

**Berlin in English-language Fiction, 1989-2009: Spatial Representation  
and the Dynamics of Memory**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University  
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# **Berlin in English-language Fiction, 1989-2009: Spatial Representation and the Dynamics of Memory**

**Paul O'Hanrahan, University of Liverpool**

## **Abstract**

This thesis sets out to define the field of Berlin English-language fiction since 1989 by identifying its distinctive forms of representation of space and memory.

The post-Wall Berlin thriller can be characterised as a literary category based on genre combinations and a turn to the past. Distinct spatial iconographies emerge in thrillers representing Nazi Berlin, post-war 'rubble Berlin' and the divided Cold War period; even the twenty-first-century city is related to 1920s cabarets. Applying Huyssen's observations on Berlin as a palimpsest of dynamic relations between past and present, I show that the Berlin thriller's concern with memory is responsive to contemporary uncertainties in the decades following the fall of the Wall.

I proceed to compare British perspectives on divided Berlin in novels with thriller associations by Ian McEwan, John le Carré and James Lasdun. I posit that British involvement in the shared governance of divided Berlin during the Cold War era has fostered a special nostalgia for the city which has influenced the intimacy with which these authors represent the city. Through analysis of spatial relations with both parts of the divided city, I reveal unexpected British affinities with East Berlin, ambivalent memories of the Wall and regret at its fall. McEwan's detailed psychological mapping of topography illustrates how ruins and abandoned space can preserve memory and challenge Nora's definition of the memory site as a compensatory form.

The contemporary, post-unification city is represented in a sample of novels from a wider Anglophone context. The transitory nature of the visitor narrative is challenged by the growing awareness of the city's memory which informs Berlin novels by American author, Anna Winger, Mexican novelist, Chloe Aridjis and Irish-German author, Hugo Hamilton. Contrasts between insider and outsider relationships with the city are explored and related to representations of peripheral space. A new emphasis on the greening of Berlin is related to eco-critical perspectives: the prospect of emergence from a traumatic past, as signalled by Hamilton is countered by the premonitions of its return as a haunting presence in Aridjis.

The diversity of representations of the past in English-language Berlin fiction since 1989 has been driven by the dynamics of the end-of-era perspective created by the fall of the Wall. I show how a seeming tendency towards detachment from post-unification Berlin contrasts with continuing engagement with memory sites in the contemporary city.

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## Abbreviations

Page references to the editions of the following novels are indicated by the initials designated here.

- (*LI*) Margot Abbott, *The Last Innocent Hour* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993)
- (*C*) Chloe Aridjis, *Book of Clouds* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2009)
- (*MD*) Eleanor Bailey, *Marlene Dietrich Lived Here* (London: Black Swan, 2002)
- (*B*) Henry Porter, *Brandenburg* (London: Orion, 2005)
- (*G*) John Buchan, *Greenmantle*, first published 1916 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)
- (*FA*) Len Deighton, *Faith* (London: HarperCollins, 1996)
- (*H*) \_\_\_\_, *Hope* (London: HarperCollins, 1996)
- (*L*) \_\_\_\_, *Spy Line* (London: Grafton, 1990)
- (*LM*) Gaylord Dold, *The Last Man in Berlin* (Naperville, IL: 2003)
- (*Z*) David Downing, *Zoo Station* (New York: Soho, 2007)
- (*SB*) Dan Fesperman, *The Small Boat of Great Sorrows* (London: Black Swan, 2004)
- (*BC*) Tom Gabbay, *The Berlin Conspiracy* (New York: Harper, 2007)

- (D) Hugo Hamilton, *Disguise* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008)
- (SC) \_\_\_\_, *Surrogate City* (London: Faber, 1990)
- (TLS) \_\_\_\_, *The Last Shot* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006)
- (LT) \_\_\_\_, *The Love Test* (London, Faber, 1995)
- (SW) \_\_\_\_, *The Sailor in the Wardrobe* (London: Fourth Estate, 2006)
- (SG) Georgina Harding, *The Spy Game* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009)
- (F) Robert Harris, *Fatherland* (London: Arrow, 1993)
- (P) Philip Hensher, *Pleased* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1998)
- (WB) Ward Just, *The Weather in Berlin* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002)
- (BN) Philip Kerr, *Berlin Noir* (London: Penguin, 1993)
- (DRM) \_\_\_\_, *If the Dead Rise Not* (London: Quercus, 2009)
- (TO) \_\_\_\_, *The One from the Other* (London: Quercus, 2008)
- (AF) John le Carré, *Absolute Friends* (London: Coronet, 2004)
- (SP) \_\_\_\_, *Smiley's People*, first published 1979 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980)
- (TS) \_\_\_\_, *The Secret Pilgrim*, first published (London: Sceptre, 2009)
- (SWC) \_\_\_\_, *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, first published 1963, (London: Sceptre, 2006)

- (SL) James Lasdun, *Seven Lies* (London: W.W. Norton, 2005)
- (CS) Jason Lutes, *Berlin: City of Stones, Book One* (Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2000)
- (RB) Cym Lowell, *Riddle of Berlin* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2008)
- (BD) Ian McEwan, *Black Dogs* (London: Vintage, 1992)
- (TI) \_\_\_\_, *The Innocent* (London: Vintage, 1990)
- (WT) John Marks, *War Torn* (New York: Riverhead, 2003)
- (DE) Tim Powers, *Declare*, first published 2001 (London: Corvus, 2010)
- (VS) Craig Russell, *The Valkyrie Song*, first published 2008 (London: Arrow 2010)
- (NC) Robert Ryan, *Night Crossing* (London: Review, 2004)
- (EB) Tim Sebastian, *Exit Berlin* (London: Bantam, 1992)
- (SS) \_\_\_\_, *Spy Shadow* (London: Bantam, 1990)
- (EG) Philip Sington, *The Einstein Girl* (London: Harvill Secker, 2009)
- (PI) Dan Vyleta, *Pavel & I* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009)
- (BT) Louise Welsh, *The Bullet Trick* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006)



## Introduction: Reconstructing Berlin

### 1. Aims and Objectives

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the growth in English-language fiction set in the city has served to underscore the need for scholarly interpretations of this body of work and for an English-language counterpart to the considerable body of scholarship on native, German-language Berlin fiction published after 1989.<sup>1</sup> Berlin's association with English-language fiction goes back to a visit to the First World War city in John Buchan's *Greenmantle* (1916); this novel also happens to be a spy thriller. The relationship between the city and the 1930s novels of Christopher Isherwood is also well established. However, the English-language representation of Berlin has received little scholarly attention. This thesis endeavours to address this deficit by showing how the field of Berlin English-language fiction since the fall of the Wall in 1989 can be defined by its distinctive representation of space and memory. The corpus is comprised of Berlin fiction in general and the Berlin thriller in particular: this is in recognition of the seminal role played by the thriller in shaping the connection between English-language fiction and Berlin. It is also evident in the continuing productivity of the genre as the basis of fictional reconstructions of the city. The analysis of both popular and literary genres in this thesis results from an intention to encompass an inclusive range of fiction. It also allows for a focus on the distinctive contribution made by individual novels in constructing images of Berlin of a particular resonance and coherence. While I

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Katharina Gerstenberger, *Writing the New Berlin: The German Capital in Post-Wall Literature* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008).

acknowledge the distinctiveness of the genres of Berlin thriller and novel in the shaping of this research, I am also interested in the relationships between the genres and aim thereby to show the extent to which generic exchange and combination has become characteristic of this fiction.

After 1989, Berlin became the focus of issues of memory and identity associated with the passing of its old role as the global symbol of the Cold War and the renewal of its pre-1945 status as the capital of a united Germany. These changes coincided with the opening up of new perspectives on Berlin's past in post-1989 English-language Berlin fiction through an engagement with the city's memory as a palimpsest of different layers: Weimar, Nazi, post-war, Cold War and post-Wall.<sup>2</sup> I have been conscious that the English-language perspective is largely an external one and that there are dangers of stereotyping for English-language Berlin fiction in associating the city with war and the crimes of the Nazi regime. This in turn raises the broader question regarding the extent to which authors who are usually not resident in Berlin may exploit the city as a projection of their own, non-German cultural attitudes and perspectives.

From the representation of a gigantic, triumphal Nazi city in Robert Harris's *Fatherland* (1992) to an orchard looking in on the city in Hamilton's *Disguise* (2008), space in the English-language Berlin novel is diverse and laden with memory dependent on historical context. In this thesis, I explore how the city's diverse topography is related to the past by investigating the changing significations of the city ranging from natural features such as suburban lakes to buildings and monuments in the central urban area. I

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<sup>2</sup> The designation 'post-Wall' refers to the period after the fall of the Wall in 1989, not to the era after its construction in 1961.

explore how memories may be contested and suppressed and how they may be reactivated by associations with particular sites, such as ruins. I also apply the insights of Andreas Huyssen on 'the voids of Berlin' to focus on the fictional representation of the time-preserving qualities of the city's many empty spaces.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis has a tripartite structure: it considers the Berlin thriller as a genre; divided Berlin from a British perspective; and outsider perspectives on the contemporary city. It is based on a sample of English-language fiction, deriving mainly from Britain, Ireland and North America, in which Berlin plays an intrinsic role. The corpus comprises individual novels, examined singly and in comparative studies, and a focus on the work of authors, such as Ian McEwan and Hugo Hamilton, who have engaged with Berlin in more than one novel.

A principal concern informing this thesis is the relationship between memory and space in Berlin texts and the fictional techniques allied to this process. These include narrative time-shifts, which act as a means of opening up of temporal reflection, and mimetic realism, which can be used to test how the surfaces of spaces and objects are conditioned by the past. The volatility of Berlin has made it fertile ground for the thriller genre: in this thesis I will explore the extent to which the circumstances of the two decades since the fall of the Wall have opened up memory perspectives that continue to animate the city.

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<sup>3</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003)

## 2. Research Context: English-Language Berlin fiction

On the basis of a substantial and growing corpus of fictional texts, this thesis configures a new field of post-1989 English-language Berlin fiction taking an interdisciplinary approach comprising elements of German studies, contemporary English-language literary analysis and urban studies. It is designed to contribute to German studies by defining English-language fictional perspectives on Berlin since the fall of the Wall and by exploring the particular impact of the past on representation of the city. Within the field of English Literature, it provides an investigation into how genre operates in both popular and literary fiction, while it also contributes to urban studies by showing how the analysis of fiction has the capacity to enhance understanding of how spaces in the city are represented, used and remembered. There is a particular emphasis in the thesis on how the imagination activates memory in the landscapes of the city and can animate the past by reflecting on particular urban spaces. Just as Deborah Stevenson has observed the contributions of disciplines such as sociology, geography and history to the multi-disciplinary nature of urban studies, so this thesis is designed to illustrate the role that literature can play in shaping how the city is perceived and experienced.<sup>4</sup>

In this respect, James Donald is an important precursor who stresses how the city is for him an imaginary, as much an actual, space, constructed out of the urban representations ‘to be found in novels, films and images’.<sup>5</sup> More specifically, Donald emphasises the intrinsic role played by fiction in contributing to the making of the city: ‘The text is actively constitutive of the

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<sup>4</sup> Deborah Stevenson, *The City*, Key Concepts series (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), p.2.

<sup>5</sup> James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), Preface, p.x.

city. Writing does not only record or reflect the fact of the city. It has its role in producing the city for a reading public'.<sup>6</sup> The important function that fiction, and generic fiction in particular, can have in constructing the image of a city is particularly relevant when the setting is a foreign location and the readership is in the main from Anglophone countries without access to the actual city as a point of comparison. The conceptual proximity of the novel to the city has been underscored by Ian McEwan:

A novel, of course, is not merely a book, a physical object of pages and covers, but a particular kind of mental space, a place of exploration, of investigation into human nature. Likewise, a city is not only an agglomeration of buildings and streets. It is also a mental space, a field of dreams and contention.<sup>7</sup>

Both novel and city are constructed spatial forms, inventions which shape how reality is perceived. Developing this logic, I investigate in this thesis how different fictional genres participate in the spatial representation of Berlin. I also consider how a turn to memory following the fall of the Wall has led to a reconfiguration and revitalisation of English-language Berlin fiction as a whole. The potential emerges for defining a new literary field based on the demonstration of a substantial engagement with the city's memory in novels published in the two decades since 1989.

To date, Berlin English-language fiction has received little critical attention in either German or English literary studies, with the exception of the German-language volume edited by Jörg Helbig, *Welcome to Berlin: Das*

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<sup>6</sup> James Donald, 'This, Here, Now: Imagining the Modern City' in *Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory*, ed. by Sallie Westwood and John Williams (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp.181-201 (p.187).

<sup>7</sup> Ian McEwan, 'In place of concrete', speech on receiving the Jerusalem Prize, *Guardian*, 'Review', 26 February 2011, p.20.

*Image Berlins in der englischsprachigen Welt von 1700 bis heute* (1987).<sup>8</sup>

Recently, Joshua Parker in an article, 'Berlin's "Meaning" in American Fiction' (2011), analyses representation of the city from the specific perspective of post-war American fiction and observes how Berlin is often used as a space on which contemporary American concerns are projected.<sup>9</sup> The outsider context of the English-language Berlin author and the addressing of a primarily non-native readership are also acknowledged in this thesis in which a focus on the British cultural relationship to the city has emerged. However, I also am aware of the tension between the external national backgrounds which inevitably inform the writing and reception of English-language Berlin fiction and a desire to identify the city's own distinctive character.

This thesis aims to draw together the various prevailing iconographies through which Berlin is represented in English-language fiction. In the related field of film, James Chapman has identified 'the Berlin of the Weimar years' and 'the divided city of the Cold War' as the 'two dominant images of Berlin in Anglo-American popular culture'.<sup>10</sup> This gives due credit to the popularisation of Weimar, as exemplified by the adaptation of Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* in the film, *Cabaret*; and to the 1960s spy city defined by the Wall in the film versions of John le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In from*

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<sup>8</sup> Jörg Helbig, ed., *Welcome to Berlin: Das Image Berlins in der englischsprachigen Welt von 1700 bis heute* (Berlin: Stapp, 1987)

<sup>9</sup> Joshua Parker, 'Berlin's "Meaning" in American Fiction', *Austausch*, German Studies Online Journal, vol. 1, no.1. April 2011. <<http://www.austauschjournal.net/current.html>> [accessed 24 October 2011].

<sup>10</sup> James Chapman, 'Funerals in Berlin: The Geopolitical and Cultural Spaces of the Cold War', in *Divided, but not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War* ed. by Tobias Hochscherf, Christoph Laucht and Andrew Plowman (New York: Berghahn, 2010), pp.220-32 (p. 220).

*the Cold* (1963) and Len Deighton's *Funeral in Berlin* (1964).<sup>11</sup> However, it overlooks the extent to which the Berlin of Nazi domination from 1933-1945 features in the imaginary of the city, particularly from the external perspective. This can be exemplified by the emphasis in Allan Massie's article, 'In the World of Night and Fog', on English-language thrillers of the Nazi era, by authors such as Philip Kerr and David Downing. Observing that these novels represent a period 'when political activity was indeed a matter of life and death', Massie identifies the extremity of experience in the city during this period as a primary reason for its recurrence as a thriller setting. Interpreting these novels as offering the satisfaction of simple dramas in which the Nazis are the villains and the Jews the victims, Massie presents spy protagonists as flawed heroes who resist the insistence of a criminal state on adherence to its perverted values. He also isolates a tendency in these thrillers to deal superficially with the millions of ordinary Germans who, neither willing Nazis nor 'good Germans', were not prepared to resist the prevailing regime. Here Massie identifies an inclination in Anglo-American thrillers to privilege an external, visiting perspective and to offer a simplistic account of the native position. The potential for demonisation of 'the other' will inform the exploration of the tension between external and internal perspectives in Berlin fiction in the second chapter of this thesis. Massie refers occasionally to Berlin itself, depicting it in relation to the Chandler influence in Kerr as 'a more vicious and pathological Bay City': here the city's

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<sup>11</sup> *Cabaret* (1972), dir. Bob Fosse, based on the novel by Christopher Isherwood; *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* (1965), dir. Martin Ritt; *Funeral in Berlin* (1966), dir. Guy Hamilton.

dark reputation gives it a special status in the thriller tradition.<sup>12</sup> I propose in this thesis to investigate how spaces within the city are characterised in both the Berlin thriller and literary fiction and to explore how memories of the city are implicated in spatial images of Weimar, Nazi Berlin, Cold War and post-unification periods.

In relation to novelists who have published on Berlin during the period under survey, only John le Carré and Ian McEwan have been the subject of monographs or edited volumes tracing the development of their work, and in both cases the use of Berlin in their fiction has not been given any special scrutiny.<sup>13</sup> Hamilton, an Irish-German author who writes in English but alternates between Berlin and Irish settings in his fiction, has published eight novels and received a degree of popular success with two autobiographical memoirs set in county Dublin, *The Speckled People* (2003) and *The Sailor in the Wardrobe* (2006). There has been a tendency, however, to overlook his three Berlin novels which have not received the readership and scholarly attention they merit as a unique chronicle of contemporary writing about the city. Hamilton's Berlin work spans the course of the twenty-year period surveyed in this research and, as a consistent response to the city in a crucial era of transition from division to unity, is considered here in its totality as an exceptional work, a trilogy which unusually encompasses both insider and outsider perspectives.

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<sup>12</sup> Allan Massie, 'In the World of Night and Fog', Bookshelf, *The Wall Street Journal*, 30 April 2011 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704013604576249412996836894.html>> [accessed 13 January 2012].

<sup>13</sup> For le Carré monographs see Monaghan (1985), Barley (1986), Bold (1988) and Cobbs (1997); for McEwan monographs see Ryan (1994), Slay (1996), Head (2007) and edited volumes by Childs (2006) and Groes (2009).



The twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Wall in 2009 inspired a renewal of interest in the city which was reflected in the publication of a number of Berlin-related anthologies and critical texts in the English language. Closest to the terrain of this thesis is *Berlin* (2009), a collection of excerpts from English-language novels and translations from German literature about Berlin in the *city-lit* series, edited by Katy Derbyshire and Heather Reyes.<sup>14</sup> This selection starts with a section on the attraction of the city in which the Isherwood and Weimar influence is discernible in the title, 'Come to the Cabaret', before it proceeds through sections with broad designations covering the character of the city; it is significant, however, that there are two substantial sections on divided Berlin of which the longest, 'The Past is Another Country', encompasses the city's twentieth-century history. Although this anthology includes extracts from a number of the novels analysed in this research by authors such as Kerr, Kanon, Vyleta, McEwan, Winger and Aridjis, it omits others, particularly Hamilton, but also Welsh and Lasdun. Published in the same year, Lyn Marven's *Berlin Tales* (2009),<sup>15</sup> an anthology of literature about the city translated into English from short stories and prose fiction in German, was a further contribution to the development of an English-language readership conversant with a range of native language responses to Berlin. Translations into English of Berlin fiction and memoirs related to the city's wartime past have had considerable impact, as has been proved by the popular success of Hans Fallada's *Alone in Berlin* (2009) and

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<sup>14</sup> Heather Reyes and Katy Derbyshire, eds., *city-lit Berlin* (Brentwood: Oxygen, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Lyn Marven, *Berlin Tales*, stories translated by Lyn Marven, ed. by Helen Constantine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

the reissue of *A Woman in Berlin* (2005), the anonymous account of a woman's survival of the Soviet onslaught in the Battle for Berlin.<sup>16</sup>

I will now focus specifically on a previous work from a related discipline which can be compared to the current research. Like this thesis, Katharina Gerstenberger's monograph, *Writing the New Berlin: The German Capital in Post-Wall Literature* (2008), surveys post-1989 Berlin literature. However, Gerstenberger's analysis is of a German-language corpus, concludes in 2005 and is thematic in its approach. My research is based on an English-language context, a period that extends to 2009 and a spatial memory methodology. By including in her analysis individual novels in translation such as Cees Nooteboom's Dutch original, *Allerseelen* (*Allerzielen*), Gerstenberger acknowledges that they contribute to the German-language representation of Berlin.<sup>17</sup> However, the English-language Berlin novel is mentioned only in passing in a paragraph summary of the plots of six novels.<sup>18</sup> Where Reyes and Derbyshire tend to focus on British and European authors, five of the six English-language authors mentioned by Gerstenberger are American or initially published their Berlin novels in the United States: Joseph Kanon, Harold Nebenzahl, Ward Just, Gaylord Dold and Buddy Giovinazzo. Of these, only Kanon is included in the *city-lit* collection; Gerstenberger, on the other hand, does not refer to Berlin fiction published before 2005 by British and Irish authors such as John le Carré, Len Deighton, Philip Kerr, Ian McEwan or Hugo Hamilton. In this thesis, I focus on a number of British and Irish novels, particularly in relation to

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<sup>16</sup> Hans Fallada, *Alone in Berlin* (2009); Anonymous, *A Woman in Berlin* (London: Virago, 2005)

<sup>17</sup> Cees Nooteboom, *Allerseelen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991); published in English as *All Souls' Day* (London: Picador, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Katharina Gerstenberger, *Writing the New Berlin*, p.21, n.33.

memory of divided Berlin, but also include a range of American and Canadian as represented through commentaries on the work of Kanon, Vyleta, Tom Gabbay and Winger. Gerstenberger's survey connects with this research in reading Berlin through borders and temporal palimpsests, and in identifying a particular interest in post-unification Berlin literature in themes such as Jewish Berlin, East Berlin entering into memory and the reconstruction of Potsdamer Platz as symbolic of the new post-1989 city. Her work also encompasses a number of themes that resonate with Berlin literature in any language such as erotic sites and sexual topographies, bodies and the grotesque, and the multicultural city. Some overlap can be found here in relation to the corpus of this thesis in which the city as an erotic site can be related to the thrillers of Kerr, Welsh and Mirolla; the grotesque is echoed in the visceral criminality of Berlin under the Third Reich in Kerr and Harris's construction of Speer's plans for the conversion of Berlin into a monumental city; the multi-cultural city is evident in Hamilton's portrayal of the ethnic mix in the former West Berlin and in the depiction of Kreuzberg as a Turkish space by McEwan and others. Gerstenberger's reference to cultural, political and economic configurations of post-Wall Berlin as 'the screen on which Germany's future [...] is projected'<sup>19</sup> evokes an image of the city as a *tabula rasa*, an idea which contrasts with her analysis of the city as a temporal palimpsest. Gerstenberger's conclusion points to similarities between German- and English-language perspectives in the post-1989 era when she describes how recent Berlin literature has looked to the past and raised 'questions of historiography'<sup>20</sup> about cultural constructions of history

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<sup>19</sup> Gerstenberger, *Writing the New Berlin*, p.172.

<sup>20</sup> Gerstenberger, *Writing the New Berlin*, p.172.

and memory since 1945. Observing a new attitude to the Nazi period, she detects that German-language writers are moving away from direct political commentary and towards storytelling.<sup>21</sup> There is a further connection here with English-language Berlin novels by authors such as Kerr and Downing, who both have written a series of novels set in the city during the Nazi era.

The extent to which German-language writing about Berlin influences English-language fiction about the city is an issue of considerable interest which is largely a separate issue to the concerns of the present thesis. Novels or other works translated into English are clearly far more available and accessible to an English-language readership and more likely to exert an influence. For example, Hamilton's use of a German protagonist haunted by the possibility of a lost Jewish identity resembles the displacement of Jewishness in W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001); the comparison, however, is not developed further here since Sebald's work is not set in a Berlin context. An author such as Hamilton, who is half-German, and, therefore, more exceptional than typical, is aware of the German-language tradition of Berlin writing, but also at a remove from it, as is shown by the following comment on his own limitations in writing in German: 'I like reading Berlin authors, I like what they're doing, which is something I can't do in the German language.'<sup>22</sup> Hamilton's acknowledgment of his limitations in German reinforces the importance of the English-language perspective on Berlin in measuring his distinct achievement in writing fiction in response to four decades of radical change in the city.

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<sup>21</sup> Gerstenberger, *Writing the New Berlin*, p.17.

<sup>22</sup> Paul O'Hanrahan, unpublished interview with Hugo Hamilton, 25 February 2011, p.14.

The corpus of this thesis is based on a sample of English-language fictional texts selected on the basis that a text is substantially set in Berlin or represents the city in a key episode or at a climax of the plot. The work chosen originates from a range of English-language nations including Britain, Ireland, Canada and the United States. To situate the corpus within a wider context of images of Berlin, where relevant, analysis includes occasional reference to film, which has played a key role in the propagation of images of Berlin, and non-fictional works, such as memoir and reportage. The methodology employed is cross-disciplinary, setting close textual analysis of contemporary fiction within a theoretical framework which draws on genre, memory and spatial studies. Adapting the work of Thomas Beebee and Tzvetan Todorov on genre evolution, this research investigates generic convergence and divergence between popular and literary fiction. In particular, I propose to assess the significance of the thriller as a genre within the English-language Berlin novel. While some Berlin novels avoid conventional generic signals, most can be related to the thriller thematically, through use of associated motifs or references, or sensational effects. Hamilton may be an exception here due to a desire to use the breadth of the novel form to represent both outsider and insider perspectives on the city in a strategy which is conditioned by his own mixed Irish-German background.

The dynamics of memory in English-language Berlin fiction ranges from representation of official forms of commemoration in the urban environment to the spatial construction in narrative of personal memory. Close textual analysis of the relationship between space and memory in the Berlin novel is seen as a means of analysing how the fictional process

contributes to the recall of the past. Whereas history is concerned with establishing an official record of events, I interpret memory as an evocation of the past through an interaction between the personal and the collective which is particularly responsive to the inventive nature of fictional form. In exploring the impact of the past on the present in Berlin fiction, I have found a particular relevance in Huyssen's concept of the city as a palimpsest which 'offers a richness of traces and memories, restorations and new constructions'.<sup>23</sup>

In a recent volume of essays on Berlin, *Berlin Divided City 1945-1989* (2010), Broadbent and Hake distinguish between Cold War Berlin in its depiction by Huyssen as a city of voids and ghosts, and a living, working city in which the future was planned alongside 'political struggles and social upheavals'.<sup>24</sup> The tension between a Berlin which is haunted by its past and accounts of everyday life in the city is one which is reflected in a novel such as Chloe Aridjis's *Book of Clouds* (2009). Contrasts and connections between past and present are intrinsic to the structure of this thesis which concentrates on twentieth-century memory and divided Berlin in its first two chapters before a comparative analysis in the final chapter of post-1989 contemporary Berlin fiction.

The turn to the past took on a particularly defined form in Berlin due to the exceptional change in the city's topography and status which followed the fall of the Wall and the ending of Cold War division. The desire to reunify led to a speedy removal of the Wall but the erasure of traces of the divided

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<sup>23</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p.84.

<sup>24</sup> Philip Broadbent and Sabine Hake, Introduction, *Berlin Divided City 1945-1989*, ed. by Philip Broadbent and Sabine Hake (New York: Berghahn, 2010), p.2.

city in turn stimulated a need to remember. Anglo-American participation in Berlin's history and identification with the beleaguered Cold War city in particular may well have enhanced a sense of loss and a consequent emphasis on memory. This has taken a number of forms in recent English-language Berlin literature ranging from fictional representations of various moments of political crisis in the city's past to depictions of the relationship of particular Berlin spaces with personal memories. These are often located at marginal locations and at ruins which often take on new meaning as they decompose. Svetlana Boym has developed Alois Riegl's concept of the 'unintentional monument' to describe ruins as 'places of historical improvisation'<sup>25</sup> and reminders of 'the coexistence of different dimensions and historical times in the city'.<sup>26</sup> In this thesis, I analyse ruins in novels by both McEwan and Hamilton as points of temporal conjunction and potent, if transitory, repositories of memory.

This research is interdisciplinary in its relationships with genre studies, studies of urban space, Berlin memory studies and literary spatial analysis. Previous scholarship in relation to the spatial configuration of city literatures includes Malcolm Bradbury's *The Atlas of Literature* (1996) and Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel* (1996).<sup>27</sup> Bradbury's multi-authored volume maps how literary authors have clustered in cities in particular eras to produce city imaginaries and iconographies with a range of international examples including chapters on Weimar Berlin and Berlin in the 1960s. Although it is primarily concerned with indigenous, German-language

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<sup>25</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic, 2001), p.78.

<sup>26</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.79.

<sup>27</sup> Malcolm Bradbury, *The Atlas of Literature* (New York: Stewart, Tabori, & Chang, 1998); Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1999).

authors, the focus on the city as a site shaping literature and, in turn, shaped by it, is shared with this thesis. Moretti is more concerned with mapping and analysing the spatial configurations of locations used by particular novelists such as Dickens: this approach is extended and adapted in the present thesis to relate space to memory through textual analysis of specific city areas, buildings and landmarks. Part of a series, *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Paris* (2013) is evidence of growing interest in defining literature by city rather than by nationality, although this multi-authored volume is still primarily defined by a native language base.<sup>28</sup> The planned publication of a Berlin volume in 2015 is another sign of the recognition of Berlin as a site richly endowed with literary representations.

Throughout the twentieth century, Berlin has been both a site of power and a focus of challenge to authority. This thesis draws on the work of a number of relevant urban analysts and commentators such as Jane Jacobs, Fran Tonkiss, Rob Shields and poet, Paul Farley. Their work, on a broad range of peripheral spaces associated with the city, such as boundaries and margins, is here related to representations of Berlin as a city of borders, both topographical and social. I also include a range of spatial commentary such as Michel de Certeau's observations on frontiers, elevated spaces and the ghostly animation of abandoned buildings. In contrast, the ecocriticism of Michael Bennett's advocacy of a new balance between urban and rural in city development is related to the development of a new, twenty-first century 'green Berlin'. The intention is to explore new forms of literary criticism in which urban theory combines with identification of textual and generic literary

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<sup>28</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of Paris* (2013), ed. by Anna-Louise Milne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).



effects to elucidate the representation of space in fiction and the function of the city in everyday life.

This thesis also analyses the imaginary spatial concepts of utopia and dystopia: this extends from Robert Harris's use of the dystopian genre in *Fatherland* (1992) to the qualified utopianism of Hamilton's *Disguise* (2008), the ending of which provides an example of Foucault's heterotopia, in the form of a space which incorporates incompatible elements into an image of unification of family and nation. The postmodernity of the era following the fall of the Wall is seen as arising from the collapse of ideologies based on utopian technological progress and the ending of the Cold War as a dominating political narrative. The result is a pluralism of perspectives in English-language fiction through which the dynamism of its association with various forms of memory of Berlin creates connections between past and present in fictional representations of the city in a range of genre combinations.

### **3. Research Questions**

This thesis investigates the characteristics of literary representation of the city by exploring how English-language fiction about Berlin has evolved over a period of two decades in response to the new temporal, political and spatial perspectives opened up by the fall of the Berlin Wall. The impossibility of contemporary representations of Cold War Berlin after 1989 seemed to make the espionage-based Berlin thriller redundant: how it reconfigured itself generically and through spatial forms of memory are principal concerns of

this thesis. Referring to Todorov's theories of genre adaptation and combination, the hybridisation of the Berlin thriller in response to a range of reconstructions of Berlin's past will be analysed.<sup>29</sup> I will also explore the extent to which the survival of the Berlin thriller as an umbrella term still refers to a distinct genre considering the diverse forms of generic combination which have emerged in Berlin fiction after the fall of the Wall.

In the second chapter, I focus on Berlin novels by le Carré, Lasdun and McEwan which could be considered as literary fiction but also have been influenced by Berlin's associations with the thriller. Here I examine the extent to which Britishness has played a role in the configuration of Cold War memory in Berlin fiction since the fall of the Wall. In contrast, the investigation of the spatial memory of the contemporary city in the third chapter involves novels from a broader Anglophone context which encompasses the different cultural and gender perspectives in novels by Winger, Aridjis and Hamilton.

Related issues here concern the degree of projection involved in 'outsider' reconstruction of the city through the focalisation offered by non-native protagonists and mediation by reference to the culture of a non-native readership. There are also ethical sensitivities involved in the portrayal of the 'other' as shown by playwright David Hare in reflecting on his position as an English scriptwriter engaged with issues of post-war German responsibility for complicity in war crime. Hare, reflecting on his film adaptation of the Bernhard Schlink novel, *The Reader*, asks himself in his dramatic memoir, *Berlin* (2009): 'What does an Englishman think he's doing writing about

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<sup>29</sup> See Tzvetan Todorov, *Genres in Discourse*, originally published in French by Editions de Seuil, 1978, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

German guilt?'(B 7).<sup>30</sup> The question of outsider representation is particularly sensitive due to Berlin's wartime and pre-war history as capital of the Third Reich and British pride in its role in defeating Nazi Germany. It also recurs in the potential in the Western-orientated Berlin thriller for the recycling of stereotypes about the inferior quality of life under Eastern-bloc communism during the Cold War period.

In this thesis I explore marginal and peripheral spaces such as boundaries, liminal zones and voids and consider the extent to which they can be related to outsider cultural contexts. I also consider how space and memory in Berlin fiction are related to particular types of urban space such as streets, buildings, landmarks, neighbourhoods and natural areas. These may constitute memory sites but not necessarily in the strict terms defined for the concept by Nora. Nora uses the concept not just to indicate the range of forms a memory site can take but also to identify it as a replacement for what he sees as a crisis of memory in the loss of *milieux de mémoire* or organic environments of memory: '*Lieux de mémoire* are there because there are no longer any *milieux de mémoire*, settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience.'<sup>31</sup> This thesis will discuss how Nora's concept translates to a Berlin context characterised by ruptures and extreme changes in which organic forms of memory transmission would be unlikely to survive. The result of the impact of war on the continuity of memory in Berlin

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<sup>30</sup> *The Reader* (2008), dir. Stephen Daldry, screenwriter David Hare, based on the novel by Bernhard Schlink.

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*', trans.by Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989), 7-25, (p.7).

can be seen in the resort to abandoned spaces and ruins for traces of the past in the novels Kanon and McEwan.

I will also consider how different fictional genres use city spaces to recall the past by a focus on typical monuments and recurrent streets or squares or geographical features such as lakes. I will analyse how fictional techniques, such as selective and mimetic spatial realism, are used to animate memories associated with specific spaces. The tendency to anthropomorphise the city will be considered alongside other literary devices used to animate the representation of space such as allegorical characterisations and personification. Identification of the city as a character may be merely a conventional trope or may indicate a particular insight into the abiding nature of a city, even one as frequently associated with constant renewal as Berlin. Often depicted in English-language Berlin fiction as a site of temporary visits, the city is also cited as an agent of personal reinvention: whether this amounts to a contradiction or a causal connection will be further explored here.

The collapse of communism following the fall of the Wall was interpreted as the demise of a utopian ideal, as shown by Vaclav Havel's comment on it as 'the death of Utopia'.<sup>32</sup> This thesis explores notions of utopia and dystopia in Berlin fiction after 1989, with a particular examination of the role of arboreal imagery and the depiction of Berlin's green spaces. As a correlative to the spatial situation in post-Wall Berlin, I will also explore the potential in Foucault's idea of heterotopia to act as an alternative to the extremes associated with utopia and dystopia. Defined as a combination of

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<sup>32</sup> As shown by Vaclav Havel's comment on 'The death of utopia'. For citation, see Kumar, *Utopianism*, p.95.

incongruities, I will test its suitability as a metaphor for the symbolic coming together of East and West in the city of Berlin and as a rejection of the social engineering and uniformity associated with utopia. In 1989, Francis Fukuyama declared that with the ending of the Cold War, the triumph of liberal democracy spelt an end to history and to a dynamic, future-orientated momentum in world politics claiming that in 'the post-historical period there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history'.<sup>33</sup> This thesis will set out to challenge this assertion by exploring the representation of memory as a dynamic process that involves literature in representing the past as a dialogue with the present that reverberates with potential for the future.

#### **4. The Publication Period in Context: 1989-2009 and Changing Perspectives after the Wall**

The twenty-years from 1989-2009 which define the publication framework of this research has been selected to test how the English-language fictional representation of Berlin responded over a period of time to changes in the city that resulted from the surprise opening of the Wall in November 1989. The unexpected nature of this event can be exemplified by the following comment from Ian Kershaw who, although he was 'living in Berlin at the time', admitted: 'Like every historian, I was wrong-footed and taken completely by surprise by the events of autumn 1989'.<sup>34</sup> A turning-point in the city's recent development, the opening of the Wall not only marked the end of the division of Berlin but initiated the process of German reunification,

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<sup>33</sup> Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest*, 16, Summer 1989, 3-18, 18.

<sup>34</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Germany's Present, Germany's Past* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, 1992), p.1.

which was formally ratified in October 1990, when Berlin once again became capital of the new Germany. Anne Whitehead refers to the observations by Halbwachs on the exceptional nature of singular events which impact on the collective memory as 'a temporal landmark around which other memories come retrospectively to be shaped'.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the fall of the Wall and its ramifications as a symbol of the ending of the Cold War, are explored in this thesis as a singular event which opened up new trajectories into the past and the need for new forms of remembrance.

In particular, events in Berlin in November 1989 seemed to complete the unfinished business of 1945. Peter Frizsche refers to the 'almost instantaneous recognition of 1989 in the register of periodicity, of the end of an era and the beginning of a new one'.<sup>36</sup> This fresh historical perspective on the twentieth-century inspired in English-language Berlin fiction many reconstructions of both the pre-1945 and post-war city; however, the fascination with the city's twentieth-century history ranges back to the aftermath of the First World War in Jonathan Rabb's *Rosa* (2005) which depicts the febrile atmosphere in Berlin in 1919 following the German defeat. Beatrice Colin's Berlin chronicle, *The Luminous Life of Lilly Aphrodite* (2008), begins earlier still, in 1906, and uses the form of the *Bildungsroman*, or novel of development, to create a memory text which covers a span of time into the 1930s.

A period of two decades has been chosen for the survey undertaken in this thesis to allow for the publication of a range of responses covering

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<sup>35</sup> Anne Whitehead, *Memory*, New Critical Idiom Series (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p.138.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Frizsche, '1989 and the Chronological Imagination' in *Debating German Cultural Identity since 1989*, ed. by Anne Fuchs, Kathleen James-Chakraborty and Linda Shortt (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2011), pp.17-29 (p. 17).

both the past of the pre-1989 period and the recent past of the post-Wall era. This allows for the inclusion of novels written before the fall of the Wall but published afterwards, such as McEwan's *The Innocent* (1990), to those written well into the first decade of the twenty-first such as Hamilton's *Disguise* (2008). This temporal frame, which starts with world attention focused on the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, German unification in 1990 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, also encompasses the shift in global political perspectives following the attack on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001 and the subsequent so-called 'War on Terror'. Incorporation of these events into Berlin fiction of the period, such as le Carré's *Absolute Friends*, was a sign of the continuing capacity of the spy thriller to respond to contemporary political developments. The twenty-year span allows work by Harris which is here contextualised by debates surrounding German unification in the early 1990s to be compared with Berlin texts by le Carré, Vyleta and Welsh published in the first decade of the new century. A late phase in this period can be discerned in the reflective nature of Hamilton's novel *Disguise* (2008), which is analysed in the third chapter alongside other twenty-first-century Berlin novels by Anna Winger and Chloe Aridjis.

The concluding of this survey in 2009 accords with the widely acknowledged importance of that year as a milestone marking twenty years since the fall of the Wall. In Berlin, 2009 was marked by a number of commemorative events, concentrated in the week leading up to November 9, and culminating in an international public celebration at the Brandenburg Gate. In London, celebrations in 2009 to commemorate the Wall's demise included Mark Ravenhill's play, *Over There*, at the Royal Court, and

performances at the National Theatre by David Hare of his monologue, *Berlin*, which recorded the dramatist's observations and memories of the city following a recent visit. The renewed interest in the Wall in particular was shown by the launch in London and Berlin of the Cynthia Beatt film, *The Invisible Frame*: featuring actress Tilda Swinton cycling in 2009 along the route of the Wall, in a new version of an earlier film by Beatt of Swinton cycling alongside the then existing Wall in 1988.<sup>37</sup>

The importance of the twentieth anniversary as an act of memory in Britain as apparent in the publication of memoirs of the divided city such as Peter Millar's account of living as a journalist in East Berlin, *1989 - The Berlin Wall: My Part in Its Downfall* (2009). The change in Berlin itself was the subject of radio programmes detailing how the city, in the words of a 2009 BBC feature, 'restitched' itself together.<sup>38</sup> Boym has commented on how Berlin in the first decade after 1989 was a city in transition, aware of history but keen to remake itself, a mixture of building sites and ruins. Describing the city as a focus of contested memories in the 1990s, Boym compares that decade favourably to the 'New Berlin' which became the city's official logo in 1999 and to what she sees as a new emphasis thereafter on urban homogeneity, on '*normalization*, not memorialization'.<sup>39</sup> Even an event as unexpected and transformative as the fall of the Wall in Berlin in 1989 can, it seems, eventually become institutionalised and rationalised. Alain Badiou's commentary on how states absorb exceptional events is here pertinent:

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<sup>37</sup> *The Invisible Frame* (2009)/ *Cycling the Frame* (1988), actress Tilda Swinton, dir. Cynthia Beatt.

<sup>38</sup> 'Restitching the City', BBC Radio 4 programme, presented by Rosie Goldsmith, broadcast 24 November 2009.

<sup>39</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic, 2001), p.176.



One of the profound characteristics of singularities is that they can always be *normalized*: as is shown, moreover, by socio-political History: any evental site can, in the end, undergo a state normalization.<sup>40</sup>

The evental site, defined by Badiou as ‘an entirely abnormal multiple, that is, a multiple such that none of its elements are presented in the situation’<sup>41</sup> could be described as an anomalous occurrence which has the potential for radical change. Considering alone the continuing interest in Berlin’s extreme past in English-language fiction, it could be argued that the processes of normalisation which Badiou describes have been resisted in the twenty years since the fall of the Wall. It would appear that the processes of political adjustment that followed unification in Berlin have been less engaging than the process of absorbing and reconfiguring in memory the city’s abnormal twentieth-century past. The official post-unification representation of Berlin as capital of united Germany and seat of national government appears to have been accompanied by the development of a counter-narrative in English-language Berlin fiction which is associated more with memory and outsider perspectives and spaces than with Berlin’s contemporary political scene.

## 5. Thesis Methodology

English-language Berlin fiction is dominated by the thriller genre but there are also a substantial number of Berlin novels that avoid categorisation within the popular generic form most associated with the city. Both Berlin thriller and novel have contributed to an exceptional period of productivity and reconfiguration over the course of the 1989-2009 period. The first chapter analyses the evolution of the Berlin thriller, the second chapter

<sup>40</sup> Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London, Continuum, 2005), p.176.

<sup>41</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, p.175.

explores generic transfer between the thriller and novel and the third investigates the Berlin novel in its contemporary form. The research is empirical in approach, based on a close reading of a sample of texts which examine generic adaptation, use of space and the relationship between specific sites and memory. In the first chapter, the ways in which authors use and modify generic convention is explored through a sample of novels illustrating the focus on different historical periods in the post-Wall thriller. The second chapter is based on a comparison between the Berlin novels of James Lasdun and McEwan in which genre adaptation and combination are exemplified through literary use of the thriller. The third chapter sets out to identify the character of the contemporary Berlin novel through a specific study of three novels by Hamilton in which specific use of marginal urban spaces in Berlin is analysed through a framework of utopian and dystopian concepts. Accompanied by contextual comparison with a number other post-Wall novels, the investigation of Hamilton's novels is supported by an interview conducted with the author in 2011 which was designed to clarify the author's relationship with Berlin both as a site of personal memory and as a marginal space.

### **Spatial Theory: from the Urban to the Utopian**

In this thesis, spatial analysis is used to explore how the Berlin thriller and novel have responded to the challenge of representing the different physical forms the city has assumed both historically and in contemporary fictional accounts. I aim to develop spatial investigation as a tool of literary interpretation by relating it to genre and memory and by applying it in

English-language fiction to the specific analysis of the representation of Berlin's topography, neighbourhoods, monuments and landmarks.

Connections between genre, memory and space will be explored through analysis of how period inflects the contrast in Berlin thrillers between natural features surrounding the city and the built environment of the urban core.

As a result of Berlin's fractured history in the twentieth century and its varying significance ranging from metropolitan capital to frontier city, investigation of the meanings of boundaries and margins within and around urban space is of particular relevance to this thesis. Peripheral and liminal areas not only demarcate the edges between the natural and the built environment of Berlin, they also have ideological resonances in the context of a city which in the last two decades has been recovering from four decades of division. From the field of urban studies, Jane Jacobs's views on the productivity of boundary spaces inform the analysis in this thesis of the representation in Hamilton's novels of the inhabiting of liminal space in the city by counter-cultural groups. The identification by Rob Shields of the potential in the marginal and the peripheral is also echoed in Hamilton's decentred explorations of identity.<sup>42</sup> David Clarke and Renate Rechtien's edited volume, *The Politics of Place in Post-war West Germany* (2009),<sup>43</sup> provides useful examples of spatial literary analysis in a range of scholarly contributions which draw on Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopias; initially defined in his 1967 paper, 'Different Spaces', it also informs the

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<sup>42</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974);

Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>43</sup> David Clarke and Renate Rechtien, eds., *The Politics of Place in Post-War Germany: Essays in Literary Criticism* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009).

methodology of this thesis.<sup>44</sup> Foucault's concept of the incompatible other as a validation of spatial incongruity is linked to the discussion of utopian concepts in this thesis and emerges as particularly suited to Hamilton's fictional representation of the changing social and topographical configurations of Berlin which have emerged in the two decades since unification.

Throughout the thesis I focus particularly on specific urban spaces or limits of the city: elevated viewpoints, abandoned spaces and voids, and liminal terrains. I consider elevated perspectives with reference to de Certeau's identification of a hegemonic mentality in the detachment of the view from above at the World Trade Center in New York.<sup>45</sup> I contextualise the representation of abandoned space and liminal terrain in Berlin fiction by allusion to the work of Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts on 'edgelands', which are identified as landscapes of overlooked potential in a post-industrial, contemporary British context.<sup>46</sup> However, there is also a degree of similarity here with the spatial voids that Huyssen has foregrounded as characteristic of Berlin: these include the post-war city reduced to rubble; the void that developed after 1961 in the fortification of the Wall through the development of a no-man's-land strewn with barbed wire and minefields; cartographic absences in Cold War representations of both East and West Berlin as voids by both sides, and the wasteland that emerged in the centre of the city stretching along the line of the Wall from the Brandenburg Gate to

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<sup>44</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Des Espaces Autres' (1967), 'Different Spaces', trans. Robert Hurley, in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. by James Faubian, 3 vols (London: Penguin, 1998), II, pp.175-85 (p.178).

<sup>45</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp.91-93.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), p.5.

Potsdamer and Leipziger Platz.<sup>47</sup> The extensive implication in history of these Berlin voids differentiates them from the anonymous space produced in the contemporary urban domain by shopping centres or transport systems, which have been categorised through the term *non-lieu* or 'non-place' by Marc Augé.<sup>48</sup> The anonymity associated with postmodern architecture and urban planning, however, is rarely signalled in English-language Berlin fiction due to the recurrent representation of the city as shaped by history or haunted by the potential presence of the past. On the other hand, Farley's description of 'edgelands' as 'underdeveloped, unwatched territories' can usefully be compared and contrasted with the boundary landscapes which often feature in Berlin fiction.<sup>49</sup> These areas of marginal terrain beyond the suburban hinterlands of cities appear to be neglected but are often characterised by previous, usually industrial, uses. As is explored in this thesis in the Berlin novels of McEwan and Hamilton, these areas of abandoned land often harbour ruins with historical resonances which enable them to function as potent memory sites. The difference between abandoned space and space of remembrance is often made through the discovery of a ruin, where the effects of time on a man-made structure serve as a stimulus to the agency of memory. In defining how the monument which is created by chance is particularly revealing of temporal processes, Boym emphasises the importance of unintentional memory as distinct from official commemoration:

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<sup>47</sup> Huyssen, *Presents Past*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>48</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-Lieux: Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), p.48.

<sup>49</sup> Farley and Roberts, *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011).

unintentional monuments or urban environments, porous courtyard ruins, transitional spaces, multilayered buildings with conflicting and disharmonious imprints of history are inimical to the idea of commemoration.<sup>50</sup>

The idea of the unintentional monument can be related in this thesis to the representations in a number of Berlin novels and thrillers of war-damaged building in East Berlin during the Cold War era: their function as memorials is an unforeseen consequence of a lack of resources to repair them. Nostalgia as a longing for home is explored in this thesis as an emotion that is often attached to Berlin in English-language fiction due to the external and frequently transitory relations with the city which often inform its narratives and therefore give rise to detached desires to belong. Boym distinguishes between 'restorative nostalgia', which she sees as orientated towards the national past and 'reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland';<sup>51</sup> and a more individual and cultural 'reflective nostalgia', which 'lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time'.<sup>52</sup> Throughout the thesis, the emergence of different types of attachment to Berlin can be considered as manifestations of the personal and cultural forms of nostalgia which Boym characterises as reflective. In the second chapter of this thesis I will explore how nationality inflects nostalgia in the focus on memories of divided Berlin in the novels of three British authors. In speculating on the emergence of a British nostalgia for divided Berlin, I am conscious that the post-unification period has also been notable for the emergence of two forms of local nostalgia, *Ostalgie* and *Westalgie*, representing respectively a longing for the former East and West

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<sup>50</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.78.

<sup>51</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.49.

<sup>52</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.41.

Germany. The fictional function of distinctive features of Berlin will also be investigated in this thesis, ranging from its defining geography, such as its hinterland of lakes and woods, and its situation on a level plain traversed by the rivers Havel and Spree. Key signifiers of the city from landmarks to streets and squares and neighbourhoods will be historically contextualised and analysed both for continuity and changes in how they are typically represented in English-language Berlin fiction. The definition of the city will be related to the cultural and social identities of particular neighbourhoods such as Kreuzberg's associations with Turkishness, squatting and alternative lifestyles or Grunewald's connections with lakeside affluence. The use of the tunnel as a significant space in McEwan's *The Innocent* is resonant in a city that prior to the building of the Wall had underground spaces which included the U-Bahn railway, wartime bunkers and basement air-raid shelters. After 1989, the frequency of reference to the Adlon Hotel in the English-language Berlin thriller appears to signify a change in the city's memory culture in recuperating a building whose past had been lost in the paralysis of a divided city. The fictional use of such historical structures is subject to critical scrutiny in this thesis in order to explore the extent to which they embody the persistence of memory or are merely used as symbolic tokens of continuity.

This thesis considers the relationship between the turn to history in post-Wall English-language fiction and the initial sense of exhaustion with utopian thinking that accompanied the fall of the Wall. Kumar, however, has defended utopian imaginings as indispensable to politics but not necessarily a blueprint for action. Conceptualisation of Berlin as a utopian and dystopian space resonates with the dualities and extreme experiences associated with

a city which, in the twentieth century, has been shaped and reconfigured by imperialist, fascist, communist and capitalist ideologies. The fall of the Wall, unification of Germany and collapse of the Soviet Union, with the liberation of former Soviet-controlled nations throughout Eastern Europe, marked the end of an era and, by some, such as Fukuyama, were seen to herald the 'end of history'.<sup>53</sup> In effect, the fall of the Wall signalled both the end of the Cold War and the start of a new historical era, the nature of which took time to emerge. Huyssen has observed how 'one major form of an orthodox and prescriptive utopianism has collapsed with the Soviet Empire'<sup>54</sup> but also counselled against Western triumphalism by asserting that since 'the demise of the Soviet Union, capitalism itself lacks a vision of the future'.<sup>55</sup> Huyssen's comments in 1995 show how the turn to history in the Berlin thriller and novel coincided with a time when liberal-democratic Western society appeared to lack the capacity to project a future, although the 1990s did involve new projects such as German unification and the expansion of the European Union. For Huyssen, a lack of interest in the arts in conceiving utopian visions connects with the new interest in history and memory:

It is in this context of a loss of confidence in the utopian powers of art [...] that the contemporary turn to history, memory, and the past assumes its full significance.<sup>56</sup>

One example of this distrust of the utopian can be seen in Harris's thriller, *Fatherland*; this dystopian projection of Nazi Berlin serves in this thesis as a point of departure for considering the extreme social visions which often inform English-language depictions of Berlin in post-Wall fiction. For

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<sup>53</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992)

<sup>54</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p.86.

<sup>55</sup> Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, p.86.

<sup>56</sup> Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, p.100.



example, the attempt to form ideal societies, which Krishan Kumar has designated ‘the practice of utopia’,<sup>57</sup> has its bearing on the escapist fantasies which drive, but ultimately frustrate, the protagonist of James Lasdun’s *Seven Lies* despite his success in arranging for himself and his girlfriend to leave East Berlin for the United States. Alongside the States, Kumar designates the Soviet Union as ‘the other great utopian experiment of modern times’.<sup>58</sup> the collapse of the latter after 1989 informs the depressed perspective of the representation of the fall of the Wall in McEwan’s *Black Dogs* (1992). In the third chapter of this thesis, reference to the utopian imagination provides a means of evaluating the city’s evolution, not only since the collapse of division in 1989, but also since the ending of the Second World War, as both temporal parameters can be traced either across or within Hamilton’s portrayals of Berlin in his three novels based on the city’s journey from division to reunification.

The relationship between utopia and space is apparent in its derivation: it refers to an idealised place which may be either a ‘good place’ or an unattainable ‘no place’, depending on its derivation from the Greek ‘ou’ or ‘eu’, respectively. Claeys and Sargent refer to dystopia as a ‘negative utopia, [...] considerably worse than the society’ in which a contemporary reader lives.<sup>59</sup> Utopia is commonly understood as the projection of a better society: its variants include its opposite, dystopia, literally ‘bad place’,<sup>60</sup> anti-utopia and critical utopia; but utopia also can be linked to dystopia. In his

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<sup>57</sup> Krishan Kumar, *Utopianism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), p.64.

<sup>58</sup> Kumar, *Utopianism*, p.84.

<sup>59</sup> *The Utopia Reader*, ed. by Gregory Claeys and Lyman T. Sargent (New York: New York University Press, 1999), ‘Introduction’, pp.1-5 (p.2).

<sup>60</sup> *The Utopia Reader*, ed. by Claeys and Sargent (New York: New York University Press, 1999), ‘Introduction’, pp.1-5 (p.1).

concept of heterotopia, Foucault provides an alternative to the homogeneity of utopia by incorporating an element of incompatibility into a combination of spaces. This idea will be explored in the third chapter of this thesis through an image of Berlin based on incongruity which emerges at the end of Hamilton's *Disguise*.

In the fictional reconstructions of the past which have emerged in the 1989-2009 period, Berlin is envisaged as a city recovering from a number of ideologically-driven utopias: the perversion of utopianism in the form of Nazi policies of racial superiority was followed by the post-war reshaping of the divided city by communist and capitalist occupiers. Utopian claims emerged on both sides of the Wall: they are implicit in the representation of West Berlin as a showpiece of liberal capitalism and also in the construction of East Berlin as a notional ideal of worker egalitarianism. This is not to dismiss utopianism: the projection of an ideal place is intrinsic to the concept of the city and has once again contributed to the reconfiguration of Berlin as a unified capital after the fall of the Wall. For example, the transparency of Foster's dome on the restored Reichstag has an element of the utopian in its advocacy of a new era of democratic accountability. Huyssen does not see an opposition between the recent turn to history and the forward temporal momentum in utopia, describing the 'search for history' as 'often invested with utopian energies very much oriented towards the future' and defining nostalgia not as 'the opposite of utopia, but as a form of memory, always implicated, even productive in it'.<sup>61</sup> The utopian nature of the engagement with the past in English-language Berlin fiction can be seen in the

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<sup>61</sup> Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, p.88.

connections with the present and implications for the future of the city in examples ranging from the dystopian in Harris to the qualified utopianism of Hamilton.

### **Berlin Memory Studies**

Memory can be personal, social or collective: fluid and changeable, it is subject to selection, erasure, ossification and ideological determination. The concept of dynamics of memory describes the active relationships between memory and space; memory and genre; memory as a form of connection between past and present; and memory in fiction as a form of invention. In particular, memory is related to genre in this thesis through the question of whether the turn to the past in the Berlin thriller and novel post-1989 represents a new emphasis on a need to remember at a time of change.

The predominantly anti-utopian reaction to the fall of the Wall is consonant with the turn to memory in the English-language Berlin novel and thriller since 1989. It is evident that 1989 provided an opportunity to construct narratives based on Berlin's past using fresh perspectives created by the new circumstances of reunification. In this thesis the fictional reconstruction of the past is considered as a form of memory which uses history as research material. Whereas history can be defined as the desire to construct a collective record of the past, memory in fiction tends towards the personal and the emotional. As Alon Confino has observed: 'a study of memory undertakes to explore how people imagine the past, not how the past actually happened'.<sup>62</sup> Considered as a means of inventing the past, Berlin

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<sup>62</sup> Alon Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp.154-55.

fiction can be related to this form of memory exploration. Although many Berlin thrillers and novels stress the historicity of their past reconstructions and assert the importance of verisimilitude by combining realist form with historical research, fundamentally, they are works of invention, and, as such, a contribution to memory studies.

Before proceeding to discuss memory in relation to the Berlin context, it is useful to consider how the need to turn to the past after the fall of the Wall registered with an English-speaking public in the publication of numerous historical texts about the city in the two decades since 1989. These included Antony Beevor's exhaustive account of the city's fall at the end of the Second World War, *Berlin: The Downfall, 1945* (2002)<sup>63</sup> and Frederick Taylor's *The Berlin Wall* (2006).<sup>64</sup> In particular, the 1990s also saw the publication of a cluster of cultural and political histories which, in being aimed at both an academic and a general readership, can be seen as a response to the surge in interest in Berlin's history caused by the fall of the Wall. These include *Berlin: The Biography of a City* (1994) by Anthony Read and David Fisher,<sup>65</sup> *the Ghosts of Berlin* (1997) by Brian Ladd,<sup>66</sup> *Faust's Metropolis* (1998) by Alexandra Richie,<sup>67</sup> and *Berlin* (2000) by David Clay Large.<sup>68</sup> These works of cultural history complement this research as evidence of a similar scholarly interest in the memory of the city that is evident in Berlin English-language fictional representations.

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<sup>63</sup> Antony Beevor, *Berlin: The Downfall 1945* (London: Penguin, 2003).

<sup>64</sup> Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall*, paperback edition (London: Bloomsbury, 2007).

<sup>65</sup> Anthony Read and David Fisher, *Berlin: The Biography of a City* (London: Pimlico, 1994).

<sup>66</sup> Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1997).

<sup>67</sup> Alexandra Richie, *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).

<sup>68</sup> David Clay Large *Berlin* (New York: Basic, 2000).

In the post-Wall decades, the significant growth within German studies in memory scholarship has been extensive enough to be described by Peter Fritzsche as a 'memory boom in the twenty years since 1989'.<sup>69</sup> Over the last decade in particular, a substantial number of memory-related scholarly volumes in contemporary German studies have been published. The pluralistic approach which informs *German Memory Contests* (2006) is one that is consonant with the emergence of a range of fictional representations of the Third Reich and Cold War eras in the English-language Berlin novel after the fall of the Wall. This volume of essays shifts the emphasis from coming to terms with the past to acknowledging a more active and competitive form of memory environment in post-unification Germany.<sup>70</sup>

Anne Whitehead has observed how the need and capacity to remember is conditioned by awareness of transience: referring to Halbwachs's distinction between history and memory, she has noted that history arises when the past 'is no longer included within the sphere of thought of existing groups'.<sup>71</sup> Applying this definition of memory to a generational, twenty-year duration, the period between 1989 and 2009, with the ending of the Cold War, can be seen to provide a special opportunity to reflect on the legacies of the divided city and its origins in the aftermath of war.

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<sup>69</sup> Peter Fritzsche, '1989 and the Chronological Imagination' in *Debating German Cultural Identity since 1989*, ed. by Anne Fuchs, Kathleen James-Chakraborty and Linda Shortt (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2011), pp.17-29 (p.26).

<sup>70</sup> Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove, 'Introduction: Germany's Memory Contests and the Management of the Past' in Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and George Grote, eds., *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film and Discourse since 1990* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), pp.1-21 (p.2).

<sup>71</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter and Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), p.106, cited by Anne Whitehead, *Memory*, New Critical Idiom series (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p.131.

The multi-authored volume, *Memory Culture and the Contemporary City: Building Sites* (2009), edited by Staiger, Steiner and Webber, illustrates the diversity of material forms in which memory is currently disseminated in Berlin through a range of disciplinary perspectives. Staiger and Steiner provide a useful summary of key questions surrounding the agency of memory which are also relevant to the particular perspective of English-language Berlin fiction, including ‘the aim for authenticity in comparison with the inherently reconstructed nature of the recollection’ which is further discussed in chapter one of this thesis in relation to the thriller genre.<sup>72</sup> They also refer to the involvement of memory in ‘the articulation of claims about the nature of identities’ and analyse the memory site, identifying

the role of the place of memory as the connecting point between the recollective moment, the place of the remembered, and the person remembering.<sup>73</sup>

In this thesis, the relationship between space, memory and the remembering mind is discussed in relation to a motif of ‘return to Berlin’ in the novels of Lasdun and McEwan in the second chapter. The dynamics of the ‘recollective moment’ are particularly layered in Harris’s *Fatherland* (1992) as a counterfactual projection of Berlin’s pre-war and wartime Nazi past into the 1960s which is here discussed in relation to British fears of German unification in the early 1990s. Mary Fulbrook’s commentary on how recent memory sites in Berlin inevitably relate to the present moment as well as to the past is relevant here:

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<sup>72</sup> Uta Staiger and Henriette Steiner, ‘Introduction’ in *Memory Culture and the Contemporary City: Building Sites*, ed. by Staiger and others (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.1-13 (p.3).

<sup>73</sup> Staiger and Steiner, ‘Introduction’ in *Memory Culture and the Contemporary City: Building Sites*, pp.1-13 (p.3).

They are, after all, not only (or even at all) attempts at differentiated representation of the past, but (also) interventions in a contested present and a desired future.<sup>74</sup>

A contemporary connection to memory through the discovery of traces of the city's Jewish past emerges as central to Anna Winger's *This Must be the Place* while Hamilton's need to recover memory through a temporal narrative that starts in wartime becomes a necessary preliminary to understanding identity in *Disguise*.

The architectural reconfigurations of Berlin which followed unification are analysed by Karen E. Till in a sustained focus on the city in *New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (2005).<sup>75</sup> In Till's monograph, the buildings and iconography of the 'new' Berlin are juxtaposed against official and unofficial memorials to the city's National Socialist and Holocaust past. Jennifer A. Jordan in *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond* (2006)<sup>76</sup> compares museums and memorials associated with Nazi-era resistance and persecution with sites that have been forgotten, thereby highlighting the processes of erasure that often accompany the official construction of memory sites.

The profusion of political and cultural histories of Berlin and of scholarly volumes interpreting the construction of the city's memory has been accompanied by a substantial expansion in English-language Berlin fiction since unification. The productivity of these engagements with Berlin is testament to a sustained interest in reconfiguring the city's past through

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<sup>74</sup> Mary Fulbrook, 'Historical Tourism: Reading Berlin's Doubly Dictatorial Past' in *Memory Culture and the Contemporary City: Building Sites*, ed. by Staiger and others (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp.126-44 (p. 141).

<sup>75</sup> Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

<sup>76</sup> Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006)

different, but allied, textual methodologies. In particular, this thesis will explore the character of the English-language perception of Berlin by analysing how space and different forms of memory inform both the Berlin thriller genre and the more experience-related modes of the Berlin novel.

### **Spatial Memory: Nora, Huysen and Berlin**

The association of memory with identity in the work of Pierre Nora is evident from the following commentary in 2002 in which he refers to 'forms of memory bound up with minority groups for whom rehabilitating their past is part and parcel of reaffirming their identity.'<sup>77</sup> Nora's work, which dates from the mid-1980s, is also linked in this thesis to the ways in which memory is reconstructed in fiction in spaces and material forms. Published in seven volumes over an eight-year period, Nora's memory project, *Les lieux de mémoire* (1984-1992), which consists of the work of a number of scholars, including Nora himself, was designed as a form of retrieval of the French past through the construction of a national collective memory as a response to the limitations of the official historical record. However, it should be acknowledged that Nora's work arose in a specifically French context and bears a relationship to the reconstruction of a French national memory: it does not automatically translate into a German context where the idea of such a memory is contested, not least by the need, post-1989, to construct a new shared memory for a Germany whose past had been represented by two ideologically polarised accounts prior to 1989.<sup>78</sup> Nora initially considers

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<sup>77</sup> 'Reasons for the current upsurge in memory' *Eurozine*, 2002, <<http://www.eurozine.com/html/www.eurozine.com/article/2002-04-19-nora-en.html>> [accessed 12 March 2012].

<sup>78</sup> This problem can be illustrated by the former concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, north of Berlin, which preserves the GDR-era memorial grounds and a museum room with



memory in its diversity and association with tangible forms to be more pervasive and powerful than history, which is limited by its relation to narrative and connection:

Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative.<sup>79</sup>

The relationship identified here between memory, the spatial and the material will be investigated by close analysis of the engagement in Berlin thrillers and novels with diverse forms of the city's physical fabric, ranging from apartment blocks to lakes, as representations of personal or collective memories. The connections between memory and space have been ambiguously defined by Nora's concept of the *lieux de mémoire*, as forms of remembrance which have grown in importance as *milieux de mémoire*, or environments of memory, have been subject to decline. Nora's definition of the *lieu de mémoire* as embodying diverse forms of memory which compensate for the loss of more organic, traditional rituals of memory, is rendered not simply as location but more metaphorically as 'realm of memory' in its English translation.<sup>80</sup> In *Les lieux de mémoire*, Nora offers an inclusive definition of the diverse ways in which memory is preserved:

Museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders – these are the boundary stones of another age, illusions of eternity.<sup>81</sup>

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artefacts and contemporary interpretations within a post-unification re-conceptualisation of the site as a series of decentralised museums.

<sup>79</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*', *Representations*, 26, (1989), 7-24, p.9.

<sup>80</sup> Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. by Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, (3 vols), (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-1999).

<sup>81</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*', *Representations*, p.12.

The idea of the memory site in Berlin English-language fiction is often located in the realm of the personal and unofficial, as shown in le Carré's *The Secret Pilgrim* through Wall memorials, where the intention is to compensate for erasures, losses or wilful obliteration of certain events from the dominant historical record. Loss of memory environments can be translated to a Berlin context in a thriller such as Harris's *Fatherland* in which inflated monumental architecture, for reasons of ideological control, allows no space for *lieux de mémoire*. Memory can also be related to specific sites, such as the war-damaged Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, and their changing, or consistent, functions over time. Ruins often function as unintentional *lieux de mémoire*, particularly where the work of decomposition serves to alter the meaning of a man-made structure.

In 2011, Nora reversed his advocacy of the primacy of memory and instead defended history as a professional discourse at risk from popular and political manifestations of memory, advancing the claim that 'history unites us, whereas memories of the past tend to divide us'.<sup>82</sup> Nora's comment could be applied to debates over planning issues in post-unification Berlin such as the controversy that preceded the decision to demolish the Palace of the Republic (Palast der Republik), a building that was the seat of the GDR parliament, in favour of reconstructing the façade of the Schloss, a former Hohenzollern palace. Here one form of memory was privileged over another and the preservation of an existing building with its past associations intact

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<sup>82</sup> Nora's comment arises in an article written in response to legislation in France outlawing denial of genocide in Armenia. Pierre Nora, 'Lois mémorielles: pour en finir avec ce sport législatif purement français', *Le Monde*, 28 December 2011, p.17. Translation from *Liberté pour l'histoire* website, 2 January 2012  
[http://www.lphasso.fr/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=164%3Aloi-sur-les-genocides-une-bataille-perdue-par-la-guerre&catid=53%3Aactualites&Itemid=170&lang=en](http://www.lphasso.fr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=164%3Aloi-sur-les-genocides-une-bataille-perdue-par-la-guerre&catid=53%3Aactualites&Itemid=170&lang=en)[accessed 12 March 2012].

deemed inferior to the artifice of an eighteenth-century reconstruction. Implicit in the debate was a further element of memory in a desire for redress for the decision made by the GDR state in 1950 to destroy the war-damaged, but not irretrievable, remnant of a once-imposing royal residence. This example highlights how memory in Berlin is political, palimpsestic in its layers and embodied in both actual and imagined spaces and buildings in the city. The attempt to rebuild the vanished Schloss, driven by memory of its destruction, also appears to be motivated by an impossible attempt to recover a past that is lost.

However, Nora also emphasises the materiality of topographical memory sites which 'owe everything to the specificity of their location and to being rooted in the ground'.<sup>83</sup> One of the questions raised in this thesis is the extent to which the reconstructions of memory in Berlin in English-language fictions of the 1989-2009 can be defined by place or are related to non-physical phenomena such as voids and ghostly presences. Nora's contention that memory is absolute is difficult to relate to Berlin, a city which has suffered so much erasure through devastation and in which many competing versions of the past surface. The concept of memory as related to the 'concrete' may have informed the encyclopaedic intention underpinning Nora's inventory of emblems, commemorations and monuments that constitute the memory of France in his multi-volume *Lieux de mémoire*. His insistence here on the tangible is useful in identifying locations of memory in twentieth-century Berlin. On the other hand, one of the particular spaces that Huyssen has identified as invested with memory in the city is the void, the

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<sup>83</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*', *Representations*, 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (1989), 7-24, p.22.

absences usually associated with the legacy of the war or of the Wall. For Huyssen these voids range from 'prominent ruins' to 'World War II bullet and shrapnel marks' on buildings.<sup>84</sup> While it would be a challenge to compile a catalogue of voids as memory sites, their presence and function in works of Berlin literature can be identified and contribute to its distinctiveness.

The image of Berlin as a city which combines new construction with old memories is a recurrent one which Huyssen has identified with ideas of voids and palimpsests in describing the condition of the city in the post-unification years of reconstruction. This took the form, as Huyssen has observed, of 'visible markers of built space', contrasting with 'images and memories repressed and ruptured by traumatic events'.<sup>85</sup> These haunted spaces have been defined by Huyssen as 'the voids of Berlin'.<sup>86</sup> Exemplified by the former Wall area between the Brandenburg Gate and Leipziger Platz, these apparently abandoned or 'empty' spaces in the city are actually repositories of memory of the era, such as the Cold War, which shaped their emergence in this form. Apparently empty space is linked to the concept of the *tabula rasa*, or the city as blank slate which can be continually rewritten; this is often associated with a new beginning such as emerged after the fall of the Wall in 1989. However, it stands in tension with the idea of the city as an accumulation of layers of memory which Huyssen envisages in his depiction of Berlin as 'part palimpsest'.<sup>87</sup> For example, the possibility of a post-war 'fresh start' in Kanon's *The Good German* is complicated by personal memory from before the war. There is a parallel opportunity for a

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<sup>84</sup> Huyssen, *Presents Past*, p.52.

<sup>85</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.52.

<sup>86</sup> See chapter 'The Voids of Berlin', Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, pp.49-71.

<sup>87</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.52

new beginning after the fall of the Wall in Hamilton's *Disguise* but this is both associated with, and located at a distance from, the memory-haunted city.

Many thrillers relate to particular phases in Berlin's twentieth-century history but also make temporal connections with the past through memory or across eras via shifts in narrative time. In *The Ghosts of Berlin*, Ladd relates post-unification redevelopment controversies in Berlin to images of the city in previous eras but warns against strict period classifications by configuring memory as a temporal flow, concluding: 'This kind of living history cannot be bracketed between particular dates'.<sup>88</sup> The idea of spaces in Berlin forming palimpsests in which present time is overlaid by memory of past experience is often informed by Walter Benjamin's recollections of personal memory of the city in 'Berlin Childhood around 1900', as cited, for example, by Aridjis in *Book of Clouds* (BC 50).<sup>89</sup> In Benjamin, the literary text becomes the vehicle through which the experience of the built environment is preserved in memory, as the urban commentators Savage, Warde and Ward have noted.<sup>90</sup> The concept of Berlin as a palimpsest comprised of different layers of the past is one that Huyssen has identified in configuring the urban imaginary as 'memories of what was there before, imagined alternatives to what there is'.<sup>91</sup> Dirk Verheven in his monograph, *United City, Divided Memories?* (2008), offers an analogous perspective by showing how another

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<sup>88</sup> Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997), Introduction, p.5.

<sup>89</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Berlin Childhood around 1900', 1934 version, *Selected Writings, 1935-1938*, ed. by Eiland and Jennings, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2002), III, pp. 344-41.

<sup>90</sup> Mike Savage, Alan Warde and Kevin Ward, *Urban Sociology, Capitalism and Modernity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.141.

<sup>91</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.7.

layer has been added to the city's landscape of memory through the legacy of Cold War museums and memorials.<sup>92</sup>

Huyssen extends this concept of connection over time by presenting Berlin as a complex example of the layering of past and present, which he describes as a 'palimpsest, a disparate city-text that is being rewritten while previous text is preserved, traces are restored, erasures documented'.<sup>93</sup> The imagining of the city as text envisages the urban as a domain which is shaped equally by those who alter and build its physical structures and by those who reinvent it in texts ranging from films to novels. This thesis picks up on the proximity between city and text suggested by Huyssen and argues that city fiction, when analysed as a collective entity, illuminates this juxtaposition of the contemporary and the past, and constitutes, in itself, a form of the city's memory. Through this research I explore the types of memory which are configured in English-language fictional representations of twentieth-century Berlin as an archive of the city's experience, defined by a non-native, outsider perspective based on external preconceptions and cultural formations.

Huyssen depicts the city as comprised of both presences and absences, past cities and the dominant contemporary form: 'The strong marks of present space merge in the imaginary with traces of the past, erasures, losses and heterotopias'.<sup>94</sup> The identification here of Berlin in the post-Cold War era with heterotopia, understood as a reference to Foucault's concept of a space combining displacement and difference, is one which is

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<sup>92</sup> Dirk Verheven, *United City, Divided Memories?: Cold War Legacies in Contemporary Berlin* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

<sup>93</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.81.

<sup>94</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.7.

related in this to the post-unification fiction of Hugo Hamilton. Following the turn away from utopianism with the disintegration of Soviet communism, the idea of heterotopia sustains continuity with utopian discourse without subscribing to either extreme of the utopia-dystopia polarity. Huyssen differs from Boym in ultimately endorsing a pragmatism in the reconstruction of Berlin: critical of the loss of memory entailed in the conversion of parts of Potsdamer Platz into a shopping precinct, he looks forward in *Present Pasts* to a city committed to both preserving traces of history and to building for the future.<sup>95</sup> However, he warns against the urge to monumentalise, detecting a latent desire to forget in the turning of memory into stone.<sup>96</sup>

### **Genre and the Berlin Thriller**

Genre defines literary category through conventions and rules which mediate between author and reader. Frederic Jameson stresses the sociological perspective in defining genres as ‘social contracts between a writer and a specific public’.<sup>97</sup> In relation to the Berlin thriller, it provides the codes through which historical or contemporary representations of the city are understood. Described by John Frow as ‘a set of cues for reading a text’,<sup>98</sup> it is a practical necessity in facilitating literary interpretation, as Thomas O. Beebee has observed, asserting that ‘we simply do not know what to do with texts without the “user’s guide” that genre provides.’<sup>99</sup> Generic conventions may atrophy if they address issues which are no longer relevant or merely

<sup>95</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.81.

<sup>96</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.81.

<sup>97</sup> Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, p.106, cited by Beebee in *The Ideology of Genre: A Comparative Study of Generic Instability* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p.277.

<sup>98</sup> John Frow, *Genre*, p.4.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas O. Beebee, *The Ideology of Genre: A Comparative Study of Generic Instability*, p.264.

conform to the preconceptions and prejudices of their intended readers. Criticism of genre fiction often identifies dependence on the formulaic and reinforcement of conventional ideas of the social order. Jean-Francois Lyotard, for example, is critical of the way that genre conventions induce passivity and conservatism: 'they produce the conditions for coming to rest; they cause a state of quiescence; they suppress and exclude.'<sup>100</sup> Particular issues which arise in relation to the Berlin thriller include the extent to which it is implicated both in replicating gender and national stereotypes, and also in propagating ideological bias related to the hegemonic contests of the Second World War and the Cold War. Frow calls for an attentiveness in identifying how genre reinforces convention, which he describes as 'those embedded assumptions and understandings which are shaped by the framework of genre'.<sup>101</sup>

The study of genre informs the analysis of Berlin fiction in this thesis through a focus on thrillers in the first chapter, literary novels in the third, and combinations of the two in the second. The intersection between the literary novel and the thriller characterises novels such as McEwan's *The Innocent* and *Black Dogs*, James Lasdun's *Seven Lies* (2006) and le Carré's *Absolute Friends*. These novels are consciously literary in their explorations of character, psychology and relationships but also use tropes and themes associated with the espionage thriller genre. Popular thrillers tend to be overtly generic and to embrace the familiarity of convention through, for example, serial novels and recurrent protagonists. Authors such as Len

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<sup>100</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p.128, cited in Garin Dowd, 'Introduction: Genre Matters in Theory and Criticism', *Genre Matters: Essays in Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Garin Dowd, Lesley Stevenson and Jeremy Strong (Bristol: Intellect, 2006), pp.11-27 (p.14).

<sup>101</sup> Frow, *Genre*, p.101.



Deighton and Philip Kerr conform to these expectations by establishing structures of familiarity within which extreme situations then emerge. The literary novel tends to operate in an opposite way, often disavowing genre convention in the name of innovation. However, it also functions according to its own conventions, its avoidance or concealment of generic signifiers itself operating as a signal of its genre.

For the English-language Berlin thriller, genre provides a means by which authors, who are likely to be non-native and not permanently resident in Berlin, can devise plots and narratives which access the city and its memory. For example, the Cold War spy thriller genre has become identifiable with Berlin through a particular spatial iconography associated with the city in the form of checkpoints, watchtowers and the Wall.

Genre convention has evolved in the Berlin thriller and novel after 1989 through generic combination and cross-fertilisation resulting in the formation of new genres or the development of old ones. In relation to generic exchange, Beebee has identified the intersections between genres as a means of defining their distinct characteristics:

to think of genre as a system of differences, we must obviously focus our attention on the borders between genres, because it is precisely there, in their differences, that genres exist.<sup>102</sup>

Another school of literary interpretation defines genre primarily in relation to form and tradition and is exemplified by the approach of René Wellek and Austin Warren, who categorise genre 'not by time or place (period or natural language) but by specifically literary types of organization or structure'.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Thomas O. Beebee, *The Ideology of Genre* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press 1994), p.257.

<sup>103</sup> René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, third edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).

However, genres are also configured in relation to determination by sociological forces, as Tony Bennett has observed, in describing:

underlying processes of social transformation which are held to constitute the propelling mechanisms responsible for the timing and direction of genre change'.<sup>104</sup>

By interpreting the fall of the Wall as a moment of social change with European and global impact, generic changes in the English-language Berlin thriller and novel can be associated with the sociological impact of transnational political developments. In this context, the turn to memory in the thriller can be linked to post-Cold War uncertainty about the future and new awareness of Berlin's past under Nazism and Soviet bloc state socialism and extending back to a sense of connection with the unified city of the Weimar era.

The capacity of the thriller to respond to crises in contemporary politics was apparent when the aftermath of the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 was followed by the espionage intrigues and political manipulation of le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* and Deighton's *Funeral in Berlin*. In these novels of the early 1960s, the spy genre was influential in encapsulating and disseminating an image of Berlin's divided and occupied terrain as a covert battlefield where intelligence agents waged a secret war between East and West. The fall of the Wall in 1989 threatened to end this special relationship between the city and the spy fiction which depicted the Wall and its checkpoints as the defining spatial markers and symbols of contemporary global politics.

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<sup>104</sup> Tony Bennett, *Outside Literature* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.77.

However, post-1989, the Berlin thriller has renewed itself by combining genres such as the counterfactual and historical with dominant generic elements usually based on either a crime fiction or spy genre element. The evolution of genre through various forms of generic interaction is described by Todorov as typical of its mode of operation:

Where do genres come from? Well, quite simply, from other genres. A new genre is always the transformation of one or more old genres: by inversion, by displacement, by combination. [...] There's never been literature without genre, it's a system subject to continual change.<sup>105</sup>

The Berlin thriller can be identified in the continuing influence of the spy thriller and the emergence of a range of combined generic forms involving espionage and crime fiction, dystopian and counterfactual genres, literary fiction and the novel of personal development or *Bildungsroman*. Genre adaptation in the post-1989 Berlin thriller has assumed a number of forms. For example, Harris's *Fatherland* combines crime and spy story characteristics: it is also a counterfactual historical novel, and, as an Orwell-influenced depiction of a repressive totalitarian society, an example of dystopian fiction. Le Carré's *Absolute Friends* is a novel about the endurance of friendship, a spy story about the dangerous liminality of the espionage operative working between opposing intelligence agencies and, in part, can be read as an historical novel which reconstructs the atmosphere of West Berlin in the late-1960s student protest era.

The process of adaptation and genre combination is linked to a flexibility required to adapt to the portrayal of different eras in Berlin's past. Berlin's twentieth century experience of war, dictatorship and destruction has

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<sup>105</sup> My translation. (Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.) Todorov, 'L'Origine des genres', in *Les genres du discours* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), pp.44-60 (p.47).

proved to be a ready source of the extreme experiences which the thriller requires. Martin Rubin has linked these sensational effects to a condition of excess: 'too much atmosphere, action, suspense - too much, that is, in terms of what is strictly necessary to tell the story'.<sup>106</sup> Representations of excesses of scale or taste are common in the Berlin thriller, as can be illustrated by the sado-masochistic performances of late-1980s West Berlin as described in Michael Mirolla's *Berlin* (2009). The excessiveness of the Wall as a system of constraint or informs the narrative of many thrillers. Its associated topography of border checkpoints and ghost stations is foregrounded in a thriller such as Raelynn Hillhouse's *Rift Zone* (2004), in which the threatened conspiracy in part consists of a secret plot to invade West Berlin by the East German state. This involves exploiting the abnormality of the divided city's infrastructure by sending forces through abandoned stations in the East and along the underground rail line into the Western sector (*RZ 320*). Here the rationalisation of the extreme in the divided city's everyday negotiation of space is intrinsic to its attraction to authors of the thriller, a genre driven by a need for the sensational. David Platten has described it as 'the fairground attraction of the literary world, where the customer pays to brush against raw existence'.<sup>107</sup> The extreme variations in political and social conditions under the many different changes of regime to which Berlin was subject in the twentieth century make it an ideal source of such intense and abrasive experiences.

Memory plays a key role in both the Berlin novel and thriller. In the crime fiction genre, the investigation may consist of the reinscription of

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<sup>106</sup> Martin Rubin, *Thrillers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.5.

<sup>107</sup> David Platten, 'Wired to the Word: On Reading Thrillers', *French Cultural Studies* 21 (2010), 267-275, (p.268).

memory, following the efforts of the perpetrators to erase traces of the crime. For example, in Kanon's *The Good German*, the protagonist sets out to investigate the hidden wartime past of scientist Emil Brandt's involvement in Nazi V-2 rocket development programmes and discovers evidence of his use of slave labour. Similarly, in Harris's *Fatherland*, detective Xavier March pieces together fragmentary evidence of the Holocaust to counter state suppression of its history.

The past also resurfaces in ghostly traces in novels which have elements of thriller-related mystery or sensation, such as Michael Mirolla's *Berlin* (2009) and Chloe Aridjis's *Book of Clouds*, both of which present Berlin as a surreal terrain in which dream overlaps with reality. Whether in the form of spectral apparitions in Aridjis, or the narration of personal or public histories related to Berlin in the work of Hamilton, the fiction itself becomes a repository of memory.

The recurrence in Berlin thriller narratives of extreme experiences arising from the association of the city with decadence and dictatorship suggests that the popularity of this fictional genre is connected with the sanctioning of controlled forms of voyeurism and use of convention to frame the presentation of experiences which might be considered morally taboo. John Frow has drawn attention to the way that genre operates as a mode of collective interpretation: 'It is a shared convention with a social force.'<sup>108</sup> The placing of fiction within a conventional frame signals an adoption of a moral consensus, offering the reader the security of knowing that however

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<sup>108</sup> John Frow, *Genre*, New Critical Idiom series (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.102.

exceptional may be the fictional experience described, ultimately conventional social norms will prevail.

## 6. Key Terms (Genre Hybridisation, Space) and Thesis Structure

### Genre Hybridisation

The thriller itself is a form which is structured on genre combination, as Rubin has observed in describing how the term is usually applied to a range of generic forms: 'spy thriller, detective thriller, horror thriller. There is possibly no such thing as a pure, freestanding "thriller thriller".'<sup>109</sup> This thesis investigates how memory and space are represented through generic cross-fertilisation following the end of a period of dominance of the Berlin thriller by the Cold War spy thriller sub-genre. Alastair Fowler has observed how 'Genres change when new topics are added to their repertoires'<sup>110</sup> as occurred after the fall of the Wall when the English-language Berlin thriller and novel turned increasingly to historical subject-matter. The mixing of genres is described in this thesis as hybridisation, although this is not to be understood as indicating the production of a new, fused genre, as an offspring of this process. Duff defines hybridisation as follows:

The process by which two or more genres combine to form a new genre or subgenre; or by which elements of two or more genres are combined in a single work.<sup>111</sup>

The second definition here is closer to the use of hybridisation in this thesis where it is used to indicate a diverse and eclectic mingling of genres rather

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<sup>109</sup> Rubin, *Thrillers*, p.4.

<sup>110</sup> Alastair Fowler, 'Transformations of Genre', originally published in *Kinds of Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp.170-83, in *Modern Genre Theory* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), ed. by David Duff, pp.232-49 (p.233).

<sup>111</sup> David Duff, 'Key Concepts', *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. by David Duff (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p.x-p.xvi (p.xiv).

than the forging of a new genre. The extent to which these changes in the Berlin thriller have the quality of a period of transition will be further explored in this thesis. Fowler's observation that 'Combination of repertoires is one of the most obvious means of generic change'<sup>112</sup> helps to illustrate why spy and crime fiction genres merge with others such as the *Bildungsroman* and dystopian novel in the English-language Berlin thriller. Duff classifies the *Bildungsroman* and historical novel as sub-genres of the novel, defining the latter term as 'a type of class or text which is identifiable as a subclass or offshoot of a larger category'.<sup>113</sup> It is interesting to note, therefore, that Jerome de Groot in turn sees the contemporary historical novel as spawning similar generic categories, describing it as written 'within an evolving set of sub-genres'.<sup>114</sup> This thesis will explore how Berlin is represented within this new historically-informed generic profusion.

The evolution of genre through various forms of generic interaction is described by Todorov as typical of its mode of operation:

A new genre is always the transformation of one or more old genres: by inversion, by displacement, by combination. [...] There's never been literature without genre, it's a system subject to continual change.<sup>115</sup>

The English-language Berlin thriller in the period after 1989 went through a process of adaptation and genre combination that is linked to political and social conditions in the location that is its subject: while at a distance from everyday political events in the city, the turn to the past in the Berlin thriller is

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<sup>112</sup> Fowler, 'Transformations of Genre', in *Modern Genre Theory* ed. by David Duff, pp.232-49 (p.234).

<sup>113</sup> Duff, *Modern Genre Theory*, p.x-p.xvi (p.xvi).

<sup>114</sup> Jerome de Groot, *The Historical Novel* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010), Introduction, p.2.

<sup>115</sup> My translation. Todorov, 'L'Origine des genres', in *Les genres du discours* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), pp.44-60 (p.47).

a strategy for maintaining the association with a city that was itself in a period of transition, not only physically rebuilding and connecting its divided halves, but also looking to the past in the search for a new identity.

The association of a city as distinct, and often extreme, as Berlin, with a conventional genre such as the thriller, also raises questions about the potential in the genre to license displays of stereotypical masculinity, expressed both in terms of physical aggression and sexuality, and to recycle gender stereotypes. There is also an issue surrounding the use of convention and the potential redundancy of the formulaic. An indication of the generic tendency towards the conventional is evident in the emphasis on the authentic in the paratextual material of the Berlin thriller. These claims of verisimilitude could be read as indicative of the insecurity of the genre in requiring extra-textual validation to support reconstructions of the city's history. However, they are also open to interpretation as responding to an expectation in the reader that genre fiction will offer a version of the past which is as authentic as possible within the constraints of the particular narrative form.

### **Space**

Space in this thesis refers to imaginary forms of locational representation in fiction of a city that also has a separate physical existence. Space is seen as encompassing place as part of a move away from privileging place as a location which is stable and secure, and associating space with movement and apparent vacuousness. As Doreen Massey has remarked:



And what if we refuse that distinction, all too appealing it seems, between place (as meaningful, lived and everyday) and space (as what? the outside? the abstract? the meaningless)?<sup>116</sup>

In this thesis, space refers to the natural and built environment, to woods and lakes, but also to buildings, memorials and landmarks. Marginal space, in characterising natural and man-made boundary areas in the city, has a particular importance with reference to Berlin, which has been both a crossroads and a frontier state, connecting and dividing eastern and western Europe.

During the Cold War era, due to the post-war sectoral occupation of the city, the isolation of West Berlin within East Germany and the reinforcement of the East-West divide by the Wall, liminal space assumed an exceptional and abnormal importance. The muted hostility implicit in the presence of fortifications and surveillance, combined with the apparent absence of actual conflict, created tension and offered a terrain which was both actual and symbolic and therefore ideally suited to the spy thriller genre. The Wall divided streets and created redundant space in its vicinity, turning formerly central areas in the city into peripheries, a process that began to be reversed with its demise. Analysis of the return of the city after 1989 to a more natural and less militarised form is one of the spatial investigations conducted in this thesis, particularly in relation to use of arboreal imagery as a signifier of renewed growth in the work of a number of authors. Examples of marginal and liminal spaces are frequent in English-language Berlin fiction. In Hamilton, for instance, allotments are situated on the boundary between the suburban and rural; a liminal area is also created by the steps

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<sup>116</sup> Doreen Massey, *for space*, (London: Sage, 2005) p.6.

between an overhead railway station and the street. These peripheral spaces are furthermore associated with the outsider protagonists whose perspectives are privileged in these novels.

### **Thesis Structure**

In the first chapter of this thesis, analysis of the spatial forms used in generic fiction encompasses a range of memories spanning the twentieth-century to 2009. The turn to memory in the Berlin thriller since 1989 is often seen in spatial iconographies related to specific watersheds in the city's past, with a cluster of fictional constructions of Nazi Berlin and the immediate post-war era. In the second chapter there is a particular focus on British memory of divided Berlin from 1945-1989 through British novels by le Carré, Lasdun and McEwan which incorporate the spy thriller genre into literary fiction. Representations of East and West Berlin by these novelists during the Cold War period are compared and the extent to which a nostalgia for divided Berlin is related to their Britishness is explored. In the third chapter, the main area of attention is the contemporary city through a comparative focus on spatial memory in the representation of the post-unification era in novels by Aridjis, Winger and Hamilton. A diversity of cultural backgrounds – Mexican, North American and Irish-German – reflects transnational, multi-ethnic Berlin but also reveals shared concerns with layers of memory in Berlin and a range of responses as to its configuration. Contemporary Berlin in English-language fiction emerges as a haunted space made up of a network of marginal spaces.

Berlin English-language literature of the post-Wall period frequently uses a visitor perspective: one of the intentions of this thesis is to explore its

characteristics. The extent to which external cultural contexts define such a position is discussed without discounting how the perspectives the outsider can offer on Berlin may complement those available to the insider.

The evolution of the Berlin thriller in the post-Wall period from contemporary espionage narrative to novels which tend to be historical and draw freely from spy or crime fiction conventions can be related to Todorov's observations on change and adaptation as intrinsic to genre. Discussing how genres develop from other genres, Todorov refers to literature as 'a system in constant transformation',<sup>117</sup> an emphasis which serves as a reminder that the opposite can occur: genres can atrophy if their conventions become mere formulae reinforcing the status quo and stifling difference through the repetition of the familiar. In the third chapter of this thesis, contemporary experience of Berlin is represented by the literary fiction of Aridjis, Winger and Hamilton without overt reference to thriller conventions. However, a proximity to popular genres can still be detected: a sense of mystery pervades Aridjis's *Book of Clouds* while Winger is indebted to a journal format in her response to the everyday life of the city and the mapping of relationships. Although Hamilton avoids signalling genre conventions in his Berlin fiction, the use of the pastoral genre informs *Disguise* (2008) while in *The Love Test* (1995) the influence of the spy thriller can be detected in his fictionalisation of an actual defection from East Berlin into the West, a key trope in spy fiction. In addition to exploring the distinctive genres and tropes of Berlin thrillers and novels, this thesis also seeks to identify how the use of space and memory animates these different generic forms.

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<sup>117</sup> Todorov, *Genres in Discourse*, originally published in French by Editions de Seuil, 1978, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.15.

## Chapter One. Reconnecting Memories: the Berlin Thriller after the Wall

### Introduction: The Turn to the Past and Thriller Verisimilitude

The English-language Berlin thriller in the period after 1989 went through a process of adaptation and genre combination in response to the opening up of memory perspectives associated with Berlin following the fall of the Wall. Discussing recent German history, Paul Betts has observed a ‘propensity to look to the past for post-1989 orientation and guidance’.<sup>118</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the English-language Berlin thriller, following unification, should engage with the fictional representation of different phases in Berlin’s twentieth-century history. Even in a contemporary post-unification thriller such as *War Torn* (2003) by John Marks, which is primarily concerned with the Balkans war of the 1990s, Berlin is a city which continues to resonate with past experience, particularly of war:

Not so long ago, war had been here, too, in this street. One could still find bullet holes in the walls. Bones must still lie beneath the concrete under his feet, a thousand restless ghosts for every inch of Berlin.  
(*WT* 5)

Here the memory of war is palpable in the marks of damage that can be seen in the built environment and metaphysical in a perception of the city as layered over a graveyard whose ghosts continue to haunt Berlin.

The memory of Berlin’s experience of war stretches back to 1914, as Martin Woollacott noted in the *Guardian* in 1989.<sup>119</sup> For the English-language thriller, the ending of an era decisively shaped by war provided an opportunity to reflect on its origins across the century. As Ian Kershaw

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<sup>118</sup> Paul Betts, ‘German Modernity as New Historical Object’, in *Journal of Urban History*, 25. 6 (1999), 874-883 (p.878).

<sup>119</sup> Martin Woolacott, ‘The climb to the sunlit uplands’, *Guardian, Review*, 4 December 1989, pp.21-25.

observed: 'The fall of the Berlin Wall and the Unification of 1990 opened the prospect forthwith of a different view of the German past.'<sup>120</sup> The immediate period after the First World War is the subject of Jonathan Rabb's 2005 novel, *Rosa*, which is set in Berlin in 1919. A number of recent thrillers, set in the 1920s and early 1930s, represent Berlin in the period of the Weimar Republic, including Rabb's crime thriller *Shadow and Light* (2009), which is set in 1927. Gaylord Dold's crime novel, *The Last Man in Berlin* (2003) has an early 1930s setting and shows the pressure on conventional detection in Berlin as a consequence of the increasing Nazi influence in the city.

Although Len Deighton continued to write Berlin-centred spy thriller trilogies in the early 1990s, a shift from the contemporary espionage genre to crime detection narratives probing Berlin's Nazi past was evident in the fictional constructions of Robert Harris and Philip Kerr. However, the spy thriller mode continued to be associated with Berlin in relation to depictions of the aftermath of the Nazi era and its Cold War legacy in the 1945-1948, post-war 'rubble thrillers' of Joseph Kanon and Dan Vyleta. During the 1989-2009 period, relatively few thrillers set in wartime Berlin were published: two examples are Harold Nebenzahl's *Cafe Berlin* (1992) and Downing's *Stettin Station* (2009).<sup>121</sup> Consequently, the clustering of Berlin thrillers set before 1939 and after 1945 indicates that remembering the causes and consequences of the Second World War has been more of a priority than reconstructing the experience of the war itself.

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<sup>120</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Germany's Present, Germany's Past*, p.11.

<sup>121</sup> Downing's series of thrillers named after Berlin stations and featuring protagonist John Russell has continued to evolve beyond the 2009 framework of this thesis with the publication of *Potsdam Station* (Tiverton, Devon: Old Street, 2010) and *Lehrter Station* (Brecon: Old Street, 2012), both set in 1945.

The post-war rubble city has proved to be particularly congenial to the thriller as an environment in which civilised law appears to have disappeared, providing an extreme and exceptional form of social abnormality for the genre to explore, the scale of the devastation matching the need of the genre for sensational spatial effects. The fall of the Wall in 1989 has itself become a thriller subject, especially the preceding late-1980s period.<sup>122</sup> In this chapter, I will focus on Welsh's *The Bullet Trick* as an example of a postmodern thriller which constructs contemporary post-unification Berlin through past associations with the tropes and decadent atmosphere of 1930s Weimar Berlin.

The focus on the past after 1989 in the Berlin thriller has offered space for invention and speculation in a number of counterfactual novels. These include Harris's projection of a triumphant Nazi Berlin in *Fatherland*, the spatial forms and reception of which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Tom Gabbay's *The Berlin Conspiracy* (2007) posits a conspiracy to assassinate US President Kennedy during his visit to West Berlin in 1963 while Hillhouse's *Rift Zone* combines the fictional with the historical in the discovery of a plot to kill Soviet Premier Gorbachev on a visit to Berlin in 1989. The novels by Hillhouse and Gabbay, both of which were published in the twenty-first century, show that there is still an interest in espionage thrillers set in Cold War Berlin, but here in combination with the counterfactual genre. These counterfactual thrillers show that the past is not

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<sup>122</sup> Thrillers which engage with this era include *Berlin* by Michael Mirolla, *Wall Games* (1990) by Michael Dobbs, *Rift Zone* (2004) by Raelynn Hillhouse, *Brandenburg* by Henry Porter (2005) and *Exit Berlin* (1992) by Tim Sebastian. A number of thrillers set in the new Berlin which has emerged since the fall of the Wall include Glenn Meade, *Brandenburg* (1994), Piers Paul Read, *A Patriot in Berlin* (1995), Buddy Giovinazzo, *Potsdamer Platz* (2004), Louise Welsh, *The Bullet Trick* (2006) and Cym Lowell, *The Riddle of Berlin* (2008).

fixed and are evidence of an association of Berlin with alternative historical possibilities involving dystopian, 'worst-case' scenarios.

The description of early-1960s Berlin as a tinderbox at the beginning of *The Berlin Conspiracy* typifies the thriller's attraction to a volatile city where the sense of danger and risk has global implications:

They called it a 'Cold War', but one spark in that divided city and it wouldn't be cold for long – the whole damn planet would go up in flames. (BC 7)

The instability and sense of threat which is often invoked in Berlin thrillers is encapsulated in the rhetorical question in Hillhouse's *Rift Zone*: 'And how many times have we nearly gone to war over Berlin?' (RZ 299). Ralph Harper has defined the thriller as characterised by extreme and heightened states: 'situations of crisis, danger, suspense, tension, terror, dread, in short, chaos and the absurd'.<sup>123</sup> A focus of local, national and international frontiers during the Cold War, Berlin was particularly congenial to a genre in which the crossing of borders is crucial. It is also a genre about confronting personal limits, as Harper has observed, citing Karl Jaspers in describing the thriller as 'the literature of boundary situations'.<sup>124</sup> The post-1989 Berlin thriller tends to be characterised by a genre combination with a dominant crime fiction or espionage component. These generic forms may be present either singly or in combination, or in association with other genres such as literary fiction, the *Bildungsroman* or novel of development, or the dystopian novel. The crime fiction genre usually starts with the discovery of a murder or crime and the rest of the narrative consists of stages in its resolution as

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<sup>123</sup> Ralph Harper, *The World of the Thriller* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), Preface, p.x.

<sup>124</sup> Harper, *The World of the Thriller*, p.51.

guided by an investigating detective. The conventional spy thriller story is based on the discovery of a conspiracy by an individual spy whose task it becomes to undertake a secret mission to rescue the world from the damaging consequences of the initial plot. The spy genre is generally associated with border-crossings, defections, duplicities and betrayals which are the consequence of the double-life the spy is compelled to lead. In the post-unification English-language Berlin novel, there has been a tendency for convergence between literary fiction and the spy thriller genre, as will be shown in the second chapter of this thesis. Conversely, in the Berlin thriller since the fall of the Wall, the inclination towards historical subject-matter has been accompanied by an increasing presence of the crime detection genre as shown by use of plots based on murder mysteries in *Fatherland*, *The Good German*, *The Last Man in Berlin* and Kerr's *March Violets* and *The Pale Criminal*.

The turn to memory in the English-language Berlin thriller can also be traced in the importance attached to verisimilitude in reconstructing Berlin's past, which shows the genre staking a claim to terrain usually reserved for the historical novel. Topographical authenticity is also particularly relevant in this thesis which accords a central role to the analysis of the relationship between space and memory. Taking the form of 'author's notes' appended to narratives, this paratextual material testifies to a perceived obligation to authenticate the fictional use of material from the past. While this accords with Bruce Merry's identification of verisimilitude as 'an over-riding concern' of spy thriller writers, its prevalence in the Berlin thriller of the post-1989



period is indicative of a specific relevance.<sup>125</sup> David Downing's prefatory author's note in *Zoo Station* is typical in offering reassurance that within the fictional frame the novelist has taken great care to respect historical plausibility: 'This is a work of fiction, but every attempt has been made to keep within the bounds of historical possibility.'<sup>126</sup> Authorial assurances of authenticity are usually placed in a number of paratextual forms such as prefaces (Flynn, Kanon, Downing) or postscripts (Kerr, Vyleta, McEwan), while many include maps to augment the impression of historical accuracy (Harris, Kanon, Flynn).

Dan Vyleta, author of *Pavel & I*, comments in a postscript to the novel on the importance of detail in claims of historical authenticity, but reserves the right to invent, stressing that the past is informed by contemporary concerns and is not hermetically sealed from the present:

In a book interested in the question of how many of our personal needs and desires we insert into narrations of the past, such inaccuracies may perhaps be excused. (*PI* 341)

Memory of the past is inseparable from the point in the present at which the remembering takes place. Objectivity is impossible but, nonetheless, Vyleta's concern for historical accuracy is shown by the details he provides of the many works of reference, including eye-witness accounts and memoirs in both English and German, which he used in reconstructing post-war Berlin in his fiction (*PI* 342-343). The claims of verisimilitude made by many Berlin thriller authors in authenticating representations of the past by providing evidence of research undertaken is compatible with spy thriller convention, as indicated by Merry. However, it also pre-empts criticism of the use of

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<sup>125</sup> Bruce Merry, *Anatomy of the Spy Thriller* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1977), p.64.

<sup>126</sup> David Downing, *Zoo Station*, 'Author's Note' as preface.

popular generic forms to engage with weighty historical matters and foregrounds a desire to be recognised for producing fiction that combines fact and invention in a form of memory which animates the past as effectively as any other mode of writing.

**1. Nazi Berlin and the Appropriation of Space: Robert Harris, *Fatherland* and Philip Kerr, *Berlin Noir***

A post-Wall surge in using the crime fiction genre to depict Berlin in the Nazi era became evident with the publication of the first two novels of Kerr's *Berlin Noir* trilogy in 1989-1990 followed by Harris's *Fatherland* in 1992. In this section I begin by exploring how the Berlin thriller connects memory of the Nazi past to contemporary concerns by analysing and contextualising the reception of Harris's novel, *Fatherland*. Later I will show how the novel configures inflated forms of monumental space as a visual correlative for a state desire to control memory. I continue the spatial analysis through examples from the first two novels of Kerr's *Berlin Noir* trilogy which show how the appropriation of the city's architectural legacy by the Nazis as a means to consolidate power becomes a signifier of the Nazi Berlin thriller.

Harris's novel *Fatherland* consists of a projection forward to 1964 of an invented, triumphalist Berlin configured as the hub of a Nazi empire arising from an imagined victory in the Second World War. The initial crime fiction genre convention signalled by the discovery of a series of murders dovetails with the espionage mode as it begins to emerge that the crimes are linked with a conspiracy, a staple of the spy genre, which consists of state suppression of memory of the Holocaust. The novel combines the crime genre with a counterfactual scenario. This could be defined as a fictional

mode in which an alternative outcome to actual historical events is constructed. Berlin is depicted as the capital of a Fourth Reich which encompasses Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Russia. In other respects, the basic geopolitical orientation of the post-war era is maintained: there is still a Cold War, détente and a nuclear stand-off, but Nazi Germany replaces the Soviet Union as the dominant power opposing the United States. In *Fatherland*, the counterfactual projection still requires the thriller genre in order to drive the narrative. The implications of the use of genre in animating the past are discussed here in response to a critique of the novel by Niall Ferguson.

In a German context, the setting of Harris's counterfactual fiction in 1964 can be related to concerns about erasure of memory of the Holocaust which came to prominence in literary and theatrical discussions in West Germany in the early 1960s, as Andreas Huyssen has observed: 'It was the 1960s that first brought the Holocaust openly into public debate in the FRG.'<sup>127</sup> *Fatherland*, however, can also be seen as a commentary on British government fears of German unity that were prevalent in the period of its publication in 1992, two years after the ratification of German unification. The novel's fictional construction of a triumphal Nazi Berlin can be read as an embodiment of British anxiety about unification leading to a Europe dominated by a powerful Germany, as expressed by Prime Minister Thatcher in 1990: 'She worried that a united Germany would be "much too large and powerful" for its own good, and, more importantly, for the good of its neighbors.'<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.142.

<sup>128</sup> David Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York: Basic, 2000), p.531.

Concerns in Britain about German unification extended from the government to intellectuals such as the Irish commentator and former *Observer* editor, Conor Cruise O'Brien, who feared the emergence of a Fascist Fourth Reich in the image of its predecessor: 'In the new, proud, united Germany, the nationalists will proclaim the Fourth Reich'.<sup>129</sup> Writing at the end of October 1989, O'Brien looked ahead to the prospect of 'the dissolution of the Soviet empire and German reunification' and responded with unease: 'The British, the French and Europeans generally are right to feel deep disquiet at this prospect'.<sup>130</sup> As events unfolded, O'Brien's fears of a revival of unchecked nationalism in united Germany proved to be unfounded: nonetheless, the anxieties he articulated were representative of a particular, conservative strain in British political circles.

Fears that unification might lead to a revival of Nazism in Germany have their echo in *Fatherland*. In Harris's novel, anxiety about power in Berlin is imagined through the configuring of the city as Germania, the grandiose, totalitarian city which Hitler and his architectural adviser, Speer, had planned to build. The result is a bloated, authoritarian monstrosity:

'Leaving the Arch, we enter the central section of the Avenue of Victory. The Avenue was designed by Reich Minister Albert Speer and was completed in 1957. [...] It is both wider, and two-and-a-half times longer, than the Champs Elysées in Paris.' (F 25)

The enormity of a triumphal Nazi Berlin is rendered in huge constructions designed to embody state power. The architecture is intended to be awe-inspiring but is also satirised through comparisons with existing monuments,

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<sup>129</sup> Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Beware, the Reich is Reviving', in *When the Wall Came Down: Reactions to German Unification*, ed. by Harold James and Marla Stone (Routledge: London, 1992), pp. 221-23 (p.222).

<sup>130</sup> Cruise O'Brien, 'Beware, the Reich is Reviving', p.222.

which serve to underscore its grossly inflated size as an indication of excessive imperial ambition. Foreign monuments are deliberately diminished: 'The Arc de Triomphe in Paris will fit into it forty-nine times' (*F* 24); the People's Hall has a capacity of 150,000 and is sixteen times the size of St. Peter's in Rome. The comparisons with other monumental buildings also serve as a reminder of the unoriginal, derivative nature of the architecture of 'Germania'.

As in thrillers by Kanon, McEwan and many others, a tour of Berlin is used as a device to provide the reader with an outline of the city by reference to a mixture of familiar and less well known city locations or landmarks. In the case of *Fatherland*, the guided tour taken by the protagonist and his son reveals a fascist Berlin in which actual street names drawn from the Nazi era and monumental buildings combine to reinforce an image of totalitarian ideological hegemony:

They had reached the top of the Avenue of Victory, and were entering Adolf Hitler Platz. To the left, the square was bounded by the headquarters of the Wehrmacht High Command, to the right by the new Reich Chancellery and the Palace of the Führer. Ahead was the hall. (*F* 28)<sup>131</sup>

The guide's tone of awed reverence at the huge scale of the architecture is a reminder of the ideological function which it embodies: these are buildings designed to humble the spectator. The inclusion as a frontispiece to the novel of a two-page map, 'Hitler's Berlin 1964', is a reminder that verisimilitude is a key consideration and a sign of hybridisation between the thriller and the historical novel. The cartographical aid is also linked to the outsider perspective and the explanatory material inherent in a narrative set

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<sup>131</sup> The 'Avenue of Victory' alludes to the Siegesallee in the Tiergarten, which existed from 1939-1945, while 'Adolf Hitler Platz' refers to the Nazi designation of Theodor-Heuss-Platz, formerly Reichskanzlerplatz.

abroad. The map further illustrates the colossal distortion of the existing scale of the city with the 80ft high Brandenburg Gate sinking into insignificance against the 1000ft high dome of the Great Hall nearby.

The recreation by Harris of Germania in *Fatherland* was cited in an *Irish Times* article reporting on an exhibition in Berlin displaying Hitler and Speer's architectural plans for the city. Entitled *Mythos Germania*, this exhibition was held at the Pavilion adjacent to Berlin's Holocaust Memorial in 2008.<sup>132</sup> The newspaper citation of Harris's depiction of the People's Hall is revealing in showing how a fictional recreation of an imagined history of Berlin has sufficient authority to be reproduced in factual journalism fifteen years after the novel's initial publication. In this instance, the construction in *Fatherland* of a Nazi Berlin proved useful in reimagining the monstrous nature of Speer's Berlin.

On the other hand, another example of the reception of *Fatherland* shows that genre fiction representation of the Nazis remains sensitive. Historian Niall Ferguson, editor of a volume analysing counterfactual approaches to history, criticised the novel for trivialising the idea of a Nazi victory by making it what he calls a 'titillating backdrop for a good departure-lounge yarn.'<sup>133</sup> Sceptical about the value of fictional reconstructions of the future, he sees the conventions of the thriller genre as interfering with the credibility of the historical representation:

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<sup>132</sup> Derek Scally, 'How the Nazi capital would have looked', *Irish Times*, 'Weekend Review', 5 April 2008, p.4.

<sup>133</sup> Niall Ferguson, in *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*, ed. by Niall Ferguson (London: Papermac, 1998), pp.1-90 (p.7).

As such books go, it is well researched. But it is irredeemably fictional, in as much as the narrative follows the classic pattern of a popular thriller; and as such it tends to dismiss the plausibility of the historical setting.<sup>134</sup>

Ferguson, however, fails to give any credit to the thriller for animating the setting and facilitating the construction of an alternative version of the past. His description of the novel as 'irredeemably fictional' also appears to reveal a prejudice against genre fiction as an inferior category of textual interpretation, presumably in comparison with the verisimilitude of historical writing. While Ferguson privileges historical writing, Hayden White compares history narratives to a discourse 'like metaphoric speech, symbolic language and allegorical representation'.<sup>135</sup> These are typical literary devices: Harris's novel uses genre to drive plot and character and animate a fictional representation of the past. *Fatherland* challenges a narrow definition of historical writing and, in using invention to construct a layered intervention in the past, shows how dystopia results from state control of memory. The novel does not expose the excess of memory to which Huyssen refers as our contemporary condition but a lack which can only be filled by the rediscovery of documentation and of vanishing memory sites such as the Wannsee Villa, where the Holocaust was planned, and the remains of a concentration camp in Poland (F 382).

Harris presents an alternative history, rather than an actual historical period, as in the conventional historical novel. By projecting the history of Nazi domination from the 1933-1945 period onto 1964, an era with its own historical formation, the result is a palimpsest, which conflates Nazi and Cold

<sup>134</sup> Ferguson, 'Virtual History: towards a chaotic theory of the past', p.7.

<sup>135</sup> Hayden White, *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (New York: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p.7.

War histories. This reflects the doubling of memory that occurred in Berlin after the fall of the Wall when the divided city entered into history, bequeathing a new layer of memorials over the spatial reminders of Berlin's Nazi past. In the novel, use of the conventions of the spy and crime thriller in the investigation of a case of serial murder and exposure of a state conspiracy does not preclude historical detail or spatial exactitude. Even the imagining of a triumphal fascist Berlin has its basis in historical plans as a fictional realisation of Speer's architectural designs for the city.

The thriller plot is designed to be engaging but also has contemporary relevance when considered in the context of Holocaust suppression. This was an issue in the early 1990s, when *Fatherland* was published, due to the 'Holocaust denial' speeches given in Austria in 1989 by British author, David Irving, who was convicted in 2006 for questioning the existence of gas chambers. Ferguson's commentary remains useful for exposing the tension that can arise between historical writing and fictional forms of representation, and by drawing attention to the particular sensitivity which can surround fictional portrayal of the Nazi regime.

Both Harris and Kerr make depictions of the city's architecture integral to their fictional reconstructions of Berlin during the Third Reich. In *Berlin Noir* Kerr depicts the insidious appropriation of the city's civic buildings and spaces while Harris envisages in *Fatherland* the triumphal post-war Berlin planned by Hitler and Speer in the form of enormous monuments to the regime's power. In a phrase which animates Berlin by use of a body metaphor, Harris refers to the Gestapo headquarters on Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse as 'Germany's black heart' (F 131). Identification of buildings is



foregrounded by reference to the housing in adjacent buildings of the Gestapo, the *Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service)* and the headquarters of Reinhard Heydrich. This concentration of Nazi power near the Brandenburg Gate and Hitler's Chancellory on Wilhelmstrasse is a key signifier of the Nazi Berlin thriller. The appropriation of buildings in this area is also referenced in Abbott's *The Last Innocent Hour* when the narrator, Sally Jackson, in an episode set in 1933-1934, alludes to the proximity of her father's place of work as American Ambassador to the administrative offices of the Nazi regime:

The embassy itself was on the Wilhelm Platz, close to the Adlon, and in the same neighbourhood as the Chancellory and Dr. Goebbels's immense Ministry of Propaganda. Those buildings were still being renovated and expanded to the proper National Socialist proportions. (LI 141)

The ideological adoption and enlargement of existing buildings in order to signal a new Nazi identity is typical of the Nazi Berlin thriller, as has already been shown in relation to *Fatherland*.

The description in *Fatherland* of Gestapo headquarters as 'a grand five-story Wilhelmine construction' that in the Weimar era 'housed the Berlin School of Arts' (F 130) is indicative of the detail of the topographic history the novel provides. The typical genre motif of the takeover of civic buildings here provides a striking instance of the undermining of the city's cultural diversity as a means by which the Nazis consolidated their power. Harris also replicates design ideas drawn from the Berlin of the 1960s, as shown by the following scene which uses the modernity of the setting of a diner to evoke the American-influenced character of 1960s West Berlin:

They had lunch in Budapester Strasse, opposite the Zoo, in a modern place with vinyl seats and a plastic-topped table: father and son, one with beer and sausages, the other with apple juice and a hamburger. (F 27)

The mix in *Fatherland* of architecture and design styles from different historical eras is based on accurate details which add plausibility to the counterfactual presentation: historical features from the 1930s and 1940s city combine with references to the design and culture of West Berlin in 1964 to construct an invented, but plausible Nazi future. The combination of the two eras is not incompatible and reflects the way Berlin and all cities are comprised of architecture from a range of different historical periods.

The Berlin of *Fatherland* is based in part on adaptation of a historically plausible representation of the city in the 1930s and 1940s as can be shown by the following list of underground rail stations:

To travel on the central U-bahn line is, in the words of the Reich Ministry for Propaganda and Cultural Enlightenment, to take a trip through German history. Berlin-Gotenland, Bülow Strasse, Nollendorf Platz, Wittenberg Platz, Nürnberger Platz, Hohenzollern Platz – the stations succeed one another like the pearls on a string. (F 164)

Here the names of still existing U-Bahn stations (Hohenzollern Platz, Bülow Strasse, Nollendorf Platz, Wittenberg Platz) are combined with one which is historic (Nürnberger Platz, closed in 1959, but appropriate for the Berlin of *Fatherland* considering the importance of Nürnberg in propagating the Nazi project); one which is an invention: Anhalter Bahnhof becomes Berlin-Gotenland, referring to 'Gotenland', the planned name of a zone of Nazi administration in the Crimean peninsula. Harris's strategy for constructing his imaginary Berlin is based on realism in its use of historic and contemporary place names but also uses invention to underscore the representation of a projected, rather than an actual history. German cultural and hegemonic

resonances implicit in underground station names such as Wittenberg, for its association with Martin Luther, or Hohenzollern Platz, named after the regal dynasty, are here appropriated by the Nazi propaganda ministry in an attempt to authorise the regime's own legitimacy. Use of the names of familiar U-Bahn stations shows how the representation of the city in the novel resonates beyond its period parameters. In conclusion, *Fatherland* is a novel in which the magnifying of space turns the city into a monumental arena which excludes the function of memory as an authentic record of the past and subjects it instead to the selectivity of state control. Its counterfactual form makes the memory issues with which it engages particularly resonant in its contemporary setting. It addresses post-unification issues such as the revival of neo-Nazism, outsider perceptions of German unification and Holocaust denial; and through the range of contemporary responses which it provoked, it emerges as a thriller which grapples both with the city's Nazi past but also with the political ramifications of its legacy in the present.

Like Harris, Philip Kerr uses the crime fiction genre to animate historical subject-matter, as has been noted by the German scholar, Peter Nusser, who cites him as one of a group of innovative authors who explore 'new possibilities for crime fiction in the contemporary trend for historical novels.'<sup>136</sup> Kerr changes genre to suit the historical period under survey: in the first two novels of the *Berlin Noir* trilogy, he uses the crime fiction genre to reconstruct Nazi Berlin while the third, *A German Requiem*, set in the post-war era, shifts from crime to spy thriller as a conspiracy by a ring of Nazi

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<sup>136</sup> 'Autoren, die im gegenwärtigen Trend zum historischen Roman auch neue Möglichkeiten für die Kriminalliteratur erkunden.' Nusser's German-language commentary is one of the few academic studies to refer to Kerr's work, in English or German, and shows how transnational scholarship can contribute to developing critical understanding of Berlin thriller fiction. Peter Nusser, *Der Kriminalroman* (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2003), p.125.

survivors to alter war records is uncovered in the course of an investigation. The theme of the covert disappearance of Berlin's Jewish population during the 1930s is addressed in *The Pale Criminal* through a subtle tracing of the hidden history of the escalating persecution of the Jews. By challenging the reader through identification with a German protagonist working in Berlin during the Third Reich in close proximity to leading Nazi officials, Kerr's novels dramatise the experience of living and working under dictatorship and of surviving in the devastated post-war city which is its legacy.

Kerr and Harris both create dramatic tension by asking the reader to identify with a protagonist who is a flawed but conscientious German detective working in Berlin under the Nazi regime. Kerr discovers a terrain eminently suited to the thriller in the enervated, doom-laden atmosphere of Berlin in the immediate pre-war period. In *The Pale Criminal*, the second volume of the *Berlin Noir* trilogy, the mood in the city in 1938 is tense with the fear of impending war: 'And how is Berlin?' (BN 387) asks an SS officer, to which the protagonist, Bernie Gunther, replies: 'Things are quiet [...]. But that's because everyone is holding their breath' (BN 387). A series of appalling sexual crimes, involving extreme bodily violations, becomes a sign of the pent-up and perverse moral climate prevailing in the pre-war city. In *Berlin Noir* the immediacy of the experience of Berlin is heightened by use of a first-person narrator reminiscent of the hard-boiled first-person narrative voice in Chandler. In the context of memory, the first-person narrative can be associated with the partial perspectives of the confessional and the individual eye-witness, rather than with claims to third-person omniscience and objectivity.

The ideological appropriation of space as a principal signifier of the Nazi thriller is illustrated by the militarisation of Unter den Linden in 1936 in Kerr's *March Violets*. This involves the chopping down of trees to be replaced by German eagles on Doric columns and the widening of the street to make it more suitable for military parades:

Unter den Linden had always been flamboyant without much harmony in its mixture of architectural designs and styles; but that flamboyance was now made brutal. (*BN* 108)

The element of display intrinsic in the design of the wide boulevard is here exploited as a platform for the reinforcement of hegemonic spectacle. In *The Pale Criminal*, which is set in 1938, the monumental architecture of Berlin is appropriated by the Nazi regime to display its power through 'grand buildings' and 'long wide avenues that [...] seemed to have been made for columns of marching soldiers' (*BN* 338). Five years after the seizure of power by the Nazis, the militarisation of the city has advanced to the stage where it appears to have been constructed for that purpose and memory of any previous use has already been erased. Nazi exploitation of the city as an instrument of social control is again in evidence in *March Violets*, when Gunther gives a list of the Berlin prisons he has visited, revealing a system of incarceration that had existed prior to the Third Reich which is now being taken to new punitive extremes:

As an ex-bull I've seen the inside of quite a few prisons in my time: Tegel, Sonnenburg, Lake Ploetzen, Brandenburg, Zellengefängnis, Brauweiler; every one of them is a hard place, with tough discipline, but none of them came close to the brutality and dehumanizing squalor that was Columbia House. (*BN 227*)

This mapping of Berlin as a carceral city shows how the Nazi appropriation of buildings in the city extends into a dystopian network of detention and punishment sites. Gunther's memory of the inhumanity of the treatment meted out at Columbia House is linked to the ambiguous categorisation of the prison, located in the Tempelhof area of Berlin, as 'a short-stay transit prison on the way to a KZ' or 'a long-stay transit camp on the way to a KZ' (*BN 227*). The reference here to *Konzentrationslager* shows that this Berlin jail was a precursor of the Third Reich network of concentration camps. In accord with the focus in *March Violets* on the 1936 period, there is no explicit forewarning of the Holocaust here, but the setting of a subsequent episode in Dachau involving the imprisonment of the protagonist there reveals that Jews are being assigned overcrowded huts and are dying at a disproportionate rate: 'Dachau was no place to be a Jew' (*BN 229*). The inhumane treatment of the Jews in Dachau is linked to Berlin as one of the secret destinations for the Jews who are disappearing from the city. On his release and return to Berlin, Gunther observes sardonically: 'certainly there was nothing Jewish on Unter den Linden that could be boycotted' (*BN 241*). Here the detective notices the absence of the Jewish presence in the city through personal memory but his reference to the association of this ethnic group with a policy of scapegoating is indicative of the marginality of his own standpoint. Based on his Dachau experience, Gunther's position of knowledge of the eradication of the Jews in the camp corresponds to the reader's own

awareness of the Holocaust, as Kerr writes the persecution of Berlin's Jews back into the memory of the city.<sup>137</sup>

Kerr reinscribes into memory events in Berlin that can be seen with hindsight as precursors of the Holocaust. The centrality of the city to the Nazi destruction of Jewish shops and synagogues is brought home by reference to a synagogue on Fasanenstrasse, a street which crosses Kurfürstendamm, the principal boulevard in the western part of the city. On this street, whose significance is underscored as the place where the protagonist himself lives (*BN* 486), the synagogue is seen smouldering (*BN* 520), while on Kurfürstendamm, the shattering of a mirror becomes an image which implicates Gunther, not in the crime itself, but in a consequential fragmentation of identity when he comes across 'an enormous mirror that lay in a hundred pieces, presenting shattered images of myself that ground and cracked underfoot' (*BN* 519). The damage stretches beyond the Jewish community, to the dulling of the moral sensibility of Germans who either take part in the destruction, like Bruno Stahlecker's son (*BN* 520-521), or like Gunther's former lover, Hildegard, who takes a major in the SS as her new partner and neglects to ask Gunther about the identity of the murderer of her stepdaughter, a victim of a conspiracy by SS officers (*BN* 522-523).

Kerr's use of metaphor in *The Pale Criminal* is designed to evoke memory of the 1930s as an era in which the city's pride in construction was replaced by a culture of destruction. This is initially signalled through a time-specific analogy drawn from the era of the Zeppelins: 'I stepped out of the airship-sized glass shed that is the Zoo Station, and walked across

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<sup>137</sup> In early 1937 140,000 Jews still lived in Berlin but by July 1939 the Jewish population in the city had fallen to 75,000. See Clay Large, *Berlin*, p.314.

Hardenbergplatz to Berlin Zoo's main entrance' (BN 287). Here the apparent normality of well-known Berlin locations is linked to civic pride in the description of the station's 'airship-sized' canopy. However, the mixed transportational metaphor set up an incongruity which suggests potential hubris in the excessive size of the building. In due course, the full force of this establishing image of a vast glass structure emerges at the end of the narrative with a description of streets showered with broken glass following the destructive violence of the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 1938: 'Glass lay everywhere, like the pieces of a huge, icy jigsaw' (BN 519). Here Kerr shows how the thriller can encompass the extended metaphors which are more conventionally associated with literary fiction. *The Pale Criminal* ends with an autumnal description of millions of leaves blown off trees and burned by workers in the Botanical Gardens: 'the acrid grey smoke hanging in the air like the last breath of lost souls' (BN 523). Here Kerr turns an everyday event into an image of human cremation, the symbolic level of the narrative making a connection between 1930s Berlin and memory of the Holocaust that was to follow.

Kerr's desire to underscore the Nazi appropriation of the architectural triumphs of Weimar-era Berlin leads him into a minor error in *The Pale Criminal* when he describes the proximity of Nazi offices to 'Gropius's Europa Haus' (BN 302).<sup>138</sup> Kerr's intention is to stress the threat to the architectural achievements of Weimar modernism in the proximity of the nearby Nazi offices: the Europahaus is described as visible from the nearby headquarters

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<sup>138</sup> Completed in 1931, the 12-storey Europahaus on Stresemannstrasse was in fact designed and built by Richard Bielenberg, Josef Moser and Otto Firlé: less recognisable names than that of the famous architect and Bauhaus director, Walter Gropius.



of the SD, the Security Service controlled by the Nazi officer, Reinhard Heydrich, which itself is located in a 'beautiful, three-storey building' (BN 302) on Wilhelmstrasse, where the Reich Chancellery was also situated until 1939. Also in the vicinity is the Gestapo headquarters, adjacent to the former 'Hotel Prinz Albrecht Strasse' (BN 303) or SS-Haus, where Heinrich Himmler presided over the SS (*Schutzstaffel*), the elite military unit committed to the enforcement of Nazi policy, and the German police force. The Nazi hegemony in Berlin is here portrayed by references to the public buildings, such as hotels, which housed the administration of police and military forces, and whose former social functions distract from their role in instilling and enforcing the ideological practices of a dictatorial regime. There is a topographical precision with which Kerr records how his protagonist enters the SS-Haus to seek out a file on a member in the 'Personnel Records Department on the second floor' (BN 456). Harris in *Fatherland* is similarly exact in describing the location of the offices of the head of the *Kriminalpolizei*: 'Arthur Nebe's suite of offices was on the fourth floor' (F 182). The detail about Nazi locations in Berlin is crucial in conveying to the reader not only the verisimilitude of the experience of entering into the heart of the Nazi administration but also the bureaucratic ordinariness of the rooms in which the violence and terror of the Second World War were planned.

In this section I have identified contemporary issues such as historical verisimilitude, Holocaust denial and fear of a Fourth Reich which resonate with the counterfactual depiction of a dystopian Nazi Berlin in *Fatherland*. Harris and Kerr use space to show how it can be appropriated to control memory. In Kerr's *Berlin Noir*, particular Berlin spaces and absences

illustrate the growth of anti-Semitism in Berlin and foreshadow the Holocaust in the spatial destruction of Jewish culture in the city. Finally, spatial appropriation functions as a trope of the Nazi Berlin thriller in the work of both Harris and Kerr. Nora has observed that memory 'has never known more than two forms of legitimacy: historical and literary' and proceeds to state that 'At present the boundary between the two is blurring'.<sup>139</sup> In the dramatic first-person witnessing of the Nazi past in Kerr and the imaginative counterfactual image of Berlin in Harris, this interplay of history and literature in fictional memory sites can be seen as a productive form of convergence.

## 2. **Memories of Reconstruction in 'Rubble Berlin' Thrillers: Joseph Kanon, *The Good German*, Dan Vyleta, *Pavel & I* and Philip Kerr, *A German Requiem***

The many Berlin thrillers which have provided fictional reconstructions of the defeated and devastated city, from 1945 to the lifting of the Berlin Blockade in 1949, indicate that the immediate post-war period has had a particular resonance in the post-1989 memory of English-language authors. Key texts which will be considered in this chapter include Joseph Kanon's *The Good German*, set in 1945; Dan Vyleta's *Pavel & I*, set in 1946-1947; *A German Requiem*, the third volume of Kerr's *Berlin Noir*, set in 1947.<sup>140</sup>

The rubble city is a trace and symbol of the violence of war:

comparable to the genre convention of beginning a crime fiction with a corpse resulting from a mysterious killing, it offers instead the corpse of a city

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<sup>139</sup> Nora, 'Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*', *Representations*, p.24. The cluster encompasses Georgina Harding's *The Spy Game* (2009), which concludes in the remnants of the Tiergarten in 1947 (SG 295-306) and Greg Flynn's *The Berlin Cross*, which is mainly set in Berlin against the backdrop of the blockade and airlift of 1948. McEwan's *The Innocent* is set in the mid-1950s and thus is distinct from the above group, but it too depicts a city in which substantial ruins are still a common sight in many central areas from the Westend to Kreuzberg.

as a starting-point for the investigation. Citing epic and mythic examples such as Troy and Sodom and Gomorrah, Burton Pike has observed one aspect of the fascination with the city as being the 'hypnotic attraction of its destruction'.<sup>141</sup> Since Berlin was reduced to rubble not as a myth but within the compass of living memory, it is perhaps not surprising that it has frequently appeared in its devastated condition in recent thrillers. Todorov's observation of 'the thriller's tendency towards the marvellous and the exotic',<sup>142</sup> is relevant here and shows the link in the genre to origins in the adventure story.

I have designated the cluster of novels set in the late-1940s as 'rubble thrillers' due to their foregrounding of the devastated topography of post-war Berlin. In the thrillers of Kanon and Vyleta, Berlin is represented as a landscape of ruins which serves as a symbol of guilt, of destruction and of loss of identity due to social and moral collapse. In this extreme terrain, both novelists explore how moral relations and values are reconstituted and the role played by the various international military forces and their associates in this process or in the further exploitation of the defeated city. In Vyleta's *Pavel & I*, the desperate struggle to survive is evident in the reduction of the city economy to a black market where the trade is as much in humans as in goods:

Cigarettes were the only currency left to the city, would buy him coal tomorrow, could buy him company if he should seek it, six Luckies for a sympathetic lap. (P 6)

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<sup>141</sup> Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), p.4.

<sup>142</sup> Todorov, 'The Typology of Detective Fiction' in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), pp.157-65, p. 162.

The focus on the post-war city in the Berlin thriller testifies to a particular kinship between post-war and post-Wall eras as turning-points in Germany, as Huyssen has observed:

In retrospective, the insistence on new beginnings – on Neuanfänge, Nullpunkte, tabula rasa, Wendepunkte, and the like – appears a particularly German obsession that links such seemingly different imaginaries as those of 1945, 1968 and 1989.<sup>143</sup>

The concept of a new beginning was applicable to reunified Berlin after the Wall, as it was to the city in 1945, when it needed to start again after the trauma of Nazi rule; in both cases, the possibility of a fresh start was also called into question by memory issues related to the forgetting of the past that such commitments to a *tabula rasa* entail. In 1945, the idea of a new start was made problematic by the need to address German responsibility for Nazi war crimes; in 1989, the apparent new beginning that unification presented was made problematic by the legacy left by the GDR.

Wolfgang Schivelbusch has written of the ‘cultural tourism’ of those like Stephen Spender, the film director Rossellini, and Sartre and de Beauvoir who visited Berlin after 1945, observing that: ‘Those going to postwar Berlin were after the thrill of witnessing the latest empire of evil brought to its fall.’<sup>144</sup> The thrill presented to the reader is the vicarious experience of experiencing the familiar made strange and dangerous: instead of the drama of encounters with Nazi officers, there is the exoticism of streets reduced to piles of rubble in *The Good German* while the legacy of rubble Berlin lingers on to the mid-1950s in the knowledge of violent destruction inherent in the recurrent presence of derelict buildings in *The*

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<sup>143</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.144. German terms designating new beginnings are not translated due to dependency on specific contexts for meaning.

<sup>144</sup> Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *In a Cold Crater: Cultural and Intellectual Life in Berlin, 1945-1948*, trans. Kelly Barry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p.x.

*Innocent*. Thriller-related excitement, linked to a loss of moral and legal restraints, is provided by the challenge and danger of widespread profiteering and sporadic shootings. The revival of the human desire for pleasure and social interaction is connected with traces of memory of the lost cosmopolitan city. However, with bars starting to reopen on Kurfürstendamm in *The Good German* as early as the summer of 1945, the city even offers a trace of the hedonism of the pre-Nazi Weimar era. In the spy thriller, *Declare* (2001), by Tim Powers, it is hard not to read East-West intermingling in 1945 as post-Wall projection in an image of 'men in Soviet uniforms mingling with American soldiers at sidewalk tables along the Kurfursten Damm [*sic*]' (*DE* 238). Here there is even a utopian moment of fraternisation as a time is recalled when the demarcation between the various zones in the city was not as rigidly policed as it would later become. A contemporary post-unification context makes possible the retrieval of an image of unity which would not have been favoured prior to 1989 due to the oppositional ideology fostered during the Cold War.

The ruins of the city offer an ambivalent image of the 'new start', suggesting at once the destruction of the old order and an image of annihilation which threatens new growth. Set in the immediate aftermath of war, in July and August of 1945, Kanon's *The Good German* is typical of the rubble thriller sub-genre in foregrounding the condition of Berlin. It begins with the hegemonic, totalising view given by an aerial perspective on the city, as the protagonist looks down on the devastation below of the defeated city from an American military transport, the plane of one of the victors' powers: 'But Berlin was gone. The Big Three were coming to divide up ruins' (*GG* 9).

A terse survey of the city's blasted landscape and rubble terrain has an apocalyptic quality: 'Berlin, a flat city, finally had contours, new hills of brick. There was no life' (GG 14). Here the idea of the *tabula rasa* seems to be identifiable with a lifeless absence of humanity. In defining space and place, Yi-Fu Tuan observes the convention of privileging the former over the latter: 'What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value.'<sup>145</sup> However, in Kanon's depiction of post-war Berlin, the destruction of landmarks appears to have reversed this process: the question of whether the city still has the capacity to sustain life becomes an existential challenge as its journalist protagonist starts to investigate and interpret the blasted terrain.

The aerial view is followed by a jeep tour through which the ground perspective is given. At this level, it becomes clear that the destruction is not absolute, and, although the city has clearly been devastated, some of its landmarks have survived, albeit in a battered condition: 'The Kaiser Wilhelm Church, its steeple blown away. Kranzler's in bits. More people now. The Kurfürstendamm smashed but recognizable' (GG 20). The endurance in remnants of the famous boulevard and some of the buildings that characterise it is a sign that this is not a clean slate: the survival of the city has an anthropomorphic quality through the naming of places associated with a human presence around them.

In the rubble thriller, the exceptionally alien landscape of the ruined city offers an anarchic terrain in which the boundaries in the city between

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<sup>145</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), p.6.

inner and outer, and private and public, are exposed. For Jake Geismar, returning to the city in 1945 in *The Good German*, personal memory plays a vital role in providing him with a direction in a volatile city. As a result, he sets out to renew his connections with Berlin by finding the place with which he has the strongest personal association. This emerges as the apartment on Fasanenstrasse where Geismar's lover, Lena, had lived before the war. Although the five-storey building has been reduced to a 'pile of rubble' (GG 20), the site retains the capacity to inspire memories of their love-making. Jake's personal mission to find Lena, which defies Allied prohibitions on fraternisation with Germans, becomes a challenge to prove that the city is still a place of human habitation despite the widespread destruction and degradation.

Marginal locations assume a new importance in the 'rubble thriller' due to the void at the centre of the city caused by the devastation of war. In Kanon's *The Good German*, the narrative begins in United States military quarters in Dahlem in the south-west of the city, in a topographic representation of the new American hegemony in the city. Similarly, McEwan starts his post-war novel, *The Innocent*, at the Olympia stadium where British military headquarters were accommodated at the time. In *The Good German*, use of the crime thriller genre provides a means of engaging with the city's past. Annette Kuhn has observed the analogy between a criminal investigation and the recovery of memory: 'The past is like the scene of a crime: if the deed itself is unrecoverable, its traces may still remain.'<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Annette Kuhn, 'Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination' in *Theories of Memory: A Reader*, ed. by Rossington and Whitehead (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 230-235 (p.232).

Similarly, in Kanon's novel, Jake Geismar, the journalist protagonist, realises on discovering evidence of a murder that the consequent investigation will give him the personal angle on Berlin that he has been seeking: 'A crime. The way in. His Berlin story' (*TGG* 57). Jake's role as a non-military observer and journalist in a ruined waste land had previously been unclear: now discovery of a corpse gives him a mission and an ethical responsibility. It is also a crime fiction genre trope, which confers on Jake the role of detective. Guided by the protagonist, the genre fiction provides a point of entry into Berlin for the reader, too, and also into the process of remembering the city in 1945, as Kuhn has suggested.<sup>147</sup>

The chaotic situation in Berlin in the immediate aftermath of war depicted in *The Good German* suggests an uncertainty as to whether the war has really finished. This is further developed in the novel's 'Wild West' finale which features arbitrary shootings and law-defying car chases. An American journalist, Tommy Ottinger, encapsulates the dangerous and chaotic ambience of the city: 'The Russians are still all over the place. Once they get liquored up, it's like Dodge City out there' (*TGG* 39). Here even the Russians, reconstructed as trigger-happy cowboy villains, are subsumed into the predominantly American cultural hinterland of *The Good German*. The analogy with Dodge City, the American frontier city synonymous with the myth of the 'wild west', suggests the possibility of the western as a generic model for the polarised conflict of the nascent Cold War and typifies the openness of the post-Wall Berlin thriller to a range of generic possibilities. considering the relationship already noted between Berlin and hard-boiled

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<sup>147</sup> Kuhn, 'Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination', p.232.



detection it is interesting to note that John Scaggs has identified a significant antecedent for the American hard-boiled thriller in 'frontier stories of the Western genre'.<sup>148</sup> As a result of the destruction of the 'mean streets' of Berlin which formed the setting for the 1930s Berlin crime thriller in Kerr, Kanon has to revert to the wilderness of the western to find a genre compatible with the devastated and volatile state of the city and its emergence as a frontier city in the nascent conflict between East and West. Topographically a crossroads in continental Europe, Berlin is repeatedly configured in Berlin Cold War thrillers such as *The Good German* as a last outpost of the West and, metaphorically, as a place on the edge, defined by associations with conflict, extremity and challenges to law and order.

Set a year after *The Good German*, in the winter of 1946-1947, *Pavel & I* also portrays the extreme drama of a ruined city where the cold weather appears to solidify the devastation and make it appear permanent: 'broken Berlin, the rubble frozen into jagged edifices of ice and stone' (*PI* 46). Racked by hunger and poverty, the survival of the city as a human construct is called into question through animal analogies with a city described as a 'rat-hole' (*PI* 39) and 'dog-eat-dog and worse' (*PI* 8). Although personal survival appears to be the only priority, individual cases of altruistic behaviour emerge as a boy, Anders, nurses a former American soldier, Pavel Richter, back to health. An alternative to the severity of military law and the prevailing exploitation of the black market becomes slowly apparent slowly in the relationships Pavel establishes with Anders, the prostitute Sonia, and his English jailer, Peterson. Through a shift in narrative time to a

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<sup>148</sup> John Scaggs, *Crime Fiction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p.57.

postscript set in 1964, Peterson remembers the constraints on Pavel in the post-war era through their association with the espionage genre: 'he wasn't born for this, a story about microfilms, but this is what he got' (*PI* 337). Here, rather than a spatial or material association, a generic reference is deemed to be the most apt correlative to the situation of those endeavouring to survive in the devastation of post-war Berlin: the spy thriller has its origins in the rubble city.

In the third novel of Kerr's *Berlin Noir* trilogy, *A German Requiem*, which is initially set in Berlin in 1947, the vast scale of the obliteration of the city's streets appears to impede navigation around the city but, paradoxically, may open up the potential for its use by the spy:

In many parts of the city a street map would have been of little more use than a window-cleaner's leather. Main roads meandered like rivers around high banks of debris. (*BN* 536)

The link between loss of an identifiable city structure and moral chaos becomes apparent when Gunther kills a Russian soldier after becoming embroiled in a fight with him on a train near the city (*BN* 542). The radical change from triumphal Nazi capital to occupied ruin is signalled by a genre shift from detection to espionage which is foreshadowed when Gunther is advised by a colonel in the Soviet secret police to move into espionage work:

That leaves spying. That's the profession to be in, Herr Gunther. You should forget about being a private detective. (*BN* 555)

At the outset of the novel, Gunther is still in detective mode, defending Becker, one of his former colleagues in the Nazi criminal police force, against a charge of murder; later, however, he exposes an espionage-style conspiracy to whitewash the war records of former Nazis. This conspiracy is led by Heinrich Müller, an actual former head of the Gestapo whose

disappearance at the end of the war has never been resolved, an historical conundrum which allows Kerr to reinvent him as a spy with the ultimate aim of restoring Nazi Germany: 'We work with the Americans. But in the end we are working for Germany. For a new Fatherland' (BN 784). Published in 1991, *A German Requiem* precedes Harris's *Fatherland* but clearly articulates similar fears in Britain of a united Germany becoming a powerful Fourth Reich. Kerr's desire to address a contemporary audience which had just witnessed German unification in 1990 is evident when he constructs a speech by Müller that puts a triumphal complexion on the West German post-war economic boom in asserting that 'The German may never rule militarily, but he can do it economically. It is the mark [sic], not the swastika that will conquer Europe' (BN 784). Gunther's demurral associating German industry with the scrapheap lacks the benefit of hindsight while repeated references to the 'new Germany' (BN 785) have both a contemporary and historic validity:

as if none of them had ever lost a war or done anything for which they ought to have been in any way ashamed. This was the collective face of the new Germany that Müller had droned on about. (BN 787)

This narrative comment can be related to British fears in the 1990s of a 'new' unified Germany rediscovering a stereotypical arrogance and forgetting their wartime and Nazi past.

Uncertainty about the protagonist's role as an investigator in both *A German Requiem* and *The Good German* is indicative of a society in which the conventional legal and policing systems are no longer operative. In *Pavel & I*, the investigative role is replaced by the narrative voice of the character, Peterson, who is driven by a desire to know rather than to bring to justice.

Berlin in the 'rubble thriller' is a city in which the landmarks and the population which define it have only just managed to survive: the identity of the city and of its citizens is not a given, but has to be recuperated. The ruination of the streets and buildings is a sign of social, moral and legal collapse, which, combined with a prevalent sense of danger and threat to life, suggest that, in Berlin at least, the war did not end in 1945, but went underground to emerge in due course as the Cold War.

The transference of principal location from Berlin to Vienna during the course of *A German Requiem* does not signal the end of Berlin's role in the narrative. Despite both cities sharing a common fate as the only two cities occupied after the war by the victors, the polarisation in the ambience of the two cities is emphasised: 'After the combusted atmosphere of Berlin, Vienna's air tasted as pure as birdsong' (BN 623). However, the contrast is deceptive: corruption in Vienna emerges when Gunther uncovers a secret cabal of former Nazis attempting to hide their past by constructing new identities. At the end of the novel, reference to the Soviet blockade of Berlin identifies it as the place where history continues to happen; the city's framing role in the narrative, and the trilogy as a whole is confirmed when Gunther is informed by a Russian: 'Berlin is surrounded by our tanks' (BN 834). Berlin is here characterised by the role of victim and a sense of personal concern for the plight of the city is reinforced when it is identified with Gunther's anxiety for the safety of his wife, Kirsten, who is still living there.

The near-impossibility of living in the ruined city in the immediate post-war era becomes apparent when Kirsten has to be rescued from Berlin and reunited with Gunther in Vienna. In *Pavel & I*, also, the three principal

survivors all leave the city in 1947. Although the final book of the *Berlin Noir* trilogy is set largely outside Berlin, it is still framed by incidents related to the city; other rubble thrillers by Vyleta, Kanon and Flynn all use the partially destroyed city as a suitably challenging and extreme environment in which to locate a thriller narrative. The rubble Berlin thriller can be identified spatially by the depiction of widespread devastation as an image of the threat to the survival of the city itself. For authors situated after the turning-point of the post-1989 era, the rubble city embodied a special memory function in offering a chance to reflect on the origins of the divided city, the legacy of the Second World War and the points of comparison between the post-unification era and the desire for a fresh start in the years after 1945.

### **3. Cold War Nostalgia and Spatial Memory in Len Deighton's Spy Trilogies and Henry Porter, *Brandenburg***

Dual identity belongs both to the spy thriller genre and to the city of Berlin. In this section I explore how Len Deighton responded to the fall of the Wall as a writer of contemporary spy thriller trilogies in which the divided city plays a central role. I also investigate the representation of Berlin spaces in his thrillers and their memory contexts, including a British nostalgia for post-war West Berlin, which will be further explored in the next chapter. Finally, I juxtapose some examples of the representation of the Wall in Deighton with depictions of the fall of the Wall in Berlin thrillers by Tim Sebastian, John Marks and Henry Porter.

The Berlin Wall as a physical entity and as a symbol of global political division was intrinsic to the espionage novel: its fall, therefore, in 1989,

inevitably had a profound impact on the fictional genre. Hugo Hamilton's novel, *The Last Shot* (1991), an historical fiction based on a memoir describing the last days of the Second World War, registers the impact on popular fiction as part of an everyday conversation. In a scene on a German Intercity train in 1989, a businessman predicts a shift in espionage from politics to commerce and foresees the spy novel adapting to the new economic scenario presented by the opening up of Eastern Europe:

The great new spy stories are all going to shift from political espionage into commercial espionage. New le Carrés. Maybe the famous Glienecke (sic)<sup>149</sup> Bridge in Berlin will now be used to swap managers, planners or chemical engineers under cover of darkness. (TLS 166)

In the early 1990s, predictions of the demise of the Berlin espionage thriller following the ending of the Cold War often involved charges of obsolescence aimed at both Deighton and le Carré. Wesley K. Wark, writing in 1991, seems to see no future for the spy thriller following the thaw between East and West but is perhaps too sweeping in assuming that the genre always served an ideological function in the Cold War and thus is destined to disappear:

Fear of stagnation has been replaced, very recently, by a notion that the spy thriller, like other weapons in the inventory of the Cold War, has been rendered obsolete by changes in East-West relations.<sup>150</sup>

Le Carré, however, refuted the charge that he was dependent on the existence of the Cold War to supply him with material for his fiction:

Yes, there was a period when people tried to write me off because of the end of the Cold War. It was a sort of critical joke, that I had been cut off from my lifeline, and it was sheer nonsense.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Undoubtedly a misprint: should read 'Glienicke bridge' or 'Glienicker Brücke'.

<sup>150</sup> Wesley K. Wark, 'Introduction: Fictions of History', in *Spy Fiction, Spy Films and Real Intelligence* ed. by Wesley K. Wark (London: Frank Cass, 1991), pp. 1-16 (p.9).

<sup>151</sup> Bruccoli, Matthew Joseph and Judith S. Baughman, eds. *Conversations with John le Carré*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), p.164.

Although the Cold War city is already recalled as a memory in *The Secret Pilgrim* (1990), le Carré's return to the Berlin spy thriller in *Absolute Friends* combined nostalgia for late-1960s divided Berlin with a contemporary espionage narrative based on a critique of early twenty-first American counter-terrorist operations in the so-called 'War on Terror'.

The fall of the Wall was bound to have a significant impact on the writing of Len Deighton given the extent of his commitment to Berlin as the central location in his Cold War spy thrillers ranging from *Funeral in Berlin* in 1964 through the *Game, Set and Match* trilogy, which began with *Berlin Game* (1983), to *Spy Hook* (1988). In Deighton's spy thrillers Berlin plays a key role as the field of operations in which the protagonist, Bernard Samson, is based as an agent working on behalf of British intelligence. However, after the fall of the Wall until 1996, Deighton continued to complete and publish spy thriller trilogies based on the divided Cold War Berlin of the 1970s and 1980s. This meant that what had been contemporary texts became works of memory: *Spy Line* (1989), set in 1987, was intended as a contemporary account of Cold War espionage, but Deighton's works of the 1990s such as *Spy Line* and *Spy Sinker*, and *Faith, Hope and Charity* represent a divided city that no longer exists. The Wall is so integral to Deighton's thrillers that it is inconceivable for its successful demise to be envisaged. For example, *Spy Line* includes a six-page digression describing escapes made over and under the Wall, in which an experienced espionage agent, John Lange Koby, reasserts its persistence despite Gorbachev's reformist inclinations: 'Forget glasnost [...]. No-one's told those frontier guards about glasnost' (SL 45). For Deighton, the state control represented by the Wall validates espionage from

the West, although the effectiveness of the Western response is often compromised by bureaucratic intrigue resulting from an obsession with personal advancement. The Wall is integral to Deighton's dramas of defection and escape, ambition and betrayal: its continuing importance, even in a novel such as *Faith*, published five years after unification, is evident in dialogue which envisages it as a permanent fixture. Deighton's protagonist reflects the mood of the novel's setting in 1987 in his sceptical response to his former wife's advocacy of change in the GDR by popular resistance through the churches: 'A gradual process of liberalization. But that's not going to knock the Wall down before the end of the century. If ever' (*FA* 167). The seeming impossibility of change in Deighton conforms to Lyotard's strictures on the conservatism of generic fiction as causing 'a state of quiescence', as discussed earlier in this chapter.<sup>152</sup> This contrasts with the contemporaneity of McEwan's *The Innocent*: completed in 1989, the same year as *Spy Line* was published, its final lines raise the prospect of the fall of the Wall at some future date.

Like le Carré, Deighton was cited in debates over the obsolescence of Cold War spy fiction. Reviewing Deighton's *Spy Sinker* in the *New York Times* in 1990, Morton Kondracke, unimpressed by Deighton's ability 'to cope with the real events of 1989', declared 'Len Deighton has exhausted the cold war as a lively topic'.<sup>153</sup> Although careful to assert that the East-West spy thriller would probably survive, just as stories of Third Reich suspense had continued long after the death of Hitler, Kondracke was

<sup>152</sup> Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, p.128, cited in Dowd, pp.11-27 (p.14).

<sup>153</sup> Morton Kondracke, 'Berlin: This Spy Gets the Credit', review of *Spy Sinker* by Len Deighton, *New York Times*, 2 September 1990 <<http://www.nytimes.com/1990/09/02/books/berlin-this-spy-gets-the-credit.html>> [accessed 26 January 2009]



adamant that Deighton could no longer sustain or justify the Cold War variant. The contention that the work of certain authors in the Berlin espionage field was dependent on the existence of the Cold War to supply it with contemporary relevance and frisson appears to some extent to be borne out by a relative lull in Berlin espionage fiction between the publication of Deighton's *Charity* in 1996 and Kanon's *The Good German* in 2001. However, Deighton's specific development as a Berlin author needs to be separated from the re-emergence of the Cold War thriller in a number of novels published in the first decade of the new century, ranging from le Carré's *Absolute Friends* to Craig Russell's *The Valkyrie Song* (2008), in which the memory of divided Berlin is recalled. Russell's thriller is mainly set in Hamburg in 1984, but develops from a key early episode located in East Berlin at Stasi headquarters in Normannenstrasse: 'Whole floors of the Stasi headquarters were devoted to the vast archive of files on citizens of the GDR' (VS 9). Berlin here provides the thriller with a combination of historical fact and extremity of situation described in recalling the system of widespread social surveillance which emerged after the demise of the East German state. Despite the difference in regime, the emphasis on the alienating size of the enterprise in Russell is similar to the use of spatial inflation in Harris. In what amounts to a refutation of the charge of obsolescence, *The Valkyrie Song* shows how the legacy of divided Berlin can continue to provide material for the twenty-first century thriller.

Deighton's spy thrillers follow genre convention in configuring the spy protagonist as typically independent, without a settled identity or home, and detached equally from family and the bureaucracy for which he works: 'He

refused to see himself the way we all really were: awkward, ugly, inconvenient aliens, suspect to the authorities and a burden to our friends' (*H* 264). Tough and smart, Deighton's anti-establishment protagonist is a competitive professional, sceptical of those in command yet never the boss himself. A particular British nostalgia for post-war Berlin is evident in the association between Bernard Samson and the rubble city which is configured as an unofficial training ground for spies:

I'd joined the Department as a *Kellerkind* – a street-wise Berlin kid who knew the city's postwar rubble – and I believed I could spot a tail within five minutes of the first contact. I knew the city streets and I knew the back alleys. (*F* 227)

The tough talk of the streets is here complemented by the German compound *Kellerkind*, which designates a slum child and serves to emphasise the intimacy of the connection with Berlin, as if Samson were a child of the city itself. Proud of the experience of life he has gained from his upbringing in Berlin, Samson is dismissive of office intermediaries sent from London, as shown in the following outburst from *Spy Line*: 'Don't bullshit me, Teacher. I was taking this town to pieces when you were in knee pants' (*SL* 29). Observing the association between Deighton's protagonists and those of Chandler and Hammett, Peter Nusser comments: 'Deighton's most well-known, artfully constructed stories involve heroes who are reminiscent of the "tough guys" in the novels of Hammett and Chandler'.<sup>154</sup>

Signalling the realism which is favoured in Berlin Cold War spy fiction, as opposed to the affluent lifestyle and exotic locations which became the signature of Fleming's Bond novels, the opening chapters of Deighton's *Spy Line* typically evoke the West Berlin of 1987 as seedy and dilapidated. The

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<sup>154</sup> Peter Nusser, *Der Kriminalroman* (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2003), p.116.

scene is epitomised by a tawdry nightclub near Potsdamerstrasse which 'smelled of sweat, cheap cosmetics, ash and spilled drinks' (L 2). Called 'Babylon', a name which echoes that of the city's famous Weimar-era Babylon cinema, the club serves as a synecdoche for West Berlin as a debased enterprise with an inexplicable capacity to survive: 'How Babylon kept going was one of Berlin's many unsolved mysteries' (L 5). Deighton's protagonist, Samson, lives in a squalid flat in a marginal location in 'Kreuzberg 36, up against the Wall' (SL 12), an address which signals the intimacy of the association with the Wall in both Samson's life and in Deighton's spy fiction. The Wall's detrimental effect on the city as a bourgeois showpiece is evident in the way it creates impoverished marginal areas in West Berlin as observed in the narrative of *Spy Line*:

This lovely boulevard now led to nowhere but the Wall and had become the focus of a sleazy district where sex, souvenirs, junk food and denim were on sale. (SL 10)

The irony of the self-righteous tone here is that it is one of the conventions of the thriller to take the reader on excursions into precisely this kind of decadent urban space, epitomised in *Spy Line* itself by the setting of the opening episode in the 'Babylon' nightclub.

In Deighton's spy fiction, Berlin has a dual function as both field of operations and home. Its importance as an operational espionage base on the 'front line' of the Cold War is shown by its designation as 'Berlin Station' by the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6). The spy battleground is the uncertain, liminal border areas between West and East such as Checkpoint Charlie, Friedrichstrasse Station and the 'corridor' road in East Germany between West Berlin and West Germany. The novels use a number of

international locations as settings but Berlin remains a recurrent focus as the base from which his protagonist, Samson, works as an agent of British intelligence.

A common trope of the Berlin thriller is the use of divided Berlin as a metaphor for duality and internal conflict. Dudley Jones has observed that Deighton is fascinated by Berlin, not least 'because the internal divisions of the city reflect the divided self of the hero, Bernard Samson'.<sup>155</sup> Another doubling of Berlin identities occurs in *Spy Sinker* when Samson's former wife, Fiona, is sent to East Berlin by British intelligence to work for, and spy on, the Stasi. Since Samson himself has West Berlin affiliations, here the division in his private life is transposed onto the divided topography and ideologies of Cold War Berlin as a whole.

An insider-outsider duality, which is also typical of the Hugo Hamilton protagonist, can be ascribed to Deighton's Samson. Brought up in Berlin and described as a man for whom 'Berlin was home' (SL 67), he has a new partner and children from his former marriage all living in England and is frequently in London where he reports to the head of MI6. London is presented as Berlin's opposite, as a comparative space it is relatively undefined. It is comfortable, unlike Berlin, where the cold extends from the climatic to the psychological: 'after my cold and lonely bed in Berlin it had become a paradise' (L 89). Samson is ambivalent in his loyalties: returning to his family in London, he talks of the 'many subtle joys of coming home' but also acknowledges that 'half of me was a Berliner' (SL 89). Samson's self-

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<sup>155</sup> Dudley Jones, 'The Great Game? The Spy Fiction of Len Deighton', in *Spy Thrillers: From Buchan to le Carré*, ed. by Clive Bloom (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp.100-12 (p.105).

description here is as half-Berliner rather than half-German: allegiance to the city precedes and overrides the need for German national identity, and, therefore, does not interfere with the family and work ties that are the signs of his British allegiance. Samson has no settled home: he is a visitor who continually returns to Berlin, and as such is a variant on the figure in the English-language Berlin novel, such as Jake in *The Good German* or Leonard in *The Innocent*, who experiences an intense emotional bond with the city after returning to it.

Samson's affinity with divided Berlin as the place in which he grew up can be associated with the political context of neo-colonial British involvement in the post-war governance of West Berlin. This can be further illustrated by the spatial correlative for Samson's nostalgia which is provided by Tante Lisl's guest house in West Berlin, the 'shabby old hotel off Kantstrasse' (FA 207). Often used by Samson, it was the family home where Samson and his parents were billeted after the war (F 208). Personal memory is also linked to collective memory: the hotel, with its war-torn facade and Wilhelmine decor, is 'like a museum of old Berlin' (F 208). Tante Lisl's is a synecdoche for a post-war West Berlin which is diminished in stature but remains familiar and hospitable to the British while its Kantstrasse address in Charlottenburg in the heart of the British sector confirms its symbolic role as a representation of the British presence in the city.

Deighton's capacity to evoke spaces in Berlin and to associate them with memory of the city is one of the strengths of his post-1989 trilogies. In *Hope*, the protagonist, Bernard Samson, expresses a nostalgic longing for his Berlin childhood: 'Yawning and dishevelled I went and sniffed at early-

morning Berlin – with all the sounds and smells I remembered as a child going to school’ (*H* 204). The lack of reference to actual sensory experiences here makes the evocation of the city unconvincing. However, when Samson revisits one of his favourite bars in Berlin, the description is notable for its poetic specificity:

A car-pool driver took me to one of my old haunts, an all-night bar tucked away between the bus terminal and Witzleben S-Bahn. Its neon sign looked pale in the watery pink dawn. (*H* 204)

Here Deighton’s protagonist guides the reader to a peripheral site which is for him a *lieu de mémoire*, if Nora’s concept is adapted to signify a special aura of the past created when personal memory evokes an exceptional place. It is significant that Deighton should refer to the bar at this station as an ‘old haunt’ since there is a ghostly quality in its marginality.

Domestic spaces in the Berlin thriller reveal contrasts in power and wealth which are often linked to the relative power of different ideologies or nationalities in Berlin. For example, the colonial nature of the Soviet occupation of East Berlin is signalled in Deighton’s *Faith* (1994) when one of the ‘spacious apartments’ (*F* 228) in an old pre-war building in Pankow in the 1980s is shown as inhabited by a Red Army veteran, Fedosov. Here a critique of the architecture of Berlin is informed by a British dislike of its massiveness and uniformity which has its origins in Buchan’s depiction of the city’s factory-like appearance in *Greenmantle*. In Buchan’s novel, an antipathy towards Berlin is apparent in a depiction of the city during the First World War as grim, forbidding and drearily industrial: ‘the whole big concern seemed to have no soul in it, to be like a big factory instead of a city’ (*G* 49).

Deighton's awareness of this kind of critique is evident when he ascribes similar sentiments to an outsider perspective:

Strangers who hated the city complained about the wide streets and the larger-than-life stone apartment blocks that dwarfed the people below. (*F* 219)

The attachment to the past in Deighton's novels can be ideological in its intention, as in the following representation of a street in Pankow: 'Apart from an ugly modern block of apartments this was a street of old buildings' (*F* 228). Here the uniform modernity favoured by the East German regime is an intrusion on the old character of the city. Pankow is further associated with the spaciousness and wealth of a pre-communist era when it is described as being an area, relatively close to the city centre, where there are 'grand country-style mansions' (*F* 228). Acknowledging the bias towards the past, and by inference, a favouring of the capitalism by which it was produced, Deighton's differentiation of the architecture in Pankow shows a greater degree of attention to the physical space of the city than some other authors such as Philip Sington who refers more simplistically to 'the tenements of Pankow' (*EG* 8) in describing this area of the city in a 1933 setting. Although this is technically correct as a translation for *Mietshäuser*, the generic reference to tenements is an Anglicisation which evokes a British context.

Samson is sentimentally attached to the city's past and the dirt which is inextricably associated with age and endurance: 'I loved this filthy old town, and while away in California I'd sorely missed its inescapable allure' (*F* 227). Even the most mundane spaces in Berlin have a past, as shown by the following example, in which the spy's specialist knowledge of the city is based on his ability to interpret the history of its built environment:

I followed him into the kitchen of his apartment in Moabit, near Turmstrasse U-Bahn. It was the sort of grimy little place that young people will endure to be near the bright lights. As a long-time resident of the city I knew it as one of the apartments hastily built in the ruins soon after the war, and nowadays showing their age. (F 10)

The reference to origins in the rubble city is significant: for the Berlin spy thriller, which is premised on the division of the city, this was the moment of beginning, and the grimy and battered apartment is a visual correlative for Samson himself. Despite the relish for divided Berlin and its squalor as a tough and heterogeneous terrain suited to the machinations of the spy thriller, the Cold War city also represents a sense of loss and failure when measured against a longer past perspective. Thus a safe house in Charlottenburg is described as a 'lovely old house' (L 180) and the narrative lingers to depict its ornate interior featuring a 'wrought-iron baluster' (L 10). The importance of Berlin's architectural legacy as a repository of past values is not only emphasised in *Spy Line* but also in its successor novel, *Spy Sinker*, when, after a conference in Köpenick, the protagonist, Fiona, has time to consider 'a richly decorated seventeenth-century palace' (SS 193). The inadvertent preservation by the GDR of historic surroundings make it possible 'to raise a loud cheer for the dilatory rate at which East Berlin was being rebuilt' (SS 193). The contrast is with the debased nature of the divided city, in which, for example, traffic congestion afflicts both sides, as shown by the observation that 'Soon the East would be clogged with cars just as the West already was' (SS 193). Accompanying this critique of the deficiencies of divided Berlin, nostalgia for an older Berlin untainted by Nazi, communist or even capitalist influence is a recurrent emotion.



The shift to memory in Deighton's post-1989 thrillers can be illustrated by the representation in *Faith* of a border crossing at Friedrichstrasse station in which an ornamentation in the writing suggests the past rather than a contemporary reality (F 224-225). Since Ian Fleming's *The Living Daylights* (1962), border crossing in Berlin has been a standard trope of the Cold War Berlin thriller; here the humour with which Deighton observes the surliness of the guards at the checkpoint suggests that there is no longer a contemporary reality implicit in the depiction of the inspection:

The grey-faced men of the Grepo were at their most obdurate, sitting behind the bullet-proof glass, examining every passport and travel document as if they were learning to read. (F 224)

The memory context here is reinforced with a shift to childhood recollection of the station at Friedrichstrasse as a 'huge glasshouse on stilts' (F 224), the transparent elevation of the structure being 'just as magical as it had been when I was a child, its glass-filled metalwork curving high into the grey sky above' (F 224). Here the post-war station-glasshouse has recovered an innocence lacking in Kerr's depiction of the hubristic inter-war station in *The Pale Criminal*, as noted earlier in this chapter.

Huyssen's concept of the city as palimpsest could be applied to the layered depiction of the station which uses Friedrichstrasse's historic role as a hub of spectacular entertainment as a metaphor to highlight the abnormality of the Cold War conversion of a civic facility into an armed border-crossing:

Here was the Kafka show as Busby Berkeley might have staged it. Dancing their slow ballet on walkways high in the air, a grim chorus line was silhouetted against the grey light of the sky, twirling sniper rifles and machine pistols and staring down at us menacingly. (F 224)

The station becomes a theatre which turns the Cold War into dangerous militarised routines. This is Foucault's heterotopia as nightmare, the incongruity of the appropriation of the public space of the station underscored by the clashing references to Kafkaesque alienation and the glamour of Busby Berkeley dance sequences. Deighton appears to engage with a contemporary Cold War Berlin but what emerges from his recurrent explorations of the city, particularly as the reality of the actual divided city becomes historical in his 1990s novels, is a sense of the fiction becoming memory as a present that no longer exists becomes increasingly theatrical as it is recalled.

In the early 1990s writers like Tim Sebastian and Deighton continued to present the walled city as part of the contemporary world. Despite its early 1990s setting, the trope of Berlin as frontier to the East features briefly in Tim Sebastian's Cold War spy thriller, *Spy Shadow* (1989): 'West Berlin was shrinking, disappearing, the last Western outpost for 12,000 miles, the last one till you reached Alaska' (SS 73). Doubts persist about the fall of the Wall, even after unification:

Now there was free passage across the most hated border in the world. How long could it last? Thirty years of killing and incarceration. Was it really over? (SS 73)

From a British espionage perspective, Sebastian's *Exit Berlin* (1992) envisages the aftermath of the fall of the Wall not as a time of liberation but as a cause of exposure for an East Berlin-based British spy, James Martin, who suddenly feels bereft of the protection that the Cold War provided through its official endorsement of undercover operations. The privilege enjoyed by the spy in East Berlin is neatly encapsulated in a metaphor which

alludes to the tunnel-like existence often associated with espionage, as the protagonist confesses: 'In East Germany I had lived in a cushioned cave' (*EB* 135). Similar metaphors linked to tunnels are used by McEwan in *The Innocent* and point to the importance of the subterranean, not merely as a literal space in the Berlin spy thriller, but also as a signifier of the clandestine nature of espionage. Martin's status as a foreigner and outsider in Berlin is suddenly apparent as can be shown in his irritation in overhearing others over lunch eagerly discussing the fall of the Wall in an East Berlin cafe: 'Every second word was *Mauer* – wall. Wall this, wall that. I sat at a table by myself and felt like screaming' (*EB* 24). The immediacy of the response to the events of 1989 in *Exit Berlin* reflects its near-contemporaneous publication in 1992.

In contrast, Henry Porter in *Brandenburg* (2005), with the distance of over fifteen years since November 1989, is able to incorporate the fall of the Wall into an historic spy narrative set against the growing pressure for democratic reform in East Germany. The struggle for liberation is personified in the mission of Rudi Rosenharte, an East German academic and former Stasi spy, to obtain the release of his ailing brother, Konrad, from Hohenschönhausen, the principal Stasi prison in East Berlin. The unexpected drama of the breaching of the Wall on the night of November 9 provides an opportunity for Rosenharte and his friends to escape from East Berlin and Stasi pursuit. The narrative climax echoes the end of le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* as Rosenharte clammers over the Wall in attempting to escape into the West. Just as the Wall defined the Berlin thriller in 1963, so the historic moment of liberation from the enforcement of

division in 1989 provides the opportunity for Porter to rewrite the memory of the Wall encoded in the earlier text. In le Carré's 1963 novel, *Leamas*, on top of the Wall, attempts to haul Liz to safety but her body shudders when she is shot by border guards and, as a result: 'Her thin arms slipped from his hands' (*TS* 228). In Porter, there is typical thriller suspense as the same scenario recurs momentarily when it seems as if Rosenharte 'would slip back into the death zone' (*B* 531). However, his friends manage to pull him to safety on top of the Wall and there is a redemptive effect as the tragic ending of the earlier novel is avoided.

The association of the Brandenburg Gate with divided Berlin arose as a result of its proximity to the Wall which led to its isolation and symbolic imprisonment in the no-man's land of the inner city border zone. The image of the monument behind barbed wire subsequently became a visual signifier of the genre as shown by the frequency with which it is used on the cover of Berlin spy thrillers. Lyn Marven has also observed the role played by the Brandenburg Gate as a symbol of the city used by foreigners contrasting it with use of the *Fernsehturm* (Television Tower) in German-language literature as a signifier of contemporary Berlin.<sup>156</sup> Berlin thrillers which feature the Brandenburg Gate on the cover include conventional thrillers which range across different eras such as Cold War, Francis Bennett, *Dr Berlin*; rubble Berlin, Greg Flynn, *The Berlin Cross* and twenty-first century, Cym Lowell, *The Riddle of Berlin*; its role as a generic signifier, and hence as a marketing tool for a popular audience, is also apparent in its use on the front

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<sup>156</sup> Lyn Marven, "Berlin ist bekannt [...] für die Mauer, die es aber nicht mehr gibt": the Persistence of East Berlin in the Contemporary City', *Oxford German Studies*, 38.3 (2009), 299-309 (300), n.2.

of Ian McEwan's *The Innocent*. Porter's depiction of the liberating effect of the opening of the Wall inspires an anthropomorphic reading of the city in the sudden animation of the Brandenburg Gate which endows it with heroic characteristics: 'The dark hero of the Cold War, so remote to the people of both Germanys for so long, was now illuminated like an opera set' (B 526). The personification and theatrical allusion here underscore the performative nature of Berlin, a city in which even the statuary has the capacity to come alive. Here it is pertinent to cite a commentary by de Certeau on the animation of abandoned buildings which he describes as 'actors, legendary heroes. They organise around them the city saga.'<sup>157</sup> The galvanising effect of the Brandenburg Gate is again foregrounded in John Marks's thriller, *The Wall* (1998) in which it is represented as a living entity, with a heart, as well as a shrine and organiser:

Soon they were at the Brandenburg Gate. Beyond the Wall, it reared – solemn, totemic, brownish dark, like a sacred object that had, from the depths of its mysterious heart, created the night's madness. [...] Now it had moved to the heart of things. It coaxed events forward. (W 148)

The fall of the Wall reveals the Gate: another monument and set of memories is suddenly in the spotlight. This is the palimpsest of the city, Huyssen's 'present past' in a spectacular revelation of its layers, as the history of the late eighteenth-century portal steps forward to overshadow the Wall by which it had been enclosed. No longer spatially or temporally trapped, the Gate becomes an orchestrator of the contemporary moment, and just as it straddles the east-west axis of the city, points towards the future as much as it looks to the past.

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<sup>157</sup> Michel de Certeau, 'Ghosts in the City', from *The Practice of Everyday Life*, vol. 2: *Living and Cooking*, trans. Timothy J. Tomasik, first published 1990 (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp.133-43 (p.135).

The Wall was a key trope in the Cold War Berlin thriller and its removal unsettled the genre. Deighton's last trilogy advances into the late-1980s and refers to *Glasnost* and the era of reform in the Soviet Union but stops well short of the events of November 9 1989. Other English-language thriller authors, like Porter with *Brandenburg* in 2005, or Marks with *The Wall* in 1998, were able to construct retrospective fictions based on the Wall's demise since they were not involved in the history of contemporary representation of divided Berlin, like Deighton. The memory perspective becomes important as the contemporary author is not in a position to respond.

A mixed response to the events of November 9 in the Berlin thriller reflects the detachment of the genre from the immediate euphoria that greeted the fall of the Wall in Berlin at the time. For British and American authors this is linked to the complication of identification with divided Berlin due to their national association with the Allied military presence in the city. One cultural manifestation of the neo-colonial occupation and governance of West Berlin by the Western powers is the English-language Berlin thriller itself: its sense of attachment to Berlin can be seen, for example, in the way that Deighton alleviates the alienation of the representation of West Berlin as seedy and impoverished by the nostalgia invested in Tante Lisl's guest house as an alternative home for his Berlin-bred, partly English-domiciled, British spy protagonist. In this section I have explored a number of spatial images in Deighton's fiction and observed that different forms of memory are inflected in them: the most specific offer the possibility of a reformulation of Nora's concept of the *lieu de mémoire*. The memories of the bar near

Witzleben S-Bahn, the border guards at Friedrichstrasse or the Second World War brothel on Schiffbauerdamm do not fit easily with Nora's definition of the memory site as an ersatz form resulting from a loss of organic forms of memory: the Berlin thrillers of Deighton in their personal interpretations of the past through space call for a more eclectic and less judgmental concept of the memory site.

#### **4. Weimar Memory and Contemporary Berlin: Louise Welsh, *The Bullet Trick* and Michael Mirolla, *Berlin***

In Louise Welsh's *The Bullet Trick* and Michael Mirolla's *Berlin*, the past informs the shaping of the city in the present and the emphasis is on theatricality as Berlin becomes a stage for the enacted and illusory. Both Welsh's twenty-first-century city and Mirolla's late-1980s West Berlin are conditioned by memory of the decadent reputation of the city during the Weimar years of the 1920s and early-1930s.

The transposition of memory into contemporary forms of representation through a range of imagery associated with sexuality, performance and the arts deriving from the culture and exoticism of the pre-1933 city can be particularly associated with postmodern referencing of the past. De Groot, in relating postmodernism to the historical novel, refers to novels that imitate particular literary styles in 'a form of pastiche in which the source material is not historical evidence but other fiction'.<sup>158</sup> The influence of Isherwood's Berlin novels and, in particular, their mediation through performance in the film, *Cabaret*, plays a key role in Welsh's *The Bullet Trick* and its use of magic performance, sensuality and the exotic. In Welsh's

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<sup>158</sup> Jerome de Groot, *The Historical Novel*, New Critical Idiom series (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp.115-16.

thriller, which is set in the contemporary post-1989 era without specifying particular dates, Berlin is a site of dualities in which magic routines highlight contrasts between sexuality and violence, glamour and the grotesque, illusion and reality.

*The Bullet Trick* is one of a number of recent Berlin novels, not necessarily thrillers, which present Berlin as a signifier of exotic performance; but Welsh's novel is distinctive in its recycling of the past in the present. Harold Nebenzal's *Café Berlin* (1993) is typically historical in its Weimar setting, juxtaposing erotic Arabic dancing in a Berlin cabaret of the early-1930s Weimar period with a contrasting narrative in which the Jewish protagonist, a former owner of a cabaret venue, struggles to survive in wartime Berlin by hiding from the Nazis. Tropes of performance are also intrinsic to Beatrice Colin's *The Luminous Life of Lilly Aphrodite* (2008), which relates the biography of a cabaret performer who becomes a film actress in the early decades of the twentieth century. Another novel which associates Berlin with performance is Lisa Selvidge's *The Last Dance over the Berlin Wall* (2009), in which divided Berlin provides the backdrop for a love affair between an English dancer and a Russian circus acrobat. Aridjis' *Book of Clouds* is thematically related to Welsh's novel in connecting Berlin with magic: Aridjis depicts an uncanny contemporary Berlin in which ghostly apparitions and unexplained phenomena are part of the everyday texture of the city. Peter Millar, in his memoir of divided Berlin, also associates the city with a seductive magic: 'Black magic, maybe, but that only made it all the more appealing.'<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Peter Millar, 1989 *The Berlin Wall: My Part in its Downfall*, (London: Arcadia, 1989), p.29.



Michael Mirolla's thriller, *Berlin*, uses a variant on the 'Cabaret Berlin' image by representing the late-1980s city as a site of decadence and illusion. A visiting academic's hallucinatory experience of bizarre and violent sexual practices appears as the subconscious corollary of the absurd perversity of West Berlin in 1987, a modern European city surrounded by the heavily guarded Wall 'almost like a magician's illusion gone wrong with its dead-end streets' (*B* 108). As in Aridjis and Welsh, here the unreality of the city is conveyed by associations with magic, even if it is of a perverse kind. The common urge to interpret the city anthropomorphically is shown when even an official view of the city is rendered as the diagnosis of a patient: 'Split in two. Isolated. Schizophrenic' (*B* 19-20). Mirolla's *Berlin* is a novel with two related narratives: the compelling urge of a psychiatric inmate to revisit Berlin in 1989 is linked to the main plot strand describing a Canadian academic's arrival in the city in 1987, in which the delivery of a philosophy lecture becomes the pretext for a series of hedonistic performances. These range from transvestite cabaret and circus sado-masochism to nightmares involving suicide and murder: the re-imagining of divided Berlin through a transgressive narrative presents the opportunity to shock, break taboos and blur distinctions between reality and fantasy. The artificiality of pre-1989 West Berlin is underscored in Mirolla's thriller fantasy by the ease with which it can be rendered as a hallucinatory account of a decadent city.

*The Bullet Trick* also draws on the city's hedonistic reputation, combining a recent post-Wall setting with tropes of performance and eroticism which acknowledge their provenance in Weimar Berlin. The combination in Welsh's novel of the contemporary crime thriller with *Cabaret-*

related tropes of performance and sensuality drawn from the Weimar era is another example of the generic hybridisation which is a feature of the post-1989 Berlin thriller. The potential for cliché in recycling familiar images is countered by the postmodern self-awareness in the narrative voice, as shown when magician William Wilson refers to the conscious marketing involved in a 1920s-style dance routine in a night club:

I had no illusions, Germans didn't need to plunder their past for their own amusement, this was aimed at tourists hungry for a taste of Weimar decadence (*BT* 175).

The observation here of a difference in attitude between insiders and outsiders suggests that foreigners are perceived to be willing to participate in simulations of the past to a greater extent than German insiders for whom the past requires 'serious' forms of engagement. This could also be read to suggest that the post-unification growth of the Berlin thriller genre itself has been partly due to non-native readers looking to the past as a source of the sensational. *The Bullet Trick* itself is constructed to appeal to an audience with an appetite for 'Weimar decadence' so here a postmodern novelistic self-consciousness serves to implicate both reader and first-person narrator as potential voyeur.

The extent to which the Cold War period has already become memory is evident in *The Bullet Trick* in its postmodern availability as a source of imagery. Thus the cultivated physique of a Russian acrobat is compared with Soviet Cold War iconography: 'Kolja looked like an illustration from a Soviet poster expounding the health of communist ideology' (*BT* 240). The latent hostility to the acrobat nurtured by Wilson in this national stereotyping of the Russian is later shown to have its origins in sexual jealousy when the

magician, discovering Kolja with Sylvie, his fellow performer, is provoked by Kolja's nonchalance into assaulting him. The aggression of the attack on the Russian by the British man is again indicative of the post-Cold War atmosphere that is apparent in *The Bullet Trick*, when Wilson is restrained from escalating the confrontation further by 'the strong German voices of the men who pulled me off' (BT 242), a new role for Germany as peacemaker is symbolically enacted.

Welsh's postmodernity extends to parodying the Berlin spy thriller itself in the similarities between an early scene in a Soho strip club and the Babylon nightclub setting which Deighton uses at the beginning of *Spy Line* (SL 2). There are differences, too, when Welsh enlivens and lightens the seedy atmosphere by bringing a magic act into the club. Framed at beginning and end by London scenes, Welsh's novel also shares the trope of a contrast between London and Berlin with Deighton's Berlin trilogies and McEwan's *The Innocent*. Use of Glasgow as a third setting emphasises the local and familial and differentiates it from both London and Berlin. As in Deighton and McEwan, the relationship with Berlin is ambivalent, the Glaswegian narrator in *The Bullet Trick* finding resemblances between London and Berlin, but also a sense of difference: 'I could almost have imagined myself in London and yet I was most definitely abroad' (BT 104). The city is associated with violence and sensuality as the conjuring act becomes more intense and daring, culminating in the shooting of Sylvie, the magician's assistant, in what appears to be a fatal incident: 'The glass shattered and the target flew backwards into the centre of an explosion of noise and red' (BT 345-6). As in earlier examples cited from Kerr's *The Pale*

*Criminal* and McEwan's *The Innocent*, Berlin again appears to be associated with violence against women: however, it is typical of the text's ludic quality that it later emerges that the shooting is a magical illusion: Sylvie survives to resurface in London. The 'explosion of noise and red' is a harmless pretence, an act which reconstructs Berlin as a site of performance and theatricality rather than a signal of another violent visitation upon the city with echoes of wartime bombing.

*The Bullet Trick* is sparing in its references to Berlin's topography or to its contemporary, post-Wall, political situation. There is one reference to an East Berlin location, but this is typically to a performance-related site, linking Alexanderplatz with 'good casinos' (BT 116); the implication is that a new decadence has replaced the protest politics usually associated with the former showpiece GDR square. In *The Bullet Trick* Welsh evokes Berlin through memory of the cultural aura of the Weimar city and reference to its performance spaces. Thus the contemporary magic act takes place in a club named after the famous *Kabarett*, 'Schall und Rauch' (BT 58).<sup>160</sup> Despite its tattered appearance, this venue embodies memory of the Weimar era in its faded grandeur, as instanced by a decorative ceiling which reveals that 'this had once been a truly impressive building' (BT 58).

The nostalgic aura which pervades the Berlin chapters in *The Bullet Trick* extend to a configuration of the city which is redolent more of the layout of the divided city than of the post-unification era in which the narrative is set: Welsh emphasises the fictionality of the novel by avoiding specific dates. In a

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<sup>160</sup> Literally, 'Sound and Smoke', a figurative expression for empty talk. The famous, Weimar-era, 'Schall und Rauch' *Kabarett* was founded in 1919 in the cellar of the Grossen Schauspielhauses at the Weidendammer Brücke.

rare allusion to street furniture, display cases on a main street are described as advertising 'everything shiny, everything expensive' (*BT* 190). The glossy cases advertising luxury goods are typical of Kurfürstendamm, the principal shopping artery in West Berlin, an assumption which can be supported by an oblique reference to the nearby Europa Centre in the depiction of 'the illuminated sign of the Mercedes-Benz building' (*BT* 190). A typical Berlin duality is signalled by the tension between this showy capitalist glamour and the memory of war enshrined in the remains of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial here encapsulated by 'the half-ruined spire of the bomb-blasted memorial church' (*BT* 190). The combination of advertising spectacle and memory of war used to evoke the city here refers to West Berlin iconography conventionally associated with divided Berlin and the pre-1989 era. In *The Innocent*, McEwan, for example, refers to 'the shorn spire' (*TI* 23) of the Memorial Church in describing West Berlin in the mid-1950s. Welsh's use of the illuminated Mercedes logo and the half-ruin of the church neatly captures the interplay between illusion and violence in the novel. However, the trope of Berlin as a combination of modernity and ruin is again reminiscent of McEwan's earlier novel and references to 'new stores flanked by ruins [...] the Cinzano and Bosch neon signs waiting to be turned on' (*TI* 23).

The city's contemporary topography becomes a secondary consideration in a novel which uses the iconography of the divided city or the aura of Weimar-era Berlin to suggest that the post-unification city is a palimpsest of temporal possibilities. Where Deighton refers to the history of specific buildings to underscore the presence of the past in the city, Welsh provides access to the city's memory through performance and parody.

## 5. Continuity and Rupture: the Adlon, Alexanderplatz and Berlin's Lakes

Historic landmarks in the thriller often perform memory functions by anchoring a reconstruction in the past. While their condition usually is illustrative of the period in which they are set, through recurrent use in different eras they may come to signify a particular characteristic of Berlin itself. This can be exemplified by the Adlon, an hotel whose central city location, close to the Brandenburg Gate, emphasises its importance as a Berlin signifier. In the post-1989 English-language Berlin thriller, an early period representation of the hotel is in 1930 in Dold's Weimar thriller, *The Last Man in Berlin* (2003) in which it is described as 'one of the most elegant hotels in Berlin' and as a 'gathering spot for Berlin's elite' (LM 56). It has a central role as the protagonist's workplace in Kerr's *If the Dead Rise Not*, which opens in 1934; it also features in Flynn's *The Berlin Cross*, set in 1948, and Kanon's *The Good German*, set in 1945-1946. The detachment of the detective protagonist, Bernie Gunther, from the prevailing Nazi regime in Kerr's *If the Dead Rise Not* (2009) is prefigured by an experience of alienation in the hotel, when, in an imaginary dialogue, a bust of the Kaiser informs him that 'You don't belong here' (DRN 24). Here the elitist environs of the hotel represent a narrow German hegemony from which the exclusion of Gunther represents the democratic position with which the reader identifies.

The Adlon hotel is an unconventional memory site as its history has been characterised by rupture as much as by continuity: built in 1907, it was ruined by fire in May 1945, but remained partially functional until it was

demolished by the GDR regime in 1984. After the fall of the Wall in 1989, it was reconstructed, contributing to a nostalgic component in the architecture of the unified Berlin, which Simon Ward has characterised as a 'neo-conservative yearning for a "normal" German past'.<sup>161</sup> The abnormality of the hotel is unintentionally represented in a contemporary fictional context in Cym Lowell's *The Riddle of Berlin*. In this post-unification thriller, the building is depicted as a symbol of architectural survival which has withstood the onslaughts of Berlin's twentieth-century devastation: 'Only recently renovated to be a Mobil five-star hotel, the Adlon had seen the rise and fall of three *reichs* [sic] and a free, unified German state' (*RB* 28). This account is inaccurate: as the hotel only witnessed the Second Reich and barely survived the third: it also omits the awkward fact of the hotel's destruction in the 1980s by the GDR. Lowell's glossing of historic detail is quite unusual in the recent Berlin thriller in which historical accuracy has an importance which often appears to exceed the genre expectation of verisimilitude. However, Lowell's reference above to the Adlon as 'a Mobil five-star hotel' (*RB* 28) celebrates its contemporary luxury at the expense of memory: the presentation of its history as a story of continuity and survival overlooks the disruption that actually characterises its return to the architectural landscape of the post-unification city.

One feature of the representation of Berlin is the symbolic designation of different areas of the city, such as Alexanderplatz, which, as the site of police headquarters in the 1930s Berlin novels of Dold and Kerr, signals an

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<sup>161</sup> Simon Ward, "Representing Normality": Architecture in Berlin', in *German Culture, Politics and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, ed. by Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke (New York: Camden House, 2006), pp.75-88 (p.76).

association of this area with the administration of social control. In Dold's earlier novel, *The Last Man in Berlin*, set in 1932, there appears to be a repressive connection between the poverty of the area and the locating of the police administration there: 'The area –near Alexanderplatz police headquarters – was a communist neighbourhood of brick tenements and wooden slums' (*LM* 3). The power inherent in the topographical dominance of Alexanderplatz by the police building is invested with tradition in *Fatherland* when the 'Berlin Police Praesidium' is described as a 'sprawling Prussian fortress' (*F* 36). Bernie Gunther is identified with the police administration at Alexanderplatz in the past, declaring, 'I'd been a detective at the Alex, back in 1932' (*DRN* 71). Gunther distances himself from the police force, after the rise to power of the Nazis in 1933, by working as a private investigator for the Adlon. Gunther is aware that the authority claimed by the police in Alexanderplatz has been perverted and abused: 'given that the Alex was now under the control of a bunch of thugs and murderers, it was hard to see who was protecting who from whom' (*DRN* 37). Kerr's protagonist thus embodies an alienation in the mid-1930s from both the city's police administration at Alexanderplatz and its social elite at the Adlon, despite being associated with both places. In James Lasdun's *Seven Lies* reference to police activity on Alexanderplatz in the 1980s echoes the association with the 1930s police headquarters. The doubleness of the divided city is apparent in the configuring of the public square, now in East Berlin, as a site of both Western protest and Eastern police control:

when Petra Kelly came over the Wall with her West German Greens and they all unfurled banners together in Alexanderplatz until the cops came and arrested them. (*SL* 150)



Here also the image of the Green activists coming over the border into East Berlin mirrors the situation of Wall escapees from the GDR. Continuity in the political associations with Alexanderplatz is evident here in the staging of a radical event and the attendant police repression. In contrast with the association of Alexanderplatz with crowds, the Adlon caters for a social elite in luxurious surroundings. In the case of the Adlon, the fictional references to the hotel in the 1930s create a context of memory which contrasts with the destruction of the actual building and subsequent reconstruction. There is inevitably a degree of the artificial in its post-unification restoration: here it becomes a *lieu de mémoire* in the strict Nora definition of a memory site as a compensation for a more organic form of memory. On the other hand, the recurrence of a typical use such as public protest at Alexanderplatz in different eras suggests historical continuity despite the disruption of war and radical changes of regime.

### **Berlin's Lakes**

In the Berlin thriller, lakes are linked to memory and the return of the repressed. They are often associated with exposure of a culture of surreptitious killing and a moral contamination that is concealed within the city but exposed by its natural hinterland. Berlin's location on a plain surrounded by lakes offers a contrast between its natural and built environments, providing a suitably anonymous and uninhabited location for the secret and conspiratorial activities associated with the thriller. Lake sites and wooded shores suggest an aura of mystery and a space with many possibilities for both concealment and discovery. They are often associated with death, as, for example, in Gabbay's *The Berlin Conspiracy*, in which a

'watery grave' (*TBC* 160) is delivered by the protagonist, Jack Teller, to one of the conspirators in a confrontation which occurs while sailing on a lake near Tegel in the north-west of the city. Lakes also serve as plausible settings for the discovery of corpses: the crime fiction genre convention of starting a narrative with such a device as the motivation for an investigation is located at a Berlin lake in a number of thrillers including Harris's *Fatherland* and Kanon's *The Good German* (*GG* 54-55). In the latter, the historical context is foregrounded when the body of an American soldier, Tully, is also discovered on the Havel, but near Potsdam, on the first day of the post-war conference between the three Great Power leaders in July 1945. The trope of the discovery of a drowned body in a lake in mysterious circumstances has a thriller provenance in the Raymond Chandler story and film, *The Lady in the Lake* (1943). Berlin's woods can also perform a similar function as an isolated environment in which a body is found as, for example, at the start of Philip Sington's *The Einstein Girl* (*EG* 10-11). Wooded areas close to the lakes to Berlin's south-west connote wealth and status, as in Kerr's *March Violets* when private detective, Bernie Gunther, is driven to the home of a wealthy industrialist in a mansion 'on the edge of the Grunewald Forest in Dahlem' (*BN* 12).

At the outset of *Fatherland*, the corpse of a high-ranking Nazi, Josef Bühler, is found at Schwanenwerder, north of Wannsee, on the Havel river. A passing reference to the police stations around the lake includes Wannsee and suggests the possibility of an association with the lakeside villa on the same lake where the policy to implement the Holocaust was agreed by the Nazi regime (*F* 22). A rainy scene combined with the water of this peripheral

location by the Havel creates a murky opening for Harris' thriller for the discovery of a corpse provides a contrast with the massive monumental architecture which dominates the city's central area. Through pathetic fallacy, the natural cycle of the plants in the lakeside environment suggests the moral turpitude which is usually concealed from view by the monstrous spectacle of the city's fascist architecture: 'There was a heavy rain-smell of corruption: rich earth and rotting vegetation' (*F* 5). Later in the novel, the Nazi legacy at Wannsee emerges when the protagonist, Xavier March, and his assistant, Charlie, secretly visit and photograph the villa by the lake which housed the infamous 1942 conference at which the decision to eradicate the Jewish population of Europe was made. Although it is well known now as the 'House of the Wannsee Conference' the villa is defamiliarised in the novel and represented as a site at which memory of the Holocaust appears to have been eradicated.

The detective's efforts to retrieve the truth involve him imagining the villa as it was in the wartime Nazi era, an act of historical recuperation which clearly makes him the conduit between novelist and reader in recalling the past: 'March tried to picture it as it might have looked in January 1942' (*F* 291). The importance of memory in salvaging history is here made evident: after the dystopia of the division of Berlin and the propaganda battles of the Cold War, new fictional perspectives recover a history that had been concealed from view. This is not the memory which Nora fears is dictating the past: this is memory in the service of an authentic historical record.

*The Good German* also uses an image of a poisoned lake, in the form of a bomb crater filled with sewage, to depict the post-war legacy of Nazi

moral contamination. Seen as 'a giant hole filling with sludge' (GG 280), it represents another void in the city to align with Huyssen's identification of memory with apparently vacant spaces. Protagonist Jake Geismar wonders if 'this wasteland was what they deserved' (GG 280): here the devastated wasteland of the rubble city is configured as retribution for the evil of the Nazi regime. The lake may be poisoned but it is also the place where the memory of the city's recent past is exposed. The city's quiet suburban lakeside settings provide a contrast with the monumental, tourist and commercial city centre and often signal a contrast in social class between wealthy suburban and working-class city neighbourhoods. Unlike the familiar streets in the city centre, lakes are unknown and indefinite, creating space for mystery and speculation. They also can be metaphorically suggestive of the terrain in which the detective operates between the known and the mysterious, and the rational and the irrational.

In the thriller, the lake is used for the aura of secrecy which surrounds it; its placidity and silence also offer an opportunity to produce a contrasting effect. In Philip Kerr's *March Violets* a river journey by boat across Berlin ends with a brutal rape scene and a shoot-out at an island location beyond Köpenick and Schmöckwitz, in which the marginal and secret nature of the location is emphasised:

This is the summer headquarters of the German Strength ring. They use it for their more secret meetings. You can see why, of course. It's so out of the way. (BN 210)

Behind the fascist euphemisms, the corruption and violence of the Nazi regime which is concealed from view in the city centre emerges in a marginal lakeside location on the south-eastern edge of Berlin.

A lakeside villa is also the site of an attack at the beginning of Cym Lowell's *Riddle of Berlin* (2008), when an American, Marc Anton, is swooped upon and arrested by a group claiming to be US agents, who are killed in a sudden burst of automatic gunfire by an anonymous assailant. The location of Anton's villa, 'across Heiliger See from the Cecilienhof in Potsdam' (RB 5), evokes particular historical echoes as the Cecilienhof was the stately home used as the location of the 1945 Potsdam conference where the victors of the Second World War agreed to divide Germany as the basis for the post-war balance of power. The importance of this location for the recent Berlin thriller is again evident in *The Good German* where the incongruity of the neo-Tudor building by the Berlin lake is rendered in familiar terms for an Anglo-American readership as 'an unexpected piece of Surrey on the edge of the Jungfernsee' (GG 53). Lakes in the Berlin thriller do not function as a source of solace and contemplation, as they do in the Romantic tradition. Often linked with shocking events or discoveries, they are the site of violent encounters, corruption and death, while their isolation from the crowded city often makes them the site of mysterious crimes. A social class distinction may be signalled by the wealthy villas which tend to line their shores and they can harbour dark secrets or hidden histories, as exemplified by the Wannsee villa where the plans for the Holocaust were ratified by the Nazis. They are associated both with the desire to erase the past and the unexpected way in which memory of the forgotten can return.

## Conclusion

Until the fall of the Wall, the Berlin thriller was defined by the contemporary espionage genre as practised by Deighton and le Carré, in which Berlin is the main setting for checkpoint confrontations, border crossings and secret defections. In the two decades since 1989, the Berlin thriller has become a diverse, umbrella sub-genre of the thriller characterised by generic hybridisation in which crime or spy fiction genres, or combinations of both, are used to construct historical narratives. These are typically drawn from the different eras that define the city's twentieth-century experience: Weimar, Nazi Berlin, rubble Berlin, Cold War divided city, fall of the Wall and post-unification Berlin. The historical diversity and ability to adapt to different types of genre combination shown by the Berlin thriller since 1989 support the contention of this thesis that it has developed into a particular sub-genre of the thriller and an umbrella literary category based either on crime fiction or espionage narratives. David Duff notes that generic mixing often signals the emergence of a genre:

the proliferation of 'genre variants', or 'hybrids', is often the clearest indication we have of a shift in the hierarchy of genres, or the establishment of a new literary trend.<sup>162</sup>

Some distinct tendencies can be singled out: Nazi Berlin thrillers, such as those by Harris and early Kerr, respectively, tend to favour the detective mode, as is appropriate in considering investigations into the rise of a criminal state. On the other hand, depictions of the tension, fear and ambiguity of the Cold War city, by Kanon and Vyleta, incline towards the spy fiction genre. However, these categories are not exclusive: the Berlin thriller

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<sup>162</sup> David Duff, introduction to 'Royal Genres' by Ireneusz Opacki, in *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. by David Duff (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp.118-26 (p.118).

often combines spy fiction and detection elements, as in the novels of Downing and Harris, and may, as in Harris's *Fatherland*, combine crime and spy fiction with other genres such as the historical counterfactual novel and dystopian fiction. In the early 1990s, a new focus on memory of Nazi-era Berlin emerged as an alternative to the emphasis on the Cold War city in the espionage genre prior to 1989.

A nostalgia for divided Berlin can be detected in the English-language Berlin thrillers of Deighton and Sebastian. In Deighton, this takes the form of a special value placed on the city's pre-war architecture and of a configuration by his protagonist of the city as a childhood home. More generally, as shown in thrillers by Kanon and Vyleta, a tendency to look back to the immediate post-war era to explore the origins of the Cold War in Berlin shows the special place that the occupied city has assumed in the Western imagination. This can be contextualised through the emergence of a nostalgia based on the Allied presence in divided Berlin which was heightened by the Anglo-American withdrawal from the governance of West Berlin following unification. Analysis of the characteristics of this nostalgia will be given a specific British focus in the next chapter. The post-1945 end-of-war period which developed into the start of the Cold War represents a significant parallel to the post-Wall period. Another significant threshold is the eclipsing of the Weimar city and rise to power of the Nazis in 1933: it is represented here on the one hand by Dold's evocation of Berlin in 1930-33, and on the other by Kerr's representation of its aftermath in 1934.

The forms which memory of Berlin have taken include archival information, such as Speer's plans for the Nazi city in *Fatherland*, or personal

memory as in the recall of particular spaces in divided Berlin in Deighton's *Faith*. On occasion, as in Gabbay's *The Berlin Conspiracy*, the 1963 Berlin setting mainly serves to provide background rather than historical engagement; but generally the focus on the past represents an attempt to address the memory of Berlin through imaginative reconstructions. The use of protagonists such as Bernie Gunther in Kerr's *Berlin Noir*, an outsider working within the Nazi-controlled Berlin police force, combines access to an insider field of operation with an independent mind to which the reader can relate. Discussing the historical novel, Jerome de Groot has observed that Tolstoy created something beyond history and fiction in the form of 'an epic of pastness which somehow maintained the integrity of history and truth whilst creating a compelling narrative'.<sup>163</sup> This ambition is shared by many Berlin thriller authors: their use of paratextual prefaces and notes to show research undertaken is a sign that the thriller genre wishes to be perceived as a serious engagement with historical reinvention.

In this chapter, I have provided a focus on *Fatherland* to explore the dynamics of memory involved in the presentation of Berlin as a counterfactual dystopia. Harris's construction of Speer's plans for the conversion of Berlin into a monumental fascist city can be historicised as a representation of British fears in the early 1990s of German power, neo-Nazism and even the revival of Nazi Germany in a Fourth Reich. *Fatherland* thus emerges as the Berlin thriller in the post-unification era in which memory-related issues have had the most contemporary resonance. Ferguson's critique of the novel for trivialising an aspect of the history of the

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<sup>163</sup> De Groot, *The Historical Novel* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010), p.39.



Holocaust by addressing it through genre fiction can be countered by instancing the capacity of genre to allow readers access to the past. It is not simply a matter of verisimilitude, although this is still important in giving authority to a memory project. As Harris himself claims in an afterword: 'The Berlin of this book is the Berlin that Albert Speer planned to build' (F 386). The Berlin in *Fatherland* is actually more historically hybrid than Harris maintains, as can be shown by subtle adjustments made to the names of U-Bahn stations and a limited incorporation of American culture in the shape of a diner. However, the author's essential point holds: the bloated image of Berlin as an enormous shrine to Nazi power is based on a construction of Speer's plans. As a manifestation of a city built on a lie through the suppression of all knowledge of the Holocaust, the novel confronts issues of European and German Jewish memory including Holocaust denial and the question of how victims of the Holocaust should be remembered in Berlin in the new historical contexts of post-Cold War Europe and the unification of Germany. The success with which the novel depicts Nazi Berlin both as a dystopian, triumphal monstrosity and as a credible 1960s city shows how the Berlin thriller can continue to address memory as a point where past and contemporary political anxieties coincide.

Anthropomorphic intimations of the city as a character in its own right are suggested by the survival of landmarks after the devastation of war in Kanon's *The Good German* or by the depiction of the sudden animation of the Brandenburg Gate, as the Wall is opened in 1989 in Porter's *Brandenburg*. Welsh's *The Bullet Trick* shows Berlin to be a repository of cultural memory in which the tropes associated with a particular era, such as

Weimar period performance, magic and cabaret, can be recycled as a source for the contemporary Berlin thriller. Cold War Berlin images or motifs of performance and decadence associated with the Weimar city in thrillers by Welsh and Mirolla signal a new postmodern consciousness of the iconography of Berlin itself.<sup>164</sup>

Allan Hepburn has observed: 'Spy fiction is not exempt from the postmodern turn to historical and "heritage" settings'.<sup>165</sup> Deighton's persistence in writing divided Berlin thrillers set in the Cold War era after 1989 inevitably necessitated an increasingly historical perspective. However, space in Berlin in Deighton's two post-Wall trilogies is consistently attuned to the past as a source of comparison and validation. An identification with divided Berlin in the Deighton protagonist is evident in an investment in Berlin as a site of memories which has British connections. Deighton's attentiveness to often mundane Berlin spaces opens up the potential for a redefinition of Nora's memory site as an enabling concept based on personal associations and marginal locations.

The post-1989 Berlin thriller uses a number of different sets of spatial tropes to evoke the memory of different periods in Berlin's twentieth-century past. The Weimar thriller tends to be associated with performance spaces such as the cinema, night club and film studio. The Nazi Berlin sub-genre can be identified by the appropriation of public buildings, such as hotels, for

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<sup>164</sup> Although it is outside the period framework of this thesis, in a postmodern context, *The History of History* by Ida Hattmer-Higgins (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), has also contributed to this trend towards self-referentiality in the recent English-language Berlin novel.

<sup>165</sup> Allan Hepburn, 'Detectives and Spies', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel*, ed. by Robert L. Caserio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp.210-22, (p.221).

use by the Nazi regime, and is particularly associated with government offices in Wilhelmstrasse and secret police quarters in Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse. The Adlon Hotel and the Alexanderplatz police headquarters feature in both the Weimar and Nazi Berlin periods identifying them as important memory sites. The post-war rubble thriller is signified by a city landscape of ruins while the Cold War Berlin thriller is identifiable by the Wall and border control zones, such as Friedrichstrasse Station and the Glienicke Bridge. The fall of the Wall thriller is associated with the revelation of the Brandenburg Gate and the post-unification thriller by the emergence of a reconstructed Potsdamer Platz. Other spaces which have become motifs in the Berlin thriller include monuments such as the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Wall, with varying significations depending on the historical era in which they are situated: for example, the Brandenburg Gate, which signifies the triumphal Nazi seizure of power in 1933 in Kerr, comes to represent liberation from oppression in the depiction of the opening of the Wall in Marks and Porter in 1989. The Wall can be seen as an integral trope in the Berlin spy thriller by defining a terrain in which the static hostility of the Cold War assumed a visible form; it also creates a controlled zone through which normal human movements are restricted but in which the espionage operative covertly acts as in a proxy war zone. During this period, there is also discernible a tendency for the Wall to move from latent instrument of war to monument.

An ambivalence in the English-language response to the fall of the Wall in the post-1989 Berlin thriller can be associated with a political context in the form of Anglo-American governance of West Berlin and varies

between the immediate discomfort of a British spy's exposure in Sebastian and a later, more reflective and novelistic treatment within a historical context in Porter. Both novels testify to the recurring need at different temporal intervals within the last two decades to preserve the memory of the Wall in a popular literary genre while it is still within the compass of living remembrance. As spaces which in themselves tend to resist the markings of history, lakes become associated with the past by association with corpses that emerge at particular moments, such as after the war, suggesting a return of the repressed, or through images of contamination connected with the Nazi era. The strength but lack of specificity of these past links suggest an association between lakes and memory. Generically, lakes serve as secret places and sites of revelation where the discovery of a corpse instigates a criminal investigation.

In this chapter, I have analysed what Huyssen has identified as the palimpsest-like layers of history in Berlin in the form of thrillers which focus on particular images of the city as spaces and encapsulations of memory, such as the Nazi city, rubble Berlin, the divided city and fall of the Wall era, and the recycling of Weimar memory in the postmodern, twenty-first century period. Huyssen discusses how 'The strong marks of present space merge in the imaginary with traces of the past, erasures, losses and heterotopias'.<sup>166</sup> From this survey, the rise and fall of Nazi Berlin appears to be the crucial issue informing the post-1989 Berlin thriller. The gap in memory surrounding Berlin, the rise of the Nazi hegemony and the anti-Semitism which prepared the ground for the Holocaust is one that both Harris and Kerr address by

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<sup>166</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.7.

inscribing a critique of the escalating prejudice against the Jews in their fictional accounts of Nazi Berlin in the 1930s. The pre-1933 Weimar Berlin thriller, as exemplified by Dold, is overshadowed by the rise to power of the Nazis, while the Cold War thriller is largely relocated to the immediate post-war, pre-Wall era of the rubble Berlin thrillers of Kerr, Kanon and Vyleta which can be read as investigations of the origins of the Cold War in the ruins of the Third Reich city. Exceptionally for a major event in Berlin's post-war history, there is no recent Berlin thriller which addresses the 1953 Workers' Uprising in East Berlin or uses it as a setting, a finding which reflects a general lack of knowledge about this event in an Anglophone context.

The recyclings of Weimar and Cold War memory in an ostensibly contemporary, post-unification thriller such as Welsh's *The Bullet Trick* is indicative of an uncertainty about referencing the new Berlin in the years after 1989. Here again Huyssen has been a model in identifying the interdependence between overlapping forms of the present and past in Berlin:

After the waning of modernist fantasies about *creatio ex nihilo* and of the desire for the purity of new beginnings, we have come to read cities and buildings as palimpsests of space.<sup>167</sup>

The overlapping of different temporal periods in Berlin can be seen for example in Kanon's *The Good German* in which the need to use memory to rediscover pre-war personal connections becomes a vital element in the recovery of the ruined city after the Second World War. In Harris, another form of palimpsest emerges in *Fatherland* when its relevance to post-1989

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<sup>167</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.7.

British anxieties about unification is overlaid on the projected 1964 city, the presentation of which in itself is concerned with loss of memory of the events of the Holocaust in the 1939-1945 period. The use of Berlin-related memory in both Harris and Kerr is related to contemporary British concerns about a new German hegemony and erasure of memory of the Holocaust. In both Harris and Kanon, the idea of a fresh start led by victorious powers is challenged by the emergence of buried histories. Despite the seeming turn to the past, the contemporary relevance of memory in the post-unification thriller is apparent.

## Chapter Two. Memory of Belonging: Divided Berlin in Ian McEwan's *The Innocent* and *Black Dogs*, John le Carré's *Absolute Friends* and James Lasdun's *Seven Lies*

### Introduction: Mapping Memory in British Berlin Fiction

Discussing Huyssen's identification of an increasing globalisation of memory, Margaret Littler refers to warnings against abandoning 'the national boundedness of cultural memory'.<sup>168</sup> Although this thesis itself is transnational in its overall exploration of non-native perspectives on Berlin's past, this chapter provides a specific focus on the British relationship with divided Berlin. In John le Carré's *The Secret Pilgrim*, George Smiley, retired head of the British Secret Service, MI6, reflecting on British involvement in espionage, acknowledges that 'the Cold War produced in us a kind of vicarious colonialism' (SP 249). Implications of post-imperial decline will be explored in this chapter in contrasting representations of East and West Berlin, in comparisons between Berlin and London, and through spatial associations linking, on the one hand, the British with the city's ruins and, on the other, the Americans with its economic regeneration.

The four-power occupation of West and East Germany, and by extension of West and East Berlin, had a considerable impact, as D.G. Williamson has observed: 'Both of these states were profoundly influenced by their occupiers.'<sup>169</sup> This chapter explores the influence of British nationality on representations of space and memory in divided Berlin in four

<sup>168</sup> Margaret Littler, 'Cultural Memory and Identity Formation' in *Contemporary German Fiction*, ed. by Stuart Taberner, pp.177-95 (p.178).

<sup>169</sup> At the end of World War Two, Berlin was divided into four occupation zones which were administered by the victorious wartime allies or 'four powers': the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France. D.G. Williamson, *Germany from Defeat to Partition* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), p.24.

novels: *Absolute Friends* by John le Carré, *Seven Lies* by James Lasdun and *The Innocent* and *Black Dogs* by Ian McEwan. These novels by British authors combine literary fiction with the espionage genre and therefore differ from the predominance of the thriller genre in the analysis in the previous chapter. I have placed a particular emphasis on the mapping of memory onto Berlin spaces and on analysing the juxtaposition of historical reconstructions and contemporary representations. The extent to which a focus on divided Berlin in novels by le Carré, Lasdun and McEwan is influenced and facilitated by a common British political and cultural inheritance will be examined. As already discussed in relation to the Berlin thriller, this can be related to Anglo-American participation in the post-war administration of Berlin as part four-power occupation and military governance of the city from 1945-1989.

Just as the previous chapter revealed a turn to memory in the spy thriller, so Richard Bradford, surveying recent British fiction, has observed that the lessening of geopolitical tension in the late-1980s led to a new growth in the historical novel:

The new fashion for the serious historical novel [...] began in the 1980s when the Cold War seemed to become gradually more of a costly aberration than a threat and the closing years of which saw the dismantling of the East-West divide.<sup>170</sup>

The novels analysed in this chapter all involve representations of the past yet resist categorisation as historical novels since they are based primarily on combinations of the literary fiction and spy thriller genres; they also all complicate the temporal perspective through time-shifts between past and present. Memory of Berlin is constructed through the device of returns to Berlin: actual in *Seven Lies* and *The Innocent*, metaphorical in the renewal of

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<sup>170</sup> Richard Bradford: *The Novel Now: Contemporary British Fiction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p.88.



a friendship in *Absolute Friends*. In analysing space and memory in these novels, Nora's concept of the *lieu de mémoire* recurs as the exigencies of retrieving memory in a changing city landscape are brought into play.

These novels provide a focus on a number of different periods in the history of divided Berlin. The immediate 'rubble Berlin' post-war era has attracted specific attention in the Berlin thriller as shown in the first chapter. *The Innocent* concentrates on 1955-1956, with a return to the city in 1987; *Absolute Friends* focuses, in part, on West Berlin in 1969 and the 1970s; *Seven Lies* explores East Berlin from 1974-1986, returning to the city briefly in 1999; and *Black Dogs* encapsulates recent history from a near-contemporary point of view by fictional reportage based in Berlin in the days after the opening of the Wall in 1989. McEwan's *The Innocent* is the novel that comes closest to Bradford's observation of the re-emergence of the historical novel, both in its late-1980s origin and in its investment in a period setting. However, contemporary representations in all three novelists challenge notions of the separateness of the past and therefore resist simple categorisation of their work as period pieces.

Memory of Berlin as a site of formative encounter is explored as a characteristic of all three novelists. In *Seven Lies* as in *The Innocent* and *Absolute Friends*, Berlin is the shaping environment in which character is formed and relationships formed. Le Carré sets his British protagonist in *Absolute Friends* in the midst of the late-1960s era of protest in West Berlin, which he depicts as a site where political intensity and emotional energy are incubated by a new, post-war generation determined to engage with the repression of a traumatic past. Le Carré's focus on British memory of the

former West Berlin coincided with a post-unification trend for ‘Westalgia’: a nostalgia for the old West Germany in German-language literature which Linda Shortt has described as ‘a longing for a remembered past where a secure future was in fact conceivable’.<sup>171</sup> Similarly, the representation of mid-1950s Berlin in McEwan’s *The Innocent* can also be read as a projection of post-war Britishness.

As an English-language Berlin novel, *Seven Lies* is exceptional in its use of an East Berlin setting and protagonist and exclusively German characters. This contrasts with the author’s admission that he used memory of growing up in London in the 1970s as a basis for imagining life in East Berlin. The capacity of fiction to transpose different cultural memories challenges the seeming irreconcilability of ideological differences between East and West by suggesting a similarity between repressive conditions in England in the 1970s and 1980s and the social situation in East Berlin in the same period.

### **1. Divided Berlin and Britain: Border Crossing in *The Innocent***

In this section, I analyse how spaces in East and West Berlin are inflected through British perspectives in McEwan’s *The Innocent*. McEwan’s concern to relate the novel to a British historical and political context can be seen in the use of an epigraph drawn from Winston Churchill’s diaries after the 1945 Yalta conference in which he predicts a post-war decline in British global influence:

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<sup>171</sup> Linda Shortt, ‘Reimagining the West: West Germany, Westalgia, and the Generation of 1978’ in *Debating German Cultural Identity since 1989*, ed. by Anne Fuchs, Kathleen James-Chakraborty and Linda Shortt (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2011), pp.156-66 (p.159).

After this war, continued the PM, we should be weak, we should have no money and no strength and we should lie between the two great powers of the USA and the USSR.<sup>172</sup>

Seen in this light, the divided Berlin of *The Innocent*, with the United States dominant in the West of the city and the East overshadowed by the Soviet Union, becomes a metaphor for the weak economic condition and geopolitical status of Britain after 1945.

This weakness is embodied in the position of the novel's British protagonist, Leonard Marnham, when he is taken on a car journey into East Berlin by the American officer, Glass, and Russell, who works as an announcer on American radio in West Berlin. The interpretation of the spatial experience is managed by the Americans with the intention of showing the superior quality of life in West Berlin, as Glass explains: 'We're starting you in the East so you can enjoy the contrasts later' (*TI* 28-29). The decline in British political influence in the post-war era is played out in Leonard's inability to contribute to the political discussion led by the Americans: 'Leonard nodded and hummed his agreement but he did not attempt an opinion' (*TI* 30). By not articulating any differing view, Leonard appears to accept the American interpretation of the East Berlin regime as a failed political and economic entity, a puppet regime sustained, according to Glass 'as long as the Soviets want it' (*TI* 30). Leonard's subordination is similar to that of the novel's Berliners, Maria and Otto, who also tend not to express opinions on political issues which the Americans discuss freely, such as the duration of the GDR government or Soviet control of East Berlin.

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<sup>172</sup> John Colville, *The Fringes of Power: Downing Street Diaries, 1939-1955* (London: Phoenix, 2005). Cited by Ian McEwan as epigraph to *The Innocent*.

As in the Nazi-era, on Unter den Linden, political appropriation of an hotel signifies ideological control of the civic domain:

Unter den Linden...Over there, the real headquarters of the German Democratic Republic, the Soviet Embassy. It stands on the site of the old hotel Bristol, once one of the most fashionable [...] ( *TI* 28)

Memory of the former hotel, destroyed in a 1943 bombing raid, recalls the elitist legacy of capitalism and British imperialism in the old Weimar city but also evokes an aura of hospitality which has been eradicated and replaced by a building whose diplomatic image conceals hegemonic authority: Soviet political power has replaced British social prestige . The lack of any specific reference here to the Nazis, in the context of this reference by Russell to the pre-war era, is typical of the mood in Berlin as a whole as configured in the novel's 1950s narrative and signals a desire to forget the Third Reich period.

The crossing into East Berlin reveals a stark contrast to the west as the darkness and emptiness of the eastern part of the city become immediately apparent: 'They drove beneath the Brandenburg Gate. Now it was much darker. There was no other traffic' ( *TI* 28). The dark and empty terrain represents the mystery and ambiguity which is intrinsic to the spy thriller; it also signifies the unknown landscape of the other which the Western allies attempt to penetrate by the secret spy tunnel. The quiet and subdued atmosphere underpins the observation of the urban decline that is evident all along Unter den Linden: 'This deserted stretch was once the nerve centre of the city, one of the most famous thoroughfares in Europe' ( *TI* 28). Here the use of an analogy with the body to describe the functioning of the city is indicative of an anthropomorphic tendency which is also apparent later in the novel in the symbolism of the dissection of Otto's corpse as a

representation of the division of Berlin (*TI* 163).<sup>173</sup> However, the polarity between an East Berlin which appears to be empty and a West Berlin which is showing signs of social rejuvenation is complicated early in the narrative when Reichskanzlerplatz, a square in the western part of the city, is depicted as 'huge and empty' (*TI* 5), in contrast with the apparent importance signalled by its imperial title.

The darkness associated with East Berlin is inside as well as outside, as shown when Russell is described as 'scanning the darker corners' of the Neva Hotel bar (*TI* 29). The use of 'scanning' here suggests military surveillance to locate an enemy: the emphasis on the dark signals the fact that East Berlin is perceived as hostile terrain by the Americans, suggesting an unenlightened and uncivilised area beyond the reach of Western support or humane engagement. Russell dances with an East German woman, but she is thin, as if malnourished, and it is made clear that she will not be selected as a partner: 'She won't do' (*TI* 29), predicts Glass. The immediate recognition of inferiority shows that the division between east and west is written on the body as much as on the streets and buildings of the city. The Americans are quick to categorise and to refuse further engagement with those from the Soviet zone, but by distancing themselves from the economic deprivation which they observe, they also signal their acceptance of it. Russell blames the thin appearance of the women on the poverty of the East German diet but is oblivious of his own contribution to the perpetuation of inequality when he proceeds to order another bottle of sweet champagne (*TI*

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<sup>173</sup> The historical accuracy of the portrayal of East Berlin's emptiness can be corroborated by an account by the British spy-turned-Soviet double agent, George Blake, who observed in his autobiography: 'By seven o'clock the centre of East Berlin, which in those days still lay in ruins was almost deserted.' George Blake, *No Other Choice* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1990), p.173.

30). Maria, who becomes Leonard's lover, is originally from Pankow, an area in the Soviet sector: as an East Berliner, therefore, she can be compared with the woman in the Neva hotel, although she now lives in the West. Like her compatriot, she socialises in a hotel with Leonard and his colleagues, but, crucially, in West Berlin: as a result, she appears to escape the low standard of living in the East and avoids being stigmatised as inferior by working for, and forming relationships with, the British and Americans.

The relatively few references in *The Innocent* to East Berlin locations are a sign of the increasing separation of the two parts of the city from each other. However, the presentation of the Western, external perspective is not uncritical and there are a number of positive associations with East Berlin. For example, an alternative view of the Soviet sector is offered when Maria is forced to retreat to her parents' apartment in Pankow after Leonard has sexually assaulted her. Here East Berlin becomes a site of recuperation as Maria regains a 'delicate equilibrium' (TI 103), an idea of balance which articulates her need to recover from the assault carried out by a British man. In a divided and unequal city, the eastern space is needed as a refuge to compensate for the violence originating in West Berlin. Maria spends three weeks in the small space owned by her family which is summed up as 'her parents' stuffy apartment in Pankow' (TI 103). The congested flat stands in marked contrast with the spaciousness of the two-bedroom apartment in West Berlin allocated to Leonard by the British military authorities (TI 3). The size of Leonard's flat as a sign of privileged status becomes a source of contention to Glass, as an American officer who is Leonard's designated superior (TI 22), and also to Maria's former husband, Otto.

East and West Berlin, however, are not portrayed in *The Innocent* as entirely separate enclaves and polar opposites. For example, they are linked underground by both border transgression through the espionage tunnel and boundary-crossing facilitated by the city's underground railway. Despite the borders between the Soviet and the Western sectors, the U-Bahn still connects West and East Berlin, as shown when Leonard travels from Grenzallee to Alexanderplatz, en route to the Café Prag. The U-Bahn is a space in Berlin which preserves its pre-war modernity and capacity to shock through the impact of speed which Leonard experiences when he takes the U-Bahn from Ernst-Reuter-Platz to Kottbusser Tor: 'Almost too soon he was on Adalbertstrasse' (TI 46). However, this ease of underground movement also encompasses cross-border journeys between the Allied and Soviet sectors. When Leonard travels by U-Bahn to East Berlin to meet a spy in the Café Prag, the speed, coherence and lack of border controls on the rail system make the journey to Alexanderplatz a quick and simple affair:

He bought a ticket to Alexanderplatz in the Russian sector. There was a train waiting to leave, and one came in immediately at Hermannplatz where he had to change. The ease confirmed him in his intention. (TI 191)

Here the act of buying the ticket clearly involves awareness of visiting a destination in the Soviet zone but there would appear to be no border formalities in evidence underground. Leonard's awareness of the stages of the journey shows he is tense about making the trip but his doubts are overcome by the efficiency of the underground rail system which continues to serve the space of the whole city without ideological constraint.

On the surface, movement between West and East Berlin in the mid-1950s is represented as relatively easy, although the sectoral border is

signalled by the presence of the military at inner city border crossings. Greg Castillo has commented on how traversing the border between the two divided parts of the city was not particularly complicated prior to the construction of the Wall in 1961, despite the ideological differences, observing how 'Berliners crossed a permeable border to construct daily lives that transgressed the Cold War's geopolitical realms'.<sup>174</sup> In *The Innocent* the American car bearing Leonard, Glass and Russell approaches the Russian sector frontier at the Brandenburg Gate and, after merely slowing at the West Berlin customs, is waved through by East German border guards after a casual inspection of the number plate (*TI 28*). The ease of the border crossing accords with the relative innocence of the pre-Wall period and contrasts starkly with the militarised Wall in the Berlin of the 1960s depicted by Deighton and le Carré. East Berlin in *The Innocent* is shown as accessible from the West by car and underground railway suggesting that casual access to the eastern sector on foot is no longer the norm. This suggests that ten years after the end of the war there is already a degree of separation between the two halves of the city but is also a reminder that Berlin is a city in which the flâneur travels by public or private transport rather than walking.

Borders divide but also connect, as de Certeau has observed in a commentary on boundaries as shared space:

This is the paradox of the frontier: created by contacts, the points of differentiation between two bodies are also their common points.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Greg Castillo, 'The Nylon Curtain: Architectural Unification in Divided Berlin', in *Berlin: Divided City 1945-1989*, ed. by Philip Broadbent and Sabine Hake (New York: Berghahn, 2010), pp.46-55 (p.46).

<sup>175</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 127.



As a secret operation extending into the Soviet sector, the construction of the secret spy tunnel is a hostile act by the West which infringes the four-power agreement on the shared military governance of Berlin through separate national sectors. On one hand, it represents exploitation of the uncertainty of the inner-city border zone by the Western allies in an effort to gain advantage by tapping into Soviet Eastern bloc communications. However, the incursion into East Berlin through the tunnel also serves as a reminder of the international political significance to the West of the city's 'other' half and of the importance of underground space as an unseen and subversive form of connection.

A territorial connection between East Berlin and Britain is highlighted on the return stretch of the car trip when the two are shown to be neighbours by sharing a border in the city:

Then they were driving past a sign which said in four languages, *You are leaving the Democratic Sector of Berlin*, towards another which announced in the same languages, *You are now entering the British Sector*.

'Now we're in Wittenbergplatz,' Russell called from the front seat. (TI 33)

In this militarised urban terrain, the name of the square with its reference to a place integral to Germany's cultural heritage, functions as a *lieu de mémoire* and alternative to the opposing ideological claims made explicit or implicit in the political signs.

The Berlin of 1955-1956 depicted in *The Innocent* is a city divided: not only between East and West Berlin and their respective communist and capitalist ideologies, but also between the Western Allies themselves, as shown by the rivalry between the British and the Americans. The emphasis

on duality in the novel is also configured in the representation of the urban environment as a mixture of lingering ruins and signs of recovery encapsulated in the description of 'ruins and building sites' (*TI* 108) through which Leonard and Maria cycle on returning to the city from excursions to the surrounding suburban lakes. Poised between destruction and reconstruction, the physical landscape of Berlin is a metaphor for the human condition: the aspiration to development and progress counterbalanced by the destructive forces unleashed by conflict. Although *The Innocent* is set primarily in the mid-1950s, by depicting a city defined by both dilapidation and development, McEwan anticipated the post-Wall landscape in Berlin in the decade after 1989, of which Boym, writing of the 1990s, has observed: 'In Berlin the ruin and the construction site coexist'.<sup>176</sup> The prescience of McEwan's analysis of the duality of the city's architecture shows how representation of the historical in fiction can resonate in the present as much as it illustrates the past, the recurrence of a stark juxtaposition between old and new in Berlin's built environment creating a connection between the post-war era and the post-Wall period described by Boym.

The pride the American officer, Glass, takes in the successful regeneration of parts of West Berlin is based historically on the US contribution from 1948-1952 to the rebuilding of the city through the Marshall Plan. Earlier he displays a more blatantly nationalist and proprietorial attitude when he drives through Kreuzberg: 'He was an American and this was the American sector' (*TI* 11). Economic recovery is linked to the quasi-colonial role of the United States in the governance of its allocated sector of the city,

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<sup>176</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.179

as one of the four victorious post-war powers in Berlin. The colonial presence of the British in West Berlin is shown in the satisfaction Leonard takes as an Englishman in the spatial occupation of the capital by his fellow countrymen:

At the end of the street he heard the voices of English children. An RAF officer and his family were arriving home, satisfying evidence of a conquered city. (TI 5)

Where the American is drawn to architectural regeneration, Leonard is fascinated by the ruined city, their contrasting attitudes reflecting different national stakes in the city: Leonard initially identifies with British wartime air-raids on Berlin while Glass is more concerned with the post-war leadership role played by the United States in rebuilding West Berlin. Leonard is particularly excited by the spectacle of ruins on Reichskanzlerplatz where he interprets the destruction as the dues of a 'defeated nation' (TI 5) and takes 'boyish pleasure' (TI 5) in imagining the destruction wreaked by British bombers, reducing grand civic buildings 'to leave only facades with gaping windows' (TI 5).

In the summer, West Berlin appears to offer a number of popular leisure spaces and facilities but idyllic images of the couple enjoying each other's company are still subject to political constraints. Leonard and Maria go out walking and enjoy swimming or sitting outside at a bar near the city centre: 'they walked to the Olympic Stadium and swam in the pool, or, in Kreuzberg, walked along the canal, or sat outside a bar near Mariannenplatz' (TI 107). Here their destination of the Olympic Stadium is probably conditioned by the British military having their offices there: it was the place to which Leonard reported on his arrival in the city. The couple enjoy trips to the more rural areas on the outskirts of the city but their excursions are

circumscribed by places which denote the perimeter of the Allied sectors and, therefore, the border with East Berlin and Soviet-controlled terrain:

At weekends they rode out to the villages of Frohnau and Heiligensee in the north, or west to Gatow to explore the city boundaries along paths through empty meadows. Out here the smell of water was in the air. (TI 107)

Gatow was the site of a British Royal Air Force base while Frohnau and Heiligensee to the north were both close to the city border with East Germany. Although these villages are located on the city's rural fringe, the reference to boundaries is a sign that they are located on the margins of West Berlin, beyond which the couple's freedom of movement is curtailed by the Cold War border with the Soviet sector. The emptiness of the meadows seems liberating but also suggests that people avoid the border area. At Gross-Glienicker See, despite the presence of British military surveillance, there is an almost comic disjunction in the way Leonard and Maria picnic 'under the flight path of RAF planes' (TI 108). Here the natural lakeside location becomes a confined space defined by the aircraft overhead and the couple's presence there is shown to be dictated as much by the allegiance they share with the British air force as by the lake environment. Air is not the only element subject to military control: the water, too, is also subject to border demarcations as the couple discover when they swim out to red and white buoys 'marking the division of the British and Russian sectors' (TI 108). Nonetheless, the innocuous activity of the lovers in its own small way challenges these limits and controls by revealing their presence to be absurd in the elemental context of the lakes. Everyday life in Berlin in *The Innocent* tends to conceal the political forces of the Cold War while spaces outside the city are more revealing of the city's secrets.

## 2. The Difference between Berlin and London: *Absolute Friends* and *The Innocent*

It is common in English-language Berlin fiction for novels to represent the city through the cultural context of the native-speaking English-language market in which they are produced. Therefore, it is not surprising, in the context of British fiction, that Berlin is often paired and compared with London, as shown already in the discussion of Deighton's Berlin thrillers and Welsh's *The Bullet Trick*, or that an American author such as Kanon should use American locations such as Dodge City as points of reference in *The Good German*.

In le Carré's *Absolute Friends*, comparison with English locations defines a welcome irregularity and unruliness in Berlin, as shown in the following comment by its English protagonist: 'Kreuzberg is not Oxford, Mundy observes with relief' (AF59). As in Isherwood's Berlin novels, the foreign city enables the English to escape the repressive atmosphere of home but also challenges the visitor with a greater intensity of political engagement. When Mundy joins a radical commune, a fellow member tests his radicalism by insisting on the exclusive nature of the local burden of memory: 'Because here is not Oxford,' she snaps. 'Here we have an Auschwitz generation. In Oxford you do not' (AF 64). The new awareness of the 1968 generation in Berlin that it is their duty to bear responsibility for the Holocaust makes them see themselves as distinct from the English. In a later comparison with London, Berlin is again presented as a less comfortable and polished place than London: 'And all right, Berlin isn't Hyde Park, it isn't Whitehall. It's less sporty, a rougher deal' (AF 90). There are similarities here

with the depiction in *The Innocent* of Berlin as a more vibrant and less cosseted city than London. In *Absolute Friends*, West Berlin in the late sixties is rife with political agitation and confrontation, its designation as ‘the highly inflammable half-city of West Berlin’ suggesting that instability is inherent in its constitutional division (AF 91). In a confined city, repressive measures invite extreme responses, as shown when the radical leader, Sasha, speaking at a political rally at the Free University, becomes more outrageous as the police close in: ‘the sight of the police cordon as it closes round him inspires him to develop his themes to their extremity’ (AF 91). The image of Berlin as site of extremity on the front-line of political engagement is a recurrent motif in the Cold War spy thriller. Here le Carré both observes and subverts generic expectation by linking the trope not to the obscure movements of spies but to memories of student protest in the city.

The exploration of the relationship between Britain and Berlin in le Carré’s novel encompasses not only the hostility towards comfortable bourgeois England displayed by a member of the West Berlin commune but also attitudes of lingering antipathy towards Berlin in the post-war British establishment. A letter from a publisher rejecting a story by Mundy about a Berlin pavement artist reveals a sanctimonious British aloofness towards the city, linked to assumptions of distaste, presumably related to the war and the Nazis, which the correspondent does not feel it is necessary to explain:

We find the actions of your German police violent and their language offensive. We fail to see why you have set your story in Berlin, a city of unpleasant connotations for many of our British readers. (AF 114)

The prejudices reconfirmed here about militaristic Germans prove that British antipathy towards Berlin, as already discussed in relation to the portrayal of

the city in Buchan's fiction of the First World War era, was reinforced during the Second and endured long in its aftermath. Martin Corrick in *After Berlin* refers to the wartime broadcasts from Britain in which Berlin came to epitomise the evil of war:

On the BBC they spoke the name with special gravity, and for the millions listening in their kitchens and parlours the city was the lair in which evil dwelt. *Berlin*. The name meant hatred and darkness and fire. (AB 24)<sup>177</sup>

From a British perspective, this perception of Berlin as a place of special iniquity is one which authors like Corrick and le Carré identify in order to challenge. For example, in *Absolute Friends* the censorious attitude of the distanced observer is not the final word on Berlin: the novel depicts a dynamic city, a 'vibrant Berlin' (AF 58) where Mundy falls in love and forges an unconditional friendship with the radical political leader, Sasha, which will define both their lives. Description of the 'divided city with its gallows humour and doomed atmosphere of unassured survival' (AF 72) shows that empathy to the city extends to anthropomorphic attributions to it of a sense of humour and a capacity to endure.

The only chapter in *The Innocent* not set in Berlin describes Leonard's return home to London for Christmas and underscores the contrast with the British capital in the mid-1950s as Leonard perceives London's 'ordinariness' (TI 114) in comparison with Berlin's 'strangeness' (TI 114). One visible physical distinction between the cities emerges in the rows of intact, undamaged houses in the British capital which reveal that London has not suffered from the bomb damage inflicted on it during the Second World War

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<sup>177</sup> The persistence of this association with the wartime city can be seen in a reference to it in a twenty-first-century context in Aridjis's *Book of Clouds*: 'Berlin, omphalos of evil, the place where World War II had ended' (BC 25).

to the same extent as Berlin. However, there is a price to be paid for such preservation: 'the parallel walls of Victorian terraces were the end of all change' (*TI* 114). London's nineteenth-century terraces are also seen as the embodiment of a stifling conservatism, as Leonard rediscovers a city that, in comparison with Berlin, is indifferent to politics and characterised by material acquisition: 'The great struggle to keep Europe free was as remote as the canals of Mars' (*TI* 114). In the pub, no-one has heard of the recent formation of the Warsaw Pact, despite Leonard's reflection on its ratification as having 'caused such a stir in Berlin' (*TI* 114). Both *The Innocent* and *Black Dogs* reinforce and deconstruct the espionage thriller trope of Berlin as a city of global importance on the front-line of the Cold War. Berlin's international significance is underscored in *Black Dogs* when Bernard responds with excitement in London to news of the breaching of the Wall in Berlin on the night of November 9. However, London's detachment from historic events taking place in Berlin is again apparent, as it was in its distance from the Cold War as portrayed in *The Innocent*. For Bernard Tremaine, watching and listening in London, the drama of the opening up of the Wall is initially experienced through the media: 'Turn your radio on, dear boy. Or the television, even better. They're streaming through' (*BD* 68). A need to witness the event in person leads to Bernard travelling immediately with a friend to Berlin.

In *The Innocent*, despite defeat and devastation in the recent war, Berlin is presented as having a greater energy and freedom than London, its victorious counterpart. London also helps Leonard to define Berlin: returning to his home city enables him to feel the absence of 'the edginess and



excitement of the half-ruined city' (*TI* 114). Here the partial devastation of the city is intrinsic to its appeal. However, Leonard's zeal in talking about Berlin is soon tempered by his parents' half-hearted interest through which they domesticate the difference that makes the foreign city exceptional:

soon Berlin was loosened from its strangeness and was nothing more than an outlying stretch of Tottenham, confined and known, interesting in itself, but not for long. (*TI* 114)

The mental annexation of Berlin by Tottenham involves an assumption of familiarity as a means of assimilating a foreign city, the containment of which is facilitated by its divided condition. The attitude of Leonard's parents shows residues of imperialism: their view that anything foreign is an extension of the metropolis has a special relevance in the case of West Berlin due to the post-war British presence in the city of which their son is a part. Leonard's return to London confirms the extent to which living in Berlin has helped him to develop, although the reiterative clauses in the following declaration are indicative of the effort he has to make to convince others of the radical impact that the city has had on his character: 'He was changed, he was transformed, but it was impossible to convey this to his parents' (*TI* 113-114). Expressed here with an emphatic conviction, the idea of Berlin as having a particular energy, diversity and strangeness whereby the individual who is exposed to the city can reinvent his or her identity is one that is traceable back to Isherwood and also plays a key role in Hamilton's Berlin novels.

The insularity of English culture is apparent in Leonard's view that London lacks the openness and immediacy of the Americans he has met in Berlin, and the diversity of the rock 'n' roll music he is able to access there. When he returns to Berlin again, Leonard savours the place even more,

enjoying the liberation in knowing that it was a place his parents would not dream of visiting: 'Leonard took satisfaction [...] in feeling at home in a city where they would never come. He was free' (*TI* 121). There is a paradox here: occupied Berlin has a liberated culture, while 'free', democratic London is perceived as paralysed by conformity. Leonard's exhilaration in being released from family constraints is a sign that he has become an adult at last, but is also a sign of naïveté and late development: he is still defining himself in relation to his parents in his mid-twenties. The representation of Berlin as a place of escape from familial claustrophobia alludes to a familiar representation of the city in the English language novel: it appealed to Isherwood in the late-1920s and early-1930s, and, since its revival in the 1960s, has remained a defining characteristic of the city.

The appeal of the foreign city to a visitor is challenged by an insider, German perspective when, in *The Innocent*, the German spy, Hans, takes issue with Leonard's contention that Berlin is 'far more interesting' (*TI* 192) than London. Looking to escape from the devastated city, Hans detects a sense of terminal decline in Berlin: 'But surely this can't be so. London is a world capital. Berlin is finished. Its greatness is all in the past' (*TI* 192). Leonard responds: 'Perhaps you're right' (*TI* 192). His concession forestalls a debate but, by qualifying it with 'perhaps', Leonard remains true to his own preference for Berlin: he also leaves open the possibility that the city's greatness cannot be so easily dismissed or might be otherwise defined than through political power. Furthermore, on the evidence of the lack of interest in world affairs shown in London which Leonard experiences on returning to his native city, the 'greatness' of Britain's former imperial capital is also

questionable. Ultimately, the ruins which are present throughout *The Innocent* from the remnants of wartime destruction through to the new ruins created by the abandonment of the spy tunnel complicate notions of greatness: they suggest that cycles of growth and decay are intrinsic to the organism of the city and that the endurance of ruins as a reminder of the vanity of human power may even define what makes a city special.

### 3. The End of the Special Relationship: British Nostalgia for the Wall in *le Carré* and McEwan

The full title of *The Innocent* is *The Innocent or The Special Relationship*: this refers to the close but often tense relationship between Leonard and Glass, as representative figures for Britain and the United States in Berlin. However, there is also the possibility that it refers, through the romance of Leonard and Maria, to a relationship between Britain and Berlin. The special nature of the British relationship with divided Berlin can be exemplified by McEwan's claiming of the Wall as a subject for his fiction which would thereby differentiate it from contemporary West German literature in the late 1980s. On a visit to West Berlin in 1987 to research the novel that would become *The Innocent*, McEwan was surprised to find that the Wall was considered too 'vulgar' a subject to merit consideration by the West German literary establishment: 'The Wall was for journalists or commercial thriller writers.'<sup>178</sup> McEwan's perception that the Wall was dismissed by German authors due to its association with the thriller and reportage enabled him to claim it for his own fiction, as he explains in a 2005 *Guardian* article, in which he praises

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<sup>178</sup> Ian McEwan, 'A tale of two cities', article on Peter Schneider's *The Wall Jumper*, *Guardian*, 'Review', 22 October 2005, pp.21-.22.

Peter Schneider's novel, *The Wall Jumper* (1983), as an exception within German literature and describes the Wall as 'a perfect subject'. *The Innocent* could be interpreted as a study of the Wall which provides a focus on its origins in the 1950s and a late period in its existence in 1987, thereby largely avoiding reference to the Wall's construction and early operational period after 1961. It is intriguing that McEwan does not mention Berlin literary forebears in the English-language tradition in the Schneider article: one reason that could be conjectured for his decision not to represent Berlin in the 1960s and 1970s in *The Innocent* is due to the Wall's totemic significance in the Berlin spy thriller narratives of that era as shown in the fiction of le Carré and Deighton. This avoidance of reference to the pioneering work of these thriller authors in responding to the Wall curiously allies McEwan with the West German literati who are the subject of his critique. The article also can be used to show that McEwan and le Carré share a conceptual and verbal understanding of the Wall. Here is McEwan's emphasis on its grotesque intrusiveness, as ideological hostility separates people and invades private space:

a near-comic monstrosity, a global political schism that had turned into cement and wire and sliced right through back yards, sitting rooms even, dividing families, lovers, and defining two nations held in a perpetual embrace of love and hate.<sup>179</sup>

With similar ambivalence, le Carré has described the Wall as 'perfect theatre as well as the perfect symbol of the monstrosity of ideology gone mad'.<sup>180</sup>

Here the novelist is aware of the paradox that he has benefited as a writer from a divisive structure that is morally objectionable. It is interesting that

<sup>179</sup> McEwan, 'A tale of two cities', pp.21-22.

<sup>180</sup> John le Carré, 'My Secret World', *Sunday Times News Review*, 17 June 1990, Section 3, p.1. Cited in David Seed, 'Spy Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*, ed. by Martin Priestman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.115-34, p.127.

McEwan describes the Wall as a 'perfect subject' using even the same adjective as le Carré does when he refers to it as 'perfect theatre' and 'perfect symbol'; both also refer to the Wall's absurdity in its madness or near-comedy and use the word 'monstrosity' to define the scale of the Wall. The similarity in response here shows both authors sharing a moral outrage at the Wall's divisive impact but also a realisation that it offers great dramatic scope to the novelist. The Wall both appals and appeals to the authors with an ambiguity that is typical of a special British attitude of attachment to divided Berlin. However, the immediacy with which McEwan depicts the Wall's invasiveness in the *Guardian* article contrasts with the more circumspect approach he adopts in *The Innocent*. McEwan was aware that merely 'to describe the Wall was to attack it, and thus appear to be a stooge of the CIA'<sup>181</sup>: as a result, he carefully avoids a charge of naive pro-Americanism by critically engaging in *The Innocent* with the Western perspective on the divided city. This perspective also determines the outlook on the Wall, which was an East German construction. Set in the 1955-1956 period prior to the Wall's construction in 1961, the novel is primarily concerned with the Wall's pre-history. However, the Operation Gold spy tunnel, which is central to the narrative, has similarities with the Wall: typical of the critique of the Western powers, it represents a transgressive border structure built by the Western Allies, not by the East Germans.

The ambiguity of le Carré's attitude to the Wall in Berlin fiction after 1989 can be discerned in contrasting depictions of it as a battlefield and sanctuary. In *The Secret Pilgrim* (1990), published only one year after the fall

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<sup>181</sup> McEwan, 'A tale of two cities', *Guardian*, 22 October 2005, pp.21-.22.

of the Wall, Cold War Berlin has a key role in the novel's opening chapters as a spatial focus of memory of a disappearance associated with the inner-city border. The threat and danger posed by the East behind the Wall, even to spies skilled in negotiating Berlin's East-West frontier, is exemplified in the mystery surrounding the fate of a West Berlin-based British agent who disappears shortly after successfully returning from an innocuous-seeming afternoon crossing into East Berlin (TS 46-47). In this instance, exposure for just a few hours to the ideological zone on the other side of the Wall causes a radical change in a spy's behaviour, and, by extension, his identity.

The ending of Allied occupation with unification and consequent loss of a position of influence create conditions in which a compensating British nostalgia emerges. In *The Secret Pilgrim* this is represented in the narrator Ned's memories of the special status of the city from a British intelligence perspective. Here he recalls the desirability of a posting to the city: 'I wanted to go myself. Everyone wants a Berlin break. It's the front line' (TS 42). For the Western spy, Berlin is a surrogate battlefield in which the presence of the Wall validates the continuance of war through espionage operations. It is the place where the Cold War originated, as shown by Ned's comment that 'for us cold warriors a visit to Berlin is like returning to the source' (TS 78). As in other novels by British authors, such as Lasdun's *Seven Lies* and McEwan's *Black Dogs*, in *The Secret Pilgrim* a return visit by the narrator to the city after the fall of the Wall is a disappointment. For Ned, returning 'a few weeks after the Wall had been declared obsolete' (TS 78), the removal of the Wall is not a cause of celebration but an affront to an era of association with the city through espionage work. The Wall's function as a memorial is underlined

when Ned laments the disappearance of an unofficial *lieu de mémoire* in the form of a fence adorned with crosses commemorating those killed attempting to cross into the West: 'When the Wall came down – hacked to pieces, sold – the memorial came down with it' (*TS* 79). The Wall, by association, here becomes a memory site, too, and the emotional response to its removal makes its dismemberment and selling off like a personal betrayal of those who were its victims. Ned is sceptical about the likelihood of the memorial being saved but even if it were rescued by a museum such an official form of memorialisation would no longer preserve the attachment to place that gives resonance to the *lieu de mémoire*: 'Perhaps it will find a corner in a museum somewhere, but I doubt it' (*TS* 79). The comparison here between the emotional memory invested in the memorial fence near the Wall and the potential for its neglect in a museum, illustrates the importance of location in endowing a memory site with value.

The intimacy of the association of the Wall with le Carré and the Berlin spy thriller can be discerned in the author's avoidance of Berlin as a location between the publication of *The Secret Pilgrim* in 1990 and *Absolute Friends* in 2004. In the reconstruction of late-1960s Berlin in the latter, the Wall is typically presented as a contrasting duality: it is both a lethal cause of suffering and a stimulus to the growth of bohemian West Berlin. The potential for liberties to be curtailed on both sides of the city border is highlighted when Mundy, the novel's English protagonist, is stopped by West Berlin policemen in the vicinity of the Wall. An impediment to normal movement and conventional legality, the inner city frontier is shown as surrounded by an

ambiguous and unreliable zone in which to walk is to invite suspicion and interrogation by the authorities:

At first he refuses to recognise it. You're a fantasy, a film set, a construction site. Two West Berlin policemen call him over.  
'Draft dodger?'  
'English', he replies, showing his passport. (AF 61)

The association between Britishness and the Wall is here further exemplified when Mundy seeks to validate his presence in the Wall zone by showing his British passport. The suffering and death caused by the GDR policy of shooting potential escapees are signalled by a metaphor comparing the Wall with the Christian crucifixion through an allusion to its 'crown of barbed wire thorns' (AF 61). This analogy can also be associated with the Wall memorial in *The Secret Pilgrim* which is made up of crosses. Despite its deadly defences, the Wall has positive side-effects in creating unwanted space in a liminal area on its western flank whose abandonment by planners enables it to be used by students for alternative forms of dwelling:

Priced out of the better parts of town, West Berlin's unruly students have set themselves up in bombed out factories, abandoned railway stations and tenement blocks too close to the Wall for the sensibilities of property developers. (AF 59)

The capitalist economy in the western half of the city creates elites and zones of exclusion, with the result that students, unable to afford to live in the more affluent neighbourhoods, move into marginal areas of industrial and war-related dereliction. Unintentionally, the Wall in the West inhibits property speculation and creates vacant accommodation in the city, thereby assisting the emergence of the alternative, counter-cultural Berlin of the 1960s and '70s. In *Absolute Friends*, looking back with the benefit of memory on the Cold War era from the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, le Carré



has a complex perspective on the Wall: he acknowledges its symbolic weight as a divisive and violent structure, but also sets out to dismantle its aura by describing it as an actual space which is controlled on the western side as well as on the east; it even has unintended beneficial effects in the abandoned zone it creates in the West where the students of the 1960s are able to fashion alternative ways of living.

#### 4. **British Memory in Berlin: *Absolute Friends***

In *Absolute Friends*, le Carré renewed his involvement in the Cold War spy thriller genre through memory and reconfigured divided Berlin as a source of togetherness, rather than of hostility and separation, as was the case in the spy thriller before 1989. This emotional bonding in Berlin is portrayed in the friendship which develops between English protagonist, Mundy, and an East German, Sasha, in the West Berlin of 1969 during the era of student protest.

The Britishness of the Berlin portrayed in le Carré's *Absolute Friends* is evident in its debt to Isherwood's Berlin novels. From the first decades of the twenty-first century through the late-sixties and back to the source in the thirties, a temporal palimpsest is constructed and accessed through reference to a canon of English-language Berlin literature. As it was for Isherwood's protagonists, le Carré configures Berlin as a site of youthful self-discovery: the city is one of a number of locations in the novel but it has a decisive impact on the novel's leading figure, Mundy. A reserved Englishman described as a naive 'greenhorn' (AF 70), Mundy, like the observer-narrators of Isherwood's Berlin, develops through experience of the city. Mundy's worship of Isherwood as a Berlin writer and observer is evident in his

enthusiasm for the ‘illusionless diarist of Berlin at the crossroads’ (AF 58), a phrase which idealises the novelist’s pursuit of a camera-like realism and objectivity in recording the city’s transition in the early 1930s from Weimar democracy to Nazi fascism. Mundy’s English romanticism is apparent when his dreams of becoming a novelist lead him to adopt Isherwood as a role model, encouraging him ‘to spread his notebook and indulge his Isherwood persona’ (AF 72). Le Carré’s protagonist even adapts Isherwood’s famous ‘I am a camera’<sup>182</sup> claim to observational detachment made at the outset of *Goodbye to Berlin* in proposing to ‘expect nothing of life but life itself. He will be a camera with a broken heart’ (AF 72). A nostalgic element in Mundy is evident in his transmutation of the social realism of Isherwood’s Berlin into romantic fantasies of encounters in Weimar cabarets:

just maybe, in some sleazy café where beautiful women in cloche hats drink absinthe and sing huskily of disenchantment, he will find his Sally Bowles. (AF 59)

This dream of a relationship becomes reality in a displaced form: Mundy does not find romantic love in Berlin but does form an enduring friendship. The nostalgia for Weimar Berlin in the 1969 city of *Absolute Friends* echoes the persistence of the image the decadent city which also features in late-1980s Berlin in Mirolla and is part of the ethos of sensuous performance projected onto post-unification Berlin in Welsh’s *The Bullet Trick*. The reference to Isherwood in Le Carré underlines his canonical status in English-language Berlin fiction and his role as a mentor for the expatriate British in Berlin. It also shows that fiction can act as a means of accessing the city’s past as much as orthodox history. Isherwood is normally associated with the

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<sup>182</sup> ‘I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking.’ Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*, first published 1939 (London: Vintage, 1998), p.9.

Berlin novel rather than the thriller, despite the spy narrative that emerges in his first Berlin novel, *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935); the sophisticated referencing of Isherwood in *Absolute Friends* is a sign that this novel can be read, like most le Carré fiction, as both thriller and literary fiction.

The English-language novel in Berlin tends to gravitate towards marginal spaces, just as Mundy adopts an outsider lifestyle as signified by his cosmopolitan predilection for 'Turkish coffee and an arak in one of Kreuzberg's many ramshackle cafés' (AF 72). The ethnic diversity of the neighbourhood also absorbs Britishness when Mundy is described as adding his own English cultural imprint to the neighbourhood mix by setting up the Kreuzberg Cricket Club on a dust-patch. Cricket is not so much the legacy of a dominant imperial power here as a multi-cultural form of sharing: improvised on rough ground with beer cans and a plank of wood, it is associated not with English privilege but with poverty. However, the enthusiastic Asian participation, here signified by the 'olive limbs' (AF 73) which lift Mundy's spirits, retain a flavour of the Commonwealth diaspora.

Published in 2004, *Absolute Friends* can be contextualised by debates in Berlin about the need to memorialise Nazi crimes against humanity in the capital of the reunified nation. This culminated in 2005 in the construction and opening of Eisenmann's Holocaust Memorial close to the former site of buildings associated with the Nazi administration in the Wilhelmstrasse area. In le Carré's novel, the need to address loss of memory of Nazi crimes leads to the planning of actions in the late-1960s by a revolutionary group, led by Sasha, a radical East German, living in a squat in West Berlin. These are designed to draw attention to a series of sites associated with crimes of the

Nazi era that are in danger of being forgotten. The campaign involves pasting leaflets and painting graffiti at sites including Wannsee, as the location of the lakeside villa where the Final Solution was agreed; Grunewald rail station, the site of mass Jewish deportations to concentration camps; Tiergartenstrasse 4, the location for Nazi euthanasia programmes; Eichmann's offices on Kurfürstenstrasse and Himmler's headquarters 'on the corner of the Wilhelmstrasse and the Prinz Albrechtstrasse, now unfortunately a victim of the Berlin Wall' (AF 85). In the latter instance, the palimpsest-like nature of history in Berlin is apparent, as this site, which is bisected by the Wall, and hence drawn into the signification of the divided city in 1969, is also the nexus of the Nazi administrative complex which has been identified as a key signifier of the Nazi Berlin thriller.

Berlin is of fundamental significance to the narrative of *Absolute Friends* through memory of the city as the site of formative encounter between Mundy and Sasha, the 1960s counter-cultural idealism of which is lightly satirised when Mundy is celebrated as being part of 'a brave new family determined to rebuild the world' (AF 69). The city comes to be embodied in these two outsider perspectives: Mundy's typically reticent Englishness complements the outspoken nature of Sasha who is 'of Saxon Lutheran origin, an East German refugee' (AF 73); here Sasha's Saxon roots may also suggest a deeper historic connection with England. The loyalty over time in this German-English friendship echoes the endurance of the relationship between Maria and Leonard in *The Innocent*. Their relationship signifies both the duality of divided Berlin, Mundy representing the West and Sasha the East, and a refutation of the spy trope of the double agent since

they remain loyal to each other. Sasha, however, could be seen as a fateful *Doppelgänger* figure to Mundy: despite years of separation from each other, a seeming inevitability in their intertwining destinies is borne out when Sasha is hunted down by US counter-terrorism forces and, Mundy, who has come to support his friend, is killed alongside him. Le Carré posits counter-cultural, alternative Berlin as a place in which the old stereotype of Anglo-German hostility, representations of which can be traced back to Buchan's propagandist image of the First World War city, can be replaced by an image of a lasting friendship.

Mundy's openness, pliability and theatrical inclinations link him to an external view of the city as a platform for self-realisation. He also represents post-Cold War Britishness as an ethical outsider position distanced from the machinations of the global powers but still likely to be implicated in them, even if only as a victim. Like their predecessors, Leamas and Liz in *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, Mundy and Sasha in *Absolute Friends* become tragic victims; Leamas is shot at the Wall when he decides to go back to help Liz, and, similarly, Mundy chooses to refuse the option of escape to Turkey with his family and instead travels back to Heidelberg to rejoin Sasha. In evoking its predecessor in this way, through parallel or contrasting situations and spaces, *Absolute Friends* functions as a memory text. The nostalgic affection for Berlin in the later novel contrasts with a city defined in *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* by a depiction of East Berlin in the early 1960s: as artificial and alienating, its distinguishing features the 'unnatural glow of arclights' (TS 223) and the 'sinister' militarisation of the Wall (TS 224).

Cold War Berlin in *Absolute Friends* has a rebel vibrancy. At the end of the narrative, Berlin is explicitly associated with values of resistance, playfulness and friendship contrasting with Western compliance in the licensed killing practised with seeming impunity by the United States in the name of counter-terrorism. A reference to Mundy's 'homing instinct' related to 'memories of the Berlin squat' (AF 363) shows that recollection of Berlin as the site of an alternative way of life informs Mundy's disregard for the counter-terrorist's squad's orders to surrender. In a corresponding analogy, Sasha's last movements as he is shot show the legacy of the free movement of a Berlin child, with his limbs flailing 'like a Kreuzberg kid in the last throes of a game of hopscotch' (AF 367). Here a connection can be made with Deighton's depiction in *Faith* of protagonist, Bernard Samson, as 'a street-wise Berlin kid' (F 227): both authors share nostalgic associations of Berlin with childhood and home, as a place which nurtures independence of spirit, rebelliousness and a playful innocence. In *Absolute Friends*, the eradication of the idiosyncratic Mundy and Sasha and their Berlin-forged relationship is symbolic of the displacement of the libertarian values of a bohemian Berlin in a new, twenty-first-century geopolitical environment dominated by one superpower.

The critique in *Absolute Friends* of the 'War on Terror' is reinforced by the accommodating British media and government reception of the so-called counter-terrorist action launched by American 'special forces' (AF 370). The only divergent voice, in an article by a former British intelligence operative named 'Arnold', shows an appreciation of memory associated with Berlin's past whereby the twenty-first-century killing of Sasha and Mundy is linked

with the framing of a Dutchman for the burning of the Reichstag in 1933: 'The two dead men were as innocent of their trumped-up crimes as was poor Van der Lubbe, the Reichstag's alleged arsonist' (AF 377). Significantly, the 'Arnold' article is dismissed by the British government as 'the work of rogue elements' setting out 'to discredit New Labour and undermine Britain's special relationship with the United States' (AF 379). The contemporary emphasis on Britain backing Washington regardless of moral considerations is here related to memory of the manipulation of the legal system by the Nazi regime.

As part of a narrative which moves from the historical to the contemporary, the energy generated in Berlin as a response to the inertia of the Cold War in 1969 contrasts favourably with the bland media acceptance of the erosions of individual liberty and justice associated with the United States in the post-2001 'War on Terror'. At the climax of the novel, the reiteration of Berlin in metaphorical references shows how the city's nurturing of anarchic loyalty and respect for individual freedom in the late-1960s is embodied in the attachment between the two friends. A special relationship between Britain and divided Berlin in *Absolute Friends* is configured in their shared values of loyalty, togetherness, wildness and idealism, the twenty-first century annihilation of which creates an aura of nostalgic loss: the friendship between a Briton and a German founded in a vibrant West Berlin has become memory.

## 5. Returns to Berlin: Spatial Memory in *Seven Lies*, *The Innocent* and *Black Dogs*

I begin this section by describing how an outsider British perspective informed the writing and imagining of East Berlin spaces and memory in Lasdun's *Seven Lies* before proceeding to analyse how personal memory responds to specific sites in the novel. In the second part of this section, I analyse how memory is attuned to ruins and marginal space in McEwan's *The Innocent*. Boym has underscored the importance of space in the nostalgic wish to revisit the past:

The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time as space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition.<sup>183</sup>

The desire to access time through space is evident in both *Seven Lies* and *The Innocent*, as characters seek out sites which they hope will manifest an authentic reminder of the past. However, by illustrating the processes through which these fictional texts engage with the memory of Berlin, I will show that the novels considered here are also alert to the dangers of nostalgia. As shown in relation to the Isherwood fantasies that the protagonist of *Absolute Friends* adopts, nostalgia is a comforting illusion of the past: these novels are aware of its temptations but take pains to avoid them by showing the effects of the passage of time and the need to connect present and past by the recovery of sites that retain traces of personal or collective memory.

James Lasdun's perspective on East Berlin in *Seven Lies* appears to differ from McEwan's focalisation through a British protagonist in that he

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<sup>183</sup>Svetlana Boym, 'Nostalgia' from 'The Atlas of Transformation' <<http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/n/nostalgia/nostalgia-svetlana-boym.html>> [accessed 04/10/13].



reconstructs the city from a native German point of view and uses a German native as a narrator. Along with Hamilton, he appears to be exceptional among post-Wall English-language Berlin novelists in adopting an insider position. Ian R. Mitchell's *Winter in Berlin* (2009), a text which is as much memoir as novel, describes life in the GDR capital in the early 1980s, but takes the more conventional stance of the outsider point of view of a visiting British scholar. However, in an interview with the author it has emerged that Lasdun has used his own experience both of a visit to Berlin and of growing up in Britain as a model for imagining East Berlin during the Cold War era. This opens up a different, outsider perspective on *Seven Lies*. Growing up in an austere and repressive England becomes a model for a narrative describing an upbringing under the strictures of state socialism in East Berlin:

I told myself (rather cavalierly) that without much exaggeration I could easily transpose the textures and atmospheres of my childhood from London and Surrey to East Berlin.<sup>184</sup>

The parenthesis here shows that the author is aware of the danger inherent in the apparent facility with which experiences associated with one national cultural context can be transferred to another.

For Lasdun, the extent and sense of purpose in the drabness of East Berlin had its own attraction, so that it appeared 'just as strange and beguiling as the gleaming hyper-modernity beginning to usurp it'.<sup>185</sup> This attraction to the mundanity of the city is similar to the affinity with the city's squalor expressed by Deighton's protagonist in his Berlin spy trilogies. Lasdun relates how he visited the old Stasi headquarters near Lichtenberg Strasse where his attention to the exhibits of surveillance equipment –

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<sup>184</sup> James Lasdun, 'On Berlin', *The Threepenny Review*, Winter 2007  
< [http://www.threepennyreview.com/samples/lasdun\\_w07.html](http://www.threepennyreview.com/samples/lasdun_w07.html) > [accessed 29 April 2013].

<sup>185</sup> Lasdun, 'On Berlin'.

‘various other bits of low-grade James Bond spy gear’<sup>186</sup> – reveals an inclination in the author to relate Cold War artefacts, not to their indigenous history, but to the British spy fiction genre. The museum display in Berlin and observation of urban space and architecture in the city contribute to Lasdun’s fictional construction of the city. However, just as McEwan sees in divided Berlin an image of Britain’s post-war, post-imperial decline, Lasdun concludes by reasserting that Berlin offered him a means of thinking about England’s past:

Writing about Berlin was, as much as anything else, a way of writing about the psychological atmosphere of 1970s England ‘by other means’.<sup>187</sup>

In *Seven Lies* itself, comparison between London or England and Berlin is not used as it is in *The Innocent* and *Absolute Friends*: there are no references to London or specific West Berlin places in the novel. This suggests that the apparent difference posed by these places actually embodies a similarity of perspective. Thus, for Stefan, the novel’s protagonist, the United States comes to represent a desirable antithesis to the ideological dogmatism of East Berlin. However, the perfection associated with America proves to be illusory when Stefan arrives in New York and finds an abundance of squalor, which he had not foreseen, but still professes to admire: ‘Both sides of the picture fascinated me: the ruin and the glamour’ (SL 157). The irony is that this duality is typically associated with divided Berlin, not the fantasy of ‘incorruptible America’ in which Stefan returns to profess his belief in the very last words of *Seven Lies* (SL 204). Stefan is an outsider who has difficulty socialising with others: for all that he is a native

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<sup>186</sup> Lasdun, ‘On Berlin’.

<sup>187</sup> Lasdun, ‘On Berlin’.

German, he could be a visitor to the city. Lasdun's use of personal memory of England in the 1970s to form an image of East Berlin at that time suggests similarities between the cultures of both countries and a challenge to the insistence on difference encoded in their ideological opposition.

In *Seven Lies*, Stefan is critical of the 'hypocrisy of the higher echelons of the party' (SL 147) but does not refer to his own privileged childhood which includes attendance at 'one of the elite high schools of Berlin, reserved for children of party officials' (SL 72) and visits to the family of an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who lives in 'the Wandlitz compound outside the city' (SL 73). This exclusive residential area, which was reserved for the East German political elite, was situated outside the city boundary and, therefore, was protected from any intrusion by the masses living within urban Berlin. When Stefan and his lover, Inge, are allowed to leave East Germany in 1986, he is again a beneficiary of privilege through when use of contacts and the exchange of goods and hard currency is involved in his release. This leads to the narrator's wry description of the authorities in the GDR as 'astute merchants' (SL 23).

The notionally communist state is revealed to have social elites and capitalist practices: it is, therefore, not so distant from the 1970s England that Lasdun drew on as an imaginative resource. The association of the protagonist with privilege in *Seven Lies* can be linked to the advantages in accommodation and legal status enjoyed by Leonard in *The Innocent* through his work for the British military in West Berlin. These representations by British authors of characters associated with privilege in divided Berlin echo the favoured hegemonic position that the British shared with the other

nations involved in the four-power governance of the city in the post-war era until unification in 1990.

A combination of British memory and evident knowledge of the alternative scene in East Berlin in the 1980s, Lasdun has also explained how a visit to Berlin informed his writing of *Seven Lies* when, in 2000, he attended the Berlin Film Festival and took a taxi journey around the city. His memory of being driven down Karl-Marx-Allee involves a filmic analogy to depict how ‘the rain-blurred parallels of its blocks reeled past us’, an image closely based on the one actually used in the novel (*SL* 196).<sup>188</sup> As he observes miles of ‘seedily grandiose buildings with vistas of crumbling apartment complexes’, Lasdun is typical of the English-language author in perceiving architecture as an invitation into Berlin’s past rather than as the framework of the contemporary city: ‘This was like looking down the wrong end of a telescope or travelling backward in time’.<sup>189</sup>

Memory comes to the fore through use of the trope of return to the city in both Lasdun’s *Seven Lies* and McEwan’s *The Innocent*. Bought out of East Berlin by the West in an exchange in 1986, Stefan flies back from the States for his father’s funeral in February 1999. As in *The Innocent*, the return inevitably involves the protagonist in the memory work of reconnecting with spaces that have changed with the passage of time. Driven through the city by his brother, Otto, Stefan resists the latter’s blandishments about having had the imagination to escape to the United States:

I turned from him uncomfortably, trying not to listen; watching the rain-blurred parallels of Karl Marx Allee unreel on either side of us, grandiose and relentless. (*SL* 196)

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<sup>188</sup> Lasdun, ‘On Berlin’.

<sup>189</sup> Lasdun, ‘On Berlin’.

The idea of East Berlin streets creating a prison-like uniformity can be compared with McEwan's use of an image which has a similar effect in depicting the sameness of post-war London as 'the parallel walls of Victorian terraces' (*TI* 114). Returning after the fall of the Wall, Stefan is still oppressed by the monumental character of the showpiece Stalinist architecture which continues to frame Karl-Marx-Allee in East Berlin. Thirteen years after his departure from the city and ten years after reunification and the ending of communist rule, Stefan experiences the new Berlin as similar to the ideologically defined city of division. Pascal J. Thomas has observed of the formative influence of cities upon those who dwell in them:

Cities are structures not only of surrounding space, but also of the human psyche; they make their inhabitants as much as those inhabitants build them.<sup>190</sup>

The use of monolithic architecture as an assertion of hegemony is reminiscent of the depiction of 'Germania' in Harris's *Fatherland*: although the built environment is not as monstrously exaggerated or as widespread, and is associated with Soviet communism as opposed to Nazism, a similar imposition of a dominant ideology on the urban landscape can be discerned. Even in the reunified city, almost a decade after the ending of the Cold War, the straits of the huge avenue continue to represent for Stefan his psychological imprisonment by the ideological conditioning which he cannot escape.

Just as Leonard's return to Berlin after an absence of four decades in *The Innocent* is reliant on memory, so Stefan strives to relate to the city by

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<sup>190</sup> Pascal J. Thomas, 'Avenues of Power: Cities as the Mindscape of Politics', in *Mindscales: The Geographies of Imagined Worlds*, ed. by George E. Slusser and Eric S. Rabkin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), pp.174-84 (p.180).

seeking sites of past connection but finds himself in places where only the cartography is familiar:

Here were Saarbrücker Strasse, Metzger Strasse, Strassburger Strasse – so familiar and yet all so changed, as though I had travelled back in time only to find the past itself altered. (SL 203)

These streets are all named after places which were the sites of battles in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, in or near Alsace-Lorraine, a historically contested border region between France and Germany. The effect of the allusion is to contextualise East Berlin's transition from communism to capitalism in 1989 as part of a longer history of territorial exchanges between nations. The reference to Saarbrücker Strasse fails to inspire memory of Stefan's rival, Klaus Menzer, unlike an earlier visit in New York when Menzer's bohemian flat in a Bond Street loft acts as a *lieu de mémoire* as indicated by Stefan's comment that 'It reminded me so strongly of his place off Saarbrücker Strasse' (SL 172). The comparison suggests that the counter-cultural ethos of divided Berlin has been better preserved in New York than in Prenzlauer Berg.

Erasure of the past as a concomitant of a hegemonic capitalist process is rife in the unified city. Margarete Menzer points out how East Berlin has been changed by gentrification: 'You wouldn't recognize it. All chichi boutiques now' (SL 201). The warehouse theatre in which Stefan had first seen his beloved Inge perform as an actress has become a plate-glass *parfumerie*, an arena for the display of luxury goods. The elitism of the exclusive GDR *Exquisit* shops which had been restricted to less immediately accessible, and, therefore, less visible, parts of the city such as the Hoppegarten racecourse, has now become widespread. Western capital is

here shown to be indifferent to history in its eradication of the traces of the building's previous functions and not dissimilar to the social ideology it has replaced in its construction of illusory practices and the fetishisation of luxury products.

The theatre where Stefan first met Inge is recalled by him as an imagined memory site, due to its erasure by new developments. The gentrification of Prenzlauer Berg could be interpreted here as loss of a *milieu de mémoire*, to apply Nora's designation of an organic memory environment. This now necessitates an isolated focus on the recall of an imaginary site, a *lieu de mémoire*, as a substitute for more substantial forms of remembering, facilitated here by presence at the site of the former building:

But after a while I found myself imagining again the dark, tatty auditorium that had once occupied this space, and from there I was able to summon the figure of Inge as I had first beheld her. (SL 204)

Stefan invokes Inge through an archaic vocabulary in which he elevates his powers of remembrance by tropes of summoning and beholding associated with the raising of apparitions by a spiritualist medium. There is, nonetheless, a realistic quality in Stefan's recall of the tawdriness of the auditorium which contrasts with the lack of specificity in his description of his girlfriend. The responsiveness of the space to personal memory is similar to that of the ruined tunnel site in *The Innocent* as the location at which Leonard is able to reconnect with his past.

Whitehead's observation that 'spatiality [...] is crucial to the act of remembering' informs the analysis in the following section of the mapping of memory onto space in the 1987 conclusion to *The Innocent*.<sup>191</sup> The effect of

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Whitehead, *Memory*, p.11.

advancing the temporal setting in the postscript from 1956 to 1987 immediately involves the reader in participating in the protagonist's memory work: the leap forward in time requires connections to be made between the new section of the narrative and familiar characters and locations established in the earlier story. Considering these changes in temporal perspective, the realist intent which becomes apparent in the spatial exactitude of the depiction of various parts of the city in the postscript assumes a new importance. Three different areas are depicted: the commercial centre of West Berlin around the Memorial Church; Maria's apartment block in Kreuzberg; and the liminal terrain between Rudow station and the former tunnel site in Altglienicke. By anchoring the action with such precise attention to location, a foundation is laid for the discovery of memory traces in the landscape.

There is an element of British detachment in Leonard's lack of relation to West Berlin's commercial development in 1987 in which he can perceive little connection with the combination of ruins and partially reviving modernity which made West Berlin distinctive in the 1950s. Tourists have replaced the military presence, and the tense aura of confrontation which characterised the city in the mid-1950s seems to have disappeared. The importance of the city's memorial architecture in creating a sense of continuity over time is shown when Leonard's sense of disorientation in 1980s Berlin is partially relieved when he recognises the Memorial Church: 'He had his bearings from the Gedächtniskirche and the hideous new structure at its side' (*TI* 213). Here the double nature of Berlin is again apparent in the addition of the new building adjacent to the remains of the old church. As Boym has observed: 'A



monument is not necessarily something petrified and stable': it, too, is engaged in a process of change.<sup>192</sup>

Despite the partial familiarity of the ruin, Leonard is confused by the layout of new roads and is soon lost (*TI* 213). The trope of being lost in Berlin is a familiar one in the English-language Berlin novel and is typical of its visitor perspective. Alienated by the changes that have made the city unfamiliar in places Leonard is also aware of the dangers of succumbing to the solipsism of nostalgia and consigning himself to the limits of his own past experience: 'He was trying to resist irritable reminiscence. *In my day*' (*TI* 214). Leonard learns of the prospect of further developments in East Berlin through a hotel receptionist who announces that: 'It's all changing' (*TI* 215). The political context of growing protest in Eastern Europe inspired by Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union is not mentioned: the detail is not an immediate concern of Leonard's. This observation also refers to the trope of Berlin as constantly evolving: once more, the city is reinventing itself. Disregarding advice from the hotel receptionist to see the Wall in a central area at Potsdamer Platz, Leonard starts to travel from the centre towards the periphery. On revisiting Maria's old flat in Kreuzberg, he is again confronted by a changing city and unfamiliar architecture such as the 'monstrous block of flats' (*TI* 215) which guard the way to Adalbertstrasse, where punks sprawl on the pavement. A similarly liminal location at Kottbusser Tor is also depicted as a focus of social alienation by Hamilton as will be explored in the next chapter. Leonard approaches Maria's flat as a personal memory site: it was here the lovers first met and their relationship developed. However, the

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<sup>192</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.79.

space is now inhabited by Turkish families and it is Leonard who is perceived to be the alien element: children stop playing as he crosses an inner courtyard. Aware of their perception of him as a suspicious outsider, Leonard sees himself as an 'elderly man' who 'did not belong here' (TI 216). This sense of alienation is comparable with that of Stefan's return in *Seven Lies* and to a desire to belong in marginal groups with which Hamilton empathises.

Leonard realises that the space that represents memory of his lover's apartment has changed and that it is futile to linger: 'Being here did not bring him any closer to his Berlin days' (TI 216). However, his sense of a connection with the city through memory is sufficiently strong for him to continue his search for a suitably responsive site. As a consequence of his inability to connect through memory with places he has known in the centre of the city, Leonard is driven out further towards the margins in what becomes a quest to find a suitably responsive memory site. The more populated spaces that Leonard visits will not function as memory spaces due either to changes in the urban fabric or to the new forms of human habitation to which they have become accustomed. Finally Leonard requires an apparently abandoned marginal space and the presence of ruins in order to access the past. The detail with which McEwan describes Leonard's journey from Rudow station to the suburban Lettsberger Strasse and beyond to the site of his former workplace makes it akin to a pilgrimage. The realism of the style is close to reportage in the affinity between the scene described and the actual topography it reflects: the 'riding school' (TI 217) which Leonard

passes in 1987 was still there in 2008, as are the 'suburban villas' (*TI* 217).<sup>193</sup>

The duality of Berlin in presenting spatial landscapes that evoke different temporal eras becomes apparent closer to the tunnel area, when suburban Berlin in the late-1980s, as a placid terrain characterised by leisure, domesticity and comfortable norms, is displaced by a liminal landscape of rough ground, a double perimeter fence and the remains of a warehouse from the 1950s. The terrain is an actual border land, due to its proximity to the inner city frontier, but also a typical spy thriller zone. Its capacity to serve as a memory site is already established, as becomes apparent when Leonard comes upon an unofficial *lieu de mémoire* in the form of a 'thick wooden cross' (*TI* 217) commemorating victims shot by East German border guards as they tried to scale the Wall, in 1962 and 1963. There is an echo of the crucifix here in the symbol used to evoke memory of those sacrificed to the city's ideological divide: this underscores both the relative innocence of the West Berlin of the mid-1950s, and the subsequent lethal character of the Wall, despite its apparent quiescence in 1987. The Wall itself is located in a marginal space beyond a fence surrounding the old warehouse where Leonard used to work, suggesting an association between it and the tunnel operation as military projects related to the frontier in the divided city. Leonard stumbles upon it involuntarily rather than by consuming it through a collective tourist experience: 'He thought how strange it was that he should come here to get his first sight of the Wall' (*TI* 217). By discovering

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<sup>193</sup> The road then narrows to a track leading to a Market Garden Centre which, coincidentally, was founded in 1955, the year in which the novel is predominantly set. This is a sign that normal commercial activity was taking place close to the tunnel site even at the time of its construction.

it on his own initiative he is able later to transform it into a physical symbol of his separation from, and reunion with Maria.

The buildings surrounding the site of the espionage tunnel are in ruins, not unlike the remains of the war-devastated city in the 1950s, except more dilapidated due to the passage of time: 'All that remained of the buildings were crumbling concrete floors where weeds were breaking' (*TI* 218). The tendency for human material constructions to change their function over time is apparent: the main building adjacent to the tunnel has no floor while the former location of Operation Gold itself has become a vacant site anywhere the old basement used to be there is now 'a huge hole, a walled trench' (*TI* 218). It is threatened on all four sides by the passage of time: this takes the form of the pressure from the proliferation of bland, leisure architecture on three sides; and on one side only, as if its seemingly inert nature embodied a lesser threat, by the persistence of the Wall: 'On three sides, beyond the fences and the rough ground, the holiday homes pressed in. On the fourth was the Wall' (*TI* 218). The site takes on the presence of the past when he notices that he is being watched by the nearby border guards, as he was in the mid-1950s. A certain symmetry and complicity is apparent here as Leonard is subject to surveillance by border guards at the Wall, over thirty years after he had once worked to put in place listening devices to spy on the Russians. Nothing remains of the eavesdropping technology, which was so extensive that the tunnel was once compared with 'the interior of a telephone exchange' (*TI* 67). In the conversion of the tunnel into piles of rubble and a hole in the ground, a change of purpose has occurred: signs of endeavour have been replaced by a signifier of futility. Here, Graeme

Gilloch's discussion of Walter Benjamin's concept of the 'afterlife' is relevant in showing that a monument may accrue a meaning over time 'which negates the original intention'.<sup>194</sup> Empty space is not vacant but a cue to memory: 'The ramp for the forklift trucks was here. The shaft started there' (TI 218). This ostensibly nondescript and ruined location is also a *lieu de mémoire* since it functions as a place where Leonard feels that his personal memories have been preserved. Similar to the concern with bomb damage in his 1955 letter home to his parents, when Leonard relates to the remains of the tunnel site in 1987, his sense of connection is with a ruined city

On his return in 1987, the first thing Leonard notices about the city on his trip in from the airport is 'the absence of ruins' (TI 213). At the end of the novel, Leonard is once again associated with ruins, at the site of the tunnel operation, but by this stage they are linked with his own character as he searches the remains of the tunnel for memories of his own past in the city: 'He poked at some earth and stones with the toe of his shoe. What was he expecting to find? Evidence of his own existence?' (TI 218) The most unspecific traces of memory could still be the catalyst to stir recall of the past: Leonard initially associated material remains with the destruction of the 'enemy'; he has learned that they are now part of his identity and that his personal life is bound up with the rubble of the Cold War workplace.

In memory, the ruins of the secret tunnel take on more significance for Leonard than Maria's flat where he fell in love, or even Platanenallee, where he himself lived. The lack of nostalgic sentiment in Leonard is evident when he dismisses the latter address as not worth visiting (TI 218); having hardly

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<sup>194</sup> Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997), p.73.

used the flat, it does not register as memorable or as symbolic of an occupying mentality in Leonard. The time span of the tunnel's existence runs in parallel with Leonard's own brief period in Berlin in 1955-1956.

Consequently the site becomes invested not only with memory of that era but also with decades of separation from the city that followed: 'It was here in this ruin that he felt the full weight of time' (*TI* 218).<sup>195</sup> The memory is partly personal and specific to Leonard but also collective in its relation to the ruins of a public building. The importance of the agency of consciousness which is brought to bear on a memory site has been underscored by Fulbrook:

For no physical site of memory has significance without participating witnesses, for whom the site has emotive and cognitive potential.

Only here can Maria's letter relating the personal memories of her life in the United States since she left him over thirty years ago be read: 'It was here where old matter could be unearthed. He took the airmail letter from his pocket' (*TI* 218). Here the earth metaphor suggests that the processes of memory are easier to grasp when they have a material correlative. In Maria's letter, space also provides a crucial reference to the last time and location the couple were together, prior to Leonard's departure for England:

'Tempelhof on 15 May 1956' (*TI* 219). The letter, a new piece of writing, reconnects with the airport in Berlin, the precise point at which the past and the narrative fiction broke off. The thirty-year gap is represented in the vacuity of the hole which signifies the remains of the espionage tunnel; it is also close to the symbol of separation represented by the Wall.

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<sup>195</sup> Maria's letter finally reaches Leonard having journeyed to all the places in London with which he has had a personal connection: from his parents' house in Tottenham to the home in Sevenoaks where he has raised a family, thereby making spatial connections to represent the time that has lapsed for Leonard in England, matching the period of the same duration which Maria has spent in the United States.

Like the tunnel, Leonard proceeds to convert another public place, the Wall, into a symbolic site of personal memory, when he envisages returning with Maria to view the Wall from the wooden platform at Potsdamer Platz 'before it was all torn down' (TI 226). The projected reunion reconfigures the political division which provided the context for their separation in the first place. This commitment to an overt act of witnessing is particularly resonant in a novel in which the principal site of division has been concealed underground and reveals, by contrast, Berlin's enclosed, subterranean character in the Cold War era. The reference to the couple seeing 'the Wall together' (TI 226) connects the two periods in the history of divided Berlin with which the novel is concerned: the mid-1950s tunnel years and the intimations of change in the Wall era of the late-1980s. The connection between space and memory in shaping and sustaining human relationships is underscored as Leonard, in the novel's climactic final sentence, envisages how he and Maria, would 'visit the old places and be amused by the changes' (TI 226). There is an echo here of Shakespeare in Lear's envisaged reunion with Cordelia: 'so we'll live/And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh/At gilded butterflies'. This is a reminder of the Englishness of McEwan's cultural context and the heightened nature of this concluding moment.<sup>196</sup> The reference to Potsdamer Platz signifies a new capacity in Leonard to engage with the collective memory at the heart of Berlin now that he has strengthened his own identity by a memory process at its margin. Leonard's ability to incorporate even the Wall into his own world view, turning a cause of division into a symbol of unity with Maria, is evidence of his

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<sup>196</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Arden edition ed. by Kenneth Muir, (London: Routledge, 1972), Act v, sc. iii, 11-13, p.187.

optimism and innocent capacity to surmount obstacles. At the end of the novel McEwan is again indebted to the Berlin espionage genre in using the Wall to provide a narrative climax in which Leonard's personal perspective is privileged as he reconceives the feared totem of the espionage novel as a repository of memory of his love affair in Berlin. With the lessening of political tension in 1987, the ending of *The Innocent* proposes that the Wall, like the tunnel before it, may soon disappear, and with it memory of the divided city that brought the two lovers together, but also separated them. The future loss of the Wall is foreseen as an inevitability but is not desired since it has become a *lieu de mémoire* for Leonard. Similarly, the reconstruction of divided Berlin by McEwan functions as a work of memory which recalls the special place in the British imaginary which the divided city assumed. The extraordinary circumstances of British involvement in shared ownership and responsibility for post-war Berlin are reconfigured as memory of a ruptured love affair between an Englishman and a German woman.

## **6. Fall of the Wall and British Regret: *Black Dogs***

Contrasting with the emphasis on reconstruction in *The Innocent* in its mid-1950s narrative and on regeneration in the 1987 postscript, the Berlin chapter of *Black Dogs* depicts the fall of the Wall in 1989 through an evocation of a haunted emptiness which can be linked to a sense of loss. Interpreted in the context of the ending of British involvement in the governance of the divided city, it is a rueful departure note rather than a



forward-looking celebration of the euphoria of liberation and prospective German unity.

The depiction in *Black Dogs* of the opening up of the Wall in November 1989 involves the rediscovery of routes through the city, particularly near the central area that had been divided by the Wall. Bernard's previous avoidance of the central ceremonial area close to the Brandenburg Gate corresponds in broad outline with Leonard's initial skirting of Potsdamer Platz as a viewing platform for the Wall in *The Innocent*. However, Bernard and Jeremy deliberately choose to walk through a terrain laden with historic political symbolism as if the circumstances of political change oblige them to confront the past. The actual buildings struggle to compete with the weight of history: the Brandenburg Gate is measured against its emblematic role, and found to be wanting – 'too small, too squat for its global importance' (*BD* 82). A pair of sites in the vicinity signifies opposites: democracy and dictatorship, in the form of 'the old Reichstag building' and 'the old Gestapo headquarters' (*BD* 93), which is depicted as reduced to 'a large hole' (*BD* 93). A similar trope is used to describe Leonard's discovery of the remains of the Operation Gold tunnel in *The Innocent*: 'What remained in front of him was a huge hole' (*TI* 218). This empty space, which is resonant with the past conforms to Huyssen's concept of the void, 'saturated with invisible history, with memories of architecture both built and unbuilt'.<sup>197</sup> Although both Nazi and Cold War history in Berlin end in a similar physical space, the city's haunted past endows one with a moral vacancy and the other with a sense of futility and lost time. Adapting

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<sup>197</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.58.

Huyssen's evocation here of an architectural void, Bernard's 'forgetting' of the Strasse des 17 Juni can be read as the creation of a personal void in memory related to the uprising of 1953.

At the time of the fall of the Wall, John Ardagh described the terrain between the Reichstag and Checkpoint Charlie as 'perhaps the most haunting and disturbing urban landscape in Europe'.<sup>198</sup> In *Black Dogs*, this liminal setting by the Wall provides the memory context in which the narrator, Jeremy, puts pressure on Bernard to account for his adherence to communist political beliefs until 1956. Despite its central location in the city and its marking by monuments and historic buildings, the area has the appearance of a marginal 'edgeland': 'On our right were abandoned buildings, empty sites with coils of wire and heaped wire and last summer's weeds still standing high' (*BD* 88). This could be a post-industrial landscape, a place existing 'in a hiatus between the end of one industrial era and potential future redevelopment', as Farley and Simmons Roberts depict such terrain.<sup>199</sup> The difference is that this wilderness in Berlin in 1989 is created by the Wall at the very heart of the city in an area which represents a particular burden of political memory. For Bernard, it encompasses not just his past involvement with British Communism but also its Soviet context and the human cost of Stalin's dictatorship from the 'show trials and purges of the thirties' to 'lies, persecution, genocide' (*BD* 89). Here Berlin is again a palimpsest of memory: the surrender of democracy to the political violence of the Nazis as imaged in the Reichstag and Gestapo headquarters is one layer

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<sup>198</sup> John Ardagh, *Germany and the Germans*, new revised edition (London: Penguin, 1991), p.47.

<sup>199</sup> Farley and Simmons Roberts, *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness*, p.151.

beneath which Bernard uncovers his own uneasy relationship with the forced collectivisation and murder that underpinned the Stalinist phase of Soviet communism. Here Berlin evokes not just the memory of its own twentieth-century traumas but those of Europe: in McEwan's two Berlin novels divided Berlin comes to represent a space in which Britain struggles, but fails, to survive as a world power whether alongside the United States, as shown by Leonard's political inarticulacy in *The Innocent*, or the Soviet Union as exposed by Bernard's recall of how he compromised by appeasing its client East Berlin regime in *Black Dogs*.

The novel presents Berlin, in the days following the fall of the Wall in November 1989, as afflicted by a sense of post-euphoric emptiness bordering on volatility. Detailing a number of historical reference points in *Black Dogs*, Dominic Head refers to one as being the 'crumbling of the Berlin Wall'.<sup>200</sup> From the outside, watching the scenes of liberation on television in London, Bernard Tremaine is excited to fly to Berlin with his friend and biographer, Jeremy. However, the mood in the city is one of anti-climax, despite the immediate euphoria that greeted the opening of the Wall. The novel, at the time of publication in 1992, represented a near-contemporary event while also registering memory of the Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe and fears about the revival of violent neo-Nazism. The retrospective trajectory which comes to dominate *Black Dogs* as a whole when the narrative later returns to a traumatic event in 1946 is symptomatic of English-language Berlin fiction in this era: it is remarkable that even in a novel which

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<sup>200</sup> Head, *Ian McEwan*, p.116.

was responsive enough to record the fall of the Wall as a contemporary event, ultimately it is the historical perspective which prevails.

In *Black Dogs*, McEwan presents an outsider's perspective on the fall of the Wall by portraying the deflated aftermath of the opening up of some of the inner-city checkpoints rather than the euphoria of the unexpected moment of liberation.

the well-wishers were still greeting pedestrians from the east, still thumping Trabant rooftops, but with less passion now, as though to demonstrate a difference between TV drama and real life. (*BD* 95)

There is no avoiding the media construction of the event: the difference between Bernard watching from a distance at home in London and being present in Berlin is reduced with the suggestion that even the distinction from the televised event is shaped by consciousness of the media presence. The crowd drifts along by the Wall, visitors and resident Berliners from East and West all becoming tourists as they look for something to happen: 'Everyone, East and West Berliners as well as outsiders, was a tourist now' (*BD* 82).

The comment shows that the habitual distinction between Berliners as insiders and visitors to the city was made redundant by the exceptional circumstances of the fall of the Wall. It also helps explain the special attachment to the city felt by international visitors. A symptom of alienation, the theme of Berliners becoming tourists in their own city is one that is also raised by Hamilton in relation to the viewing platforms overlooking the Wall in the divided city and the fall of the Wall itself.

A morbid nostalgia can be detected in the crowd's desire to buy models and postcards recalling the violent characteristics of the former frontier: 'The crowd had lost interest and was drifting back to the queue for

scale-model watchtowers and postcards of no-man's-land and the empty beaches of the death strip' (*BD* 91). The desire of the crowd for the replica expresses a lack, a loss of the thrill of the violence symbolised by the Wall for which the consumable object seeks to compensate: the model replicates the Wall, even at the moment of liberation from its oppressiveness. The event becomes a consumable spectacle in which the meaning of the occasion is swamped by the crowd which has come to witness it.

Although *Black Dogs* is nearly contemporaneous in its 1992 publication date with the events of 1989, in itself it involves a form of temporal layering since the type of racial assault it depicts became more associated with developments a year or two later in the unification process. As Mary Fulbrook has noted: 'Violent attacks on ethnic minorities increased alarmingly in the early months of 1991.'<sup>201</sup> Within a realist fictional account of Berlin, McEwan creates a symbolic drama in which the neo-Nazi violence which would arise as a consequence of unification is superimposed on the beginning of that process.

The palimpsestic nature of memory in Berlin is suggested in the potential of the violent incident in *Black Dogs* to recall the conditions of the rise to power of the Nazis in the 1930s. This is underscored by the fact that the skinhead gang involved wear swastika insignia, pointing to a neo-Nazi affiliation (*BD* 97). Initially berated by a well-dressed group of citizens and punched by one of them, a Turkish man provocatively waving a red flag is then viciously assaulted. The collusion of different social classes in the attack

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<sup>201</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The Two Germanies, 1945-1990: Problems of Interpretation* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1992), p.87.

violence bears similarities with the methods used by the Nazis to assert their authority in the pre-war decade.

A British desire to intervene in foreign affairs is highlighted when Bernard speaks up in defence of the victim. However, his appeal to the aggressors' sense of reason is ineffectual and symbolic of a decline in British authority. The Englishness of his admonitory remarks is underscored in its almost comic absurdity: "Now then," he said, in the old-fashioned kindly stern voice of an English bobby' (*BD* 97). Bernard's martyr-like intervention causes a distraction which allows the Turkish man to escape at Bernard's own expense as the young neo-Nazis round in turn on him, as the narrator relates: 'I heard the thud of boot on bone. With a little sigh of surprise, Bernard folded up in sections on the pavement' (*BD* 98). Despite the farce-like intervention, the brutality of the violence is emphasised. The ineffectual nature of the British intervention is confirmed when the English narrator, Jeremy, makes a clumsy attempt to help by grabbing one of the gang. With the fall of the Wall, those associated by their Britishness with the external, neo-colonial, control of Berlin no longer have any authority. The Americans are also conspicuous by their absence in *Black Dogs*, contrasting starkly with their dominance of the 1955-1956 narrative in *The Innocent*.

The violence is defused when Berliners take back responsibility for the moral governance of their city. A pair of young Berlin woman come forward out of the crowd and one of them, Grete, stands up to the skinhead gang in terms which they understand: 'It was a furious young woman. Her power was of the street. She had credibility. She was a contemporary, an object of desire and aspiration' (*BD* 98). This assertive young woman, an active

Berliner who comes to Bernard's rescue, not by means of physical force but by expressing disgust with a sexual authority, signifies the resurgence of the city. The narrative does not offer a translation of her 'staccato sentences of piercing rebuke' (*BD* 98) but their stark directness clearly contrasts with Bernard's appeal to reason and fair play. Earlier Bernard had compared Grete's features with his former wife June's; Jeremy also participates in this mythologising when he describes her as Bernard's 'guardian angel, the incarnation of June' (*BD* 100): Grete's moral authority may justify the analogy but the men overlook her singularity in making the comparison: the exceptional is made familiar. Through Grete's assertiveness Berlin is seen to recover a contemporary energy which offers a contrast with the depiction of Berlin characters in *The Innocent* such as Maria, with her feisty, but war-scarred, dependency, or Otto, as an embodiment of drunken frustration. Contrasting with the masculinity that is often identified with male protagonists in the Berlin thriller, the association of Berlin as a woman with independent female figures can be related to a lineage in English-language Berlin fiction that derives from Sally Bowles in Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*. The assertiveness of a strong Berlin woman in warding off a violent attack also contrasts in the past with the pusillanimity of Bernard's delegation in diluting criticism of the East German regime during the Cold War era.

Berlin in *Black Dogs* and *The Innocent* is a site on the front line of European politics, a source of positive and negative energies, and a focus of encounter and confrontation which demands participation, even from initially reticent English visitors. Grete's riposte to the gang could have been represented, as McEwan uses phrases of German in both of his Berlin

novels, but he chooses not to do so. These words belong to a dialogue between Germans that is the future of Berlin and unified Germany: despite the contemporaneity of McEwan's *Black Dogs* and ending of *The Innocent*, McEwan's Berlin is primarily a work of memory of the divided city. Both novels are framed by the circumstances of Cold War Berlin between 1945 and 1989 as a time when the British had a special investment in the city, extending from the politics of neo-colonial four-power military governance to Anglo-German personal relationships. Grete's energy is an expression of hope in Berlin's future but she is a fleeting symbolic presence rather than a developed character. The view is retrospective: in Bernard's political regrets, even in Leonard and Maria's hopes, which are galvanised by a sense of lost time, McEwan's fictional representations of Berlin do not extend beyond the fall of the Wall. After the publication of *Black Dogs* in 1992, McEwan did not return to write about Berlin: memory of the divided city defines his subject, and for developments in the contemporary city after unification it is necessary to turn to another range of Berlin English-language fiction.

### **Conclusion**

The shared interest shown by these British novelists in exploring endings of relationships with the city and departures from it could be interpreted as expressions of a sense of loss accompanying the ending of British military governance of Berlin after 1989. Although the writing of *The Innocent* was only completed in that year, it concludes with the desire to accomplish a personal reunion before the Wall is removed: the end of the period of division



is imminent, and it has implications for those who have shared the culture and memories it created.

All four novels analysed here use returns to the city to create memory perspectives which facilitate reflection on change in Berlin. Yet although all refer substantially to the past, they are not conventional historical novels in that the contemporary era at the time of publication becomes the concluding point of each of them. Huyssen's concept of 'present pasts' in which memory is linked to the contemporary world is vital in each case. The mapping of memory onto space plays a key role in making these connections, particularly in McEwan and Lasdun, but all three novelists construct protagonists who come to represent Berlins of the past where they have had crucial formative experiences. In the novels of McEwan and Lasdun, Leonard, Bernard and Stefan find it difficult to adjust to the modern city in which the fall of the Wall is either foreseen as a possibility or has become a fact.

The outsider perspectives represented in these novels can be seen in the fact that the protagonists of all four leave the city at different points but remain associated with it. Leonard and Stefan return to visit the city and try to reconnect with it through memory; Mundy remains linked to Berlin by the recurrent renewal of the friendship he forged there with Sasha; on the other hand, Bernard leaves the city bruised by an encounter with his memories of Berlin and Berlin's own political memory.

Returns to Berlin yield mixed results: elation for Leonard on reconnecting through memory but a rebuff for Bernard whose communist past is out of keeping with the new era emerging with the fall of the Wall. The

metaphorical return of Berlin in the renewal in the twenty-first century of the friendship between Sasha and Mundy is eradicated by their killing. Both Leonard and Stefan struggle to relate their memories to a changing city, before and after unification: the latter cannot escape memory of the confinement of the former East Berlin on his return to the unified city and struggles to find a memory site related to his lover. However, most of these characters live unfulfilled lives outside Berlin: this is perhaps most clearly exemplified by Stefan who is isolated and driven towards suicide when past lies and personal betrayals return to haunt his new life in the United States. His desire to make a clean break with his past in divided Berlin but inability to do so is a typical challenge to the concept of the *tabula rasa* often associated with Berlin after unification.

The representations of Berlin by British novelists such as le Carré, Lasdun and McEwan preserve memory of the divided city of the 1945-1989 era and reflect a period in which the British had a privileged position in the city as part of its four-power military authority. As George Smiley recalls in *The Secret Pilgrim*:

we bought ourselves a stay of execution for our vision of our colonial selves. Worse still, we encouraged the Americans to behave in the same way. (SP 250)

In each of the novels considered here, a special form of British relationship with divided Berlin is predicated either on British memory as a comparison in Lasdun, or a sense of nostalgic attachment as in McEwan and le Carré. In le Carré, aloofness of the official British attitude of hostility towards Berlin contrasts with memory of an Englishman sharing in the vibrancy of West Berlin in the late-1960s by forming an enduring personal relationship with an

East German. Within the text, the importance of memory is shown when action is taken to draw attention to spaces associated with Nazism in Berlin as a reaction of a younger generation against an older one perceived to be keen to forget the past.

In Lasdun, the author's memory of his own upbringing in England in the 1970s is used as a means of empathising with an individual growing up in East Berlin under the ideological constraints and impositions of state socialism. For McEwan, in both *The Innocent* and *Black Dogs*, divided Berlin is a landscape of memory where personal identity is shaped by political pressure and Britishness struggles to assert itself in a post-war world in which Britain is no longer a great power. As the author himself has explained the Wall's alleged lack of representation in German literature presented him with an opportunity to claim it as a subject within English fiction. However, this overlooks the extent to which the Wall was already well established in the spy thrillers of le Carré and Deighton in the early 1960s and remains intrinsic to the English-language Wall fiction from Sebastian to Porter that has emerged in the two decades since 1989.

The reaction to the fall of the Wall in the British Berlin novel would appear to be ambivalent with an initial excitement soon giving way to a sense of detachment and loss. In *Black Dogs*, the presentation of Berlin is bleaker and less hospitable than in *The Innocent*: an unexpected outcome considering that the latter describes the divided city and the former the wake of the euphoria that accompanied liberation from the Wall. Like the postscript in its predecessor, *Black Dogs* again juxtaposes a changing contemporary Berlin with the endurance of past memories for a visiting Englishman

returning after an interval of many years. In both of McEwan's Berlin novels, there is a special attachment to the divided city and its legacy of war and politics which make it an exceptional place, a site of violent eruptions and intense encounters, where personal and political dramas coincide. In *Black Dogs*, the initial jubilation at the breaching of the Wall is followed by a sense of emptiness, a vacuum which has echoes of the city's Nazi past when a violent assault with a racial dimension takes place. A post-Wall loss of British authority is underscored when an attempt by a British outsider to intervene to prevent a violent racial attack is ineffectual. The implication in Grete's assertiveness is that Berlin is no longer dependent on neo-colonial goodwill and can now use the resources of its own native citizenry to recognise and disarm the memory of the Nazi era in any recurrence of the violent scapegoating which once destroyed the city's moral fabric.

A depressed response to the unexpected liberation from Cold War division is also articulated in Lasdun's *Seven Lies* where Stefan feels isolated from the prevalent mood of celebration joy which he sums up as 'The ghastly comedy of being the one person in the Western world unable to rejoice' (SL 183). The lack of jubilation in both Lasdun and McEwan's similarly unenthusiastic responses to the liberation of 1989 show an ambivalence in the response to the fall of the Wall in two British authors. This sense of loss associated with the ending of the Cold War can be linked to a realisation that the ending of the Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe also entails the termination of the last vestiges of British post-war authority in Western Europe.

## Chapter Three

### Recovering Memory in Contemporary Berlin Novels by Anna Winger, Chloe Aridjis and Hugo Hamilton

#### Introduction: Contemporary Berlin Fiction Before and After the Wall

This chapter explores how topographical marginality is associated with identity in fictional representations of a radically changing, post-unification, Berlin. Contrasting with the focus on British memory, the analysis in this chapter features three authors from a wider Anglophone context whose differing approaches to representing Berlin through memory and space provide an insight into how English-language authors have defined the contemporary city in a period of transition.

In this chapter, an extended analysis of Hamilton's representation of the city in *Surrogate City* (1990), *The Love Test* (1995) and *Disguise* (2008) is framed by comparative reference to the post-1989 English-language novels, *This Must be the Place* (2008) by Anna Winger and *Book of Clouds* (2009) by Chloe Aridjis. The Hamilton novels have been chosen on grounds of substance and quality of engagement with the city: he is the only author of English-language Berlin fiction to have written three contemporary works in a span that covers the twenty-year frame of the post-Wall era. The Winger and Aridjis novels, which were, like Hamilton's *Disguise*, both published towards the end of the period surveyed in here, explore memory issues associated with the 'new' Berlin that has evolved since unification: Winger, through buried traces of the past; Aridjis, through the evocation of ghostly presences.

As debut novels and narratives in which protagonists struggle to form personal relationships in the city, these novels can also be compared with

Hamilton's first novel, *Surrogate City*. The protagonists of all three are outsiders: American, Mexican and Irish, respectively; however, it is indicative of Hamilton's familiarity with Berlin that the leading characters in *The Love Test* and *Disguise* are all German. Hamilton's own Irish-German background opens up the potential for a different cultural relationship to that of the novelists associated with a particular nostalgia for West Berlin in the last chapter. In his most recent Berlin novel, *Disguise*, Hamilton adopts the persona of a German protagonist, Gregor, as an insider alter-ego; at the same time he situates the novel outside the city. The use of a rural location in a town near Berlin as the novel's principal setting facilitates the novel's reflective cast and an overview of Berlin as a representation of unification and as a site of memory. Aridjis is stylistically innovative in her haunted account of the city in which the weather has an animate character and apparitions can emerge, such as the protagonist's sighting of Hitler in 1986 in the form of an old woman on the U-Bahn (BC 5-9). Winger's novel appears to be a conventional description of the American-German encounter in Berlin through an account of the growth of a relationship but becomes a meditation on the city as an archive of suppressed cultural memory.

The trajectory of the publication of Hamilton's three Berlin novels over the twenty years since the fall of the Wall allows them to be read as a chronicle of the unification process. Like Deighton's novels after *Spy Line* or McEwan's *The Innocent*, Hamilton's *Surrogate City* is another novel which was caught on the cusp of unification and immediately became historic. Published in 1990, its account of life in West Berlin in the 1970s and 1980s would normally have held a contemporary relevance but became a work of

memory recalling life in a divided city that was rapidly disappearing due to the rapidity of the reconstruction of Berlin that accompanied unification. Hamilton's next novel, *The Love Test* is a contemporaneous account of the immediate post-unification period in which unresolved issues from the past unsettle the rush to unify the city. Published towards the end of the two-decade period surveyed in this thesis, *Disguise* is the most reflective of Hamilton's three Berlin novels. It combines a twenty-first-century vantage point, a pastoral mode and a topographical setting in Brandenburg to juxtapose contemporary and retrospective perspectives on Berlin. Hamilton's Berlin novels are primarily contemporaneous with their period of publication from 1990-2008, although the setting of the opening chapters of *Disguise* in wartime Berlin is a sign that the novel will be concerned with memory issues. The tendency in the novels to avoid reference to specific dates serves to emphasise the structuring of the narratives as fictional reconstructions rather than as history *per se*.

Hamilton's engagement with memory develops over the course of his Berlin novels. References to the victories of Helmut Schmidt in 1970s West German elections in *Surrogate City* show that the history of official politics carried little resonance in West Berlin. In *The Love Test*, the fictional adaptation of the biography of the ex-Stasi, GDR defector, Walter Thräne, constitutes a work of memory reclamation for an Anglophone readership unlikely to have been aware of Thräne's escape from East Berlin in 1962, capture and subsequent imprisonment. The use of alternating past and present time structures in both *The Love Test* and *Disguise* illustrates a desire in Hamilton to use narrative to show the dynamics of memory. In

*Disguise*, this becomes an oscillation between past and present which starts with a retrospective wartime perspective and leads to the construction of the city through the post-war biographies of characters such as Gregor and Gregor's mother as much as from representations of the present. In general, Hamilton's three Berlin novels operate outside the interstices of the official historical record to reconstruct marginal identities that might otherwise be forgotten or erased.

In this chapter, the focus is on the contemporary English-language Berlin novel, rather than the thriller. The intention to explore the extent to which the city can be evoked through spatial memory in fiction without reference to the generic conventions of the thriller.<sup>202</sup> Philip Hensher, whose *Pleasured* was one of the first Berlin novels to emerge after the fall of the Wall, in an interview in 2012 observed a change since the 1990s in the popularity of Berlin as a subject for the English language novelist: 'Berlin was sort of an unknown then, although everyone has discovered it now'.<sup>203</sup> Hensher's novel, which alludes to many of the concerns of the Berlin spy thriller, such as defection, surveillance and betrayal, is an affectionately satirical portrayal of the impact of the fall of the Wall on the insular, alternative cultural scene in West Berlin.

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<sup>202</sup> In addition to the five novels analysed in this chapter, other novels which have responded variously to the contemporary city, mainly in the first decade of the new century, include Philip Hensher, *Pleasured*, J.S. Marcus, *The Captain's Fire* (1996), Eleanor Bailey, *Marlene Dietrich Lived Here* (2002), Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex* (2002), Nigel Cox, *Responsibility* (2005), Paul Verhaeghen, *Omega Minor* (2007) and Paul Beatty, *Slumberland* (2008).

<sup>203</sup> Nicholas Wroe, interview with Philip Hensher, 'A Life in Writing', *Guardian*, 'Review', 31 March 2012, p.12. The trend to use Berlin settings has continued in the post-2009 period, outside the purview of this thesis, as can be seen from a surge in the number of literary texts using Berlin settings such as Lloyd Jones, *Hand Me Down World* (2010), D.B.C. Pierre, *Lights Out in Wonderland* (2010), Esi Edugyan, *Half Blood Blues* (2011) and Ida Hattemer-Higgins, *The History of History* (2011).



Responses to the new urban landscape which emerged after the reunification of Berlin feature in a number of novels of the 1989-2009 era, such as Eleanor Bailey's *Marlene Dietrich Lived Here* (2002):

Everything was built of glass – the revamped railway stations, the new library, the thirty-six metre bulb on top of the Reichstag. People wanted to see through the city. (*MD* 29)

Here the desire for transparency suggests a renewal of post-Wall Berlin through architecture that echoes the reconstruction that Glass observes with pride in the post-war era of *The Innocent*. In McEwan's novel, Glass's name suggests an allegorical reading but his American openness is also treated ironically in a text that both plays with and against cultural stereotyping. In Bailey's novel, the emphasis on architectural transparency reflects the official aspiration in the city to a democratic commitment to accountability and visibility; this in turn is predicated on memory of the secret manipulations of power by the Nazi and state socialist regimes that dominated the twentieth century city. Bailey's novel appears to respond directly to the post-Wall city through a story set in the city's fashionable gallery scene in the 1990s. However, it also includes an historical memoir within its narrative which associates it with the prevailing trend in English-language fiction after 1989 towards incorporation of memory into representation of the contemporary city.

The dominance of reconstruction in defining the reunified capital city has been subject to critical scrutiny in a number of Berlin novels and thrillers, leading to the emergence of the memory-laden central space at Potsdamer Platz as an emblem of the new Berlin in English-language post-Wall fiction. It provides the eponymous title for a Mafia thriller by Buddy Giovinazzo, in

which the rebuilding of the city provides a front for criminality; it also features in Dan Fesperman's *The Small Boat of Great Sorrows* (2003) and *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides. Huysen's view of Potsdamer Platz as 'a void filled with history and memory, all of which will be erased [...] by the new construction'<sup>204</sup> appears to be borne out by its representation in both the English-language novel and thriller. In Winger's *This Must be the Place*, Hope's perspective resembles that of Huysens when she ponders that 'It was a pity they couldn't leave the space as it was as a memorial' (*TMP* 132). Eugenides presents a viewpoint which indicts the commercial homogeneity of the new architecture at Potsdamer Platz while Fesperman's thriller pinpoints erasure of awkward traces of the Nazi past in the capitalist imperatives which informed the rebuilding of the area in the early 1990s.

Dual forms are intrinsic to the representation of the city in *Middlesex*, the epic novel by Eugenides which ranges across continents and the twentieth century, but also features an episode set in contemporary Berlin. Towards the end of the narrative, the novel shows, in two short contrasting scenes, how the city continues to be defined by polarised environments: in the first, set in the Schöneberg neighbourhood, the city's ethnic diversity saves the city from its legacy of division, as the Greek narrator admires the traditional skills of a Turkish baker, observing: 'We're all made up of many parts, other halves. Not just me' (*M* 440). The second scene, however, at the Neue Nationalgalerie, is an indictment of the architecture of the new Berlin in which the homogenous appearance of the new buildings at Potsdamer Platz is 'like a mall in Vancouver' and the use of illuminated 'skeletons of cranes'

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<sup>204</sup> Huysen, *Present Pasts*, p.66.

(M 496) hardly heralds a renaissance of the city. New architecture alone cannot compensate for past losses, as Huyssen has observed: 'The new Potsdamer Platz will never match the myth of the square as an emblem of Weimar modernity.'<sup>205</sup> It is here that fiction can play a role both by allowing the reader to participate critically in the past but also by showing how the present is dependent on memory.

In contrast to the generic convention which provides a structure through which the past can be animated through plot in the Berlin thriller, the more open forms of the literary novel offers scope for reflection on the experience of contemporary Berlin in the novels of Hamilton, Winger and Aridjis. The duality of Berlin, which is spatially expressed in recent Berlin novels set in divided Berlin in distinctions between West and East Berlin, and Berlin and London, takes on broader definition in the contrasts between past and present in Winger, Aridjis and Hamilton. Configured in the context of a dominant, globalised American culture in Winger and in the distinctions between historical investigation and memory perception in Aridjis, they are refracted through a marginal rural space in Hamilton. In Winger, Germans in Berlin mediate a dominant American culture but have lost contact with traces of a lost German Jewishness hidden in the city; Hamilton, too, in his novel, *Disguise*, reflects on the possibilities of lost Jewish identity. Winger, exploring an American-German relationship in Berlin sees the city post-unification, as threatened by the homogenising forces of capitalist development and globalisation but also as a place which retains buried memories of other cultural configurations. For Hamilton, the fall of the Wall opens up the city to

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<sup>205</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.81.

a flood of personal memories but for Ardjis the haunting of the city is dominated by the unsettling presence of ghosts from the Nazi era.

**1. Visitors and Memories in the ‘New Berlin’: Anna Winger, *This Must Be the Place* and Chloe Aridjis, *Book of Clouds***

Berlin is often represented as a place in which the city can have transformative effect described as follows by Hugo Hamilton: ‘I have this strong belief that the person coming to Berlin, the newcomer, either wants to, or is forced to, change their biography and they have a hand in a kind of fictional version of themselves.’<sup>206</sup> Berlin has a long history in embracing the newcomer, as Peter Gay has observed in relation to the 1920s Weimar city: ‘Berlin was eminently the city in which the outsider could make his home and extend his talents.’<sup>207</sup> The female protagonists of Winger and Aridjis provide a suitable post-unification, twenty-first century reconfiguration of the masculinity of the visitor specified here. In their novels and the fiction of Hamilton, one challenge is to define the extent to which Berlin, after all the shocks of war and division, continues to offer the outsider a home and a platform for personal reinvention. In this chapter, the position of outsider is associated with visitors to the city, who are unaware of its languages and infrastructure. Outsiders can be defined as marginal sub-cultures and isolated individuals, minority ethnic or national or regional groups, such as the Turkish community or east Germans, women in a dominantly male environment and those distanced from the social mainstream by economic disadvantage.

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<sup>206</sup> O’Hanrahan, interview with Hamilton, 25 February 2011, p.6.

<sup>207</sup> Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (London: Penguin, 1992), p.138.

Both Winger and Aridjis construct protagonists who are changed or challenged by their experiences of Berlin; both relate their respective United States and Mexican cultural contexts to the city but also, as visitors to Berlin, have to confront the city's difference to themselves. In *This Must Be the Place*, Berlin is described by Winger's protagonist, Hope, as a place apart, not only from home in the United States but also within a European context:

If only she had come to Berlin on that trip in 1986, she thought, she might have been prepared for how far away this city felt from the United States, and even from the rest of Europe. (*TMP* 20)

By coincidence, Aridjis includes a prefatory chapter in which her protagonist visits West Berlin in 1986 as a young girl on a European tour with her family. Both authors clearly identify the city as a place that responds better to memory than through an account of a first-time visit. For Winger's female protagonist, Hope in *This Must Be the Place*, the city has more in common with post-industrial America than with other major European capital cities:

If her bathroom here was like somewhere in suburban New Jersey, she thought, then what she had seen of the rest of Berlin was more like Newark on a winter day than Rome or Paris, like the depopulated fringes of urban America. (*TMP* 20)

Winger's narrator is aware of the dominant myths and historical images associated with Berlin but their availability creates a sense of detachment, of postmodern surface:

*Cabaret*, the War, the Wall; Ronald Reagan at the Brandenburg Gate ("Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"), heartbreaking news clips of freed people clambering over it. (*TMP* 23)

This is Berlin's history as a surfeit of images: Huyssen has described memory as a slowing-down process which aims 'to recover a mode of contemplation outside the universe of simulation and fast-speed information'.<sup>208</sup> The progress of *This Must be the Place* illustrates a similar need to escape from the superficiality of the present into a deeper engagement with the past. The neutral attitude in Winger's narration to Reagan's challenge to the Soviet premier can be compared with the critique of the U.S. president's remarks in June 1987 in Hamilton's *Surrogate City* in which the narrator shows an insider's knowledge of the local response:

Occasionally, too, a statesman will make use of the Wall in a gritty show of courage. Tear down this Wall! they shout whenever they arrive in Berlin on a visit, blatantly missing the point that everyone in Berlin has been trying to forget about it. (SC 8)

In Winger, the Reagan comment has become part of the televisual history of the city in the twenty-first century. On the other hand, Hamilton's 1990 novel offers a near-contemporaneous response which captures local feeling at the time. This takes the form of frustration at political posturing as an imposition on the everyday experience of those trying to live in the anomalous circumstances of a divided city. Hamilton has a connection with the locals – 'everyone in Berlin' – and is able to recognise a strong sense of communal identity in West Berlin in the 1970s; Winger, too, is interested in the everyday life of Berlin, but in the radically different circumstances of the post-unification city.

The eastward orientation of the 'new Berlin' is evident on in a reference to 'the complete stagnation of Charlottenburg in favor of cooler, shabbier neighbourhoods to the east' (*TMP* 26). Here a relatively affluent

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<sup>208</sup> Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, p.7.

area of West Berlin, where Winger's protagonist lives, is perceived to have become a backwater while East Berlin has become the fashionable part of the city. The critique of the area shows how the city's east-west division continues to persist even after unification, a trend to which Lyn Marvin has drawn attention in contemporary German-language literature on Berlin.<sup>209</sup> In this instance from Winger, the pre-Wall categories have been reversed, and it is the western part of the city which appears paralysed, as the eastern part was perceived to be in the Cold War era. The stasis of Charlottenburg in the novel is symptomatic of the slow development of the protagonist's relationship with Walter, a voice-over artist and neighbour whom she befriends. Walter bears similarities with the protagonist, Gregor, in Hamilton's novel *Disguise*, as he also is a German whose uncertainties over his cultural inheritance extend to a suspicion that he might be Jewish:

That his mother's parents and thus his mother, and thus he, too, might be Jewish offered [...] an explanation for his lifelong sense of dislocation and therefore, finally the prospect of a home. (*TMP* 242)

Hamilton's protagonist suffers a similar temporal trajectory of displacement and search for a lost Jewish identity. In Winger's novel, Walter's attempts to reconnect with his own Jewish family founder when he is unable to relate to his emigrant grandfather when he tracks him down in the United States. Hope, however, is more successful in Berlin when she embarks on an inward journey related spatially to the memories that she perceives in her home environment. This deliberate process begins in her room when she peels back layers of wallpaper encrusted over time and sees each as representing different generations:

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<sup>209</sup> Marvin, "Berlin ist bekannt [...] für die Mauer, die es aber nicht mehr gibt": the Persistence of East Berlin in the Contemporary City', 299-309.

She liked the idea that each layer had been chosen by a different mother to decorate the nursery of a different child, and pictured the women she had met in Berlin so far along a timeline, populating the history of the room. (*TMP* 253)

Hope's removal of layers of wallpaper to reveal the traces left by pre-war Jewish residents in *This Must be the Place* provides a graphic example of Huyssen's concept of the city as palimpsest. The last layer of paper can be dated back to September 1939 from a piece of newspaper attached to it: once again the post-1989 Berlin novel reverts to the war as a comparable watershed period. Hope finds a common cultural inheritance in the painting of scenes from children's stories by the Jewish mother she imagines once lived in the room. With German origins in Grimm's fairy tales, these point to the possibility of recovering a German-Jewish identity: 'She painted Hansel and Gretel. Little Red Riding Hood. The Wolf. This was her culture too' (*TMP* 290). The irony in the last sentence is that the inclusiveness Hope recognises in the mother's claim on German culture is also Hope's passport to belonging in Berlin through recovery of the city's memory. The narrative concludes with a scene in which Hope and Walter hold a candlelit ritual in the basement of their apartment block, in which they honour the Jewish family who lived there prior to the war by reciting the Kaddish, a Jewish funeral prayer, and reveal traces of the room's past use in form of writing on the walls:

On the back wall Hebrew letters had been drawn from right to left in tidy lines, in ink and now faded. [...] 'It was a Hebrew school,' said Walter. (*TMP* 302)

Here the cultural memory which had been suppressed and then hidden over the passage of time is retrieved and renewed through participation in a shared ritual. The lost Jewish-German culture which is revealed in Hope's



apartment is the missing element in a Berlin in which an indigenous German identity has been displaced by an American cultural hegemony. This is most clearly exemplified by the work of Walter as a voice-over artist who specialises in impersonating Tom Cruise in dubbed German versions of American films.

The replacement of a German-language articulation of identity for an English-language one also occurs in the transition of Stefan and Inge from 1980s East Berlin to a new life in the United States in Lasdun's *Seven Lies* in which Stefan decides to write his memoir in English: 'I'd write it in German, but we fled that language, didn't we? Now I think in English, even dream in it' (SL 21). Where Stefan willingly abandons Berlin but ends up isolated in the States, Hope becomes determined to combat a sense of alienation by addressing her personal relationship with the city. Ultimately, a Berlin perspective prevails: Hope does not travel with Walter to America, as he encourages her to do, but instead they finally come together to make a metaphorical journey towards Jewishness in Berlin. In relation to the post-Wall English-language Berlin novel, the emphasis on the recovery of Berlin's Jewish past links the novel with the concerns of a number of English-language Berlin novelists including Harris's projection of repression of memory of the Holocaust, Kerr's focus on the eradication of the city's Jewishness in the years leading up to the war, the entrusting of Kanon's protagonist with the care of a Jewish child after the war and, again post-war, the principal character's potential loss of a Jewish identity in Hamilton *Disguise*.

In both novels by Winger and Aridjis, the relationship between the female protagonist and the city emerges as one of primary significance. This corresponds with the position of the female subject in German-language Berlin literary narratives of Weimar and the post-unification era, described by Godela Weiss-Sussex as negotiating the dominant male culture 'by emphasising subjectivity, memory and imagination as ways of establishing close relationships between female subject and the city'.<sup>210</sup> The importance of the association of the female protagonist with Berlin is evident in the priority it is given over personal relationships in *This Must be the Place*. In *Book of Clouds*, the relationship between the female narrator, Tatiana, and the city, again seems to preclude her from forming a lasting union with any other character, such as the East Berliner, Jonas Krantz, with whom she has a detached sexual encounter (BC 160).

The animate nature of the city is configured through the influence of the weather, which is endowed with human characteristics: a typical comparison links a sudden gust of wind with 'a prankster child' (BC 55). Metaphors of flux and evanescence contribute to a consistent and cumulative emphasis on the climate which is linked to the city's memory:

Without sounding too simplistic, meteorology helped me understand - and maybe even cope with - recent history, before and after nineteen-eighty-nine. The fogs of time and all the obfuscation that surrounds them. (BC 62)

The novel echoes Benjamin's 'Angel of History' through motifs of winds and clouds which course through the narrative as a metaphorical evocation of the

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<sup>210</sup> Godela Weiss-Sussex, "'Ich gehe und gehe [...] und gehe und sehe.'" Female Experience of the City', in Godela Weiss-Sussex and Ulrike Zitzlsperger, eds., *Berlin: Kultur und Metropole in den zwanziger und seit den neunziger Jahren* (Munich: Iudicium Verlag, 2007), pp.46-61 (p.61).

past. Benjamin's description of the Paul Klee painting, *Angelus Novus*, concerns an angel that has its back turned to the future and would like to stay to address the catastrophe it sees accumulating in the present but is blown by a storm into the future.<sup>211</sup> Benjamin's use of a storm image is metaphorically congruent with the meteorological tropes which inform Aridjis's narrative, suggesting the temporal and spatial uncertainty of Berlin.

As in Winger, the protagonist of *Book of Clouds* feels a compelling need to understand the city's past, however obscure or hidden it may appear to be. One method of engaging with it is through the interviews that Tatiana conducts on behalf of Weiss; but there is a recurrent sense that such rational, historical methods are an inadequate means of comprehending the city's memory. Huyssen has called into question the use of the archive as 'counterweight to the ever-increasing pace of change' observing that 'forgetting is the ultimate transgression'.<sup>212</sup> One example of this fear of memory loss in *Book of Clouds* occurs when a tape about the history of an abandoned amusement park in Treptow becomes jammed in a dictaphone. Weiss's subsequent anxiety at the loss of the recording shows the dependency of the archive on technology and the difficulty of preserving memory of the past as represented in 'Yet another closed and crumbling landmark of the former GDR' (BC 120-21).

Weiss represents history, Tatiana memory: the factual investigation and archiving of the past characterised by Weiss contrasts with the memory implicit in Tatiana's engagement with the city in which her openness to aura

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<sup>211</sup> See commentary on Klee's painting, *Angelus Novus* in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), p.249.

<sup>212</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.26.

and sensation allow her to respond to it as a haunted, ghostly domain. The weather becomes a metaphor for Berlin as a site of the irrational and anarchic as shown when the city is transformed by a fog that has an amoral, carnivalesque effect on human behaviour. On the one hand, it saves the narrator and Weiss from suffering further violence at the hands of two thugs (BC 186); on the other, it leads to an increase in crime and depravity throughout the city. In a satire on the precariousness of the civilised order in Berlin, museums, galleries and libraries such as the *Staatsbibliothek* find themselves under threat from theft beneath the cover of the fog while prostitutes are accosted on Oranienburger Strasse 'by men from all walks of life' (BC 194). The moral abandonment here echoes with memories of the city's susceptibility in the twentieth century to the overturning of the rule of law through revolution or war.

The spatial openness of the city is underscored by the prevalence of climatic conditions and sparing references to the city's topography illustrated by use of a few recurrent landmarks such as the Television Tower at Alexanderplatz which provides Tatiana with a fixed point in a city which is continually eluding definition. As the narrator leaves the city by plane, she catches sight of the tower, which although it was constructed by the GDR in the late 1960s, still dominates the view of the city even in post-unification Berlin:

I caught sight of the metal sphere of the television tower glinting in the sun, asserting its dominion over the beautiful East. (C 208)

Formerly an assertion of East German technological authority, the tower now seems quaintly historical, a relic of the space-race era. It is still a dominant

presence but its realm is aesthetic rather than political: like the new memory function of the ruined tunnel site in McEwan, it has, to cite Gilloch on Benjamin, a new 'after-life'.<sup>213</sup>

Huyssen refers to the era after the fall of the Wall as 'a chapter that brought back shadows of the past and spooky revenants'. *Book of Clouds* is a novel in which Berlin and its weather constitute a space that is always open to the uncanny and ghosts from the past such as the apparition of the ghost of Hitler to Tatiana on the U-Bahn (*BC* 6-9). On another occasion, the narrator, on a guided tour of an underground bowling alley, becomes almost overpowered by an apprehension of the ghostly presence of Gestapo officers (*BC* 112-119). Although these ghosts are witnessed by Tatiana alone, the further haunting of the city is apparent in the accumulation of memory in the U-Bahn 'ghost stations' closed by the GDR during the Cold War and in the obsession with the past which is linked to the narrator's secretarial work on Weiss's personal project to preserve the recent history of East Berlin. However, Weiss's own private life is mysterious and may not that of a conventional historian: Tatiana sees a transvestite on a tram and suspects that she may be her employer (*BC* 166). As in the apparition of Hitler, the enclosed public space of the transport system is seen to embody memory and to offer an alternative form of knowledge.

In *Book of Clouds*, Tatiana describes the city's elevated S-Bahn railway as 'a wondrous thing' (*BC* 28). The city's rail systems have a related function in Winger's novel, as shown when Hope travels randomly to different stations on the basis of their names, giving agency to the city, the point being

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<sup>213</sup> Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*, p.73.

to let it 'unfold on its own' (*TMP* 170). The emergence of the U-Bahn into daylight above ground is a reminder of the city as palimpsest revealing a 'grand archaeological site' in which it is 'possible to see every layer of the city's history' (*TMP* 171). However, the onus is on the onlooker to excavate the past: Hope finds it 'relaxing' that after the wartime destruction of the city 'years later holes remained all over the place without explanation or apparent concern' (*TMP* 172). Here Winger underscores the presence in the Berlin of 2001 of 'the narrative of voids' which Huyssen has identified as particularly characteristic of the city.<sup>214</sup> Hope's development as a character and deepening of her relationship with Berlin becomes dependent upon her taking the initiative in revealing the buried past in her own apartment block.

In *Book of Clouds*, Tatiana, too, is involved in active engagement with Berlin's memory as the narrative records her own subjective responses to the city in the present and her assistance with Weiss's more objective historical research. Having lost a set of questions supplied by Weiss for an interview with a representative of the board of the BVG, the Berlin transport system, Tatiana asks him a series of questions of her own devising about the closed 'ghost stations' through which U-Bahn trains passed during the era of division (*BC* 87). The interview reveals little in contrast with an earlier meeting with Weiss at which he vividly depicts a 'dimly lit Netherworld' which had endured for thirty years (*BC* 76). The opening up of the ghost stations in November 1989 is instanced in the form of the station *Imbiss* at Oranienburger Strasse where the memory site is comprised of 'a compendium of abandonment' in the form of litter from wrappings and a

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<sup>214</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.55.

refrigerator 'unplugged, severed, like everything else from its life current in 1961' (BC 77). The converse is the sense of reconnection in 1989 to this past moment.

The allegorical tendency in *Book of Clouds* becomes apparent when Tatiana is allowed to carry out an interview on a subject of her own choice and encouraged to find someone who 'embodies the city for you' (BC 132). Tatiana selects a colourfully-dressed young woman whom she has seen begging at a Deutsche Bank machine on Alexanderplatz. This woman, whom Tatiana calls 'the Simpleton' (BC 74), responds in her interview with an account of everyday experience which challenges the rationalism of the dialogue mode promulgated by Weiss in reportage-style interviews. In a novel which is orientated towards the unconventional, the woman assumes a symbolic role:

When I arrive in the morning my hair inside my scarf smells nice but when I go home in the evening it smells dirty, like city. (BC 137)

Detached in her marginal role as beggar, the Simpleton is described as smiling 'into the city, without seeming to focus on anything or anyone'; she is orientated towards the past in a manner that is reminiscent of Benjamin's Angel of History, 'as if clinging to a compliment or a joke uttered long ago' (BC 73). An allegorical figure representing Berlin's post-Wall mood, it is as if she were struck dumb by the weight of the past, yet still manages to present a happy face to the world. The woman, not unlike Grete in McEwan's *Black Dogs*, is a symbolic Berlin character, except that she differs from the latter in representing the city's lost soul rather than an active and engaged energy. Between Grete in 1989 and the woman called 'the Simpleton' in 2007, Berlin has become wistful and happily melancholic, less driven towards the future.

In *Book of Clouds*, Berlin is linked with gratuitous violence in an incident which occurs when Tatiana and her employer, the historian Weiss, are attacked as they are leaving a complex of anonymous apartment blocks in Marzahn, in East Berlin. Weiss is badly injured and hospitalised, and Tatiana decides to leave Berlin and return to her family in Mexico (*BC* 197). The unpremeditated assault on the old man, which has particular similarities with the attack by an apolitical gang on the young man in McDonald's in West Berlin in Hamilton's *The Love Test* (*TLT* 189), and also with the neo-Nazi skinhead attack on Bernard in McEwan's *Black Dogs*, shows that the unified city is still volatile and subject to random acts of violence.

*Book of Clouds* echoes the trajectory of the Berlin visitor narrative as defined by Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* by the departure of the protagonist from the city. Examples from the post-Wall era include Leonard's departure from Berlin at the end of the 1955-1956 section of *The Innocent* or Max's return to London at the end of Bailey's *Marlene Dietrich Lived Here*. Aridjis's novel concludes with the narrator preparing to leave Berlin, aware that she is breaking her relationship with the city as if it were an emotional bond with another human being:

I felt like the city had given up on me, that the moment I handed in my notice and had my ticket to Mexico, Berlin turned its back on a former inhabitant. (*BC* 204)

Shunned by the city she feels she has betrayed by leaving, the narrator, animated by the knowledge of her departure into a new fluency in German, admits that an outsider's timidity and lack of linguistic confidence has characterised her five years in the city:



All the shyness and inhibition I'd felt during my years in Berlin fell away and in the last weeks and days my spoken German flowed more smoothly than ever as I found myself being assertive in a way I'd never dared to before. (*BC* 205)

This sense of inhibition in the foreign visitor is a syndrome which is apparent in McEwan's *The Innocent* in the depiction of Leonard as a 'shy Englishman' (*TI* 53); it also recurs in the Irish narrator of Hamilton's *Surrogate City* who deliberately acts like a foreigner and pretends not to know German. In the novels by Aridjis and Winger, the newness of post-unification Berlin is configured in female protagonists with limited experience of the city while the depth of its memory is evident in the difficulties the women encounter in trying to understand it. Their difficulties in forming relationships mirror their struggles to relate to a city in which the present conceals the past, as in Winger, or in which the relationship between past and present is both mysterious and disturbing, as in Aridjis. In both Winger and Aridjis, the city is an animate presence that demands acknowledgement from its visitors; as a palimpsest, it involves the surface and something hidden or stirring behind that veneer: beneath wallpaper or underground, the buried traces of a Jewish culture and Nazi ghosts are the memories of a city and the signs of a repressed identity calling out to be addressed.

## 2. The Insider Outside Berlin: Hugo Hamilton, *Surrogate City* and *The Love Test*

As a multicultural city characterised by diverse forms of ethnic identity - East and West German, Turkish, Irish - Berlin is related to Hamilton's own dual Irish-German origins and represented in his Berlin fiction by the many characters who have connections with both Ireland and Germany.<sup>215</sup>

Hamilton's half-German, half-Irish identity is intrinsic to his two memoirs, *The Speckled People* (2003), and *The Sailor in the Wardrobe* (2006). These sequential autobiographical works are, in effect, an autobiographical *Bildungsroman*: they conclude with the narrator's arrival in Berlin, thereby signalling the importance of the city as marking the end of youth and the beginning of a new phase in the author's subsequent development as a young adult, confirming his mixed or 'speckled' identity.<sup>216</sup> Spatially, Hamilton finds a desire to communicate in the most marginal of places, as the following comment reveals: 'Even the graffiti and the scratch marks on the S-Bahn windows in Berlin represent a search for belonging'.<sup>217</sup> Hamilton's exploration of dual Irish and German identity creates a complex layering of personal history and fiction which is often open to dual interpretation in Irish or German, outsider or insider contexts.

By not supplying dates in *Surrogate City*, Hamilton avoids historical specificity and stresses contemporaneity: the characters live as if absorbed

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<sup>215</sup> In *Surrogate City*, Helen is Irish and has a son by Dieter, who is German, while Ireland is also integral to the relationship between the German Berlin residents, Hadja and Wolf, who first meet in Galway. Irishman Kevin and West Berliner Claudia have a brief affair in *The Love Test* while, in *Disguise*, Berliner Gregor teams up with an Irish musician and lives in Ireland for a period. While none of these relationships is lasting or appears stable, the recurrence of the connection between Ireland and Berlin creates a close association between the two places in Hamilton's work.

<sup>216</sup> Hamilton, *The Sailor in the Wardrobe* (London: Fourth Estate, 2006), p.263.

<sup>217</sup> Hugo Hamilton, 'The Past is not a Weakness', Hugo Hamilton website, <[http://www.hugohamilton.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=67](http://www.hugohamilton.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=67)> [accessed 25 May 2010].

in the present, without consciousness of the past. However, from external evidence it is apparent that the novel is based on Hamilton's own experience of living in Berlin for a year in 1974.<sup>218</sup> This can be corroborated by a reference to the election in that year when the Social Democrat leader, Helmut Schmidt, became the new West German Chancellor:

As expected, Helmut Schmidt became the new Bundeskanzler. Talks were held on improving road and rail connections through the East German corridor. New arrests were imminent in the fight against the Red Army Faction. (SC 131)<sup>219</sup>

The history of the period is concisely summarised, adumbrating the era of *Ostpolitik* in a reminder of the insecurity and isolation of West Berlin as a small 'island' of West German territory, isolated by the Wall and surrounded by East Germany. Detachment and alienation, internal conflict and a paradoxical situation of dependent independence define the political context of the divided city represented in *Surrogate City*.

Hamilton has described the paradoxical combination of insider and outsider status he experienced when he lived in Berlin in 1974: 'In one sense I was quite at home there and in another sense it was a completely alien society that had to be discovered afresh.'<sup>220</sup> A sense of ambivalence about belonging in Berlin can be traced from the outset in *Surrogate City* in the opening depiction of an individual lost and disorientated within the city. The narrative is conditioned by the dizziness of a pregnant woman who has been running; unnamed in this section, her anonymity reinforces a sense of her vulnerability. She is said to be in Rosenheimer Strasse, which is in the city's

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<sup>218</sup> O'Hanrahan, interview with Hugo Hamilton, p.2.

<sup>219</sup> A later reference to the Pope's travels, 'The Pope began to travel' (SC 175), indicates that *Surrogate City* also refers to a period after Pope John Paul II began his international travels in 1979. He visited West Germany from November 15-19 1980.

<sup>220</sup> O'Hanrahan, interview with Hugo Hamilton, p.1.

Schöneberg neighbourhood. To the woman the street ‘sounds the same as Eisenacher Strasse or Grunewaldstrasse’ (SC 1). Her inability to distinguish between the street names arises from anxiety and lack of cultural connection but is also indicative of the dislocated character of West Berlin during the era of division. The distressed woman finds herself in an area depicted as ‘a commercial district of the city’ (SC 1), an association with capitalism which is extended when the wall against which she rests is revealed to be of the Dresdner Bank.<sup>221</sup>

The alienation of the individual encounter with the city is heightened by her anonymity and the postponement until the next chapter of the explanation: Helen Quinn is trying to find her partner, Dieter, to inform him that he is the father of her child. As Helen continues her search, her Turkish flatmate, Hadja, warns her that ‘Berlin is a big place’ (SC 7),<sup>222</sup> reiterating a commonplace of the modern city as a labyrinth in which it is easy to lose oneself or someone. In *Disguise*, there is a similar sense of the city as a site of confusion, following the bombing of Berlin during the war: ‘People were lost and disoriented, walking in a daze’ (D 3).

From the title reference to ‘city’ and the naming of the novel’s opening section as ‘Berlin’, the centrality of Berlin to *Surrogate City* is clearly signalled, but also questioned by the implication that the city is an artificial replacement. The reiteration in the narrative of platitudes such as ‘The

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<sup>221</sup> There may be no intention to evoke memory here but it is typical of Berlin’s layered history that the bank was heavily involved in financing the Third Reich, and, in the post-war period prior to unification, typified the paradoxes of division as a West German concern with no specific Dresden connection.

<sup>222</sup> A converse view of the scale of the city is expressed in McEwan’s *The Innocent* (London: Vintage, 2005) which, like *Surrogate City*, was first published in 1990. The spy George Blake describes the Berlin of the mid-1950s as being like a ‘village’ (TI 126).

reunification of Germany could be declared an old song' (SC 30) is indicative of an apathy arising from the paralysed nature of Cold War politics in the era of division. Hamilton, however, has acknowledged a personal identification with the Cold War city, observing that its 'divided nature was like myself'.<sup>223</sup> The city in *Surrogate City* appears both historic and unfinished, its mixture of decay and attempts at renovation recalling the mid-1950s city of McEwan's *The Innocent*. Its illusory character makes it seem like a stage-set rather than a stock of substantial buildings: 'All she saw was another street, with more old houses, some of them with peeling facades, some with scaffolding outside' (SC 12).

Nonetheless, West Berlin in *Surrogate City* is not without utopian moments of belief in the future, as when Helen's pregnant body itself is envisaged as harbouring the growth of a new city: 'She would become part of a forward evolution; expanding internally as though inside her there was a city under construction' (SC 10). A more specific association of Berlin with the pregnant womb occurs when the narrator, Alan Craig, relaxing with Helen in the Tiergarten, imagines 'the chariot of horses from the Brandenburg Gate [...] charging away across the top of her stomach' (SC 91). The animation of the Quadriga from the Gate expresses a desire for liberation from the constraints of the divided city which can be retrospectively read as foreshadowing the fall of the Wall. Although these images attempt to bring Berlin within the ambit of the body, the city remains mobile and elusive, resistant to containment: there is no domestication of Berlin as a likely future

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<sup>223</sup> See article on DAAD Scholarship Holders/Alumni, Hugo Hamilton, Guest of the Artists-in-Berlin programme 2001-2002 <[http://www.daad.de/alumni/pics/vip/Hugo Hamilton](http://www.daad.de/alumni/pics/vip/Hugo%20Hamilton)> [accessed 30 May 2009].

environment for the pregnant woman and her prospective child. Instead, the dominant image of the woman in *Surrogate City* remains her dystopian disorientation in the labyrinth of the city. Helen and Alan meet and complement each other for a short time but their relationship proves to be as provisional and insecure as the divided city which surrounds them.

The narrator of *Surrogate City* has a detached visitor perspective which resembles the narrative persona that Isherwood developed for *Goodbye to Berlin*. However, Alan's marginal position as an outsider is enhanced by insider knowledge: he knows more about the host culture and its language than he is prepared to admit. Instead, he plays the part of the unknowing visitor: 'I'm good at letting on I know less than I do' (SC 19). Feigning ignorance when caught with an unvalidated ticket on the U-Bahn, he pretends not to speak the native language: 'In fact I understand a lot more German than I'm given credit for. But it pays not to know too much' (SC 19). To adopt as metaphor the title of Hamilton's novel, *Disguise*, he is adept at acting the outsider. His attitude to negotiating the rail system contrasts with the naivety and hurt innocence of Winger's protagonist who is aggrieved to discover that public transport in Berlin is not free. Fined at Friedrichstrasse station for travelling on the underground without a ticket just when 'she was beginning to feel at home' (TMP 172), Hope finds that Berlin is not as welcoming and generous as she expected. Winger, however, is perhaps too indulgent of her heroine in contrasting her distraught emotional state with the stereotypically German officiousness of the inspector who disregards Hope's pleas of ignorance of the fare-paying system (TMP 173-175).

An apparently neutral, pseudo-objective documentary style is typical of the narrative voice in *Surrogate City*: Alan's impressions of the city seem to be without any particular ideological perspective and his interpretation of the city tends to be ironically encoded rather than explicit. A character without a strong will, someone who is acted upon rather than acts, he feels himself merging into the other people with whom he lives:

The boundaries of events and personalities became unclear and elusive. Where does Helen begin and Hadja end? Where does Mehmet end and I begin? Where does Dieter begin and I end? (SC 129)

Alan's anxiety about dissolution of identity here is counterbalanced by an intimation of the utopian potential of communal togetherness. The permeability of inter-personal boundaries takes on extra resonance in the context of a city then defined by a reinforced border in the form of the Berlin Wall. The novel's principal characters are Irish, Turkish and German, reflecting the cosmopolitanism of the city: they share apartments and work, socialising and drifting in and out of relationships with one another. Despite the apparent openness of this communal lifestyle, Alan's reserved attitude and tendency to observe contrasts with the emotionally open and demonstrative behaviour of his Berlin friends:

Hadja and Wolf stop at nothing. They say irreversible things. I hate you. I love you. Yes. No. Liebling. Schatz. arschloch. Anything. Things I would never dream of saying to anyone. (SC149)

In negotiating the city, Alan relies on the self-confidence of his flatmates: 'Hadja and Wolf sound like the "what's on" magazine *TIP*. They make you feel like you're at the centre of things' (SC 6). Here Alan becomes an insider by association; later, chameleon-like, he becomes a visitor again,

empathising with Helen, an Irish friend, and her pregnancy, as they stroll around West Berlin:

I walked down Tauentzienstrasse with Helen one night. We were larger than life, swollen in the oncoming lights of traffic. We walked slowly, just talking about things; noticing Berlin the way visitors do. (SC 44)

The visitor's heightened perception of Berlin is apparent not just in *Surrogate City*, but also in the narratives of Winger and Aridjis and can be considered part of the argument for defining non-native cultural perspectives on cities.

Hamilton himself has stated that when he was living in Berlin in 1974, he, too, was in the position of an immigrant in the city: 'I was effectively a migrant myself.'<sup>224</sup> However, his ability to speak German meant that he also was partially considered as an insider: 'I had fluent German, so I was accepted as a German, so I had an insider-outsider view'.<sup>225</sup> Helen and Alan, as Irish citizens, are also immigrants in Berlin, if less visibly recognisable as such than the Turkish workers. Helen is less linguistically skilled than her author and, like Mehmet, has to work behind the scenes when employed as a kitchen assistant in a restaurant, due to her limited ability to speak German: 'Helen would have got a job as a waitress if only she had more German' (SC 55). Alan's own struggles with identity and belonging emerge in frequent attempts to define what it is to be 'German': the narrative's frequent reiteration of the concept show an insider's knowledge of the culture while also signalling an outsider's difficulty in absorbing new information and adopting new forms of behaviour. Germany is seen as represented by a culture of open declaration: 'In Germany, everything must be explained.' Shortly afterwards, the point is repeated: 'In Germany, there's no sense in

<sup>224</sup> O'Hanrahan, interview with Hamilton, p.3.

<sup>225</sup> O'Hanrahan, interview with Hamilton, p.3.



hiding anything under the carpet' (SC 152). The style here reflects the certainty and clarity of utopian narratives in which the customs of a state are explained. However, the ethnic and economic complexity of West Berlin cannot be so easily assimilated by the official national narrative: for example, the apparent insistence on transparency in the official culture is inconsistent with Hadja's practice of concealing unregistered immigrant Turkish workers.

Inequality in Berlin, often expressed in relationship to space, is a recurrent concern in Hamilton's Berlin novels. In *Surrogate City*, Hamilton's narrator does not ascribe a sense of constriction to 'the Berlin Wall or the fact that West Berlin is an island' (SC 32); instead he attributes it to social inequality: 'Claustrophobia in Berlin is caused by the sight of what other people have' (SC 32). Michel de Certeau has described how the view from the former World Trade Center detaches the viewer from commonality with the mass of humanity below: 'His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance.'<sup>226</sup> A similar spatial perspective in *Surrogate City* also reveals class and power distinctions. When Hadja looks down from the elevated point of view of her apartment at the U-Bahn station below it is reduced to appearing 'like a hole in the ground' (SC 15). Huyssen characterises Berlin, prior to the fall of the Wall, as constituted of a past in which empty spaces or 'voids' are a recurrent presence.<sup>227</sup> The image of a hole corresponds with similar spatial aporias such as McEwan's depiction of the ruins of the tunnel site at Altglienicke in *The Innocent* (TI 218) or the depiction of the site of the former Gestapo building in *Black Dogs*, as

<sup>226</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p.92.

<sup>227</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.55.

described in the last chapter. From Hadja's elevated perspective the people beneath her appear weak and inconsequential:

From where Hadja stands, people look small and ineffective. They could be crushed so easily. Another handful of passengers emerging from the U-Bahn would hardly be missed. (SC 16)

A similar elevation occurs in *The Love Test* when an East German scientist, Ralf, on the night of his defection from East Berlin, also looks down from a high window at the passers-by on a West Berlin street below. However, unlike Hadja, he does not reduce them to a worthless collective by the 'imaginary totalizations'<sup>228</sup> to which de Certeau refers. Distance from the ground makes the people below appear to lose stature and a sense of purpose in their movement, but Ralf's attitude is neutral, not dismissive: 'Ralf looked out of the window over the city at the tiny figures shuffling along pavements below, bathed in the pink of neon lights' (*TLT* 101). Newly arrived in West Berlin, Ralf's detachment from the city is figured in his distance from ground level but, unlike Hadja, he does not dismiss those who are belittled by the elevated perspective.

*Surrogate City* signals Hamilton's preference for the peripheral in a critique of the affluent and fashionable areas in West Berlin. The parading of wealth on Kurfürstendamm exposes the vast difference between the income of the rich and that of invited immigrant workers: 'More private property can be seen walking down Ku-damm in five minutes than a Gastarbeiter would earn in a lifetime' (SC 33). Later, in a scene reminiscent of the city collage approach which encapsulates 1920s Berlin in Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927), a new chapter is introduced by a snapshot

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<sup>228</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p.93.

of lunchtime customers sitting outside at tables and restaurant terraces along Kurfürstendamm and Savignyplatz (SC 114). However, the focus quickly shifts and the depiction of the prosperous city area provides a contrast the conditions of a group of immigrant workers who are described as living in the one street, thereby revealing ghettoisation within West Berlin: 'they are all Turkish; all from Grossbeerenstrasse in Kreuzberg' (SC 114). Working without official state authorisation, the labourers are employed below street level to evade inspection: 'Men are easily hidden in a cellar' (SC 114). The job requires that the workers suppress their identity but they only agree reluctantly as 'they don't like to be told to keep the Turkish music from the cassette player down' (SC 115). A sign of nostalgia for home in a context of alienation, music here represents a yearning for belonging.

After unification, Hamilton shows in *The Love Test* how new forms of East-West inequality are mapped onto older ones of gender. Mathias's short-term affair with Christa Süsskind, which ends when he decides to return to his wife, is emblematic of the initial, short-lived, West German infatuation with the East (and vice versa) which accompanied the initial euphoria of reunification. Here Sharp's research into the representation of women from the GDR in the popular media in the post-unification period is relevant and, in particular, analysis of how East German women became objectified as 'fantasy products for the western market as part of the legitimate spoils of victory'.<sup>229</sup> In *The Love Test*, at their first meeting, Mathias makes an assessment of Christa's physique which is inextricable from his awareness of her GDR origins as shown by two references to her as an 'East German

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<sup>229</sup> Sharp, 'To the Victor the Spoils', p.180.

woman' (LT 20-21). Like Russell in the Neva Hotel in 1955 in *The Innocent*, he passes judgement on the sexuality of the East German woman, although unlike Russell, Mathias doesn't conclude that she is unsatisfactory. Secretly surveying her body, he makes a surreptitious appraisal of her as a potential partner: 'Wonderful legs, he thought, making an habitual, subconscious comparison with Claudia's legs' (LT 21). Christa's relative powerlessness as an East German in the new Berlin is evident in the help she needs in gaining redress for the personal damage to her life resulting from GDR state abuse. As a result, she has to depend on Mathias, who as a West Berliner, is in a position of power as a journalist to advance her case. The development of their professional relationship into a sexual partnership reveals the privileging of the Western male in the period around unification when, as Sharp has observed, German popular magazines portrayed West German males as superior to East German men with 'access to power and the symbols of power and wealth which are presented as a necessary part of erotic appeal'.<sup>230</sup> Although Christa and Mathias appear to be united by their affair and their common goal in seeking to find Christa's son, the inequality inherent in the clash of cultures represented in *The Love Test* by the former Hohenschönhausen inmate and the western Kreuzberg journalist is another sign of the persistence of dystopian traits in the newly united city: the common cause of exposing the inhumane practices used by the East German state security service is not enough to unite the divided cultural formations of East and West.

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<sup>230</sup> Sharp, 'To the Victor the Spoils', p.180.

All of Hamilton's novels appear to portray outsiders such as the Irish characters, Alan and Helen in *Surrogate City*, and Christa, who, in *The Love Test*, as an East German, is conscious of a need to empower herself by making contacts with Westerners, like Maria in *The Innocent*. The protagonist of *Disguise*, Gregor, a character whose German identity is complicated by his potential Jewishness, is also an outsider who finds it difficult to settle in Berlin prior to the fall of the Wall. However, it should be noted that Alan is still resident in Berlin at the end of *Surrogate City*; Christa has made a proposal that Mathias should father a baby for her; and Gregor at the end of *Disguise* is back living in Berlin, reconciled with his wife and son: although they appear to be on the margins of the city, all sustain a sense of belonging to Berlin.

One of the major challenges faced by Berlin in the new memory landscape created by the fall of the Wall and the downfall of the communist regime in East Germany involved recognition of the legacy of state repression in the GDR, details of which began to emerge in this period with the opening of state security files to the public. In this respect, the incorporation of Walter Thräne's story of suffering at the hands of the Stasi as a principal narrative strand in *The Love Test* encapsulates a contemporary moment while also bearing witness through memory to the inhumane methods practised by the East German state in its punitive treatment of defectors. A contemporary fiction, the novel is primarily concerned with the uneven experience of unification in Berlin in the immediate, post-Wall period: *The Love Test* shows the city becoming once again the stage for a significant political development as characters

emanating from the former East and West Berlin meet uneasily in unequal circumstances. Describing the impact of infrastructural projects on the unification process, Clay Large has observed how the utopian principles manifest in the reconstruction and reconnection of the city were not matched by a coming together of the people of Berlin:

All the efforts to rejoin streets, reconnect utilities, and transform the east into a shining replica of the west, however, did little to pull the city together politically or socially.<sup>231</sup>

Writing in 1994, a year before publication of *The Love Test*, Hamilton summed up the reunified Berlin of October 1991 as ‘the newly reopened, hastily stitched together city of Berlin’.<sup>232</sup> Remembering an Anglo-American anti-German culture of the 1950s, he commented on how the latter could be related to ‘the very same high-moral stance of the capitalist triumph over communism at the end of the Cold War’.<sup>233</sup> As McEwan’s *The Innocent* refers to and reconstructs this very triumphalism in its representation of Berlin in 1955-1956, Hamilton’s comment illustrates the contemporary, post-Cold War relevance of McEwan’s novel. Paul Cooke has observed how ‘the language of colonization pervaded discussions of German unification and the place of east Germans within this new society in the 1990s’.<sup>234</sup> Calling into question the idea of the west colonising the east, Cooke claims that ‘perceptions of colonization’ remained important in the relationship of east and west Germans to the unified state.<sup>235</sup> East German sensitivity to perceived disempowerment is apparent in the tension between east and

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<sup>231</sup> Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York: Basic, 2000), p.558.

<sup>232</sup> Hugo Hamilton, Introduction to Francis Stuart, *The Pillar of Cloud* (Dublin: New Island, 1994), pp.1-4 (p.1).

<sup>233</sup> Hamilton, Introduction, *The Pillar of Cloud*, pp.1-4 (p.3).

<sup>234</sup> Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p.2.

<sup>235</sup> Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification*, p.2.

west Germans in *The Love Test*. The strain is evident in the first meeting between Mathias and Christa, when the latter seeks the help of the *Tageszeitung* journalist in finding the child forcibly taken from her in prison by the Stasi. Mathias's casual western approach and ease with publicity comes into conflict with Christa's more intense and guarded sensibility, particularly when she objects to him running a story about her case in the paper

'I don't want my whole life story published.'

Mathias was taken aback. The hate which she had shown towards the past seemed like nothing to the hostility and opposition she expressed towards the dominant West. (*LT* 23)

Following the fall of the Wall in 1989, once the immediate euphoria had subsided, clear differences in the social formation of East and West Germans became apparent. This scene, in which Mathias is surprised at the vehemence of Christa's hostility to what she perceives to be a Western hegemony, illustrates a mutual incomprehension. As Mary Fulbrook has observed, even early in the unification process, 'East and West Germans had effectively become strangers to one another'.<sup>236</sup> As this example from *The Love Test* shows, the sudden unification of the nation could not conceal how Germans in their two separate states, according to Fulbrook, had 'become quite different social beings'.<sup>237</sup>

The lack of social cohesion in the newly reunified Berlin is exemplified in Hamilton's novel through incongruous spatial juxtapositions. As Christa descends from the U-Bahn station at Kottbusser Tor, the clash of East and West German cultures represented by her meeting with Mathias is echoed by a series of spatial comparisons in contrasting paragraphs. A reference to

<sup>236</sup> Mary Fulbrook, 'Ossis and Wessis: the creation of two German societies, 1945-1990', in *Twentieth-Century Germany: Politics, Culture and Society, 1918-1990*, ed. by Mary Fulbrook (London: Arnold, 2001), pp.225-46 (p.225).

<sup>237</sup> Fulbrook, 'Ossis and Wessis: the creation of two German societies, 1945-1990', p.245.

Hohenschönhausen prison is followed by a description of the defiant lassitude of a group of punks inhabiting a grimy transitional space outside the West Berlin U-Bahn station, which is in turn contrasted with the neatness of a designer bar in the vicinity:

The only progress he had made so far was to compile a list of some ex-Hohenschönhausen inmates.

That afternoon Christa made her way by U-Bahn to meet him, getting off at Kottbusser Tor and descending the concrete steps. A young punk girl stretched out her hand to beg a few marks, her face reddened by the sun, hair matted and filthy. In the afternoon warmth, young men lay on the concrete, some laughing like halfwits through stained teeth, some drinking cans of beer [...]. One of them lying under the U-Bahn bridge had his trousers open, exposing everything. The salty stench of urine hit her nostrils.

Not far away, Mathias was waiting for her, in a trendy Kreuzberg bar. (LT 61)

The edges of the station, the steps and the area under the bridge, provide a stage for the punks to display themselves in a challenge to the orthodoxy of the conventional travellers who are forced to pass them at the narrow entrances and exits from the station. The boundary of the station steps, which provides a platform for the punks as Christa descends towards street level, can be compared with Homi Bhabha's description of the stairwell 'as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity'.<sup>238</sup> Fran Tonkiss, developing the work of Jane Jacobs on the vacuums created by urban borders describes such spaces as creating 'new space: in-between zones whose uses and meanings remain uncertain.'<sup>239</sup> By occupying the steps between the station and the street, the gang give a new shape to the public

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<sup>238</sup> Homi Bhabha, 'Border Lives: The Art of the Present', in *Defining Travel: Diverse Visions*, ed. by Susan L. Robertson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), pp.157-66 (p.160).

<sup>239</sup> See 'The Curse of Border Vacuums', in Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp.257-69. Fran Tonkiss, *Space, the City and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), p. 32.



transit zone by redefining it as a parody of private, domestic space. The general aura of lassitude can be read as a symptom of a marginal group who have not been engaged by the dominant politics of the unification process.

Defiant and yet still dependent, as shown by the girl, the sprawling unruliness and indolence of the punks contrasts with the studied casualness and orderly behaviour in the fashionable bar. Over a decade after Kreuzberg's heyday in the early 1980s, when it was 'the epicentre of the squat scene'<sup>240</sup> as Clay Large has observed, the association between Kreuzberg and a history of alternative lifestyles and anti-authoritarianism continues. Hamilton himself is sympathetic to the position of the punks as outsiders and identifies a lethargy in the city which has excluded them rather than in the punks themselves:

There is something brutal about the city which casts them out. There is something tired and uninspiring about the culture they inherit.<sup>241</sup>

For Hamilton, the shocking behaviour of the punks is symptomatic of a desire to participate in society: 'whether it is through a drug culture or a pop culture or graffiti, it is all an act of claiming and [...] an attempt to belong'.<sup>242</sup> One of the architectural and social spaces that excludes the punks is the designer 'Kreuzberg bar' (*LT 61*) in which Mathias meets Christa. It is situated in the text with deliberate awkwardness between the anarchic punk spectacle and Christa's emotional personal testimony describing the suffering inflicted on her by the East German state. Mathias's choice of venue reflects western insensitivity: Christa recalls that she was forced to join the Stasi who then abducted her child, but the brash contemporary ambience of the bar clashes

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<sup>240</sup> Clay Large, *Berlin*, p.493.

<sup>241</sup> O'Hanrahan, interview with Hamilton, p.4.

<sup>242</sup> O'Hanrahan, interview with Hamilton, p.4.

with the intensity and gravity of Christa's testimony. The disjunction between traumatic memory and the city's fashionable new architecture also reveals a temporal incongruity: 'the analysis of her past seemed entirely at odds with this trendy enclave of Berlin' (*LT* 8). The city's constant reinvention is here portrayed as implicated in the diminution of its memory. From the detached observer's perspective of Alan in *Surrogate City* to the protest of the punks in *The Love Test*, Hamilton identifies with marginal stances and groups but shows an insider's understanding of the environments which have created these positions of exclusion.

### 3. Forgetting and Remembering the Wall: Berlin as Prison

In *Surrogate City*, memory, in the form of forgetting, plays its part in everyday living for the citizens of West Berlin in the 1970s and 1980s, who treat the Wall which surrounds and divides the city as an historical feature and tourist curiosity which is best forgotten:

It's a monument that deserves a visit, like the leaning tower of Pisa. But after that, if you settle in Berlin, it is never mentioned again. For most people it doesn't exist. (*SC* 8)

As Boym has observed, 'When the Wall was present, it wasn't much spoken about'.<sup>243</sup> By ignoring it, the West Berliners in Hamilton's novel refuse to acknowledge its authority and attempt to defy the artificiality of division. However, the fact that this tactic is necessary at all is a testament to the Wall's hegemony. Reference to the Wall as a monument and a spectacular anomaly like the tower at Pisa is also an indication that it has accrued a degree of value as an historical entity. An air of unreality permeates a city

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<sup>243</sup> Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.178.

swamped by tourist photographs: 'All over the city, things appeared as they would on prints; durable images that would outlast either of us' (SC 148).

More lasting than its citizens, the city in turn is shaped by the reproduction of its own image.

The Wall is not just a concrete barrier: lighting plays an important role in asserting its divisive presence. As the narrator, Alan Craig, observes: 'it's really the floodlights that create the frontier' (SC 48). A lighting operator himself, he is alert to the different qualities of light and points out that the constant illumination of the Wall is unnatural: 'There is a strip along the Berlin Wall which hasn't seen darkness in years' (SC 44). Identifying with the local coping strategy of sceptical indifference to the Wall, Alan distances himself from those who come to see it as a tourist attraction: 'Nobody in Berlin would dream of getting their picture taken by the Wall', he pronounces, adding: 'We're not holidaymakers' (SC 154). Indifference to the Wall in West Berlin signals a refusal to acknowledge its power to intimidate but its appeal to tourists appears to be a sign that spectacle is replacing substance and that the Wall's function in entrenching the East-West division of the city is being hidden by its fame. However when Helen asks to be photographed by the Wall, and Wolf, a local musician, casually uses it as a backdrop for his album cover, the insider's studious avoidance of the Wall is exposed as more of an attitude designed to distinguish between Berliners and outsiders than a firm conviction. The aura of unreality which surrounds the Wall is intensified when the narrator even professes to regret a notional erasure of the frontier through over-exposure to tourist photography: 'Every year, thousands of visitors take photographs of the Berlin Wall. There will be nothing left of it

soon' (SC 154). There is an uncanny premonition here of the eradication of the Wall: set in the years prior to its fall, by the time of the publication of *Surrogate City* in 1990, the work of removing it was already underway.

The casual indifference to the Wall in the narration is almost like mimicry of the knowing attitude of a local, as advice is given recommending a visit for those new to the city, but otherwise downplaying its significance: 'The newcomer is urged to take a look at the Berlin Wall itself. It's worth that much, anyhow.' (SC 8). The narrator's offhand tone here can be partly explained by a desire to differ from the self-righteous attitude of visiting Western politicians and their exhortations to the Soviet regime to remove the Wall. Instead the local strategy of coping with division is to ignore it (SC 8).

The absence of the Wall in *The Love Test*, whose primary contemporary setting is the early 1990s, is indicative of the speed with which it was dismantled during the unification process. However, the historical turn in this period is evident in the inclusion of a fictionalised account of Walter Thräne's actual defection from East Berlin in the 1960s. Although there is no reference to Thräne in the text apart from an initial dedication, Ralf and Christa's story in *The Love Test* is closely based on Thräne's defection, capture and subsequent imprisonment.<sup>244</sup>

Ralf and Christa's escape from East Berlin reveals the spatial abnormality of the divided city through the bizarre territorial designations that

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<sup>244</sup> A former scientist and member of the Stasi, Thräne defected to West Berlin in 1962 with his girlfriend and linked up with a friend, whom he was unaware was a Stasi informer. The latter, however, proceeded to report Thräne's whereabouts to the East German authorities and, as a result, the couple were captured in Austria, assaulted and brought back into the Eastern bloc via Czechoslovakia: Thräne subsequently served ten years in solitary confinement in Hohenschönhausen prison.<sup>244</sup>

constitute the inner-city frontier within Friedrichstrasse station. The realism and human perspective of the depiction of the border crossing in Hamilton contrasts with the emphasis on the absurdity of the militarisation of the same station through the deployment of teams of heavily armed guards in Deighton's *Faith*, as discussed in chapter one. In *The Love Test*, although the Wall itself is not described, the couple have to cross the border by negotiating a checkpoint between the overground S-Bahn and underground U-Bahn platforms. Further abnormal spatial constraints and juxtapositions emerge when the U-Bahn train on which the couple leave East Berlin is officially categorised as 'West Berlin space' but actually passes through closed stations in East Berlin territory before it reaches West Berlin:

They carried on by U-Bahn, and, though they were technically in the West already, on West Berlin transport, Ralf realized that they still had to pass through more disused East Berlin stations before they were out of GDR territory. (*LT* 81)

East Berlin seeps into West Berlin and vice versa: the boundary, as often in Hamilton, is uncertain, space is porous and bounded by edges that are fluid, not fixed. The disused 'ghost' stations between East and West Berlin were atypical East Berlin underground stations, but here serve as emblematic of the East German regime, their gloomy abandoned atmosphere rendered as 'the jaundiced twilight of GDR stations' (*LT* 81). In contrast with the representation of the ghost stations in Aridjis as memory sites, here Hamilton's earlier fiction incorporates them into a past narrative which has an imaginative actuality.

West Berlin is defined by illumination: the couple encounter 'the first brightly lit West station' (*LT* 81) and when they emerge from the U-Bahn at Kurfürstenstrasse, the western city is evoked by neon lights. However, the

situation is far from the utopian discovery of a promised land: the spectacular lights barely conceal the tawdry reality of a street where the smells from a kebab shop strike the East Germans as 'exotic' (LT 98), a sign of how foreign West Berlin has become to those from the other side of the city. Later, when Ralf reflects in the confinement of his cell on the freedom of which he has been deprived, there is a poignancy in the reduction of his memories of the West to a fleeting series of sensory impressions, in which West Berlin is again associated with illumination:

the luxury of this slow healing brought back more clearly the reality of the world from which he had been plucked: the lights of West Berlin and Munich; the smell of the underground, the taste of beer and wurst.(LT 107)

Heightened by deprivation, Ralf's memory of the West is conveyed through a relish for the most basic sensory impressions of the city, contrasting with the blasé ease with which West Berliners dismiss East Germany in *Surrogate City*:

In East Berlin, they say, things are so inferior. Life is inferior. You'd never buy anything over there. Certainly not clothes or electrical items. (SC 8)

Here the narrator's use of the phrase 'they say' is characteristic of his divided outsider-insider status, showing how he is implicated in listening to and recording routine claims of West Berlin superiority but also distanced from their actual articulation. Such unchallenged convictions contribute to an impression of West Berlin's insularity in *Surrogate City*; in *The Love Test*, in keeping with its title, common knowledge is more rigorously challenged in the context of actual encounters between East and West Germans in the newly unified city.

In *Disguise*, which is primarily set in the former East, the emphasis on memory presents an opportunity to present an insider East Berlin perspective on the Wall during the Cold War era. A revealing anecdote explores the psychological and social damage it inflicted and provides a corrective to complacent western views of the inferiority of East Berlin in *Surrogate City*. The difficulty East Berliners experienced in presenting a rational explanation for the Wall's existence emerges in Mara's memory of how Thorsten, as a child, used to travel to school with his mother on the S-Bahn railway. When they pass the Wall and Thorsten asks her about its purpose, she replies strictly in accordance with state socialist doctrine but her response sounds so absurd in the railway carriage that unintentionally she appears to be mocking the system. The other passengers ignore her except for one man who objects, saying that 'her attitude was disgraceful and that she should stay quiet' (*D* 167). Subsequently, she is told by an official that she would no longer be allowed to travel on the S-Bahn. The anecdote reveals a dystopian situation in the impossibility of living in a perversely controlled environment where even authorised responses sound wrong: 'the innocence of the questions and the answers must have sounded absurd' (*D* 166). The incapacity of state-controlled East Berlin to accommodate innocence is illuminating when considered in relation to McEwan's foregrounding of the same concept also in relation to the divided city, but at an earlier, pre-Wall stage in its development. In Hamilton's example, innocence is not only incongruous but also a challenge: the state 'utopia' can be preserved provided nobody ever breaks the illusion in public by referring to the illogical rules on which it is constructed. The Wall, rather than

preserving the perfect socialist state, creates a dystopia where values are perverted and citizens live in fear of not conforming.

The paradoxical position of belonging and alienation which characterises Hamilton's Berlin is accentuated by the fall of the Wall. Towards the end of *Disguise*, the spectacle of the opening of the Wall makes Gregor partially feel like a tourist, the condition which, in *Surrogate City*, the locals had tried so hard to avoid: 'The city was still full of excitement and confusion after the Wall had come down. He felt like a tourist and an inhabitant at the same time' (*D* 248). Here again the combination of local and visitor is typical of Hamilton showing how Gregor embodies a paradoxical sense of simultaneous belonging in the city and detachment from it. This stance can be related to Hamilton's own dual identity which he has described as 'a form of schizophrenia' and 'a form of disconnectedness.'<sup>245</sup> In another example of dislocation, Gregor's mother struggles like her son to reconnect with Berlin when Mara brings her back during the period of division to see the city from which she has been separated since the war (*D* 212-213). The scene in which they visit the Wall and look across to East Berlin from a viewing platform shows a former resident of the city forced by its post-war division to become a visitor and experience Berlin in the same distant and mediated way as a tourist.

Despite the desire of some locals to ignore the Wall in *Surrogate City*, its presence is unavoidable; physically absent in *The Love Test*, it continues to haunt the city in the form of the persistence of East-West social division; in both novels the Wall or its legacy prevents the imagination of a progressive

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<sup>245</sup> O'Hanrahan, interview with Hamilton, p.10.



future and underscores a dystopian vision. In *Disguise*, Gregor's identity crisis starts in wartime schism and loss of a settled family structure; it can only be repaired after the ending of the era of paralysis and separation symbolised by the Wall.

Hohenschönhausen prison in *The Love Test* becomes a synecdoche for the GDR as a whole. Ralph Süsskind sees his own confinement as 'an image of the entire population of East Germany being in prison, jailors and inmates alike' (LT 117). Located in north-east Berlin, from 1951 until 1990, Hohenschönhausen was the centre of a network of GDR prisons controlled by the Stasi or Ministry for State Security. In *The Love Test* memory of humiliating and inhumane practices in prison defines the lives of the novel's two principal East German characters, Ralf and Christa. Both memoir and spy thriller, the narrative describes the couple's defection from the GDR into West Berlin and their subsequent capture following betrayal by a friend. This leads into a detailed depiction of the ordeal the pair endure in prison, including beatings, interrogations and solitary confinement. John Carey has observed, that 'punishment is a subject that inevitably concerns creators of utopias, since the eradication of wrong-doing is one of their prime targets.'<sup>246</sup> The forced adoption of the couple's child in the Stasi-controlled prison is indicative of the loss of human rights suffered by dissidents in detention in the GDR and of the state's determination to eradicate any trace of opposition. The reconstruction in *The Love Test* of the procedures of prisoner subjugation used in Hohenschönhausen is reminiscent of the breaking down of the will of those considered to be opponents of the

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<sup>246</sup> John Carey, *The Faber Book of Utopias* (London: Faber, 1999), p.28.

totalitarian state depicted by Orwell in *1984*. Particularly apposite here is Foucault's commentary on how power in modern society is secretly extended through widespread surveillance in the form of a panopticism which operates 'on the underside of the law, a machinery that is both immense and minute, which supports, reinforces, multiplies the asymmetry of power.'<sup>247</sup> In one instance, Ralf and Christa, who have been imprisoned in isolation from each other, are forced under surveillance to confront each other naked; but by refusing to embrace they resist the outcome desired by the watching authorities and appear to reveal a strength born out of the extreme marginality of their experience:

Ralf felt his way like a blind man to one of the armchairs. Christa was curled up into a ball. [...] It seemed that even by force or by threat of death they would not submit to each other's bodies. (*LT* 159)

However, this refusal to be manipulated takes its toll after release when the couple separate. A spatial legacy of the repression practised in the prison at Hohenschönhausen is the contamination of the local area by its memory in the form of an empty apartment near the prison once owned by a senior Stasi official. Mathias learns from a caretaker that 'the flat had been empty since the end of 1989' (*LT* 113); new tenants have been encouraged but 'were reluctant to move to Hohenschönhausen' (*LT* 113). Invested with memory of the abuses practised by the GDR in the name of State Security, here is another example of Huyssen's concept of a Berlin void, this time not based on destruction but on conscious avoidance..

Contrasting with the deserted Hohenschönhausen apartments and the tainted legacy of the area, there are signs of recovery in a new energy and

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<sup>247</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Discipline and Punish', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991), pp.206-213 (p.212).

social mix in Hamilton's contemporary depiction of other areas of post-unification East Berlin. A scene located in Oranienburgerstrasse, on the edge of Alexanderplatz, in the up-and-coming area of Mitte, and a sometime red – light district, shows how this long, but liminal connecting street has diversified following the unification of the city to attract a bohemian mix ranging from artists and students to prostitutes. Hamilton's use of a translated title. 'Fruit and Vegetables' (*LT* 136), to describe a bar well known at the time as 'Obst und Gemüse', reflects a degree of wariness of German in the English-language Berlin novel of the early 1990s. The bar's 'sludge-green GDR shop sign' (*LT* 136) may seem to signal the torpor conventionally associated with commercial life in the former East Berlin but has now become a signifier of contemporary fashion. Complementing the heterogeneity of the crowd attracted to the bar, lights pulsate and sound reverberates from a rave party in a nearby basement. The energy and cosmopolitanism of the area appeal to both Mathias and Christa, but in praising it as a 'wild place' (*LT* 137), Christa's enthusiasm about the renewal of this part of former East Berlin also reconfirms a stereotype suggesting that it is an area outside the civilised West. However, the next venue visited by the couple, also based on an actual bar called 'Ostzone', shows how quickly objects associated with the former East Germany have passed into obsolescence:

The new bar was like an exhibition of GDR artefacts: bits of old shop signs, a defunct Soviet washing machine, colanders, a headless tailor's dummy and the disembodied parts of a Trabi. (*LT* 137)

Here the fetishising of the products of the former regime as pub décor is portrayed as a dismemberment in which the former state is broken up and trivialised as postmodern spectacle. A mixed legacy from the East German

past is also apparent in the representation of Pankow, an East Berlin district just to the north of the city centre, which is depicted as a residential neighbourhood and site of an Eastern European market. Mathias occasionally stays with Christa in 'her small apartment in Pankow' (*LT* 165): the lack of any further comment on the apartment, beyond the allusion to its modest size, is indicative of the diminished status of East Berlin in the early phase of unification. Despite a forty-year difference in temporal setting, McEwan in *The Innocent* also uses Pankow in an early 1990s novel to signify a residential location which provides an alternative to West Berlin. Pankow also features in the novel as the site of an East European market, at which the selling of cheap imitation goods by immigrants from Eastern countries associated with the former GDR, such as Poland and Vietnam, is a sign that the unification of the city has not led to an extension of Western economic well-being, as indicated by the devaluing of the products on sale. As seen in the depiction of the intoxicated punks languishing on the threshold of Kottbusser Tor U-Bahn station, open-air drinking is again in evidence and suggests unemployment and economic marginalisation. Here Hamilton is not just depicting the GDR legacy in the Eastern origin of the immigrants; he also shows how natives of countries aligned with the former Eastern bloc now have to struggle to survive in the new Berlin by redefining the value of their goods within the hegemony of 'free market' Western capitalism:

A Polish man offered three potato peelers for the price of one and tiny Vietnamese women sold cut-price cartons of cigarettes. Men sat on the park benches nearby with sunburned faces, drinking. (*LT* 165)

The opening up to the West does not offer a universal panacea: informal, spontaneous and traditional forms of street trading may have returned to

East Berlin following the demise of the GDR state-controlled economy, but there is no immediate recovery. East Berlin may be seen slowly emerging from the legacy of decades of overbearing political control and economic impoverishment but there is no utopian social transformation by the West.

Confinement and surveillance, however, is not exclusive to East Berlin and also arise in the context of a West Berlin couple's dysfunctional and claustrophobic relationship. A scene in which Mathias spies on his wife in bed with a lover implicates the observer in a domesticated western version of the surveillance more systematically practised in Hohenschönhausen. Despite contributing to the tension of the family home through an affair of his own, Mathias, after witnessing the adulterous scene described above, ironically feels the need for 'the freedom of the streets outside' (LT 132), recognising, as he leaves, 'how suffocating the familiarity of this place was' (LT 132). However, there is still a crucial difference between the reality of prison and its semantic application: only the West Berliners enjoy the luxury of prison as metaphor.

The configuration of divided Berlin as a prison in Hamilton can be related thematically to references to the carceral nature of the city in the 1930s in Philip Kerr's *Berlin Noir*, which were discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Kerr alludes in *March Violets* to Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, a novel which also invests heavily in the trope of Berlin as prison through protagonist Franz Biberkopf who emerges from Tegel jail at the start of the novel and recurrently fears the consequences of being drawn back into criminality. In *The Love Test*, Hamilton describes the persistence of division in the newly unified Berlin by relating the experience of institutional

imprisonment to East Berlin and its metaphorical application to a domestic situation in West Berlin. Dystopian disruptions of human relationships still occur on both sides of the former divide in the city and the instant removal of the Wall leads to new, but fleeting relationships and an atmosphere of volatility beneath the superficial unity. The attack by a gang on a man and an adolescent in a lavatory in McDonald's on Tauentzienstrasse, at the commercial heart of the former West Berlin, shows that violence continues to be associated with confined spaces in Berlin after unification, but has become less institutionalised, and more arbitrary and opportunistic.

#### **4. Berlin as Refuge**

In contrast to the depiction of Berlin as a prison, the city is variously represented in Hamilton's novels as a refuge: in this section this term embraces ideas of home, post-unification East Berlin as a site of regeneration, and the liminal terrain of allotments as sites of personal expression and fantasy. The concept of Berlin as a home is not a given in the Berlin novel or thriller since many of these narratives describe the experience of visitors. However, a desire to identify with the city as a home recurs: it is evident in Winger's presentation of Hope's investigation into her own flat and apartment block as a repository of the memory of the past. For Tatiana, in Aridjis's *Book of Clouds*, the experience of the city as *unheimlich*, or uncanny, is literally 'unhomely' even in the occasional sanctuary provided by her apartment which she sums up on leaving as 'a little cave of solitude I'd both shunned and withdrawn to depending on mood' (BC 204).

Berlin is more accommodating in Hamilton, in which home is linked in Hamilton's memoir, *The Sailor in the Wardrobe*, and in *Surrogate City* to a concept of the city as haven. An association between utopia and the idea of a haven can be traced back to the sixteenth century and More's genre-defining *Utopia* which includes three references to 'haven' in a description of the approaches to the land of Utopia.<sup>248</sup> In *Surrogate City*, the apartment of the narrator, Alan Craig, is located in Sonnallee, in the Berlin district of Neukölln, near the Wall on the inner-city border with East Berlin.<sup>249</sup> This neighbourhood, relatively close to Mitte, the city's central district, became peripheral in the aftermath of post-war division, and, especially after the building of the Wall in 1961; it is, however, typical of the marginal areas which feature in Hamilton's Berlin novels. The location of Craig's flat is clearly based on Hamilton's own period of residence in the neighbourhood, after he left Dublin in 1974, as he records in his second memoir, *The Sailor in the Wardrobe*: 'I've got a place to live on a street called Sonnenallee, in Neukölln' (SW 259). Here the narrator experiences a new sense of belonging, which is encapsulated in a haven image: 'I walk back towards Neukölln as if the city has become a harbour' (SW 263). Close to the Wall, the flat may have felt even more home-like as the truncation of Sonnenallee by the Wall would have made the surrounding area exceptionally quiet. The idea of Berlin as a haven is prefigured in *The Sailor in the Wardrobe*, in which the protagonist is depicted arriving in Berlin for the first time by a sea route via Hamburg (SW 258).

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<sup>248</sup> Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Ralph Robynson, ed. by David Harris Sacks (Boston MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), p.128.

<sup>249</sup> Hamilton, *The Sailor in the Wardrobe*, p. 259.

Through shared resonances with the sea, the idea of the haven is cognate with the myth known as *Berlin am Meer*, or Berlin-on-Sea. Despite its industrial legacy, Berlin's built heritage is surrounded by a considerable natural environment, as a city crossed by a river and a canal and surrounded by lakes. Combined with its sandy foundations, these watery surroundings have contributed to the myth of Berlin as a coastal location. *Surrogate City* alludes to Berlin as being 'built on sand' (SC 6): Andrew Webber has commented on how such references are both actual and allegorical and contribute to the city's 'psychocultural topography over the twentieth century'.<sup>250</sup> An example can be cited from Benjamin who creates a coastal palimpsest in the city through memory. Benjamin recalls how images of the Baltic or North Sea beaches would be superimposed onto the urban streetscape close to the departure railway station for these destinations:

Since that time, the dunes of Koserow and Wenningstedt have loomed before me here on Invaliden Strasse (where others have seen only the broad sandstone mass of the Stettiner railroad station).<sup>251</sup>

The urban legend of Berlin-on-sea is also summoned up in the opening pages of *Surrogate City*: 'They make it sound as though the water has only recently receded where in fact it all happened millions of years ago' (SC 6). The myth underscores a perception of Berlin's impermanence, as if it were 'somehow on lease from the sea' (SC 6), perhaps creating a larger temporal perspective to avoid ascribing the city's provisional aura to its divided status.

From a Western perspective, West Berlin became a haven in the Cold War era when the exceptional circumstances of its international governance

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<sup>250</sup> Andrew Webber, 'Berlin: A Topographical Case History' in *The Politics of Place in Post-War Germany*, pp.107-26 (p.111).

<sup>251</sup> Benjamin, 'Berlin Childhood around 1900', in *Selected Writings, 1935-1938*, ed. by Eiland and Jennings, III, pp. 344-413 (p.387).



meant that young Germans could avoid military service by moving there: in *Surrogate City* West Berlin is described as 'A sanctuary for draft dodgers' (SC 37). The same sheltering quality of the city is reiterated in *Disguise* when late-1960s Berlin is described as 'a city full of peeling facades and people on the run from something or other' (D 33). A marginal place, which attracted those in search of alternative and unconventional ways of living, Berlin is celebrated as a place of renewal and reinvention where everyone can 'begin afresh' (D 43).

Both le Carré in *Absolute Friends* and Hamilton in *Disguise* configure West Berlin in the era of student protest as a place where significant personal relationships are formed, as shown in the latter when Gregor meets his future wife, Mara, at a demonstration. Not only for expatriates but for Germans, too, Berlin can be liberating as shown when it is seen as offering Mara refuge from the religious conservatism of the Rhineland: 'She had escaped to Berlin, it turned out, freeing herself from a rigid, Catholic, Rhineland upbringing' (D 64). Here Hamilton's bifurcated identity can be seen at work: on the one hand, this can be read as a displacement of Hamilton's Irish concerns in a German context: as his memoirs describe, he himself escaped to Berlin after growing up in a family dominated by his father's dogmatic Irish nationalism. On the other, there is also an echo here of Hamilton's mother's migration from Kempen in North Rhine-Westphalia to Dublin in the immediate post-war period. Mara, like Maria in *The Innocent*, is also another example of an internal migrant to Berlin from within Germany.

Use of a rural space as a primary setting in *Disguise* is foreshadowed by the recurrence of suburban allotments in the first two of Hamilton's Berlin

novels as signs of an inclination in Hamilton towards peripheral spaces. These could be seen as more indeterminate than monumental central city areas and, therefore, more congenial to an author such as Hamilton whose Berlin novels function in the liminal space between external and internal perspectives. Allotments offer an intermittent leisure opportunity for part of the urban population and signify contained and controlled forms of nature and the rural. Historically, allotments in Berlin, as in Britain, helped supply food during the war. Farley and Symmons Roberts consider allotments a signal feature of 'edgelands', existing 'on a borderline between recreation and utility'.<sup>252</sup> As liminal spaces, between city and countryside, they offer an alternative to, and an escape from, the urban domain to which they are peripherally attached. Characteristically sited in Hamilton's novels on the circumference of West Berlin's urban area, one example is the suburban setting of a party in *Surrogate City* on the city's southern border between Alt Mariendorf and Lichterfelde, 'where there is nothing but gardens and summer-houses' (SC 193). Considering that this location is close to the boundary imposed by the Berlin Wall it is perhaps not surprising to find the area characterised by provisional accommodation such as allotments and summer residences. Although the narrator is dismissive of their suburban uniformity, the allotments signal Hamilton's tendency to identify with Berlin's green areas and outer boundaries. This marginal inclination is one Hamilton shares with McEwan: these allotments in Alt Mariendorf are similar to the liminal leisure accommodation in the hinterland of the Berlin suburb of

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<sup>252</sup> Farley and Roberts, *Edgelands*, p.108.

Rudow through which Leonard passes on his way the tunnel site, close to the Wall in *The Innocent* (TI 217).

A peripheral allotment area also features at the beginning of *The Love Test*. In contrast with the instability and illusory togetherness of the communal lifestyle of West Berlin in *Surrogate City*, here a bourgeois West Berlin is seemingly defined by utopian images of comfort and order. The leisure idyll of the garden house by a lake enjoyed by the affluent West Berlin couple, Mathias and Claudia, and their son, Werner, is summarised as ‘the calm security of this lakeside allotment outside Berlin’ (LT 8). However, the pleasure of a relaxed and tranquil lifestyle is soon exposed as an illusion by the strains in the couple’s marriage. As the narrative progresses, use of the word ‘security’ turns out to be ambivalent: applied in a West Berlin context, it indicates a seemingly desirable sense of control and peace of mind; in the East, however, as shown in an early reference to ‘trouble with State Security’ (LT 28), there is an equation with state control and the term assumes very different connotations as a signifier of surveillance, imprisonment and psychological torture.

The potential for the periphery to restore a perceived deficiency in the urban centre is apparent when *The Love Test* begins with Claudia serving damson tart in an effort to bring back ‘some of the tranquillity of their allotment garden’ into the family’s city apartment (LT 1). However, the liminal allotment space can be ambiguous in its orientation as emerges in a subsequent scene when it is suggested that the ‘family sanctuary’ might also be a ‘family cage’ (LT 8). Metaphorically, the concept of prison is here applied to West Berlin at a very early stage in the narrative and prior to the

literal association with East Berlin, established later through the focus on the prison at Hohenschönhausen. The uncertainty of designation in the slippage here from 'sanctuary' to 'cage' is reminiscent of the peculiarity of West Berlin's position as free but walled-in. It also corresponds to Tonkiss's identification of one of the characteristics of an 'in-between zone': the allotment, as a suburban place between the urban and the natural, is an uncertain liminal zone concealed by an aura of orderliness. The tranquil environment is an illusory utopia which highlights family tensions rather than concealing them. Nonetheless, the couple's desire for an ecologically balanced environment has a contemporary resonance as can be shown by William Cronon's search for a synthesis of the best qualities of the urban and the rural, as endorsed by ecocritic Michael Bennett:

He is right to conclude that we need to find a middle ground between country and city – and he doesn't mean the suburbs – which might be called 'home'.<sup>253</sup>

The search for an authentic home, which is a recurrent desire in Hamilton's Berlin, drives a desire to dwell on the margins of the city. For Claudia and Mathias the lakeside periphery becomes the west of Ireland, the stage for an escapist fantasy of an ideal natural world: 'a piece of the west of Ireland to which they could flee every weekend' (LT 8). The imagining of Berlin as a place which it is not, like the fantasy in *Surrogate City* of West Berlin not being surrounded by the Wall, is a manifestation of a belief in an illusory utopia. Ultimately, Claudia's hopes of revitalising the centre with the fertility of the periphery, which she tries to put into practice by incorporating the

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<sup>253</sup> Michael Bennett, 'From Wide Open Spaces to Metropolitan Places: The Urban Challenge to Ecocriticism', in *The Isle Reader: Ecocriticism, 1993-2003*, ed. by Michael P. Branch and Scott Slovic (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003), pp.296-302 (p.302).

allotment garden fruit into the damson tart, are unsuccessful. It requires a further move out of the city and a cathartic rite of passage through Berlin's wartime and post-war memory before the marginal location in Brandenburg emerges in *Disguise* as the focal point for an image of Berlin as a new type of community.

The city could be seen as its own surrogate, a replacement for the city destroyed in the war: in *Surrogate City*, Helen wants to speak to the old women who admire her baby, who 'speak of the past, of life before the war, when Berlin was still Berlin' (SC 163). Pre-war Berlin does not otherwise feature in the immediate concerns of the young characters who dominate Hamilton's first novel, yet this reference to the past is an intimation of a concern with memory which deepens as his work develops over the course of the twenty years since the start of the unification process. By the time of the publication of *Disguise* in 2008, the past is integral to the novel's retrospective twenty-first-century perspective. It begins with loss and an act of replacement: in the chaos and panic of a wartime air-raid on Berlin, a mother loses her child; but later, in Nuremberg, her father finds a three year-old in the midst of refugees drifting from the east and offers it to his daughter:

A young mother who had lost her only son, matched up with a son whose mother had been taken from him. What an extraordinary reunion this was. (D 9)

Here the neatness of the substitution and the fairy-tale simplicity of the exchange represses the trauma of the preceding losses experienced both by mother and foundling child: it also shows the human capacity for utopian wishful thinking in wishing to make amends. Another example of surrogacy occurs when, in the absence of Gregor, family friend Martin fills the parental

deficit for Gregor's son and becomes 'closer to Daniel' because 'he became a surrogate father figure to him' (*D* 97).<sup>254</sup> The optimism inherent in the theme of surrogacy as a form of compensation for loss is recurrent in the Berlin novels. In *Disguise*, as an extension of this utopian view of the potential in human community, friends and family shape identity by sharing experience, helping each other to become themselves:

Gregor Liedmann has been brought to life by Mara, by his family, by the external story created around him, existing only inside those experiences he has shared with others. (*D* 254)

Towards the end of the novel, further images of human unity are shared by city and citizens at the time of the fall of the Wall when Thorsten and Katia meet 'amid the celebrations' (*D* 247), representing a new generation but echoing the memory of the first meeting between Gregor and Mara in Berlin in the late-1960s. There are intimations of potential disharmony: Thorsten is from the East and Katia from the West and a narrative comment on 'how far both parts of the country had drifted apart' (*D* 247) even alludes to a need for translation following linguistic differences. However, in contrast with the breakdown of the East-West relationship in *The Love Test*, optimism prevails as the couple marry successfully, resolving any linguistic issues by their creativity in making 'a new family language of their own' (*D* 247). A typical marital trope celebrates unification in Berlin: through memory the cathartic journey from hurt to healing has been completed and new identities can be forged in a settled place.

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<sup>254</sup> In *Surrogate City*, Daniel is also the name of Helen and Dieter's baby son and the fact that he, too, is associated with an absent father, makes the Daniel of *Disguise* a surrogate for his namesake in the earlier novel.

## 5. Trees in the City and the Orchard Outside: Green Berlin in Hamilton's *Disguise*

Michael Squires has observed that pastoral offers a remedy to urban rupture: 'the pastoral novel seeks to create a feeling of wholeness in those whose lives have been fragmented in urban centers'.<sup>255</sup> This envisaging of a healing connection between genre and geography can be related to an ideal vision of the relationship between centre and periphery in urban studies, as advocated by Donatella Mazzoleni who describes the surrounding area as an impalpable membrane which defines the city:

It guarantees, therefore, the city's concentration of energy, its topological separateness, and, at the same time, the osmotic exchange between internal and external.<sup>256</sup>

This is the utopian ideal: on an economic level, there is a danger that the centre can drain the margin. The principal setting in Hamilton's *Disguise* is a pastoral scene: a group of friends spend a day together apple-picking in an orchard near Jüterbog, a town forty miles south of Berlin, where a timeless aura is created through the traditional activity of harvesting in a rural context. In a narrative which alternates between past and present, the contemporary harvest scene provides a tranquil and reflective atmosphere which contrasts with the destructive impact of the war scenes with which the novel opens, encompassing the rupture which has affected two generations of the Liedmann family. This began with Gregor's abandonment of his parental home in a dispute over his claim to possible Jewish origins and is visited on a further generation when he leaves his wife and son in an argument over

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<sup>255</sup> Michael Squires, *The Pastoral Novel: Studies in George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975), p.11.

<sup>256</sup> Donatella Mazzoleni, 'The City and the Imaginary', in *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location* ed. by Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), pp.285-301 (p.293).

the same issue. The recurrence suggests a continuing failure to address a memory of a lost connection between German and Jewish identities and is comparable to a concern to reconcile these cultures at the end of Winger's *This Must Be the Place*.

In *Disguise*, a peripheral rural context is extended into the heart of the city, encompassing the urban core in its pastoral vision. Use of the rural as a customary form is part of a postmodern concern with 'difference and particularity',<sup>257</sup> defined by Kevin Robins as a neo-romantic strain which 'aims to re-ignite a pre-modern sense of place and tradition'.<sup>258</sup> *Disguise* not only refers to the harvest for its traditional resonances of earthiness and fertility but creates in Jüterbog a postmodern location which is decentred and marginal, yet still retains a connection to the adjacent city of Berlin. By assembling in Brandenburg characters from West Berlin, such as Gregor and Martin, and others from East Berlin, such as Thorsten, a human image of the potential unity of Berlin is constructed. To this is added an image of territorial unification through the rediscovery of a connection between the city and the surrounding region from which it was severed by the post-war division of city and country. Description of the terrain in which the farm is situated as 'the flat landscape south of Berlin' (*D* 12) is geographically accurate; metaphorically, it provides a potential image of a *tabula rasa* and suggests the possibility of a new beginning as Gregor travels to join family and friends after a long period of separation.

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<sup>257</sup> Kevin Robins, 'Prisoners of the City: Whatever Could a Postmodern City Be', in *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, pp.303-30 (p.303).

<sup>258</sup> Robins, 'Prisoners of the City: Whatever Could a Postmodern City Be', p.304.



The depiction of the setting at the start of the chapter as a 'disused farm' (*D* 12), suggests that the rural site has been depleted by the centripetal lure of the urban: 'Everyone having fled from here into the cities' (*D* 13). The exhausted and abandoned terrain and the evidence of military occupation are symptomatic of a dystopian landscape. Jüterbog is still recovering from the presence of the Russian army which has only recently departed, having been stationed in the town 'right up to the nineties' (*D* 13). Ruins created by the destruction of the Soviet barracks stir local memories of the end-of-war period, once again invoking the parallel between the post-war and the post-Wall watersheds that is a recurrent feature in English-language Berlin fiction. However, a sense of reversion to more traditional customs also emerges as the human and natural environment returns to a more ancient rural appearance:

For the people living there it was one last glimpse of those terrible years before the town and the landscape finally settled back into a kind of ancient anonymity. (*D* 13)

The barracks site, located outside Jüterbog on the 'outskirts of the town' (*D* 13), can be compared with McEwan's ruined tunnel in its peripheral location and function as a *lieu de mémoire*, except that the memory located here is not personal, but communal. Here Hamilton underscores the importance of living memory in that it is local people who appreciate that the ruin is a repository of the connection between German defeat in the Second World War and subsequent Soviet occupation; they also are aware of its temporary nature. The likelihood of the disappearance of the war memories represented by the barracks underscores what Nora has described as the difficulty in relating to the fragmentary legacy of the past:

We no longer inhabit that past, we only commune with it through vestiges - vestiges, moreover, which have become mysterious to us and which [we] would do well to question, since they hold the key to our 'identity', to who we are.<sup>259</sup>

Nora's emphasis on the need to interpret the remains left behind by history so as to engage with issues of identity encompasses a key concern of Hamilton's in *Disguise*. Addressing memory in the novel can also be related to a process of coming to terms with the past or *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*: a key theme in post-war German culture, principally related to taking responsibility for the Holocaust, it is another sign of Hamilton's insider awareness. Adoption of a pastoral setting creates a scene of peaceful, communal activity in which Gregor 'feels at home' (*D* 44). The transition from depiction of the depredations of war to a new emphasis on the traditional activity of gathering the harvest is comparable to a description by Raymond Williams of Virgilian pastoral as 'the peace of country life [...] contrasted with the disturbance of war and the political chaos of the cities'.<sup>260</sup> Picking apples in the orchard, Gregor senses a connection to the earth 'doing what people have done here in this same place for hundreds of years' (*D* 44). The ritual activity through a centuries-old customary practice opens up a longer memory perspective than that of the twentieth-century wars that has previously been the focus.

An earlier example of the human need for the remedial properties of natural imagery occurs in *The Love Test* when Ralf, imprisoned in East Berlin, tries to relieve the pressure of confinement by imagining apples, but

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<sup>259</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Reasons for the current upsurge in memory', *Eurozine*, 2002 <<http://www.eurozine.com/html/www.eurozine.com/article/2002-04-19-nora-en.html>> [accessed 5 February 2010].

<sup>260</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), pp.28-29.

only succeeds in producing a nightmarish vision: 'He dreamed of apples until apples began to flash in his mind like a demented fruit harvest' (*TLT* 115).

This dream of escape into a rural idyll has no anchor and reproduces itself as a manic image: it requires time and the more settled, political context of unified Berlin in the twenty-first century in *Disguise* for traditional values, usually associated with the countryside, to be able to be associated with the urban metropolis of Berlin.

The pastoral tends towards the lyric rather than the narrative mode since it avoids 'significant plot, for plot involves tension', as Kathryn Hume has observed.<sup>261</sup> Similarly, *Disguise* is not an action-based novel: instead the orchard scenes allow for the recollection of scenes from the past and describe a slow movement towards a new acceptance of family and friends by the sixty year-old Gregor. As a result, the description of the bombing of Berlin at the beginning of the novel appears to have a more dramatic effect, as Hermione Lee has observed: 'The war scenes, are, I think, stronger and more original than the stories of Gregor's life in postwar, post-wall Berlin.'<sup>262</sup>

The robust and unflinching character of the war scenes in *Disguise* is palpable but also belongs to a cluster of writing about the devastated post-war city: this includes both the 'rubble thrillers' of Kanon and Vyleta, and McEwan's *The Innocent*, in which the depiction of the poignant character of ruined buildings with their vestigial and interrupted traces of human occupancy is particularly comparable to Hamilton. Unlike Lee, I would contend that the distinctive contribution of *Disguise* to Berlin literature is to be

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<sup>261</sup> Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (New York and London: Methuen, 1984), p.61.

<sup>262</sup> Hermione Lee, 'The wounded heart of Europe', review of *Disguise* by Hugo Hamilton, *Guardian*, 'Review', 28 June 2008, p.11.

found in the resort to pastoral, the calm and reflective ambience of the orchard episodes providing an exceptional counterbalance to the destruction of the city as portrayed in the opening chapters. Ultimately, the damage inflicted on the wartime city is framed in the narrative by the opening up of historical perspectives from the orchard setting in the first decade of the twenty-first-century, and also from before 1939, through trees whose provenance exceeds that of the Second World War:

The trees are old. Planted long before the war. They must have seen a few things, when this landscape was a battle zone and the farm became a last line of defence. (*D* 44)

Berlin as urban site of war appears to cede to a rural place of peace but the two are shown to be interrelated through memory of a common war experience. Like the city, the countryside also bears the scars of conflict such as the barracks which has only recently ceased to accommodate a military presence. However, the trees, planted before the war, are represented as animated by a memory that both encompasses and precedes it. By surviving and upholding the natural traditions of the land through the war and then the decades of Soviet occupation and GDR state control that followed, the orchard preserves a sense of natural continuity as a counterpart to the endurance of the neighbouring city.

Hamilton reverses the conventional view of the Cold War thriller in which East Berlin poses an environmental threat. For example, in Deighton's *Spy Line* pollution from East Berlin is seen as a weapon of the Cold War, forming another wall surrounding and enclosing West Berlin: 'The air was thick with the stink from the lignite-burning power stations that the DDR have on all sides of the city' (*SL* 37). Almost two decades later, in *Disguise*, by

way of contrast, the restorative potential is located in the former East, as the rural setting in Jüterbog complements intimations of regeneration in the city. When Gregor's mother returns to Berlin after a long period of absence, the natural environment appears to be far more extensive than she remembers from wartime: 'The city had changed so much. Trees everywhere, she commented, more than before' (*D* 212). Here the perception of the new greenness of the city echoes Hamilton's own account of similar observations of contemporary Berlin by Irish novelist, Francis Stuart, who lived in Berlin during the Second World War. Reporting on meeting Stuart in Berlin in 1991, Hamilton comments that the author observed the post-Wall city to be much less 'densely built up' and more spacious than its wartime equivalent. Stuart was also aware of a greater natural presence within the urban domain: 'so many green parks had replaced the bombed out blocks of apartment buildings'.<sup>263</sup> This additional reference to the greening of the city signals the importance of the concept for Hamilton; it also shows a close relation between eye-witness testimony from the past and the representation of memory in *Disguise*.

The growth of trees provides a central image of recovery in the city when Gregor's estranged wife, Mara, arranges for Gregor's mother to revisit Berlin. The importance of the visit as a means of reconnecting with the city through memory is shown when she revisits the *lieu de mémoire* represented by the site of the apartment building she was forced to leave in the chaotic aftermath of war (*D* 3). The return to the place of rupture has a healing context signalled by the maturing of new trees in the courtyard: 'The trees at

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<sup>263</sup> Hamilton, 'Introduction', *The Pillar of Cloud*, p.1.

the centre of the courtyard had been replaced since then by a young walnut and a cedar which had almost grown to maturity' (*D* 213). The combining here of city courtyard and natural tree suggests a new accommodation between past and present while the interweaving of the urban and rural indicates a new way forward for the balanced development of Berlin. The visit becomes part of a process of renewal which recognises change in the context of continuity, the natural image of regeneration signalling that Berlin's long post-war recovery is nearing completion.

The configuration of a green centre to Berlin involves a legacy which exposes another void in the past as illustrated in Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*, in which the narrator perceives the focus of Berlin in the early 1930s to be the city park, Tiergarten: 'the real heart of Berlin was a small damp black wood'.<sup>264</sup> Here the blackness of the woods represents the poverty of those who shelter there and the bleakness of an era when the city is on the verge of surrender to Nazi dictatorship. McEwan's *The Innocent* picks up on the motif when in Leonard's introductory excursion through the ruined post-war city, the lack of woods in the Tiergarten is pointed out: 'There's hardly a tree to be seen' (*TI* 28). In contrast, at the end of the novel, the modest suburban corner at Neudecker Weg, supplies a slender sycamore whose 'young trunk' (*TI* 226) takes Leonard's weight and acts as a symbol of incipient renewal.<sup>265</sup> In *Disguise*, the utopian possibility of a new green zone

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<sup>264</sup> Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin*, first published 1939 (London: Vintage, 1998), p.231.

<sup>265</sup> It is also a signal of the environmental issues that have become a major concern of McEwan's. See Ian McEwan, 'The world's last chance', *Guardian*, 19 November 2008 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/nov/19/global-climate-change-policy-obama>> [accessed 26 November 2008].

in the heart of the city is raised when Gregor and his friends discuss the closure of an airport in central Berlin:

They talk about the closure of the inner-city airport and what an opportunity it would be to create a parkland, an urban green lung, part of the Amazon rainforest reclaimed at the heart of Berlin. (*D* 233)

This discussion can be contextualised by reference to a referendum about the future use of Tempelhof airport, which closed in 2008. By avoiding specific names Hamilton is able to focus on the environmental issue rather than evoking the airport's past as an example of Nazi architecture. This is a constructive kind of 'insider forgetting' in which the right not to remember contributes to a benign reclaiming of terrain where a new use does not involve erasure of the past. The vision here of the recovery of a natural area in the centre of the city is idealistic, but although there is an element of hyperbole in the enthusiasm for imagining the rainforest in Berlin, the optimistic note is not dismissed. Frederic Jameson has observed that 'one of the most durable oppositions in utopian projection' is 'that between country and city'.<sup>266</sup> By alluding to the growth of trees and greenness within and around the urban terrain, *Disguise* overcomes this polarity by imagining a new form of city in which the influence of the rural is felt both within and beyond its limits.

Rob Shields, endorsing the challenge in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) to the stereotyping of the marginal 'as being at the "edge of civilisation,"'<sup>267</sup> emphasises the creative potential of the peripheral as 'carnavalesque leisure spaces of ritual inversion of the dominant, authorised

<sup>266</sup> Frederic Jameson, 'The Politics of Utopia', *New Left Review*, 25, (2004), 35-54 (p.48).

<sup>267</sup> Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*, p.5.

cultures'.<sup>268</sup> There is a correspondence here between this enthusiasm for marginal festive diversity and the finale of *Disguise* which portrays a celebration of togetherness as the group of friends relax after the day's work and contemplate the distant light emanating from Berlin:

Chairs and glasses for everyone. [...] they can sit there for a while, looking at the stars and the glow of light on the horizon coming from Berlin. (*D* 259)

No longer the razed city obscured by apocalyptic smoke in the aftermath of wartime bombing, here Berlin is presented as modestly connected to its hinterland without wishing to dominate the panorama: the obverse of the huge monumental city portrayed in Harris's *Fatherland*. There is no desire to project an image of human perfectibility: instead the scene of relaxed affability and contemplation is comparable to what Foucault has described as 'actually realized utopias [...], places that are outside all places, although they are actually localizable'.<sup>269</sup>

This is Foucault's concept of heterotopia, defined as a real location which is also a combination of incongruous spaces: 'The heterotopia has the ability to juxtapose in a single real place several emplacements that are incompatible in themselves.'<sup>270</sup> As a palimpsest of memory sites, the trees in Jüterbog encompass local memories of Soviet occupation in the ruined barracks and personal memories of those gathered around Gregor in the orchard which, in turn, focus on memories of the adjacent city of Berlin. The aptness of designating the pastoral setting as a heterotopia is underscored when Foucault goes on to describe the garden as one of the 'oldest

<sup>268</sup> Shields, *Places on the Margin*, p.6.

<sup>269</sup> Foucault, 'Different Spaces', in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, II, p.178.

<sup>270</sup> Foucault, 'Different Spaces', in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, II, p.181.



examples of these heterotopias.<sup>271</sup> Gregor and his friends form an impromptu band with makeshift instruments in a Breughel-like tableau of heterogeneous combination while the ‘glow of light’ (*D* 259) from Berlin in the distance shines as an indicator of the city’s benign participation. No longer the isolated and atomised West Berlin of *Surrogate City*, or the city of disjunction, as portrayed in *The Love Test*, rural Brandenburg connects with distant Berlin by offering an image of unity and social cohesion in a spontaneous celebration which is at once unconventional and traditional. Recalling the irrepressible Turkish sounds in *Surrogate City*, the utopian spirit is epitomised by a communal musical celebration which resonates across the Brandenburg plain as a ‘long living note spreading out across the flat landscape’ (*D* 261). If, as suggested earlier, the level terrain is an image of Berlin’s future as a *tabula rasa*, this form of transitory inscription is not an imposition. The imagining of a communal gathering may take place outside the city but the rediscovery of an old connection with the country, as rural setting and nation, brings energy to the prospect of renewing Berlin.

## 6. The Turn to the Past: Memory as Rite of Passage

Through tree imagery in *Disguise* the rural comes to embody a longer perspective on memory than that usually adopted in post-Wall Berlin fiction. The turn to the past in Hamilton’s most recent Berlin novel traces a trajectory from the Second World War to the twentieth-century that is designed to use memory to address an identity crisis in the novel’s protagonist and, by extension, in the Berlin with which he is associated, even in his absences

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<sup>271</sup> Foucault, ‘Different Spaces’, p.181.

from the city. Despite Hamilton's detachment from thriller conventions and techniques in his Berlin novels, *Disguise* starts with a dramatic account of a World War Two air-raid and the devastation that results which has the immediacy of a thriller and is similar to the rubble thriller in describing the city's ruined landscape. However, rather than situating itself in this particular historical context, the narrative then proceeds to trace a trajectory out of the chaos and crisis represented by the destruction of Berlin. The city is portrayed as a graveyard of identity: along the charred remains of streets with their 'blackened hulls of apartment blocks' (*D* 4), unrecognisable bodies are carted away. The 'lost in the city' motif which opens *Surrogate City* returns as a traumatic echo as Gregor's mother searches desperately for her son but is soon adrift in an unfamiliar landscape. Whole streets have been obliterated, leaving only the occasional street signs as a reminder of their location:

All the familiarity had been taken away. In some places the street names still stood on the corner, giving the numbers of the houses, though the street itself had disappeared and the whole district began to look like open country. (*D* 5)

The loss of the physical structure of the city threatens its identity but, despite the annihilation, the resemblance of the urban terrain to 'open country' is suggestive of a clean slate or fresh start and of a new landscape emerging from the apparent nothingness. The congestion of the exhausted city is replaced by the expansiveness of the country in a first sign of an overlapping of the urban by the rural which will become a trope of social and personal renewal in the novel.

A photograph discovered later in the narrative, contrasts Gregor as a child against a background of a similarly devastated urban domain and

serves as an emblem of the human capacity to survive. The image is a present from Gregor's mother to Mara, who has renewed contact with her, in an effort to heal the breach with her husband:

Each time she and Daniel went to Nuremberg, they came back with a new piece of information, a memory of Gregor's childhood, a photograph of him in the lunar canyons of post-war ruins. (*D* 210)

The photograph becomes the earliest documentary proof of Gregor's origins, the environs of the devastated city suggesting that he lived in wartime Berlin as a child. By isolating Gregor, the photograph makes him appear part of the ruined terrain, a child of the dystopian city. Since Berlin is a level part of the North German Plain, the lunar appearance and incongruity of a topography of 'canyons', as a metaphor for the height and extent of the rubble mounds, vividly configures the alien landscape into which it has been transmuted. The presence of the child, however, modifies the image of destruction with a sign of renewal: this utopian impulse is further developed as the narrative continues through the accumulation of regenerative ideas around the image of the orchard.

Post-war memory in both *Disguise* and Kanon's *The Good German* is associated with unresolved issues about Jewish provenance and repressed Jewish identities. Kanon's novel explores the plight of a Jewish woman, Renate Naumann, who, having been forced into betraying other Jews by the Nazis during the war, has to endure further victimisation when she stands trial in Berlin in 1945 and is accused of being a collaborator before a Soviet court not inclined to sympathise with her predicament. The novels by Kanon and Hamilton both feature a child who dies in an air-raid only to be replaced by an infant of similar age: there is speculation that a child may have been

handed over by a refugee fleeing from the east in *Disguise* (D 8); in *The Good German*, when Renate faces the death penalty, she entrusts her child to Jake Geismar for safe-keeping, insisting 'He's a German child' (GG 362). There are also similar concerns with concealed Jewishness: the infant is unaware of his Jewish origins in *The Good German* while in *Disguise* the late disclosure to Gregor that he might be Jewish sparks an identity crisis. Although the relationship between Jewish culture and its place within German society is not probed in depth in the novel, the issue of the suppression of Gregor's possible Jewish origins is intrinsic to his unsettled sense of self. By not resolving the question of the protagonist's potential Jewish identity, the novel portrays both a sense of loss and a buried connection between Berlin and Jewishness.

Berlin in *Disguise* is represented less through urban topographical details such as streets, landmarks or named neighbourhoods than through memory as shown by references to the past which inform how a range of characters, such as Gregor, Gregor's mother, Mara, Martin and Thorsten relate to the city and, in particular, its legacy of war and division. Perceptions are often equivocal: for some who have direct experience of war in the city, Berlin is a site of trauma to which return is impossible. Gregor's own life history is so closely related to the disrupted place from which he emerged that for many years he avoids returning, as if he believes the city to be tainted like the parents from whom he has become alienated. The mother of Gregor's friend, Martin, is also reluctant to go back, an unwillingness which Martin suspects is connected to the possibility that she was raped at the end of the war by his father, a former soldier in the Russian army: 'I can

remember him bringing us to Berlin once when I was small and she didn't want to go' (*D* 154). This traumatic memory associated with Berlin by a woman can be allied with *The Innocent* and Maria's similar fear of recalling the violation of women by Soviet soldiers in the city during the end-of-war period. These experiences are represented in both *The Good German* and McEwan's novel through women: Lena in *The Good German* and Maria in *The Innocent* are both victims of the Soviet onslaught on the city in 1945, when Lena was raped (*GG* 166) and Maria was traumatised by witnessing a rape (*TI* 83). Considered along with the success of *A Woman in Berlin*, a memoir of experience of the subjugation of Berlin's women in 1945, these fictional depictions of trauma indicate that this was an area of wartime experience that had not been adequately represented in post-war memory.

The devastation of the post-war city has been shown in Kerr's *A German Requiem* to be so chaotic as to render a narrative about it almost impossible. An alternative approach has been to make a drama out of the struggle for survival in the city in which an allegorical alignment is forged between Berlin and leading characters such as Lena in *The Good German* and Pavel in *Pavel & I*. The parallel in *Disguise* begins in the confusion of war and the uncertainty surrounding Gregor's adoption as a child; it is further developed when his subsequent life of exile reflects Berlin's own post-war dislocation through division. Hamilton himself acknowledges the close association between the city and his protagonist: 'Berlin has been forced to re-make itself so often. The character of Gregor could not have come out of any other city.'<sup>272</sup> Prior to 1989, Gregor returns to Berlin but is still unable to

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<sup>272</sup> O'Hanrahan, interview with Hamilton, p.15.

overcome the detachment that has come to define his relationship with his son. Without the capacity to engage with his family, Gregor cannot settle in Berlin: he is described as lacking 'the song-line home' (*D* 218), a metaphor drawn from the Aborigine culture of attachment to the land and giving new meaning to the 'old song' to which unification had been wearily compared in *Surrogate City* (*SC* 30), as discussed earlier in this chapter. The need for an accommodation between people and place is defined at a late stage in *Disguise* as a utopian dream of social integration: 'Gregor had turned his life into a search for belonging, though it always remained a distant thing, a vague utopian memory' (*D* 218). The links here between memory and a utopian desire for home suggest that a dystopian character conversely can be attributed to Gregor's life of wandering in exile from Berlin: 'The longer Gregor stayed away, the more the distance grew between truth and memory.' (*D* 218) The implication here is that memory is verified by association with place and tends to falsify if it loses contact with it: it is another argument for the importance of the physical site in the *lieu de mémoire*.

Just as the relationship between protagonist and city comes to the fore in the Berlin novels of Winger and Aridjis, so Gregor's return to Berlin after the fall of the Wall is pivotal to his subsequent development. The change in the city after 1989 is configured as a sudden release of personal memories: 'Merely walking down certain streets brought back random images of great intimacy, highlights re-enacted with great precision in his memory' (*D* 248). The contemporary is framed by the past, as shown when an early four-page section describing the sixty-year-old Gregor cycling

through the unnamed Turkish neighbourhood where he lives (*D* 19-23) is located in the context of a chapter which begins and ends with a discussion of memory and loss. The relative anonymity of the area corresponds with the use in *Disguise* of generalisations to depict Berlin as an entity of memory rather than as specific city names or descriptions of its physical fabric. The technique here is the opposite of that chosen by McEwan in his Berlin novels where memory depends upon the specificity of the experience recalled. In *Hamilton*, the whole city is *lieu de mémoire*: 'He saw Mara on every crowd, on every platform' (*D* 248). *Hamilton*'s Berlin becomes a haunted space in which the intensity of Gregor's memories is prioritised over the transitory nature of ever-changing streetscapes, in which the reinvention of the city is matched by the renewal of the individual. Earlier in the novel, the resonance of the city with memory is linked to an anthropomorphic perception of the city as an animate, living presence, steeped in past experience. Berlin is credited with having learned from tragic experience how to remember and remain humble:

The city is vivid with history. Layers of it in every suburb, coming up through the streets, in people's eyes. A chamber of horrors, but also a place of monuments and devotion to memory. A place that has no time for greatness any more and celebrates instead the ordinary genius of survival. A wounded place at the heart of Europe, eager to heal and laugh. (*D* 96)

Here the character of the city is foregrounded, its endowment with human qualities identified in its capacity to survive and to remember: it is an active agent, a participant in the process of recall. In this qualified and measured eulogy, Berlin's dark past is alleviated by conversion into a fairground image of a 'chamber of horrors', while the emphasis is laid on its present condition as a survivor and victim, encapsulated in the image of a 'wounded place'.

The taunt made by Hans in *The Innocent* indicting Berlin's post-war lack of greatness here receives its rebuttal: the question is no longer relevant. Like a human character, the city is keen to laugh and recover, no longer seeking the utopia of elevated ideals and ideology but instead committed to the ordinary and the everyday. The anthropomorphic representation of Berlin here as an animate presence typifies Hamilton's reconfiguring of the city as a space in which the increasing openness to collective memory provides a platform for the realisation of personal memories.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have shown how the configuration of Berlin as a space haunted by memory informs Aridjis's vision of Berlin and is crucial to a deepening of engagement with the city in novels by Winger and Hamilton. Aridjis and Winger both describe protagonists who struggle to form relationships in the city: both come to realise that it is the relationship with the city itself that is either paramount, as in the case of Aridjis, or has to be addressed first, as shown in Winger's novel. Both connect most effectively with the city by investigating its past. Hamilton's first novel, *Surrogate City* can be compared with the novels by Aridjis and Winger as debut novels that show how visitors attempt to negotiate the city and explain it to outsiders. Hamilton's trilogy of novels becomes increasingly involved with memory processes: nostalgic references to pre-division Berlin in the first are followed by a second in which the new political circumstances of unification release memory of an account of repression by the former East German regime; in Hamilton's third Berlin novel a process of memory that extends back to the



Second World War is intrinsic to the reconciliation of a family and the renewal of identity. I have echoed the endorsement in early Nora of the association between memory and materiality by identifying memory sites in a diversity of forms in these novels by Aridjis, Winger and Hamilton, including the 1930s paintings found under the wallpaper in Hope's flat in Winger, the Soviet barracks in Jüterbog in Hamilton and the pitch by the bank machine on Alexanderplatz used by the smiling woman in Aridjis. Although these fictional examples differ in their respectively cultural, political and personal references, all are places which assume additional importance due to the memories which become associated with them.

As a chronicle of the radical change and enduring character of Berlin during the period of transition from division to unity, Hamilton's three Berlin novels merit being described as a 'Berlin Trilogy'. A selective fictional account of the city's last four decades, they have become a work of memory: first, as a record of the cultural diversity of West Berlin behind the Wall as an unstable haven for both bohemian individuals and Turkish immigrant labourers; in *The Love Test*, as a fictionalised representation of Western domination of an unequal unification process and a revelation of state control of memory in the former GDR; finally, in *Disguise*, as a retrospective twenty-first-century perspective on the city's traumatic post-war history. Spatially, the energy of the initial encounter with West Berlin in Hamilton's first novel is matched by a sense of disorientation: in the second, the unification of the city clashes with dystopian conditions of isolation, inequality and even sporadic violence. Juxtapositions of liminal and marginal urban spaces represent economic and ideological difference while references to heights and depths

(as in cellars and underground transport) reflect unequal power relations and issues of hegemony. In Hamilton's three Berlin texts, from the era of division in the 1970s and 1980s, through early unification, to the twenty-first-century city, the city emerges as a site which embraces spatial incongruities and desires to belong, alongside differences which can represent friction and inequality. In his representation of the memory of some older Germans it can be a site of fear deriving from memory of its association with war or of the repressive conditions of that existed in East Berlin under state socialism. Although there is no overlap in the three novels between plots and characters, Hamilton himself has endorsed the possibility of interpreting his novels as a trilogy which chronicles the recent evolution of Berlin:

You could see that, there's definitely a progression there. I am like a witness to history in that way in my own lifetime as a writer. I couldn't see those novels being written in any different order.<sup>273</sup>

Hamilton's work has become increasingly concerned with how memory and identity are influenced by changes in political and social context. Huyssen's concept of the past as a contemporary presence is underscored in *Disguise* by a key character, Martin, who observes that the radical transformation that followed the fall of the Wall reveals the fluidity of time: 'The past is not fixed. It keeps changing. Look at how everything has changed since the Wall came down' (*D* 191). These comments themselves embody memory of similar reflections on the dynamism of history by William Faulkner and Christa Wolf. Wolf's novel, *Kindheitsmuster (Patterns of Childhood)* (1976),<sup>274</sup> which depicts childhood in East Prussia under the Third Reich, begins: 'The past is

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<sup>273</sup> O'Hanrahan, interview with Hamilton, p.8.

<sup>274</sup> 'The past is never dead. It's not even past.' William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) (London: Chatto and Windus, 1953), p.85. Christa Wolf translates Faulkner in the opening sentence of *Kindheitsmuster* (1976): 'Das Vergangene ist nicht tot; es ist nicht einmal vergangen.' (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1977), p.9.

not dead. It is not even past.' Wolf's comment 'on the aftereffects of National Socialism',<sup>275</sup> in the radically different circumstances of East Germany in the mid-1970s, is given an intertextual echo in Hamilton's use of the phrase in the twenty-first century and related directly to Berlin. The observation of the change in the memory context that followed the fall of the Wall could also be applied as the rationale for the turn to the past, not only in Hamilton's work, but also in English-language Berlin fiction as a whole.

Hamilton's dual, Irish-German ethnicity is reflected in the appeal of the divided city to him and in contrasting fictional representations of Berlin as a refuge or prison. The portrayal of Berlin as a prison has literal and metaphorical connotations, encompassing the abusive treatment of GDR defectors in Hohenschönhausen prison and state control of memory through which a history of violations of human rights, such as forced adoption, have been suppressed. On the other hand, the concept of imprisonment is also metaphorically applicable to a West Berlin family concealing a breakdown in a marital relationship and to the hemmed-in nature of West Berlin itself. This interpretative ambivalence, in which meaning is contingent upon an East or West Berlin context, shows how space can be ideologically determined. The normalisation of the unified city appears as a chimera: the separate halves of the city are shown to have developed distinct and entrenched cultures which the rush to unity will not easily replace.

Hamilton's ability to adopt both insider and outsider perspectives on German culture results in a dynamic between his understanding of a

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<sup>275</sup> Tobias Dürr, 'On "Westalgia": Why West German Mentalities and Habits Persist in the Berlin Republic', in *The Spirit of the Berlin Republic*, International Political Currents Series, vol. 5, ed. by Dieter Dettke (New York: Berghahn, 2003), pp.37-47 (p.39).

fragmentation in post-war German identity and empathy towards excluded groups and individuals in Berlin. His novels tend towards the representation of marginal perspectives which reflect alternative stances and question dominant power relations in the city. There are affinities here with Aridjis and the closeness in *Book of Clouds* between the narrator and the smiling woman whom she observes begging on Alexanderplatz. In Hamilton, the inhabiting of urban boundaries by the socially marginalised signifies both a desire to belong and the power of the city to exclude. Marginal sites recur and take a number of forms such as the liminal areas of urban protest surrounding U-Bahn stations. Other spaces are related to memory, such as the old Soviet barracks in Jüterbog, which is on the verge of disappearance, or the orchard where traces of history may remain undisturbed, prefiguring the potential for new growth and a new rural-urban equilibrium in Berlin society.

As an exploration into identity and community which uses peripheral locations and the pastoral genre, *Disguise* reflects tendencies in postmodernism identified by Kevin Robins as an emphasis on the pre-modern and a desire to rediscover communal or civic terrain:

The postmodern city is then about an attempt to re-imagine urbanity: about recovering a lost sense of territorial identity, urban community and public space.<sup>276</sup>

An alternative to the centralising of power, the creative potential of the marginal is traced in Hamilton's novels through the space for remembrance and reconciliation associated with the city's rural hinterland and the inhabiting of liminal areas as a manifestation of a desire to belong. However,

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<sup>276</sup> Robins, 'Prisoners of the City: Whatever Could a Postmodern City Be', in *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, pp.303-30 (p.304).

advocacy of the conversion of the inner-city airport into parkland shows that the greening of Berlin also extends into the inner-city (*D* 33): just as ecocritic Michael Bennett advocates a home outside the city but not detached from it, Hamilton is drawn to marginal space connected to the urban domain.

The trope of Berlin as haven in the work of Hamilton can be seen as cognate with the idea of the Wall as an unintended sanctuary which was identified in the previous chapter in le Carré's *Absolute Friends*. Representations of Berlin as haven, refuge and image of unity based on reconciliation suggest utopian possibilities, although this is qualified by the presence of inequality in the city and the transgressive use of civic spaces by subcultural groups which is indicative of social exclusion. Tempered by a mature understanding of the complexity of Berlin's violent past, Hamilton's understanding of the city's potential for reinvention is linked to empathy with the minorities that constitute its ethnic diversity. This ranges across his trilogy from 'unofficial' Turkish labourers in West Berlin through East German victims of state oppression to a focus on using memory to recover traces of a combined German-Jewish identity in post-unification Berlin, an interest Hamilton shares with Winger.

The historian David Clay Large sounds a utopian note when he advocates Berlin as a city of the future which might become 'if not the capital of the twenty-first-century, one of the most dynamic and progressive centers of the new age'.<sup>277</sup> Similar aspirations are expressed by an actor in Ward Just's novel, *The Weather in Berlin*, when he looks forward to 'a German Renaissance, Berlin once again as it was after the Great War' (*WB* 104).

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<sup>277</sup> Clay Large, *Berlin*, p.644.

Hamilton is more wary: he imagines a new type of society emerging in Berlin, but his view of the city as wounded precludes the resurrection of Weimar glories or dreams of singular future achievement. Ultimately, the diversity of his vision accords more with the incongruity of Foucault's heterotopia than with the potential hubris of utopia or the nightmares of recurrent trauma suggested by Aridjis: grounded in an exchange between personal agency and public memory, Hamilton's Berlin, like Winger's, looks to a reconfiguration of the balance between past and present as the way forward.

## Conclusion: The Reinvention of Berlin and the Challenge of Memory

In this thesis I have endeavoured to define the field of English-language Berlin fiction and to explore the specifics of its representation of space and memory; wherever appropriate, I have sought to relate the two. In this respect, Nora's concept of the *lieu de mémoire* has been crucial, particularly in relation to an inclusivity which encompasses both the formal memory site 'spectacular and triumphant, imposing and generally, imposed' and its contrary which Nora defines in religious terms as 'places of refuge, sanctuaries of spontaneous devotion and silent pilgrimage'.<sup>278</sup> This model from French case studies has been adapted here to describe memory sites in Berlin fiction in which formal and public spaces contrast with unofficial and personal forms of remembering. These sites may or may not take material form: Nora's observation that '*lieux de mémoire* have no referent in reality' offers the potential for them to be extended to encompass the ghosts of Berlin, for example in *Book of Clouds* by Aridjis, and the voids which Huysen sees as one of the most characteristic forms of memory in Berlin, at least prior to the reconstruction of the city in the 1990s.<sup>279</sup>

In view of the range of fiction available, this thesis has involved a number of choices: rather than focus on the Berlin thriller or Berlin literary fiction alone, I have followed the emphasis in Beebee on genre intersection and opted to explore the complexity in the many areas of overlap between the genres. This choice has been supported by the identification of generic cross-fertilisation as a recurrent characteristic of English-language Berlin fiction in the twenty-year period that followed the fall of the Wall. Another

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<sup>278</sup> Nora, *Representations*, p. 23.

<sup>279</sup> Nora, *Representations*, p.23.

option would have been to define the research by a particular era such as the Cold War, as the one closest to living memory, and orientated the analysis of memory and space accordingly. However, the interest in different eras in the city's twentieth-century past that has emerged in this fictional corpus supports Huyssen's analysis of the city as a palimpsest of layered temporal perspectives. The range of memories in English-language Berlin fiction, and particularly in the thriller, reveals a chain of causation from the fall of the Wall and unification back to the Cold War, Second World War, Nazism and Weimar which has necessitated an inclusive approach in the exploration of the dynamic between past and present.

During this research I have found it useful to expand the comparative analysis so that both thrillers and novels are considered individually and in connection with other relevant works. I have endeavoured to analyse a representative sample of the field of English-language Berlin fiction during the 1989-2009 period and, to show the breadth of the field, have extended this, wherever possible, to include analysis of novels other than the core texts in each chapter. The corpus selection is both extensive as a survey of recent fiction and intensive in its analysis of individual texts: it includes a sample of the thriller genre which includes British, Canadian and American authors; a focus on the attachment to divided Berlin in British novels; and a comparison of other voices – Irish, American and Mexican. I have explored in particular the turn to memory that has arisen in English-language Berlin fiction and contextualised this need to engage with the past as a consequence of anxieties and opportunities created by the fall of the Wall. Benjamin's image of the 'angel of history' which faces a past it wishes to



address only to be blown backwards into a future which it cannot see provides a resonant analogy with the situation of English-language Berlin fiction after the fall of the Wall. During the 1989-2009 period, relatively few have undertaken the challenge of addressing contemporary Berlin as a newly unified entity and there have been no representations of Berlin's future. On the other hand, the turn to the past evident in many Berlin thrillers and novels has revealed the changing political and spatial topography of the city, prompted questions about Nazism and the Holocaust which have contemporary implications, and stirred a nostalgia about involvement in shared Weimar, wartime, and Cold War histories.

Foucault's idea of the heterotopia offers a useful means of defining spatial incongruities in Berlin, particularly in relation to Hamilton's description of twenty-first-century Berlin settling into unity with surrounding Brandenburg after the shock of the sudden unification of the divided city in the early 1990s. The endorsement of the marginal in Hamilton has been echoed in the urban analysis of Shields; in relation to specific spaces, the post-industrial landscapes of Farley and Symmons Roberts have been compared with post-Wall areas in Berlin; I have also used commentaries by Jacobs and Bhabha on liminal spaces such as U-Bahn stations to illustrate how Berlin continues to be a site of frontiers and social difference even after unification. Central spaces can take on marginal configurations: the girl beggar in Aridjis who takes up a pitch on Alexanderplatz is revealed to have travelled there from a peripheral location. This heterotopia also becomes a memory site when the narrator, leaving the city, looks down from her plane to see if she can locate the girl. Empathy with marginal space in Hamilton is complicated by a dual

Irish-German, outsider-insider focus which enables him to encompass themes of German wartime suffering and displacement. Hamilton's investigations into the personal consequence of the suppression of Jewish memory and loss of identity are concerns shared by Berlin novels as different as Harris's *Fatherland*, and Winger's *This Must be the Place*.

The initial, and mistaken, view, in the 1990s, that the fall of the Wall would spell the demise of the Cold War thriller was disproved by the capacity of the genre to remain productive by adaptation. The charge that both Deighton and le Carré were assumed to have lost their subject matter with the ending of the Cold War was refuted by le Carré's ability to combine Cold War Berlin with a post-9/11 twenty-first-century perspective in *Absolute Friends*. It was also challenged by Deighton's persistence in the 1990s in completing two further trilogies of Cold War fiction.

Todorov describes the evolution of genre through various forms of generic hybridisation as typical of its mode of operation: 'A new genre is always the transformation of one or more old genres: by inversion, by displacement, by combination.'<sup>280</sup> In the light of this observation, the post-1989 Berlin thriller, which encompasses various forms of genre combination, can be seen as a development from the pre-1989 Berlin spy thriller, but not as a transformation that would herald a new genre. The Berlin thriller in the two decades since the fall of the Wall can be characterised by its use of either crime or espionage genres in reconstructions of Berlin's twentieth-century past. Represented here by the generic fiction of Harris, Kerr, Kanon, Vyleta, Deighton and Welsh, and associated thriller-novels by le Carré,

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<sup>280</sup> Todorov, 'L'Origine des genres', in *Les genres du discours* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), pp.44-60 (p.47).

Lasdun, McEwan, it is engaged with memory of the city's twentieth-century past which it tends to animate through a perception of the city as tough, decadent and extreme. The city combines the familiarity of a sophisticated urban infrastructure with an exposure to war and subjection to dictatorship which make it a ready source of the visceral experience upon which thrillers are constructed.

The Berlin thriller is not a genre in itself so much as a designation for a compendium of genres that reconstruct the city with an emphasis on extremity, suspense and excess. It is usually based on either the crime fiction or spy thriller genre and may adopt typical thriller tendencies such as a tough masculinity, verisimilitude and the American hard-boiled idiom of Hammett and Chandler. The Berlin thriller encompasses the crime fiction of Kerr and the spy fiction of Deighton; the combined detection and conspiracy forms used by Harris, Kanon and Vyleta; and the use of suspense, intrigue and compressed variants on the novel of personal development in le Carré, Lasdun and McEwan.

This thesis has shown that the distinction between the thriller and literary fiction is often not as great as imagined. Analysis of texts by Winger, Aridjis and Hamilton shows that disruptions of the present by the past in the contemporary novel function as the converse of the connecting of past with present in thriller configurations of previous eras such as Nazi, or rubble, Berlin. The thriller could be said to be the most recurrent genre in English-language fiction related to the city: literary fiction may avoid its conventions but thriller tropes of betrayal or themes such as a divided Berlin defection

can be detected in novels such as Lasdun's *Seven Lies* or even Hamilton's *The Love Test* that otherwise appear remote from the genre.

Spatially, the Berlin thriller is often constructed on contrasts between the city's urban core and the lakes which constitute its hinterland and often are associated with both mystery and memory. Lakes feature in Harris as the place of revelation of crime and corruption; in Kanon as an image of the city's contamination by Nazi memory; and in McEwan as a space which is subject to Cold War territorial demarcations and surveillance overflights: in each case, they provide a mirror to the memory context in which it is situated. In the city itself, signifiers of continuity from Weimar to the present day in the Berlin thriller include the Brandenburg Gate and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church; the Adlon Hotel and the post-unification reconstruction of Potsdamer Platz which has become an emblem of the new Berlin in both Berlin thriller and novel, despite universal disappointment with its attempt to make a grand architectural statement. On the other hand, the Wall, as the symbol of the Cold War, overshadows post-war thrillers, even in those set prior to its construction in 1961, for which it exists as an absent presence, a hidden of what is to come. Excoriated in Berlin fiction for its absurdity and inhumanity, its loss is also lamented, particularly in British novels such as *Black Dogs*, *Seven Lies* and *Exit Berlin* in which there is little euphoria at the opening of the Wall in 1989. This apparent contradiction is linked to the nostalgia for the certainties of the Cold War and identification with divided Berlin based on a vestigial colonialism in British involvement in its sectoral governance. Spontaneous memorials, such as the crosses left to commemorate those shot trying to escape from communist East Berlin, become unofficial *lieux de*

*mémoire* in le Carré and McEwan. The emergence of Berlin in Harris, Kerr and Kanon as the dominant setting for crime fiction thrillers rather than as the most important of a number of international locations, as was the pattern in the Berlin spy thriller, is indicative of a new importance in English-language perception of the city. The implication is that the city's layers of memory require a focused investigation rather than a climactic concluding episode in the city.

In the thriller, a clustering effect has emerged with groups of novels showing a tendency to converge on particular historical thresholds such as the late-Weimar, early-Nazi era of 1932-1933 (Dold and Kerr), the pre-war Nazi period of 1938-1939 (Downing and Kerr), and the 'rubble Berlin' era of 1945-1948 (Kanon, Vyleta, Kerr and Flynn). The fall of the Wall in 1989 itself was another watershed moment and has been revisited in thrillers by Hillhouse, Porter, Sebastian, Marks and Dobbs. Novels by Kanon and Vyleta and others which engage with the immediate post-war era in the city suggest a particular affinity between that time and the post-Wall era. The image of the devastated city appears to have been particularly resonant with 1989-1990, as the end of the Cold War evoked memory of its origins.

The close relationship between space and memory in the Berlin thriller can be seen in the tropes by which they can be identified: the Weimar thriller is associated with spaces of performance such as cabarets and cinemas; the Nazi Berlin thriller with the aggrandisement and ideological dominance of the city's streets and architecture through state appropriation; the 'rubble Berlin' thriller is evoked through depiction of the city as a panorama of devastation symbolically associated with revenge for war crimes; while checkpoints,

border crossings and shabby bars are the staple of the Cold War Berlin thriller. In a playful postmodern context, Welsh's *The Bullet Trick* shows how the myths and iconography associated with the performance and decadence of Weimar Berlin can transcend the historic period from which they originate and be transplanted to the twenty-first-century city. On the other hand, in *Fatherland*, Harris shows the dystopia that results when Nazi Berlin is detached from memory of the 1933-1945 era and constructed spatially from Speer's plans.

The retreat of utopianism with the fall of the Wall and the demise of state communism as a grand narrative has not encouraged the imagining of future societies in Berlin: the closest has been an envisaging of the future in the past of 1964 in *Fatherland*. Despite the profusion of memory-based representations in the twenty years since the ending of the Cold War and unification of Berlin, the criticism could be made that English-language Berlin fiction has been too concerned with the past and has failed to respond to the challenge of addressing the contemporary city. Undoubtedly, there have been fewer thrillers set in post-1989 Berlin than in previous eras. However, the contemporary, post-unification period has been represented in thrillers by Welsh, Fesperman, Read, Giovinazzo, Marks and Lowell; while novelists who have engaged with the 'new' Berlin include Hamilton, Bailey, Winger and Aridjis. Spatially, it might be assumed that unification would open up the terrain of the whole city, east and west, to the English-language Berlin novelist but there has been less exploration of the former East Berlin than might have been foreseen. Aridjis is an exception in setting her novel of twenty-first-century Berlin almost entirely in the former East but the

exclusivity of her choice is in itself an indication of the power of memory: despite unification, the city's previous configuration endures and underscores the city's lack of unity. Hamilton's insider perspective is evident in *The Love Test* in the focus he provides on Hohenschönhausen prison as a site of memory of GDR oppression; while in *Disguise* the narrative is located outside the city in Jüterbog, the wider spatial perspective on the city complementing the novel's depth of investment in the city's post-war memory. In *Middlesex* by Eugenides the rapidity of over-development at Potsdamer Platz is seen to represent a disappointing architectural homogeneity, while Fesperman, in his thriller, *The Small Boat of Great Sorrows*, describes a scene at the same location in which the discovery and hasty reburial of a Gestapo bunker shows a failure to engage with the city's awkward past. There is a parallel here, too, with Aridjis when the narrator of *Book of Clouds* is the only one on a guided tour of cellars under an abandoned post office on Krausenstrasse, near Potsdamer Platz, to sense the haunting of an old bowling alley by ghosts of the Gestapo (BC 118).

In the English-language Berlin thriller and novel, Berlin in the post-unification period continues to resonate with memory as can be shown by a diversity of forms of engagement between past and present. A novel such as le Carré's *Absolute Friends* contrasts a nostalgia for the idealism of student protest in Cold War Berlin with a critique of twenty-first-century, state-sponsored American counter-terrorism seen as , spuriously legitimised by the post-9/11 'War on Terror'. The spatial inflation of Berlin as a reconstruction of Speer's Germania in *Fatherland* can be read as a projection of early-1990s British anxieties at the potential for a newly unified

Germany to stir memories of a new Nazi hegemony. In McEwan's *Black Dogs*, Hamilton's *The Love Test* and Aridjis's *Book of Clouds* scenes of wanton and opportunist violence reminiscent of Nazi street assaults in the 1930s show that some memories are unwanted and are best forgotten. Considering that such violence is associated with actual neo-Nazi attacks in the early 1990s, its recurrence as a facet of the twenty-first-century city's memory in Aridjis is a reminder of the persistence of violence as part of the city's imaginary. In the thriller, the image of a violent Berlin takes the form of murders in Weimar- and Nazi-era crime fiction by Dold and Kerr and shoot-outs in a spy thriller such as Kanon's *The Good German*. The new Berlin offers a diminution in violence when in Welsh's post-Wall thriller, *The Bullet Trick*, an apparent shooting turns out to be staged. The friendship made in Berlin in le Carré's *Absolute Friends* also meets a violent end but, significantly, outside the city, while in Hamilton's novel *Disguise*, use of the pastoral genre signifies a turning away from the violent narratives of the thriller, evoked in its opening episode, to a form associated with the peace that follows war.

This thesis has provided a focus on spatial memory through genre fiction, literary fiction influenced by genre, and literary fiction which appears to function outside genre conventions. The Berlin novel in the last two categories, as shown in this thesis by texts ranging from McEwan and Lasdun to Winger and Hamilton, foregrounds experience and a relationship with the city which tends to avoid generic convention in the interest of psychological exploration. All fiction, including the literary, belongs to genre: there is no guarantee that the representation of Berlin in a literary work will



necessarily be more animate than that of a more conventionally generic novel. In *The Innocent*, McEwan's literary fiction is dependent on spy thriller tropes and spaces for a visceral energy which informs the realism of its portrayal of post-war Berlin as half-ruined and half-reviving. Others, such as Kerr and Vyleta, give immediacy to the stringencies of life in pre-war and post-war Berlin through hard-boiled narrative voices. Space plays a key role in Deighton's spy thrillers which assume a gritty realism as they juxtapose divided Berlin and its paralysed Cold War landscape of checkpoints and shabby accommodation with identification of remnants of an older, more elegant city. Often augmented by narrative commentary on the city's past, they are not as exclusively contemporary as they appear.

Memory of particular eras is not confined to its originary historical settings in Berlin fiction: for example, the Nazi era in *Fatherland* is superimposed on the early 1960s, while in Welsh's *The Bullet Trick* animation of the twenty-first century city is conveyed through a set of Weimar spaces and tropes. The Weimar era of the late 1920s and early 1930s emerges as holding a special place in the post-Wall Berlin novel, serving as a point of identification for the new Berlin with the last time when the city was both democratic and united. The turbulent but culturally effervescent city which is depicted in the graphic fiction of Lutes is already starting to be overshadowed by the encroaching influence of the Nazis in Dold's Weimar thriller, *The Last Man in Berlin*. The appropriation of the city following the watershed moment of the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 is played out in Kerr's Berlin thrillers, *If the Dead Rise Not*, set in 1934, *March Violets*, set in 1936 and *The Pale Criminal*, set in 1938. Like a return to a trauma, these

novels revisit the process of the city's capitulation to dictatorship from which it only emerged in 1989. The influence of the Weimar city is also evident in nostalgic references to Isherwood in le Carré's *Absolute Friends*. As the first layer encountered in the city's past after the fall of the Wall, Cold War memory often recurs in configurations of post-unification Berlin through the idea of duality and the double. In the Berlin thriller, it is often dramatised through a motif of two brothers, as shown by a contrasting Stasi-CIA pairing in Gabbay's *The Berlin Conspiracy* and again in the depiction of an imprisoned academic and his East German brother in Porter's *Brandenburg*. Division of the city continues to survive both as a setting for Cold War thrillers and as a metaphor, as is evident in the duality of the Deighton protagonist, caught between Berlin and London, or in Hamilton's oscillations between city and countryside, past and present, in *Disguise*.

Although English-language Berlin fiction addresses a largely Anglophone readership and is associated with expatriate cultures, some of the memory concerns in this literary field parallel developments in memorialisation in Berlin. Thus the recurrence of themes related to Jewish memory in the Berlin thriller and novel in the two decades since 1989 reflects the awareness of a need for united Germany to address Holocaust memory in Berlin. Memory of the Holocaust emerges as one of the key shared concerns influencing the return to the past in the English-language Berlin thriller in this period. In *Last Man in Berlin*, Dold traces the pressures on a detective to conform to a growing anti-Semitism in the city in the early 1930s. Kerr's first two novels in the *Berlin Noir* trilogy show how the persecution of the Jews led to the eradication of their visible presence in the city. Downing

also makes the official sanctioning of anti-Jewish prejudice in late-1930s and wartime Berlin a key theme in his 'Station' series. This focus on the germination of the Holocaust in Weimar and Nazi Berlin thrillers reveals by contrast how the emphasis on the urgency of the contemporary in the Cold War thriller prior to 1989 meant that Berlin's pre-Holocaust responsibilities were not addressed. Post-war repercussions of Nazism are illustrated in Kanon in the continuing victimisation of the Jews in Kanon and the issue of suppression of memory of the Holocaust in Harris. Covert references to Wannsee in Harris and McEwan show how memory of the planning and administration of the Holocaust was also concealed in Berlin. Examples in the contemporary period include Winger's revelation of buried traces of German-Jewish culture and Hamilton's exploration of efforts to reclaim a suppressed Jewish identity in Berlin. The fact that suppression of Jewish memory in Berlin is a common theme both in thriller authors such as Kerr and Harris, where it is embodied in plot, and in the work of a literary novelist such as Hamilton, where it is focused through character, shows how the need to address the city's implication in the Holocaust created common ground in the genres of Berlin fiction.

A nostalgia for the divided city which is associated with the privileged position of the British and Americans as partners in its military governance can be discerned in the novels of McEwan and Kanon, albeit from a critical perspective in both cases. Identification with the Western military presence in the city as part of its shared sectoral governance provides access to memory of the city and a sense of belonging. In McEwan's *The Innocent*, for example, familiarity with the culture of the British military presence in the city provides

the author with a national connection on which to base a critique of British and American rivalry and co-operation in the quasi-colonial, four-power, administration of Berlin. By sharing in the occupation of the Cold War city, McEwan shows how the British experience a residual involvement in European and global political affairs despite a post-war decline in the nation's influence as an imperial power. In the city's confined environment, the intensity of personal relationships is liberating after the repressive atmosphere of post-war Britain. McEwan intensifies Isherwood's concept of the city as a place of formative encounter and reinvention by calling upon it twice to fulfil this function, the second time at a reunion of lovers which is predicated upon the presence of the Wall acting as an essential *lieu de mémoire*. Divided Berlin is the essential setting, as it is in *Black Dogs*, in which the fall of the Wall prompts a rush to Berlin to witness the end of an era by a former British Communist who has enjoyed a degree of privilege without power in having access to the Party as part of visiting British delegations during a few previous visits to East Berlin. As in *The Innocent*, Berlin tests the values of a visiting Englishman and although political idealism is put under scrutiny and found wanting, the rejuvenation of the city is exemplified by a Berlin woman's courageous act in resisting a violent gang.

Relationships with the city in English-language Berlin fiction of the two decades since 1989 are often predicated on the intensity of a specific outsider or visitor experience: as a result, arrival, departure and return are key tropes. The desire of the outsider to be at home in the city is evident in a tendency in English-language Berlin authors to project external concerns and

experiences onto the city: this is evident in Lasdun in his use of English memory to construct East Berlin and of McEwan in his foregrounding of a British perspective on the divided city. British Berlin nostalgia is also evident in le Carré's depiction of the city as the nurturing place of a lasting British-East German friendship. Homely yet foreign, Berlin emerges as a place of dualities which gives rise to intense emotions: either of attachment, as in the case of the nostalgia in Deighton for post-war West Berlin as a childhood home, or of alienation, as shown by Stefan in *Seven Lies*. Lasdun's Britishness is inflected in his method of composition of this novel in which memory of 1970s England was projected onto East Berlin as a means of imagining the deprivations and compromises of life under imposed state socialism.

In the context of the emergence of *Ostalgie*, a nostalgia for the former East Germany in the work of some authors from the former East Germany, such as Jana Hensel, and the film, *Good Bye Lenin* (2003), a satire involving the reconstruction of life in East Berlin under the GDR, a comparable phenomenon since the mid-1990s has been identified as *Westalgie* by Andrew Plowman.<sup>281</sup> Both tendencies contrast with a sense of loss associated with the fall of the Wall and linked to a nostalgia for British political engagement with the Cold War city, as can be seen in novels by a number of authors of English-language Berlin fiction such as Sebastian, Deighton, le Carré and McEwan. The mediation of Berlin through British cultural memory in English-language Berlin fiction is apparent in the influence

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<sup>281</sup> Jana Hensel, *After the Wall*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). *Good Bye Lenin* (2003), directed by Wolfgang Becker. Andrew Plowman, "'Westalgie' Nostalgia for the 'Old' Federal Republic in Recent German Prose", *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies, Beyond Ostalgie: East and West German Identity in Contemporary German Culture*, ed. by David Clarke and Bill Niven, 40 (2004), pp.249-61 (p.250).

of Isherwood on both the Berlin novel and thriller. This endures in a number of forms such as the deployment of consciously nostalgic references by le Carré; similar use of a detached narrative stance, as shown in Hamilton's *Surrogate City*; or evocation of tropes of hedonism and performance, as configured in Welsh's *The Bullet Trick*.

Observing in 2010 a post-unification process which addressed both National Socialist and state socialist legacies, Bill Niven has commented on how 'Over the last two decades, united Germany has been confronting its "double past".'<sup>282</sup> This doubling of memory can be seen by comparing Berlin novels of the 1990s such as Kerr's portrayal of Nazi Berlin in *Berlin Noir* with Hamilton's unlocking of memory of GDR repression in *The Love Test*. In the latter, Hamilton uses the political prison in Hohenschönhausen as a key setting for the adaptation of a true story exposing the torture used by the East German state in punishing defectors. Release from the same Stasi-controlled prison also forms the narrative climax to the plot of Porter's *Brandenburg*. The metaphorical imprisonment of life in East Berlin under the pressures of ideological conformity enforced by the GDR is encapsulated in Lasdun's *Seven Lies* when Stefan returns to Berlin. On this occasion, memory of the psychological repression associated with the city is inflected in the monotony of the straight lines of Karl-Marx-Allee, in a prison-like image of East Berlin that reveals the narrator's inability to liberate himself from an ideological reading of the space even after unification and the collapse of Soviet communism.

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<sup>282</sup> Bill Niven, 'The Sideways Gaze: The Cold War and Memory of the Nazi Past, 1949-1970', in *Divided, but not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War*, ed. by Hochscherf, Laucht and Plowman, pp.49-62 (p. 59).

Berlin emerges in Hamilton's novels as a place in which the autonomy of marginal areas allows space for struggles for expression, belonging and the making of new identities. As a 'surrogate' or replacement city which is constantly reinventing itself and taking on new forms, it is a refuge or haven for outsiders, as it was for Hamilton himself, whose fiction and autobiographical works manifest a strong sense of attachment to the city. Through representations of marginal space, Hamilton portrays the difficult working conditions faced by migrants in the city and empathises with outsider groups, such as punks, and their struggles to belong. His particular achievement in the contemporary Berlin novel is to respond to changes in Berlin over four decades. This thesis has shown how the consistent focus on contemporary Berlin in the three novels Hamilton published between 1990 and 2008 enables them to be considered as a trilogy with a special status in recent English-language Berlin fiction as a chronicle of a period of exceptional change. Hamilton's external perspective has grown into an intimacy with the city through contemporary accounts of the divided city and the challenges of unification to a more reflective perspective on the city's post-war memory from the vantage point of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Hamilton avoids the generic associations of the city with spy fiction but is aware of them and occasionally, as in the story of a Cold War defection in *The Love Test*, covers the same ground. He differs from the British novelists in seeking to inhabit Berlin from the double perspective of an outsider with insider knowledge who represents German perspectives on the city. However, his identification with the city through marginal spaces and

personal memory as a site of individual and collective reinvention bears many similarities with the Berlin novels of McEwan.

The greening of the city as a common characteristic of the Berlin novel in the post-Wall era can be traced in use of arboreal imagery in McEwan, Lasdun and Hamilton to signify the potential or actual recovery of Berlin. In Hamilton in particular, adoption of a rural idiom and identification of regeneration through green spaces points to a new integration of city and country as a way forward for the holistic development of Berlin. The reinvention of Berlin in this thesis refers not only to the familiar trope of the city as a site of restless change and the radical changes to the conceptualisation and topography of the city that unification entailed, but also to the extent and depth of the remaking of Berlin in post-Wall English-language fiction. In the Berlin novel and thriller the city's compelling and disturbing past has been continually revisited and refreshed through a variety of genre combinations. Behind the chimera of a malleable, post-war *tabula rasa*, the city increasingly emerges from this fiction as a place with an enduring personality beyond its transitory spatial associations with monumental fascist buildings, mounds of rubble, a prison, wild bar or international hotel. In the twenty-first-century novels of Winger and Aridjis, the relationship of the protagonists with the city takes precedence over personal relationships and, in both cases, requires engagement with the city's memory.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, considering their external English-language perspective, the sense of being an outsider is common to many Berlin thrillers and novels, as can be shown from Gunther's epiphany in the Adlon



in *If the Dead Rise Not* when Kerr's detective protagonist experiences a defining moment of alienation. Leonard's experiences a sense of dislocation in his initial inability to relate to the city on his return in *The Innocent*; while in Hamilton's Berlin novels key characters such as Alan in *Surrogate City*, Christa in *The Love Test* and Gregor in *Disguise* all encounter problems in identifying with Berlin, complicating the insider knowledge that also characterises Hamilton's fictional reconstructions of the city. As a German, Gregor's fleeting and intermittent relation with Berlin during the Cold War era provides a contrast that dovetails with the intensification of the British and American association with the divided city in McEwan and Kanon. From the English-language perspective, Berlin tends to be experienced through characters in transit, encompassing individualists ranging from Deighton's Bernard Samson to Hamilton's Gregor and Aridjis's Tatiana. Stereotypically represented in McEwan's drunken and obstinate returning soldier, Otto, its free spirits are le Carré's Sasha and Mundy, and its symbols of future aspiration are Winger's aptly-named Hope or McEwan's charismatic and outspoken Grete.

In 2013, the journalist Neal Ascherson noted that he had originally thought, after the fall of the Wall, that Berlin would develop into the powerhouse of Europe but had since come to realise that it had become something much more modest and amenable: 'When people talk about "Berlin", they usually don't mean the government of the most powerful nation in Europe. [...] There is no centre.'<sup>283</sup> The absence of a centre to the city was a literal fact in the divided Berlin era and before: the persistence of this trope

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<sup>283</sup> Neal Ascherson, 'Hanging on to Mutti', *London Review of Books*, 6 June 2013, 35, 11, pp.6-8.

is in itself a testament to the city's memory, showing how Berlin has resisted the centralisation of its renewed capital city status. Ascherson's view of Berlin's absent centre can be corroborated by the decision in English-language fiction in the two decades since 1989 not to focus on the contemporary corridors of power: instead, the outsider perspective tends to represent the city through its past or through animation of peripheral spaces. Both inclinations are embodied in novels such as *Book of Clouds* or *Disguise*, although in the former the city's memories continue to be unsettling while in the latter personal memory has healing potential. In Hamilton the city is assimilated to the heterotopic vision of traditional gathering on the rural periphery; no such consolation is available in *Book of Clouds*, in which the departing narrator leaves behind a city still haunted by Nazi ghosts. The ambivalence typifies a period of transition and diverse possibility in the evolution of Berlin.

The turn to the past in the Berlin thriller and novel in the two decades since 1989 has created a fertile area of spatial memory. The fall of the Wall revealed voids in Berlin that necessitated the city's physical reconstruction; the openings in memory at the same time inspired imaginative reconfigurations of many different layers of the city's past. Complementing Huyssen's delineation of Berlin as a palimpsest which 'offers a richness of traces and memories, restorations and new constructions', the diverse investigations of the past in contemporary English-language Berlin fiction have created a distinct body of work that represents a compelling layering of memory in which the city's present and future are deeply implicated.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, p.84.

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