PROLOGUE

Berlin is worth a journey

> I lower my head und find myself now on journeys from Berlin to Berlin.[1]
>
> Aras Ören

This book takes its cue from the reconstruction and reinvention of Berlin as cosmopolitan capital of the 'new Germany' at the end of the twentieth century, which a recent cover title of *Der Spiegel* called the 'Comeback of a World City'.[2] The emergence out of the schismatic state of the post-war city and into a period of rebuilding and remapping has created possibilities for a critical awareness of topography unique amongst the metropolitan centres of the Western world. At the same time, that awareness is nowhere more challenged by complications. The remodelling of *Baustelle* or 'building-site' Berlin has served to reveal different types of historical maps, to privilege some and efface others. As the lines from Ören's pre-unification poem suggest, it is a city of plural identities and locations, a territory of transition, of departures and arrivals both internal and external. The bent head of the outsider journeying 'from Berlin to Berlin' indicates that the journey has to negotiate complex terrain, inclining the subject towards a melancholic posture. At the same time, the return to the city in the work of Ören and many others indicates that, as the popular slogan has it, 'Berlin is worth a journey', indeed demands one.

Berlin is a city with a telescopic archaeology, layered with the restored or demolished architectures of a dense and often traumatic century. As such, it is ripe for the sort of critical assessment of its cultural topography that is undertaken here in a sequence of journeys from Berlin to Berlin. These will be made looking down certainly, for it is thus that the traveller in Berlin might know where the Wall once ran or – through the *Stolpersteine*, the

[1] From Aras Ören, 'Berlin'den Berlin'e Yolculuklar' (Journeys from Berlin to Berlin), *Forum* 1 (1985), 130–1.
[2] 'Berlin: Comeback einer Weltstadt', *Der Spiegel* 12, 19 March 2007.

stumbling stones,[3] set into the pavement – come upon the places from which Berlin's Jews and other victims of National Socialism were deported. To invoke the title of a public sculpture by Karl Biedermann commemorating the pogrom of 1938, Berlin is a city occupied by 'abandoned space', the traces of which often have to be sought at ground level or underground (see Figure 1). To look down in this way also involves looking back, with an eye to other kinds of historical comeback. But, at the same time, there will be reason to look up, around, and forward.

Twentieth-century Berlin moves from its peripheral historical status, described by Scheffler in 1910 as a 'colonial' outpost on the border to the east,[4] to a centre, by turns integral and insular, of colonising ideologies. It provides the show-place for an unrivalled succession of occupying powers: an empire in the *ancien régime* style, a Socialist Republic, a fascist empire, the face-to-face showrooms and parade-grounds of high capitalism and Communism, and the unified centre of democracy in the New European style. The monuments of each of these regimes, often the same edifices or spaces re-appropriated, are of course landmarks in the historical map of Berlin. But each also served to organise the more general cultural life of the city, its mapping on a less monumental level. The many plans which trace and construct urban life in its political and technical aspects also relate to a different kind of mapping of consciousness, contributing to what has been called the 'Myth Berlin'.[5]

A key aim here is to track the relationships between the official or representative map of the city and the more shifting topographies that work on the level of imagination, both individual and communal, and are especially in evidence in the representations of Berlin life in textual, visual, and performance art. This version of metropolitan layout varies both diachronically, as culture changes through history, and synchronically, as it changes in cross-section, according to perspective, at given times. As the city mutates from colonial outpost into an imperial capital, is divided, colonised by other powers, and then 'reunified', so it produces a range of colonies both voluntary and involuntary in or around its precincts, from campsite colonies to ghetto sites and internment camps. This book aims to trace the colonisations and counter-colonisations of one of the world's most extraordinary cities in the 'long twentieth century' from the 1880s to the present.

[3] The *Stolpersteine*, brass cobbles installed by Gunter Hemnig, are inscribed with the names of the deported.
[4] Karl Scheffler, *Berlin – Ein Stadtschicksal* (Berlin: Fannei & Walz, 1989), p. 15.
[5] See Knut Hickethier *et al.* (eds.), *Mythos Berlin: Zur Wahrnehmungsgeschichte einer industriellen Metropole: Eine szenische Ausstellung auf dem Gelände des Anhalter Bahnhofs* (Berlin: Ästhetik und Kommunikation, 1987).

1 *Der verlassene Raum* (The Abandoned Room/Space), Karl Biedermann (1996), Koppenplatz.

On the one hand, then, I will follow the city history of the dominant ideological groupings, as focused in what Henri Lefebvre classifies as 'representations of space'. These are those representative structures of cultural space, 'tied to the relations of production and to the "order" that those relations impose'.[6] My study will consider the key sites, zones, and events of this official or 'frontal' history and examine the constructions and controls that they put upon the metropolis. The functioning of the city map will be considered through such generic controlling structures, places of passage, of inclusion and exclusion, as the station, the square, the bunker, the gate, the wall and the bridge. The specific key sites will include such 'lieux de mémoire' (after Pierre Nora) or memory sites as the Alexanderplatz, the Anhalter Bahnhof, Unter den Linden, the Kurfürstendamm, and the Potsdamer Platz. These are sites of memory never fully functioning as composite parts of a memorative environment, of what Nora would call a 'milieu de mémoire'.[7] They are characteristic both of the plenitude and vitality of metropolitan life and of the symptomatic vacant spaces that Andreas Huyssen has called 'the voids of Berlin'.[8]

My second line of enquiry will be concerned with Lefebvre's 'representational spaces', the sites of more localised or minority forms of culture, 'linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art'.[9] The cultural hinterland of the Berlin *Kiez*, or neighbourhood, and the public-private space of the *Hof*, or courtyard, provide archetypal examples of this, amongst a range of other alternative and idiosyncratic urban places. My argument is that these alternative cultural sites sustain types of knowledge that act as a form of unconscious in relation to the urban designs of the successive versions of the dominant ideology. They represent a city map that has more or less hidden sites of special investment, of what psychoanalysis would call cathexis (*Besetzung*), and of resistance, or countercathexis. At the same time, such sites are, following Michel de Certeau, migratory; that is, the official, representative spaces of the city may be occupied, at least in passing, by the practices that belong in less evident spaces. For de Certeau, these unofficial practices of being in the city are

[6] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 33.
[7] See Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations* 26 (1989), 7–25.
[8] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 49–71.
[9] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 33. Art can of course also fashion 'representations of space', as in the monumental allegorical sculptures installed in key Berlin locations in the summer of 2006, representing it as capital of a 'Land of Ideas'.

aligned with the turns or tropes in the rhetoric of the unconscious, its displacements and condensations,[10] its overdetermined encounters and telling lapses.

What this book does, therefore, is take up a challenge that Lefebvre contemplates, and that de Certeau explores. While psychoanalysis can lead, says Lefebvre, to 'intolerable reductionism', he also sees it as open territory for research in the production of space, following the hypothesis that every city has 'an underground and repressed life, and hence an "unconscious"'.[11] This conjecture comes back to haunt his work at intervals.[12] While he recognises that psychoanalysis has a special affinity with the category of representational spaces, with the affect that inhabits them,[13] it is repeatedly invoked only to be charged with a mechanistic lack of dialectical finesse. This book aims to apply critical dialectics to the psychoanalytic method of understanding the production and representation of space.

What is proposed here is to construct and test an operable relationship between the city and the psyche, a metapsychology of city life. This will mean reading the texts, films, and other cultural artefacts that will be the main material focus of the book in a symptomatological fashion, looking for the structures of fantasy, dreams, trauma, melancholia, hysteria, and paranoia in the cultural cityscape. Roland Barthes suggests that psychoanalysis might deserve a place amongst the diverse requirements in the portfolio of the urban semiologist – geography, history, architecture, etc.[14] And he goes on to indicate that the 'language of the city' that interests him is to be understood semiotically, like the sign-system of the 'language of dreams' in Freud.[15] This urban semiotics combines the territory of psychoanalysis, in the erotics and traumatics of the city's encounters, with that of ideology: the enforcement of power.

The mapping of modern culture by Walter Benjamin exemplifies that which is proposed by Barthes and developed in the current study. Out of Benjamin's topographical analyses of nineteenth-century Paris and of Berlin *c.* 1900 as the city of his childhood, emerges a model of cultural understanding which sees the sites and passages of the city as subject to cathexis

[10] Michel de Certeau, 'Walking in the City', *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 91–110; p. 107.
[11] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 36.
[12] See Victor Burgin, 'The City in Pieces', *New Formations* 20 (Summer 1993), 33–45; p. 40.
[13] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 42.
[14] Roland Barthes, 'Semiology and Urbanism', *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 191–201; p. 191.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

and counter-cathexis: occupied by ideological and psychical investments and disinvestments. These run parallel to the practical forms of occupation (*Besetzung*) and counter-occupation that operate on both a mass level, with occupying forces of various political colours, and on such local levels as the Berlin squat (*Hausbesetzung*). They are at work in the language and image systems of the city, in its rhetorical and iconographic representations of places. In particular, they inform the allegorical fashioning of its identity. Behind official representations in that form, managed by dominant ideologies, we will find more subversive kinds of allegory at work, representing alternative ways of speaking and seeing the city.

In the Introduction that follows, the ground will be prepared for this cultural topographical exploration of the city. Firstly, it provides a synoptic historical view of the city in its cultural and political aspects over the last century. This will involve scrutiny of ways in which the cultural topographical map of the city has been formed, through its key structures, figures, and elements. Secondly, it approaches the book's object from its historical boundaries, first by stepping back to the closing years of the nineteenth century and considering the ambiguous prospect that the twentieth-century city presents from there, and then by taking a retrospective view of it through an early twenty-first-century lens. Finally, and in conjunction with those boundary views, it sets out the principal theoretical assumptions of the study, as derived in particular from Benjamin and Freud. By way of scene-setting for the critical modality in which the book will work, there first follows a short sequence of excursions out of and into Berlin. That these travels explore the city from another place and encounter disorientation, makes them, paradoxically, especially suitable for the task of initial orientation. Like Ören, their protagonist moves to and from Berlin as a minority figure from without.

EXCURSION: KAFKA DREAMS OF BERLIN

This first excursion into the terrain of the city follows in the footsteps of Kafka in Berlin, or of his dream-self. This proxy takes him on psychical journeys through Berlin that enter both 'spaces of representation' and 'representational spaces'. Kafka, for whom Berlin was both a fantasy space (in his correspondence with Felice Bauer) and a real one (as visitor and, later, resident), sets out the experience of the city as a confusion of material reality and fantasy projection in a series of dreams recorded in his diary between 1912 and 1914. With characteristic ambivalence, Kafka embraced Berlin as a place of prospective freedom, whilst also experiencing it as a

site of trial, specifically in the familial melodrama of the 'hotel tribunal',[16] leading to the breaking of his engagement to Felice. His Berlin visit of July 1914 on the occasion of that trial is characterised by a split sense of embodied psyche in the city. He is divided between the corporeal freedom of a minoritarian community, with Jews sporting in the open air at the bathing school on the Strahlauer Ufer,[17] and the experience of urban alienation, sitting alone on a seat on Unter den Linden, racked by pain and obsessed with the surveillant role of the ticket controller.[18] To use the terms applied to Kafka's writing by Deleuze and Guattari, he is at once deterritorialised in the foreign city, freed from old territorial claims, and reterritorialised, subject to new ones.[19]

The dream series is similarly divided between the freedom of the city and the experience of psychosomatic constraint. The first dream follows the oedipal logic so familiar from Kafka's writing.[20] He relates how he is riding through Berlin on a tram with his father. The city is represented only by a multitude of upright barriers that seems to take the place of urban buildings and crowds, open and yet experienced as an enclosing 'throng'. Father and son alight before a gate and step 'in through the gate'. While the logic of the journey might suggest that this would take them outside the city, the gate brings them back into it, but only in the shape of a wall that they have to climb. It is an experience of the city gates, in particular for Jews, which we will encounter again. The father dances effortlessly up the wall, while the infantilised son's own progress is impeded, not least by the excrement he finds on it. When he reaches the top, his father has already completed his visit to a certain Dr von Leyden (deceased),[21] and his son is relieved to find that he does not have to do the same. Behind them, in a room with glass walls, sits a man; not the lung specialist von Leyden it turns out, but his secretary. It was the secretary as 'bodily' representative of the doctor that the father had consulted, providing him with a justifiable basis for his 'judgement'. The dream, with its reference to the father–son contest, and questions of corporeal abjection, diagnosis, and judgement, plays out a classic Kafkan scenario in a dream version of the Berlin topography, represented by architectures and street furniture that impede and dislocate the progress of the protagonist. The scenario is reminiscent, in particular, of the story

[16] Franz Kafka, *Tagebücher*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch *et al.* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990), p. 658.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 660. [18] *Ibid.*, p. 659.
[19] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
[20] Kafka, *Tagebücher*, pp. 419–20.
[21] The funeral of the lung specialist von Leyden was reported during Kafka's visit to Berlin in 1910.

'Das Urteil' (The Judgement), which Kafka indeed saw as carrying encoded references to Berlin as a semantic field of memories and dreams through the name Brandenfeld.[22]

The second dream (which is, in fact, a pair of sequences) sees Kafka's dream-self walking through the streets of Berlin, ostensibly on his way to the house of a woman we might take to be Felice.[23] Despite his assured sense that he could reach it at any moment, the dream subjects him to displacement. He sees open streets, and a sign advertising an entertainment venue, the 'Prachtsäle des Nordens' (Stately Halls of the North). In the dream, the location of this attraction is displaced from Wedding in the north to Berlin west, and thus from working-class territory to that of the bourgeoisie. The displacement duly invokes a scene reminiscent of Kafka's gnomic narrative 'Gibs auf!' (Give it up!), as the disoriented subject asks a policeman in a servant's uniform for directions, but any prospect of orientation is waylaid by obscure directions that he cannot follow. He senses another figure at his side, but has no time to turn to identify it, only to feel haunted in his urban disorientation. It might be appropriate to understand this shadowy attendant as the 'bucklicht(e) Männlein' (hunchbacked manikin) as this figure is understood in Benjamin's reading of Kafka, embodying allegorically the principle of *Entstellung*: the distortions, displacements, and lapses in the psychical life of the misfit subject (WB II.ii 425–32). In Kafka's Berlin dreams, this figure, or 'disfigure', is a peculiar kind of urban attendant.

The second sequence sees the protagonist living in a hostel in Berlin, where apparently only young Polish Jews live. The scenario is here apparently shifted to the east. The protagonist spills a bottle of water, suggesting an incontinence to match the scatological character of the first dream. This is the sort of parapraxis that, following Benjamin's account of the 'bucklichte Männlein' in his *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert* (Berlin Childhood around 1900), gives evidence of his uncanny presence (WB VII.i 429–30). The dream-self keeps seeing what appears to be a street-plan in the hand of another resident, but finds that it is only an administrative list of Berlin schools or the like. The tantalising possibility of finding a map with which to negotiate the urban topography, and the psychical territory projected onto it, is never realised. Whether as a bachelor in search of his fiancée or an eastern Jew seeking orientation in the capital outside the ghetto, he is at a loss. The scene resonates with the (mis)guidance given to Kafka by the actor Löwy, as described in a letter to Felice of 1912, where he mimics his friend's

[22] Kafka, *Tagebücher*, p. 492. [23] *Ibid.*, pp. 635–6.

Yiddish account of the route to take from the Alexanderplatz to the Immanuel-Kirchstraße, where Felice lives, only to arrive at the wrong address.[24]

The third dream takes the displaced protagonist into one of the city's most representative 'representations of space': 'Dream last night. With Kaiser Wilhelm. In the Castle. The lovely view. A room like in the "Tabakskollegium". Encounter with Matilde Serao. Unfortunately all forgotten.'[25] The dream of his imperial reception in Schloss Bellevue, in a room resembling the smoking rooms of the early Prussian courts, and in the company of the Italian writer and newspaper publisher Serao,[26] comes to nothing. The entry into the castle as seat of power and visual enjoyment is subject to the erasure of memory. The 'Schloss', in other words, becomes the sort of allegorical site of exclusion, of heteronomous authority, that features in Kafka's novel of the same name.

The dream texts combine uncertain modes of transport with the physical and psychical disorientation of the urban pedestrian and access only to elusive interiors. The protagonist encounters enigmatic texts, figures, and visual designs, but figuration here is recurrently displaced into forms of disfigurement. It thereby follows the principle of *Entstellung* that Freud establishes in his account of dream work, and to which Benjamin's use of the term is indebted. The dreams take a form that, in characteristic Kafkan style, suggests an allegorical principle of representation and elicits interpretation in that vein, but one that also eludes such interpretative mappings in the persistent otherness that it unfolds. As such, the texts are exemplary of the sort of complex experience between historical and geographical materiality and psychically determined fantasy that will recur here. The lures and the aporias of Kafka's dream-life encounters with Berlin establish a model that informs the method of this study: a cultural topography that maps the individual case onto the historical capital, from palace to ghetto.

In the spirit of this exploratory excursion, my book charts the territory between studies devoted to specific artists, movements, or genres and more general cultural historical accounts.[27] It will take a 'case historical' approach, illustrating general tendencies through the close reading of texts, films, architectures, and images. Lefebvre argues that the problem with considering

[24] Franz Kafka, *Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit*, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1967), p. 75.
[25] Kafka, *Tagebücher*, p. 704.
[26] Serao might represent the freedom of the city that Kafka imagined for himself as journalist in Berlin (*Tagebücher*, p. 508).
[27] See, for example, Ronald Taylor, *Berlin and its Culture: A Historical Portrait* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1997).

the production of space in literature is that it is to be found everywhere.[28] And this applies *a fortiori* both to the mobile medium of film, and to the largely still forms of architecture and of photographic and other images. In order to make sense of this ubiquity, however, the concern here will be with paradigmatic configurations of space, with topographical designs that are emblematic for the 'case history' of twentieth-century Berlin, such as those encountered in Kafka's dreams of the city. The particular combination of the psychical with the juridical and political, the clinic with the courts, that characterises the 'case' of Kafka's Berlin will be a recurrent theme throughout.

In its pursuit of the emblematic designs of such cases, the book's cultural historical mapping of Berlin works along two coordinated axes: it traverses the period from Fontane to Grass in a series of synchronic sections, while also staging thematically or generically based encounters between the cultural topographies of different parts of the century, measuring their diachronic links and breaks. It takes key examples from 'high' culture, but the readings show how these are embedded in popular cultural tendencies. It derives new perspectives on the city's culture by pursuing the vital interactions between different cultural media and considering the reciprocal impact of artistic production and the material conditions of the city, its social, architectural, transportation, and information systems. And it opens up new ways of understanding the historical map of the city by engaging both theories of cultural identity, place, and memory contemporary with the earlier material and more recent theoretical developments.

[28] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 15.