

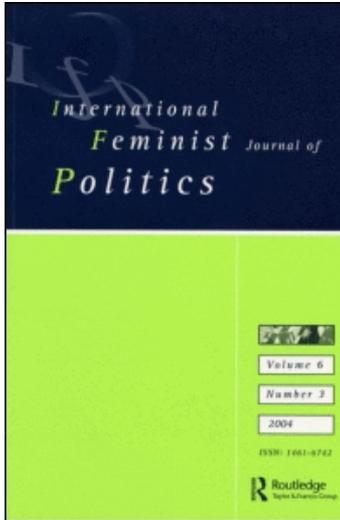
This article was downloaded by: [Temple University Libraries]

On: 15 March 2010

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 918014460]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## International Feminist Journal of Politics

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713722173>

### 'Death in the Shape of a Young Girl': Feminist Responses to Media Representations of Women Terrorists during the 'German Autumn' of 1977

Patricia Melzer <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Temple University, Philadelphia, USA

**To cite this Article** Melzer, Patricia(2009) "Death in the Shape of a Young Girl': Feminist Responses to Media Representations of Women Terrorists during the 'German Autumn' of 1977', International Feminist Journal of Politics, 11: 1, 35 – 62

**To link to this Article:** DOI: 10.1080/14616740802567782

**URL:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616740802567782>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# 'Death in the Shape of a Young Girl'

## FEMINIST RESPONSES TO MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN TERRORISTS DURING THE 'GERMAN AUTUMN' OF 1977

PATRICIA MELZER

Temple University, Philadelphia, USA

### Abstract

---

This article examines feminist responses to mainstream media coverage of female terrorists in West Germany during 1977. Women in left-wing terrorist groups like the Red Army Faction (RAF) and 'Movement 2. June' ('Bewegung 2. Juni') inspired a gendered discourse reflecting a cultural unease about women participating in political violence, in which the media propagated notions that posited female terrorists as 'unnatural' women. This analysis demonstrates how different 'Alltagstheorien' (everyday or common sense theories) on female terrorists we find in West German media publications in the 1970s and 1980s served as a springboard for West German feminist activists to examine arguments about violence as legitimate means in their own political communities. This essay begins by briefly outlining key feminist positions on political violence that have made invisible the complex debates taking place in the 1970s. The second part of the essay uses images of female terrorists circulated by the West German media, such as the newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* (*The Mirror*), to contextualize the 'Alltagstheorien' the magazine propagated in an article covering RAF actions in 1977. The third and main part of the essay then examines the responses this and other articles elicited from contemporaneous feminist movement publications.

---

### Keywords

*Der Spiegel*, gender, Germany, left-wing militancy, non-violence, RAF, Red Army Faction, violence, women's political participation

## INTRODUCTION

On 30 July 1977 the chief executive of one of West Germany's largest banks, Jürgen Ponto, was shot in his home in Oberursel during an attempted kidnapping by the left-wing militant group Red Army Faction (Rote Armee Fraktion or RAF). The incident was one of a series of events foreshadowing the dramatic climax of the German Autumn (Deutscher Herbst) later that year, during which the confrontation between the State and the RAF escalated.<sup>1</sup> The role of a young woman, Susanne Albrecht (who knew the Ponto family intimately) in gaining access to the house triggered media coverage that focused mainly on her 'deviant' behavior rather than on the brutal shooting. By highlighting the stereotypical feminine deceit that allowed the RAF to enter the house, mainstream media created a highly gendered representation of the terrorist action (Steinseifer 2006: 361–3). In the social drama that had been unfolding during the RAF's activities, the 'murderous girls' ('mörderischen Mädchen', as quoted in Steinseifer 2006: 362–3) of the RAF and other groups such as the 'Movement 2. June' ('Bewegung 2. Juni') created moments of destabilization of gender conventions: a deviance (violent female actors) within an already deviant framework (terrorism). This troubling of gender norms becomes visible in the excessive press coverage of women active in left-wing militant groups in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Simultaneously dismissed as 'terrorist girls' ('Terroristenmädchen') and demonized as 'wild furies' ('Wilde Furien', *Der Spiegel* 1981) in the West German press, these women inspired a gendered discourse that reflected a cultural unease about women participating in political violence. The media coverage in turn elicited responses from feminist movement publications that resisted what Klein (1998) refers to as 'Alltagstheorien', everyday or common sense theories on the 'nature' of women's relationship to criminal violence propagated by the mass media.<sup>2</sup> These theories position a female terrorist as 'non-woman' or 'non-feminine/female' (Hacker 1998: 17).<sup>3</sup> Based on her violent behavior, the terrorist 'non-woman' symbolizes a transgression of gender and sexuality which goes beyond simply enacting masculinity and instead represents a gender outside the 'normal' manifestations of man and woman (Hacker 1998: 9).

The general casting of politically violent women as inherently (gender) deviant in the mainstream or mass media is the starting point of this essay. The main focus, however, is feminist responses to these representations. I will show how the different 'Alltagstheorien' on female terrorists we find in West German media publications, and particular in *Der Spiegel*, in the 1970s and 1980s served as a springboard for West German feminist activists to examine arguments about violence and its legitimacy in their own political communities. Specifically, I consider two kinds of movement publications responding to media coverage. First are the larger regularly published journals distributed nationally through either newsstands and/or bookstores and so called Infoshops (Infoläden), such as *Courage* and *Die Schwarze Botin* (*The Black Messenger*). The commercially successful *Emma* is still published

today, and articulates the feminist position that reaches mainstream audiences more than any of the others.<sup>4</sup> The second group of movement publications consists of short-lived newsletters and journals put out by local women's initiatives, especially the Women's Centers (Frauenzentren) that were established throughout West Germany in the 1970s. These publications often took more radical positions than the nationally distributed ones.<sup>5</sup>

The debate that took place in movement publications illuminates how feminists have struggled to define women's relationship to political violence. The term 'feminist', as I apply it to publications, groups, debates and political positions alike, is meant to connote a commitment to gender equality and/or the right of women to self-determination. The shared belief in gender relations as an oppressive regime that is in need of correction does not necessarily extend to a shared analysis of its roots and/or its relation to other systems of oppression. Consequently, 'feminist' here functions as an umbrella term for a diverse and at times contradictory or even hostile range of political positions. To signal the fracturing within the feminist label in Western discourse, I add modifiers (such as anti-imperialist, anarchist, radical, cultural, socialist and mainstream) when discussing feminist publications; I also focus particularly on their analysis of gender and violence. Overall, my interest is in feminist political *practices*, not in defining 'the' feminist political subject.

The women who participated in armed struggle in West Germany in the 1970s serve as counterexamples to widespread notions of women's activism as non-violent. Specifically, they pose the question: 'can political violence be feminist?'.<sup>6</sup> Traditionally, feminists in the second half of the twentieth century have given two answers to this question. One set of theories take the position that women's activism typically is non-violent and that violence contradicts the principles of feminism, a position emerging in the cultural feminism of the 1970s and cemented during the disarmament movement in the 1980s (Di Leonardo 1985; Davis 2005). This approach has been further developed in feminist social movement history and theory in the 1990s (Waylen 1992; Zwerman 1994), in which women's relationship to political violence is primarily explored through their experiences of militarism and imperialism (Enloe 2000). A second set of theories – mainly developed in activist literature – examines how political violence in specific contexts (such as colonialisms) can serve feminist ends, pointing to factors other than gender that drive women's political decisions, and arguing that feminist work should not be viewed as separate from Left activism as a whole ('A Weatherwoman: Inside the Weather Machine' 1970; 'Honky Tonk Women' 1970; Michel 1988). In scholarly work, this approach finds most resonance in research on anti-colonial anti-imperialist movements in the Third World (Tétreault 1994; Millan 1998; Amrane-Minn 1999). In the pre-9/11 decades following the armed struggle in Western industrialized nations, however, definitions of women's political strategies as intrinsically non-violent became the feminist norm.<sup>7</sup>

Representations of this debate can quickly degenerate into efforts to claim certain strategies as 'feminist' while dismissing others as 'anti-feminist'.

Instead, I want to facilitate a historical understanding of women's political activities that is complex and that accounts for the dominant gender ideologies shaping women's choices with regard to political resistance. The question 'can political violence be feminist?' then is recast as 'how do women arrive at their feminist politics?' and 'how and why do feminist practices differ from each other?'. A focus on West German feminist responses in the 1970s to what are perceived as hostile, sexist media portrayals of RAF women makes visible how activists have approached these questions in a particular time and place. This essay begins, however, by briefly outlining key feminist positions on political violence developed in subsequent years that have made invisible the complex debates taking place in the 1970s. In the second part of the essay, I use images of female terrorists circulated by the West German media, such as the newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* (*The Mirror*), to contextualize the 'Alltagstheorien' the magazine propagated in an article covering the Ponto murder in 1977. The third and main part of the essay then examines the responses this and other articles elicited from contemporaneous feminist movement publications.

Before engaging with these questions, however, a note on terminology: the term 'political violence' used here indicates the politically motivated strategic employment of violence by a group against objects and structures (and in certain cases, humans) that, in the worldview of the group, represent either state or systemic power. The aim of political violence therefore is to destabilize the existing government through strategic attacks, as well as to direct public attention to issues of perceived injustice. More specifically, political violence in the 1970s and early 1980s was viewed by Left militants in industrialized nations as 'revolutionary violence' and 'armed struggle'; they saw themselves as 'guerrillas' and part of a worldwide fight against US imperialism spearheaded by anti-colonial movements in the Third World (Varon 2004: 2, 7). The State, in turn, classified these actions as 'terrorism'. The topic of political violence thus cannot escape 'ideologically charged discourse' and 'choices of terminology are controversial' (Varon 2004: 314, note 3). In my textual analysis of feminist responses to news coverage, I follow Varon who 'describe[s] members of the RAF and other German groups variously as guerrillas or terrorists, depending on context'. Using both terms, he strives 'to reproduce some of the ambiguities that define the group's existence and that haunt efforts to reach definitive judgments on political violence' (Varon 2004: 314, note 3). Accordingly, I will use the terms 'terrorism' and 'armed struggle' contextually.

## THE 'NATURALIZATION' OF WOMEN'S NON-VIOLENT ACTIVISM

While the political roles of women active in 1960s Left social movements were often reduced to those of muse and event-organizer – roles which provoked the emergence of the women's liberation movement<sup>8</sup> – revolutionary cells of the 1970s included a surprising number of women. Especially in West

Germany, the number of women engaged in armed struggle was unusually high compared to other political areas and to armed groups in other countries (Diewald-Kerkmann 2006: 664). At the height of its activities, more than 50 per cent of the RAF consisted of women, many of whom were convicted, given life sentences and are still incarcerated today (Diewald-Kerkmann 2006: 663–5).<sup>9</sup> Women's participation in the RAF and in revolutionary groups throughout Europe and the USA was extensively debated in the 1970s.<sup>10</sup> However, in later historical accounts and within a broader cultural memory of women's political activism, these controversial political actions increasingly are viewed as contradicting a feminist worldview, or are simply not part of the account (Schenk 1983; Rosen 2000; Schulz 2002).

Since the late 1970s, feminist scholars have interpreted women's resistance through non-violent activism and the militarization of women's lives. This interpretation was fueled by a shift in the mid-1970s in large segments of the feminist movement in both West Germany and the USA toward a cultural feminist understanding of women's political work, in conjunction with a growing peace movement. This in turn fostered the equation of feminist identity with pacifism (Echols 1989: 243–86; Davis 2005: 245). The 1980s peace movement gradually adopted 'feminist ideological frames' (Meyer and Whittier 1994: 277), producing a rhetoric that characterized peace as a 'naturally' female trait (Davis 2005: 251). Statements such as that by peace activists Helen Caldicott declaring "there are no Communist babies; there are no capitalist babies. A baby is a baby is a baby" . . . promoted an analysis of militarism rooted in a feminist critique of patriarchy' (Meyer and Whittier 1994: 287). Within a growing feminist debate on how women's 'feminine' qualities could be understood as a source of 'good' power that opposes 'masculine'-defined 'bad' power (Davis 2005: 251, 255), war and destruction were viewed as results of patriarchal rule.<sup>11</sup> By the early 1980s, as Zwerman (1994: 34) observes, 'a new ideological position was consolidated: strategies for political change that included violence do not serve the interest of women, mothers, or feminism'. The ready embrace of non-violence as women's distinct political disposition was consequently naturalized and women's political work became synonymous with pacifism.

Cultural feminism, also referred to as 'gynocentric feminism' (Hackett and Haslanger 2005), conceptualizes women as non-violent primarily due to their role as actual and/or potential mothers. In its earlier manifestations, cultural feminism situated feminist non-violence within an essentialist approach; that is, women as life-givers are inclined to be naturally/psychologically opposed to violence (Alpert 1974; Miller Gearheart 1982). Since the mid-1980s, feminist scholars have countered this biological essentialism with a gynocentric understanding of women's activism as rooted in social roles such as primary caretakers and socially conscious citizens (Elshtain 1987; Mitscherlich 1987; Ruddick 1989).<sup>12</sup>

The views of politically militant women in 1970s West Germany, however, did not correspond with such prevalent perceptions of women's political

participation. Many of these ‘unnatural daughters’, far from being patriarchy’s pawn, perceived themselves as feminists and saw their participation in the armed struggle as a logical extension of their liberation as women, or thought of revolutionary movements as superceding feminist aspirations of equality. This troubling position rarely finds representation in Western scholars’ accounts of women’s activism – let alone of activism that is defined as *feminist*. So what are we to do with such conflicting understandings of women as political agents? And what is the place of militant women in a cultural memory of feminist activism? I approach these questions by examining how political violence was understood in West German feminist debates, as found in 1970s movement publications, *before* women’s activism was naturalized as non-violent.

## RAF WOMEN, THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC IMAGINATION

Rooted in the Left’s general criticism of the ‘bourgeois’ press, the RAF’s relationship to public media was ambivalent: while dismissing mass media as propagating fascist ideology, the group simultaneously relied on the media for communication with the State and the public,<sup>13</sup> and to make the group part of the West German political landscape (Elter 2006: 1070–2).<sup>14</sup> In turn, a story on the terrorists always boosted press sales (Elter 2006: 1072; Steinseifer 2006: 370–1). From its inception, the RAF had been openly hostile toward the Springer Presse, one of West Germany’s largest publishing houses and producer of Germany’s most notorious tabloids. The RAF’s anti-Springer stance stood in the tradition of the 1960s student movement’s ‘Disown [Enteignet] Springer’ campaign that charged the media giant with feeding malicious right-leaning propaganda to the German public. During that period, Jürgen Habermas’ notion of ‘the public sphere’ as an instance of democratic control against the State was influential in student circles. Drawing on this and ‘manipulation theory’, the anti-Springer campaign assumed a true political interest within the public that needed to be freed from willful manipulation from external forces (Kraushaar 2006: 1083). Taking the campaign to a controversial extreme, the RAF bombed the main Springer building in Hamburg in 1972, injuring several workers.<sup>15</sup>

Without question, the media granted the RAF visibility by reporting certain events and circulating images. The foci and interpretation of these events varied radically, depending on the particular medium’s position on the political spectrum. How far the media’s role extended from reporting to *shaping* public opinion is much more difficult to determine. As Balz (2006: 321, emphases added) emphasizes, ‘*published* opinion is not necessarily congruent with *public* opinion’. While the media define issues as newsworthy, thereby strongly influencing public debate and emotions triggered by events, they also at times counter prevalent public opinion, creating spaces for the discourse on events to shift (Balz 2006: 321). In the case of the RAF, then, we should be cautious about

equating media analysis with public opinion, even as we accept the impact of media discourse on political decisions (Balz 2006: 321). In its perpetuation of 'Alltagstheorien' about the 'nature' of gender, the mass media play a crucial role in shaping public debate, which becomes visible in the responses the coverage of RAF women generated in movement publications as well as in scholarly work.<sup>16</sup> For this analysis, *Der Spiegel* – as undisputed 'opinion leader' ('Meinungsführer', Balz 2006: 320) in the liberal portion of the population – is particularly interesting. *Der Spiegel* reports often synthesize concerns voiced in the wider media, including those of the tabloids as well as of the conservative daily press. Images and ideas regarding RAF women that were circulated by *Der Spiegel* in the 1970s and early 1980s thus make visible some of the 'Alltagstheorien' held on the nature of women.

*Der Spiegel's* coverage indicates that the face of the RAF has always been partly female in the public imagination. *Der Spiegel* and the wider media frequently reprinted images of RAF founders Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ensslin, both 'good' daughters turned 'bad', no doubt because they wanted to tap into the cultural paradoxes these women represented. Meinhof was portrayed as an accomplished journalist turned crazed outlaw (*Der Spiegel* 1981: 90, 106) and Ensslin was portrayed as a mother turned terrorist and sexual seductress due to her appearance in a small, avant-garde porn movie before her time in the RAF (*Der Spiegel* 1981: 90, 98).

In 1976, four women – Juliane Plambek, Inge Viett, Gabriele Rollnik from the Movement 2. June and Monika Berberich from the RAF – broke out of prison in West Berlin. The incident made the cover of *Der Spiegel* (see Figure 1), which read 'Women's Breakout: The Terrorists Are Mobilizing' ('Ausbruch der Frauen: Die Terroristen machen mobil', *Der Spiegel* 1976a). In the accompanying article reporting on the escape of the 'Berlin lady-quartet' (*Der Spiegel* 1976b: 20), images of women with guns not related to the actual event emphasized the lethal potential of armed women (*Der Spiegel* 1976b: 21). By 1981, a 'wanted' poster distributed throughout the country suggests the extent to which women were associated with left-wing terrorism in West Germany (see Figure 2): the poster shows that ten of fifteen terrorists wanted by the police were women.

Women were integral to the planning and execution of terrorist acts, and they were highly visible in the media. Yet, while historical research into and cultural texts on these representations may contribute to the *iconography* of women and violence, little is said about the gendered nature of RAF activism and its relationship to feminist discourse. Instead, as we have seen, later feminist analyses of the 1970s are often too quick to dismiss women's participation in armed groups, and there persists a tendency in current historical research on these movements to leave gender unexamined.<sup>17</sup> Such erasures facilitate a one-dimensional image of women in armed struggle not as political agents, but as misguided, 'unnatural' women.

Nonetheless, there was an important debate on women's participation in armed struggle taking place within movement publications of the time, in

# DER SPIEGEL

C 7007 CX  
Nr. 29  
30. Jahrgang · DM 2,50  
12. Juli 1976



Figure 1 *Der Spiegel* front cover  
Source: *Der Spiegel*, No. 29, 1976, *Der Spiegel*

which many activists responded to what they viewed as sexist media coverage. A close reading of these original publications illuminates the gendered relationship between ideology and political strategy and how that relationship was debated between feminist activists. A dialogue emerged among feminists, mainstream media and radical political activists in which terrorist acts



Figure 2 'Wanted' poster

Source: *Der Spiegel*, No. 33, 1977, *Der Spiegel*

constituted a violent disruption of both the social contract and gender prescriptions. Socialist and anarchist feminists challenged universalist ideas about gender they saw as underpinning an emerging cultural feminism they believed to be problematic.

## WOMEN AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE: THE DEBATE IN FEMINIST MOVEMENT PUBLICATIONS

An initial survey reveals that movement publications frequently responded to the media's representations of women's role in armed struggle. Feminists debated women's relationship to political violence especially in the context of an emerging critique of violence against women. Meanwhile, debates in the New Left reduced the discussion to the strategic dichotomy between political violence against objects and violence directed at people. Nationally established feminist journals commented on mass media coverage, and the small local newsletters in turn responded to *both* mainstream media and the more widely circulated feminist press.

In 1977, *Der Spiegel* printed an article on female terrorists that sparked a discussion about women and political violence in West Germany, as well as feminist analyses of the armed struggle in movement publications. *Der Spiegel's* reporting is of particular value to my analysis since it delineates *other* media's framing of the debate by frequently quoting other sources (including newspapers in the Springer publishing house). Its report on women's participation in political violence presents a layered discussion of gender; the author uses the rhetorical strategy of first quoting extreme statements by officials or media, and then contextualizing them. So while the more simplified 'hysterical' beliefs about women and terrorism articulated in the article might not be shared by the author or *Der Spiegel*, the text consolidates the major concerns voiced in the media and makes them accessible in one lengthy discussion. When analyzing feminist debates triggered by this coverage, we see complex positions developing that are not reflected in many later feminist writings on armed struggle. Positions voiced within fringe movement publications often do not find their way into research on feminist movements; thus I am particularly interested in small, grassroots publications. The debates that my analysis makes visible challenge the prevailing view that women who engage in political violence are seduced into it and that they lack a feminist consciousness and/or any political position outside their relationship with men.

### July 1977: Der Spiegel and the Irrationality of Women in Armed Struggle

Following the Ponto killing, the 8 August 1977 edition of *Der Spiegel* placed Susanne Albrecht's picture on its cover (see Figure 3),<sup>18</sup> evoking the tension – printed in bold on the title page – that plagued the nation: 'Female Terrorists: Women and Violence' ('Terroristinnen: Frauen und Gewalt' *Der Spiegel* 1977a).

In its coverage of the murder, *Der Spiegel's* (1977b) provocative opening section to the story titled: 'Women Living Underground: "Somehow Irrational"' ('Frauen im Untergrund: "Etwas Irrationales"', drawing on a

# DER SPIEGEL

C 7007 CX  
Nr. 33  
31. Jahrgang · DM 2,50  
8. August 1977

## Die Terroristinnen

# Frauen und Gewalt

Figure 3 *Der Spiegel* front cover  
Source: *Der Spiegel*, No. 33, 1977, G. P. Reichelt

quote from Secret Service-Chief Günther Nollau) sets the tone of the article. While the author of *Der Spiegel* rhetorically distances her/himself from some of the more outrageously sexist responses to the murder found in the media and among officials, the strategic citation of these in staging the journalist's (often more moderate) position enables the magazine to highlight gendered responses while itself maintaining a more moderately gendered

language. Much of the replication of conservative gendered positions that occurs in the article derives from the author's choice of sources.

The writer consistently refers to women in the Left terror-scene using the diminutive term 'girls'. This emphasizes a general tendency to frame women as (political) minors, despite the fact that there was a clear majority of women wanted by the police in relation to terrorist activities (Diewald-Kerkmann 2006) and that these women often led the groups efficiently and ruthlessly. The article emphasizes the destabilizing nature of their leadership by describing it as 'macabre' (*Der Spiegel* 1977b: 22). The public, claims the journalist, is puzzled as to what prompts these 'girls' to 'act against their traditional role' as the fair sex (1977b: 22–3).

At the time of the Ponto killing, terrorist acts in West Germany were mainly focused on freeing political prisoners; it was a period characterized by the kidnapping and/or killing of individuals who represented the state system and who would be exchanged for prisoners.<sup>19</sup> The article's reprinting of pictures of RAF women wanted in connection with the Ponto killing makes their involvement tangible: the images of Albrecht, Sigrid Sternebeck, Silke Maier-Witt and Adelheid Schulz give faces to the elusive RAF (*Der Spiegel* 1977b: 23).<sup>20</sup> Referring to the RAF's stated challenge to the middle class, the *Der Spiegel* author subtly shifts from the RAF's general goal (to upset social relations by destabilizing the privileged position of the middle class) to a gendered image of armed *women*, playing on (and evoking) the double-threat RAF women posed. The journalist writes, '[these women] could not have made it much clearer to middle-class, comfortable West Germans who is pulling the trigger now' (1977b: 22), leaving the reader to wonder if it is the RAF posing the threat, or women in general. The deception that made the attack possible is seen to enhance the violence of the crime: Albrecht, the daughter of friends of the house, brings flowers when ringing the doorbell. Womanly innocence here is deceit, and hence deadly. A manifestation of 'the extreme limit of human perversion', as the daily newspaper *Welt* is quoted as saying, this makes 'every citizen' worry they might encounter 'violent death in the shape of a young girl' (*Der Spiegel* 1977b: 22). The shattering of the near-universal symbol of innocence in Albrecht's behavior evoked particular outrage, making visible the alarm felt – maybe understandably – by Germans at this explosion of gendered cultural expectations. The ultimate cultural paradox of a young girl as a figure of violent death explains the sense of 'irrationality' (un-reality) the incident held for Nollau (quoted in *Der Spiegel* 1977b: 23). The article further highlights the deviance implicit in the manipulations of gendered expectations with images such as the 'Baby-Bomb' (a woman disguising explosives as her pregnant belly) that rely on the cultural perception of pregnant women as mothers and thus peaceful (see Figure 4, *Der Spiegel* 1977b: 29).

The article does not provide any context for this image other than an assertion that it displays a reconstruction of a camouflage device for a law-enforcement demonstration – the author gives no indication if such a device was ever employed by the RAF.

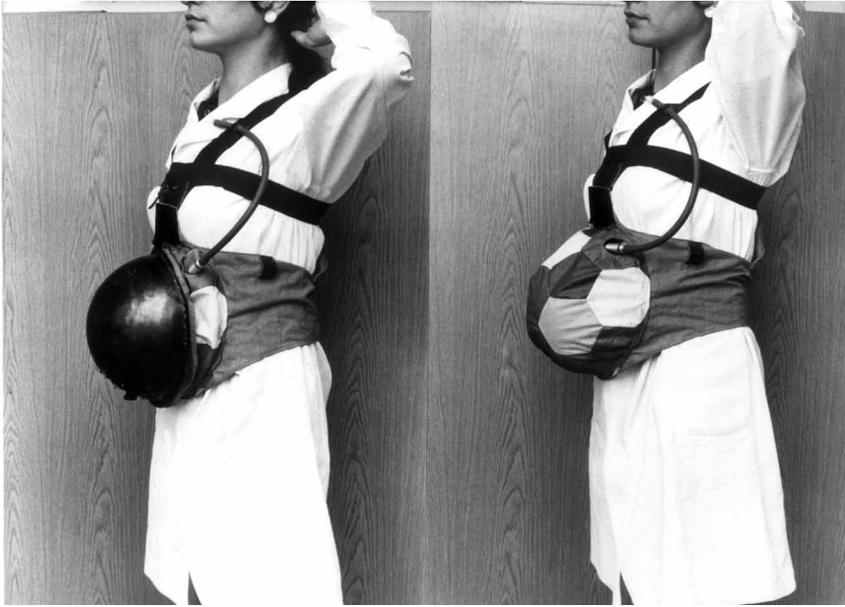


Figure 4 Images of the 'Baby-Bomb'  
Source: *Der Spiegel*, No. 33, 1977, dpa Picture-Alliance

After explaining the extent of the participation of women in the radical scene, many of whom are 'man enough' to lead (*Der Spiegel* 1977b: 23), the article speculates on the reasons for women turning terrorists. The phenomenon is termed a particular sort of 'girl-militancy' ('Mädchen-Militanz', *Der Spiegel* 1977b: 25). The author discusses two prevalent explanations given by 'experts'. The first one is sexual dependency (even though, the author admits, it is at times unclear who is dependent on whom), which defines women's political violence as the acts of desperate lovers. The second reason is located within women's liberation. Here, terrorist violence is an 'excess of emancipation' (as the official Nollau put it). With the gun as its primary weapon, female terrorism symbolizes the 'dark side of the movement for full equality', according to US sociologist Freda Adler (*Der Spiegel* 1977b: 23). For another sociologist, Erwin Scheuch, the 'gun in the beauty-bag' (*Der Spiegel* 1977b: 25) symbolizes the ultimate break with rejected femininity and thus connects feminist demands for the end of patriarchal oppression to political violence. The majority of experts consulted in the article (psychologists, criminologists, sociologists and law-enforcement officers) depoliticize the actions of female terrorists and instead try to find individual and psychological reasons for them – or declare them the results of unnatural gender identities. Much of their reasoning seems to rely on the 'Alltagstheorien' discussed earlier – assumptions based on pseudo-scientific 'knowledge' that attain common sense status.

The author of the article in *Der Spiegel* succeeds in maintaining a certain rhetorical distance from the frequently sexist and misogynist overtones of other media coverage. Nevertheless, the journalist treats female terrorists as 'unnatural' with highly gendered (and often derogatory) word choices, such as the terms 'gun broad/gun moll' ('Flintenweib') and 'broad violence' ('Weibergewalt', *Der Spiegel* 1977b: 22–3), and by agreeing with the claim that an 'excess of emancipation' explains the women's actions: 'That might well be the case' ('Das mag wohl sein', *Der Spiegel* 1977b: 23). The tone of the article then becomes more neutral as it moves from the initial three to four pages on 'girl-militancy' into the actual reconstruction of the crime.

### Women and Violence or Violence and Women: Feminist Responses to the Mass Media's Construction of 'Unnatural Women'

Responses to this *Der Spiegel* article were immediate in Left feminist movement circles. It appears that feminist activists within a broader political subculture critical of the 'bourgeois' media perceived the newsmagazine as a major voice in German culture and attributed considerable influence to its coverage. In their responses, authors of small movement publications claimed that sexism and conservatism underlie mass media's treatment of the topic. In these texts, we can find the outline of a debate within the multi-faceted women's liberation movement that demonstrates the complicated relationship feminist activists of the time had to political violence. Two documents in particular represent distinct positions in the discussion. One is an article, 'Women and Violence or Violence and Women' ('Frauen und Gewalt oder Gewalt und Frauen'), published in *Dokumentation zur Situation in der BRD und zum Verhältnis BRD–Schweiz* (*Documentation on the Situation in the Republic of West Germany and on the West German–Swiss Relationship*) in Zürich in 1977. This Swiss-based radical publication discusses the article in *Der Spiegel* from a perspective generally supportive of armed struggle and political violence as a legitimate feminist means. The second is a publication of the socialist Weiberplenum (Broad-Plenum) in West Berlin in 1978, *Frauen gegen den Strom II* (*Women Against the Tide*) that, while condemning armed struggle, refutes both demonization and dismissal of women who employ political violence. On the one hand, both publications, as different as their responses are in terms of their overall feminist positions, protest the conflation of women's liberation with political violence. On the other hand, they point out the more basic cultural fear of women stepping out of line – in any way – that manifests in 'Alltagstheorien' on women and violence.<sup>21</sup>

The article 'Frauen und Gewalt' in *Dokumentation* comes out of a left-radical, anti-imperialist activist context. It discusses the *Der Spiegel* article in detail, giving quotes and commenting on them. Its main issue is with the construction of women who do not adhere to traditional roles as deviant and 'unnatural' – women using political violence are then nothing but an example of aberrant

women. Those in power, claims the anonymous author, cannot otherwise explain a phenomenon that contradicts their historical experience; they are blind to the reality that 'from violence against women grows that women also employ violence' ('Frauen und Gewalt' 1977: 32). Instead of viewing violent women as unnatural, the article proclaims that political violence employed by women is a product of the violence experienced at the hands of the State – they are *resisting*, not randomly turning violent.

It is important to point out that while this criticism emerges from a feminist standpoint, that particular feminist position is firmly rooted in a radical anti-imperialist context. Mainstream culture's understanding of Susanne Albrecht's 'deception' as a 'perversion of humanity' is countered with the observation that Ponto's role in the exploitation of Third World countries by industrialized nations is understood by anti-imperialist groups as 'perversion'. The author employs an international revolutionary position to challenge the basic moral values of post-war West German society of which traditional, patriarchal gender roles are just one aspect.

The article points out the underlying sexism in *Der Spiegel's* comments on women being 'man enough' to lead radical groups. The magazine's inquiry into why women partake in political violence is then itself based on the assumption that political activism (and violence) is masculine. The depiction of violent women as 'unnatural' and 'irrational', the author insists, is aimed at creating the impression that 'those women, who do not shy away from employing violence in order to fight for a more humane life for themselves and others, are not normal, and need not be taken seriously as a political force' ('Frauen und Gewalt' 1977: 33). So instead of acknowledging that women's militancy has become a necessary premise for liberation, society views it as an 'excess of emancipation' ('Frauen und Gewalt' 1977: 33), directly echoing Nollau's by then infamous quote. The article concludes that the de-politicization of violent acts committed by women – the reduction of such acts to self-serving and pathological motives – reflects society's inability to conceptualize women as independent thinkers. It further allows those in power to deny that they are dealing with a political opponent by characterizing female militants as randomly crazy women. This feminist position then declares women's participation in armed struggle a response to oppression and a necessity in the overarching goal of worldwide revolution.

In contrast, the socialist feminist publication *Frauen gegen den Strom* comes out of the women's liberation movement. The issue in question consists of five parts, one of which is dedicated to women and armed struggle and has four contributions. In the article 'Terrorism, the Excess of Emancipation' ('Terrorismus, der Exzeß der Emanzipation'), the author gives an analysis of mass media's coverage of women in armed struggle, and points out the continuous attempts to depoliticize violent acts committed by women. Print media the author discusses include *Bild*, *Stern*, *Welt*, *Quick* and *Der Spiegel*. The anonymous author traces recurrent themes in the coverage that obscure the 'real' reasons for women resorting to violence as

a political means ('Terrorismus' 1978: 3), framing the article's discussion in terms of the assumption that there *are* 'real' reasons for these women to participate in political violence.

Sexuality, states the article, is a favorite issue in the media; female terrorists are declared lesbians with no other desires than to 'be' men by wielding guns, or to have developed pathological lesbian desires during their time in gender-segregated prison ('Terrorismus' 1978: 3).<sup>22</sup> The article points out that if they are not constructed as wanna-be-men lesbians, female terrorists are 'explained' in further contradictory ways. The *Der Spiegel* article depicts them as sexually dependent on men who seduce them into committing terrorist acts or, alternately, as dangerous seducers of men. Family is also a theme through which women are pathologized. Female terrorists, the author points out, are said to have distant fathers they desperately hate and want to hurt through their rebellion, or mothers who neglected their duties in bringing up their daughters properly ('Terrorismus' 1978: 3).

The author speculates that the evocation of 'Home and Stove Ideology' ('Terrorismus' 1978: 3), which implies that mothers need to pay more attention to what their daughters are doing and that they can do that best by staying home, is no coincidence in the late 1970s when unemployment rates were staggering. In accordance with an obsession with women's role as mothers within the debate on women and political violence, these women are declared by a female politician to 'negate deliberately everything that defines female/feminine nature' (quoted in 'Terrorismus' 1978: 3).<sup>23</sup> This 'negation of female/feminine nature' is extended then to all women who do not adhere to traditional roles – and all are destined to turn into terrorists: 'The farewell to the kitchen indicates the direct path to prison' ('Terrorismus' 1978: 3).<sup>24</sup> The assumption that a rejection of any assigned gender roles (such as mother) leads to terrorism, the article concludes, together with the tendency to construct women's biology as predestined for psychosis, effectively declares efforts of women's liberation as criminal. The overall image that 'women who resist are crazy' results in a psycho-pathologizing of militant women that 'completely deflects from their political motives' ('Terrorismus' 1978: 4), echoing the declaration of female terrorists as 'wild furies' in the article in *Der Spiegel*. Here, the main criticism again is of the conflation of terrorism with women's liberation, on the one hand, and of sexist 'Alltagstheorien' on the 'nature' of women that deny political agency, on the other.

While the first movement publication clearly situates women's political violence in relation to necessary *revolutionary* violence, *Frauen gegen den Strom* takes a more complicated – and troubled – standpoint that voices feminist objections to stereotypes at the same time as it questions violence as a political means. Thus a second article in the section on women and terrorism in *Frauen gegen den Strom* rejects the armed struggle's 'strategy and tactic [as] damaging to the development of Left politics' ('Frauenbewegung' 1978: 7), although like many other feminist grassroots groups it simultaneously declares solidarity with the political prisoners.

In this second article, 'The Women's Movement since the "German Autumn"' ('Frauenbewegung seit "Deutschland im Herbst"'), the author recounts the debate within several factions of the emancipation movement of how to achieve women's liberation. The article relates the concern of left-wing, socialist/anarchist feminists in the face of a growing tendency among some feminists to retreat into 'self-awareness and experience' and individual empowerment as the only means to achieve women's liberation. For example, the author is critical of one particular 'call to action' formulated by Frankfurt women in October 1977, in the aftermath of the German Autumn, that was widely distributed in feminist circles. Entitled 'Call to All Women for the Invention of Happiness' ('Aufruf an alle Frauen zur Erfindung des Glücks'), the text was reprinted in *Emma* superimposed on a photo of a happily smiling woman, forming the *Yoni* symbol while raising her hands to the sky ('Aufruf an alle Frauen' 1977: 16).<sup>25</sup> The image connotes peacefulness and joy. In this call, women are asked to reject patriarchal violence, to 'demand to be released from the nation that brings forth nothing but unhappiness' ('Aufruf an alle Frauen' 1977: 16) and instead to insist on their right to laughter. By resorting to their 'female' qualities of peace and non-violence, the authors of the call claim women can remove themselves from patriarchal destruction and despair (in the form of terrorism and state repression) by 'dancing out of line'. The author in *Frauen gegen den Strom* declares this to be a dangerously naïve and a-political position. She writes:

Our 'happiness' is not independent from social power-relations, to whose change we want and have to contribute actively. And *how* are we to 'dance out of line' when we are denied our basic rights every day and the repression against us continuously intensifies? Supposedly only if we wear blinders! This 'call to action' rather is aimed at getting us back to where those in power wanted us in the first place!  
(*Frauenbewegung* 1978: 8, emphasis in original)

The author views the 'peaceful' feminist position as not only unrealistic and apolitical, but also ignorant of women's participation in oppression and of the complex interrelations of global capitalism, imperialism and patriarchy. Instead of viewing women's political concerns separate from others, the author in *Frauen gegen den Strom* criticizes the 'naturalization' of women as peaceful and of their activism as non-violent as reproducing many of the assumptions about women's nature found in the mainstream media.

## CONCLUSIONS

Because terrorists symbolize a violent departure from the social contract and challenge the promise of democratic political measures, they are often demonized in public debates. However, the main tenor in the article in *Der Spiegel* and much of the news coverage of female terrorists seems to be that, while terrorism/armed struggle as political strategy is condemned in

general, the participation of *women* is a fundamental contradiction in terms. Men believing in armed struggle are understood to be ideologically misguided but do not pose a mystery (they are seen as acting out some power-fantasy that is in accord with masculine aspirations), while the very nature of terrorism precludes women's participation. This does not mean that RAF men were not pathologized in public discourse. At times, their deviance was framed in terms of sexual (and implicitly, gender) transgression, such as when Andreas Baader's political activities were analyzed in relation to the fact that he was 'spoilt' by a women-only household in his childhood, his bisexual practices and his (assumed) sexual relations with RAF women (Hauser 1997: 54–5, 112, 209). My point is that while terrorism as a political strategy is considered deviant to begin with, the discussion of women within that practice is systematically gendered and sexualized in ways that of men is not.

Women's participation in this male-defined social territory constitutes a deviation within a deviation from norms of social behavior. It disrupts familiar patterns of social conflict and warrants an explanation outside of political motives and/or personal power aspirations. The turn to universal notions about the female gender for explanations is cleverly captured in a sarcastic movement pamphlet reproduced in Figure 5, quoting media headlines beneath the photo of a smiling young woman.

The text translates as follows:

Her path to terrorism is determined, since ...  
 ... she is at times aggressive (*Bild*)  
 ... she is from a good/respectable family (*Stern*)  
 ... she is thin and small-boned (*Stern*)  
 ... she has a confident demeanor (*Bild*)  
 ... her toilet is frequently flushed (*Bild*)<sup>26</sup>  
 ... students get caught up in these things more easily (*Der Spiegel*).  
 ('Ihr Weg Zum Terrorismums ist Vorzeigzeichnet, denn...' n.d.)

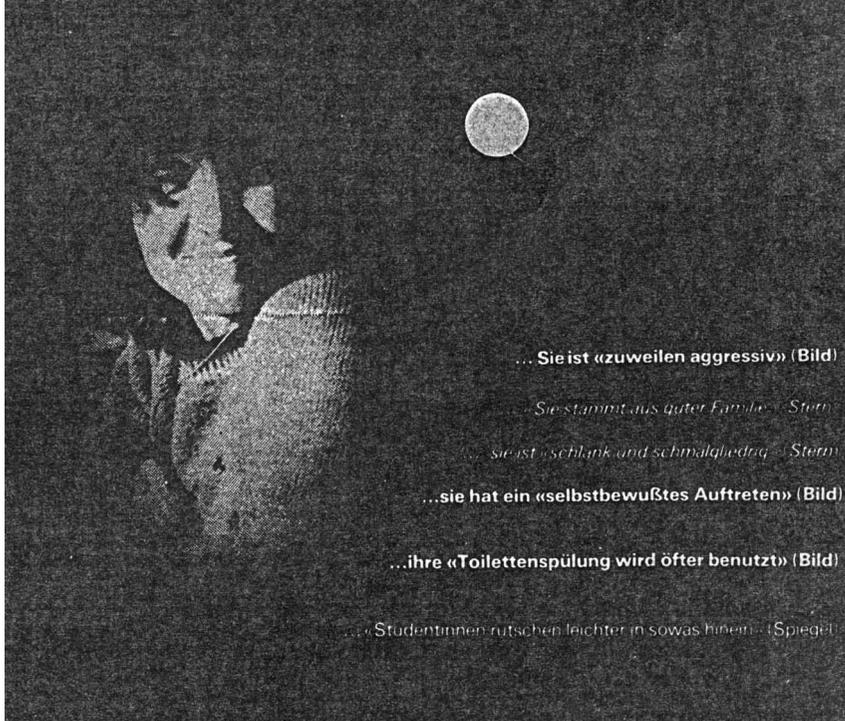
The pamphlet makes visible the cultural paradox that has mainstream culture resort to 'Alltagstheorien' about women's 'nature'. Feminist voices responding to these explanations were diverse in their analysis of the events in West Germany in 1977, yet all insist on solidarity with prisoners and demand a feminist critique of the depiction of militant women that, so they claim, reflects and serves a greater patriarchal ideology. The position of cultural feminists – that women need to remove themselves from violent conflicts that are not theirs – is criticized as naïve and self-serving. The danger, according to the argument, is that claiming 'female values' depoliticizes women's agency as much as do traditional gender roles.

The movement publications examined here complicate the notion of a universal feminist political subjectivity by insisting on the historical specificities of women's activism. However, some contradictions emerge in their responses

IHR WEG ZUM

# TERRORISMUS

IST VORGEZEICHNET, DENN ...



... Sie ist «zuweilen aggressiv» (Bild)

... Sie stammt aus guter Familie» (Stern)

... sie ist «schlank und schmalhedaq» (Stern)

...sie hat ein «selbstbewußtes Auftreten» (Bild)

...ihre «Toilettenspülung wird öfter benutzt» (Bild)

... «Studentinnen rutschen leichter in sowas hinein... (Spiegel)

Figure 5 Pamphlet

Source: Anonymous, APO-Archiv

to the media's framing of women and violence that pose a dilemma for feminists, which von Paczensky (1978: 11–12) addresses as follows:

When the fight against terrorism suddenly degenerates into a fight against emancipation, when female suspects are persecuted and branded not only for their delinquencies but beyond that as insubordinate women, then this persecution is also aimed at myself and at my efforts for change. ... If the rejection of

violence, the horror at a group who wants to destroy itself and our society, is at the same time turned into a rejection of active women, into a surrendering of protest and necessary rage, then I am paralyzed by this conflict between two solidarities.

Furthermore, feminist outrage at the assumption that terrorism is an 'excess of emancipation' leaves unanswered the troubling question why revolutionary spaces seem to allow women greater participation than most other social arenas – after all, the percentage of women in the RAF only reflects their proportion in the wider population. A rejection of 'Alltagstheorien' that explain female delinquency with either a natural disposition for deviance or with 'non-femaleness' at the same time should entail an analysis of 'Alltagstheorien' on masculinity and the naturalization of male violence. 'It is not enough to disclaim the connection between terror and emancipation, for the sake of our own conflicting loyalty we need to examine [this connection] thoroughly and conscientiously' (von Paczensky 1978: 12). In their justifiable indignation at the sexist portrayal of RAF women, West German movement publications, while pointing out the contradictions inherent in 'Alltagstheorien' on women, at times fail to engage with these underlying contradictions and their implications for feminist politics.

A thorough examination of the tension between understanding violence as a feminist tool of resistance and violence as patriarchal is an important aspect of building feminist political communities and collective resistance. An insistence on contextualizing women's experiences and political decisions brings with it resistance to a universal notion of 'women's' activism – and with that a universal definition of 'feminist'. In the process of building cultural memory, and in their continued attempts to make sense of these contradictions, feminists need to take care not to rely on simplistic evocations of a 'peaceful' tradition of women's political work. This is especially dangerous in our contemporary global situation of a rising neo-liberalism and the wars that are raging in the name of (US) 'freedom' and imperialism. Declaring one form of activism as 'feminist' and another as 'non-feminist' based on universal notions of gender can itself be an imperialist gesture, one which eradicates the diverse and necessarily contradictory practices that constitute feminism. Recognizing contentious political strategies within feminist histories – of which 'girl-militancy' is a part – is necessary in our ongoing debates on feminist practices in a transnational world.

Patricia Melzer  
Director, Women's Studies  
816 Anderson Hall  
Temple University  
1114 West Berks Street  
Philadelphia, PA, USA  
E-mail: pmelzer@temple.edu

All translations in the article are mine, unless stated otherwise.

- 1 The RAF, like other left-radical groups, such as the militant groups Movement 2. June (Bewegung 2. Juni) and Revolutionary Cells/Red Zora (Revolutionäre Zellen/Rote Zora), formed in the wake of a declining student movement in the late 1960s. The number of active members in the RAF during the 1970s remained small; they lived underground and operated in individual cells responsible for separate political actions. The RAF bombed US military facilities, kidnapped and assassinated influential businessmen and state representatives, robbed banks and worked with the militant wing of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Known for politicizing their cause further with prison hunger strikes, the RAF maintained a consistent political presence in West German public debates. Renouncing their armed struggle in 1992, the RAF released a public statement of dissolution in 1998. For more on the history of the RAF, see Aust (1987); Varon (2004); Kraushaar (2006); and Weinbauer *et al.* (2006).
- 2 According to Klein, popular 'Alltagstheorien' build on pseudo-scientific theories long proven scientifically obsolete, whose basic patterns can be summarized as follows: 'A woman's delinquency and non-delinquency are explained with *biological characteristics* of women and always have something to do with *sexuality*' (Klein 1998: 10, emphases in original).
- 3 The German term is 'Nicht-Weiblichkeit'. Weiblichkeit can mean either femininity or femaleness.
- 4 The West German *Emma* was modeled after the US magazine *Ms.* in terms of layout, distribution, targeted audience and content. *Emma* was launched in January 1977 by Alice Schwarzer (Schenk 1983: 100), and today is Germany's most successful commercial feminist publication.
- 5 I reviewed the material under discussion in the following archives: cilip-Archiv (Archiv des Instituts für Bürgerrechte und öffentliche Sicherheit, e.V. – Archive of the Institute for Civil Rights and Public Safety) and the Archiv 'APO [Ausserparlamentarische Opposition] und soziale Bewegungen' (Archive of the 'Extraparliamentary Opposition and Social Movements', usually shortened to APO-Archiv), both at the Freie Universität, Berlin, the Otto-Suhr Institut für Politikwissenschaft (Otto-Suhr Institute for Political Science); Archiv 'Protest, Widerstand und Utopie in der BRD' (Archive of 'Protest, Resistance and Utopia in the West German Republic') at the Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (Hamburg Institute for Social Research); the independent cultural center and library for social movements, Papiertiger, in Berlin; and 'Anarchiv', International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
- 6 'Feminist' activism need not be synonymous with 'women's activism, since not all women activists organize for the liberation of women from patriarchal restrictions (see Waylen 1992 for a critical differentiation between the two). Here I am less interested in the analytical demarcation of feminist *versus* women; rather, my focus is on how naturalized assumptions about women's innate political dispositions inform notions of (and debates about) what constitutes feminist politics.

- 7 9/11 has generated an increased focus on political violence within feminist scholarship and activism, especially regarding religious fundamentalism, militarism and women living under Muslim laws (see, for example, the special issues of *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture* on 'War and Terror: Gendered Logics and Effects', issues 32 (4), Summer 2007, and 33 (1), Autumn 2007). It signifies a changing political context for the debate on gender and political violence. An analysis of post-9/11 feminist debates is beyond the scope of this article and the historical period of its focus.
- 8 In September 1968, women in the West German SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund [German Socialist Student Union]) formed the 'Aktionsrat zur Befreiung der Frau' ('Action Committee for the Liberation of Women') – a committee/task force for the liberation of women – and officially challenged the organization's male-centered structure and political agenda (see Schulz 2002: 81–5). In 1965, Casey Heyden and Mary King formulated a feminist critique of the male-centeredness and sexism within the US New Left in their 'A Kind of Memo', which was circulated nationally in groups of progressive organizing and was reprinted in 1966, sparking enthusiastic responses and actions from (mainly white) women organizers (see Rosen 2000: 110–13).
- 9 West German women-only groups included the Red Zora [Rote Zora], initially the feminist contingent of the Revolutionary Cells formed in the early 1970s that split off into an autonomous feminist group in the mid-1980s, targeting institutions of feminist concern (*Früchte des Zorns* 1993). Unlike the Red Zora, groups like the Women's Liberation Front (Frauen-Befreiungsfront) and the Militant Panther Aunts (Militanten Pantherantent) were short-lived, and their actions usually were limited to low-level violence aimed at drawing attention to the liberation of women as part of the revolutionary struggle.
- 10 One of the few early attempts to look systematically at women's participation in left-wing terrorism by feminist scholars includes the collection of essays edited by Susanne von Pasczensky in 1978, *Frauen und Terror: Versuche, die Beteiligung von Frauen an Gewalttaten zu erklären* [*Women and Terror: Attempts at Explaining the Participation of Women in Acts of Violence*].
- 11 See, for example, McAllister (1982); Quistorp (1982); Caldicott (1984); Enloe (1984); Russell (1989).
- 12 A prominent voice for cultural feminism is Robin Morgan, who in *The Demon Lover* (1989) defines political violence as inherently male.
- 13 The significance of the media in West Germany's dealings with the RAF was reiterated in the RAF exhibit *Zur Vorstellung des Terrors* in Berlin of 2005, which included a complete exhibit floor chronologically displaying selected news coverage of the RAF. See Steinseifer (2006: 351–2) for a discussion of the exhibit's treatment of media coverage.
- 14 See Elter (2006) for a discussion of terrorism's strategic use of the media as a means of communication.
- 15 For an extensive discussion of the anti-Springer campaign and the RAF's bombing of the Springer building, see Kraushaar (2006).
- 16 See Mitscherlich-Nielsen (1978); von Paczensky (1978); Klein (1998).

- 17 There are few studies on women in Western armed struggle. Journalist MacDonald (1991) takes questions about gender seriously in her study of women in armed groups. De Cataldo Neuburger and Valentini (1996 [1992]) examine women in Italian left-wing terrorist groups, and Zwerman (1994) discusses women in US armed groups as mothers. Most recently, Eager's (2008) study offers a broad discussion of women's participation in political violence worldwide. As von Pasczensky noted in 1978, research on female terrorists in West Germany was slow to enter public discourse (von Pasczensky 1978: 9–10). Women in the RAF and Movement 2. June generally are discussed in the broader context of women and violence (Mamozzai 1990; Heyne 1993; Eager 2008). Recent historical studies on the RAF rarely mention gender as an analytical category at all. Neither Varon's (2004) comparative analysis of the Weather Underground and the RAF, nor Weinhauser *et al.*'s (2006) edited collection on West German terrorism, consider gender. In the two-volume, 1415 page-long essay collection on the RAF edited by Kraushaar (2006), only one of sixty-three contributions addresses women within a gender analysis (Diewald-Kerkmann 2006).
- 18 This particular cover indicates a moment where the media directly influenced political decisions. Steinseifer points out that Albrecht's portrait photo printed on the *Der Spiegel* cover later was used as a 'wanted' image by the police (Steinseifer 2006: 363 note 33). One would assume that the high recognition factor generated by the cover image influenced the decision to use this photo on wanted posters.
- 19 In 1975, the Movement 2. June kidnapped Berlin politician Peter Lorenz. The West German government exchanged him for five political prisoners. Two months later, the RAF seized the West German embassy in Stockholm, Sweden, with the aim of freeing twenty-six political prisoners, including RAF leaders Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Baader and Jan-Carl Raspe. The West German government this time did not compromise; the incident ended in the death of two diplomats and two terrorists, and the arrest of the remaining four terrorists. After the kidnapping of Jürgen Ponto failed, the RAF abducted Hans Martin Schleyer in September 1977, demanding the release of several political prisoners. The government refused an exchange, and Schleyer was killed by his kidnapers the day after Ensslin, Baader and Raspe were found dead in their cells on 18 October 1977, ending the German Autumn.
- 20 Steinseifer (2006: 363) gives a compelling analysis of the media's visual emphasis on the degenerative effect of living underground on the faces of *female* terrorists in particular.
- 21 I chose these two publications because of their detailed analysis of media coverage and of the article in *Der Spiegel*. While one originated in Switzerland, not West Germany, its discussion of the events can be understood as part of the debates among left-wing political groups in German-speaking Europe, excluding East Germany. Further examples of feminist responses to sexism in media coverage of female militants can be found in the feminist journal *Courage* ('Fahndung nach Frauen' 1976), which criticizes the hysterical search by police for female terrorists and points out how *any* form of deviation from traditional gender norms are criminalized; and in a brief critique of the article in *Der Spiegel* in *WIR: Frauen-*

- zeitung Hannover 7*, a small women's center publication, which again criticizes the equation of terrorism with female liberation ('Exzeß der Emanzipation' 1977).
- 22 Typical for this is the tabloid *Bild-Berlin*'s quoting of a psychologist after the escape of the four women from prison in 1976, which the feminist journal *Courage* reprinted in a parody of the newspaper's coverage: 'Women, who have been imprisoned for years, gravitate toward lesbian contacts. A hug, some stroking and maybe a motherly kiss already affect some women like an explosion of intoxicating desire' ('Fahndung der Frauen' 1976: 9). Drawing on, and feeding off, the public's illicit sexual fantasies, the coverage here criminalizes lesbian identity ('It is definitely possible that the escapees are being hidden by lesbians') while at the same time framing lesbian desire as deviant and deceitful. This is reflected in the speculation that RAF founder Gudrun Ensslin, the 'ice-cold seductress' (*Bild am Sonntag* 1972: 14), not only seduced men, but also women into terrorism. The result is a homophobic equation of female terrorists with lesbian identity, both of which represent a threat to the status quo, as if 'unnatural' sexual desire leads to violence, or a violent woman is only conceivable if she is known to have deviant sexual preferences.
  - 23 The original text states 'weibliche Natur', which can be translated as either 'female' or 'feminine' nature.
  - 24 One way in which women terrorists rejected traditional female roles was by leaving families with children. The two most prominent examples here are Ulrike Meinhof, whose ex-husband seized custody of their 7-year-old twin daughters she had sent to Italy, seemingly on their way to a Palestinian orphanage camp, and Gudrun Ensslin, who left a small infant son with his father when committing political arson in 1968 in Frankfurt, and when going underground in 1970.
  - 25 In tantric iconography, the *Yoni* symbolizes the vulva.
  - 26 This ridiculous sounding observation is derived from the police's directions to citizens on what to look out for in neighbors' behavior that might indicate terrorist activities. A toilet that is flushed abnormally often could point toward a group of terrorists inhabiting an illegally rented apartment.

## References

- Alpert, J. 1974. 'Mother Right: A New Feminist Theory'. Available at <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/wlm/mother/> (accessed 10 January 2008).
- Amrane-Minn, D. 1999. 'Women and Politics in Algeria from the War of Independence to Our Day', *Research in African Literatures* 30 (3): 62–77.
- 'Aufruf an alle Frauen zur Erfindung des Glücks [Call to All Women for the Invention of Happiness]'. 1977. *Emma* 12: 16.
- Aust, S. 1987. *The Baader-Meinhof Group: The Inside Story of a Phenomenon*. London: Bodley Head.
- 'A Weatherwoman: Inside the Weather Machine.' 1970. In Jacobs, H. (ed.) *Weatherman*, pp. 321–6. San Francisco: Ramparts Press.
- Balz, H. 2006. 'Der "Sympathisanten"-Diskurs im Deutschen Herbst [The 'Sympathiser' Discourse during the German Autumn]', in Weinbauer, K., Requate, J. and Haupt,

- H.-G. (eds) *Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik [Terrorism in West Germany]*, pp. 320–50. Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag.
- Bild am Sonntag*. 1972. 'Gudrun Ensslin – Die Eiskalte Verführerin [Gudrun Ensslin – the Cold Seductress]', 11 June: 14.
- Caldicott, H. 1984. *Missile Envy: The Arms Race and Nuclear War*. New York: William Morrow.
- Davis, B. 2005. "'Women's Strength Against Their Crazy Male Power": Gendered Language in the West German Peace Movement of the 1980s', in Davy, J. A., Hagemann, K. and Kätzel, U. (eds) *Frieden-Gewalt-Geschlecht: Friedens- und Konfliktforschung als Geschlechterforschung [Peace-Violence-Gender: Peace and Conflict Research as Gender Research]*, pp. 244–65. Essen: Klartext.
- De Cataldo Neuburger, L. and Valentini, T. 1996 [1992]. *Women and Terrorism*. Trans. Hughes L. M., New York: St Martin's.
- Diewald-Kerkmann, G. 2006. 'Bewaffnete Frauen im Untergrund: Zum Anteil von Frauen in der RAF und der *Bewegung 2. Juni* [Armed Women Underground: About the Participation of Women in the RAF and the *Movement 2. June*]', in Kraushaar, W. (ed.) *Die RAF und der Linke Terrorismus [The RAF and Left-Wing Terrorism]*, vol. 1, pp. 657–75. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- Di Leonardo, M. 1985. 'Morals, Mothers, and Militarism: Antimilitarism and Feminist Theory', *Feminist Studies* 11 (3): 599–617.
- Eager, P. W. 2008. *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists: Women and Political Violence*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Echols, A. 1989. *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967–75*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Elshtain, J. B. 1987. *Women and War*. New York: Basic Books.
- Elter, A. 2006. 'Die RAF und die Medien: Ein Fallbeispiel für terroristische Kommunikation [The RAF and the Media: A Case Study for Terrorist Communication]', in Kraushaar, W. (ed.) *Die RAF und der Linke Terrorismus [The RAF and Left-Wing Terrorism]*, vol. 2, pp. 1060–74. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- Enloe, C. 1984. *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Enloe, C. 2000. *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- 'Exzeß der Emanzipation [Excess of Emancipation].' 1977. *WIR: Frauenzeitung Hannover [WIR: Women's Newspaper Hanover]* 7: 9.
- 'Fahndung nach Frauen [Manhunt for Women].' 1976. *Courage* 1: 9–10.
- 'Frauenbewegung seit "Deutschland im Herbst" [The Women's Movement since the "German Autumn"]'. 1978. *Frauen gegen den Strom II [Women Against the Tide]*: 7–10. Archiv 'APO und soziale Bewegungen' [Archive of 'Extraparliamentary Opposition and Social Movements'] (APO-Archiv).
- 'Frauen und Gewalt oder Gewalt und Frauen [Women and Violence or Violence and Women]'. 1977. *Dokumentation zur Situation in der BRD und zum Verhältnis BRD–Schweiz [Documentation on the Situation in the Republic of West Germany and on the West German–Swiss Relationship]*, pp. 31–4. Berlin: Cilip-Archiv, Freie Universität.

- Früchte des Zorns: Texte und Materialien zur Geschichte der Revolutionären Zellen und der Roten Zora* [Grapes of Wrath: Texts and Material on the History of the Revolutionary Cells and the Red Zora]. 1993. Volumes 1 and 2. ID-Archiv, IISG/Amsterdam. Berlin: Edition ID-Archiv.
- Hacker, H. 1998. *Gewalt ist: keine Frau: Die Akteurin oder eine Geschichte der Transgressionen* [Violence Is Not a Woman: The Agent or a History of Transgression]. Königstein/Taunus: Helmer.
- Hackett, E. and Haslanger, S. (eds). 2005. *Theorizing Feminisms: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hauser, D. 1997. *Baader und Herold: Beschreibung eines Kampfes* [Baader and Herold: Description of a Struggle]. Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag.
- Heyne, C. 1993. *Täterinnen: Offene und versteckte Aggression von Frauen* [Perpetrators: Open and Covert Aggression in Women]. Zürich: Kreuz Verlag.
- 'Honky Tonk Women'. 1970. In Jacobs, H. (ed.) *Weatherman*, pp. 313–20. Ramparts Press.
- 'Ihr Weg Zum Terrorismus ist Vorzezeichnet, denn... [Her Path to Terrorism is Determined, since...]. No date. Archiv 'APO und soziale Bewegungen' [Archive of 'Extraparliamentary Opposition and Social Movements'] (APO-Archiv).
- Klein, U. 1998. 'Kriminalität, Geschlecht und Medienöffentlichkeit [Delinquency, Gender and Media]', in Henschel, P. and Klein, U. (eds) *Hexenjagd: Weibliche Kriminalität in den Medien* [Witchhunt: Female Criminality in the Media], pp. 9–20. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Kraushaar, W. 2006. 'Kleinkrieg gegen einen Grossverleger [Guerilla Warfare Against a Publishing Giant]', in Kraushaar, W. (ed.) *Die RAF und der Linke Terrorismus* [The RAF and Left-Wing Terrorism], vol. 2, pp. 1075–116. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- McAllister, P. (ed.). 1982. *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers.
- MacDonald, E. 1991. *Shoot the Women First*. New York: Random.
- Mamozzai, M. 1990. *Komplizinnen* [Accomplices]. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.
- Meyer, D. and Whittier, N. 1994. 'Social Movement Spillover', *Social Problems* 41 (2): 277–98.
- Michel, A. 1988. *Frauen die Kämpfen sind Frauen die Leben* [Women Who Fight Are Women Who Live]. Zürich: Selbstverlag.
- Millan, M. 1998. 'Zapatista Indigenous Women', in Holloway, J. and Pelaez, E. (eds) *Zapatista!: Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*, pp. 64–80. London: Pluto Press.
- Miller Gearheart, S. 1982. 'The Future – If There Is One – Is Female', in McAllister, P. (ed.) *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Nonviolence*, pp. 266–84. Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers.
- Mitscherlich, M. 1987. *Die friedfertige Frau* [The Peaceable Sex]. Frankfurt/Main: Fischer.
- Mitscherlich-Nielsen, M. 1978. 'Hexen oder Märtyrer? [Witches or Martyrs?]', in Paczensky, S. V. (ed.) *Frauen und Terror: Versuche, die Beteiligung von Frauen an Gewalttaten zu erklären* [Women and Terror: Attempts at Explaining the Participation of Women in Acts of Violence], pp. 13–23. Reinbek: Rowohlt.

- Morgan, R. 1989. *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism*. New York: Norton.
- Quistorp, E. (ed.). 1982. *Frauen für den Frieden: Analysen, Dokumente und Aktionen aus der Friedensbewegung* [Women for Peace: Analyses, Documents, and Activism from the Peace Movement]. Frankfurt/Main: päd extra buchverlag.
- Rosen, R. 2000. *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. New York: Penguin.
- Ruddick, S. 1989. *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*. New York: Ballentine.
- Russell, D. (ed.). 1989. *Exposing Nuclear Phallacies*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Schenk, H. 1983. *Die feministische Herausforderung: 150 Jahre Frauenbewegung in Deutschland* [The Feminist Challenge: 150 Years Women's Movement in Germany]. München: Verlag C. H. Beck.
- Schulz, K. 2002. *Der lange Atem der Provokation: Die Frauenbewegung in der Bundesrepublik und in Frankreich 1968–1976* [The Long Breath of Provocation: The Women's Movement in the Federal Republic and France 1968–1976]. Frankfurt/Main: Campus.
- Spiegel, Der. 1976a. 'Ausbruch der Frauen: Die Terroristen machen mobil [Women's Breakout: The Terrorists Are Mobilizing]', 29: cover page.
- Spiegel, Der. 1976b. 'Ausbruch in Berlin: "Das ist eine Riesensache" [Breakout in Berlin: "That's a Huge Thing"]', 29: 17–27.
- Spiegel, Der. 1977a. 'Terroristinnen: Frauen und Gewalt [Female Terrorists: Women and Violence]', 33: cover page.
- Spiegel, Der. 1977b. 'Frauen im Untergrund: "Etwas Irrationales" [Women Living Underground: "Somehow Irrational"]', 33: 22–33.
- Spiegel, Der. 1981. 'Wir fühlten uns einfach stärker [We Simply Felt Stronger]', 20: 82–108.
- Steinseifer, M. 2006. 'Terrorismus als Medienereignis im Herbst 1977: Strategien, Dynamiken, Darstellungen, Deutungen [Terrorism as Media Event in Fall 1977: Strategies, Dynamics, Representations, Interpretations]', in Weinbauer, K., Requate, J. and Haupt, H.-G. (eds) *Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik* [Terrorism in West Germany], pp. 351–81. Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag.
- 'Terrorismus, der Exzeß der Emanzipation [Terrorism, the Excess of Emancipation]'. 1978. *Frauen gegen den Strom II* [Women Against the Tide]: 3–4. Archiv 'APO und soziale Bewegungen' [Archive of 'Extraparliamentary Opposition and Social Movements'] (APO-Archiv).
- Tétreault, M. A. (ed.). 1994. *Women and Revolution in Africa, Asia, and the New World*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press.
- Varon, J. 2004. *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Von Paczensky, S. (ed.). 1978. *Frauen und Terror: Versuche, die Beteiligung von Frauen an Gewalttaten zu erklären* [Women and Terror: Attempts at Explaining the Participation of Women in Acts of Violence]. Reinbek: Rowohlt.
- Waylen, G. 1992. 'Rethinking Women's Political Participation and Protest: Chile 1970–1990', *Political Studies* 40 (2): 299–314.

- Weinhauer, K., Requate, J. and Haupt, H.-G. (eds). 2006. *Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik: Medien, Staat und Subkulturen in den 1970er Jahren* [Terrorism in the Federal Republic of West Germany: Media, the State and Subcultures in the 1970s]. Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag.
- Zwerman, G. 1994. 'Mothering on the Lam: Politics, Gender Fantasies and Maternal Thinking in Women Associated with Armed, Clandestine Organizations in the United States', *Feminist Review* 47: 33–56.