Chapter Six
RAF Revivalism in the 2000s

Younger German writers in the 2000s are angrier with contemporary politics than are the aging 68ers, whose late terrorist fiction is predicated on characters’ remorse for their association with violence. German political fiction as a whole enjoyed a renaissance in the decade of the 2000s. Urban guerillas battling the system come in a number of guises. They may be embittered former Stasi operatives, as in the surreal social panorama The Good and the Bad by André Kubiczek, (2003) or an inscrutable group of underground bomb makers, as in Michael Kumpfmüller’s Message to Everybody (2008), which is set in the near future in an unnamed European country.¹ The most talked about novel of 2008 was Uwe Tellkamp’s epic of GDR life The Tower, but three years earlier in The Kingfisher (2005) he portrays a right-wing terrorist movement that calls itself “The Rebirth,” and is inspired by RAF methods, if not their ideology.² Where Will You Be (Hammerstein, 2010) is set in the near future after a complete meltdown of the world financial system.³ A group calling themselves the Victims takes Germany’s most infamous stock market speculator, Lisa Locust, hostage in an imitation of the RAF’s ambush of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, except that nobody is killed. While “Lisa Locust” is a villain de nos jours, representing international finance capital, the Victims are postmodern protestors, who are convinced that nothing they can do will have any effect, in contrast with the heroic era of protest in the recent past. The idea of setting the RAF on corporate financiers who had brought the western world to the brink of economic ruin was not limited to Germany. In Love, Gudrun Ensslin (Corbin, 2010), a British Baader-Meinhof enthusiast persuades a former German RAF member to come out of retirement to assassinate city financiers, such as hedge fund managers and bond dealers responsible for the financial crisis.

After the financial crisis of 2007–08, a second factor that influenced how Baader-Meinhof is depicted and understood, was the al-Qaeda attack on the United States on September 11, 2001. In cinema, this resulted in a pause in the production of Baader-Meinhof feature films. In German
fiction, the opposite is the case, but only two novels, both published in 2008, allude to 9/11 directly. In *The Weekend* (Schlink, 2008), which takes place in 2007, it is suggested that Jan, originally the seventh member of the group of friends, who are gathering to welcome the convicted terrorist Jörg out of prison, did not really commit suicide in the mid-1970s. In the novel that Ilse starts writing at the beginning of the weekend, she imagines that Jan faked his death in order to join the RAF. In her story, he even pulls the trigger on Schleyer. Ilse further imagines that Jan found himself at the top of one of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, there to deposit a suitcase for a Lebanese contact, and that he jumped to his death once the floor began to melt. It seems likely that, unbeknownst to Jan, the suitcase contained a transmitter that guided one of the hijacked planes to the tower. Thus for Ilse, al-Qaeda finally killed off the dream of the Red Army Faction. Indeed, she lays 9/11 at the door of the RAF.

Like the trio of novelists who are the main subject of this chapter, Bernhard Schlink recognized that Baader-Meinhof veterans could inspire a new generation. Schlink’s Jörg, whose case is based on that of Christian Klar, shows no explicit regrets, but on release from prison has no intention of picking up where he left off or of recommending that anyone else do so, despite being encouraged by a young hanger-on. For Jörg, the past is past, the "war" that he was fighting is over. Jörg’s reason has not got much to do with politics. His big surprise for his friends is that he has inoperable prostate cancer and has been given just months to live. This explains why he panicked when the 18-year-old Dorle, daughter of his friend Ulrich, presented herself naked to him on the first night. This rather implausible episode is designed to show that an aging terrorist can still appear glamorous to a teenager in 2007. Dorle, however, is attracted by his charisma as mediated in the press and television, but nothing else. After failing to seduce Jörg on Friday, which the whole house discovers because of his loud protests, Dorle beds his son on Saturday, which represents a more wholesome romantic outcome.

In *Dreamers of the Absolute* (Wildenhain, 2008) the same trope of terrorist as alter ego or onetime close friend is employed, and its general tenor is similarly critical. Michael Wildenhain (b. 1958) retells some of the history of the Kreuzberg squatters’ movement from the 1980s, which was the subject of some of his earlier fiction. In a plot line that occurs for the first time in a German novel, however, he fictionalizes the career of a clandestine Revolutionary Cells activist with connections, not least through his Lebanese father, with the Middle East. *Dreamers of the Absolute* is infused with the narrator’s disaffection with all forms of militant activism and as such is an antidote to even the most melancholic Baader-Meinhof novels that have been the subject of this book; it narrates an emotionally