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## **"Bonnie und Kleid": Female Terrorists and the Hysterical Feminine**

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"Bonnie und Kleid"<sup>1</sup> was the title of a fashion article which appeared in *Der Spiegel*, the German newsmagazine, in 1968 ("Bonnie" 123). Apart from being a mildly amusing pun, this title is typical of media representations of violent female terrorists in 1970s Germany, not least in its invocation of fashion – a prime signifier of the feminine – to diffuse the fear aroused by the figure of the violent woman.

In a 1977 article on the phenomenon of female terrorism, Alice Schwarzer, a pioneering German feminist, describes the German media as "Männerpresse" ("male press") (5). A female reader of *Der Spiegel* also understands the magazine to be "written by men, for men"<sup>2</sup> ("Letters" 7). One need only look as far as newspaper advertisements to see how this medium is almost exclusively aimed at the male reader.<sup>3</sup> The female body – including that of the violent female terrorist – is clearly positioned as object of the desiring male gaze. Ideas about the German *Männerpresse* and the controlling gaze of the male journalist, camera and reader greatly influence this paper.

According to Nira Yuval-Davis, the figure of woman functions as both the literal and cultural reproducer and representation of the nation. This idea, combined with the fact that the feminine ideals of "Kinder, Küche, Kirche"<sup>4</sup> form the bedrock of German cultural narratives, explains the mass hysteria surrounding female terrorism in 1970s Germany. An article in *Der Spiegel*, for example, refers to Ulrike Meinhof, the most infamous of the female terrorists, as "the negative symbolic figure of the Federal Republic"<sup>5</sup> ("Wer Sich" 62). Such hysteria, whipped up by reactionary newspapers such as *Bild* and *Die Welt*, centres largely on the figures of Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun

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<sup>1</sup> "Kleid" is the German word for "dress". Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* was released in Germany in December 1967: the first Hollywood film to have violent criminals, one of whom is a woman, as its protagonists.

<sup>2</sup> "von Männern, für Männer geschrieben."

<sup>3</sup> For example, *Der Spiegel* featured a dishwasher advertisement which encouraged men to buy their wives a dishwasher as "a declaration of love" ("eine Liebeserklärung"). The use of the female body to sell products is also all pervasive.

<sup>4</sup> "Children, Kitchen, Church."

<sup>5</sup> "Die negative Symbolfigur der Bundesrepublik."

Ensslin, both of whom belonged to the core group of the anti-capitalist guerrilla group, the Red Army Faction. This group grew out of the radical student movement of the late 1960s and, controversially, involved a disproportionately large number of women. Concurrent with the rise of “second-wave” feminism, which was already questioning conventional gender roles, violent female terrorists seemed to be radically undermining the body politic of the nation through grossly exceeding their feminine socialization.<sup>6</sup> The precarious nature of the Federal Republic’s identity further intensified this threat. After defeat in two World Wars, the division of the German nation into two states, and in the context of the Cold War and the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*,<sup>7</sup> it is not surprising that a female-dominated terrorist group, which had declared war on the state and capitalism, would provoke great anxiety.

This paper will explore the ways in which the feminine, in particular the hysterical feminine, is invoked in media representations of violent women in order to contain<sup>8</sup> the threat they pose.<sup>9</sup> I shall draw on a number of mainstream German newspapers, both leftwing, liberal “quality” journals, such as *Der Spiegel* and, to a lesser extent, *Stern*, and more reactionary papers, such as *Bild* and *Die Welt*. It is my contention that although these journals may seem to be of different quality, the same paradigms are being mobilized with regard to the violent female terrorist: paradigms that are firmly anchored in the German popular imagination of the 1970s.

In her essay of 1929, “Womanliness as a Masquerade,” the psychoanalyst Joan Riviere explores the way in which “women who wish for masculinity” – manifested through having a career – “may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men” (35). This mask, in the case of one of her clients, involves “compulsive ogling and coquetting” (37) after giving a presentation, and in the case of another, “wearing particularly feminine” clothes when lecturing to male colleagues (39).

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<sup>6</sup> Female terrorists were often conflated with feminism. An article in *Der Spiegel*, for example, talks about the “excess of emancipation.” (“Exzeß der Emanzipation”) (“Frauen” 22).

<sup>7</sup> This is a German word to describe the process of coming to terms with Germany’s Nazi past.

<sup>8</sup> I do not believe that these media techniques do serve to wholly contain the threat posed by the figure of the violent female. However, it is not within the scope of this essay to explore how the violent female body exceeds and destabilizes its discursive framework.

<sup>9</sup> The other contrasting way in which German media dealt with the problematic figure of the violent female terrorist was through depicting her as the abject negative *other* of the German woman, in order to bolster conventional understandings of woman as *das ewig Weibliche*. Unfortunately, I do not have the space here to explore this second strategy.

Of course, the Freudian idea of "wish(ing) for masculinity" should be read critically from today's perspective. In the context of 1970s Germany, it can be understood as women exceeding their socialization as passive and innocent housewives; something that Ensslin and Meinhof clearly did. I am not arguing that female revolutionaries put on the mask of femininity, although at times they may have done so.<sup>10</sup> Rather, I am arguing that German mainstream media – the *Männerpresse* – imposed this mask upon its representations of them, as a means of containing the threat they posed to the body politic.

Riviere's essay is instructive in another way. The notion of femininity as a masquerade or a decorative act – which can be traced back to Nietzsche's musing in *The Gay Science*<sup>11</sup> – takes us to the heart of popular ideas about hysteria;<sup>12</sup> a trope that is employed on countless occasions with relation to German female terrorists.<sup>13</sup> According to Elaine Showalter, nineteenth-century views of hysteria as a "woman's disease" or a "disturbance of femininity" ("Hysteria" 281) have mutated, in the twentieth century, "into more psychological portraits that link hysteria with *femininity* – with a range of 'feminine' personality traits" (287).<sup>14</sup> The nineteenth-century physician, Auguste Fabre, supports this conflation of the feminine and the hysterical: "As a general rule" he asserts, "all women are hysterical and ... every woman carries with her the seeds of hysteria. Hysteria ... is a temperament, and what constitutes the temperament of a woman is rudimentary hysteria" (quoted in Showalter, "Hysteria" 287). Femininity itself has become almost synonymous with hysteria in the popular imagination, and hysteria is understood as the extreme manifestation of femininity. As Showalter explains, *grande hystérie* is commonly "regarded as an acting out of female sexual experience, a spasm of

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<sup>10</sup> My own understanding of gender identity is greatly influenced by the work of Judith Butler who theorizes any gender identity as performative. See *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York; London: Routledge, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche, for example, refers to women as "above all else actresses" (quoted in Heath 51).

<sup>12</sup> In his essay "Hysterical Fancies and their relation to bisexuality," Freud discusses the way in which hysterical attacks and symptoms are a performance of "the unconscious phantasies brought into view through 'conversion'" (1959 162).

<sup>13</sup> Feminists are also invariably represented as hysterics. For example, the anti-feminist writer, Eliza Lynne Linton, coined the term "the shrieking sisterhood" (quoted in Showalter 1993 306).

<sup>14</sup> Hysteria has been the subject of much academic discourse and there are many different understandings of what constitutes hysteria, both today and historically. It is, of course, etymologically linked to the feminine and women, with its name derived from the Greek word "hysterá" which means uterus. Understandings of hysteria range from it being defined as the result of a wandering womb to being linked to the nervous system and trauma. Since the nineteenth century, hysteria has also been identified as a male condition. However, what concerns me here is the popular understanding of the condition.

hyperfemininity, mimicking ... both childbirth and the female orgasm" (287). She continues: "The diagnosis becomes 'a caricature of femininity' but also an exaggeration of the cognitive and personal styles that women are encouraged to develop as attractively 'feminine'" (287).

### Hysterical Bodies

Perhaps the most striking way in which attempts are made to contain the threat of the violent female terrorist is through the hystericization of her body and subjectivity: an appropriate strategy since hysterical symptoms are often associated with violence (Porter 256). Freud's essay, "The Psychology of Women" is useful in terms of popular notions of the feminine and hysteria.<sup>15</sup> Amongst other things, Freud attributes "a greater amount of narcissism" to women: "Their vanity is partly a further effect of penis-envy, for they are driven to rate their physical charms more highly as a belated compensation for their original sexual inferiority" ("Psychology" 170). Equally, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg speaks of the "narcissistic self-assertion" of the nineteenth-century hysteric (quoted in Showalter, "Hysteria" 303). These ideas pervade media representations of violent women. A *Bild* article, published after Ulrike Meinhof's alleged suicide in prison, states in bold print under the title: "She made herself look beautiful one more time and then ripped a towel into strips"<sup>16</sup> ("Die Wahrheit" 2). Making herself look attractive was arguably the last thing on Meinhof's mind before committing suicide, if indeed she did commit suicide.<sup>17</sup> The article is accompanied by two photographs of Meinhof, one of which has a distinct glamour shot flavour.<sup>18</sup> Meinhof wears lipstick, smiles and coyly returns the gaze of the camera over her right shoulder. The caption reads: "the wife and mother Ulrike Meinhof: a smiling friendly somewhat chubby young woman with a strong

<sup>15</sup> Although Freudian ideas on the feminine and female subjectivity are questionable from today's perspective, such ideas pervaded the German popular imagination of the 1960s and 1970s. 1967 was, for example, the year that Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich published their hugely influential work, *The Inability to Mourn*; a psychoanalytical study of German postwar subjectivity.

<sup>16</sup> "Sie machte sich noch einmal schön und riß ein Handtuch in Streifen."

<sup>17</sup> The question of whether Meinhof committed suicide or was murdered by the state remains controversial today.

<sup>18</sup> The strategy of publishing photographs of a distinctly bourgeois-looking Meinhof, before she went underground, and contrasting these with later images during her underground years is frequently found. As I will discuss in the section on "hysterical narratives," this before-and-after-technique introduces the idea of trauma into the narrative of the "hysterical" female terrorist.

liking for luxury, lively parties and intellectual discussions."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, a disproportionate amount of interest is generated by Meinhof's clothing. An article in *Die Welt* informs us: "wearing a designer dress, she would discuss Marx and Lenin at bourgeois parties"<sup>20</sup> (Lampe 3). Equally, *Der Spiegel* reveals that Meinhof was quite the star of the Hamburg scene: somebody whose attention you would attract to "decorate yourself with her; and she decorated herself for society and wore hand-crafted Skoluda<sup>21</sup> pendants along with her Gloria designer dresses"<sup>22</sup> ("Wer sich" 64). Significantly, the German "sich schmücken" ("to decorate oneself") carries strongly gendered associations because of its link to the noun "Schmuck" meaning jewellery. Although Gudrun Ensslin was subject to less media speculation, she does not escape similar "feminising" treatment. The *Baader Meinhof Report*, commissioned by the government in 1972, attempts to explain why Ensslin was arrested in a shop shortly after the arrest of her partner Andreas Baader. Its outrageous explanation is indicative of the popular imagination: "The arrest of her boyfriend Baader affected this deviant woman to such a degree that she simply had to buy something new, like any normal woman does when something is wrong"<sup>23</sup> (quoted in Dürkop 194-195). The representation of Ensslin, here, takes us close to the discourse of "Bonnie und Kleid" with which we started.

An article in *Die Welt* about another violent woman is fascinating in terms of the hystericization of aberrant female bodies (Renner 4). The case concerns an actress, Ingrid van Bergen, who allegedly murdered her lover as the result of sexual jealousy.<sup>24</sup> The article is saturated with allusions to hysteria and the narcissism of this woman, whose femininity is certainly portrayed as a self-conscious hysterical masquerade. Most strikingly, the image dominating the page shows van Bergen in court, complete with beautifully made-up face, long blond hair, fiddling with her earring whilst admiring

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<sup>19</sup> "Die Ehefrau und Mutter Ulrike Meinhof: eine freundlich-lächelnde etwas pummelige junge Frau mit viel Sinn für Luxus, flotte Parties und intellektuelle Streitgespräche."

<sup>20</sup> "Im Modellkleid diskutierte sie auf den Parties der Bourgeoisie über Marx und Lenin."

<sup>21</sup> "Skoluda" is exclusive jewellery made on the island of Sylt.

<sup>22</sup> "schmückte sich mit ihr; und sie schmückte sich für die Gesellschaft und trug zum Gloria-Modellkleid gern das handgehämmerte Skoluda-Gehänge."

<sup>23</sup> "Die Verhaftung ihres Freundes Baader hatte dies abartige Frau so tief berührt, daß sie wie auch normale Frauen, wenn sie Kummer haben - unbedingt etwas Neues kaufen mußte..."

<sup>24</sup> As I shall discuss in the next section, sexual jealousy is also typical of the hysterical woman.

herself in a hand mirror; an image which fits comfortably into and perpetuates the associative cluster of cultural ideas of femininity, narcissism and hysteria.

Countless suggestions are made that this woman is performing a masquerade – she is, after all, an actress by profession. The evening of the murder, van Bergen is condescendingly described as “the hysterical lover, who was playing a game and broke her toy”<sup>25</sup> (4). The article refers to “van Bergen’s mixture of controlled tears and recited/rehearsed testimonies”<sup>26</sup> during her trial, which adds a sense of calculation and self-consciousness to her performances.

The notion of performing the hysterical feminine leads us to the work of the celebrated nineteenth-century doctor, Jean-Martin Charcot: “a showman with great theatrical flair” (Showalter *Hystories* 31). Charcot was based at La Salpêtrière in Paris where he pioneered new understandings of hysteria based upon the (pseudo-)science of “seeing” hysterical symptoms. La Salpêtrière was the first European hospital to employ its own resident photographer – Albert Londe – and iconic images of hysterical poses still circulate today.<sup>27</sup> According to Sander Gilman, “the camera was as necessary for the study of hysteria as the microscope was for histology” (352). The emphasis on hysteria’s visual manifestations brings notions of self-conscious performance and spectacle to the fore. According to Gilman, “the patient knows how to be a patient” (353). Charcot himself even seems aware of the performances of his patients: “It is incontestable that, in a multitude of cases, (the hysterics) have taken pleasure in distorting, by exaggerations, the principal circumstances of their disorder, in order to make them appear extraordinary and wonderful” (quoted in Gilman 352). This is not surprising given the popular attention that Charcot and La Salpêtrière received. Indeed, Charcot even instituted two weekly performances or lecture-demonstrations in La Salpêtrière, attended by the Parisian elite. As a result, hysterics such as Blanche Wittman became the “stars of hysteria” (Porter 242), who have inspired and continue to inspire works of art (Showalter, *Hystories* 100-112).

<sup>25</sup> “Die hysterische Geliebte, die ein Spiel spielte und ihr Spielzeug zerbrach.”

<sup>26</sup> “Ingrid van Bergens Mischung aus kontrollierten Tränen und rezitierten Einlassungen.”

<sup>27</sup> Significantly, the front cover of the Penguin edition of Michel Foucault’s *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: vol. 1*, features a detail from perhaps the most iconic image of the hysterical feminine: *Une Leçon de Charcot à La Salpêtrière* by Andre Brouillet. This image will be discussed in more detail later.

Hypnotic trance plays a vital role in Charcot’s subjects’ performances, not least because of the visual potential of trance. In the article on van Bergen, hypnotic trance is frequently alluded to. The violent woman is described as “out of her mind”<sup>28</sup> as the result of sexual jealousy, and “beside herself”<sup>29</sup> and “in trance”<sup>30</sup> during the murder (Renner 4). Arguably the most crucial characteristic of the hysterical feminine body is its sexuality. Roy Porter, for example, explains that hysteria was read by nineteenth-century doctors “as eros in disguise. Its swoonings, jerks, convulsions, and panting blatantly simulated sexuality” (251). In view of the understandings of the degree to which self-conscious performance plays a part in the hysterical feminine, the condition can perhaps be interpreted as women performing the sexual for the male gaze, which in turn contains this excessive sexuality and channels it into culturally intelligible paradigms.<sup>31</sup> 1970s aberrant female bodies, in the case of female revolutionaries and terrorists, are also sexualised in order to diffuse the subversive threat they pose. An image from a *Stern* article, documenting the student revolution in April 1968, is particularly instructive in terms of the sexualisation of the hysterical body, and the hysteric’s perceived compulsion to reveal herself (“Deutsche” 18-19). The woman in the image lies on the floor with a group of demonstrators. With her skirt high, underwear revealed and legs and heeled court shoes in the air, she seems to be mimicking one of the classic poses of hysterical iconography. Figure 1 is a sketch of a similar pose from the stage of *grand hystérie*:



**Figure 1: a hysterical pose**

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<sup>28</sup> “von Sinnen”

<sup>29</sup> “Außer sich”

<sup>30</sup> “In Trance”

<sup>31</sup> Nineteenth century ideas about female sexuality and the female orgasm being in excess of reproduction led to this compulsion to contain.



The image in *Stern* is almost an illustration of an account of one of Charcot’s lecture-demonstrations: “Another (hysterical woman) would crawl on all fours on the floor, barking furiously when told she was a dog [...] *lift her skirts with a shriek*<sup>32</sup> of terror when a glove was thrown at her feet” (Axel Munthe, quoted in Showalter, “Hysteria” 311, my italics). Furthermore, in the main lecture hall of La Salpêtrière hung Tony Robert Fleury’s painting, *Pinel Freeing the Insane* (<http://www.ihm.nlm.nih.gov/ihm/images/B/21/323.jpg>) This image clearly outlines the relationship between sexuality – in the guise of revealing oneself – and madness/hysteria in visual iconography. With her right hand still clutching at her blouse, the hysterical woman in the background has clearly revealed herself intentionally, albeit in trance. Equally, at the centre of the image, another woman’s dress has fallen down, revealing much of her shoulders and the top of her breast.

States of hypnotic trance and hallucination are supposedly perceptible in the eyes of the subject, whose hysterical feminine gaze contrasts perfectly with the authoritative male gaze of the physician and the camera. The hystericization of Gudrun Ensslin and Ulrike Meinhof in their eyes is often evident. A *Spiegel* image of Ensslin in her prison uniform is interesting:



**Figure 2: Gudrun Ensslin in Prison (“Es kann” 38). By kind permission of Franz J. Ruch.**

<sup>32</sup> The shrieky, shrill voice of violent female terrorists is also alluded to frequently in German media.

The most striking feature of this image is Ensslin’s eyes which look to the side with a curious expression. As figures 3 demonstrates, the eyes are a central signifier – “the real clue” (Gilman 384) - of hysteria and visual hallucinations in the visual iconography of hysteria:



**Figure 3: Paul Regnard, *Les maladies épidémiques de l’esprit: sorcellerie magnétisme, morphisme, délire des grandeurs*. (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie, 1887), p. 87. (Bethesda, Md.: National Library of Medicine).**

Meinhof’s eyes are also hystericized by media discourses, but in a slightly different way, suggestive of the iconography of the hysterical melancholic. On the notorious “wanted poster” and also in images of Meinhof during her journalist days, her downcast eyes are striking:



Figure 4: The famous “wanted” poster, printed in countless newspapers.



Figure 5: Meinhof the journalist (Prinz). (c) Archiv Verlag Klaus Wagenbach

Meinhof’s eyes and pose, more generally, echo an image from the iconography of the hysterical melancholic:



**Figure 6: Hugh W. Diamond, a portrait of a case of "religious melancholy." (1858) By kind permission of The Royal Society of Medicine.**

As Showalter also notes, downcast eyes contrast perfectly with the penetrating and "knowing" male gaze of the physician, of science, of the camera, and, in this instance, with the containing gaze of the *Männerpresse*:

The intensely scrutinizing male gaze mingled the mesmerizing power of the hypnotist and the commanding eye of the artist with the penetrating vision of the scientist piercing the veil of nature. It was very much associated with masculinity itself. Charcot's stare was contrasted with the downcast eyes of his hysterical women patients ("Hysteria" 309-310).

The face, the brain and the hair of the subject are further signifiers of hysteria and potential madness, central to cultural ideas of femininity. According to nineteenth-century physiognomy, the face can be studied "as the index of the brain" (Warner, quoted in Gilman 383), where the brain is understood as "the source of all hysteria" (Gilman 385). Close-up images of the faces of female terrorists abound, and the fact that pseudo-scientific discourses pervade the popular imagination is demonstrated by an article by a Munich psychologist in *Bild*, who extrapolates from a photograph of Petra Schelm shot dead that she has a "combative personality"<sup>33</sup> because of her prominent lower jaw in that particular image (quoted in "B&M" 19). The idea of the brain as the source of hysteria acquires particular significance in the case of Meinhof, of whose brain x-rayed photographs were actually published in *Stern* as proof of her pathological nature ("Ihr letzter" 74).

Hair also connotes the hysterical and the mad. Gilman notes that "(i)mages of the alteration of the hair in the mentally ill are already evoked in Darwin's study of the nature of expression" (382). The combed-down hair of the boy in figure 1 contrasts with the unkempt and uncontrolled curls of figure 2 here:

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<sup>33</sup> "kämpferische Persönlichkeit"



**Figure 7: From Dr Räuber, “Ein Fall von periodisch wiederkehrender Haarveränderung bei einem Epileptiker,” [Virchows] Archiv für pathologische Anatomie und Physiologie 97 (1884): 50-83, plate no. 2. (Bethesda, Md.: National Library of Medicine**

An article in *Der Spiegel* uses a similar visual language with regard to Ensslin in order to hystericize her. It includes three images of Ensslin arranged in a vertical line, similar to figure 7. The first photograph shows a young Ensslin with a short, straight sensible haircut; the obedient German daughter par excellence. The second image shows Ensslin with long slightly straggly blond hair, connoting slightly subversive ideas of sexuality and vitality. In the final image, Ensslin has much darker short curly out-of-control hair which signifies a sort of hysterical madness (the German phrase “Krauses Haar, krauser Sinn” (literally “frizzy hair, frizzy mind.”) springs to mind).

### **Hysterical Narratives**

Sigmund Freud, a great admirer of Charcot, is significant for having taken hysteria from a visual to a verbal language, most famously in the guise of his "talking cure." From a condition resulting from a hereditary defect, exacerbated by trauma, Freud redefined hysteria as solely the result of trauma, likely to have occurred during the Oedipal stages of development, which could be reversed through putting the pieces of the narrative back together. From the positivism of Charcot, Freud privileges the psyche, as can be seen in his notorious hysterical narratives. Most controversial was his Dora case study.<sup>34</sup> Dora walked out on Freud before the "recovery" was complete, and Freud, some years later, wrote her hysterical narrative, complete with happy ending and all the embellishments of nineteenth-century literature. Dora is given no voice and Freud's interpretations are authoritatively imposed upon her narrative and subjectivity. Upon the chaos and disorder of Dora's life, then, Freud imposes an ordered narrative – inspired by his own preoccupations and fantasies - with little regard for whether it corresponded to Dora's experiences or understandings. This colonial act resonates with the hysterical narratives imposed upon violent female terrorists in the 1970s German *Männerpresse*, not least because trauma is identified to be at the heart of this hystericization.

Oedipal narratives are imposed upon violent women. *Der Spiegel*, for example, suggests that Meinhof's problems can be traced back to the trauma of losing her father at an impressionable age. The suggestion is made that Meinhof tried to replace him through marrying her husband Klaus Rainer Röhl: "When she was six her father died after suffering from chronic depression as the result of his wife's infidelity – a trauma which might explain the radical way in which Ulrike Meinhof turned her back on bourgeois society after the failure of her marriage."<sup>35</sup> ("Meinhof: „Wer" 14). The reference to Meinhof turning "her back on bourgeois society" alludes to her decision to "go underground." By conflating the failure of her marriage with this decision, Meinhof's actions are undermined as hysterically feminine. In a different article from *Der Spiegel*, we learn that Meinhof's "marriage could not stand up to the 'lively libertinage'

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<sup>34</sup> The case of Dora has been subject to much feminist academic discourse. (see Showalter 1998 49-58).

<sup>35</sup> "Als sie sechs war, starb ihr Vater nach schweren Depressionen über ‚eheliche Untreue‘ seiner Frau – ein Trauma, das die Radikalität erklären soll, mit der Ulrike Meinhof nach dem Scheitern ihrer Ehe [...] der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft den Rücken kehrte."

(Rühmkorf) of the Hamburg party scene"<sup>36</sup> („Wer sich" 64) As if to illustrate this "lively libertinage," an image is printed of Röhl with bare chest, leather jacket, and thumbs jauntily hooked into his trousers:



**Figure 8: Klaus Rainer Röhl, Meinhof's ex husband („Wer sich" 64). By kind permission of Sigrid Rothe.**

The suggestion is that Röhl is a libertine, and that it is no wonder that Meinhof's and his marriage failed: a reassuringly familiar scenario. The failure of this marriage, then, provides the trauma which ultimately leads to Meinhof's hysteria. This before-and-after-trauma strategy is also employed in terms of Meinhof's operation to remove a brain tumour shortly after she gave birth to her twins in 1962, leading to a "Jekyll-and Hyde-metamorphosis"<sup>37</sup> ("Meinhof „Wer" 14). The before-and-after-narrative, often buttressed by two contrasting photographs of Meinhof, provides a readily understandable narrative which serves to contain the aberrant female. An image taken during Meinhof's arrest in 1972 is often published alongside such discourses about her putative hysterical madness. The photograph features a very short, dark haired Meinhof, gaunt and grimacing and

<sup>36</sup> "daß ihre Ehe... der ‚lustigen Libertinage' (Rühmkorf) der Hamburger Party-Gesellschaft nicht gewachsen war."

<sup>37</sup> "Jekyll-Hyde-Verwandlung." The word "Verwandlung" is clearly associated in the popular imagination with Kafka's short story *Die Verwandlung* of 1912, which contributes to the sense of Meinhof turning into some sort of monster.

restrained by male police officers. Significantly, the officer to the left of Meinhof has the palm of his hand, flat under Meinhof's chin, holding her head up and also rendering the image similar to iconic images of beheading, not least those of the biblical Judith – another violent woman – beheading Holofernes. Here, however, the tables have been turned.

In "The Psychology of Women," Freud also asserts "that envy and jealousy play a greater part in the mental life of women" (161). These ideas underpin many of the hysterical narratives of violent female terrorists. In the same *Bild* article which informs us that Meinhof "made herself look beautiful" before committing suicide, the journalist suggests possible motives, one being that Meinhof was jealous of the sexual chemistry and intimacy between her prison comrades, Ensslin and Baader. Meinhof "could see how it was not only their shared convictions that united Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin but also recollections of their shared pleasures in the bedroom"<sup>38</sup> ("Die Wahrheit" 2). Another suggestion is that Meinhof killed herself because of her distress at not being able to see her children. The fact that she killed herself on mother's day does admittedly lend itself to this narrative.

### Conclusion

Considered together, both the gaze of the camera and the imposed ordered narrative of the 1970s German *Männerpresse* serve to hystericize the female terrorist, rendering her hysterically feminine. If woman functions as the literal and cultural reproducer and representation of the nation (Yuval-Davis), this dual strategy is an attempt to contain, or at least diffuse, the threat that the aberrant female body poses to the body politic of the nation, through at once undermining her actions and subjectivity and rendering her culturally intelligible. An image of Meinhof escorted by police after a demonstration says a lot about the gender politics of the gaze at work ("Meinhof/Baader"

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<sup>38</sup> ".....mit ansehen konnte, wie Andreas Baader und Gudrun Ensslin nicht nur die Gesinnung, sondern auch die Erinnerung an gemeinsame Bettfreuden verband."



31).

(<http://www.berlinpressservices.de/start/order.php?text=ulrike%20meinhof&pid=2566>)<sup>39</sup>

Viewing the image alongside André Brouillet's iconic painting of Charcot and Blanche Wittman, *Une Leçon de Charcot à La Salpêtrière*, is instructive

([http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theatre\\_journal/v049/full/49.2king\\_fig02f.jpg](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theatre_journal/v049/full/49.2king_fig02f.jpg)) In both images, the woman is surrounded almost exclusively by men whose authoritative and "knowing"<sup>40</sup> gaze contrasts perfectly with the deficient and pathological gaze of the female, signified, in Wittman's case, by her sexualised hypnotic trance and, in Meinhof's, by her dark glasses which obscure her perceptions.<sup>41</sup> The female body is seen, and therefore "known," by male viewers. In the context of the 1970s German *Männerpresse*, such a "knowing" gaze is not limited to the image itself: the German, largely male, reader is also implicated in the gender politics of the gaze, controlling and containing the aberrant female body and, by extension, anxiously striving to re-enforce notions of a healthy body politic.

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<sup>39</sup> This image of Meinhof bears striking similarities to Fleury's *Pinel Freeing the Insane* discussed above (<http://www.ihm.nlm.nih.gov/ihm/images/B/21/323.jpg>) with the man on Meinhof's left holding her arm and the man on her right mirroring the gaze and stance of the Fleury image.

<sup>40</sup> "knowing" in the Foucauldian sense of "power-knowledge."

<sup>41</sup> The fact that glasses obscure perception is fitting for a woman who sees the Federal Republic from a radically different perspective.

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