smaller group, instead formed itself into autonomous cells, within which intense processes of subjectivation took place, with solidarity increasing through the series of actions undertaken, clashes with the police and especially in response to the loss of life of RAF members. One of the few statements on the structure of the RAF was by Brigitte Monhaupt in the Stammheim

trial, who described it as being made up of 'eight groups organized in six cities', which 'were autonomous in their decisions regarding how to carry out operations' (Monhaupt cited in Moncourt and Smith ed. 2009, p. 173). There were logistical coordination and group discussions, but nothing like the strategic direction of the BR, making it unsurprising that these two groups were never able to work together despite the desire to do so on both sides. One further comment on structure, written by Meinhof shortly before her death, in suspicious circumstances, emphasized the collectivist structure of the RAF and the form of leadership that operated within this structure: according to Meinhof, 'the collective is a group that thinks, feels and acts as a group' (Meinhof in Moncourt and Smith ed. 2009, p. 397). For Meinhof, leadership developed within this collective context through practice, and 'leadership falls to the individual who has the broadest vision, the greatest sensitivity, and the greatest skill for coordinating the collective process' (Meinhof in Moncourt and Smith ed. 2009, p. 398). However much this corresponded to the actual power relations within the group, it is certainly a rejection of an *explicit* authoritarian structure and an ideal of collective becoming initiated by the decision to join the armed struggle. Whether this approach to leadership was, in practice, *implicitly* authoritarian is a question that is much more complex and difficult to determine.

From the beginning, the RAF developed a kind of self-referentiality, especially in the naming of 'commandos', the subgroups that performed specific actions, after fallen comrades; hence the 'Petra Schelm' and 'Holger Meins' commandos. This self-referentiality only increased as more RAF members were arrested this led to the release of the RAF leaders becoming the principle if not the only demand of their actions, as their levels of violence increased. Another important dimension of the RAF was its international connections and anti-imperialist outlook, with a key event being the training of its first-generation militants in a Palestine training camp, a trip facilitated by the GDR. Later cooperation with Palestinian militants was instrumental in the most dramatic action conducted by the RAF: the hijacking of a passenger plane that was ultimately raided in Mogadishu. Rather than drawing on the myth of WWII resistance units, the RAF was clearly aligned with the new left, and articulated the politicization of its members with both personal and political liberation, as well as with global anti-imperialist struggles. Ultimately, the RAF would become its own myth, and in doing so would also be the inspiration for subsequent urban guerrilla groups in Germany such as the June 2nd Movement and the later Revolutionary Cells.

The aspect of guerrilla subjectivation in the RAF has been taken up by Simon O'Sullivan in *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari* (2006), otherwise dealing with Deleuze and Guattari and art, as an exemplary case study of the militant production of subjectivity (O'Sullivan 2006, pp. 82-87). For O'Sullivan, the guerrilla cell is both centripetal and centrifugal; that is, it is defined both as a force against an outside, the regime of capitalism-imperialism, but also as a force operating within the cell as a mutant production of subjectivity. O'Sullivan cites Meinhof's reference to the guerilla as a 'breeding cell' and as a constant process of 'learning and action' as evidence for seeing the RAF in part as a becoming political of the individual. This was clearly evident in the transition of Meinhof from a 'bourgeois' left journalist to the ideologue of the RAF, producing texts that correspond to the Deleuze and Guattarian concept of a collective assemblage of enunciation based on group processes of subjectivation, rather than the expression of a separated and privileged individual.

In fact, O'Sullivan goes on to assimilate the actions and textual discursive productions of the RAF to the concept of a minor literature; for him, the statements of the RAF can be seen as a sort of stammering interfering with the normal workings of dominant languages. Indeed, O'Sullivan is not the first to identify a certain poetics at work in the textual expressions of the RAF, for example, it has been noted that the lower-case communiques of the RAF, composed of programmatic decisionist rhetoric, reprise certain tendencies of the modern poetry formerly studied by Gudrun Ensslin. This engagement with literature is also confirmed by the 'info system' adopted by the RAF once they were in prison, by means of which a type of coded communication facilitated by sympathetic lawyers, was based on each key member, with the exception of Meinhof, being assigned a character out of *Moby Dick* (Meinhof was, in contrast, Saint Theresa). This is emphasized in *Starbuck Holger Meins*, whose title refers directly to Meins's name within this info system. This info system was a veritable media ecology in its own right, not only overcoming the attempts of the state to keep the RAF members separated from one another, but providing a forum for a production of minor knowledge ranging from a collective critique of their conditions of imprisonment to elaborating tactics such as hunger strikes against them. In many respects, the tactics the group found to continue communication, even when they were often kept in isolation if not sensory deprivation, was more radical than the actions they had engaged in prior to their arrests. In particular, the use the RAF made of hunger strikes as a means to resist their conditions of imprisonment, which, in the case of Meins was continued to the point of death, coupled with their resistant

actions at their lengthy trial at Stammheim, which aimed consistently at the politicization and deindividualization of their 'crimes', can be seen as amounting to the constitution of a form of minor or resistant knowledge. This is especially evident in the previously cited text by Meinhof on the 'dead wing', which vividly describes the effects of the kind of isolation treatment to which members of the RAF were subjected:

The feeling, one's head explodes (the feeling, the top of the skull will simply split, burst open) [...] the feeling, one's spinal column presses into one's brain [...] the feeling, one's associations are hacked away – the feeling, one pisses the soul out of one's body, like when one cannot hold water. (Meinhof in Moncourt and Smith 2009, p. 271)

It is prison texts such as this, much more than the RAF's actions themselves, that have inspired the ongoing reverence of Meinhof as a figure of radical resistance.²⁸

Furthermore, both the language and actions of the group have been compared to the culture of the happening, graffiti art, fluxus, and living theatre; it was, for O'Sullivan, not only a political, but an aesthetic break with previous forms of political organization (2006, p. 83). In this regard, Thomas Elsaesser has noted a comparison by Michael Dreyer of the RAF's street violence not only with street theatre but also with rock music, 'as a percussion cutting into the monotone of the everyday', which, like rock music, 'opened up a new subjective space' (Elsaesser, 1999, p. 289). In terms of language, this meant adopting a direct, even abusive, mode of expression that paralleled the engagement with violent actions. This mode of expression was not just the misogyny of some of its male leading members such as Baader, but a deliberate and collective attempt to counter what they saw as bourgeois, polite, and deceptive modes of communication, even at the risk of psychological cruelty. Even the acts of violence of the RAF can be seen as the twisting of the language of the state in that its aim, at least in the beginning, was to highlight the violence of the state itself, by attacking military installations and politicians whose power stemmed from their involvement in the Nazi era, to make the fascistic violence of the state appear from behind its cloak of democratic invisibility. More than this, the deployment of violence was, in itself, an expressive affirmation, as both the means and the consequence of breaking with conventional norms of subjectivity.

This leads to the second aspect of minor literature, namely a becoming political, which, as already pointed out, can clearly be seen in the

transformation of Meinhof herself from a bourgeois individual to the assumption of a collective identity as an element of the guerrilla group. This rejection of individualization continued in jail through the information network that was set up precisely as a form of resistance to the forced individualization that the state was attempting to impose on the prisoners as responsible legal individual subjects. O'Sullivan also points to the futural orientation of the group; the group not only reacted critically against society as it was in the present, but aimed to embody a future society to come. It is this last point that seems most problematic to maintain and the problem of leadership is a crucial stumbling block; far from an egalitarian utopia, the RAF seemed to be dominated by strong personalities, and especially by Andreas Baader as a leader as well as the dominant Enslinn/Baader couple. In accordance with the previously cited statement by Meinhof, however, Baader could be seen as embodying for the rest of the group a model or forerunner of a people to come, the leader as the product of group practice. Nevertheless, there is a very thin line between this affirmative leadership and micro-fascism, a line that, in the case of the RAF, remains a grey area.

What is most interesting in O'Sullivan's analysis is that, unlike most accounts of the RAF, it is aesthetic rather than moral.²⁹ Indeed, O'Sullivan is not primarily interested in the RAF itself so much as what aspects of its practice might be productive in relation to both contemporary aesthetic practices and modes of life. One might even argue that this reading is only possible from a certain distance, when the violent effects of the RAF's actions have become a kind of modern mythology and its protagonists have become pop icons as have other militants such as Che Guevara or the Black Panthers. For these practices and figures, it is now safe to discuss in a type of affirmative, even nostalgic fashion – as a fond memory of the days when the left was dangerous and political violence was politically rather than theologically informed. Even so, it would certainly be arguable that the members of the RAF are not the best model for an affirmative, non-bourgeois production of subjectivity, and perhaps themselves fell prey to pop-cultural delusions such as a Bonny and Clyde or even Godardian version of the revolution; the stridency of their affirmations of violence resembling the students in Godard's *La Chinoise* (1967), who, after a summer of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist study, assassinate a mistaken target. One aesthetic movement not mentioned by O'Sullivan in relation to the RAF is Pop Art, and the transfiguration of Baader, Enslinn, and especially Meinhof into pop icons also expresses the complicity of the movement from which they emerged with pop consumerism. They were the 'children of Marx

and Coca Cola' as the Godardian phrase taken up in a collection of essays on radical European 60s and 70s counter cultures has insisted upon.³⁰ Put simply, the student movement, the antiwar movement, the anti-imperialist movement, and the RAF itself took place to a soundtrack of American rock music and popular culture that, as stated in Wenders' *Kings of the Road* (*Im lauf der zeit*, 1976), had colonized the subconscious of the European countercultures even in their most radical expressions. This point is also emphasized by Elsaesser (1999, p. 288-289). This is not to diminish their actions, but to locate them within the highly ambiguous environment in which they took place.³¹

The RAF was, however, neither the only urban guerrilla cell, nor the only example of this linking of guerrilla organization with new modes of communication and subjectivation. For example, Michael 'Bommi' Baumann, a key member of the June 2nd movement – named after the date on which Benno Ohnesborg was killed –, wrote an extraordinary account of his political radicalization and turns towards and away from political violence called *How it All Began* (1977).³² This book, written while Baumann was still leading an underground existence, appeared at the height of counterterrorist state paranoia, and was banned under counterterrorism laws. This resulted in a raid of the offices of its publisher Trikont Verlag by 30 police, armed with sub-machine guns, who confiscated, in addition to all copies of the book in stock, 1200 other publications, as well as typewriters and other equipment, virtually putting the small left-wing publisher out of business (Baumann 1979, pp. 7-8). However, due to the support and defence of the book by prominent figures, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and Heinrich Böll, a second edition appeared in a much larger print run, partly due to the publicity generated by the attempts of the state to censor it.

The reason the book attracted such strong support is due, in part, to the extraordinary frankness with which it describes Baumann's experiences as an urban guerilla, which are quite different to those of the RAF. Growing up in the GDR and coming from a proletarian background, Baumann was no stranger to violence as a part of everyday life and while well-read was not from the student and intellectual milieu of Meinhof. Baumann was at first a participant in the counterculture and took part in the Kommune 1 experiment in communal living, during which time he became increasingly politicized. His expression of this politicization, however, sometimes took bizarre forms, such as the slashing of the tyres of more than 1000 cars in a neighbourhood largely inhabited by the police. Through such acts as these, he spent time in jail and became increasingly introduced to

illegality so that, by the time of the Springer riots, he was well-prepared to go further than the activists who only threw Molotov cocktails in the heat of the moment but were not prepared to maintain an armed form of activism.

In the early 1970s, the June 2nd movement was formed explicitly following the lead of the RAF by forming an underground armed cell, but diverging greatly from the latter's tactics; the June 2nd movement largely operated in their own area of West Berlin and Baumann was quite critical of the RAF's games of cat and mouse, with police and safe houses all over West Germany. Instead, the June the 2nd movement retained close links with political movements in Berlin and also combined acts of violence with humour, such as wearing crazy clothes and masks during bank raids, handing out sweets to bank clients, and giving away considerable amounts of their takings. During a brief encounter with the RAF, they were harshly criticized by the latter as chaotic and hedonistic, and for not taking revolutionary action seriously enough; however, this was precisely the June 2nd movement's way to escape bourgeois forms of subjectivity, the middle-class work ethic still apparent in the *modus operandi* of the RAF.

The language of Baumann's book differs considerably from that of the RAF; in place of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, there is an anarchic combination of German and American slang and countercultural language that reveals Baumann's continued attachment to the ideals and ways of life of the Kommune; terrorism is described as a 'trip', albeit a heavy trip; he uses particular expressions such as 'night and fog actions'; or refers to the various groups with which he was involved as 'the base'; and, in the end, says he has chosen love over terror. Especially noticeable in his account is the affirmation of pleasure and emotions, and the opposition to the cold revolutionary discipline of the RAF. According to Baumann, the big mistake of the RAF was to oppose the state apparatus with their own apparatus, their complex network of safe houses, codes, and disguises, since the state would naturally be superior in this domain, rather than making use of a different and anarchic mode of life, which Baumann associates with his own countercultural group, the Blues:

They [the RAF] opposed the apparatus of the Bulls [cops] with their own apparatus, which is always weaker. The opposition just has much longer experience in this area and they also have a bigger, better apparatus – that's precisely their thing, what they invented, the methods of gathering material, identification etc. [...] Not a single one of them is Blues; they can't deal with the way you act, doing exactly what no-one expects, all

of the time. For example, running around in all those bright clothes so that everyone thinks: one of those insane Hash Brothers. (Baumann 1979, p. 92)

Baumann even described driving across Berlin in a brightly painted van with Dynamite Transporter written on the side and being waved ahead by the police, when the van really was transporting explosives. For Baumann, the difference between his group and the RAF was that they mostly had proletarian origins and therefore a completely different, instinctive rather than intellectual, relationship with violence; in other words, the student origins of the RAF were still evident in the way it used violence:

What lies behind that attitude [of revolutionary discipline] is the rigidity of being a student: it's this total opposition to pleasure. Every ecstasy – without which a revolution can't happen – is lacking. In the Paris commune, they climbed on the barricades singing, and not with a sour face, or membership cards in their pockets. They didn't say, we must make a revolution here, they said, this is our hour now. [...] They [the RAF] couldn't see that it was exactly this – the mini-insanity, the gags, that brought comedy into the situation, that made the thing at least in part still worth living for. (Baumann 1979, p. 106)

The contrast between the two assemblages, despite their shared aims is clear; whereas the RAF aimed at becoming a disciplined apparatus, resembling, in some respects, an official state army, the groups with which Baumann was involved in Berlin corresponded much more to the nomadic war machine. Paradoxically, the dispersal of the RAF all over West Germany in a complex network of safe houses actually made it easier to locate them, whereas, by blending into the West Berlin counterculture, the June 2nd movement was more nomadic, even if this was a nomadism in place, in direct relation with the 'base' of the Berlin political counterculture. Both of these models were different again from that of classical guerrilla warfare and each had its own tactical weaknesses, whether being caught up in the new computer-aided machineries of the state for the tracking of aberrant movements, as in the case of the RAF, or being too easily localized within a particular milieu, as in the case of the June 2nd movement.

Despite these differences, however, both the revolutionary discipline of the RAF and the 'mini-insanity' of the June 2nd Movement can be seen as related techniques of militant subjectivation, of developing new relations

to oneself, the group, and the outside world; in other words, as expressive ecologies, even if this expression, for the most part, took the form of acts of political violence, rather than other modes of communication. Nevertheless, this subjectivation was also expressed via forms of media from pamphlets and statements to the tactical manipulation of the mass media. Ultimately, despite their differences, what was left of the two organizations would combine into one, while, as in Italy, other more autonomous organizations, such as the Revolutionary Cells also emerged. This chapter will now turn to a final example of the US urban guerrilla group, the Weather Underground, whose organization and tactics were different again and raise even more directly questions of the media ecologies of left political violence.

Weather Variations: Weatherman, the Weather Underground, and the Symbionese Liberation Army

At the same time and for similar reasons that the German SDS was becoming more radical, a similar process was taking place within the US Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), provoked even more directly by resistance to the Vietnam War, as well as encounters with black liberation movements, from the pacifist civil rights movement to the armed Black Panthers and the Soledad Brothers prison movement. In the beginning, however, SDS was simply a left liberal student response to the political vacuum left by the vehement anticommunist attacks of McCarthyism in the immediate postwar era that had left what remained of the US left in a weak and defensive position. Inspired by the nonviolent black civil rights movement, these mostly middle-class students sought to contribute to combating racism as well as to affirm such quintessentially liberal, American values as free speech and democracy. Rather than attacking the US Constitution, they saw themselves as upholding its values, not fully realizing the depth of the gulf between these liberal ideals, and their actual implementation, which was much more authoritarian, segregative, and often the complete opposite of what was actually proclaimed.

Such idealism can clearly be read in the famous Port Huron statement, written by Tom Hayden, but modified in collective discussions of the SDS in 1962 (Hayden 2008, pp. 35-64).³³ The fact that this statement was sharply criticized by the old left at the time of its production as a radical rejection of anticommunism, and reviled by most factions of the SDS only a few years later as being too reformist, only demonstrates its value as an indication of