

CONSUMING//TERROR is a dynamic academic analysis of the Baader-Meinhof, the self-proclaimed "urban guerilla cell" active in West Germany in the 1970s and '80s. The book traces the visual history of the Red Army Faction (RAF) and its relations both to the history of left-wing iconography and the genre of radical chic. This study concentrates on the era when terrorism first entered the Western news media through spectacular bombings, hijackings and assassinations. Located on the frontlines of the Cold War, the story of the RAF provides an excellent lens with which to study the visual components of terror. Since that time, public conceptions of the RAF have shifted in significant ways, as images which initially emerged in the news media have gradually become processed and reframed through recycling in cinema, historical studies, pop culture and fine art.

CONSUMING//TERROR explores how the RAF, like Che Guevara, have seeped into popular culture, fashion and art, moving through contexts where they become floating signifiers for rebellion that have been stripped of political and historical clarity.

"Rupert Goldsworthy has taken the entire visual world surrounding the German terrorists belonging to the Baader-Meinhof gang and related those posters and emblems and photos to an ever-widening repertoire of radical chic images springing up across the globe. Like the famous picture of Che Guevara, these symbols seem powerful but carry no specific political message. Goldsworthy has brought together all this fascinating material—potent but polyvalent—and analyzed it for the first time in subtle and diverse ways."
— Edmund White

The New York Times on Goldsworthy: "sad twilight histories bounce off each other and interconnect like fragments of overheard conversations...suicidal rock stars, student radicals, Black Panthers and aged movie queens—blasts from the past plus cultural arcana—the textual melange makes fun reading: sharp, dark, hard to pin down, but definitely there."

Rupert Goldsworthy is a British artist and writer based in New York City.



9 783639 184570 978-3-639-18457-0

CONSUMING//TERROR

Rupert Goldsworthy



Rupert Goldsworthy

CONSUMING//TERROR

Images of the Baader-Meinhof

II

THE RED STAR AND OUTLAW IDENTITY

As noted in Chapter One, Robert Storr states that the RAF aimed “to bring the struggle of the revolutionary Third World to the reactionary First World.”¹ His assessment provides an interesting counterpoint in a consideration of RAF imagery. How did the graphic/tactics of the RAF relate to that of earlier movements?

The RAF adopted strategies from earlier radical and terror groups which had developed and created high-visibility identities and strategies that intentionally aimed to provoke public outrage. The RAF’s tactics owe a clear debt to the avant-garde shock tactics of particular art groups of the post-War period. Some RAF members had been involved in the Munich

theatrical circle around Fassbinder in the late 1960s before joining the group. Some members were clearly influenced by French provocational art groups the Lettrists and Situationist International (SI). The RAF adopted the Situationist tactic of *détournement* (see Chapter Six), an example of both this tactic, and the S.I.'s influence on the RAF is the *détournement* of the very name RAF, parodying the acronym of World War Two victors the British Royal Air Force responsible for the devastation of many German cities. Dieter Kunzelman, a Kommune 1 founder and RAF associate, had been involved in the Situationist International during the early 1960s.

Beyond these influences, the media-savvy antics of Berlin's late 1960s hippie commune scene helped to shape RAF thinking. The antics and theatrics of Kommune 1 during this period had similarities to those of their contemporaries, U.S. political pranksters the Yippies. Baader had lived briefly in Kommune-1 in the late 1960s.

Given the familiarity of some RAF members with the world of avant-garde theater, another likely inspiration appears to have been Antonin Artaud. His "Theater of Cruelty" deliberately intended—through transgressive and horrific theatrics—to shock an audience out of their cultural desensitization.

Informed by the earlier proximity to these milieus, RAF terror strategy adopted shocking theatrical modes of engagement—to produce a type of violent political theatre. These methods were adopted along with more clearly terroristic strategies, such as bombings, bank robbery, kidnapping and assassination of high-level government figures. Similar terror acts by the I.R.A., the Brigade Rosse and the Tupamaros received global media coverage in the late 1960s. Thus the zeitgeist of the 1960s informed the RAF's terror tactics.

To discuss a history of RAF imagery, one also needs to begin before the group's formation and consider Leftist visuals of the 1960s. This West German group began to engage in terror tactics in response to Vietnam, and along with adopting a

broad anti-imperialist struggle, the RAF also adopted a visual lingua franca of radicalism that had been generated by a range of earlier left-wing militant groups.

Outlaw Imagery

The RAF terror phenomenon in West Germany involved a complex series of events where a strong visual identity was a key element. As well as acting as a signature in a range of communiqués, a terror group's logo is a crucial authorial stamp, brand, and meaning-maker—a sign that is used by a phantom presence, the terror group, which creates a spectacular and horrific display and then disappears. In such a context, the visual resonance of a terror group's logo is of central importance.

The history of the group's most recognizable identifying symbol—their logo and its relation to earlier Leftist movements—is crucial. Studying the genealogy that precedes the RAF can explain something about the visual impact of this German group. In this chapter I argue not only that the RAF logo drew from specific international reference points, but that all these Leftist signs were....unstable in meaning, a quality that affects the later public understanding of the RAF's identity.

The design of the RAF logo is often attributed to group leader Andreas Baader and graphic designer Holm von Czettritz.² It first appeared in 1970 in the group's communiqués and in locations like underground political magazine 883.

The logo clearly draws its graphic style from three particular logos used by high-profile terror and radical groups active during the late 1960s in other parts of the world.

The RAF logo design takes graphic elements from the logos of Italian terror group, the Brigate Rosse (the red star and militaristic name); from that of Uruguay's Marxist guerilla group the Tupamaros (the central three initials on the star); and from the logo of the newspaper of the American "armed community activists" the Black Panthers (a star with a soldier holding a gun). A further reference in the RAF's name is to the

acronym of the British Royal Air Force. Another reference here is to the Japanese Red Army (JRA), a contemporaneous Leftist terror group, from whom some claim the RAF adopted their name. The JRA were best known for their involvement in the airport massacre at Lodz, Israel in 1972.

By adopting these signs, the RAF logo suggested from the outset that the group's strategies—like the other groups—would include hijacking, bombing and the use of guns. The sign itself explicitly indicated the type of war in which the RAF aimed to engage. This logo exemplifies both the RAF's ideological intent at their inception, and also their visual plundering. It also reveals a degree of identity confusion and mystification.



Fig. 1: The RAF logo and some of its precursors: Red Army Faction logo, 1970; Tupamaros logo, 1960s; Black Panther newspaper logo, 1967; Brigade Rosse logo, 1960s; British Royal Air Force insignia, c.1930s.

What does this graphic borrowing also reveal? Does the RAF attempt to develop as a sub-brand spinning off from a global brand of left-wing terrorism, and what does this pattern imply about the loose currency of this type of imagery during this period? What was the RAF's role in the broader dissemination of a free-floating transnational graphic style denoting the Leftist guerrilla? These questions concerning authenticity and branding are important terrains to map.

The graphic punch of the RAF's logo was key to the notoriety that this particular group achieved in a short time on a national scale. One reason for the RAF's logo's visual resonance was their synchronicity with the cultural zeitgeist of the era. The RAF logo was understood to suggest a world-

historical engagement. This founding imagery of the RAF makes this particular group's identity stand out from the many other self-styled urban guerilla groups active in West Germany during the same period, such as the "Hasch Rebellen," "Bewegung 2.Juni," "Sozialistisches Patienten Kollektiv," or "Rote Zellen."³

The RAF's visually commanding logo closely resembled the style of already globally-recognized Leftist groups, and this made the group's identity stand out. But what also made the RAF's visual identity resonant was their ability (consciously and unconsciously) to tap into further mythologies and signifying streams. As we shall see in Chapter Four and Five, parallel to the RAF's own intent to mythologize their identity, the West German media increasingly portrayed this particular group in mythic terms—as *the embodiment of outrageous terror*.

In relation to the idea of a terror group attempting to adopt signs signaling the mythic, powerful and world historic, it is important to consider the RAF's deliberate invocation of a global rhetoric of terror in the construction of their public image. As noted, some within the RAF leadership had worked in the media. These included RAF leader Ulrike Meinhof, who was former editor of *konkret*, the leading West German left-wing magazine, Andreas Baader, at one point an aspiring journalist,⁴ and Holger Meins, a filmmaker.⁵ As figures familiar with the patterns of news construction, all were aware of the importance of arresting visuals in the success of news-grabbing public actions.⁶

The RAF logo was clearly inspired by the group logos already cited. But it is also important to track what other signifying systems their logo appears to tap into. Other kinds of associations with different types of symbolism are also apparent. Some of these signs may initially appear unrelated, but on closer consideration it is easier to see a connection.⁷

While the RAF logo clearly inherits the visual grammar of other violent Leftist groups, it also directly and

indirectly draws from a language related to other social organizations, such as trade unions and worker movements which rely on the presence of a logo as a group identifier. The RAF graphics also have stylistic affinities with a visual language associated with the contemporaneous hippie subculture of the 1960s, the American Civil Rights movement, and also the Chinese Cultural Revolution.



Fig. 2. Three logos featuring a star and a gun: Minutemen logo, 1800s; Black Panther newspaper logo, c.1967; Red Army Faction logo, 1970.

The RAF logo also indirectly draws from right-wing signage. An example of this connection is that the RAF logo draws from the Black Panthers' newspaper logo—a sign that with its image of a soldier at arms deliberately hijacks the visual rhetoric of the logo adopted by the Minutemen, known in the 1960s as a US racist militia group.⁸

Like many other Western countercultural groups of the era, the RAF logo is related to markings of alterity, such as Islamic stars and pagan symbols, mythic, pre-Christian and Classical narratives.

Other contemporary examples from the 1970s include the U.S. urban guerrilla group, the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), formed in 1972, kidnappers of heiress Patty Hearst. The SLA logo adopted the mythological several-headed Hydra snake. The Black Panthers' logo featured a running



Fig. 3. Radical and Terror Group Signs from the 1920s to the Present: Left-right, top to bottom: The Black Panthers logo, c.1967; Brigate Rosse logo, Italy, 1960s; Red Army Faction logo, West Germany, 1970; Zapatista group logo, Mexico, 1990s; Ulster Young Militants logo, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1970s; Hamas logo, 1960s, Palestine; Palestinian terror group logo, 1980s; Action Directe logo, France, 1970s; Symbionese Liberation Army logo, San Francisco, 1971?; The Angry Brigade, London, 1970s; Islamilcal terror group, Middle East, 1970s; IRA street sign, Belfast, 1980s; West German-Iranian Leftist militant group, Iran/Germany, 1970s; Ulster Defense Army, Belfast, 1960s?; Viet Cong solidarity flag, Western Europe, 1970s; Rote Zellen logo, West Germany, 1970s; 17th November group, Greece, c.1960s; Weather Underground logo, U.S, c.1970; OSPAAAL Black Power solidarity poster, Cuba, c.1970; Basque separatist movement ETA, 1950s? logo; SLA/Weathermen solidarity poster, U.S, 1974; Russian Communist logo, early 1920s; Japanese Red Army logo, Japan/Palestine, c.1970; 883 magazine logo, West Germany, late 1960s.

Fig. 4. Further Leftist, Radical and Terror Group Signs from the 1960s to the Present. Left-right, top to bottom: Brigate Rosse, Italy, 1960s; Bewegung 2.Juni, West Germany, 1970s; Cellules Communistes Combattantes, France, 1970s; ERP, Latin America, 1960s; MIR, Latin America, 1960s; Animal Liberation Front, Britain, 1980s; Wobblies, U.S, 1900s; Israeli group logo, 1980s; Red flags; ELN, Latin America, 1960s; Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands/Marxisten-Leninisten, West Germany, 1970s, MLN, Latin America, 1960s, Hasch Rebellen, West Berlin, 1960s; Partido Comunista Circolo Antonio Gramsci, Italy, 1970s; U.S.S.R. Red Army badge, 1920s; Symbionese Liberation Army communiqué, U.S, 1975; Hezbollah logo, Palestine, 1980s; 26th March group, Latin America, 1980s; FSLN, Latin America, 1960s; Mozambique Communist group, 1970s; West German graphic from 1970s, with a range of radical and terror logos; Radical Feminist log, U.S?, 160s; Iranian Communist group, 1970s; Communist Party, South East Asia, 1970s



panther. Both these logos use anthropomorphic symbolism to suggest the untameable power of the animal kingdom to mythologize their groups' identities.⁹

Similar to this pattern of co-opting older powerful public iconography, the RAF took signs associated with earlier Leftist groups and reconfigured this signage to create their group's identity.

The Red Star in Guerrilla Signage

During the late 1960s a visual style emerged denoting a Leftist radical identity that was used by a range of international underground groups. This style circulated through political magazines, banners, pins, T-shirts, and in settings on the periphery of the urban landscape, such as graffiti. These group logos often included a star, a gun, and a circle representing the globe to suggest their involvement in a worldwide Marxist revolution.

To explain this mythic component of the RAF logo and the resonance of this kind of signage, it is necessary to consider the contexts where this type of Leftist sign first developed currency, and what it was meant to suggest.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, after the growth of workers' movements in the mid-eighteenth century, particular kinds of worker-identified iconography emerged.¹⁰ Later with the rise of Anarchist and Communist movements in the nineteenth century, the star symbol and the colors black and red were first used as Leftist signifiers.

During the early years of the twentieth century, signs and images with these political associations became more widespread. Due to the high visibility of successful left-wing revolutions in Russia in 1917 and China in 1949—two of the largest countries in the world—this genre of signs grew in public visibility internationally.

Such signs were often used as graphics in textual tracts, printed broadsheets, posters, and newspapers. Crucial to the

dissemination of these symbols was their mass-reproducibility and their uncopyrighted status.¹¹ These signs developed as a discrete category denoting Leftism among a wider catalog of politically-identified public signage. But this particular identity was understood to loosely refer to a somewhat-amorphous collection of political identities: insurrectionary groups, official Communist parties, anti-imperialists, the “politically-radical”—and later, Leftist terrorists.

A central formal element used in the design of the RAF logo is the red star of Communism. The history of the red star as a Communist signifier can be traced back to its association with the Red Guard in the immediate post-World War-One period. The history of this sign reveals much about the particular resonance of much Leftist iconography. There are a number of competing claims as to the origins and exact meaning of this symbol. What seems clear is that the red star emerged as a Communist sign at the end of the First World War, in the context of the Russian Revolution.

Russian troops fleeing from the Austrian and German fronts found themselves in Moscow in 1917 and mixed up with the local Moscow garrison. To distinguish the Moscow troops from the influx of retreating Russians, the officers gave out tin stars to the Moscow garrison soldiers to wear on their hats. When those troops joined together with the Red Army and the Bolsheviks, they painted their tin stars red to symbolize Communism—thus creating the first official Communist red star. Another claim of origin for the red star comes from an alleged encounter between Trotsky and the Bolshevik revolutionary Nikolai Krylenko during this period. Krylenko, an Esperantist, was wearing a green star lapel badge; Trotsky enquired as to its meaning and received an explanation that each arm of the star represented one of the five traditional continents. On hearing this, he specified that a red star should be worn by soldiers of the Red Army.¹²

The five-pointed red star is also said to represent the five fingers of the worker's hand. A further suggestion is that



Fig. 5. Leftist, Radical and Terror Signs Featuring the Red Star from the 1920s to the Present, left to right, top to bottom: USSR Communist Party Logo, 1920s; Info magazine, West Germany, 1970s; 883 magazine, West Germany, 1960s; Brigade Rosse, Italy, 1960s; Black Panthers newspaper, U.S., 1960s; Zapatistas, Mexico, 1990s; Radical magazine, West Germany, 1960s; Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands/Marxisten-Leninisten, West Germany, 1970s, Red Army Faction group logo, 1970; Graphic from 883 magazine, West Germany, 1970s; Tupamaros, Uruguay, 1960s; Vietnam flag, 1970s; U.S.S.R Red Army insignia, 1920s; Latin American poster in solidarity with Leftist prisoners, 1970s; Ulrike Meinhof on a red star, from RAF solidarity poster, West Germany, 1970s; Cellules Communistes Combattantes, France, 1970s, Rote Zellen, West Germany, 1970s; Brigade Rosse solidarity T-shirt, Italy, 1980s; Wobblies, U.S., 1900s; West European Viet Cong Solidarity flag, 1970s.

the five points on the star were intended to represent the five social groups that would lead the nation to Communism: Youth, the military, industrial workers, agricultural workers and the intelligentsia.¹³

All these competing historical narratives develop around the red star as it emerges as a sign identified with Communism. The sign appeared resonant because it lent itself to many projections and associative narrative threads. A range of differing legends, myths and associations around the sign's meaning appear to solidify its wider symbolic stature in society. The use of the color red in Communist imagery can be traced back to the memorializing of the red flag flown by the Paris Commune of 1871. Red symbolizes the blood spilt by workers the world over in the fight for their emancipation. The red flag in Paris symbolized blood to indicate no surrender (as opposed to the white flag of surrender). Added to this, red has traditionally always had very positive connotations in Russian language and culture. The word "red" ("*красный*") is etymologically related with the words "*прекрасный*" ("very good", "the best") and "*красивый*" ("beautiful"). Red is also a color prominently featured in Russian Orthodox Christian Easter festivals.¹⁴ Until communist Russia's adoption of the hammer and sickle in 1924, the red flag was one of the key founding symbol associated with a worker's government.¹⁵

This set of explanations for the originations and meanings of the red star seem logical and coherent in the Russian setting, but it is important not to disclude other histories around the five-pointed star, particularly as a sign related to non-Christian religions, powers, and ideologies. It would simplify things to claim the red star sign emerged with Leftism. But it is also important to look at star symbolism in other contexts—to consider its resonance across a wider range of historical settings. This can explain more about the mythical aspect to this type of sign.

We can begin by noting that, regardless of color, the eye-catching formal qualities of the star already suggest a particular set of associations. Its geometric form intrinsically installs a semantic connection with the heavenly and exceptional, making it an apt symbol of a rupturous or avant-gardist movement.



Fig. 6. Non-Leftist group logos featuring the five-pointed star, from the 1920s to the present, left to right, top to bottom: RAF logo, 1970; Royal Air Force insignia, Britain, 1920s?; Masonic Temple sign, U.S, 1800s; Osotspa drink featuring U.S. sheriff's insignia, Britain, 2005; British Transport Police crest, 1900s?; Satanic goat with pentagram sign, Victorian graphic, Britain, 1800s; Nazi SS insignia, Germany, 1930s; Occult pentagram graphic, Western Europe, 1500s?; Ulster flag, Northern Ireland, 1800s?; Fraternal Order of Police crest, U.S, 1900s?; Heineken beer bottle cap, 1900s, Denmark; Top Star brand, Germany, 2005; Texaco Oil Company; Nation of Islam sign, U.S, 1950s?; Macy's Department store, U.S, 1900s; Turkish flag, 1900s?; Masonic crest, U.S, 1800s?; Masonic Grand Lodge symbol, Britain, 1800s?; U.S. Marine Corps graphic, 1940s?; Hells Angels New York logo, U.S, 1969.

The five-pointed star often appears in combination with other graphic forms to denote memberships and ideologies unassociated with Leftism. These other threads of association include the five-pointed star's use by Masonic groups and other secret organizations. A star logo inherits a rhetorical language of secrecy and avant-gardism from these other kinds of association. Further connections include the five-pointed pentagram that appeared on the coats of arms of crusaders in the

Middle Ages. The pentagram has also often been associated with the occult. When the sign was turned so that two of its ends were pointing upward, it is understood to represent the Devil. Since medieval times in Nordic countries this upturned star sign was drawn on doors and walls as protection against trolls and evil. In more recent eras, the five-pointed star has been used on army uniforms, and on the sides of tanks and fighter planes in the United States, and a range of other countries.

As this range of examples indicates, many people in the West are already on some level aware of prior associations with the five-pointed star beyond its use as Communist signifier. This sign has often implied secrecy, militarism, and an exceptional status.¹⁶ The Communist red star inherits these earlier associations. This reminds us that a sign's meaning remains fluid and subject to switches. This inherited polysemous quality adds to its rhetorical charge.

A Communist graphic with less multivalent associations is the hammer and sickle, a logo that first appeared in Soviet symbolism around 1917.¹⁷ The Soviet flag featuring the hammer, sickle and star was officially adopted in 1923. Although the hammer and sickle symbolizes the worker and peasant, also implicit in this logo's visual rhetoric is the potential of both's use as weapons, suggesting the possibility of violent insurrection. The hammer and sickle sign was never used by the RAF. But the RAF's logo substitutes these tools of industry with the image of a machine gun.

Despite contestation over exact details concerning specific narratives and meanings, what is clear is that the Russian revolution, and before it the Parisian uprisings, produced catalogs of images which were then used to signal communism and/or a call to violent worker uprising. In the wake of Marx and Engels' 1848 demand for a global worker insurrection ("Arbeiter aller Länder vereinigt Euch!" Workers of the world organize yourselves ¹⁸), red star graphics signaling Communism sprouted across a range of geographies. These

movements generated a body of internationally-recognizable Leftist signs, which led to the establishment and growth of communism as one of the first multinational visual brands of an ideological and economic nature.

In the context of wildfire global expansion in hostile political environments, the use of these Communist graphics often relied on grassroots, do-it-yourself patterns. These patterns established the permissions for these signs' appropriation in home-made embodiments, creating a tendency toward self-authorization around the usage of all Leftist signs. These signs were understood to be free, shared, and for the use of all. Without the control of copyright, the dissemination of the Leftist logo became widespread across a broad semantic field through its use by a diffuse range of groups and organizations.

Thus Leftist signs were from their inception floating in contexts that were, in terms of ideology and identity, particularly prone to schisms and wild cards. These logos—uncontrolled and untrademarked—lent themselves to insurrectionary movements of almost any hue. Due to this meta-praxis, a semantic fluidity is understood in the conception of all Leftist signs, and this sense of *laissez-faire* lends a particular rhetorical punch to their understanding. What we gather from all these earlier patterns is that long before the 1960s and 1970s, radical and Leftist signs were already established as markers with less than legitimate public associations. By the Seventies, with the rise of the domestic terrorist, these uncontrolled Leftist logos and ideologies provided the possibility for personally-motivated acting-out in the name of another loose signifier, “the people” (*das Volk*).



Fig. 7. Leftist, Radical and terror group logos of the 1960s and 1970s: from l-r, starting from top: Rote Armee Fraktion logo 1970; Black Panthers newspaper logo, 1968; Tupamaros logo, late 1960s; Brigade Rosse logo, late 1960s, Che 1965 (courtesy Estate of A.Korda); USSR logo 1920s, Hamas logo (date unknown); Vietcong flag, 1970s; Weather Underground logo, 1970s; Palestina poster, West Germany, 1970s; Soviet hammer and sickle logo, 1920s; Black Panther logo, 1968; Fatah logo, c.1970; Black power poster, 1970s; Basque ETA logo, 1970s; Palestinian-German group, early 1970s; UDA mural, Belfast 1970s; Black Panthers poster 1968; SDS Days of Rage poster 1969; IRA mural, Belfast 1970s.

The RAF adopted this visual style associated with Communist revolution in an attempt to *inszenieren* (insinuate and establish) the idea of their role in a larger ongoing international Leftist movement. What was the part played by the RAF in the dissemination of a free-floating transnational visual language that denoted not only the Left, but now also the urban guerrilla? By the RAF's adoption of this global Leftist visual rhetoric, I argue that this group blurred and shifted the perception of these signs and of the ideology of many other international Leftist groups.



Fig. 8. Holger Meins' "Freiheit für alle Gefangenen" poster. From "883" magazine, 1970.

An early RAF-related poster is particularly useful to understand the RAF's attempts to position their involvement in a global resistance movement. The image above was featured in the West German underground magazine 883 in 1970. The poster was designed by Holger Meins, who joined the RAF the same year.^{19 20} 1970 also marked the official formation of the RAF.

This image is remarkable on many levels—as an object expressing the verbal style of the era, for its graphic cleverness,

and also as a chilling forecast of future events. (Meins himself died in jail on hunger strike four years later on bombing charges). The image of a sunflower exploding in bloom is screen-printed in a primitive hippie-esque style. But this is no reference to flower-power. It drives the hippie “peace and love” rhetoric into reverse. On closer inspection the flower is assembled from a hand grenade, names and bullets, and it is red and somewhat-star-shaped. A text below the flower reads “Freiheit für alle Gefangenen” (“Freedom for all prisoners”). The flower is symbolic harbinger of future growth (a probable reference here to Mao’s injunction to “Let a thousand flowers bloom”²¹) but also here of imminent violence (the bullets ready to fly). Circling the fourteen-pronged, star-shaped, bullet petals are the names of international radical and terrorist groups of the period who were in the news. Notably no German group is present. The poster suggests that all the prisoners from these political groups should be liberated from jail by violent means.

However we should note that all these groups were involved in activism of many different shades, ranging from community initiatives (i.e. the Black Panthers’ free breakfast programs) to spectacular bank robberies (the Tupamaros in Uruguay), or the anti-Vietnam War bombings of state buildings (the Weather Underground in the U.S). Meins conflates the identities and goals of different groups, including national homeland movements, anti-colonial struggles, ideological groups, or armed community initiatives, are all here conflated. The rhetoric of this poster suggests that these groups shared a common goal that was only to be accomplished through violence. The poster implies that all these cells are ideologically linked beyond the release of their imprisoned members. Even in 1970, this appears to be misrepresentative of some of these groups, and a wishful thinking on Meins’ part—in his invocation of a global Leftist terror on a monstrous level.

The appropriation of the names of these groups in a poster made in another country renders their names emblematic and mythologizes their identities. What is kept and what gets

lost or evacuated in such a re-situating? Whilst Meins' poster acknowledges the semantic power of these identities, and appears to endorse their struggles, his appropriation brings into question the issue of authorization. This citing or co-option of another's struggle—whatever the intent—is part of a pattern of meaning-fragmentation that occurs around all uncopyrighted symbols and is a frequent pattern around signs of the political Other. The appropriation of the names, ideology and tactics of Third World anti-colonial movements by Europeans like the RAF (most of whom were born into West German families who survived the fascist era) opens another set of questions. As noted, one central ideological slippage of the RAF was to imagine that in identifying with Third World struggles, adopting their visuals and their violent strategies, that they, the RAF—despite being white and living in Western Europe under a relatively democratic government compared to say, Argentina—were then entitled to locate themselves similarly as the geopolitical “oppressed” subjects of world historical agency.

These issues of authenticity and the appropriation of global Leftist signage brings into discussion the role of this public marker for the terror group. As noted, a logo is of great importance for a terror group's public identity. It is used in their communiqués as an authenticating sign for their deeds. But the broader signification of such a sign is more clearly explained by considering the legal and cultural operations that structure its use and social status.

To explain the role of a terror logo within wider imaging systems, it is necessary to consider the history of logos as social and economic phenomena, and to look at the shifting historical contexts from which they emerge, how they assume currency, and the ways in which they operate.

The Logo in Society

The connection between public signs and a specific social or political identity begins within economies of ownership, shipping, slavery and sovereignty.²² The shift from

the sign as tribal marking develops due to its importance in the emergence of monarchical and institutional contexts. Publicly-identifiable signage makes visible specific compliances or associations with ideologies, memberships, or hierarchies within the civic body. Social and cultural identities in turn grow in stature as these logos develop currency. These visual domains expand in relation to technological and economic advances. Logos accrue associative power through their use in guilds, crests, and uniforms—a language of signage within an economy of paternal “author”-ity.

An example of this power of visual display is the way in the Middle Ages in Europe, court painting was used to show hierarchies of social control and the power of the established economic order. And although the subject matter of court painting expanded over time beyond just symbolizing economic status or portraying the sovereign and court, and began to include subjects whose status was less socially determined, the logo, as seal or mark, retained its imprimatur as an indicator of social status or authenticity.

During this period in Italy, the privileging of certain types of cultural production established a structural hegemony that then affected further economic and social relations. Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss talks of the relation between economic elites, cultural objects, and aesthetic hierarchies in these terms:

For the Renaissance artists, painting was perhaps an instrument of knowledge but it was also an instrument of possession.... Renaissance painting... was only possible because of the immense fortunes which were being amassed in Florence and elsewhere, and that rich Italian merchants looked upon painters as agents, who allowed them to confirm their possession of all that was beautiful and desirable in the world. The pictures in a

Florentine palace represented a kind of microcosm in which the proprietor, thanks to his artists, has recreated within easy reach and in as real a form as possible, all those features of the world to which he was attached.²³

Within the world of commerce, signs of “quality” and “markability” develop as a kind of shorthand—as locations where they become legitimated to mark off and police geographic or economic territory.

Later, due to the Industrial Revolution, increasing power was invested in brand logo in relation to the emergence of mass-production and commodification culture. A key to the rising power of this type of sign is the development of print technology, and the logo’s currency for the bourgeois classes of post-Enlightenment.

Further, an important shift in this semantic field concerning logos and signs was the introduction of the concept of “copyright,” which began within European state systems during the eighteenth century. The introduction of mass printing and copyright changed social and economic relations in a profound way.

European governments had previously granted monopoly rights to publishers to sell printed works. An example of the emergence of the modern concept of limited duration copyright was the British “Statute of Anne” in 1710.²⁴ This statute was among the first in Europe to accord exclusive rights to authors (i.e. creators) rather than publishers, and this law included protection for consumers of printed work, ensuring that publishers could not control their use after sale. (It also limited the duration of such exclusive rights to twenty-eight years, after which all works would pass into the public domain).²⁵ Similar patterns of legal control and ownership around print and image reproduction rights began to emerge concurrently across Western Europe. The “Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works” in 1886

began protected ownership over scientific advances and artistic works beyond national borders, thus introducing the concept of transnational copyright. As historian Hernandez-Reguant notes of the impact of the Berne Convention, “over the next century, many other countries followed suit in order to participate in international commerce.”²⁶ The introduction of this type of legislation encouraged broader patterns of control around all visual and verbal signage.

Notably during the twentieth century, communist states did not acknowledge or adopt the transnational laws of the Berne Convention. However in capitalist countries, parameters controlling the visual field continue to develop over time. One recent indication of the ongoing tightening of this copyright control is the introduction of increased levels of trademark infringement legislation. Recent U.S. patent laws now include the protection of the use of particular color combinations, letters and styles in public signage.²⁷ This legislation prohibits the use in advertising of imagery or color-combinations that are deemed too similar to the logos of established transnational brands in any way close to those used by global franchise corporations such as McDonald’s or Federal Express.

What these developing legal patterns suggest is that the level of control around all public signage is constantly growing, and the visual has become a field increasingly defined by legal, economic, administrative and linguistic limitations.

This pattern illustrates the way that institutional and economic systems attempt to control certain types of visual signage. But it is also important to consider the way that other historical developments fracture and redraw the existing roles of the visual sign. In order to better understand the shifting social role of the logo, it is necessary to consider shifting societal relations in the wake of the Industrial Revolution.

Technology and Visual Perception

If the visual was once a locus primarily used for the display of hierarchical power, suddenly in the nineteenth century, due to the advancements of photography and print technology, the role of visuality shifted in significant ways.

Parallel to the logo's emergence as a social and cultural signifier, due to important steps forward in technology, changes concerning visuality began to emerge in institutional contexts. The introduction of photography as a mass tool also altered much in the arena of visual relations.

The “bringing-to-visibility” established in court painting installed one kind of ocular economy where visibility indicated high social status. However due to photography this pattern of “visual-presence-denoting-power” could suddenly be reversed.²⁸ The reproducibility of photographs introduced the idea that a “bringing-to-visibility” was not always an indication of great socio-cultural power.

Objects such as mugshots used on a “Wanted” posters are emblematic of this redrawing of the parameters of what the visual could now perform. In a somewhat Foucauldian analysis, historian John Tagg argues that in the nineteenth century police photography, along with “the burgeoning sciences of criminology, psychiatry, germ theory and sanitation,” redefined the social as the object of their technical interventions.²⁹



Fig. 9. Police “Wanted” Posters from the Eighteenth Century to the 1970s: (left to right) Ned Kelly Wanted poster, Australia, 1800s; Angela Davis FBI Wanted poster, U.S., 1970; Bridget Rose Dugdale Wanted poster, Northern Ireland, 1974; Ulrike Meinhof Wanted for Murder poster, West Germany, 1972; RAF Wanted poster, West Germany, 1972.

Tagg suggests that parallel with photography came the growth in institutional settings of new “technologies of inscription.”³⁰ The photographic display of a fugitive’s likeness on a police poster could now demonize his or her face and name in a way that explicitly marked this identity as separate, sick, or notorious.³¹ The “Wanted” poster installed a specific type of visual regime. The mugshot established a new ocular economy—one of policing visibility and of a forensic surveillance of the body.³² The mugshot precisely renders the human subject “objectified,” denatured, “identified,” and subaltern. It developed a new “tabloid” print category—the visualized villain.

The enhanced veracity of photography leads to a refiguring of existing social relations and also of public conceptions of the state’s stability. In a Wanted poster the criminal is rendered both wanted yet undesirable. This is the Wanted poster’s inherent contradiction, it presents the criminal as the portrait of moral ugliness that the state nevertheless needs and desires as symbolic currency. As art historian Rachel Hall points out, the Wanted poster shows the face of a criminal who has successfully avoided the eyes of the police—at least for the moment anyway.³³ But a poster declaring the villain’s status as “Wanted” also demonstrates the vulnerability of this new disciplinary power. The Wanted poster is witness both of the domination of the state, and of its own vulnerability. The Wanted poster is not only a tool of surveillance, but also a report of its own functioning—an advertisement of “the one who got away.”³⁴

Walter Benjamin’s essay “Critique of Violence” argues that public admiration for the great criminal arises not in response to his deeds, but to the violence to which they bear witness: the violence of the state. The criminal’s violence arouses, “even in defeat the sympathy of the mass against the law.”³⁵ In Benjamin’s analysis, the high profile criminal threatens the law by indirectly making a spectacle of the state’s

exclusive claim to violence—and I contend, the extent of its visual domination.

In this new inter/disciplinary system of state control over identity, besides individuals, certain texts (including both written texts and image-texts) could be marked as “unnamed-able,” “unsay-able,” “unvisualizable,” “ineffable,” or demarcated as publicly useable only within specific state-approved parameters.³⁶

Outlaw Signs:

The Control and Use of

Copyright installs a sense of legitimacy around specific texts, images, and cultural framings. Parallel to socially-legitimated identity emerges its reflection—the illegitimate or forbidden. An early explanation for this policing of signage comes from the work of Count Goblet d'Alviella, an eighteenth century semiologist who conducted research into the distribution and migration of sacred symbols. D'Alviella suggested that certain symbols were mutually exclusive, i.e. they could not appear in the same country or cultural sphere.³⁷ If the logo of a crown signifies the sovereign, no other visually-similar marker can be allowed to diminish the monarch's visual sovereignty. The use of similar kinds of sign in such a context would therefore through their very existence, interrupt an established frame of reference. Such a pattern can be noted in the Christianization of pre-existing pagan shrines.

Implicit in this either-or dynamic is the idea that from their first emergence in society, public signs hold a crucial role in dominant regimes that control language, establish agency, and guard territory. The appropriation of any given sign—legal or illegal—interrupts the social order that attempts to dominate the visual sphere.

A contemporary example illustrates how visual control is typically enacted in Western society. The use of the *Federal Express* logo is tightly controlled, and appropriating or misusing it, incurs a fine for theft of intellectual property. If a

claim of trademark infringement submitted by *FedEx*, a fine is meted out by the state's legal system, and the offending visual is withdrawn from public display.

However, the appropriation of an uncopyrighted "outlaw" sign such as the red star RAF logo, the Black Panther logo, or for that matter, the Hell's Angels biker gang colors, creates a different kind of uneasiness, because another kind of social control surrounds these signs. Although the state or certain social groups may outlaw such signs at a certain time or place, no clear written ruling controls their use in other settings. Like many other culturally-indeterminate symbols, they are unprotected by legal means, but exist as loaded cultural markers. They exist as signs outside the state's law. But they still have specific understandings and connotations around their public use.

How do "outlaw" or terrorist signs establish themselves and operate as a heretical category amid a closely administered, legitimated, forest of signs?

In the 1970s, systems of communications such as television, newspapers, the underground press, or juridical documents helped to publicly define this type of signage.

Wider public use of these outlaw signs often begins in edge zones such as the underground press, university campuses, graffiti, rock festivals, tourist zones, art galleries, and most recently, the Web. These transitional or countercultural settings are where less-legitimate subject matter can more easily circulate. Border zones are by their nature porous and troublesome—subject to contestation and random policing. Such zones often become locations for struggle over linguistic meaning, and sometimes for an enactment of a discursive performativity.

In such settings, a certain type of mob rule consensus can still exert domain, where certain citizens feel entitled to publicly enact their own regimes of correction, denial, and punishment. Such elements do this (presumably) in the name of

maintaining—even essentializing—their notion of respectful social and linguistic order.

This “misuse” of outlaw signs illustrates how a non-juridical control of the visual is enacted. Unlike the state-legitimated “FedEx” model of visual control, the unauthorized use of a terror logo or the Hell’s Angels “colors” provokes a different kind of “forbidding” injunction from extra-legal forces—often enacted in a more random way via threats of physical violence from gang members, associates, rivals, or from “lobby groups.”

A recent high-profile example of this extra-legal pattern of control around outlaw political signage occurred in June 2007. Hollywood actress Cameron Diaz found herself forced to make a public apology in the media on a trip to Peru for wearing an army green handbag with a red star and a Mao slogan in Chinese that read “Serve the People.” To some in Peru, the bag and its slogan evoked painful memories of the Maoist Shining Path insurgency that fought the government in the 1980s and early 1990s in a bloody conflict that left nearly seventy thousand people dead.

According to the Associated Press, one prominent Peruvian writer claimed that “Diaz should have been a little more aware of local sensitivities when picking her accessories.” Diaz was compelled to make a public statement to express her regrets for this unintended faux-pas: “I sincerely apologize to anyone I may have inadvertently offended. The bag was a purchase I made as a tourist in China and I did not realize the potentially hurtful nature of the slogan printed on it.”³⁸ Her apology exemplifies how particular kinds of outlawed signage are conceived in the public domain, however unintentional or unknown their meaning to the wearer of such a sign. The Diaz story illustrates the way this pattern of random social policing of outlaw signage occurs. Although renegade signs are not usually controlled directly by legal means, they are patrolled by other forces (i.e. the general public and lobby groups).

In the blame storm of social policing swirling around taboo signs, terror group logos (such as that of the RAF) exist on the fringe of the visual field due to their potentially-problematic, banished, interstitial, and/or redundant status. In his seminal 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility,” Walter Benjamin famously argued that lesser-viewed signs retain a greater level of “aura”³⁹—associative social power—due to their rareness of public display. Benjamin argues that controls exist in the visual field which influence the use of these kinds of “exceptional” signs. But, he adds, mechanical reproduction is a liberatory force,⁴⁰ that the new age of print technology will refigure all existing social relations, and liberate the use of such signs.

Three Dominant Visual Systems: The State, Industry, and the Media

Contrary to Benjamin’s claim, I argue that the twentieth century has been marked not by a liberatory struggle, but by a power shift between monarchical power and less-explicitly hierarchical forces invested in technological reproducibility for commercial gain—such as industry. And this reshuffling of power is most explicitly enacted in the field of visibility.⁴¹

The monarchical display of power in earlier centuries indicated visual sovereignty—a sign of civic order unchallenged and undisputed. Such a visual display is performative, and is manifest through public rituals such as the state parade, the political rally, the royal wedding, or the demonstration. Historically these types of events establish or reassert the dominant force in control of the visual field. But after the Industrial Revolution, a shift in the existing economic relations emerged due to the impact of technological reproduction. Independent economic forces began to vie with the state’s monopoly for control of public visual space. As a number of theorists have noted, the impact of industrial

revolutions, mass reproduction, and advertising create vast new parameters for dissemination.

New forms of production produce unforeseen distribution possibilities with new technologies to dominate markets, and in marketing, the ability to go global and “colonize” economic markets in an entirely new, less explicitly domineering way than the European imperial model. This challenge to monarchical domination over the visual field is illustrated by the growth of the advertising business in the wake of the Industrial Revolution and in its use of the visual landscape to establish and develop the consumer market.

To further explain this shift in power relations in the visual field, it is helpful to relate these patterns to the social analyses of British sociologist Raymond Williams. He claims that since the Modern Era there is no single dominant ideological formation, but rather a range of competing discourses that define the social sphere. Williams draws distinctions between “residual” ideological formations (ideologies that have been mostly superceded but still circulate in various ways); “emergent” ideological formations (new ideologies that are in the process of establishing their influence); and “dominant” ideological formations (what Louis Althusser termed “ideological state apparatuses”; e.g. schools, government, the police, and the military).⁴²

In relation to Williams’ analysis, we can conceive of the refiguring of power relations in the post-World-War-Two period as a triangulated struggle for dominance between state, media, and the corporate. During this period, other challenges to the state’s domination of the visual field emerged. The development of the news industry during the post-war era can be mapped in parallel to the explosion of commodity culture.

The challenge to the visual dominance of older monarchical systems is exemplified by the emergence of mass media news systems in the second half of the twentieth century. Since the 1960s, there has been an immense growth in the role

of both television and the tabloid press in shaping public opinion.

Historian Cori E. Dauber notes television's crucial role in shaping public conceptions, the impact of live television footage in the later 1960s, and how it affected U.S. government's involvement in the Vietnam War:

It is...believed that the unprecedented freedom of the press to roam the combat zone at will, to publish or air images with little outside interference, and the status of Vietnam as the first "living room war" contributed to that erosion (of public opinion). For the first time, it is argued, members of the American public saw for themselves...what it was that really happened when we sent young men into battle.⁴³

Due to the deregulatory effects of new technological systems like television, the U.S. government was caught off-guard in the Vietnam conflict. The constant flow of gruesome images flooding back from Vietnam is generally accepted as one of the main contributing factors for the public backlash that ultimately led to the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 1974. What this pattern shows us is the way that new technological industries refigured social relations, and developed a new discursive language. However, as Chomsky, Herman and O'Sullivan have noted, the state itself later became more adept at controlling this new discursive forum.

The growing importance of systems such as television, radio, and print news media post-World War Two has led to patterns where all information was increasingly disseminated through massive "mediating" systems. Over the past fifty years, these "top-down" systems have developed nuanced discursive modes of morphing public opinion.

Under such a system, a visual signifying an outlaw identity—such as a terror logo—may enter the arena of news coverage, but it is (re)presented in this forum in a very specific way. As we have earlier seen, a “guerrilla” logo is never an officially legitimated visual marker. But due to new technological developments and framing systems, since the 1970s, terror group logos including those of the RAF, the Brigade Rosse, ETA, Hamas, and Hezbollah often appear on mainstream television and in newspapers. These logos are used to signal “quasi-legitimate” public entities. Through news media use, these logos become widely understood as a type of political signage associated with a particular type of identity outside the law.



Fig. 10. (left-right) Kidnap Victims with Terror Group Logos: Aldo Moro, kidnap victim with Brigade Rosse logo 1978; Peter Lorenz, Bewegung 2.Juni kidnap victim with group name 1976; Hans-Martin Schleyer, kidnap victim with RAF logo, 1977; ETA kidnap victim with logo 1990s; Iraq kidnap victim with Islamic group logo, 2004.

The RAF logo often appeared in the news media of the Seventies, but within the context of a larger framing construct. The group’s logo was displayed as a backdrop in television and newspaper coverage of hostage stories and arrests. In such an arena, the logo becomes synecdochal for the terrorist’s ideology, a particular group of “Wanted” persons, and a specific psycho/geography. The logo was heavily programmed—but it was used within specific media structurations where this display of alterity is closely interpreted by the position of the news channel.

Similar to media's use of the swastika sign, a terror logo is coded as notorious and usable only within a particular contextual framing. The media's presentation of the terrorist identity thus both establishes its public presence and also quarantines its perception in further discourse. Although the terror logo retains some of its outlaw understandings, now through television and newspaper coverage, it develops increasingly as a loose signifier, subject to a wider range of interpretations. As soon as this kind of sign moves into wider arenas of public circulation, it becomes subject to freer play and it starts to lose power as semantic slippage occurs around its usage and understandings.

To conclude, this chapter has focused on three aspects to the history of the RAF's logo. The first section looked at the genetics of Leftist visual markers. The second considered the rhetoric of Holger Meins' poster "Freiheit für alle Gefangenen" and issues concerning copyright and identity control. Lastly, this chapter discussed the media's framing and reframing of outlaw signage.

The aforementioned dynamics illustrate the complex linguistic patterns and histories that shape understandings of outlaw political identity. Because of the contexts in which Leftist signs first emerged, I argue that the RAF's visual identity was from its birth an entroubled signifier—one that was hybridized and interstitial due to the political and linguistic operations that surround its referents. This complex background has led to the understanding of the RAF logo as a densely-loaded signifier, somewhat unclear.

Further questions remains in this pre-history of RAF imagery. What occurs over a longer time as the RAF identity moves into broader public settings, and what happens to particular types of underground signs as they enter larger communication systems? As I have suggested, television and the newspapers in the 1970s crucially shaped the initial public conceptions of this oppositional group's identity. An example of the free play that emerges around such a Leftist sign is illustrated by the history surrounding Che Guevara's image.

The following chapter considers socio-cultural tendencies that emerged around Che. As we will later see, what happens with Guevara's image is similar to patterns that occurred around the RAF's identity.