

# **Sydney and Berlin**

## **Cities of Silence and Absence**

**A psychogeographical reading of contemporary  
non-fiction texts**

Hannah Lili Böttcher

MA (Freie Universität Berlin)

This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy under a joint award PhD programme between

The University of Western Australia  
School of Humanities  
European Languages and Studies  
German Studies

and

Freie Universität Berlin  
Fachbereich Philosophie und Geisteswissenschaften  
Institut für Englische Philologie

Perth and Berlin, May 2016

Examiner 1: Professor Dr. Alexandra Ludewig (UWA)

Examiner 2: Univ.-Professor Dr. phil. Andrew James Johnston (FU)

Day of Thesis Defence: 15 June 2016

## **Declaration / Erklärung**

I hereby state that all parts of this thesis are my own work and that I have not availed myself of any means other than those stated.

This thesis has not previously been accepted for any other degree in this or another institution and it has been accomplished during enrolment in the degree.

Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich diese Arbeit in allen Teilen selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel verwendet habe.

Diese Dissertation wurde noch nicht für einen anderen Abschluss an dieser oder einer anderen Institution angenommen und wurde während der Einschreibung zu diesem Abschluss verfasst.

Berlin, 28 April 2016

Hannah Lili Böttcher

## **Examiners / Gutachter**

### Supervisor

**Professor Dr. Alexandra Ludewig**

The University of Western Australia

European Languages and Studies

German Studies

### Supervisor

**Univ.-Professor Dr. phil. Andrew James Johnston**

Freie Universität Berlin

Institut für Englische Philologie

### External Examiner

**Professor Dr. Dr. Russell West-Pavlov**

Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Englisches Seminar

### External Examiner

**Professor Dr. Helmut Peitsch**

Universität Potsdam

Institut für Germanistik

## **Supervision / Betreuung**

### **UWA Supervision**

#### Coordinating Supervisor:

Professor Dr. Alexandra Ludewig  
Head of School  
School of Humanities  
European Languages and Studies  
German Studies

#### Co-Supervisor:

Professor Dr. Philip Mead  
Chair of Australian Literature  
English and Cultural Studies

### **FU Berlin Supervision**

Univ.-Professor Dr. phil.  
Andrew James Johnston  
Literaturwissenschaft  
Institut für Englische Philologie

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to a number of people, without whom this thesis would never have been possible.

Many thanks to my supervisors in Perth and Berlin:

Alexandra Ludewig, my principal supervisor at UWA, for having been incredibly supportive, enthusiastic and reliable throughout as well as for reading innumerable drafts and providing swift and helpful feedback. I could not have wished for better supervision.

Philip Mead, my co-supervisor at UWA, for setting up and managing to finalise the Joint PhD agreement despite various obstacles and for taking the time to discuss my thesis with me during my stay at UWA.

Andrew James Johnston at FU Berlin, for his help and for agreeing to step in at such a late stage in the project for the German side of the supervision.

I was extremely lucky to have a wonderful network of family and friends around me without whom the rather lonely task of writing a PhD thesis would have been much more difficult at times.

Above all I would like to thank my parents Ada and Ernst-Rudolf Böttcher for having been unceasingly supportive and encouraging since I first started university (and especially the PhD), for having listened to my worries and for always being there for me; and Gerrit Haas for lending me his support and encouragement, for always being on hand with help and advice and for patiently answering my many questions.

Thanks also to my sister Lisa M. Böttcher who has provided me with hands-on advice and support.

Friends near and far have had a friendly ear for me over the past four years. I cannot name them all, but Susanne Wartenberg and Judith Schühle deserve special recognition and I would like to thank them for their help. I will also miss the many happy and productive co-working Fridays with the latter.

Elizabeth Gralton has done a fantastic proofreading job, for which I am very grateful to her. (All remaining errors are entirely my own responsibility.)

I would also like to thank Leisa Mundy who has proofread earlier chapter drafts.

Thanks to Lenka Filipova for our ‘study buddy sessions’ and Johanna Ahlrichs for good company during many lunch and tea breaks at the Stabi Unter den Linden (Berlin State Library).

I am grateful to Russell West-Pavlov for paving my way to Perth in the first place and for initiating the Joint PhD agreement with UWA.

My thanks also go to Ian Collinson, Elizabeth Farrelly, Karl Friedhelm Fischer, Ross Gibson, Gail Jones, Eoghan Lewis, Tony Mitchell, Ella Mudie, Stephen Muecke and Naomi Stead who took the time to discuss psychogeography and my thesis with me in Sydney, Brisbane and Berlin and provided valuable suggestions.

### **Scholarships**

The following Australian scholarships have financially supported this PhD project, for which I am grateful:

International Postgraduate Research Scholarship: 23/02/2012-21/02/2016  
(IPRS)

Australian Postgraduate Award (APA): 23/02/2012-22/08/2015

UWA Safety-Net Top-Up Scholarship: 23/02/2012-22/08/2015

I would also like to acknowledge that the Graduate Research School and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Western Australia have granted Postgraduate Research Student Travel Awards that allowed me to travel to Sydney in order to conduct research as well as to present at the symposium “Cultures of Change” at the University of New South Wales in October 2013 and to attend a literary festival in London in June 2015.





# Contents

Cover Page	1
Declaration / Erklärung	3
Examiners / Gutachter	4
Supervision / Betreuung	5
Acknowledgements	6
Abstract	10
Kurzzusammenfassung	12
List of Illustrations / Abbildungsverzeichnis	14
List of Publications / Vorveröffentlichungen	15
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2. Paris and London – Origin and Revival of Psychogeography</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1 Paris – Psychogeography’s Situationist Beginnings	27
2.2 London – The ‘Visionary’ Tradition and the Psychogeographical Revival	46
<b>3. Sydney – City of Contradictions</b>	<b>80</b>
3.1 Darkness Beneath the Glitzy Surface: Haunting in Delia Falconer’s <i>Sydney</i>	87
3.2 The Paradox of Silence: Reading Ross Gibson’s <i>26 Views of the Starburst World</i> as an Expression of Verbalised Absence	103
3.3 Urban Islands: Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour	127
3.4 Artistic Engagement with Place and History: <i>Maps That Cried</i>	143
3.5 Conclusion	147
<b>4. Berlin – City of Scars</b>	<b>148</b>
4.1 The Silence of Memory: Berlin in the 1960s through the Eyes of a Child	155
4.2 The Omnipresence of the Past: Cees Nooteboom’s Philosophical Forays into Berlin	181
4.3 Along the (Former) Wall: <i>Cycling the Frame</i> and <i>The Invisible Frame</i>	205
4.4 <i>Orte des Erinnerns/Places of Remembrance</i>	210
4.5 Conclusion	214
<b>5. Conclusion</b>	<b>215</b>
6. Illustrations	220
7. Bibliography	224
Curriculum Vitae	242

## **Abstract**

This dissertation – entitled “Sydney and Berlin – Cities of Silence and Absence: A psychogeographical reading of contemporary non-fiction texts” – seeks to suggest a further development of the practice of psychogeography. According to Guy Debord (1955), the theory of psychogeography offers a way of investigating the impact of the surroundings on people’s emotions and behaviour. While psychogeography is commonly associated with its avant-garde Situationist beginnings in Paris in the 1950s and 60s and its British revival in London in the 1990s, I appropriate the characteristic pliancy of the term psychogeography and attempt to break new ground with regard to its application. Firstly, my study employs psychogeography on a set of texts and other art forms that have not been read as, or identified as psychogeographical. I hereby aim to demonstrate that a contemporary interpretation of psychogeography is not confined to close readings of texts but can also be productively applied to other genres and media. Secondly, I use psychogeography in order to analyse two postmodern cities, Sydney and Berlin, which have thus far not been associated with the tradition. And thirdly, motivated by the desire to further modify the Londoners’ psychogeographical interest in their city’s local histories, I have arrived at a revised definition of the term. This novel interpretation goes beyond psychogeography’s common reading as a means of apprehending the impact of a (usually urban) place on a person by arguing that the practice equally lends itself to acknowledging the way in which the past resurfaces in and has an impact on the present, which often manifests itself in the form of what I have identified as silences and absences.

The introduction provides a general overview of this project as well as its aims and methods. In addition, the choice of cities is explained: the early 1990s constituted a watershed in both Australia and Germany with regard to a coming to terms with the past, while the silences and absences that hark back to the past manifest themselves very differently in Sydney and Berlin. Chapter 2 is divided into two parts: the first part provides an overview of the Situationist origins of psychogeography in Paris and part two deals with the diverse London scene of the 1990s. Chapter 3 focuses on Sydney as a city of contradictions and argues, by means of two non-fiction texts, an urban island and an artwork,

that the silences and absences, which often allude to the Aboriginal past, linger under the surface and have an impact on modern-day Sydney. On the basis of two non-fiction texts, two documentary films and a memorial, Chapter 4 describes Berlin as a city of scars, heavily affected by the events of the twentieth century. In Berlin, the silences and absences abound and are firmly fixed in the cityscape. The conclusion argues that psychogeography offers potential for further revivals and analyses of other places and concepts.

## Kurzzusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Arbeit – mit dem Titel „Sydney and Berlin – Cities of Silence and Absence: A psychogeographical reading of contemporary non-fiction texts“ – schlägt eine Weiterentwicklung der Methode der Psychogeographie vor. Laut Guy Debord (1955) zeigt die der Psychogeographie zugrundeliegende Theorie Möglichkeiten auf, die Auswirkung der Umgebung auf das Verhalten und die Emotionen von Menschen zu untersuchen. Während Psychogeographie üblicherweise mit der Avantgarde-Bewegung der Situationisten im Paris der 1950er und 60er Jahre sowie ihrer britischen Neubelebung im London der 1990er Jahre in Verbindung gebracht wird, macht sich diese Arbeit die Dehnbarkeit des Begriffs der Psychogeographie zu eigen und versucht in Hinblick auf ihren Anwendungsbereich, neue Wege einzuschlagen. Erstens wird Psychogeographie auf einen Textkorpus sowie andere Kunstformen angewendet, die noch nie als psychogeographisch gelesen oder identifiziert wurden. Hierbei soll aufgezeigt werden, dass eine zeitgenössische Interpretation von Psychogeographie nicht auf ein ‚Close Reading‘ von Texten beschränkt ist, sondern ebenso produktiv auf andere Genres und Medien angewendet werden kann. Zweitens wird Psychogeographie hier verwendet, um zwei postmoderne Städte, Sydney und Berlin, zu analysieren, die bisher noch nicht mit der psychogeographischen Tradition verknüpft wurden. Und drittens – motiviert durch das Bestreben, das psychogeographische Interesse der Londoner Autoren an ihrer Heimatgeschichte zu modifizieren – ist diese Arbeit zu einer neuartigen Definition des Begriffs gelangt. Diese neue Interpretation geht über die geläufige Lesart von Psychogeographie als ein Mittel zur Erfassung der Auswirkung des (üblicherweise urbanen) Ortes auf eine Person hinaus, indem sie argumentiert, dass sich diese Methode gleichermaßen dafür eignet herauszuarbeiten, wie die Vergangenheit erneut in der Gegenwart auftaucht und sich auf diese auswirkt. Dies, so wird gefolgert, manifestiere sich oftmals in Form von Schweigen („silences“) und Abwesenheiten („absences“).

Die Einleitung bietet einen generellen Überblick über dieses Projekt sowie über dessen Ziele und Methoden. Des Weiteren wird die Auswahl der Städte erläutert: die frühen 1990er Jahre stellten sowohl in Australien als auch in Deutschland einen Wendepunkt in Hinblick auf die jeweilige

Vergangenheitsbewältigung dar, während sich das Schweigen und die Abwesenheiten, die auf die Vergangenheit zurückgehen, sehr unterschiedlich in Sydney und Berlin äußern. Kapitel 2 ist in zwei Teile aufgeteilt: der erste Teil liefert einen Überblick über die situationistischen Ursprünge der Psychogeographie in Paris, während Teil zwei sich mit der vielfältigen Londoner Szene der 1990er befasst. Kapitel 3 fokussiert sich auf Sydney als eine Stadt der Gegensätze und argumentiert anhand von zwei Sachtexten, einer urbanen Insel sowie einem Kunstwerk, dass das Schweigen und die Abwesenheiten, die oft auf die Geschichte der indigenen Bevölkerung anspielen, unter der Oberfläche nachklingen und auf das heutige Sydney einwirken. Basierend auf zwei Sachtexten, zwei Dokumentarfilmen und einem Denkmal beschreibt Kapitel 4 Berlin als eine Stadt der Narben, die stark von den Ereignissen des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts gezeichnet ist. In Berlin sind das Schweigen und die Abwesenheiten zahlreich vorhanden und fest verankert im Stadtbild. Die Schlussbemerkung argumentiert, dass Psychogeographie Potential für weitere Wiederbelebungen und Analysen anderer Orte und Konzepte aufweist.

## List of Illustrations / Abbildungsverzeichnis

Fig. 1. Daniel Boyd, <i>We Call Them Pirates Out Here</i> (2006)	220
Fig. 2. E. Phillips Fox, <i>Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770</i> (1902)	220
Fig. 3. Guy Debord with Asger Jorn, <i>Guide psychogéographique de Paris</i> (1956)	221
Fig. 4. Guy Debord with Asger Jorn, <i>The Naked City</i> (1957)	221
Fig. 5. The Notebooks of William Dawes, Book A, page 1	222
Fig. 6. Ruth Watson, <i>Maps That Cried</i> (1995-2005)	222
Fig. 7. Renata Stih/Frieder Schnock, <i>Orte des Erinnerns</i> (1993)	223
Fig. 8. Renata Stih/Frieder Schnock, <i>Orte des Erinnerns</i> (1993)	223

## List of Publications / Vorveröffentlichungen

This thesis contains only sole-authored work, some of which has been published and/or prepared for publication under sole authorship. The bibliographic details of the work and where it appears in the thesis are outlined below.

Boettcher, Hannah Lili (2017), "Cees Nootebooms philosophisch-geschichtliche Streifzüge durch Berlin". In: Holdenried, Michaela, Alexander Honold, and Stefan Hermes (eds.), *Reiseliteratur der Moderne und Postmoderne*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag. 313-27.

(Chapter 4, Section 4.2 The Omnipresence of the Past: Cees Nooteboom's Philosophical Forays into Berlin)

Boettcher, Hannah Lili (2016), "Contemporary Artistic Articulations of Aboriginal Rights: The Work of Daniel Boyd". In: Adair, Gigi, and Anja Schwarz (eds.), *Postcolonial Justice in Australia: Reassessing the 'Fair Go'*. KOALAS 12. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier. 61-72.

(Chapter 1, Introduction)

Boettcher, Hannah Lili (2013), "A Psychogeographical Exploration of Disappearance and Dis/Orientation in London's East End". *Stet* 3 (June 2013).

(Chapter 2, Sections 2.2.2 Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair, *Rodinsky's Room* (2000) and 2.2.4 Janet Cardiff, *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* (1999))

The city is a place, a center of meaning, par excellence. It has many highly visible symbols. More important, the city itself is a symbol.<sup>1</sup>

(Yi-Fu Tuan)

---

<sup>1</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan (2011 [1977]), *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 173.



## 1. Introduction

In *The City in Literature* (1998), Richard Lehan remarks that, ever since the “fairly recent discipline” referred to as “[u]rban history” practised “by early sociologists like Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and Georg Simmel”, who described “the city as a subject in and of itself”, there has been an interest in “the effect of the city on its inhabitants: what happens when the city becomes a state of mind”.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the theory of psychogeography explores the effect of the city on the individual: through its emphasis on “the intimacy between environment and human emotion”,<sup>3</sup> it offers a way of investigating the impact of the surroundings on people’s behaviour.<sup>4</sup> The avant-garde origins of the term go back to the Situationist International, a group of left-wing radicals in Paris in the 1950s and 60s who conceived of psychogeography as a means by which they could encounter their familiar surroundings anew and engage with their fast-changing urban environment by aimlessly walking its terrain. Many years later, in the 1990s, a heterogeneous group of London-based writers revived this practice and gave it a distinctly British flavour by exploring the local histories and hidden corners of their capital while tracing the re-emergence of the past. Based on the Parisian beginnings and the London revival, my dissertation seeks to suggest a further development of the practice of psychogeography. I appropriate the characteristic pliancy of the term psychogeography (as set out by its inventors), modifying or extending the definition, and also attempt to break new ground with regard to its application: first, by employing it with reference to a set of texts and other art forms that have not yet been read as, or identified as psychogeographical; and second, by using it to analyse two postmodern cities, Sydney and Berlin, which have thus far not commonly been associated with the tradition. Consequently, the focus of my thesis necessarily wavers between these two poles: psychogeography on the one hand and Sydney and Berlin on the other. In order to understand how and why psychogeography emerged, and what it aspired to in the first place, it is crucial to start with an overview of its Situationist origins. However, the London

---

<sup>2</sup> Richard Lehan (1998), *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*. Berkeley/LA/London: University of California Press. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Sadler (1999 [1998]), *The Situationist City*. Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press. 85.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Guy Debord (1955), “Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography”. In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 8.

psychogeographers – whose work is not confined to texts but encompasses the arts more generally – have particularly kindled my interest in the concept. Their determination to uncover what is below the surface, to roam the urban edges, to untangle what was there but no longer is, and to investigate what role the past plays in contemporary London means that I regard them as pivotal ‘spiritual forerunners’ to my project. Motivated by the desire to further modify the Londoners’ reading of psychogeography, I have arrived at a revised definition which I shall apply to my contemporary primary sources dealing with Sydney and Berlin. While still employing psychogeography as a means of identifying the impact of a place (or, more precisely, the *genius loci*, the ‘spirit of place’) on a person, as described by the Situationists, I have identified another tendency that is more informed by the London scene: I regard psychogeography as a practice suitable for acknowledging the way in which the past resurfaces in and has an impact on the present, a phenomenon which often manifests itself in the form of silences and absences. Due to the fact that psychogeography is especially receptive to atmospheres and hidden secrets, I argue that this method of experiencing the geographical environment lends itself to engaging with (and, at least as far as this is possible, visualising or drawing attention to) silences and absences. The concept of silence is often discussed in memory studies and, although memory studies are not the focus of this thesis, Astrid Erll’s “Concluding remarks” in one of the most recent publications in this field, *Beyond Memory: Silence and the Aesthetics of Remembrance* (2016), apply here, too: “Art and literature, it seems, are crucially important as media that critically observe and negotiate society’s knowing and not-knowing about the things that are kept silent”.<sup>5</sup> Though it is hard to generalise, I define silence as something that can be perceived but not seen, something intangible yet omnipresent, indiscernible but nevertheless present below the surface. Absences are closely related to these silences and can also be referred to as voids<sup>6</sup> – gaps in the cityscape; reminders of something which is no longer physically there but whose former presence continues to be felt and to have an impact on the sense of place. In the respective chapters I shall qualify what constitutes the silences and absences in each of my primary sources. In

---

<sup>5</sup> Astrid Erll (2016), “Concluding remarks”. In: Dessingué, Alexandre, and Jay Winter (eds.), *Beyond Memory: Silence and Aesthetics of Remembrance*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge. 210.

<sup>6</sup> I was inspired to use the term ‘voids’ here by Andreas Huyssen’s essay “The Voids of Berlin” (1997), which will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Berlin.

accordance with Erll's statement and the London tradition, I have expanded my focus on close readings of non-fiction texts by including in my analysis, though to a lesser degree, other art forms such as memorials and documentaries, in order to illustrate the wide applicability of contemporary psychogeography, which does not have to be confined to the written word. Before elaborating on my primary sources, I will explain my choice of cities, which might initially seem unusual.

Neither Sydney nor Berlin has been identified as a centre of psychogeographical activity, but I will argue that these cities, due to their historical circumstances in the late twentieth century, lend themselves to investigation within a psychogeographical framework that focuses on silences and absences. The early 1990s constituted a watershed in both Australia and Germany in terms of the way in which significant events from the past were considered. Although necessarily incomparable in terms of their individual historical developments, these two nations experienced a simultaneous coming to terms with the past, a commonality which has influenced my choice of cities. As Sydney and Berlin are, from a historical viewpoint, the most significant cities in Australia and Germany, respectively, and can be regarded as the cultural centres and most popular destinations of their respective countries, attracting large numbers of tourists every year, I have chosen these metropolises for my reading of contemporary non-fiction texts (and other art forms) which strongly evoke silences and absences.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, Australia began to deal differently with its colonial past. As the site where "Governor Arthur Phillip came ashore from his First Fleet [...] in 1788",<sup>7</sup> Sydney Harbour was the major location of the nationwide bicentennial celebrations, which culminated in the re-enactment of the landing of the First Fleet on 26 January 1988. However, the Bicentenary also triggered "uncertainty over the place of Indigenous Australians in the national story and heated debate over the legacy of the past" (Bashford/Macintyre 2013: xxii). Running parallel to the celebrations, crowds of up to 40 000 (mainly Aboriginal) demonstrators gathered in the streets of Sydney.<sup>8</sup> The protesters questioned hitherto largely taken-for-granted historio-

---

<sup>7</sup> Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (2013), "Preface". In: Bashford, Alison, and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Australia*. Vol. 2: *The Commonwealth of Australia*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. xxii.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Geoffrey Bolton (1996 [1993] [1990]), *The Oxford History of Australia*. Vol. 5: *1942-1995. The Middle Way*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Melbourne: Oxford University Press. 286.

graphy by calling for 'Australia Day' to be renamed 'Invasion Day' (cf. Bashford/Macintyre 2013: xxiii). By the early 1990s, major milestones in the acknowledgement of Australia's postcolonial legacy, land rights and the dispossession of its Indigenous peoples were reached. In the landmark *Mabo* case<sup>9</sup> (1992) "the High Court declared [...] that native title existed in Australian common law", while "the doctrine of *terra nullius*, which had deemed that the land had belonged to no one at the time of European arrival" was rejected.<sup>10</sup> Later that year, "in launching Australia's celebration of the United Nations Year of Indigenous Peoples on 10 December 1992," Prime Minister Paul Keating addressed "a predominantly Aboriginal audience" in Sydney's Redfern Park and confirmed "the *Mabo* decision as an 'historic turning point'"; at the same time, his speech amounted to an admission of guilt on the part of non-Indigenous Australians.<sup>11</sup> A few years after the "codification of native title (the *Native Title Act* of 1993)" (Haebich/Kinnane 2013: 353),

[i]n a further case brought by the Wik people of Queensland, the High Court found in 1996 that the granting of a pastoral lease did not fully extinguish native title: it was possible for native title and pastoral rights to coexist. (Haebich/Kinnane 2013: 354)

Despite the fact that many non-Indigenous landholders strongly criticised these new rights (cf. Haebich/Kinnane 2013: 354), they marked a defining moment for Aboriginal Australians. Another breakthrough was the implementation of "[t]he first National Sorry Day [...] on 26 May 1998", in response to "the tabling of the report *Bringing them Home*" the previous year, which investigated the cases of Indigenous Australian children (later known as 'the Stolen Generations') who had been taken away from their families by the Australian Federal and State government agencies and church missions.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, in 1997, the then-

---

<sup>9</sup> In 1982 Eddie Mabo, together with two other Torres Strait Islanders from the Murray Islands (David Passi and James Rice), "brought an action in the High Court of Australia against the State of Queensland. They claimed that Queensland's sovereignty over the Murray Islands was subject to the land rights of the Murray Islanders (also known as the Meriam people) based on local custom and traditional title." (Peter Butt, Robert Eagleson, and Patricia Lane (2001), *Mabo, Wik & Native Title*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Sydney: The Federation Press. 8-9.)

<sup>10</sup> Mark Peel and Christina Twomey (2011), *A History of Australia*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 259.

<sup>11</sup> Anna Haebich and Steve Kinnane (2013), "Indigenous Australia". In: Bashford, Alison, and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Australia*. Vol. 2: *The Commonwealth of Australia*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 353.

<sup>12</sup> "The report was the result of an inquiry by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission into the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families" who "came to be known as the Stolen Generations". (Quoted from the Australian Government's website, accessed 22 February 2016:

Prime Minister John Howard still “refused to apologise to the Stolen Generations” (Haebich/ Kinnane 2013: 354), and a formal apology from the Australian government was not to come for another eleven years (cf. Haebich/Kinnane 2013: 356). These decisions and events constitute a turning point in the recognition of Aboriginal rights. Sydney, although not the specific site of all these events, was nonetheless the site of the first European settlement in Australia and therefore a crucial symbol in the nation’s grappling with its contested past. As a slightly later visual manifestation of this rethinking of the past, I would like to mention the painting *We Call Them Pirates Out Here* (2006, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney) by Daniel Boyd, a young Aboriginal artist of the Kudjla/Gangalu people, whose work encourages a different perspective on historiography in Australia (Fig. 1., p. 220). Boyd has reinterpreted the famous painting *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770* (1902, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne) by E. Phillips Fox (Fig. 2., p. 220) by way of changing a few details and representing Cook not as a glorious and famous explorer, but rather as a pirate conquering inhabited land. He thereby inverts the meaning of the original scene and criticises the Eurocentric viewpoint and the doctrine of *terra nullius* implied in Fox’s tableau. *We Call Them Pirates Out Here* is a thought-provoking painting, prompting one to reconsider how significant events from Australia’s past are depicted, and provoking a visual engagement with the question of postcolonial justice.<sup>13</sup>

Berlin, in turn, occupies a special position in Germany’s history, as no other German city has been so heavily affected by the events of the twentieth century. From 1945 onwards the sectors of occupied Berlin started to move apart, and were finally divided – as was the rest of the country – into the communist East (the German Democratic Republic, the GDR) and the democratic West (the Federal Republic of Germany). With the fall of the Wall in 1989, the then rather different parts of the city were able to start to grow together; Berlin, nevertheless, has not yet been able to shake off the legacy of that division. By the time Germany was reunified in 1990, many parts of the

---

<http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/sorry-day-stolen-generations>). The removals occurred between the late 1800s and the 1970s (cf. National Sorry Day Committee website, accessed 22 February 2016: <http://www.nsdcc.org.au/stolen-generations-history/>).

<sup>13</sup> A more detailed analysis of Boyd’s contribution to a debate about postcolonial justice in Australia can be found in my article “Contemporary Artistic Articulations of Aboriginal Rights: The Work of Daniel Boyd” (2016). In: Adair, Gigi, and Anja Schwarz (eds.), *Postcolonial Justice in Australia: Reassessing the ‘Fair Go’*. KOALAS 12. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.

dividing wall had started to disappear and the city changed considerably once again; for a long time Berlin was Europe's largest building site, the yellow cranes becoming almost a characteristic of the city's skyline. On the one hand, as part of this urban renewal, many remnants of the most recent past have been erased, with the Wall – apart from a few remaining stretches as at Bernauer Straße – the most prominent example. Some East Berlin neighbourhoods have been gentrified over the years, changing almost beyond recognition, and Potsdamer Platz, which had been Berlin's traffic hub in the 1920s, has enjoyed a large-scale renewal and has been awoken from its 'ghost station'-sleep. A number of streets – especially those bearing the names of people who had been classified as active opponents of democracy – have been renamed<sup>14</sup> and later, in 2006, much to the dismay of many Berliners, the Palace of the Republic, which had been the seat of the GDR parliament, was controversially demolished, making way for the reconstruction of the Berlin Palace (the former Prussian royal palace) in its original location. On the other hand, a new and more extensive form of accounting for the past began in the early 1990s, which focused not only on a coming to terms with Germany's division – an example of which is the Berlin Wall Memorial at Bernauer Straße – but also on the darkest chapters of Germany's history: its Nazi past, or, more precisely, the legacy of the Second World War and the Holocaust. The events of the last century have left an imprint on Berlin; the vestiges of the past are visible and inescapable. Mary Fulbrook, an English Professor of German History, states, in fact, that Berlin "is now arguably one of the most historically self-aware cities in the world".<sup>15</sup> The historically-loaded area located roughly between the Brandenburg Gate, Potsdamer Platz, the Anhalter Bahnhof (station) and Checkpoint Charlie that became accessible again after the fall of the Wall has developed into a site of places of remembrance. The two most prominent and impressive memorials in the area are the Topography of Terror on Niederkirchner Straße, a documentation centre "in the ruins of the Gestapo headquarters" (Fulbrook 2009: 128), and the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Holocaust Memorial), "a place of memory in the center of a new

---

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bernd Stöver (2010), *Geschichte Berlins*. München: Verlag C. Beck. 123.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Fulbrook (2009), "Historical Tourism: Reading Berlin's Doubly Dictatorial Past". In: Staiger, Ute, Henriette Steiner and Andrew Webber (eds.), *Memory Culture and the Contemporary City: Building Sites*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 126.

postunification landscape”.<sup>16</sup> Although based on ideas that had been conceived of before the fall of the Wall,<sup>17</sup> both were created after reunification (in 1992/95 and 2005, respectively). Another prominent example of such a project in Berlin is the Jewish Museum (opened in 2001). The building’s architect, Daniel Libeskind, has incorporated empty spaces, which he calls ‘voids’, into the architectural structure of the Museum. These voids refer to “that which can never be exhibited when it comes to Jewish Berlin history: Humanity reduced to ashes”.<sup>18</sup> As Ernestine Schlant states in *The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust* (1999):

Libeskind has used the properties of broken lines (the broken Star of David), of absences and of voids to achieve the extraordinary experience of the absence of Jewish life in Berlin and at the same time express its past integral presence.<sup>19</sup>

The Jewish Museum could thus be regarded as an example in the field of architecture which draws attention to silences and absences in contemporary Berlin.

In conclusion, in both Sydney and Berlin a change of thinking with regard to the past occurred in the years that followed the Bicentenary in 1988 and the fall of the Wall in 1989. In the wake of this rebuilding phase, the silences and absences in each city became, to a certain degree, more perceptible, with texts, memorials and documentaries, as well as art and architecture projects engaging with or alluding to the respective city and its past. Yet what I find most striking, and what has prompted me to choose exactly these two cities, is the different ‘visibility’ or perceptibility of these silences and absences in their cityscapes: whereas in Berlin one is confronted with the legacy of the events of the twentieth century at almost every corner, Sydney’s Aboriginal history is not as immediately obvious – which, of course, does not mean that it is not equally

---

<sup>16</sup> Karen E. Till (2005), *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Topography of Terror and Holocaust Memorial websites (accessed 25 February 2016): <http://www.topographie.de/en/foundation/>

<http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/en/memorials/the-memorial-to-the-murdered-jews-of-europe/history.html>

<sup>18</sup> Libeskind quoted on the Museum’s website (accessed 02 March 2016):

<http://www.jmberlin.de/main/EN/04-About-The-Museum/01-Architecture/01-libeskind-Building.php>

<sup>19</sup> Ernestine Schlant (1999), *The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust*. New York/London: Routledge. 242.

present. The texts and art forms I have selected aid in drawing attention to what lies dormant underneath.

I have chosen my primary sources on the basis that they deal with each city's impact on the author (or narrator/artist) in question, and address the underlying silences and absences that refer back to the past. I have narrowed my choice of primary sources on Sydney and Berlin to contemporary texts, with 'contemporary' quite generally meaning 'after 1988/89', as these were the watershed years in Germany and Australia. I have, however, aimed to select the most recently published texts (most were written after the millennium, more precisely after 2010), as it seems that, especially in the last six years or so, there has been a heightened interest in non-fiction texts which have the city itself as their central focus. It is important to note that the state of research concerning secondary sources relating to my primary texts is, in almost all cases, sparse: either there has not yet been much written about such recent works, or the secondary texts focus on issues that do not contribute to my approach. Another aspect to be taken into account is that, although the writers/artists I have selected here identify with the 'victims' of the respective pasts, none of them was directly involved him- or herself. Their reflections benefit from the distance of time.

The Sydney texts under discussion are Delia Falconer's *Sydney* (2010), a portrait of her hometown's hauntedness and contradictory 'character', and Ross Gibson's *26 Views of the Starburst World: William Dawes at Sydney Cove 1788-91* (2012a), in which Gibson 'reconstructs' a partly fictional biography on the basis of Dawes' Aboriginal language notebooks, which testify to the impact which Sydney Cove and its Indigenous inhabitants have on a young Englishman in the early days of European settlement. Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour is an example of a site of psychogeographical interest due to its many different layers of history as demonstrated on the basis of architectural projects. An artwork by New Zealand-based artist Ruth Watson, *Maps That Cried* (1995-2005), rounds off this chapter.

For Berlin, I have chosen as primary texts Hanns-Josef Ortheil's *Die Berlinreise – Roman eines Nachgeborenen* (2014), a travel journal written in the 1960s when the author visited the divided city as a child with his father and was confronted with his family's traumatic secrets; and Cees Nooteboom's *Roads to Berlin: Detours and Riddles in the Lands and History of Germany* (2013 [2009]),



in which the Dutch author narrates roughly forty-five years of Berlin history from the half distanced, half personally-affected standpoint of a foreigner and visitor to Berlin. In addition to these texts, I shall discuss two documentary films: Cynthia Beatt's *Cycling the Frame* (1988) and *The Invisible Frame* (2009), featuring the Scottish actress Tilda Swinton cycling along the border of the (former) Berlin Wall. My last example is *Orte des Erinnerns/Places of Remembrance* (1993), a memorial by Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock located in the district of Schöneberg, which commemorates the thousands of Jewish people from the area who were deported and killed by the Nazis, and who have left an irrecoverable void in this neighbourhood.

My thesis is structured as follows: after this general introduction to my topic (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 provides the background to my particular focus on psychogeography and, importantly, introduces the 'spiritual forerunners' to my project in two sections, allowing me to point out parallels and differences in my approach to the subject. Part 1 focuses on Paris and the origins of psychogeography: it outlines the early Situationist beginnings, explains the theoretical terms closely connected to psychogeography and illustrates the Situationists' mind-set, which is necessary for understanding what the practice initially aimed to achieve. Part 2 deals with the London revival and discusses some of the well-known psychogeographers as well as writers and artists whose approaches to depicting London lend themselves to a psychogeographical reading. Concluding with the more recent developments of psychogeography in Britain, which are no longer confined to London, the discussion leads to the main section of my thesis, the chapters on Sydney and Berlin. Chapter 3 focuses on Sydney and illustrates – on the basis of the above-named texts, a map and an urban island – that Sydney is a city in which the past does not feature very prominently in the cityscape, but can nevertheless be perceived. Chapter 4 deals with Berlin's 'scars', which, especially since the fall of the Wall, have become increasingly visible in this once-divided city. The primary texts, along with the documentaries and the memorial, address the events of the twentieth century which have shaped Berlin to this day. In the Conclusion, I summarise what constitutes the novel aspects of my approach to psychogeography, namely employing the theory in order to read primary sources and cities hitherto unexamined, but also regarding it as a suitable method in order to bring to light (as far as this is possible) the silences and

absences that hover over Berlin and Sydney. In addition, I seek to demonstrate that the psychogeographical approach to artistic and literary production has not yet been exhausted.

To provide some historical context and to introduce the theoretical foundations of psychogeography, I shall now turn to its Situationist beginnings in Paris.

## 2. Paris and London – Origin and Revival of Psychogeography

### 2.1 Paris – Psychogeography's Situationist Beginnings

In order to outline how psychogeography emerged and what it was used for, I shall in the following provide an overview of the Situationist International, its general ambition and the ideas it was based on. However, I should make clear from the start that it was necessary to select from the Situationists' various interests only what is relevant to my thesis. Therefore, some prominent aspects of the Situationist International – for instance their political, anti-capitalist conviction as famously expressed by Guy Debord in his Marxist critique of the post-war consumer culture in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), as well as the utopian architectural project focused on the Situationists' idea of an ideal city as represented by Constant's model of "New Babylon" – cannot be dwelled on here, as they do not contribute to my reading of psychogeography and would require diverging too far from my main focus. Other aspects, which might not usually be considered as directly related to psychogeography either, for instance what the Situationists call 'the situation', I regard as crucial background knowledge in order to understand the movement's overall concept; hence, I have included them in the following overview.

Psychogeography's origins can be traced back to the Lettriste movement, which was formed by Isidore Isou and Gabriel Pomerand in Paris in 1946.<sup>20</sup> After a split with the Lettristes (cf. Ford 2005: 26-27), Guy Debord, who would later become one of the key players of psychogeography, formed together with Serge Berna, Jean-Louis Brau and Gil J. Wolman the Lettriste International (LI) (1952-57) (Ford 2005: 20-24). Along with François Dufrêne, they had formerly been part of "the tribe", a group of young people gathered around Isou, who indulged in "an extreme philosophy of inaction" and condemned work, as expressed in their slogan "Ne Travaillez Jamais!" ("Never Work!") (cf. Ford 2005: 20-24). Yet the Lettriste International dissolved after only five years in order to "make way for the SI", the Situationist International (1957-72), an avant-garde group of left-wing radicals founded, among others, by Debord who soon "took control of the new group" (Ford 2005: 9) and became its intellectual

---

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Simon Ford (2005), *The Situationist International: A User's Guide*. London: Black Dog Publishing. 18.

centre. The Situationist International never exceeded ten to twenty members “[a]t any one time”<sup>21</sup> and constantly fluctuated in numbers (cf. Ford 2005: 9). At this early stage, its members worked at the interface between poetry, art and politics, both in theory and practice, but later increasingly abandoned the artistic side of their work in favour of political theory and activism.<sup>22</sup> The following overview (and my focus on psychogeography more generally) takes as its interest the artistic aspects of the movement rather than its political and activist aims, which, as stated above, do not contribute to my engagement with literary texts dealing with the ‘spirit of place’. My choice of approach should not imply a lack of acknowledgement on my part of the importance of a political agenda to the Situationist International.

Around the time when the Lettriste International was still in existence, those methods were invented which were later continued by the Situationist International and became their trademark: psychogeography, drift/*dérive*, unitary urbanism and *détournement*. It is vital to explain these terms as only in combination do they contribute to an understanding of the concept of psychogeography as a whole.

### 2.1.1 Terms and Definitions

In his 1955 “Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography”, Debord provided the following definition of the term psychogeography:

Psychogeography sets for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals. The charmingly vague adjective *psychogeographical* can be applied to the findings arrived at by this type of investigation, to their influence on human feelings, and more generally to any situation or conduct that seems to reflect the same spirit of discovery. (1955: 8)

---

<sup>21</sup> Frances Stracey (2014), *Constructed Situations: A New History of the Situationist International*. London: Pluto Press. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bernd Adamek-Schyma (2008), “Psychogeographie heute: Kunst, Raum, Revolution?”. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 7.3. Accessed 18 April 2016. 408-09. <http://ojs.unbc.ca/index.php/acme/article/view/813/671>

Debord railed against most forms of conventional labelling or classification yet he regarded the term ‘psychogeography’ as “not too inappropriate” (1955: 8) – possibly because of its “pleasing vagueness”,<sup>23</sup> which has enabled many later generations to use the term according to their own needs and interests as is also the case in this thesis. In the Situationists’ journal *Potlatch*<sup>24</sup> – soon to become the mouthpiece for their undertakings – psychogeography was first mentioned in print (cf. Ford 2005: 33). It was defined as “the emotional and psychological impact of places, usually urban, upon the individual, with a view to formulating a reorganisation of society itself”.<sup>25</sup> The vagueness or rather the multifariousness of psychogeography is also reflected in its divergent characteristics which might at first glance seem random but, on closer consideration, coalesce to create an approach that is concerned with exploring the metropolis on various levels.<sup>26</sup> In his introductory work *Psychogeography* (2010), Merlin Coverley has compiled some features of the method which frequently occur either individually or in combination. Firstly, “the activity of walking” as performed by “[t]he wanderer, the stroller, the flâneur and the stalker” (Coverley 2010: 12) might be regarded as the most characteristic ‘tool’ of the Parisian psychogeographers, although in the texts I have chosen to read from a psychogeographical perspective, the walking aspect is not a stringent necessity, as I shall explain later. Secondly, psychogeography is often marked by a “spirit of political radicalism”, paired with “a playful sense of provocation and trickery” (Coverley 2010: 13). Thirdly, “the search for new ways of apprehending our urban environment” tends to be the main focus of the psychogeographer (Coverley 2010: 13). Similarly important, and possibly linked to the third characteristic, is a preoccupation with “excavating the past” as well as with “recording the present” (Coverley 2010: 14). In addition, Coverley names some more general features of psychogeography: “urban wandering, the imaginative reworking of the city, the otherworldly sense of spirit of place, the unexpected insights and juxtapositions created by endless drifting, the new ways of experiencing surroundings” (2010: 31). These characteristics provide

---

<sup>23</sup> Merlin Coverley (2010), *Psychogeography*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials. 89.

<sup>24</sup> The name *Potlatch* is a “Chinook word for a form of exchange and communication based on gift giving” (David Pinder (2005), *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 147). It was a reference to the anthropologist Marcel Mauss’ study *The Gift*, which examined the role of gift-giving “amongst the native tribes of British Columbia and Alaska” as an “enhancement of status” (Ford 2005: 33).

<sup>25</sup> Merlin Coverley (2008), *Occult London*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials. 109.

<sup>26</sup> Today, psychogeography is not confined to cities, but the Situationists practiced it mainly in metropolitan areas, above all in Paris, and were very much focused on the city.

the premise for the 'psychogeographical mood', which is a crucial state of mind and prerequisite for exploring the city. By wandering the streets of real-life cities and embarking on an urban voyage of discovery, the fabric of the city becomes more graspable.

Closely connected to psychogeography is the notion of the "drift", or *dérive*, meaning "the aimless stroll" (Coverley 2010: 90). The aspiration of "deliberately trying to lose oneself in the city" (Ford 2005: 34) is at the very centre of the psychogeographical endeavour as it allows one to perceive one's surroundings anew.<sup>27</sup> The definition that the Situationists themselves gave is as follows: "A mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. The term also designates a specific uninterrupted period of deriving".<sup>28</sup> I will refer again to this idea of the *dérive* when I dwell on the walking aspect of psychogeography a little later.

Unitary urbanism is the principle on which the Situationists' vision of an ideal city was based: "a [unitary] social project" (Sadler 1999: 117). It also stands for "[t]he theory of the combined use of arts and techniques as means contributing to the construction of a unified milieu in dynamic relation with experiments in behavior" (Anon 1958: 52), meaning "the theory of the combined use of the arts and techniques for the construction – or preservation – of environments in which the *dérive* and psycho-geographical experiments would prosper".<sup>29</sup> The concept is central to the Situationists' "attempts to transform urban spaces and society" and did not connote "a doctrine of urbanism [...] but a critique of urbanism" (Pinder 2005: 129). In fact, "[i]t was forged out of a revolutionary struggle to transform social space and everyday life" (Pinder 2005: 129). The Situationists "envisaged unitary urbanism as being dynamic, continually evolving, concerned with ambiances and situations, and the outcome of people's desires and actions" (Pinder 2005: 129). It would break down the boundaries between "work/leisure or public/private" (Debord quoted in

---

<sup>27</sup> The Surrealists' chance encounters in the city were formative for the *dérive*, but the Situationists practiced their *dérives* with a lot more "seriousness and commitment" and "much less dependence on random factors" (Ford 2005: 34).

<sup>28</sup> Anon (1958), "Definitions". (First published in *Internationale Situationniste #1*, 1958.) In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 52.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Wollen (1999), "Mappings: Situationists and/or Conceptualists". In: Newman, Michael, and Jon Bird (eds.), *Rewriting Conceptual Art*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 30.

Pinder 2005: 129) and was “promoted as a project that was *collective* and *participatory*” (Pinder 2005: 129).

The concept of *détournement* refers to the representation of “everyday ephemera, such as advertisement slogans and comic strips, and significant cultural products, such as quotations from Marx and old master paintings [...] within a new artistic context” (Ford 2005: 36). This appropriation could also be called a form of deliberate and blatant plagiarism: “[p]lagiarism is one of the methods by which *détournement* seeks to liberate a word, statement, image or event from its intended usage and to subvert its meaning” (Coverley 2010: 95). It is a “method of propaganda” and requires “[t]he integration of present or past artistic productions into a superior construction of a milieu” (Anon 1958: 52). Furthermore, *détournement* was the prerequisite for the creation of new situations, which were formed out of these “*détournements* or recombinations” (Stracey 2014: 13).

The concepts will be taken up again in the course of this overview of the Parisian psychogeographical beginnings.

### 2.1.2 Situations

In his “Report on the Construction of Situations” (1957), Debord introduced the term ‘situation’, which became crucial and eponymic to the Situationist International: “Our central idea is the construction of situations, that is to say, the concrete construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior passional quality”.<sup>30</sup> Later in his text, which exhibits the typical radicalness and harshness in tone of the twentieth-century avant-gardes, Debord continued: “Our situations will be ephemeral, without a future. Passageways. Our only concern is real life; we care nothing about the permanence of art or of anything else” (1957: 41). In the “Questionnaire” of 1963, his colleagues and fellow-Situationists further expand the concept of the situation by stressing that the word “situationist” “denotes an activity aimed at *creating* situations, as opposed to passively recognizing them in academic or other separate terms” while “replac[ing] existential passivity with the

---

<sup>30</sup> Guy Debord (1957), “Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency’s Conditions of Organization and Action”. In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 38.

construction of moments of life, and doubt with playful affirmation”.<sup>31</sup> This idea of the situation refers partly and indirectly back to Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialism, here understood and summarised as “the idea that ‘existence precedes essence’”, that is, “Sartre’s basic Existential argument is that [...] in fact ‘existence’ comes first, without definition, and finding that we exist, it is only subsequently that we go on to define ourselves”.<sup>32</sup> His “central notion of man being essentially ‘nothing’ but what he makes of himself” (Earnshaw 2007: 74) is linked to

the way Sartre understands consciousness, since it is only through his formulation of how consciousness is constituted and functions that we find ‘nothingness’, and it is precisely this nothingness which guarantees man’s (Existential) freedom. (Earnshaw 2007: 75)

Yet in contrast to Debord’s active creation and shaping of a “new ‘science of situations’”, Sartre used the term to “describe[...] a sense of self-consciousness of existence within a particular environment or ambience” (Ford 2005: 50), as expressed in “For a Theatre of Situations” (1947):

But if it’s true that man is free in a given situation and that in and through that situation he chooses what he will be, then what we have to show in the theatre are simple and human situations and free individuals in these situations choosing what they will be. [...] The situation is an appeal: it surrounds us, offering us solutions which it’s up to us to choose.<sup>33</sup>

However, as Frances Stracey points out in *Constructed Situations: A New History of the Situationist International* (2014):

For Sartre, the autonomy of the subject to choose freedom is actually closer to the SI’s [Situationist International’s] free activity of constructing

---

<sup>31</sup> J.V. Martin, Jan Strijbosch, Raoul Vaneigem, René Viénet (1963), “Questionnaire”. (First published in *Internationale Situationniste* #9, 1963.) In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 178.

<sup>32</sup> Steven Earnshaw (2007 [2006]), *Existentialism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group. 74.

<sup>33</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre (1947), “For a Theatre of Situations”. In: Brandt, George W. (ed.) (1998), *Modern Theories of Drama. A Selection of Writings on Drama and Theatre 1850-1990*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 43.



situations. As in the SI's 'situation', freedom for Sartre is exercised or realized only through a practical, concrete manifestation of choice [...]. (2014: 13)

Despite this obvious influence, the Situationists do not directly refer to Sartre in their "Questionnaire", but it is apparent that "they find it necessary to distance their constructivist model of a situation from the given reality of a particular phenomenological, existential situation" (Stracey 2014: 12). Unlike Sartre, the Situationists "dispute this givenness of the situation, grasping it instead as something created that can therefore be re-created" (Stracey 2014: 13).

Stracey further instances the French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre's "theory of moments" as another influence on the Situationist International's concept of the constructed situation, which he had discussed in his autobiography *Le Somme et le Reste* (1959) (2014: 10). However, the Situationists also sought to "distance their model of the 'constructed situation' from Lefebvre's theory of 'moments'" (Stracey 2014: 11) even before they split with him. In "Théorie des Moments et Construction des Situations", which was published in 1960, they indeed acknowledge a common ground as both situation and moment are something actively "created", but

unlike the moment, which Lefebvre separates out into distinct, repeatable categories, such as moments of play, rest, justice, poetry or love, the situation comprises of perishable instants that are unique, in the sense of being unrepeatable – hence the later description of situations as ephemeral, as mere passageways. The transience of the situation is in part derived from the realm of artistic production, unlike the moment; in particular, an avant-garde destruction of durable artworks. (Stracey 2014: 11)

The Situationists were also sceptical towards "Lefebvre's ability to draw up a prescriptive and somewhat programmatic list of self-contained moments, such as play, justice, rest, etc." (Stracey 2014: 11). Contrary to the moment, "the situation has no prescribed limits or ends" – in fact, "[t]he constructed situation is a singularity" (Stracey 2014: 11) and "more akin to a permanent revolution of everyday life" (Stracey 2014: 12). However, Lefebvre's influence as an

important forerunner and contemporary of the Situationists has to be acknowledged. Debord, together with his partner and colleague Michèle Bernstein and Belgian fellow-Situationist Raoul Vaneigem, introduced Lefebvre's influential *Critique of Everyday Life* (1946) to the Situationist International (cf. Sadler 1999: 19-20).<sup>34</sup> Lefebvre had a background in surrealism (cf. Pinder 2005: 132) and was "close friends" with the Situationists<sup>35</sup> until "they split acrimoniously with him in the early 1960s" (Pinder 2005: 132). His work also played an important role in the May '68 student uprisings in France and he shared with the Situationists "[t]his inclination to transgress the boundaries found in cultures and cities" (Sadler 1999: 44). I would argue, then, that in spite of these obvious differences, there exist nevertheless points of convergence between the concepts of the Situationists and those of other (French) thinkers.

### 2.1.3 Unitary Urbanism

Furthermore, the Situationists engaged in what they called "unitary urbanism", namely the urge "to transform urban life" (Coverley 2010: 94). Unitary urbanism was based on three "basic condition[s]": "dérive", "psychogeography" and the "*unité d'ambiance*",<sup>36</sup> the latter being "an area of particularly intense urban atmosphere" (Sadler 1999: 69). Their dissatisfaction with the modern consumer world and the development of urbanism expedited "their attempts to transform urban spaces and society" and led to their pointed "critique of urbanism", which was also aimed at "transform[ing] [...] everyday life" (Pinder 2005: 129). This harsh stance is made explicit in Ivan Chtcheglov's "Formulary for a New Urbanism" (1953), actually written a few years before the Situationist International was initiated but completely in line with what was to come, in which he proclaims: "We are bored in the city, there is no longer any Temple of the

---

<sup>34</sup> Although Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* is often mentioned in relation to the Situationists, I have decided against integrating it into my project as, again, its discussion would distract from my actual point of departure, the Situationists' practice of psychogeography.

<sup>35</sup> Lefebvre quoted in: Kristin Ross (2002), "Lefebvre on the Situationists: An Interview". In: McDonough, Tom (ed.), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*. Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press. 267.

<sup>36</sup> Mirella Bandini (1996), "Surrealist References in the Notions of Dérive and Psychogeography of the Situationist Urban Environment". In: Andreotti, Libero, and Xavier Costa (eds.), *Situationists: Art, Politics, Urbanism (Situacionistas: Arte, Política, Urbanismo)*. Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. 50.

Sun. [...] we really have to strain to still discover mysteries on the sidewalk billboards, the latest state of humor and poetry”.<sup>37</sup> The architect Le Corbusier was depicted as the Situationists’ enemy incarnate because he created the kind of urban environment they were harshly resisting (cf. Chtcheglov 1953: 2). Chtcheglov downgrades Le Corbusier’s architectural design as “a style suitable for factories and hospitals, and no doubt eventually for prisons” and remarks that it awakens suicidal thoughts in him (1953: 2). The Situationists were irritated by the solidness of this new architecture as it did not leave much room for their experimental lifestyle and engagement with their surroundings: “Darkness and obscurity are banished by artificial lighting, and the seasons by air conditioning. Night and summer are losing their charm and dawn is disappearing” (Chtcheglov 1953: 2-3). In fact, it was Paris’ “rapid transformation” from the 1950s onwards that worried and enraged the Situationists (Pinder 2005: 137). Debord, for instance, pointed out that “the fabric of urban areas was being dissolved and dispersed along highways and temporarily reconstituted in shopping centres” (Pinder 2005: 138). The Situationists sought to express their dissatisfaction with how the capitalist city, in which “[e]veryone is hypnotized by production and conveniences”, was deteriorating (from their point of view), due to this “mental disease” called “banalization” (Chtcheglov 1953: 4), by engaging in the practices they developed: psychogeography and the *dérive*, “its chief means of [...] investigation” (Ford 2005: 34).

#### **2.1.4 *Dérive*, *Flânerie* and Walking**

In his “Theory of the *Dérive*” (1958), Debord defined the drift as “a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances” and stated that “[d]érives involve playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll”.<sup>38</sup> It was evidence of this “awareness of psychogeographical effects” that determined my choice of texts, even if they did not emphasise the actual act of ‘drifting’ itself.

---

<sup>37</sup> Ivan Chtcheglov (1953), “Formulary for a New Urbanism”. In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Guy Debord (1958), “Theory of the *Dérive*”. In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 62.

Debord delimited the parameters of drifting and recommended “two or three people who have reached the same level of awareness” (1958: 63) as the ideal starting point for a *dérive* which usually lasts “one day, considered as the time between two periods of sleep” (1958: 64). He also pointed out that each drift invokes a particular “state of mind” (1958: 64) which I take as the defining factor for the purposes of this thesis. The early practitioners of the *dérive* “saw getting lost in the city as a concrete expressive possibility of anti-art, adopting it as an aesthetic-political means by which to undermine the postwar capitalist system”.<sup>39</sup> Taxis were considered legitimate means of transport and either enforced a sense of “personal disorientation” or merely transported the drifter to a (more or less random) destination, in which case it would be termed “research for a psychogeographical urbanism” (Debord 1958: 63). The aimless, though not purposeless drifting is a crucial element of the psychogeographical investigation of the urban surroundings. Aimless implies a vague destination<sup>40</sup> but with no emphasis on getting from one point to another as quickly as possible. Yet the drifting is not purposeless because the reason for going on a *dérive* is this very urban roaming itself, the act of walking as a means for unexpected encounters and hidden sites, always open to oddities along the way. The *dérives* were not only directed “at defining the unconscious zones of the city” but were likewise “attempts to investigate the psychic effects of the urban context on the individual” (Careri 2002: 90). In fact, “the *dériveur* is conducting a psychogeographical investigation and is expected to return home having noted the ways in which the areas traversed resonate with particular moods and ambiances” (Coverley 2010: 96). The *dérive* can thus be characterised as a mode of random but controlled walking particularly geared to taking in the atmospheres and moods encountered along the way.

Although, as stated above, I do not regard the act of walking, or more precisely drifting, as a mandatory criterion for my interpretation of psychogeography, some of the authors in the present study, such as Nooteboom, in fact drift through the city, while others, Falconer for instance, instead attain a state of ‘mental roaming’ reminiscent of the psychogeographical ‘state of mind’. What these authors share, however, and what I would ascribe to

---

<sup>39</sup> Francesco Careri (2002), *Walkscapes: Walking as an Aesthetic Practice*. Land & Scape Series. Barcelona: Ingoprint. 88.

<sup>40</sup> In *London Overground: A Day's Walk Around the Ginger Line* (2015), for instance, British psychogeographer Iain Sinclair follows the new Overground railway line.

the tradition of the *dérive*, is this particular mind-set necessary for experiencing the city: being open to one's surroundings – to a certain extent even being disoriented in the city – while soaking up the atmospheres. This mental state is more important to my reading of psychogeography than the actual act of walking or drifting which I however acknowledge as being pivotal to the Situationists' practice of psychogeography and the London tradition.

In the following, I shall provide a brief and necessarily selective summary of the history of walking as it not only plays a significant role in the British context, but has – of course – a long and multifaceted tradition in philosophy, literature and critical research more generally. In addition, the act of walking illustrates the close connection between the environment and the individual, which is one of the basic principles of psychogeography and also applies to my chapters on Sydney and Berlin. Hence, I shall outline how the idea of walking, instigated within the Situationist movement by the practice of the *dérive*, has shaped psychogeography and its aim of reconnoitring the city.

There has been a considerable amount of research on this topic, with Coverley's *The Art of Wandering: The Writer as Walker* (2012)<sup>41</sup> and Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2002 [2001])<sup>42</sup> among the most recent studies to provide a historical overview.<sup>43</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century walking had become a popular pastime; it was perceived as “a pleasure not a chore, the preserve of the leisured classes and not merely the poor” (Coverley 2012: 101). This enthusiasm for walking can be traced back to the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) who expressed his appreciation of the effect of walking in his *Confessions* (published in 1782): “I can only meditate when I am walking. When I stop, I cease to think; my mind only works with my legs” (cited in Solnit 2002: 14).<sup>44</sup> It was also Rousseau “who made the ‘solitary walker’ into an instantly recognisable figure on the cultural landscape”.<sup>45</sup> In parallel to the burgeoning interest in this physical activity, the way in which nature was perceived underwent radical changes “as landscapes

---

<sup>41</sup> Merlin Coverley (2012), *The Art of Wandering: The Writer as Walker*. Harpenden: Oldcastle Books Ltd.

<sup>42</sup> Rebecca Solnit (2002 [2001]), *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. New ed. London/New York: Verso.

<sup>43</sup> Many critics also discuss Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), especially his essay “Walking in the City”, in connection to the Situationists and psychogeography. A proper treatment of de Certeau's work, however, would lead too far away from my point of departure.

<sup>44</sup> Iain Sinclair takes a very similar stance towards walking and thinking, as he admits in an interview. (Cf. “Interview with Iain Sinclair on his book ‘London Orbital’”, presented by Harriet Gilbert. BBC World Book Club. 10 January 2002, accessed 06 April 2016. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02r7gkc>)

<sup>45</sup> Iain Bamforth (2006), “The Future of the Walk”. *Quadrant* (January-February 2006). 59.

hitherto regarded as unrewarding came to be viewed as spiritual and liberating” (Coverley 2012: 101). Associated with the Romantic, often idealised view of nature was “the idea of the picturesque” as expressed by Reverend William Gilpin in the 1770s (Coverley 2012: 102).<sup>46</sup> In Coverley’s explication, the English poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850), an ardent walker, played a central role in this development of walking by following in the footsteps of Rousseau (cf. 2012: 105). It is important to stress that from the start the walker has always been presented as “a figure of social alienation, divorced both from his society and his surroundings”, as exemplified by Wordsworth’s early poetry (Coverley 2012: 105).

This characteristic of the walker as an alienated and marginalised figure still held true for the *flâneur* at the beginning of the twentieth century in Paris who played a pivotal role not only in the tradition of walking in general but also in distinction from the drifter (i.e. the person who goes on the *dérive*). The history of *flânerie* is, of course, a vast topic, which has been written about extensively. I shall therefore single out those characteristics that stand in relation to my interest in the emergence of psychogeography. Tom McDonough elaborates on the similarities and differences between the *flâneur* and the drifter and comes to the conclusion that what they share is that both “move among the crowd without being one with it” and are “‘already out of place’, neither bourgeois nor working-class”.<sup>47</sup> However, what differentiates the two from each other is firstly this very question of class: the *flâneur* entails “a kind of aristocratic holdover”, whereas the drifter “consciously attempts to suspend class allegiances” (McDonough 2002: 257). Secondly, and this is crucial, “the *dérive* was distinguished from *flânerie* primarily by its critical attitude toward the hegemonic scopic regime of modernity” (McDonough 2002: 257), meaning that the drifters consciously attempted to contrast with and subvert the *flâneur*’s modernist stance. Thirdly, unlike the drifter, the *flâneur* is “an exclusively masculine type” and, according to Griselda Pollock, “characterized by a detached, observing gaze”

---

<sup>46</sup> For Gilpin, “the qualities defining picturesque objects – ‘roughness’ of surface and ‘ruggedness’ of outline”, were as “constitutive of beauty” as were the qualities usually associated with it, namely “symmetry, proportion, and smoothness”; he believed that what he called a “picturesque beauty” could only be brought forth through “representation”, that is “through paint on canvas or words on a page”, and he “identifie[s] the picturesque with artifice.” (Timothy M. Costelloe (2013), *The British Aesthetic Tradition: From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 141-42.)

<sup>47</sup> Tom McDonough (2002), “Situationist Space”. In: McDonough, Tom (ed.) (2002), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*. Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press. 257.

(McDonough 2002: 257). The Situationists also contrasted their drifts with “surrealist automatism”, which they regarded as “creatively and politically exhausted”, and believed they could strike a balance between “chance and planning” while going on a *dérive* (Sadler 1999: 78). Despite some obvious parallels between the two types of ‘city walkers’, the Situationist drifters declined to acknowledge the forerunner function of the *flâneurs* as “[i]t is precisely the class- and gender-specific privileges that the *dérive* critiques in its refusal of the controlling gaze” (McDonough 2005: 257).

One cannot discuss the *flâneur* without mentioning two men. On the one hand there is the French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) who, in his essay “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863), gave the first ‘definition’ of what constitutes a *flâneur* (cf. Coverley 2012: 154):

The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand there is Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), the German literary critic and essayist who settled in Paris in the late 1920s, who famously walked the city and described it in his writing (cf. Solnit 2002: 196-97). He could also be regarded as the literary link between Paris and his hometown Berlin, which, roughly eighty years after he wrote his famous *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, is now explored by a new generation of city-observers.

Despite the immense research that has been conducted in order to analyse and describe the nature of the *flâneur*, no precise definition of the term exists (Baudelaire’s definition remains rather vague). What all the attempts to depict this figure have in common, however, is “the image of an observant and solitary man strolling about Paris” (Solnit 2002: 198).<sup>49</sup> The *flâneur* is characterised as “a new kind of public person with the leisure to wander, watch

---

<sup>48</sup> Charles Baudelaire (1863), “The Painter of Modern Life”. In: Mayne, Jonathan (ed. and trans.) (2012), *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. London/New York: Phaidon Press. 9.

<sup>49</sup> The fact that the *flâneur* is predominantly male has been subject of much postmodern feminist criticism (cf. Elizabeth Wilson (1995), “The Invisible *Flâneur*”. In: Watson, Sophie, and Katherine Gibson (eds.), *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*. Oxford/Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. 65.).

and browse” (Wilson 1995: 61). Elizabeth Wilson’s description of how the *flâneur* adjusts to the changing urban environment is important with regard to my analysis of psychogeographical approaches to the city:

In literature, the *flâneur* was represented as an archetypal occupant and observer of the public sphere in the rapidly changing and growing great cities of nineteenth-century Europe. He might be seen as a mythological or allegorical figure who represented what was perhaps the most characteristic response of all to the wholly new forms of life that seemed to be developing: ambivalence. (1995: 61)

This new form of ambivalent life that came about as a result of the radical changes that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century was exactly what disturbed and enraged the Situationists, as they must have felt the repercussions of these transformations much more strongly in the 1950s. Yet what characterises the *dérive* in contrast to the *flânerie*, as analysed above, is the act of undertaking “an experiment to be conducted under scientific conditions and whose results are to be rigorously analysed” (Coverley 2012: 193), that is a more scientific, political and, at times, radical approach to the metropolis.

This stance has been adopted by some of today’s psychogeographers as well. A contemporary writer who is at the forefront of the British psychogeographical revival and who can be regarded as “the example of writer as walker *par excellence*” (Coverley 2010: 26) is Iain Sinclair who, in *Lights Out for the Territory* (1998), writes in his first chapter “Skating on Thin Eyes: The First Walk”:

Walking is the best way to explore and exploit the city; the changes, shifts, breaks in the cloud helmet, movement of light on water. Drifting purposefully is the recommended mode, tramping asphalted earth in alert reverie, allowing the fiction of an underlying pattern to reveal itself. To the no-bullshit materialist this sounds suspiciously like *fin-de-siècle* decadence, a poetic of entropy – but the born-again *flâneur* is a stubborn creature, less interested in texture and fabric, eavesdropping on philosophical conversation pieces, than in noticing *everything*. [...]



Walking, moving across a retreating townscape, stitches it all together: the illicit cocktail of bodily exhaustion and a raging carbon monoxide high.<sup>50</sup>

This quote exemplifies Sinclair's appropriation of the Situationist idea of psychogeography and walking, yet he creates, particularly due to his unique writing style full of side-references and evocative of atmosphere, his very own form of associative psychogeography. The key phrase, "allowing the fiction of an underlying pattern to reveal itself", pinpoints Sinclair's approach to walking and psychogeography more generally. As we will see shortly, it is exactly this underlying, fictionalised pattern which Sinclair aims to track down in his psychogeographical explorations mainly in and around London.

### 2.1.5 Mapping

Maps are another feature and crucial tool of psychogeography and have a significant meaning in Situationist theory: "Situationism [...] stimulated intense interest in the map as a communicative device and in the subversive potentials of mapping practices".<sup>51</sup> Due to the fact that mapping not only continued to play a significant role in the London revival, as "London's psychogeographical elect have long used maps to explore and record their journeys, both real and imagined",<sup>52</sup> but also because it features in Gibson's characterisation of William Dawes in *26 Views* and Watson's *Maps That Cried*, a brief overview of the Situationists' use and understanding of mapping seems crucial in order to establish an overall impression of how the city can be approached psychogeographically. Peter Wollen reads the Situationist use of maps predominantly as a critique of urban planning:

In the case of the Situationists, maps were overwhelmingly used in the context of their critique of post-war forms of city planning, predominantly rationalist and functionalist in their approach, dividing the city into functional zones and demolishing whole neighbourhoods in order to

---

<sup>50</sup> Iain Sinclair (1998 [1997]), *Lights Out For The Territory: 9 Excursions in the Secret History of London*. London: Granta Books. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Denis Cosgrove (2005a), "Maps, Mapping, Modernity: Art and Cartography in the Twentieth Century". *Imago Mundi* 57.1. 39.

<sup>52</sup> Simon Foxell (2007), *Mapping London: Making Sense of the City*. London: Black Dog Publishing. 247.

construct 'modernized' but socially and psychologically destructive new traffic systems.

In sharp contrast to the dominant planning ideology, the Situationists developed three principal theoretical ideas of their own – those of the *dérive*, psycho-geography and unitary urbanism. (1999: 39)

As the *dérive* “offered a new way of surveying urban space, a new means of representing space on paper [had] to be found” (Sadler 1999: 82) and maps seemed suitable for this task. In fact, the *dérive* was the prerequisite for the subsequent emergence of psychogeographical maps, as James Corner aptly states in “The Agency of Mapping” (1999), in which he reads the drift as one of “four thematic ways in which new practices of mapping are emerging”:

These [maps] were made after Debord had walked aimlessly around the streets and alleys of the city, turning here and there wherever the fancy took him. Recording these wanderings, Debord would cut up and reconfigure a standard Paris map as a series of turns and detours. The resultant map reflected subjective, street-level desires and perceptions rather than a synoptic totality of the city’s fabric. More a form of cognitive mapping than mimetic description of the cityscape, Debord’s maps located his own play and representation within the recessive nooks and crannies of everyday life.<sup>53</sup>

With the help of the Danish artist and fellow-Situationist Asger Jorn, who had been “a founding member of Cobra” in 1948 (Ford 2005: 38) – an avant-garde art movement “which took its name from the cities from which its protagonists hailed (Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam)”<sup>54</sup> – Debord designed two psychogeographical maps: the *Guide psychogéographique de Paris* in 1956 (Fig. 3., p. 221) and *The Naked City* in 1957 (Fig. 4., p. 221), which served as “alternative maps of Paris” that represented “the surreal disorientation of their [Jorn and Debord’s] drifts around Paris by scattering the pieces of [the] map and the arrows showing their routes” (Sadler 1999: 82). They “split maps of

---

<sup>53</sup> James Corner (1999), “The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention”. In: Cosgrove, Denis (ed.), *Mappings*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 231.

<sup>54</sup> Sadie Plant (1992), *The most radical gesture: The Situationist International in a postmodern age*. New York/London: Routledge. 54.

Paris into free floating sectors connected by red arrows indicating 'psychogeographic' flows" (Ford 2005: 59). The aim of these maps was to expose the spectator to the city in a state of disorder while simultaneously excavating "the strange logic that lay beneath its surface" (Sadler 1999: 82). The idea behind Situationist cartography differed from the conventional use of maps as tools for swiftly orienting oneself in the metropolis by gaining an overview from the bird's eye perspective, based on the assumption that "[a]s a scientific instrument, [...] a map is to be judged by its accuracy and objectivity when measured against the real world that it claims to represent".<sup>55</sup> Through the creation of Situationist maps, the structure of "the city was reconstructed in the imagination"; they pieced together "an experience of space that was actually terrestrial, fragmented, subjective, temporal, and cultural" (Sadler 1999: 82). The psychogeographical map is detached from its conventional function and actually serves the reversed aim: the main purpose is to get lost in order to open up to seeing the city and its atmospheres with different eyes. Thus, I would argue that maps were 'détourned', that is to say that they were created to subvert their conventional function as tools to facilitate orientation. The psychogeographical map also enabled a steering towards those parts of the city not normally in the limelight:

If mapping had been traditionally assigned to the colonizing agency of survey and control, the Situationists were attempting to return the map to everyday life and to the unexplored, repressed topographies of the city. (Corner 1999: 232)

One way of doing this was what Debord described in his "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography" (1955) as the popular method of "arbitrarily transposing maps of two different regions" as exemplified by a friend who "had just wandered through the Harz region of Germany while blindly following the directions of a map of London" (1955: 11). As Cosgrove explains,

Situationism's conscious move beyond the art world of studios and galleries into the spaces of everyday life reinforced this concern with

---

<sup>55</sup> Denis Cosgrove (2005b), "Mapping/Cartography". In: Atkinson, David et al. (eds.), *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*. London/New York: I.B. Tauris. (n.pag.)

mapping as a means of engaging graphically and actively with material spaces. (2005a: 39)

With these psychogeographical maps, Debord referred to Paul-Henri Chombart de Lauwe's "concept of the city as a conglomeration of distinct quarters, each with its own special function and class divisions" (Ford 2005: 59). Chombart de Lauwe was "a French sociologist whose work of the early 1950s was concerned with such 'social space' and with urbanism" and who "defines the elementary unit of the city as the residential unit or, as its inhabitants call it, the *quartier*" (McDonough 2002: 250). These *quartiers* "are not 'given' urban districts, clearly defined and logically linked one to the other" (McDonough 2002: 252). Debord was obviously influenced by "these ideas" yet also "altered them in the fabrication of the psychogeographic map": both stick to "the notion of the *quartier* as the basic unit of urban structure", but unlike Chombart de Lauwe who defines the *quartier* more functionally as "a 'residential unit'", Debord regards "it as a 'unity of atmosphere'", which reveals "a much less empirical idea" (McDonough 2002: 252).

### 2.1.6 The End of Situationism

Despite these 'hands-on' methods like the *dérive*, mapping, and psychogeography, the end of Situationism already loomed in 1958 because "actual results of all these experiments are strangely absent" (Coverley 2010: 99). In the long term, the Situationists failed to live up to their own ambitions as they did not manage to realise their "aim of dissolving art into life".<sup>56</sup> The idealism of their visions ultimately prevented any meaningful implementation. By 1962, the Situationist International had split into the Second Situationist International, which had its priorities in the arts, and the Specto-Situationist International, which, under the leadership of Guy Debord and Raoul Vaneigem, was decidedly political in its orientation (cf. Coverley 2010: 100).<sup>57</sup> The last

---

<sup>56</sup> Libero Andreotti (1996), "Introduction: The Urban Politics of the Internationale Situationniste (1957-1972)". In: Andreotti, Libero, and Xavier Costa (eds.), *Situationists: Art, Politics, Urbanism (Situacionistas: Arte, Política, Urbanismo)*. Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. 34.

<sup>57</sup> Stracey refutes this two-part division by claiming it to be "a false division between theory and practice, typically read as a separation between politics and art" (2014: 44). Instead, she reads "[p]olitics and art [...] as equivalent and common forms of action" (2014: 44).

noteworthy campaign in which the Situationists participated was their active involvement in the May 1968 student revolt in Paris during which they incited the students to undertake “acts of disobedience” (Ford 2005: 116-17). However, “the immediate period after May ’68 was one of intense reassessment and little activity” (Ford 2005: 135) for the Situationist International. Over the course of 1969, there were more and more “resignations and expulsions” until “the inevitable public announcement of the end of the SI came with the publication in April 1972 of Debord and Sanguinetti’s [...] *The Veritable Split in the International* [...]” (Ford 2005: 136-37). Thus, the main reason for the dissolution of the Situationist International seemed to be that “situationist psychogeography [or more generally Situationist theories and methods] had proved unable to live up to its ambitious promises” (Coverley 2010: 103). For roughly the next two decades, psychogeography fell silent until it enjoyed a mostly London-centred revival in the 1990s. This new movement is continuing to develop and represents a distinctly British orientation towards psychogeography which draws upon the legacy of its early ‘visionary’ writers. The second part of this chapter will discuss and exemplify the further development of psychogeography against the backdrop of London.

## 2.2 London – The ‘Visionary’ Tradition and the Psychogeographical Revival

London has always been a popular setting for British writing across the centuries and genres – Charles Dickens or Virginia Woolf are just two prominent examples of authors whose work springs to mind. The city also has a tradition of ‘visionary’ writing, which, in hindsight, can be regarded as having paved the spiritual way for some of today’s London-based psychogeographers. I shall briefly delineate this tradition before, on the basis of a selection of texts and other art forms, I elaborate on the psychogeographical revival in the late twentieth century. The so-called “Cockney visionaries” (Charles Dickens, William Blake, and J.M.W. Turner)<sup>58</sup> – as Peter Ackroyd has termed these writers/artists – were “retrospectively supported” (Coverley 2010: 31) by many of today’s authors. One such example is eminent psychogeographer Iain Sinclair who writes deliberately<sup>59</sup> and consciously in a psychogeographical mode and attributes a role model function to Blake by calling him “the godfather of all psychogeographers” (1998: 208). Those ‘seers’ like Blake are “able to recognise sites of psychic and chronological resonance and can align these points in order to remap the city” (Coverley 2010: 16). Coverley acknowledges writers such as Daniel Defoe, William Blake, Thomas De Quincey, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Machen and Alfred Watkins as the important figures who constitute the London tradition, extending from the seventeenth (Defoe) to the twentieth century (Watkins). In fact, it was Watkins’ theory of ley lines which was a significant factor in Sinclair’s interest in the movement (cf. Coverley 2010: 32-33). Ley lines are a specific characteristic of the British tradition and were first mentioned in Watkins’ book *The Old Straight Track* (1925). They are “straight lines that connect culturally historic places of esoteric interest that are woven into the landscape” but “are often considered [...] more theoretical than

---

<sup>58</sup> Peter Ackroyd (1993), “Cockney Visionaries”. *Independent*. 18 December 1993, accessed 05 February 2013. (n. pag.) <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/cockney-visionaries-1468288.html>

<sup>59</sup> This statement calls for some qualification: Sinclair himself is aware of the tradition he is part of, but simultaneously demurs at the suggestion that he is today’s exemplary psychogeographer: “In a way I’ve allowed myself to become this London brand. I’ve become a hack of my own mythology, which fascinates me. From there you can either go with it or subvert it [...]” (Sinclair cited in: Stuart Jeffries (2004), “On the road”. Review of *Dining on Stones*, by Iain Sinclair. *Guardian*. 24 April 2004, accessed 13 October 2015. (n. pag.)) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/apr/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview14>

material”, as Tina Richardson points out.<sup>60</sup> They are “hypothetical alignments of places of geographical or religious significance, such as ancient monuments and megaliths” (Coverley 2008: 97). The “Countryside Discovery Movement” evinced interest in the ley lines and, after

the publication of *The View Over Atlantis* (1969) by John Mitchell[,] there was a 1970s resurgence through the Earth Mysteries School, which focused on seeing ley lines as ancient paths that connected monuments and places of spiritual importance, for example in paganism. Interest was in the hidden energies between significant points. (Richardson 2015a: n.pag.)

Peter Ackroyd’s *Hawksmoor* (1985), a novel which investigates the secret ‘ley-lined’ connection between six London churches built by Nicholas Hawksmoor and which was inspired by Sinclair’s early poem *Lud Heat* (1975), sets an example for this revival of interest in ley lines and spiritual connections. As Coverley states,

Sinclair and Ackroyd are particularly representative of this tendency to dramatise the city as a place of dark imaginings. This obsession with the occult is allied to an antiquarianism that views the present through the prism of the past and which lends itself to psychogeographical research that increasingly contrasts a horizontal movement across the topography of the city with a vertical descent through its past. As a result, much contemporary psychogeography approximates more to a form of local history than to any geographical investigation. (2010: 13-14)

As “[t]his strand of visionary London writing” (Coverley 2010: 18) occupies a significant position in the development of the British ‘branch’ of psychogeography and highlights once again the different strategies this method draws together, it is crucial in illustrating how many different ‘versions’ of psychogeography there are. However, one has to be aware of the fact that this esoteric involvement with place is a typically British feature which can be traced

---

<sup>60</sup> Tina Richardson (2015a), “When is a Ley Line not a Ley Line? When it is a Perambulatory Hinge!”. *Driftmine*. 04 June 2015, accessed 03 July 2015. (n. pag.)  
<http://driftmine.org/when-is-a-ley-line-not-a-ley-line-when-it-is-a-perambulatory-hinge/>

back to a tradition of fascination with the occult.<sup>61</sup> In contrast, my own interpretation of psychogeography is more concerned with a contemporary engagement with *genius loci* and is marked by an interest in the moods and atmospheres of a place, the close entanglements between a city and the people who live and move within it as well as an engagement with what lies hidden underneath the surface that the selected texts exhibit, as the chapters on Sydney and Berlin will exemplify.

With the 'visionary' tradition of London at the back of one's mind, it comes as no surprise that this city is the site of a psychogeographical revival that started in the 1990s and continues to evolve. After roughly two decades during which psychogeography had been lost to oblivion, a number of London-based writers revived this Situationist practice and gave it a new, distinctly British shape, as shall be demonstrated in the following. Today the method

has [...] been reinvented [especially in the British context] as a shorthand for a number of practices, literary, political and artistic, which concern themselves both with the rediscovery of those previously overlooked margins of the city and with an antiquarian desire to unearth the more occluded aspects of local history. (Coverley 2008: 110)

Thus, the London 'branch' of psychogeography constitutes an inspiring example for my subsequent chapters on Sydney and Berlin. I have aimed at a broad selection of London texts, covering mostly writers who belong to the 'first wave' of the British psychogeographical revival (though most continue their psychogeographical pursuit to this day), but I shall also introduce "[t]he new psychogeography",<sup>62</sup> which can be regarded as a further development of the 1990s revival. This by no means complete overview of London writing is intended to provide an idea of what type of texts I regard as psychogeographical in order to set the tone for my choice of texts on Sydney and Berlin, especially as neither of these two cities has a psychogeographical

---

<sup>61</sup> I use the term 'occult' here as employed by Coverley in his 2008 book *Occult London*, in which at the very beginning he provides the definition of the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2004): "*Occult* (adj.) Kept secret, esoteric; recondite, mysterious, beyond the range of ordinary knowledge; involving the supernatural, mystical, magical; not obvious on inspection [...]" (2008: 11). To him, "London is a city whose origins remain obscure and whose identity remains bound up with the mythical and the legendary, the hidden and the occult" (2008: 11).

<sup>62</sup> Tina Richardson (2015d), "Conclusion: The New Psychogeography". In: Richardson, Tina (ed.), *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Place, Memory, Affect. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International. 250.



tradition or background. On the basis of close readings I intend to point out the London writers' psychogeographical potential. I have deliberately chosen a variety of authors who have been identified as psychogeographers or whose approach fits in neatly with my idea of psychogeographical writing, despite the fact that they all have a unique style, each which differs considerably from the others; indeed I espouse this vagueness of definition as it enables an eclectic usage of the term.<sup>63</sup> This ambivalence also mirrors the very nature of psychogeography. Will Self cynically and almost flippantly describes this phenomenon in the prologue to his 2007 book *Psychogeography*.<sup>64</sup>

Although we psychogeographers are all disciples of Guy Debord and those rollicking Situationists who tottered, soused, across the stage set of 1960s Paris, thereby hoping to tear down the scenery of the Society of the Spectacle with their devilish *dérive*, there are still profound differences between us. While we all want to unpick this conundrum, the manner in which the contemporary world warps the relationship between psyche and place, the ways in which we go about the task, are various.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to texts, I have included one visual arts and one audio project in order to provide examples of the different media embracing the potential of psychogeography then and now. The texts and projects chosen here are: Iain Sinclair's *Lights Out For The Territory: 9 Excursions in the Secret History of London* (1998), Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair's *Rodinsky's Room* (2000), Dennis Severs' *18 Folgate Street: The Tale of a House in Spitalfields* (2002), and Janet Cardiff's audio walk *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* (1999). These works all share an interest in the city's (local) history and hidden corners, although each author/artist tackles the task from a unique perspective and by different means.

Another striking commonality is the fact that all of the above-named texts and projects focus on the eastern parts of London. Due to "the unique

---

<sup>63</sup> British academic and practicing psychogeographer Tina Richardson takes a similar approach to psychogeography: "Psychogeography has its problems and its detractors, not least because of its vague label, although this vagueness could be seen as being positive as much as it is negative." (Tina Richardson (2015b), "Introduction: A Wander through the Scene of British Urban Walking". In: Richardson, Tina (ed.), *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Place, Memory, Affect. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International. 7.)

<sup>64</sup> *Psychogeography* is a collection of the 'Psychogeography' columns Self wrote for the *Independent* between 2003 and 2007.

<sup>65</sup> Will Self (2007), *Psychogeography*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. 11.

atmosphere” of what has been called the “East End” since the 1880s – then also pejoratively known as “the abyss”<sup>66</sup> – this area of London has always been attractive to those eager to explore ‘the other’ London and therefore has been an alluring place for psychogeographers who “tend to gravitate to edgelands and liminal spaces, to seek out blurry and forgotten places”.<sup>67</sup> Although East London might not be a forgotten place any more<sup>68</sup> – especially, as it has, in fact, become an increasingly popular location to live and work, attracting artists, writers, designers and young urban professionals alike – it is traditionally perceived as a working-class area and was for a long time associated with the city’s ‘darker’ elements such as overpopulation, crime and poverty. It has always been one of the poorer areas of London and home to, among others, Cockneys, immigrants, and also criminals like the so-called Jack the Ripper. For many centuries, Spitalfields,<sup>69</sup> the “place on the edge”,<sup>70</sup> had also been the centre for various immigrant communities who shaped the area according to their needs and customs: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Huguenots, many of them silk weavers, settled in what came to be known as “Petty France”; later, “during the last third of the nineteenth century”, large numbers of Yiddish-speaking “Eastern European Jews” turned the area into “Little Jerusalem” until new immigrants from Bangladesh arrived from the late 1950s onwards and transformed Brick Lane into a Bengali “Banglatown” (Kershen 2005: 1).<sup>71</sup> Recent years, however, have been marked by the

---

<sup>66</sup> Peter Ackroyd (2001a [2000]), *London: The Biography*. London: Vintage [Chatto & Windus]. 675.

<sup>67</sup> Morag Rose (2015), “Confessions of an Anarcho-Flâneuse, or Psychogeography the Mancunian Way”. In: Richardson, Tina (ed.), *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Place, Memory, Affect. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International. 154.

<sup>68</sup> It comes as no surprise that the Stoke Newington Literary Festival, which has been held annually since 2010 “to celebrate the area’s radical and literary history” (cited from the festival’s website, accessed 13 October 2015: [www.stokenewingtonliteraryfestival.com/about](http://www.stokenewingtonliteraryfestival.com/about)) and which in 2015 featured such psychogeographers as Iain Sinclair, Will Self and Tina Richardson, among others, is held in East London (Stoke Newington is an important site of the ‘visionary’ tradition of London as it is the very neighbourhood where Daniel Defoe lived; today it can be counted among London’s trendiest areas).

<sup>69</sup> Spitalfields, the area around Brick Lane, is a former parish in the London borough of Tower Hamlets and often regarded as the heart of the East End.

<sup>70</sup> Anne J. Kershen (2005), *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields 1660-2000*. London/New York: Routledge. 56.

<sup>71</sup> The story of Brick Lane’s immigrant heritage and traces of various religious beliefs are also reflected in the area’s architecture, the most prominent and striking example being the edifice at the corner of Brick Lane and Fournier Street, which bears testament to the changing immigrant population and the role of religion in the immigrants’ lives. This house of worship was erected in 1743 by French Huguenots who inhabited the area around Brick Lane. They called their Protestant church *La Neuve Eglise*. Later, from 1809, it was briefly used as a mission for converting Jews to Christianity. In 1819 it became a Methodist chapel until it was turned into the *Spitalfields Great Synagogue*, with a congregation of approximately two thousand worshippers, mostly Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe (cf. Rachel Lichtenstein (2008 [2007]), *On Brick Lane*. London: Penguin Books. 94-96.). Since 1976 it has been a mosque, the *Jamme Masjid*, home to the large Bangladeshi-Sylheti community in the area. The building’s fascinating history reflects the area’s changing inhabitants. In each century it was occupied according to the religion of the predominant ethnicity.

outmigration of the Bengali community due to rising rents and gentrification caused by the influx of “New East Enders” and “urban trendies”.<sup>72</sup>

This background information concerning the history of the area will be crucial when referring to *Rodinsky’s Room* and *18 Folgate Street*, as both books indirectly address the immigrant history of Spitalfields. They allude to the fact that the neighbourhood has changed beyond recognition yet is still shaped by its history – an evolution that attracts the attention of many psychogeographical texts.

Although most British writers whose links to psychogeography originated in the 1990s share an interest in local history, each of them has an idiosyncratic approach that once again reinforces “[t]he bricolage nature of psychogeography” (Richardson 2015b: 3). In the following, on the basis of close readings, I intend to provide an idea of what kind of texts are representative of the British psychogeographical revival; I must reiterate, however, that mine is only *one* possible and necessarily subjective selection from an abundance of available literature on London’s psychogeography (or related practices). Will Self, too, for instance, is a ‘writer-as-walker’, but his almost derisive approach to “the psychogeographic fraternity” (Self 2007: 12) – in which he nevertheless includes himself – takes on a more ironic tone and his long-distance walks, for example to New York or Dubai,<sup>73</sup> do not exhibit the typical London-focus I aim to foreground here.<sup>74</sup> Nick Papadimitriou, on the other hand, is a dedicated walker and London eccentric, too, who has for many decades now explored the escarpment near his home in North London/Middlesex, embarking on what he (in order to distinguish it from psychogeography) has termed ‘deep topography’.<sup>75</sup> His friend and occasional fellow-walker Self has described this method as “minutely detailed, multi-level examinations of select locales that impact upon the writer’s own microscopic inner-eye” (2007: 11). It is thus a means of urban exploration which obviously exhibits an intense interest in the

---

<sup>72</sup> Tarquin Hall (2005), *Salaam Brick Lane*. London: John Murray. 46.

<sup>73</sup> In his second psychogeography book, *Psycho Too* (2009), Self sets out on a walk to the artificial archipelago ‘The World’, off the Dubai coast (cf. Will Self (2009), “Introduction: Walking to the World”. *Psycho Too*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. 11-75.).

<sup>74</sup> In fact, Sinclair does not regard Self as a ‘proper’ psychogeographer: “Now it’s become the name of a column by Will Self, in which he seems to walk the South Downs with a pipe, which has absolutely nothing to do with psychogeography.” (Sinclair cited in: Jeffries 2004: n. pag.)

<sup>75</sup> There is a very illuminating film on Papadimitriou, *The London Perambulator* (2009), directed by John Rogers, in which Self and Sinclair pay tribute to Papadimitriou’s work and Sinclair even admits that he by now actually prefers the term “deep topography” to “psychogeography”, as he believes that the latter has become “a rather nasty brand name” (accessed 09 October 2015): <https://londonperambulator.wordpress.com/>

metropolitan 'psyche' very similar to psychogeography. A sample of deep topography can be found in Papadimitriou's essay "Bedfont Court Estate" (published in Sinclair's *London: City of Disappearances*), in which he sets out to explore the semi-rural area around Heathrow Airport more or less hidden by the air corridor above and, in the process, "discovered the Bedfont Court Estate, a colony of derelict smallholdings set up by the Middlesex County Council in the 1930s",<sup>76</sup> now fenced off and conveying "the feeling that something disastrous had happened here" (2006: 614). It is the weirdness and eeriness of the place that he captures:

Yet the particular resonance didn't arise from relics left behind by previous users: the broken fences lost in weeds, a burned-out caravan parked in a yard, the dying damson bushes. There was a knotty multifariousness, a strata of cultural associations, evident in the broader brushstrokes of the place. (2006: 615)

The deep topographer explains his motivation to walk and record the urban edges as follows:

My ambition is to hold my region in my mind, so that I *am* the region, so that when I die I literally *do* become Middlesex in some kind of way. I mean, for me, that is my high spiritual aspiration.<sup>77</sup>

This statement illustrates how intricately Papadimitriou identifies with his surroundings. Deep topography could therefore be regarded as one 'branch' of psychogeography or maybe even used as a synonym.

Another well-known British psychogeographer is Stewart Home, who "was a prime mover within the resurgence of psychogeographical and avant-garde groups in the 1990s but his relationships with these groups remains tangential and obscure" (Coverley 2010: 128). His contribution to the London Psychogeographical Association (LPA), which was "reconvened in 1992" (Coverley 2010: 128), as well as his work in general is characterised by

---

<sup>76</sup> Nick Papadimitriou (2006), "Bedfont Court Estate". In: Sinclair, Iain (ed.), *London: City of Disappearances*. London: Penguin. 612.

<sup>77</sup> Papadimitriou interviewed in *The London Perambulator* (35:10-35:24) (accessed 12 October 2015): <https://londonperambulator.wordpress.com/>

radicalness, provocations and counter-cultural aspirations and hence does not fit into my selection of London texts with a focus on the hidden corners, local histories, and overlooked narratives, although he certainly has a prominent role in the British psychogeography scene:

Home has been responsible for a deluge of psychogeographical pamphlets, statements and events, which in recalling the pranksterism of the Lettrist International, have this time managed to inject some much needed humour into the proceedings. (Coverley 2010: 129)

Although there are a variety of psychogeographical texts on London, some seem to put emphasis on elements that are less relevant to my interpretation of the term. The texts chosen for the following discussion reflect a keen interest in *genius loci* and provide evidence to support my argument that psychogeography is the most suitable method for revealing the silences and absences that linger under the urban surface of cities like Sydney and Berlin. I shall start my discussion with a text by Sinclair, which deals with a very peculiar example of absence and its relation to its urban location.

### **2.2.1 Iain Sinclair, *Lights Out For The Territory: 9 Excursions in the Secret History of London* (1998)**

Written by renowned British psychogeographer Iain Sinclair, “the godfather of contemporary psychogeography” (Richardson 2015b: 9), *Lights Out for the Territory*<sup>78</sup> is “an elaboration of essays written for various magazines, interspersed with accounts of walks constructed around routes drawn upon a map of inner London”.<sup>79</sup> Here I shall focus on “*House in the Park*”, one of the nine prose pieces, which describes an in-situ artwork, entitled *House*, by English artist Rachel Whiteread.

*House* (1993) consisted of the concrete casting of the negative space of a condemned turn-of-the-century terrace house on 193 Grove Road in Bow in the East End of London, which the local council was about to tear down. It was the

---

<sup>78</sup> Iain Sinclair (1998 [1997]), *Lights Out For The Territory: 9 Excursions in the Secret History of London*. London: Granta Books. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Sheppard (2007), *Iain Sinclair*. Horndon/Tavistock: Northcote House Ltd. 86.

last of a row of terrace houses that had “to make way for a forlorn park”.<sup>80</sup> The process required the demolition of the already doomed brick house around it, which acted as a kind of ‘baking mould’. Kent provides a detailed explanation of the making:

The process was essentially similar to casting a sculpture in bronze. The wallpaper was stripped, the walls were made good and all fittings were removed. Wax and paraffin oil were applied as resisters before a thick layer of concrete was sprayed onto the interior surface of the walls. Steel mesh and heavy filling lent support to this outer skin, and steel piles, inserted between the floors, gave the building-within-a-building the strength to stand alone once the neighbouring houses had been torn down and the external brickwork stripped off to expose the concrete. (1994: 102)<sup>81</sup>

In an interview, Whiteread stated that at the very beginning of this project, “it was about embodying a very simple notion of mummifying the space inside a house – to turn a space inside out – to transcribe the imprint of a universal space”.<sup>82</sup> This process of turning an urban (and also private) space inside out while simultaneously mummifying it is a fascinating endeavour, which lends itself to a psychogeographical investigation and yet adds another twist to the approach, as we will see shortly. The concrete cast then stood in “a meadow of voluntary amnesia” (211), as Sinclair describes Wennington Green, this tiny park. He attributes it as having an “innate surrealism” and calls it “the most northerly of these sanctioned gestures at the pastoral” (209). Thus, Sinclair seems to regard this unremarkable location as mythically charged – an indication of his longstanding preoccupation with the occult in the city. Doreen Massey, in her contribution to the catalogue accompanying the project, also points out that “the East End is an area which oozes with meaning as a place, both locally and in the national psyche”,<sup>83</sup> which would have contributed to the

---

<sup>80</sup> Sarah Kent (1994), *Shark Infested Waters: The Saatchi Collection of British Art in the 90s*. London: Zwemmer. 102.

<sup>81</sup> For more information on how *House* was made I recommend watching the DVD *Rachel Whiteread* (2005), which also features an interview with the artist in 1993.

<sup>82</sup> Rachel Whiteread cited in: Francesco Bonami (1997), “Nothingness Supplied with Space. Interview with Rachel Whiteread”. In: Goetz, Ingvild (ed.), *Art from the UK*. München: Sammlung Goetz. 158.

<sup>83</sup> Doreen Massey (1995), “Space-Time and the Politics of Location”. In: Lingwood, James (ed.), *Rachel Whiteread's House*. London: Phaidon Press Limited. 46.

intensity with which *House* was perceived. Whiteread's "postmodern Rubik cube" (214) attracted a lot of attention and also controversy, as not everyone was in favour of this monument that brought the demolition of houses in the East End into focus and "made a stark comment on social issues", as critics like Sarah Kent believe (1994: 103): "*House* was a memorial to architectural idealism, and a monument commemorating the ambition of postwar governments to provide plentiful, cheap public housing" (Kent 1994: 102) and simultaneously "a major public sculpture that embodied (and confronted) the lack of vision and generosity characteristic of the last decade of the millennium" (Kent 1994: 103). Others, like John A. Walker, regard "the political dimension" of *House* as "overstated".<sup>84</sup> However one interprets the political intentions of *House*, there is no denying that it did draw attention to the fact that it marked an absence, as Massey remarks: "It set a familiar past in the space-time of today; it made present something which was absent; it was the space of a house no longer there" (1995: 36). Ironically enough, the pulling down of the sculpture itself could not be prevented; after only a few months, *House* was demolished in January 1994 (cf. Walker 2011: 1), so that the space where *House* stood now marks the absence of two 'houses'.

This 'double absence' is of special interest to my research. On the one hand, Whiteread's artwork is already in itself an exploration of a hidden London because it illustrates that the cityscape is changing due to gentrification and urban planning projects and long-time residents are forced to move out, as happened in 193 Grove Road. It plays with and hints at the notion of disappearance: *House* in Wennington Green can only exist because the old house that acted as the model is no longer there, it is only its negative space that remains and that provides the whole project with a hint of the mysterious that Sinclair is eager to explore. *House* draws our attention towards something ordinary – an old terrace house like thousands of others in London – but due to the fact that it is no longer there, that it made way for this art project, one encounters it as turned 'inside-out'. Adding a further layer of interpretation to this piece is the psychogeographer Iain Sinclair who in turn describes this artwork in his unique writing style which teems with side-references, interjections and local colour. His is a retrospective view on the whole project as

---

<sup>84</sup> John A. Walker (1999), "Rachel Whiteread: *House*, London (1993)". Excerpt from *Art & Outrage* (1999). *Artdesigncafe*. Accessed 08 July 2012. 1. [page expired, October 2015]  
<http://www.artdesigncafe.com/Rachel-Whiteread-House-1993-library-2010>

he focuses on *House* after its demolition. He remembers the sculpture that commemorated a vanished house, yet by the time of his writing, *House* had vanished as well. It is a double disappearance, which Sinclair thus turns into a literary exploration of a site-specific artwork. In a directly related essay, Sinclair paints a picture of the context in which the sculpture stood:

*House*, seen from across the field, was a giant plug, feeding current into the madness of the city. Grove Road had the lot: a terrace house with three exploitable sides (and a sitting tenant), a hyperactive local politico, anarchist squatters, post-Situationist rock stars looking for the grand gesture, and wild-eyed psychogeographers prophesying war. This terrace was in the wrong documentary.<sup>85</sup>

With direct reference to loss and absence, he states:

We are the fiction of the vanished lives and buildings. They have nothing but our lies to sustain them. *House*, as soon as the last bricks were cleared, joined that company – misremembered and ineradicable. (231)

Thus Sinclair does in writing what James Lingwood, Co-Director of Artangel – a British arts organisation based in London that commissioned *House* and works closely with “contemporary artists” whose projects are often “given shape by a particular place and time”<sup>86</sup> – says about this massive sculpture: “It was not possible to separate *House* from its place, or the place from *House*”.<sup>87</sup>

Juxtaposing these two approaches – Whiteread’s work of art and Sinclair’s literary rendering of the two demolitions – conveys a vivid image of the particular location, and this two-fold erasing gives another twist to my research. “*House in the Park*” enables a psychogeographical reading not only of itself, but also of the object he describes. It is the impact of the place, or in this case of

---

<sup>85</sup> Iain Sinclair (1995), “The House in the Park: A Psychogeographical Response”. In: Lingwood, James (ed.), *Rachel Whiteread’s House*. London: Phaidon Press Limited. 18.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted from the Artangel website (accessed 04 October 2015): [www.artangel.org.uk/about-us](http://www.artangel.org.uk/about-us)  
Two other examples of Artangel commissions which exhibit psychogeographical potential are Janet Cardiff’s audio walk *The Missing Voice*, which will be elaborated on later, and Sukhdev Sandhu’s book *Night Haunts: A Journey Through the London Night* (2006), in which the author introduces a number of ‘nocturnal city workers’ (for instance graffiti artists, cleaners, urban fox hunters and the nuns of Tyburn) whose nightly movements in the city provide another perspective on the British capital.

<sup>87</sup> James Lingwood (1995), “Introduction”. In: Lingwood, James (ed.), *Rachel Whiteread’s House*. London: Phaidon Press Limited. 11.



the object in a certain location, on the viewer or reader. Despite the fact that Sinclair does not explain explicitly how *House* was made, the reader gets a feel for the place and the atmosphere that is radiated from it:

Her [Rachel Whiteread's] work, whose essence was its privacy, its slow-cooking, meditative acts of repetition, was stripped bare on the street: asked to explain itself, when any explanation would negate the enigmatic stillness she worked so hard to cultivate. (224)

My interest lies in this “enigmatic stillness”, which is felt in response to a specific site in the city as it draws attention to an absence. Later, Sinclair writes: “The house is in limbo” (225) – a rather peculiar description for a massive concrete block, yet, after close consideration, it does not seem quite so odd any more. It is like the shadow of something that was there but no longer exists. Elsewhere Sinclair calls it “a white ghost” in “a city of broken mirrors” – a typical example of Sinclair’s metaphor-rich language:

The enigmatic object was circumnavigated, probed, photographed. [...] The white ghost was seen in negative, printed. Thousands of different images, different readings from different heights: a terrace of repetitions, a city of broken mirrors. Loss was multiplied. Loss, carried away, was confirmed as a general condition. (226-27)

Without making reference to Marc Augé, who coined the term (*non-lieux*), he calls adjacent Meath Gardens “a non-place”, which “is blessed by standing on the true path of the Blackheath/Greenwich/Limehouse Church ley line” (230). Here, Sinclair pays tribute to his own early psychogeographical beginnings and his fascination for ley lines. Even more concrete is his description of the way in which *House* fitted into and was connected to its surroundings:

Whiteread’s artwork belongs with the invisible church of St Mary Matfelon in Whitechapel, a removed structure from which that district took its name. An absence, a brick outline in grass, that gave credence to the surrounding crush of business and development. The church appeared,

disappeared, and reappeared in many forms, soliciting destruction: [...].  
(231)

*House* and “the invisible church of St Mary Matfelon” thus make an imaginary pact: similar to the vanished church that gave the district its name, *House* (or in fact its absence post demolition) also defines the surrounding green area. To Sinclair, it is “[t]he palpable absence of Whiteread’s sculpture [that] validated the ‘secret garden’ aspect of the park” (235). This tangible feeling of disappearance is stressed by Sinclair’s psychogeographical approach to the object, the place and the rendering of both in his literary text. Abstracting *House* from its immediate location and function, he refers to the city as a whole: “And this process of transformation, inside to outside, was also recurring across the map of the city” (232). The reference to the city as map is crucial and stresses the psychogeographer’s engagement with “remap[ping] the city” (Coverley 2010: 16). Sinclair describes a city consisting of layers that bear witness to the events that have shaped it over time, the ‘scars’ of which can still be seen: “[t]he narrative of the city is rewritten, scribbled over, revised: the ‘lost’ earthwork of the Whitechapel Mound [...] is unaccounted for, synagogues are discovered as Bangladeshi supermarkets. *House* aspires to the same provisional status” (231).

Through Sinclair’s text one is encouraged to understand the layered nature of the city by paying attention to objects and negative spaces that evoke a feeling of disappearance and absence.

## 2.2.2 Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair, *Rodinsky’s Room* (2000)<sup>88</sup>

*Rodinsky’s Room*<sup>89</sup> is a story of disappearance. Its chapters are authored alternately by the artist, writer and oral historian Rachel Lichtenstein and the author and psychogeographer Iain Sinclair. It is, however, not only the story of the eponym, the vanished David Rodinsky, a Jewish Orthodox man who led a

---

<sup>88</sup> Parts of this section have been published in a similar version in my article “A Psychogeographical Exploration of Disappearance and Dis/Orientation in London’s East End” in *Stet* 3 (June 2013).

<sup>89</sup> Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair (2000 [1999]), *Rodinsky’s Room*. London: Granta Books. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

solitary life in the attic above an abandoned synagogue, but also the story of a lost space, the Jewish East End, that no longer exists in this part of London.

In 1969, Rodinsky disappeared unnoticed and without a trace from his home in Spitalfields, East London, which had once been the heart of the Jewish Eastern European immigrant community. Only in 1980 was his abandoned room unlocked and found covered in thick layers of dust, untouched for the past eleven years. The attic was full of books, maps highlighting apparently random walks through London (the purpose of which subsequently became clear) and cabalistic diagrams. The state of the room, which implied that its owner was a compulsive hoarder, as well as the eye-witness accounts of locals and a few remaining family members caused a lot of confusion as to whether Rodinsky had been a reclusive genius, as some believed (cf. 155), or rather a poor soul hardly capable of caring for himself, as others claimed (cf. 110-13). No facts about his life or him as a person existed when his room was found, so Lichtenstein and Sinclair set themselves the task of investigating further, though their approaches differed markedly from each other. Nonetheless, the room opened up access to a world long left behind. In the following, I shall focus predominantly on the authors' different strategies of tackling the mystery surrounding the room and its former inhabitant rather than on recounting Rodinsky's life. In his seminal *A Journey Through Ruins* (1993) the British historian Patrick Wright has described the connection between Rodinsky and the area as follows: "The story of Rodinsky's disappearance has become a *post-hoc* fable of the gentrifying immigrant quarter".<sup>90</sup>

However, as much as it reconstructs the story of David Rodinsky, *Rodinsky's Room* is also very much Lichtenstein's autobiographical search for identity and belonging: "[I]t is the story of a man who vanished, and the woman who set out to find him, and, in the process, found herself".<sup>91</sup> Ruth Gilbert, in her article "The Frummer in the Attic" (2006), goes so far as to say that Lichtenstein "becomes a character within the text, not just the teller of this story".<sup>92</sup> In the early 1990s, the young artist set herself the task of tracing her own Jewish ancestry, roaming

---

<sup>90</sup> Patrick Wright (1993 [1992]), *A Journey Through Ruins: A Keyhole Portrait of British Postwar Life and Culture*. London: Flamingo. 141.

<sup>91</sup> Lyn Gardner (1999), "The lost spirit of Spitalfields". Review of *Rodinsky's Room*, by Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair. *Guardian*. 22 May 1999, accessed 01 October 2012. (n. pag.) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/1999/may/22/books.guardianreview9>

<sup>92</sup> Ruth Gilbert (2006), "The Frummer in the Attic: Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair's *Rodinsky's Room* and Jewish Memory". *The International Fiction Review* 33. 29.

Brick Lane and its adjacent streets in the hope of better understanding her Polish refugee grandparents' life in the former Jewish East End. Visiting the location where their watchmakers shop had once been, she came across 19 Princelet Street,<sup>93</sup> an eighteenth-century former Huguenot master silk weaver's house that was later turned into a synagogue (in which her late grandparents had presumably been married and where David Rodinsky had led his solitary life for decades). This was the very beginning of her devoted interest in this man, his room and the mystery of his death just a few days before she was born. The two strands of the narrative, the quest for her own Jewish roots on the one hand and the search for any traces of Rodinsky on the other hand, became intricately interwoven with one another. Her curiosity turned into an obsession and her determination to discover his fate led her to travel to Poland and Israel in search of her own family's as well as the Rodinsky family's story and background. While living in Israel she was attracted by the idea of converting to Orthodox Judaism which she, for a while, thought to be the only way of approaching both Rodinsky's and her own family's legacy as well as atoning for her ancestors' fate. As Stephan Laqué remarks, Lichtenstein had the strong "desire to mourn the man whose life she felt can vindicate her entire heritage and identity".<sup>94</sup>

Lichtenstein's chapters, which increase markedly in emotionality as her search proceeds, alternate and contrast very distinctly with those written by Sinclair who believes that "Rodinsky was an empty space" (63) as well as "a museum of ephemera and dustbreath" (35). He cautions Lichtenstein against the room, calling it a "trap" (35).<sup>95</sup> Lichtenstein, however, takes the bait and the reader witnesses the way in which she is drawn deeper and deeper into the mysterious vortex or "web", as she calls it (32), that surrounds Rodinsky's disappearance. Sinclair visited the attic at an early stage, soon after its discovery, and also became engaged in the story, although at a very different level. He reports on Lichtenstein's frantic pursuit of any lead whatsoever and approaches the Rodinsky-mystery on a meta-level whereas Lichtenstein is

---

<sup>93</sup> 19 Princelet Street now houses the Museum of Immigration and Diversity.

<sup>94</sup> Stephan Laqué (2008), "'A deconstructed shrine': Locating Absence and Relocating Identity in *Rodinsky's Room* (2000)". In: Eckstein, Lars, Barbara Korte, Eva Ulrike Pirker, and Christoph Reinfandt (eds.), *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi. 378.

<sup>95</sup> This quote that equates the room with a trap is originally taken from an article Sinclair wrote for *The Guardian* called "The Man Who Became a Room" (published in the late 1980s). Unfortunately, it was impossible to obtain.

personally involved (although she also reflects upon her own search): “Rachel becomes the thing she is talking about. [...] Rachel Lichtenstein *is* the story [...]” (3). She believes herself to be chosen for this task, stating that: “The moment I entered 19 Princelet Street I knew I was meant to be there” (22). This was her epiphanic moment. At several other points in the book she refers to and reflects on her increasing obsession with Rodinsky (cf. 27, 32, 44).

The two approaches differ completely from one another. Brian Baker, in his book *Iain Sinclair* (2007), suggests that “*Rodinsky’s Room* is not an entirely successful collaboration”<sup>96</sup> because “the plainness and directness of her [Lichtenstein’s] writing contrasts strongly with Sinclair’s”, which to him, at first, seems “trivial or inauthentic next to Lichtenstein’s writing” (2007: 111).<sup>97</sup> Other critics have similar views regarding the differences between the two authors: “[w]hile Sinclair is content to shuffle these indeterminacies into endless patterns of suggestive meaning, Lichtenstein becomes increasingly motivated to fill in the many gaps of Rodinsky’s life”, Christopher C. Gregory-Guider argues.<sup>98</sup> Lichtenstein is completely absorbed by her aim to uncover the mystery and legend of this man and offers the reader insight into her innermost thoughts. Her emotionally charged language and chronological writing style contrasts with her co-author’s more factual and excursive style.

Sinclair, on the other hand, mostly focuses on Lichtenstein and her eager quest to uncover the secret that has been hovering over 19 Princelet Street for decades. His ultimate goal is not to shed light on what actually happened to Rodinsky, but to revel in this ‘urban myth’, the very place where it takes place: “Through Rodinsky’s room he accesses his subject – always London in one way or another [...]”.<sup>99</sup> The attic has a powerful allure: “[a]nyone who visits the room, a cell of memory, is affected” (189). In fact, “Sinclair looks at Rodinsky through the topography and history of the room, through the structural implications of the crypt-like attic” (Laqué 2008: 377). Additionally, he is strongly committed to observing Lichtenstein’s quest. He frequently jumps between

---

<sup>96</sup> Brian Baker (2007), *Iain Sinclair*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 110.

<sup>97</sup> I do not completely agree with Baker, but I can understand his point of view.

<sup>98</sup> Christopher C. Gregory-Guider (2005), “Sinclair’s Rodinsky’s Room and the Art of Autobiogeography”. *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* (September 2005). Accessed 25 October 2012. (n. pag.) <http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/september2005/guider.html>

<sup>99</sup> Susan Alice Fischer (2010), “A Room of Our Own: Rodinsky, Street Haunting and the Creative Mind”. *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education* 8. 122.

associations and stories from his vast repertoire of East End anecdotes.<sup>100</sup> His chapters are full of side-references and allusions to people and places, which occasionally make it hard to follow his train of thought. In *The Making of London* (2011), Sebastian Groes describes Sinclair's writing as "'difficult', intimidating, sometimes inaccessible objects of art. His prose is often in hyperbolic overdrive, full of slippery irony and densely packed with references to obscure sources".<sup>101</sup>

While Lichtenstein provides the bare facts as well as her (strong) feelings about them, Sinclair reflects on her approach and the various pieces of information she puts together one by one until she finally manages to locate Rodinsky's grave and reaches her ultimate goal: to say Kaddish, the Jewish mourner's prayer, for him so that he – and she – can finally rest in peace.

*Rodinsky's Room* evidences the strong engagement with a vanished urban place and the psychogeographical interest of both Sinclair and Lichtenstein, though to varying degrees and with diverging approaches, as analysed above. Lichtenstein in particular is enthralled by this unknown man, the abandoned attic room as well as by the vanished Jewish East End, which she seeks to resurrect through her meticulous search in which "she was continuously marking sites of absence" (Gilbert 2006: 30). Sinclair is equally searching for "sites of absence", but he is more focused on following Lichtenstein follow Rodinsky, although his imagination had also been captured by the fate of this hermit-like loner. He ponders on this issue by establishing the link between the room and the person: "Rodinsky is only visible in the sense that he is absorbed by the room in which he was the last tenant" (187).

Both authors reflect upon their own way of approaching the place and the phantom of the vanished man, and their different strategies in doing so are particularly interesting. Lichtenstein's aspiration is to shed light on the mystery and to pay her last respect to Rodinsky. She is driven by pity and the strong will to learn the truth as she thus hopes to, in a way, bring him 'back to life': "Lichtenstein's assumption is that one can piece together who 'David Rodinsky' was from the evidence that he left behind" (Baker 2007: 112). Sinclair, as mentioned above, seems to be more fascinated by the place itself and by

---

<sup>100</sup> Sinclair has a vast stock of knowledge about London and the East End in particular and the more familiar one is with the historical development of the East End and the more of Sinclair's texts one has read, the more recurring stories and characters one recognises (e.g. the Kray twins, the East End's notorious gangsters), which makes the reading process much easier.

<sup>101</sup> Sebastian Groes (2011), *The Making of London: London in Contemporary Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 94.

Lichtenstein's quest than he is by the actual person of interest. He recognises Rodinsky's isolation and disorientation, but at the same time observes how his co-author becomes increasingly lost in her research. His thoughts revolve around the room in relation to time: "Rodinsky's room is a reversed vortex, spinning time backwards" (198). Just like his aforementioned image of the room as a trap, it seems to have, at least in Sinclair's opinion, the aura of something dangerous one cannot escape. Although both raise their investigations to a meta-level and discuss their respective roles, only Sinclair really abstracts from the story of Rodinsky and considers how this man became the symbol of a vanished past and what role Lichtenstein plays with her fervent pursuit of the truth:

The man became intimately associated with the place, the dissolution of the Jewish ghetto. [...] Rodinsky's life was pressed into legend. It belonged at the end of an era, before memories became memorial plaques. An abandoned room contained all that was left of a man's life and Rachel Lichtenstein understood that it was her task, nobody else could do it, to live that life again, and to complete it. Find some resolution or lose herself forever in the attempt. That was her joy. That was her burden. (4-5)

This quote is extremely enlightening as it addresses the question of memorialising as opposed to remembering. What differentiates the two? Sinclair suggests that Rodinsky's life and the Jewish East End have become part of a specific historical narrative in which memories have turned into established myths, even though they might have been distorted over the years.

Disappearance and absence are very much at the core of the book. On the very first page Sinclair describes Rodinsky as "a man who invented himself through his disappearance" (3) and believes that "Rodinsky was a shape whose only definition was its shapelessness, the lack of a firm outline" (3-4). Elsewhere he merely states: "He [Rodinsky] is an absence. He doesn't belong in his own story. [...] The room is a map of the mind<sup>102</sup> that anyone capable of climbing the stairs can sample" (174). This implies that the most interesting aspect of

---

<sup>102</sup> The expression "map of the mind" is highly reminiscent of psychogeographical thought in which place (by means of a map) and expression (mind) are brought together.

Rodinsky is in fact his non-existence. He is simultaneously the main character of the book as much as he is non-existent, he is there and not there. What he symbolises – the vanished Jewish East End, a bygone era, Orthodox Judaism etc. – is, in Sinclair's opinion, far more interesting to explore than the actual man himself.<sup>103</sup>

Sinclair therefore does not intend to reconstruct Rodinsky's identity. He is eager to go beyond merely trying to acquire facts about this man's life. Rather, it is the void and its secrets about the forgotten past of one particular area of urban London that he finds exciting, he wants to explore this void but keep the secret in order not to demystify Rodinsky: "a man, the facts of his life barely known, is adopted as a symbol for the reimagination of a special district of London" (186).

Gregory-Guider believes that "a tension mounts over the course of *Rodinsky's Room* as Sinclair's attempts to maintain the otherness of Rodinsky's story begins [sic] to contrast with Lichtenstein's ongoing demystification of Rodinsky's life" (2005: n. pag.). Gilbert also mentions "an intriguing tension within the text" which, being simultaneously produced and repressed by the text, is at the centre of her interest (2006: 27). The book qualifies "as an 'autobiogeography,' [...] a work of life-writing in which the story of person is refracted through the story of place" (Gregory-Guider 2005: n. pag.). Just as 'psychogeography' can be divided into its two parts, the compound word 'autobiogeography' makes the components visible and logical, an apt conflation in the case of *Rodinsky's Room* because in the book a place (geography) is connected with a biography (of Rodinsky) and an autobiography (of Lichtenstein). Gregory-Guider even regards

*Rodinsky's Room* as an autobiogeography par excellence, a paradigmatic instance of the memorialisation of a biographical subject through the representation and revisitation of the place he once occupied and/or traversed (2005: n. pag.).[,]

---

<sup>103</sup> *Rodinsky's Room* vaguely reminds me of Virginia Woolf's novel *Jacob's Room* (1922) as in both books the main character or protagonist, respectively, is absent and is only revealed to the reader via other characters. One would have to be very careful with a direct comparison, of course, but I believe that a parallel does exist, not only due to the obvious analogy of the titles. In both cases a certain kind of mysterious haziness surrounds Jacob and David and only their rooms give some indications as to their respective characters and lives.



that is it is “this work’s dynamic interpolation and interbraiding of person and place, alternatingly framing the former from the vantage point of the latter, and vice versa” (2005: n.pag.), that makes it an autobiogeography. The only source of information is this one long-abandoned room, as Sinclair believes: “A man whose story is the story of a sealed room. The room is his doctored autobiography” (189). Earlier Sinclair wonders: “If his walks could be repeated, might he be brought back to life?” (185) – a question that emphasises the extent to which Rodinsky and his room are inextricably interwoven. In fact, he seems to *be* the room. At the end of the book Sinclair admits his fascination with place: “[i]t was the room, the set, that obsessed me” (256). Sinclair wants to preserve the absence and in this he differs significantly to Lichtenstein who tries to reconstruct and re-imagine the place and wants to fill the gap that has emerged in the wake of this absence (cf. Gilbert 2006: 33). These different roles of the two authors could be read as (stereotypically) gendered: an emotional and highly involved female part on the one hand and a more observant and rational male part on the other hand. This tension is never adequately resolved, as Gregory-Guider hints. Although I do not intend to read *Rodinsky’s Room* through the lens of gender, this interpretation could be a very productive approach.

The mystery that surrounds Rodinsky and his disappearance has only been solved to a certain degree: in 1968, Rodinsky was taken to St Clement’s Hospital in Bow, East London (cf. 289); later he was recorded in the Jewish temporary shelter, presumably because social services had inspected his room and rated it as “unfit for human habitation” (cf. 312); from there he must have been sent to Longrove, a psychiatric hospital in Epsom, outside of London, probably because he was regarded as mentally ill, yet no records exist to prove this (cf. 311-14). David Rodinsky died of a stroke (cf. 285) on 05 March 1969 at the age of forty-four and was buried in the paupers’ section of Waltham Abbey cemetery (cf. 314-15). Some of the mysterious paths he had marked in red in his *London A–Z* also started to make sense, for example the one leading to Dagenham, where Rodinsky had been fostered out as a child due to his mother’s apparent incapacity to care for him at the time (cf. 285-86, 335). Yet despite these findings, much remains uncertain and merely based on conjecture; no photograph of him has ever been found, for example, and the contradictory remarks of the eye-witnesses and contemporaries of Rodinsky

can neither provide a logical solution nor be explained properly. Evidently some mistaken identity must have occurred. In addition, the memories of those who knew him are likely to be unreliable after so many years. All that is left of Rodinsky is a reconstruction based on his abandoned room; he remains “a character who is only ever glimpsed in the reconstructed remnants of his life” (Gilbert 2006: 27).

Lichtenstein’s extensive search for details as well as Sinclair’s more abstract investigation reveal two divergent psychogeographical approaches to local history and emphasise the different ways in which individuals can be affected by a biography and an urban location. *Rodinsky’s Room* is the epitome of a text that has an ‘absent space’ at its centre, “an absent presence” (Gilbert 2006: 27) – at least this is Sinclair’s point of departure. His co-author, then, has taken it upon herself to deal with this absence: “Lichtenstein’s project, however, is to resist, or at least to fill the space left by, this absence” (Gilbert 2006: 33). In this sense the two authors work together as well as simultaneously against each other.

### **2.2.3 Dennis Severs, *18 Folgate Street: The Tale of a House in Spitalfields* (2002)**

*“You either see it or you don’t”*

Dennis Severs’ House in 18 Folgate Street in Spitalfields is not a conventional museum. As soon as one sets foot in this eighteenth-century house, one leaves the hustle and bustle of nearby Liverpool Street Station far behind and not only steps into “a time capsule”<sup>104</sup> but also enters a different world, the life of a Huguenot master silk weaver family in the eighteenth century: “To enter its door is to pass through a frame into a painting, one with a time and life of its own”.<sup>105</sup> The late Dennis Severs, owner and creator of this “living house museum”<sup>106</sup> which was also his residential house, lovingly decorated the building’s interior with the aim of re-creating the home of an imaginary Huguenot family around

---

<sup>104</sup> Quoted from the House’s website (accessed 16 February 2016): <http://www.dennissevershouse.co.uk/>

<sup>105</sup> Quoted from the House’s website (accessed 17 February 2016): <http://www.dennissevershouse.co.uk/the-tour/>

<sup>106</sup> Gavin Stamp (2000), “Dennis Severs” (obituary). *Guardian*. 10 January 2000, accessed 01 October 2012. (n. pag.) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2000/jan/10/guardianobituaries>

the time when the area was known as 'Petty France'. Asked not to speak and told by the attendant at the entrance "it's not a museum, it's an experience", the visitor roams the ten rooms of this narrow, candle-lit house and experiences its magic in silence, merely guided by (taped) sounds and smells that are evocative of a very special atmosphere. It was Severs' intention that the sounds and smells suggest that the family has just left the room; the still steaming cup of tea or the smell of food evoke their almost-presence.

Dennis Severs' House is a unique and unusual psychogeographical location, complemented by the book *18 Folgate Street: The Tale of a House in Spitalfields*.<sup>107</sup> House and book are intricately linked with each other and I will make reference to both, as the book explains the 'composition' that lies behind the house. In *18 Folgate Street*, Severs takes the reader on a tour through the house as he did regularly with visitors during his lifetime.

I read *18 Folgate Street* as psychogeographical because the exploration of the effect a place has on the mind of a person is at the very centre of the book (and the house) although this is not a strictly text-immanent reading.<sup>108</sup> Yet the book differs noticeably from the non-fiction texts written by other London-based psychogeographers like Iain Sinclair, not only because it is not purely non-fictional. In the following, I will argue why I believe the text to be psychogeographical in a different way.

As Gavin Stamp writes in his obituary for Severs: "He felt able to summon up past eras not through history books, but through empathy with objects and places, to tell a fictional, true story" (2000: n. pag.). The same sentiment is echoed by Dan Cruikshank in his film about his late friend's unique house. Here he underscores Severs' fascination with the past – a past which, however, is not bound to historical accuracy but rather is concerned with 'emotional accuracy' in terms of an atmosphere evoked.<sup>109</sup> A classification of *18 Folgate Street's* genre is complex and difficult: to a minor degree and merely in parts it is an autobiography, but simultaneously it is a reconstructed historical account of an urban place, Spitalfields, or, more directly, of this particular eighteenth-century Georgian house, as well as being the (fictionalised) biography of a

---

<sup>107</sup> Dennis Severs (2002 [2001]), *18 Folgate Street: The Tale of a House in Spitalfields*. London: Vintage [Chatto & Windus]. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>108</sup> I try to omit the word 'museum' as it does not really do justice to the house.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. *Dan Cruikshank and the House That Wouldn't Die*. Dir. Dan Cruikshank. BBC, 2005.

family of Huguenot master silk weavers. The fact that the Gervais/Jervis<sup>110</sup> family is imaginary does not play as big a role as one might think if one is willing to let oneself be taken in by the house and its magic. In this sense I would argue that the book can also be considered an 'autobiogeography' (cf. Gregory-Guider 2005: n. pag.), similar to *Rodinsky's Room*.<sup>111</sup> Yet there are, of course, differences between the two: the biography of a fictional family should normally be termed a novel, but this is not really important here and would destroy the charm of Severs' microcosm because the key aim of Dennis Severs' House is not historical accuracy but rather the exalting of the imagination. This house should be regarded as Severs' *Gesamtkunstwerk* in which he entangles his autobiography with the history of Spitalfields as well as with the 'biography' of his house and its former (imaginary) inhabitants. Peter Ackroyd, in his introduction to *18 Folgate Street*, interprets the nature of the house and how it might be classified as follows: "But Severs was also a novelist and romancer. The house became a living story, with each of its rooms as a separate chapter"<sup>112</sup> and the reader of the book or the visitor to the house, respectively, "becomes a character in the house's story" (2001b: ix).

The house has a prominent motto on which the whole 'story' is built: "*You either see it or you don't*" (66). In order to grasp what 18 Folgate Street is about, one has to let oneself be drawn in by this place. This "famous time machine" is aimed at "drawing human nature and history together" by staging the objects Severs had been collecting all his life (7). The artificiality and high degree of reconstruction and evocation is obvious and people either love it or hate it. Iain Sinclair, for instance, hates it. He does not fall for this kind of 'museum' and dismisses it as silly. In the very first chapter of *Rodinsky's Room* he compares Rodinsky's attic to Severs' house and denigrates the latter as a "parallel reality" (2000: 8) and "a ceremony, a High Church ritual" (2000: 9). The fact that everything in the house is arranged and well-conceived becomes obvious from the moment one enters the place, but this 'controlled history' is entirely intentional. Severs was not interested in creating a museum that exhibits a natural imitation of a Georgian silk weaver's house that is authentic in every

---

<sup>110</sup> Severs tells his readers that the Huguenot name Gervais was later anglicised and became Jervis (cf. 38).

<sup>111</sup> Interestingly, 19 Princelet Street and 18 Folgate Street are in close proximity.

<sup>112</sup> Peter Ackroyd (2001b), "Introduction". In: Severs, Dennis (2002 [2001]), *18 Folgate Street: The Tale of a House in Spitalfields*. London: Vintage [Chatto & Windus]. viii.

detail. Rather it is the “*mood*”<sup>113</sup> he was interested in: “For I was collecting *auras*: signposts to the thinking of other times” (6). Sinclair dismisses this aim by mockingly calling Severs “an aether broker, a man dedicated to creating ‘atmosphere’, sculpting rococo fantasies out of his own ectoplasm” (2000: 8). Yet he draws direct comparisons between 19 Princelet Street and 18 Folgate Street: “The ascent through the Severs house, with its staged manifestations, its vanished presences, runs in parallel (split-screen) to the trudge up the broken stairs of the Princelet Street synagogue. [...] A space as empty as Rodinsky’s attic. Or as replete with stopped time” (2000: 10). But he goes further and condescendingly concludes:

The stinks and the tapes condition you. They tell you how you are supposed to read the scene. It’s very different in Princelet Street. Nothing is known about Rodinsky, much is rumoured. There is nobody to explain the story. (2000: 10)

Although there certainly is a parallel that can be drawn between these two places that are marked by absences, Sinclair is justified in his claim that the scene in Princelet Street differs fundamentally from the one in Folgate Street: the first was real and unintended, the fate of a person who did not fit into society; the latter highly composed and sophisticated, the absence of the (imaginary) Jervis family is intentional and staged and set about two hundred years before Rodinsky lived. Both places have been left as if only for a moment; their inhabitants seem to be nearby. One is tempted to make a comparison, especially when taking the strong relation to place into consideration as well as “the East End’s history of cyclical immigration” (Baker 2007: 110), which both ‘stories’ at least indirectly refer to.

Yet Sinclair’s objections seem to (partly) miss the point that Severs tried to make. As the latter said, he wanted to capture a certain *mood* and *aura* and thereby created a kind of cabinet of wonder. Sinclair, however, seems to regard 18 Folgate Street as a ‘non-spooky ghost train’, a place he cannot take seriously.

For the focus of my research, Dennis Severs’ House constitutes the ideal counter-balance to the other psychogeographical texts. Here, fact and fiction

---

<sup>113</sup> Severs’ emphasis.

are blended, which once again proves that psychogeography can take many different shapes and can encompass different genres. The house and the book both deal with absence: the Jervises are no longer there, they are said to have just left the room before one enters, but one can smell their food, hear the ticking of the clocks and see the steaming cup of tea they have left half-drunk as if they had just jumped up. Simultaneously it is an exploration of the house's and the area's history and the conventions and fashions of the era, which are presented as relics of bygone times. As Severs states at the very beginning in his autobiographical introduction, which he interweaves with the house's story:

With no real category, my youth was spent in *the space between*: something to which I was always contentedly – if not happily – resigned. Besides, the views from there were exceptional; I became fascinated by their interplay – *between*. (2)

The “Space Between” is omnipresent in his book (cf. 54, 71, 100, 268, 271) and alludes to Severs' life in-between two worlds, his imagination and reality. To him, the “Space Between” equals “the invisible” (54), which he claims he is able to see and which he wants to make accessible to a wider audience: “As an artist my canvas is your imagination” (91). This fanciful guidance is Sinclair's main point of critique – and it is indeed artificial, but it is intended to be so. Nevertheless, Severs' approach is a psychogeographical one, I believe, as revealed by a retrospective view of his childhood and one which finds expression in his house: “I developed an interest that made me stand three steps back to watch the effect of buildings and places on people's thinking, on their mood and on their behaviour” (138). The outcome of the effect the building had on Severs is this elaborately and fondly decorated house and the ‘presence’ of the Jervises. Time and place are the two factors that shaped Severs while creating this time warp:

While working in the eerie darkness of those deserted Spitalfields nights – and with the room and myself working towards the same goal – I have never felt so close to the past. My mind travelled in a way that structured and made better sense of things I already knew. It was as if I was working

alongside Time, and with no company and modern equipment abroad.  
(142)

By delving into the home of an (imaginary) eighteenth-century Huguenot family, one enters another London, another world, indeed another century.

Dennis Severs' House and the accompanying book slightly deviate from the other texts chosen for my thesis, but I believe that the house's expressive power is strong and adds, due to its fictional element, a new component to my research. Despite the fact that everything in the house is staged and not authentically furnished and the book can be read as a kind of screenplay, a sense of the area's history is conveyed. 18 Folgate Street invites one to enter into a dialogue with the house and its past and obliges the spectator to immerse him- or herself in this particular area of London.

#### **2.2.4 Janet Cardiff, *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* (1999)<sup>114</sup>**

*The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*<sup>115</sup> is an audio walk conducted by Canadian artist Janet Cardiff in Whitechapel and Spitalfields, East London, in 1999 and is roughly set in the same area of the metropolis as the three previously discussed texts.

In *The Missing Voice*, the listener is given a discman and is instructed to proceed to the point of departure, the Whitechapel Library (which is now part of the Whitechapel Gallery), and is told to pick up a book from the crime section, Reginald Hill's crime novel *Dream of Darkness*, from which Cardiff reads a passage. Upon leaving the library the walk proper begins and Cardiff's voice and footsteps guide the participant through the streets of the East End:

Part urban guide, part detective story, part *film noir*, this audio walk transports individual listeners on foot through the streets and alley ways of Spitalfields, a historic part of London next to the City. Intimate, even

---

<sup>114</sup> Parts of this section have been published in a similar version in my article "A Psychogeographical Exploration of Disappearance and Dis/Orientation in London's East End" in *Stet* 3 (Spring 2013).

<sup>115</sup> Available for download from the Artangel website, who commissioned *The Missing Voice* (accessed 08 April 2016): <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-missing-voice-case-study-b/>

conspiratorial in tone, it entwines the listener in an elusive narrative that shifts through space and time, confession, conjecture and dream.<sup>116</sup>

While ‘accompanying’ Cardiff on her walk through the city, the listener experiences time and space at various levels: although muted due to the headphones, one finds oneself simultaneously in two acoustic spaces (the one that has been taped and the one experienced while listening to the tape), as Mirjam Schaub argues.<sup>117</sup> In the following, I try to analyse the walk in terms of its psychogeographical potential.

Cardiff herself reflects on the importance of urban space and her way of drifting: “Sometimes I don’t really know what the stories in my walks are about. Mostly they are responses to the location [...]”.<sup>118</sup> It is indeed hard to tell what *The Missing Voice* is about, as its plot is very fragmented, but it certainly is about the perceived impact of the urban surroundings and about being disoriented in a large city: “Cardiff’s audio-walk in particular works with connections between the self and the city, between the conscious and the unconscious, and between multiple selves and urban footsteps”.<sup>119</sup> As Schaub states, due to the overlap of the actual aural surroundings and the taped sounds and voices on the discman, the listener finds ‘evidence’ for what is being said on the tape while an uncanny feeling sets in as one has left behind the secure environment of the museum, library or gallery and has followed Cardiff into the city, in which this art project suddenly has to share ‘the stage’ with real, random encounters (cf. 2007: 136). At the beginning of the walk, Cardiff confides to the listener that reality and the powers of imagination, or indeed a sense of who she is, become blurred once she sets out into the streets:

---

<sup>116</sup> Cited from the website, “Audio Walk: The Missing Voice (Case Study B) (Part One)” (accessed 08 April 2016): <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-missing-voice-case-study-b/>

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Mirjam Schaub (2007), “Die Kunst des Spurenlegens und –verfolgens. Sophie Calles, Francis Aljys’ und Janet Cardiffs Beitrag zu einem philosophischen Spurenbegriff”. In: Krämer, Sybille, Werner Kogge, and Gernot Grube (eds.), *Spur: Spurenlesen als Orientierungstechnik und Wissenkunst*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag. 133-34. All translations into English are my own.

<sup>118</sup> Cited from the website, “Making The Missing Voice (Case Study B)” (accessed 08 April 2016): <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-missing-voice-case-study-b/>

<sup>119</sup> David Pinder (2001), “Ghostly Footsteps: Voices, Memories and Walks in the City”. *Ecumene* 8.1. Accessed 02 May 2016. 1. <http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/docs/staff/6729.pdf>



I started these recordings as a way to remember, to make life seem more real. I can't explain it but then the voice became someone else, a separate person hovering in front of me like a ghost. (Tape 1, 2:56-3:10)

One hears Cardiff's voice, her directions, traffic sounds and a few scraps of conversation from people passing. Thus, one enters into a "*physical cinema*" caused by the overlaying of different sound tracks (Schaub 2007: 133). Sometimes a tape recorder echoes the artist's voice just seconds later, which adds to the fragmented nature of the urban experience. As David Pinder remarks in his article "Ghostly Footsteps: Voices, Memories and Walks in the City" (2001):

Cardiff's narratorial voice is not constant. Her measured and close-up first-person narration that observes and gives directions is interspersed with personal thoughts and memories. It also sometimes switches to a more distant third person that acts as a voice over. (2001: 5)

This shifting of perspectives is apparent when Cardiff states: "She describes things I don't remember seeing" (Tape 2, 1:52-1:55), whereby both "she" and "I" refer to Cardiff, the narrator; sometimes she is detached from herself and sometimes she is close by. She seems disoriented in relation to where she is and who she is and at times it is not evident any longer who is speaking. From time to time, the voices of "an anonymous man and also a male detective who seems to be on the trail of a woman with red hair, who has apparently disappeared or perhaps been murdered", interrupt Cardiff's drift (Pinder 2001: 6). This detective story, in which the narrator seems involved as she confides to the listener that she wears a red-haired wig and thus suggests that she might be one and the same person, runs parallel to but is simultaneously intertwined with the urban drift the listener is encouraged to re-enact. Especially in the London context does the detective story have a long literary tradition, with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective Sherlock Holmes as its archetype. Pinder remarks:

The figure of the detective has long been associated with the complexity of modern urban life. It rests on the idea of confronting the city's apparent

unknowability in its infinite spread and diversity, and of following clues to tame and make intelligible its secret and scrambled paths. (2001: 6)

Yet, simultaneously,

the detective's presence comes to speak of the difficulties of reading and knowing the city, where the city's legibility and representability have been thrown into doubt and become a focus of anxiety, or in more extreme cases where they have become the subject of paranoid webs of connection, as in the self-reflexive, metaphysical detective fiction of Paul Auster [and his famous *New York Trilogy* (1985-86)]. (Pinder 2001: 6)

Cardiff herself talks about how she found photos of a woman with long red hair in the tube and kept them and later sent the detective the photos and hired him to find her. It seems plausible that the narrator herself is this mysterious woman as the aforementioned confused identification of the narrator suggests, but this suspicion is only alluded to and I do not believe it is crucial to know for sure as the significance of the walk lies more in conveying a certain subjective and fleeting impression and not so much in the solution to the enigmatic story she tells. The ways in which Cardiff approaches her surroundings are more salient than her approach to the plot, which is deliberately fragmented and incoherent: "the project activates the imagination in the production of a different sense of space and time" (Pinder 2001: 7), which brings to mind the *dérive* in which space and time are also distorted and 'out of joint'. This activation is achieved through aural perception: "recorded sounds" are interspersed with "those of the city" which, in addition to the sound of the footsteps and the artist's voice, make one "acutely aware of [...] the practice of walking" and "sharpens attention to outward surroundings" (Pinder 2001: 5). These "instructions" thus "emphasize[...] the sensuousness of walking as a mode of apprehending the city that is tactile, aural and olfactory as well as visual" (Pinder 2001: 5) and thus make Cardiff's guided walk through the East End a psychogeographical experience, a *dérive*. She explores the city and imparts her immediate observations and reactions towards things and people. While watching a construction site, the narrator ponders on the changes that continually occur in the city – and especially in this part of London where the layers of history and of

stories are apparent: “I wonder if the workers ever think of themselves as the changers of the city, the men that cover up the old stories, making room for new ones” (Tape 2, 1:07-1:16).

Pinder situates Cardiff’s audio walk in a London-tradition of “urban walking” epitomised by Iain Sinclair:

Sinclair’s urban walks in particular demonstrate a concern not only with exploring ambiances in the city but also with memory, with excavating hidden histories and geographies, and with rewriting conventional maps to reveal some of ‘the other cities that exist inside the city’. (2001: 8)

Cardiff’s walk can also be seen in relation to Sinclair’s urban drifting: “*The missing voice* itself opens up the idea of the city through its attention to historical layers and multiple narratives and identities” (Pinder 2001: 8). Pinder further explores the connection between Sinclair and Cardiff by pointing out the overlapping routes between *The Missing Voice* and *Rodinsky’s Room* (cf. 2001: 12-13), which once again indicates how ‘rich’ the East End is to contemporary psychogeographers or those engaged in peeling back the layers of the city. Another parallel between the book and the audio walk is the sense of disappearance: “The theme of disappearance indeed runs through the piece, with the narrator [Cardiff] herself reflecting on the urge to disappear” (Pinder 2001: 9-10). Both the book and the walk convey the feeling that something is missing: in *Rodinsky’s Room* the absent person David Rodinsky is evidence of the Jewish East End that no longer exists; in *The Missing Voice* one is guided by a narratorial voice that feels “invisible” and is disoriented. In my understanding of the audio walk, the concepts of invisibility and disappearance enforce the sense of disorientation in the city, which, at least to a certain extent, seems to be a basis or prerequisite for the psychogeographical drift.

To conclude, it is not so much the enigmatic plot of *The Missing Voice* that is crucial, but rather the impact of the urban surroundings and audible experience on the listener/walker that matters. It is this individual and personal feeling which Cardiff captures and which adds another perspective to the psychogeographical activity.

## 2.2.5 Outlook: “The new psychogeography”

This broad selection of texts and their close readings were aimed not only at providing an overview of what characterised the London psychogeographical revival in the 1990s and early 2000s, but also at illustrating that (and analysing why) London, and especially its ever-changing East End, remains a city attractive to contemporary psychogeographers. The works introduced here exhibit different ways of dealing with the city and at the same time different approaches to psychogeography. Some (fictionally) reinvent the city and its inhabitants (e.g. Severs), while others mirror the city in a much more associative and erratic style (e.g. Sinclair) while yet others, the new generation of psychogeographers, which shall be introduced in the following, “move away from the pathos attached to some of the more nostalgic London-based psychogeographical accounts” (Richardson 2015d: 250).<sup>120</sup> Gareth E. Rees’ *Marshland: Dreams and Nightmares on the Edge of London* (2013),<sup>121</sup> for instance, can be regarded as representative of this ‘new psychogeography’, which Richardson identifies as follows: “The new psychogeography is, first and foremost, one of heterogeneity. It is not exclusive, closed, snobbish or protectionist” (2015d: 250). Rees’ book is written in a lighter and more casual tone, which appears more accessible and less nostalgic than older psychogeographical texts, and he seems more open to experimental styles and formats (cf. 2013: 83-106). Yet he also pays tribute to the ‘London tradition’ by sharing with his more established fellow-psychogeographers a curiosity concerning the urban fringes (cf. 2013: 163) and limits himself to the East End (in this case the marshes of Hackney and the surrounding areas) as his ‘psychogeographical playground’. However, one has to stress that other centres of psychogeographical exploration have emerged in Britain alongside London, for example Leeds and Manchester<sup>122</sup> and even rural areas like Scottish Fife.<sup>123</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup> For a discussion of nostalgia in British psychogeography, among others the writing of Sinclair, see: Alastair Bonnett (2009), “The Dilemmas of Radical Nostalgia in British Psychogeography”. *Theory, Culture & Society* 26.1. 45-70.

<sup>121</sup> Gareth E. Rees (2013), *Marshland: Dreams and Nightmares on the Edge of London*. London: Influx Press.

<sup>122</sup> Both Rose and Richardson are founders/founding members of psychogeographical groups *not* set in London, namely Rose’s Loiterers Resistance Movement (LRM) in Manchester (cf. Rose 2015: 147), which engages in psychogeographical activities like “the game of CCTV bingo” (Rose 2015: 152), and Richardson’s Leeds Psychogeography Group (cf. Tina Richardson (2015c), “Developing Schizocartography: Formulating a Theoretical Methodology for a Walking Practice”. In: Richardson, Tina (ed.), *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Place, Memory, Affect. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International. 181).

<sup>123</sup> See the Fife Psychogeographical Collective (accessed 22 April 2016): <https://fifepsychogeography.com>

Whereas the 1990s' London psychogeography was largely marked by a fascination for the city's local history and hidden corners and the predominant mode of exploration remained walking, the new generation of psychogeographers<sup>124</sup> strives towards a wider application of the term and might at times appear to move even further away from the Situationist tradition. This evolution is not necessarily a negative development, but instead allows for each practitioner to create his or her own niche. Richardson also notes that the younger generation can be characterised by a less rigid adherence to "the strong literary background of psychogeography" (2015d: 249). In addition, new technologies like "websites, blogs and social networking" as well as so-called "geo apps" facilitate the sharing of one's psychogeographical findings (Richardson 2015d: 242) and enable the production of what could be termed psychogeographical 'snapshots' rather than fully elaborate texts. However, one could also apply this to a more open usage of psychogeography in the arts more generally.<sup>125</sup> Richardson, a blogger herself,<sup>126</sup> believes that what has been happening in British psychogeography over the past few years is indeed a second revival, yet she shies away from calling it what would normally in academia be termed a "*turn*" and "prefer[s] to describe the current movement in psychogeography as more like a gentle turn in the road" because she regards these changes as "leanings" rather than "a radical break" (2015d: 245).

In fact, Richardson can be counted among the forefront of today's British psychogeography scene as *Walking Inside Out*, which Richardson edited and contributed to, is possibly one of the most important additions to the contemporary corpus of (British) psychogeographical writing in that it combines academic with artistic and activist approaches (cf. Rose 2015: 150) and thereby reinforces my argument concerning the pliancy of the term psychogeography. However, as already indicated by the title, Richardson mostly focuses on the walking aspect of psychogeography, which does not play a major role in my interpretation of the term and is therefore not regarded as a decisive criterion for the Sydney and Berlin texts. I of course acknowledge the importance of

---

<sup>124</sup> Richardson even dares to call this new generation "post-Sinclairian" (2015d: 249) but stresses that "[t]his is not a slur on Sinclair or his works" but "based on a conversation" they had in which Sinclair expressed his view that "a new group of psychogeographers should 'pick up the mantle'" (2015d: 251).

<sup>125</sup> An example of a public art producer whose work could in the widest sense be termed psychogeographical is Bristol-based Situations: "Situations opens up the potential for artists to make extraordinary ideas happen in unusual and unexpected places, inspiring audiences and participants to explore new horizons" (cited from their website, accessed 09 October 2015: [www.situations.org](http://www.situations.org)).

<sup>126</sup> Richardson embodies the contemporary psychogeographer per se, as she combines in her person the blogger, the practicing and political psychogeographer as well as the academic.

walking the city in order to fully perceive it as well as its literary tradition, yet I extend the idea to what could be regarded as mental roaming too.<sup>127</sup> It is the state of mind, of letting oneself in for a particular place, that is important in my understanding of the term. Richardson explains “[t]he current resurgence in walking” as having “coincided with a renewed interest in cartography encouraged by the availability of digital tools” (2015d: 243).

*Walking Inside Out* is a showcase of many different psychogeographical voices and this makes this collection of essays so unique and useful to my project. The fields of interest and research from which the contributors to this volume come mirror the multifaceted nature of contemporary psychogeography and range from legal (Luke Bennett) to anarchist/feminist (Morag Rose). Richardson herself seems to be situated in the activist and political tradition of psychogeography and expedited the progression of psychogeography by having developed (by reference to Félix Guattari’s “*schizoanalysis* and *schizoanalytic cartography*”) the term “schizocartography”, “a method of cartography that questions dominant power structures and at the same time enables subjective voices to appear from underlying postmodern topography”, as a form of “urban critique” (2015c: 181-82). In summary, “[s]chizocartography is the walking practice, the observation and the critique of a particular space” (Richardson 2015c: 182). Phil Smith, another contributor to this volume, introduces his term “*mytho-geographical*”, which “was almost certainly a misremembering of ‘psychogeographical’” and “emerged from a transition in the artists’ collective Wrights & Sites [...] from making site-specific performances to making interventions in everyday life”.<sup>128</sup> Although I do not want to go into detail and provide an in-depth analysis of these two newly coined terms “schizocartography” and “mythogeography” as this has already been done in *Walking Inside Out*, I regard it as crucial to acknowledge them here as they show the disposition of the younger generation of psychogeographers to produce novel psychogeographical ideas and new approaches to urbanity. In the same breath one could mention Jon Day’s *Cyclogeography – Journeys of a London Bicycle Courier* (2015), which is another recent addition to the ‘pool’ of

---

<sup>127</sup> In *Sydney*, for instance, Delia Falconer does not actively set out to walk Sydney, but her picture of the city is very much shaped by perceiving the different areas and her everyday encounters, that is, despite not actively walking, her approach to the city is a similar one.

<sup>128</sup> Phil Smith (2015), “Psychogeography and Mythogeography: Currents in Radical Walking”. In: Richardson, Tina (ed.), *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Place, Memory, Affect. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International. 165-66.

new terms denoting the seemingly ever-growing British psychogeographical pursuit. Those whose voices would have been marginalised in the early days of Parisian psychogeography (and maybe even in the London scene in the 1990s) – Morag Rose, for instance, who positions herself as “a working-class, queer, disabled woman” in contrast to the male, privileged Benjaminian *flâneur* (2015: 149) – are afforded the opportunity to participate in the contemporary psychogeographical discourse. *Walking Inside Out* opens up psychogeography to other disciplines<sup>129</sup> and areas one would not necessarily associate with this practice and thereby “represent[s] the diversity of psychogeographical writings” (Richardson 2015d: 250). Thus, Richardson’s closing remarks to *Walking Inside Out* are the perfect transition to my chapters on Sydney and Berlin, as she promotes an open and diverse application of the term and method of psychogeography:

And you do not have to be an academic, a theorist, a researcher or a writer to be a psychogeographer. You are not even required to have your own blog. Call it psychogeography. Don’t call it psychogeography. Walk. Don’t walk. Either way, the ‘franchise’ endures. (2015d: 251)

Some of the authors or artists I have chosen to introduce in my chapters on Sydney and Berlin certainly do not at first glance fall into the category ‘psychogeographer’ as they, for instance, approach their city not on foot. This is not crucial to my understanding of psychogeography as what is at stake is their engagement with and concern for the urban surroundings, as Richardson has aptly stated. In a way, the subsequent chapters open up the current trend to new, hitherto psychogeographically unexplored cities and illustrate that psychogeography can be practiced everywhere and can take different shapes according to the place in focus. Moving away from the mainly walking-based British tradition of psychogeography, I shall now turn towards my second example, Sydney.

---

<sup>129</sup> Two British (though not London-based) academics who also work in the field of psychogeography are Alastair Bonnett, Professor of Social Geography at Newcastle University, and Alex Bridger, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Huddersfield. Their respective interests in the field substantiates the allegation that psychogeography is no longer confined to literature or to the arts but has been adopted by other disciplines as well.

### 3. Sydney – City of Contradictions

SYDNEY. It's aqueous. Shiny. Shifty. Stupid. Braggart. Gorgeous beyond measure. Cruel. Exorbitant. A *geist* that puts hooks in where you do your hardest wanting.<sup>130</sup>

This compilation of partly contradictory characteristics set out by Sydney-based author, filmmaker and researcher Ross Gibson stands in stark contrast to the images Sydney normally conjures up: stunningly beautiful Sydney Harbour, Opera House, sunshine, beaches, ferries, culture and nature. Yet it is the other face, the *geist* of the city and the contrast to the 'postcard' image that I want to analyse in the following on the basis of literary and artistic dialogues with the city.

Two non-fiction books – working at the interface between memoir, travelogue, historiography, and (auto-) biography – constitute the core of this chapter: Delia Falconer's *Sydney* (2010) and Ross Gibson's *26 Views of the Starburst World* (2012a) approach Sydney in individual and imaginative ways. In order to emphasise my reading of psychogeography as a method that does not have to be confined to the urban wayfarer's fleeting images of the cityscape, I have deliberately chosen two books that differ distinctly from each other; in my opinion, a psychogeographical approach depends rather on *how* and by what means the city and its impact on the psyche of a person are depicted, how this special relationship between geographical location and subject can be described, and how the city's atmosphere and 'character' have been captured and rendered in a literary text. In both primary texts, the close entanglements between a person and a place (Sydney) are at the very centre, yet both have their unique ways of tackling these entanglements and of dealing with Sydney's *genius loci* and its silences and absences. Falconer describes her personal, ambivalent relationship to her hometown's contradictory 'character traits' and refers back to the Indigenous past, which, as she perceives, still 'haunts' modern-day Sydney. This interest in Sydney's Aboriginal history is shared by Gibson, who interleaves the fictionalised biography of the historical character

---

<sup>130</sup> Ross Gibson (2012b), "Blustertown". *Cordite Poetry Review*. 01 May 2012, accessed 23 October 2013. (n. pag.) <http://cordite.org.au/ekphrasis/blustertown/>



William Dawes with Sydney Cove in its early days of European settlement via the medium of Dawes' language notebooks. Admittedly, *26 Views* might at first glance seem like an aberration as it does not deal with modern Sydney. Gibson's approach is hard to pinpoint but results in a very subtle psychogeographical text, I believe. To a certain extent, the text could be regarded as an explanation for why a writer like Falconer who is very receptive to the city's atmosphere, hidden layers, and its silences and absences, feels that something is eerie or uncanny, that something impalpable keeps resurfacing in Sydney even in the twenty-first century. What is fascinating about *26 Views* is the way Gibson arrives at a characterisation of a man who lived at the end of the eighteenth century merely on the basis of scant evidence and by imagining Dawes' relationship to the people and the country that surrounded him. In the following, I aim to show why I regard *26 Views* as highly suited to my investigation into Sydney's psychogeography and a good counterpart to Falconer's *Sydney*. It is important to note that research concerning the two primary texts is sparse; hardly any secondary sources exist. Hence, I regard it as a challenge but also as an advantage to enter unknown territory with these texts, which allow me to perform my own psychogeographical reading of them.

As I intend to broaden my field of study, I shall add to this textual component an analysis of a very particular place: Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour. Due to its special role as an urban island and post-industrial site, which has developed from an Aboriginal fishing base into an arts venue, its layers of history are fascinating from a psychogeographical point of view. At the same time, I want to extend my examples of psychogeography to the visual arts as I find it important to showcase the evidence that psychogeography today is neither confined to only one genre nor medium. Ruth Watson's artwork *Maps That Cried* (1995-2005), which was part of the project *Mapping Sydney* (2009), exemplifies this claim.

There exists a large number of books, articles and also audio or visual material on Sydney. Some can be identified as directly and consciously drawing on the Situationists' idea and theory of psychogeography whereas others engage with the city on a more abstract level or merely focus on particular aspects of the metropolis. What these sources share is an interest in Sydney and its many facets. I have chosen as primary sources those texts or projects that try to

identify the silences and absences that seem to persist in every large city, with the aim of evoking the *geist* of the city, to use Gibson's term. There are, of course, many more examples of contemporary artistic engagements with Sydney, some of which are more amenable to a psychogeographical reading than others. In the following I would like to briefly introduce some texts and projects that reveal psychogeographical tendencies in order to showcase the full range of urban portraits before providing more in-depth examples via my close reading analyses of the primary sources.

In the essay "Writing the City, or, The Story of a Sydney Walk" (2010),<sup>131</sup> Naomi Stead, architecture critic and editor of the project *Mapping Sydney*, recounts setting out on a walk across Sydney. In her role as "a semi-stranger" (Stead 2010: 226), she looks forward to a day of drifting in "furtive and aimless freedom" (2010: 227), the only guidelines being the starting point and final destination of her deambulation. Yet this is not the only overtly psychogeographical incentive that drives her. She also ponders the effect of walking this semi-familiar terrain where she had once lived:

I think of the many synonyms for walking (skip, wander, plod, sidle, gambol, stride, march, mince, saunter, mooch, stalk, amble) and how walking becomes a performance and bodily attitude, a mimetic response to both internal mood and external terrain. Urban walking, in particular, has both freedom and the charm of disrepute. (2010: 227)

The article explicitly portrays Sydney through the eyes of a queer woman who is emotionally involved in re-visiting this city yet at the same time fully aware of the Situationist legacy in whose footsteps she is following (cf. 2010: 227). It is an academic experiment that she was nervous about (cf. 2010: 230-31) but also determined to perform:<sup>132</sup> "Here, once again, I will attempt a narrative of the city, of walking, an impressionistic bridge between scholarly theory and the writing of space, place, and experience" (2010: 229). Due to the fact that "Writing the City" deviates from the norm of academic writing by including highly emotional

---

<sup>131</sup> Naomi Stead (2010), "Writing the City, or, The Story of a Sydney Walk". *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 18.4. 226-45.

<sup>132</sup> Stead uses the term "performance" herself (2010: 230).

and subjective responses to the urban environment, I regard Stead's text as a crucial example of Sydney psychogeography.

A similar approach to the city is presented in the ABC Radio National programme "All In The Mind" in which producer Stephen Burstow sets out on a more or less random psychogeographical walk across the city.<sup>133</sup> He walks from the Domestic Airport Terminal through the industrial area of Mascot to Centre Point in the inner city, accompanied by architecture critic, essayist and writer Elizabeth Farrelly who has had a long-lasting interest in the city herself.<sup>134</sup> Aware of the prerequisites for a 'proper' *dérive*, Burstow and Farrelly do not consult a map but simply keep walking, guided by intuition, smells and actual landmarks in order to experience a subjective response to the environment while casually chatting away, pondering on the characters of the houses they pass by, for instance. Their walk is intersected by another 'storyline': Burstow also accompanies cyclist Elaena Gardner on her daily commute into the city from her inner west home. These regular cycle trips have enabled her to build up a very special relationship to Sydney that is guided by memories, emotions and smells, and she lets Burstow take part in her feelings for her city. "All In The Mind" thus explores in a very psychogeographical manner "the physical as mental terrain", as announced at the very start of the podcast.

There are also a number of non-fiction books that portray the city, yet their potential for classification as psychogeographical texts is limited as their focus is of a slightly different nature. John Birmingham's *Leviathan: An Unauthorised Biography of Sydney* (1999),<sup>135</sup> for instance, particularly deals with Sydney's underbelly – not only the sordid underbelly of modern society but also the origins of Sydney and its dark chapters of history. Birmingham's choice of language is often quite coarse and he seems to revel in the lurid details his city should not be too proud of, yet at times he also examines Sydney with a more reflective attitude: "To peer deeply into this ghost city, the one lying beneath the surface of things, is to understand that Sydney has a soul and that it is a very dark place indeed" (1999: 252).

---

<sup>133</sup> "Psychogeography: Discovering the Mental Terrain of the City", presented by Lynne Malcolm. ABC Radio National "All In The Mind". 05 September 2009, accessed 10 May 2013. <http://www.abc.com.au/radionational/programs/allinthemind/psychogeography-discovering-the-mental-terrain-of/3062988>

<sup>134</sup> Elizabeth Farrelly's blog "farrelly's famous urban rhubarb" is an example of her interest in all things urban and Sydney-specific. Accessed 18 February 2014. <http://www.leflaneur.mobi/>

<sup>135</sup> John Birmingham (1999), *Leviathan: An Unauthorised Biography of Sydney*. Sydney: Random House Australia Pty Ltd.

Louis Nowra's *Kings Cross: A Biography* (2013)<sup>136</sup> is a more recent example of a rekindled interest in Sydney's 'character' or, in this case, the 'character' of one particular borough in Sydney.<sup>137</sup> Kings Cross was once a notorious red light district but the area has since undergone a process of gentrification, and it is this transformation that Nowra traces. Anecdotes from the author's own experience as a long-term resident are commingled with historical facts and portraits of prominent local figures to create a colourful picture of an equally colourful neighbourhood.

Ross Gibson's *The Summer Exercises* (2008)<sup>138</sup> is a novel examining Sydney immediately after the Second World War, although the term 'novel' does not entirely encapsulate the essence of this text as it is a very unusual city portrait that captures the mood of Sydney in the late 1940s. From negatives of the years 1945-60 from the Justice & Police Museum in the NSW Police archive, Gibson selected 230 black-and-white photographs, which he used "to provide points of visual reference with the plot in his novel".<sup>139</sup> Hence, different genres and media (photography, historical records) have been melted together and provide a fascinating and multifaceted yet at times also disturbing (fictionalised) impression of life in Sydney just after the Second World War. Despite the fact that the characters are fictional, one catches oneself actually believing the person in the picture to be the person in the story. Once again Gibson skilfully conjures up the atmosphere of the city by interweaving fact and fiction with various storylines while putting the concept of absence – of something gone missing (details, information, relations) – at the very centre.

Another novel that vividly conjures up a distinct mood of Sydney is Gail Jones' *Five Bells* (2011).<sup>140</sup> It follows the lives of four people on one single day in Sydney, each character being lost in his or her thoughts of the past while moving through the city. It is not a psychogeographical text per se as the focus is mainly on the characters and their feelings and fates, but the setting and the vibes of Sydney play an important role and have an impact on the four

---

<sup>136</sup> Louis Nowra (2013), *Kings Cross: A Biography*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing.

<sup>137</sup> It is striking that both Birmingham and Nowra call their Sydney-books 'biographies', maybe following Peter Ackroyd's *London: The Biography* (2000).

<sup>138</sup> Ross Gibson (2008), *The Summer Exercises*. Perth: UWA Press (in association with the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales).

<sup>139</sup> Peter Watts (2008), "Director's Note". In: Gibson, Ross (2008), *The Summer Exercises*. Perth: UWA Press. 6.

<sup>140</sup> Gail Jones (2011), *Five Bells*. Sydney: Random House Australia Pty Ltd.

protagonists. The interplay between character and place is certainly at the centre of *Five Bells*.

However, psychogeographical tendencies can also be found outside of literature in the visual arts and architecture, both of which offer another pathway towards a dialogue with the city. Sydney Architecture Walks (SAW) offer guided walking tours and *dérive* bike tours which they describe as “urban-tours for aesthetes, city-lovers and for locals who love familiar terrain from a different point of view”.<sup>141</sup> SAW claims that they want their participants “to understand the ‘why’ of the city”.<sup>142</sup> Despite the focus and starting point being architectural in nature, SAW’s way of looking at Sydney, covering many fields and aspects, is very broad and reflects a psychogeographical interest in the city that goes beyond mere sightseeing.

Photographer Garry Trinh provides access to the ‘soul’ of the city by focusing on the psychogeographical activity of walking, yet the Sydney of his photographs is far away from the inner city and its iconic landmarks. *Within Walking Distance* (2012) is the first in a series of projects called *Tracing the Parklands* in which Trinh has taken pictures in the Western Sydney Parklands, fifteen of which have been mounted on billboards and set up in the park, each *within walking distance* of where the respective photo had been taken in order that residents can “rediscover[...] a sense of wonder and uniqueness in the places that surround you in daily life”<sup>143</sup> – a claim similar to that expressed by SAW. Trinh’s method reveals a psychogeographical spirit as he states:

I have spent much of the last ten years photographing the landscape and people of Western Sydney. This often begins around my home, and can involve endless hours of walking and wandering, searching for strange and wonderful moments. [...] I love walking. For me, the act of walking is meditative and with my camera in hand it becomes almost a means of play.<sup>144</sup>

---

<sup>141</sup> Quoted from the SAW website (accessed 20 February 2014).

<http://sydneyarchitecture.org/pages/opening.htm>

<sup>142</sup> Quoted from the SAW website (accessed 20 February 2014).

<http://sydneyarchitecture.org/pages/opening.htm>

<sup>143</sup> Quoted from the Museum of Contemporary Art’s website, i.e. the brochure accompanying the exhibition (accessed 20 February 2014): [http://www.mca.com.au/media/uploads/files/Online\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.mca.com.au/media/uploads/files/Online_PDF.pdf)

<sup>144</sup> Trinh quoted in the accompanying brochure (accessed 20 February 2014): [http://www.mca.com.au/media/uploads/files/Online\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.mca.com.au/media/uploads/files/Online_PDF.pdf)

*Micro Parks*, too, a project in the performative arts, is set in urban parks. It was organised in association with Sydney Festival by the Sydney institution Performance Space, “Australia’s leading agency for interdisciplinary arts” that is particularly “excited about site-specific work”<sup>145</sup> and thus reminiscent of Artangel in London. During one weekend (11-13 January 2013), people were encouraged to pick up a map and embark on a self-guided tour of the tiny parks that are scattered across the inner-city neighbourhoods of Erskineville and Newtown. Here, artists showcased performances that included “suburban dance odysseys, surprising installations, heroic durational performances, and more”.<sup>146</sup> Comparable to Trinh’s work or the areas that SAW guides tourists through, the concern is for the familiar, maybe even banal places in Sydney: it does not always have to be world-famous sights that attract attention; rather, it is a sense of locality, of seeing the surroundings from a new perspective, that make these projects fascinating engagements with the city of Sydney.

With this range of different Sydney-experiences I intend to show that there is a growing community of contemporary writers, artists and architects in Sydney who have a particular interest in a sense of the relationship between the city and its inhabitants. In the following, I shall elaborate on those texts and projects mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter as I regard them as especially suitable as examples of what I term psychogeographical engagements with Sydney. My interest in the absences and silences of a city and the question whether psychogeography is especially suited to discussing these concepts in relation to an urban environment will be revisited during the respective close readings/analyses. Despite the fact that my chosen primary sources are very different in style and sometimes even in genre and medium, I do believe that they provide a good overview of a growing contemporary psychogeography scene that spans many areas of research and thus emphasises the wide applicability of this method.

---

<sup>145</sup> Quoted from the website (accessed 20 February 2014):  
<http://www.performancespace.com.au/us/vision-statement/>

<sup>146</sup> Quoted from the website (accessed 20 February 2014):  
<http://www.performancespace.com.au/2012/micro-parks/>

### 3.1 Darkness Beneath the Glitzy Surface: Haunting in Delia Falconer's *Sydney*

Delia Falconer's *Sydney* (2010)<sup>147</sup> is an account of her hometown's hauntedness, a concept which resurfaces throughout the text and functions as a unifying symbol and leitmotif. Light and darkness are the main opposing forces that seem to tug at the city; these forces are closely linked to the idea of Sydney being a haunted as well as dialectical city that is shaped both by its beauty and its love of destruction. *Sydney* does not praise the metropolis' obvious charms; instead, the darker sides of the city come to the fore. Falconer's depiction of Sydney falls short of the expectations one would normally have of a book on this city. Instead, the Sydney one encounters, differs completely from the 'postcard' image that is often conveyed.

The idea of haunting is certainly a much-used concept in academic writing and it seems aptly chosen by Falconer for the purpose of her urban portrait and interpretation. In his influential *Specters of Marx* (1993), Jacques Derrida famously uses the term hauntology and makes the distinction "between the spirit (*Geist*) and the specter (*Gespensst*), between the spirit on the one hand and the ghost or *revenant* on the other".<sup>148</sup> Derrida's discussion of Marxism in *Specters of Marx* does not concern us here, yet the distinction he makes between spirit and spectre can provide a useful insight into Falconer's text. Falconer engages both with the spectre and the spirit, though not in an occult way. It is the spirit of the city, its character, which she tries to capture in her writing, but the spectre seems to be part of this spirit. It is striking that Falconer herself uses the term 'haunting' or 'haunted' extensively but never defines it. In my psychogeographical reading of *Sydney*, the hauntedness of the city is linked to a state of inner disorder, of not fulfilling – either due to a lack of capability or a lack of effort – that which seems to be expected of the city: Sydney is widely thought of as one of the most beautiful cities in the world, with a stunning coastline, breath-taking harbour views and beaches and simultaneously a lively urban cultural life. This is the fair and friendly side of the city. However, Falconer seems to be more interested in the dark, haunted subsurface and

---

<sup>147</sup> Delia Falconer (2010), *Sydney*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>148</sup> Jacques Derrida (2006 [1993]), *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. London/New York: Routledge Classics. 156.

gives the reader insight into her very personal experience and love-hate relationship with her hometown (cf. 11). The concept of the haunted city is not used here in a spiritual sense and does not mean that the city is being plagued by ghosts, but instead alludes to an awareness of something being not quite right or out of place: an eerie, uncanny feeling that conveys a certain atmosphere of gloom. To Falconer, haunting, or rather hauntedness, seems to be not only her personal reading of the city's history but also of the marginal sites one would not normally come across as a tourist visiting Sydney. It is a feeling for that which is neither spoken nor seen, and is obviously only perceived by the very few who know Sydney well enough to notice. For those who do, this shadow, as one might call it, is omnipresent, even when one stands at Circular Quay overlooking Sydney Harbour, Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, those touristy sites that define and shape the city as much as its lesser known neighbourhoods: "Sydney is not so much full of ghosts, as absences. It echoes" (22). The hauntedness or uncanniness that is emphasised throughout the book is inherent in the city's character, something Falconer aims at coming to grips with. This often becomes apparent in her personification of Sydney; she almost seems to talk about the city as if it were a close friend she has known for a long time and is hence familiar with all her/his moods and character traits. The hauntedness of Sydney is that which lies underneath the glitter and sunshine the city has become so famous for. This eerie undertone does not lessen Sydney's beauty, but this other, darker side cannot be ignored either (cf. 11).

I read Falconer's depiction of a haunted Sydney as a way of stepping away from the more superficial and one-sided impression of the city towards a rather more profound and maybe more complicated viewpoint that takes its past and its present into account. The text does not shy away from pointing out what has afflicted the place or what still *haunts* it in the sense of events from the past casting a shadow of gloom over the city:

Sydney's restless to-and-fro energy comes out of a nagging sense that something is missing, even, or perhaps particularly, when the city is at its most soft-aired and shiny. This feeling has many causes, which it has been my impulse to try to uncover. The first of these is the destruction of



the language and culture of the Eora before the loss could even be grasped. (10)

The hidden or secret places of a city are of interest in my research because they point towards silences, absences and, concomitantly, to a sense of hauntedness. Falconer draws attention to these *other* places, which one could also call “heterotopias”, to use the term Michel Foucault coined in his 1967 essay “Of Other Spaces”.<sup>149</sup> According to Foucault one distinguishes between utopias, which are “unreal spaces” (1967: 3), and what he terms “heterotopias”, those actual, real spaces, which are “outside of all places” and “something like counter-sites” (1967: 3-4). Foucault sets out six principles that define “heterotopology” (1967: 4), some of which can be useful in relation to Falconer’s *Sydney*. In his third principle, Foucault argues that “[t]he heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (1967: 6) and names the theatre (which “brings onto the rectangle of the stage [...] a whole series of places that are foreign to one another”), the cinema (“a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space”) and the garden (a “sort of microcosm”, indeed “the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world”) (1967: 6) as examples. Despite the fact that Foucault obviously had very specific things and places in mind when he set up these principles and the definition, ranging broadly from cemeteries to ships, the latter of which he regards as “the heterotopia par excellence” (1967: 9), I would go so far as to say that cities, or rather certain urban sites and places within the metropolis, can be termed heterotopias: the city is a real place which incorporates liminal, marginal places. The third principle’s requirement for a heterotopia to unify juxtaposing spaces can easily be applied to any modern city, I argue, as these large cities offer a wide variety of difference amongst their neighbourhoods. In almost any urban context one comes across various cultures, languages, as well as socio-economic and religious groups, which co-exist within the same entity but simultaneously also alongside and detached from each other.

---

<sup>149</sup> Michel Foucault (1967), “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias”. Trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* (October 1984). 1-9.

Falconer, who is mostly known for her fiction, does not usually fall into the category of psychogeography, but I believe a psychogeographical reading of *Sydney* to be suitable. However, this does not mean that Falconer fulfils all the previously mentioned criteria compiled by Merlin Coverley that constitute most of the contemporary psychogeographical texts, as she does not, for example, meet the criteria of employing a radical writing style and of using walking as the main catalyst for writing and observing her surroundings (cf. Coverley 2010: 12-14, 31). However, she does exhibit a number of these characteristics, especially her keen interest in the past and the present and her preoccupation with what Coverley has termed an “otherworldly sense of spirit of place” as well as with “unexpected insights and juxtapositions created by aimless drifting” (2010: 31). Falconer does not drift in the literal sense of the word, she is not a walker in the city as is, for instance, Iain Sinclair, her drifting is more metaphorical in that she roams her city mentally, based on her memories, although she does occasionally visit specific places. Yet this lack of total affiliation with the psychogeographical tradition does not matter, as my understanding and reading of psychogeography as set out in my Introduction defines the term more broadly as a literary rendering (which can be fictional or as in this case non-fictional, though some texts exhibit fluid transitions) of the resonance that a place has for the author (and reader, respectively). The walking aspect can play a marginal role, I believe, as it is rather a feature of the ‘classic’ psychogeographer (if this is not a contradiction in terms; the Situationists would certainly have rejected this label). This engagement with the atmosphere of the city and its very specific situations and sentiments is what Falconer is extremely good at and what, in my understanding, makes her book a psychogeographical text, although other readings are legitimate as well, of course (the book cover classifies it as ‘travel/memoir’, for instance, which is equally correct). It is “[t]he lyrical quality of her prose”, as Drusilla Modjeska describes Falconer’s writing style in her review in *The Monthly*,<sup>150</sup> as well as “the energy of this ambivalent love [the love of her hometown], the force she let into the book”, that makes *Sydney* not just another book celebrating the superficial touristy view of Sydney. The following quote illustrates this ambivalence:

---

<sup>150</sup> Drusilla Modjeska (2010), “Under the Bridge”. Review of *Sydney*, by Delia Falconer. *Monthly*. 04 November 2010, accessed 06 June 2013. (n. pag.)  
<http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2010/november/1288836098/dtusilla-modjeska/under-bridge>

In Darlinghurst I passed a row of old terraces where feral banana trees had colonised the tiny courtyards behind them, and walked on, past the smell of Thai food, up dirty William Street. Outside my flat the flying foxes were landing in the Moreton Bay fig, and already their squabbles had sent a thick fall of fruit onto the pavement, which smelled phlegmy and sweet in the dew. [...] The street smelled of low tide. For all its beauty, the city could return in an instant to pulp. And that thought was strangely cheering. (12)

Falconer lets the city speak for itself and seems to merely capture in writing what the city's 'character' is and what, to her, is undeniably Sydney.

### **3.1.1 Personification of the City**

Falconer depicts Sydney as a character who has its own moods and character traits, which are also expressed in the Sydneysiders' behaviour. She presents the city as highly emotionally charged and often reports on personal memories and occasions, which she feels are typical of her city. Her favourite story, and the one she thinks sums up best Sydney's temperament, is a scene she witnesses in the streets: waiting to cross a heavily trafficked road, Falconer notices 'Happy Hanukkah' banners on some cars and then next to her "two young men" who "radiated a lean sense of menace" and who soon

began to chant and pump their fists: 'Ha-nu-kkah! Ha-nu-kkah!' As the traffic started to move again, the drivers honked their horns back. 'Ha-nu-kkah!' Like most of the city's magnanimities, this was a moment that could have easily gone the other way. (166-67)

To Falconer, this "irreverence" (167) is typical of Sydney, and she seems proud of it, as she admits elsewhere (cf. 2). It is the city's "light-heartedness" (168) she appreciates and its ability to not take things too seriously, even insults (cf. 2, 167).

At times, Falconer's often very figurative language almost appears stereotyped, for instance when she describes the effect of the ocean on the city. She feels that "[t]he sea is moody" (162) and these moods change quickly: "A day later, and the weather is dirty [...] [t]he air looks swollen, bruised" (163). Falconer anthropomorphises the city and its nature; she talks about Sydney as if it were a person who can be sweet and gentle one day but grumpy and sinister the next. This obviously very emotional side of the author's perception of her city is a strong feature in the book and characterises Sydney as a place driven by its moods, its desires and its senses, even its hormones:

This intensity, this unevenness of mood, is almost hormonal. Everything is breeding. [...] There is a feeling like puberty in the air: musky, eruptive; silly as a two-bob watch; given to fits of gloom. (163)

To her, Sydney seems like a person she actually knows and whose advantages and disadvantages she outlines, adding her personal point of view. It is the moodiness, which to her seems to have a sexual/hormonal component, that makes the city unpredictable. Falconer stresses this aspect of Sydney on several occasions:

Of course this is sexual. The whole city is loaded, palpably enlivened by this spunky, ancient and gamey under layer. The air is both languorous and fervid, for it comes with an almost overwhelming awareness of the city's great forces of life and death. (172)

The paradox Falconer uses to describe the air being both "languorous and fervid" is an indication of her perception of Sydney as a dialectical city, torn between its own inner forces. She describes this particular Sydney-atmosphere with the Japanese word *umami*, which normally denotes a fifth taste indicating 'savouriness'. To her, this specifically taste-related term is most appropriate to phrase her perception of the Sydney air:

When it [the air] is at its most tender and lovely, its most beautiful, that is precisely when its *umami* touches our every sense – when we worry, wherever we are, that perhaps we should be somewhere else; [...]. (174)

Again, this is a sign of Sydney not being as smooth and sweet as one might expect, as exactly at the time when it is best, the atmosphere of the city touches our senses and makes us worry and question our very existence. It is a paradoxical characteristic.

A similar sense of the city is expressed in her remark on what crosses her mind when she passes some old terrace houses and cottages in the now highly gentrified neighbourhoods of Surry Hills, Newtown and Darlinghurst: all she can think of are the “dank layers metres deep” (176), an image that emits gloominess. Falconer often perceives – and this might be due to her insider-knowledge of the city – the darker vibes that drift underneath. While walking the streets, she ponders on the history, the stories that took place here in the past, as well as the poverty that has shaped people’s lives. She still feels the impact on the buildings’ walls and backyards:

It is all still caught up in the bricks and soil, in so many parts of the city, along with chaff from its granaries, smoke from its factories, and the acrid lining from the brakes of trains. (176-77)

This might seem astonishing as, for example, a tourist visiting lively Newtown or Surry Hills would possibly not be aware of these historical resonances. Yet Falconer lets the reader participate in her memories and knowledge. She calls the city of her youth “a smorgasbord of beats” (185) which illustrates the melting-pot nature that Sydney has always had and which makes it a metropolis full of contradictions. Falconer senses these opposing forces in the city, she feels that “there is a fiery madness about our pleasures, which only flare more wildly the more they are contained” (213-14).

To a certain extent opposed to its madness but at the same time a characteristic of this dialectical city, as Falconer emphasises throughout the book and at the very beginning of her foreword, is her estimate of Sydney as a melancholy place that does not actually fulfil the cliché of a ‘fun’ place, a place of beauty and sunshine:

From the outside it seems like the brashest and most superficial of cities, almost a kind of unplanned holiday resort. But perhaps you need to have grown up here, as I did, to see that its fundamental temperament is melancholy. (1-2)

This characterisation of Sydney as a melancholy place with a dark undercurrent leads us to an analysis of Sydney's tension-ridden nature.

### 3.1.2 Light and Dark

The idea of Sydney as a dialectical city as put forward by Falconer throughout the book is a vital component to her central argument, namely that Sydney's quintessential characteristic is its hauntedness. In an ABC Radio National interview, Falconer sums up her view of this city by comparing it to Mozart's music: "sunny on the surface, but shadowy" and permeated by a deep melancholy underneath,<sup>151</sup> which is perhaps the best summary one could give of Falconer's *Sydney*. This dark side, which predominates in her book, does not prevent her from loving this "dialectical city" (255) even more. Falconer seeks to discover what else there is to the city, dark as that may be. In addition to exploring the hidden parts of the city, Falconer aims at fighting the "accusations of brainlessness" directed at the city by pointing to the rich intellectual history the city can boast (4-5). Her aim is "to confound the prejudice that this is a shallow place that generates more heat than light" (4). Later, however, she has to admit: "[...] I am struck by the feeling that my city may have become a cliché; a sparkling ghost of itself – to have moved from gritty melancholy to permanent self-absorption" (219).

The first and most striking indication of Sydney being a dialectical city is expressed by Falconer's understanding of Sydney uniting both light and darkness at the same time. This might, at first glance, appear to be a slightly clichéd idea but, over the course of her book, she manages to elaborate it and build it into a persuasive argument. To her, "Sydney's misty sunshine is never

---

<sup>151</sup> "Sydney, Delia Falconer", presented by Peter Mares. ABC Radio National "The Book Show". 04 October 2010, accessed 19 October 2015.  
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bookshow/sydney-delia-falconer/2957036>

far from noir” (3); it is “the most dialectical of cities” and “a contradictory city” (10), full of juxtapositions. On the basis of Foucault’s definition, one could read the fun fair Luna Park, which, according to Falconer, is “the most iconic” of all the city’s “strange dreaming places”, as a heterotopia, that she believes to be “a gifted symbol of the city’s eerie talent for combining dark with light” (99).<sup>152</sup> Having grown up in McMahons Point just opposite the fun fair and within earshot of “the gasps and plunging screams of the passengers of the Big Dipper”, Luna Park was her “playground” (63). In his fourth principle of the heterotopia, Foucault makes the distinction between those heterotopologies that are “linked to the accumulation of time” and those that are “linked, on the contrary, to time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival”, meaning they are “not oriented toward the eternal” but rather “absolutely temporal [chroniques]”, and he names funfairs as an example (1967: 7). Luna Park could be read as a heterotopia: it has been an icon of the city since 1935 (cf. 99) and it is a marginal urban place that is both ‘fun’ and ‘melancholy’ at the same time, its grotesque face inviting interpretation as either a laughing mouth or a distorted grimace.

Falconer extends this reading of her hometown as a dialectical city torn between light and darkness to a much more factual perception of Sydney: “the light is unquestionably Sydney’s: saturating, and warm, but also muted and inconstant” (122-23). Sydney seems unable to be the one without the other, the contradictions like “saturating” and “muted” are inherent, at least in Falconer’s understanding of her city. She loves and hates the place at the same time (cf. 11), and it seems to be exactly this incapacity to pin Sydney down that makes the place so attractive to her:

It is my violent love for the city, a feeling as irrational as its geographic assertions – a love for its mix of tolerance and dirt, its sunshine with an undertow, its pride in its own darkness. (165)

In Falconer’s perception, Sydney is *always* bipolar, in whatever situation, it is always dark *and* light, beautiful *and* dirty. She encapsulates her experience of the city by stating:

---

<sup>152</sup> I am aware of the fact that Luna Park is not a unique Sydney attraction as Melbourne has one too, in St Kilda. However, the Luna Park in Milsons Point has reached an iconic status in Sydney as its gaping mouth can be seen from the harbour.

The thing with this city is that you always feel the dark pull of the earth, along with the urge for sea and sun. Perhaps this is the city's most pleasant haunting. (213)

Another indication that Sydney is a dialectical city is the juxtaposition between beauty and aggression or ruin, which, in Falconer's depiction of Sydney, plays a role similar to the light-dark-opposition. Right at the very beginning she lays out this contrast as follows: "This was my town. It was a place you took lightly at your peril, whose beauty has never been far from rage, and perhaps even the urge for destruction" (2-3). This dialectic is even stronger than "dark" versus "light", with "rage" and "destruction" conveying a sense of menace and real danger. How then does this fit together with the common perception of Sydney as a beautiful and peaceful city by the sea? A reading of *Sydney* gives one the impression that the author feels compelled to defend her hometown, but not in the usual sense of emphasising its pleasant and pretty sides. Instead, she seems to counteract the clichéd idea that Sydney is always "golden", because, in fact, the "great abyss" is never too far (2). Even when the author ponders a supposedly harmless fact such as the vastness of the city's suburbs which stretch far into the north, the east and the south, she feels that "this dispersal has psychic consequences", whose result, "a dreaminess, a sense of pleasant unreality [...] can, if disturbed, turn hostile" (43). These "psychic consequences" are very psychogeographical in the sense that an urban place, in this case the abstract suburban vastness, has a psychological impact on the city-dweller. The fact that Falconer chooses to take suburbs, which are often perceived as 'empty', into account, draws attention to heterotopian 'counter-sites'; these suburbs, surprisingly, turn out to have plenty to offer in terms of historical and secret stories, as she discovers (cf. 121), totally in contradiction to her initial expectations (cf. 111). A similar emotion arises in her in relation to the harbour, one of the most iconic landmarks in Sydney: "there is a kind of troubled sadness within the beauty of the harbour, a longing so strong it almost seems to glow" (48). Even this place, to her, has a sinister pull, something she seems to sense whenever Sydney shows its pretty face to the general public. To elucidate her relationship with the harbour, Falconer interprets and analyses



Kenneth Slessor's famous Sydney-poem "Five Bells"<sup>153</sup> because she shares with Slessor an interest in celebrating "Sydney's feral undertow", as Falconer states in the previously mentioned interview on ABC Radio National's "The Book Show". In the same interview, Falconer stresses how Slessor tried to "come up with a founding myth of Sydney, and this myth is death": Joe Lynch, who was a friend of Slessor's, disappeared in 1927 from a ferry on the way from Manly to Circular Quay and was never seen again, his pockets full of beer bottles which must have pulled him down to the bottom of the harbour where he drowned.<sup>154</sup> Slessor put Lynch at the centre of his "Five Bells". Falconer then reads the troubling sadness that shapes the poem as symbolic of the beauty of the harbour, as she states in the interview. To her, "[t]he genius of Slessor's poem is that it summons up the epic, chthonic presence that seems to run far beneath the city itself" (50) – an aim she shares with the late poet. Although she has to admit that Slessor does ostensibly admire and praise the harbour, she acknowledges that his poem "insists on eternal shadows dogging Sydney's beauty" (52) and "recasts any expression of this place as inadequate, as plagued by longing" (53).

Returning to the motive of beauty versus rage, Falconer does not regard this contradiction as illogical at all: "No wonder Sydney, in the face of its implacable beauty, has such an attachment to the feral, undisciplined and harsh" (54). The beauty that is not quite as pure as one might have thought is an idea that runs like a common thread through the book. In the chapter "Dreaming", Falconer attempts an explanation why this beauty that is so affected by its surroundings can eventually turn foul:

It reminds us that Sydney's great beauty, and its nearness to the eternal, have always attracted the visionary; and that the dreams it prompts are often extravagant, perverse and febrile. For this same reason, because the environment they grow in is so harsh, they can turn quickly to nightmares. (62)

---

<sup>153</sup> Kenneth Slessor (1937), "Five Bells". In: Langford, Martin (ed.) (2009), *Harbour City Poems: Sydney in Verse 1788-2008*. Sydney: Puncher and Wattmann. 51-54.

<sup>154</sup> The image of disappearance in the city, in this case of being literally swallowed by it, reveals a parallel with Martin Edmond's *Dark Night: Walking with McCahon* (2011), in which the author retraces the path the New Zealand artist Colin McCahon must have taken in 1984 through Sydney's inner city during the day of his disappearance and subsequent period of amnesia.

Falconer follows the idea of the dialectical city through to the end of the text and even sees Sydney's beauty as "dependent on the knowledge of corruption" (165). Towards the end of the book, she identifies the mutually reinforcing relationship between beauty, haunting and destruction: "Yet it seems that the haunted beauty of Sydney does have a peculiar tendency to turn the mind toward the precipice between life and destruction" (254).

### **3.1.3 Haunted Sydney**

The image of Sydney as a haunted city is the leitmotif in Falconer's book around which all the other motifs – light versus dark, beauty versus rage as well as the powerful and melancholy feeling of loss that will be elaborated on shortly – are centred. As outlined at the beginning of this close-reading analysis, I understand Falconer's usage of the term 'haunted' as a dark undertow that permeates the city. She has an awareness of that which drifts underneath remains unnoticed by many but it is permanently there:

For to live here is always to feel the place has a secret life that resists you. This sense of hauntedness is not necessarily always conscious, but expresses itself in our tendency to judge, to boast, to act out, to bully, to look for visions; or, failing that, to revel in the city's sweat and grit. (11)

Falconer feels this secret life resisting against the Sydneysiders in every corner of her city, so replete with contradictions. The following remark on the layers of the city demonstrates the extent to which her notion of Sydney's hauntedness is intertwined with her understanding of the juxtapositions that characterise the city:

For all its vitality, Sydney is a haunted city. This is not a simple haunting, if hauntings can ever be thought of as straightforward. It is not just its human past that seems to well up. There is a sense that everything has an extra layer of reflection, of slip beneath the surface. Few other cities have such a compelling sense of being so temporary and yet so close to the eternal. None is so under the spell of natural beauty, but so addicted to the ugly as

a kind of talisman against it. It would be hard to find another as vigorous and dreamy, as full of fecund life yet on the verge of decay. (21)

Throughout her text Falconer foregrounds this “wild underlayer” (36) that constitutes this haunting; a notion which probably becomes most apparent in her description of “[a]n invisible creek [that] also haunts Sydney” (33), the Tank Stream. This stream has changed in function from being “[t]he original source of water for the colony” into “one of the city’s stormwater drains” (33). To Falconer, “this buried waterway is unquiet” (33) as it used to flood the surrounding buildings (cf. 34). Water has always played a significant role in Sydney:

But the Tank Stream is only the best known of the thwarted waterways that continue to agitate across the city. The whole of metropolitan Sydney is built on the great bed of a prehistoric floodplain. (35)

Falconer’s depiction of the Tank Stream can be easily linked to Peter Ackroyd’s book *London Under* (2011),<sup>155</sup> which is an exploration of the invisible underground springs and wells that run beneath London; comparable to Falconer, Ackroyd also ascribes them occult qualities. Much later, Falconer mentions the “psychic Tank Stream” (194) again. While she is only using it as a metaphor (cf. 193-94), the importance that she accredits to it is obvious as the Tank Stream seems uncanny to her.

The haunting becomes even more apparent in her description of the harbour and her elaborate interpretation of Slessor’s harbour-poem. Falconer reads Slessor’s “Five Bells” as an expression of “a more profound, even existential, kind of haunting” in which Sydney Harbour “becomes an almost supernatural force that invades the city” (50) as it was, independent of Joe Lynch’s death, a haunted place even before the young man was swallowed by the nocturnal waves. It is again the harbour that carries the city’s identity.<sup>156</sup>

Falconer is obviously nostalgic about the ‘old’ Sydney, the Sydney of her childhood and youth, despite the fact she did not enjoy living in suburban Roseville Chase. Returning to Sydney as an adult after a decade in Melbourne,

---

<sup>155</sup> Peter Ackroyd (2011), *London Under*. London: Chatto & Windus.

<sup>156</sup> In Gail Jones’ eponymous novel *Five Bells* (2011), the harbour plays a similarly melancholy role as the starting point of the book and the point of disembarkation of four foreigners whose perceptions of Circular Quay differ a lot from each other. As the epigraph to the novel indicates, Jones has borrowed the title from Slessor.

she notices at every turn the changes that have taken place and the way in which a façade of glitz has taken over:

But the city we returned to [...] was not the city we had left. [...] Something had profoundly shifted. It was a shock, visiting my mother, to see a ten-year-old on his paper round, his mother steering the four-wheel-drive while he pitched the papers from the back seat. (226-27)

However, the inherent uncanniness is still there: “But it would be a mistake to think the city was not still haunted, perhaps more than ever. For these were old dreams reviving” (228). This, as Falconer suggests, is due to the fact that

Sydney has never been one place, of course. It has been overflowing with dreams, been different cities to different people, from the start. It has always been a changeful town, *haunted by loss*, doubled over its own secrets like some strange plasma marine creature. (238) [my emphasis]

Bearing the bulk of responsibility for the loss and secrets that contribute to the hauntedness of the city is Sydney’s colonial past. The author comments on this history at several stages in her book.

### 3.1.4 Absence

The characteristics of Sydney as pointed out by Falconer culminate in a bigger, deeper haunting. This haunting is linked to the Aboriginal history of Sydney which is mostly invisible in the modern city yet can still be felt. It is this *absence* that haunts the city to its present day or, as Rhyll McMaster puts it in her review of *Sydney* in the *Australian Book Review*: “Beneath the brash metallic sounds of the growing metropolis and its burgeoning colonial life, Falconer suggests, lay another more sonorous tone, that of the Eora nation”.<sup>157</sup> I am, of course, aware of the fact that I can here merely scratch the surface of this vast subject dealing

---

<sup>157</sup> Rhyll McMaster (2010), “Glitz and Rot”. *Australian Book Review*. November 2010, accessed 06 June 2013. (n. pag.)  
<https://www.australianbookreview.com.au/prizes/peter-porter-poetry-prize/60-november-2010/580-delia-falconer-sydney>

with the Indigenous history of the city. However, when approaching a hidden or silent Sydney via the chosen texts, this topic is inevitable as Falconer and Ross Gibson address Sydney's past in their books. Falconer deals with the question of how the traumatic events of the past haunt and shape Sydney to the present day. I, in turn, want to explore how these remnants of the past are being rendered in the texts by the individual authors.

Falconer first addresses the city's Aboriginal past and with it a notion of absence by referring to the fact that "the language and culture of the Eora", the Indigenous people of the Sydney area, has been destroyed (10). A little later, she mentions the photographic images of ancient, now nearly fading Aboriginal rock carvings, captured by photographer Peter Solness on the Bondi to Bronte Beach Walk, which have a "haunting effect of reflection" (18). The carvings can hardly be seen any more, even though some ruthless or ignorant people have re-marked them, as, due to an absence of Cadigal<sup>158</sup> guardians, no one watches over these sacred sites any longer (cf. 18). Falconer remarks with regret that "[b]ecause we did not value our Indigenous history, our myths had come from somewhere else to give us psychic grounding" (45). She feels this loss and absence ever so strongly and believes that it still reverberates or "echoes" (22). These carvings that are reminiscent of the Eora's past are no exception: "In fact these traces were everywhere" (31). It is the echo of these hardly noticeable traces that haunts Sydney, or at least Falconer's Sydney. The absences Falconer perceives are especially prevalent in the harbour region, the site where Arthur Phillip and his troops settled shortly after their arrival. Hence, the place has particular significance. Falconer ponders on this postcolonial aspect of the haunting as follows:

Yet the loss of the meaning of the Eora's language and stories, combined with this wide-scale destruction, has imparted a strange aura to the material world itself. Counterintuitively, this pervasive disappearance has led to ubiquity, to a pregnant presence. Some days each and every part of the harbour city can feel so richly and enigmatically charged, so secretive, that it seems more real than real. (32-33)

---

<sup>158</sup> The Cadigal are a clan belonging to the Eora people.

Falconer's poetic writing style forcefully evokes this irrecoverable loss that is still omnipresent. Later she specifies what this "pregnant presence" really is: "It may seem obvious today that this ghostly absence, which throws even time itself out of whack, is the lost world of the Eora" (56). One can still find places in Sydney that exude this "forbidding gloominess", but "[t]heir silence deafens" (57). The (admittedly fairly traditional) oxymoron 'deafening silence' is a crucial aspect in Falconer's depiction of absence and one which she alluded to when emphasising, at the beginning of her book, the relationship between language and place:

The Eora's strategic withdrawal in the first few days of the colony's official life seemed to establish an irrevocable pattern; and an awareness on the colonists' part of an elusive gap between language and place that still haunts the city. (26)

These "gaps", in fact, are followed through by Gibson in his *26 Views*: the disappearance or 'silencing', respectively, of the habitat, culture and language of the Eora are registered by astronomer William Dawes in his notebooks.

### **3.1.5 Conclusion**

To conclude, Falconer's portrait of her city tries to render the different and often contradictory 'faces' of Sydney. It is her aim to capture the 'soul' or the 'spirit' of this city and to show it in a light different to the common perception. Falconer's compulsion to defend her hometown against the clichés of sunlit superficiality is clear in the text. Although her own writing sometimes borders on cliché, one is tempted to conclude that she is appropriating this language in an attempt to subvert the dominant, mainstream image of her city. Falconer's Sydney is sometimes sunny, but often darker, full of secrets and hidden stories. These stories and secrets often make reference to an Aboriginal past which, although barely visible on the surface, cannot fade in the way of the material rock carvings. These stories continue to haunt modern-day Sydney.

### 3.2 The Paradox of Silence: Reading Ross Gibson's *26 Views of the Starburst World* as an Expression of Verbalised Absence

In *26 Views of the Starburst World: William Dawes at Sydney Cove 1788-91* (2012a),<sup>159</sup> Ross Gibson analyses the two notebooks written by the young British astronomer Lieutenant William Dawes in which he recorded the language of the local Aboriginal people, the Eora, during his time at Sydney Cove between 1788 and 1791. Based on these notebooks and by combining fact and fiction, Gibson arrives at a form of speculative, partly fictionalised non-fiction. By referring to these notebooks, Gibson aims at an “imaginary biography” of Dawes, as Gibson has described the motivations for his book in an interview.<sup>160</sup> Yet lack of other sources means that the author had very little factual material on which to base his biography of this historical character. Instead, I argue, Gibson takes a psychogeographical approach to characterising Dawes by taking into account the antipodean surroundings that must have influenced him and which Gibson gleans from the language recordings gathered by the astronomer.

Gibson points towards two divergent worldviews or epistemologies, which must have collided when Dawes came into contact with the local Indigenous population. The way in which Dawes recorded the Eora words was not the only indication of his perception of his surroundings, which will be referred to in the next section. The dialectic is also reflected in the fact that his notebooks were an ambitious project in terms of putting down in *writing* an *oral* language, just as, more than two centuries later, Gibson tries to use Dawes' records to discover more about the identity of this man who made an effort to learn the language of the Aboriginal people of Sydney Cove, to understand how he experienced the new world surrounding him and to investigate what can be deduced about the Eora from these two slim language books. Four entities that accompany these two epistemologies are at the centre of *26 Views*: the character of Dawes who arrived in Australia as participant in the First Fleet expedition; the Eora and their understanding of the world; the place where

---

<sup>159</sup> Ross Gibson (2012a), *26 Views of the Starburst World: William Dawes at Sydney Cove 1788-91*. Perth: UWA Publishing. Subsequent references are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. “The Notebooks of William Dawes”, presented by Maria Zijlstra. ABC Radio National “Lingua Franca”. 18 August 2012, accessed 27 April 2013.  
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/linguafranca/2012-08-18/4204560>

Dawes conducted his research, Sydney Cove, and the point in time when this took place, the late eighteenth century; and Dawes' two notebooks, the medium that connects the man with the place and its Indigenous peoples.

In the following, I shall briefly explain what I have termed 'the paradox of silence' and 'a verbalised absence' in this section's title. Absence and silence, more specifically that which is implied or alluded to but not voiced, are multi-present in *26 Views*: absence of evidence, absence of details, absence of directness, absence of historical facts, and absence of available access to the required information due to a large time gap. A lot has been left unsaid by Dawes, his records are sketchy and often enigmatic, he did not provide enough context for the twenty-first-century reader to grasp the meaning of many of the situations and expressions voiced or merely alluded to in the notebooks. We are left to guess, just like Gibson. At the same time, however, it has to be kept in mind that Dawes' aim, to put into writing an oral language, must have presented an enormous challenge, and therefore vagueness was possibly unavoidable but maybe also intended. Again, we are left to guess, and Gibson encourages us to speculate as much as he does. What I regard as the paradoxical aspect is the fact that Dawes tried to give a 'written voice' to the Eora whose way of communication was oral; Gibson, in return, tries to give voice or meaning to Dawes' records, yet both have to remain silent in a metaphorical sense of the expression. Dawes' silence appears intentional: it seems he deliberately left things enigmatic and unsaid/unwritten, things we can only guess from his notes, as for instance those jotted down situations that indicate his intimate relationship with the young Eora girl Patyegarang (cf. 129). Gibson remains silent, at least to a certain extent, as a consequence of exactly these ambiguities in Dawes' notebooks. By 'verbalised absence' I refer to these omissions and silences, which Gibson, as a writer, tries to overcome by filling the gaps that history has left.

In his article "Places – Past – Disappearance" (2006),<sup>161</sup> Gibson conceptualises his approach by addressing exactly these gaps he seeks to tackle in *26 Views*. He states that "[i]t's the absences, the negative spaces, that prompt the work" (2006: n. pag.) – a tendency he also perceives among many other Australian writers and artists. He constantly wonders, "what's gone

---

<sup>161</sup> Ross Gibson (2006), "Places – Past – Disappearance". *Transformations* 13 – *Making Badlands* (September 2006). Accessed 17 April 2016. (n. pag.)  
[http://www.transformationsjournal.org/issues/13/article\\_01.shtml](http://www.transformationsjournal.org/issues/13/article_01.shtml)



missing here? ... how to imagine functional coherence here? ... what if these dumb portions could get some eloquence?”, and these questions evoke “this compulsion to know the negative space” (2006: n. pag.). In the article, Gibson explains the technique he executes in many of his books including *26 Views*:

Backfill is what we have to enact when conventional historical techniques fail us, as happens often in this place that’s been formed by so much purposeful disappearance and dispersal. Backfill is work performed after one has done some divination, after one has attempted to intuit feasible and defensible but admittedly inconclusive accounts connecting the fragments. Backfill is necessarily an imaginative and speculative procedure. But it needs to be authoritative as well as imaginative. And I think it’s the only response, opposed to silence or denial, that helps us keep on investigating when we encounter the definitive quality of post-1788 Australian history, when we encounter the fact that despite the settlers’ overwhelming attention to some types of bureaucratic minutiae, many of the truly important events of our past – particularly those cross-cultural encounters that took place on frontiers, away from the administrative centres, in situations where writing would not net what occurred – many of these crucial events have not made it into the textual archives. (2006: n. pag.)

Gibson believes that any writer who addresses historically ambiguous events has to undergo this “re-animation process” (2006: n. pag.). In *26 Views* he decides to create “a variously textured set of vignettes, some of them more imaginative than historical, each of them its own literary exercise or view” (vi-vii).<sup>162</sup> Hence, even though he admits to the fictitious component of his writing, history and historiography will inevitably play a crucial role in my analysis of the book. However, he explains that it is not his aim to write history but rather he is “seeking a poetics of the past, [...], something imaginative that is informed by history” (133). In the above-mentioned article he argues in support of his stance thus: “Such historically informed speculations are vital because they vault over

---

<sup>162</sup> Ross Gibson is a well-known writer of fictocritical texts, and his *26 Views* could as well be read from a fictocritical perspective. However, this is no contradiction to my psychogeographical reading, as in both forms of writing the boundaries between fiction, non-fiction and critical or historical thinking, respectively, are blurred.

silence, denial and absence. And they change hearts and minds” (2006: n. pag.). Gibson provides the historical background of the notebooks but primarily singles out certain entries in them as starting points from which to approach the historical figure of the young man and to draw inferences from the notebooks about their author. In consequence, via the language recordings and the facts we know about Dawes from other sources, limited as they may be, an imagined characterisation is aimed at. The way in which Gibson deals with these absences is the focus of my close reading analysis. Yet it is not only the conceptualisation of absence, but also time and place that are addressed. Gibson aims at unravelling these interconnected concepts and, in so doing, tentatively portrays Dawes whose actual character has so far remained enigmatic to a large extent. Gibson scrutinises the gaps that inevitably spring from the notebooks; he offers suggestions, ideas, possible *versions*,<sup>163</sup> in fact twenty-six *views* of imaginable characterisations with which he tries to tackle the silences, but provides no certainties. In the thirteenth chapter, very tellingly called “Said and Unsaid”, he states: “My job is to say what I can after Dawes saw and wrote what he did, and to accept that this leaves a good deal unsaid. Just as he did” (152). *26 Views* can thus be classified as an example of *speculative* writing. This form of “historically informed” speculative writing is also addressed by Stephen Muecke, a fictocritical writer, in his essay “Speculating with History: The Wreck of Sydney Cove” (2011),<sup>164</sup> in which he experiments with “recasting” the “*intercolonial*” story of the “speculative trade [that] was at the beginnings of the India-Australia relation” while aiming at a “less distanced, more intimate history” (2011: 38). While making a distinction between “*philosophical* speculation” on the one hand and “*capitalist* speculation” on the other hand (2011: 40), Muecke states:

There too, in the elaboration of an *historical* discourse, lies speculation of another sort, which is the movement of interpretation and imagination based on the contingencies of the present – one writes history for those reading it now. The ‘past strives to turn toward that sun which is rising in the sky of history’ says Benjamin (249), emphasising history’s vitality as it

---

<sup>163</sup> This word was chosen in reference to Gibson’s psychogeographical/fictocritical book *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland* (2002).

<sup>164</sup> Stephen Muecke (2011), “Speculating with History: The Wreck of the *Sydney Cove*”. *Wasafiri* 26.2 (June 2011). 37-40.

continues to engage with the public feelings of the present. My point is that anyone who engages with history has to have ready an argument to account for the work they perform and one to justify their involvement in one historical event rather than another. I argue against the ‘critical distance’ that seems to offer, unearned, the privilege of either neutral overview or political vanguardism. My argument for participating in history has neither an allegiance to the discipline of history itself nor to some counter-society of cultural critics bent on reforming it. (2011: 40)

Gibson seems to take a similar view as he does not make use of this “critical distance” either but “participates” in history by providing his own version of the story. His book is invulnerable to being pigeonholed in terms of genre, which makes it even more fascinating. It is neither a history book, nor what one would call a historical novel. He refrains from fictionalising too ostensibly the meagre scraps of historical certainty on which his text is based. In fact, Gibson has not much more than word lists and recorded sentences or expressions from which to start his account, substantiated by information on the early European settlement of Sydney Cove from other contemporary sources, for instance Watkin Tench’s “A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson” (1793).<sup>165</sup>

*26 Views* deals with the most profound concepts of psychogeography in a very subtle way: how place (*geography*) and person (more precisely his/her *psyche*) interact and how the environment shapes and affects its inhabitants. It is this unusual approach to psychogeography that, as I believe, adds richness to the book. I argue that it is the engagement with the mutual connectedness between person and place which makes a text – or even a work of art – psychogeographical. How is each affected by the other? And what does this mutual influence tell us about the place and the person, respectively?

Referring back to the idea of ‘autobiogeography’ embodied by Lichtenstein’s and Sinclair’s book *Rodinsky’s Room* which incorporates ‘autobiography’, ‘biography’ and ‘geography’, I construct a new hypothesis for *26 Views* by reading it as what I have termed a ‘bio-geo-graphy’,<sup>166</sup> aiming at a

---

<sup>165</sup> Watkin Tench (1793), “A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson”. In: Flannery, Tim (ed.) (2009 [1996]), *Watkin Tench’s 1788*. Melbourne: Text Publishing. 85-274.

<sup>166</sup> I have used hyphens in order to foreground the two components of the term, ‘biography’ and ‘geography’, but also to distinguish it from the scientific term *biogeography*, a branch of geography which is

reconstruction of a characterisation (biography) of William Dawes on the basis of his geographical surroundings. Is *26 Views* in actual fact a portrait of the man William Dawes as much as it is a portrait of Sydney Cove between 1788 and 1791 and, on a third level, a portrait of the local Eora at this time?

### 3.2.1 The Language Notebooks

The two notebooks, simply called A and B by Dawes, were written by the young Lieutenant at the end of the year 1790, when he had already spent almost two years at Sydney Cove as participant in the First Fleet voyage (cf. 37). They are not merely of linguistic value but also hint at the two philosophies of life which were implied in the word lists and phrases Dawes gathered and subsequently compiled during his interaction with the Indigenous people he became friends with: on the one hand Dawes glimpsed the “more ‘flighty’” (112) world of the Eora, but on the other hand he was himself, especially as an astronomer and engineer, deeply embedded in the European “nominalist worldview [...] – where reality is presumed to be composed of a set of permanently pre-defined objects, filed in designated places along the great chain of being” (112). I visualise this juxtaposition in the way Dawes set out, in his first notebook (A), to record Aboriginal words in traditional European-style vocabulary lists: Eora words in the left hand column, the English translation in the right hand column.<sup>167</sup> However, this one-to-one translation did not do sufficient credit to the Aboriginal language (and, closely intertwined with it, the Eora worldview), as Dawes was soon to notice. It can be surmised from his records “how much value he was by now ascribing to immateriality, to ephemeral moments pulsing and drifting away in air” (115). He must have grasped – at least to a certain extent – the Eora worldview that was reflected in their language and that hence made European word lists irrelevant and inappropriate. As of Notebook B, Dawes “had shifted his attention from semantic to episodic investigations, waiting to learn the patterns in the larger world” (197), a world he just began to understand as “he soon adopted a narrative-contextual approach” (30). This, at least, is Gibson’s

---

concerned with an “analysis of [the] spatial distributions of organisms” (definition taken from: <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/fitch/courses/evolution/html/biogeography.html>) (accessed 03 November 2015).

<sup>167</sup> Dawes’ notebooks have been digitalised and are available online: <http://www.williamdawes.org/>

interpretation of the notebooks, but it is a very plausible one as the difference between Dawes' way of recording in the notebooks is an obvious fact and can almost certainly be seen in the light of an appropriation of his surroundings or an enhanced knowledge of the Indigenous language that reflects a deeper engagement with the natural environment. In addition, Gibson notes that Notebook A is concerned with *seeing* and "looking out over space", whereas Notebook B, in contrast, "is all about *hearing*" and more concerned with time rather than with space (115), which is an indication of Dawes' increasing familiarity with his surroundings. Yi-Fu Tuan aptly described the relationship between time and place and the 'feel' of a place in his seminal *Space and Place* (2011 [1977]):

Abstract knowledge *about* a place can be acquired in short order if one is diligent. [...] But the 'feel' of a place takes longer to acquire. It is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years. It is a unique blend of sights, sounds, and smells, a unique harmony of natural and artificial rhythms such as times of sunrise and sunset, or work and play. The feel of a place is registered in one's muscles and bones. (2011: 183-84)

The fact that as of Notebook B Dawes recorded experiences and personal encounters rather than single words can be read as an indication that he started to develop a feel for Sydney Cove and its Indigenous inhabitants as well as their relation to their environment. It is crucial to take into account that Dawes' notebooks were written during the time when the exploitation and expulsion of the country's Indigenous population began and the British started to implement power in what was to become their new colony. Yet Dawes, who, on the basis of eighteenth-century sources by his contemporaries, can be said to have been an outsider to his own society as he "set himself apart" (50),<sup>168</sup> gained the Eora's trust and, in the process of befriending them, compiled records of their language. The notebooks provide no coherent narrative of his arrival at Sydney Cove and his first encounters with the Indigenous people. Instead, they "are a

---

<sup>168</sup> Although aware of the fact that "[f]oisting modern diagnoses backwards onto historical characters can be a flippant interpretive trick", Gibson nevertheless wonders: "Might he have been self-absorbed to a clinical degree? Terms like 'obsessive compulsive', 'Asperger syndrome' and 'high functioning autistic' are diagnoses that were not available back then, but they are worth wondering with now" (50).

mesh of cross-references that can be discovered from many different starting-points” and “do not have a beginning, middle and end” (194). They capture *moments* or *situations*, not sequential storylines and thus force one to read between the lines in order that the silences and absences become vaguely perceptible.

Interestingly, as Delia Falconer points out in her review of the book, Dawes and his notebooks have not been very popular with contemporary historians. Up until the discovery of the notebooks at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London in 1972, Dawes seemed to have been buried in oblivion.<sup>169</sup> To Gibson, however, the notebooks were a gold mine: “Fragmented, unfinished, heuristic, the inscriptions in the notebooks have a prismatic quality” (14). Due to this “prismatic quality” of the source material, Gibson took pains over the question of which form his book would need to take in order to adequately represent the notebooks as a medium for approaching their author as well as the place where he conducted his research. Gibson lets the reader partake in his motives by stating that his book on Dawes had “to be a protean thing”, in fact “a shape-shifting device” in which he also wanted to incorporate the influence of “some unexpected exemplars” (15) which led the way or inspired him in his choice of text format, namely

Akira Kurosawa’s prismatic film *Rashomon*, and the superimposed folio of pictures in [Katsushika] Hokusai’s *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, as well as the braided strands of [François] Girard’s *Thirty-Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*. (15)

The idea for the title is quite obviously borrowed from these examples, especially Hokusai’s set of paintings. Similarly to the way the Japanese artist depicted the same mountain from different angles and in different weather conditions, Gibson aims to show Dawes in all his facets, too. *26 Views* confronts the reader with “a literary style germane to Dawes’ experience” (16), hence the twenty-six *views* that reflect the various shapes of Dawes’ rather neurotic character (cf. 50-51) in addition to the ‘objects’ of Dawes’ research, the

---

<sup>169</sup> Delia Falconer (2012), “History catches up with First Fleet officer whose notebooks speak volumes about Eora”. Review of *26 Views of the Starburst World*, by Ross Gibson. *Australian*. 11 August 2012, accessed 18 June 2013. (n. pag.)  
<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/history-catches-up-with-first-fleet-officer-whose-notebooks-speak-volumes-about-eora/story-fn9n8gph-1226446748548>

Aboriginal people and their language as well as, at least indirectly, Sydney Cove. Gibson initiates the reader into his strategy by explaining why he chose this form for the book and not another, why this seems the only adequate approach he could have opted for:

I use these exemplary artefacts [the above-mentioned film by Kurosawa, Hokusai's pictures and Girard's short films] as my guides into a style of writing that must approach and revisit its topic again and again from many different perspectives, deploying many different filters and depths of field, sometimes using a tessellated construction, letting various textures intermesh until we can acknowledge that, even as we gather more and more interpretations, we will never smoothly encompass or conclusively know the full, shifting world that Dawes dropped into. What I need, as I seek the form of this book, is a means for accommodating doubt, for understanding that mystery and the *inability to understand* are strong parts of what Dawes began to record in his notes. I need a literary form that can sustain a thorough but *provisional* understanding, an account that admits insufficiency but helps us come back ceaselessly to the ever-altering and barely comprehensible world where Dawes encountered the Eora. (15-16)

Gibson arrives at the decision that, due to the fact that the notebooks merely provide fragmentary information on their author, *his* [Gibson's] *own* account of the notebooks has to be similarly aligned with the sources it is based on. He states:

So I need a literary form that avoids the lures of fellow feeling. I need a form that *works with* rather than *works away* the estrangement that the notebooks show not only between two cultures but also between the present and the past. (17)

This is what Gibson does throughout the text: as soon as one gets immersed in the story and starts to feel for Dawes or any of the other characters in *26 Views*, Gibson intervenes by pointing out that "*all this is mere conjecture*" (143). He foregrounds the fact that we cannot know what really happened or what Dawes or the Eora thought; he gives us possible interpretations on how it *could* have

been, but he does not allow us as readers to fully believe him. Right at the beginning of his *26 Views* he repeats in different passages across one page that his conclusions are not built on certainties: “The point is we do not know exactly. [...] But we have no details. [...] But the traces he left are meagre” (2). The fact that he frequently starts a sentence with ‘But’ indicates that what is to follow is subject to restrictions, which is true in this case. With direct reference to the notebooks, he points out what impact they have on him as a *reader* and as a *writer* by subsuming the influence under the general and ambiguous term ‘affordance’:

Firstly, when I respond to the notebooks *as a reader*, I can see that they afford me some startling ways to think creatively about the ideas and emotions that were generated between Dawes and the Indigenous people whom he encountered at Sydney Cove. As literary forms, the notebooks are peculiar and puzzling. They are sharp goads to a reader’s thinking. As physical forms they have been directly *shaped* by the experience of Dawes using them. [...]

The second connotation of ‘affordance’ shines when I respond as a writer. I can work with the notebooks to understand and test the affordances and insufficiencies of the many different artistic genres that I might use for extracting richness from the wisped clues that Dawes scratched on the paper. No matter which aesthetic form I choose for responding to the notebooks [...] each mode will occlude as well as reveal a different set of insights and feelings. So the notebooks afford me new insights into the uses of literary forms. (14-15)

Gibson reflects on the form of the notebooks and their potential as a medium to inspire in him various literary approaches. ‘Affordance’ is therefore an umbrella term for the notebooks’ ability to capture one’s imagination. In consequence, Gibson’s “account of him [Dawes] is deliberately multi-faceted and contentious” (vi).



### 3.2.2 Fragmented Characterisation

The factual information on Dawes that has survived up until today is “meagre and fragmented” and inevitably shaped by “the speculation and inconclusiveness that Dawes represents” (vi). In the very first *view* he gives of Dawes, Gibson states that “he is defined mostly by what is absent from his records” (2). I am interested in how the author approaches a man who has long been dead and about whom hardly any facts are known. One is compelled to draw a parallel with *Rodinsky’s Room* as in each case it is the absence of a person which gives rise to the author’s reconstruction of a character via a place or an object left behind. However, in *26 Views* it is not only Dawes, but also the Aborigines, along with their language and culture, who are the subject of Gibson’s analysis. As Christopher C. Bamford asks in his essay “Negative Capability” (2005), “[c]an we engage the unknown, while leaving it unknown, precisely by not taking hold of it?”.<sup>170</sup> Gibson skilfully proves that we can by *emphasising* the absence which, in turn, allows us to arrive at a form of presence. He does not conceal the absence, but rather draws attention to it, he ‘un-veils’ it.<sup>171</sup> Despite the fact that we are given an actual list of Dawes’ characteristics, or rather a list of what Gibson reads as indications to support his characterisation of Dawes, the astronomer remains enigmatic. I do not intend here to compile the factual and fictional characteristics Gibson yields throughout *26 Views*. Rather, I am interested in *what* Gibson does in order to arrive at a (possible) characterisation of the Lieutenant and *how* he achieves this. The question, however, can only be answered in conjunction with the next section, which deals with the representation of Sydney Cove and the local Aborigines in Dawes’ notes as well as in Gibson’s text, respectively. In the penultimate chapter Gibson emphasises once again that we cannot know who Dawes really was, but that it is our imagination, in fact the combination of “fiction and history, imagination and memory” (193), that allows us to arrive at some sort of picture of Dawes, fragmented and partly fictional as it might be:

---

<sup>170</sup> Christopher C. Bamford (2005), “Negative Capability”. *Parabola* 30.2. 19.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Tom Carlson (2001), “absence”. In: Taylor, Victor E., and Charles E. Winquist (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*. London/New York: Routledge. 1.

But no great decree from him has survived. We have just a few fragments of his genius. Just enough to start us imagining what he might have learned and what we might do now with the little that we know. (269)

The “bewildering sketchiness” (255) even extends to his outward appearance as no portrait can be definitely matched to him: “the Lieutenant is all absence and blur” (215). So how can one arrive at a characterisation of a person who can hardly be grasped? What techniques can one revert to in order to portray this person nevertheless? Gibson has opted for a form of speculative writing, which he calls “a kind of divination”, a means of “*divin[ing]* a way through the fragments and riddles that have been left to us” while at the same time “*vault[ing]* across and *fill[ing]* in the absences that often give overall form to the archives that hold the traces” (134). To him, “divination is a process whereby you help fragments adhere and integrate so that the dis-membered elements of a scene might share some sensible connection, some re-membering. With divination, there is an urge to connect” (Gibson 2006: n. pag.). In *26 Views*, Gibson goes on to explain how fiction comes into play:

To find a way through these absences into the shifty colonial relationships and the quick indigenous systems that predated everything that now remains, I have to practise a mode of divination that is conjectural and intuitive and, to some significant extent, undeniably *fictional*. (134)

But, as Gibson is quick to clarify, “[f]ictional does not have to mean ‘fanciful’”, let alone “irresponsible” (134), instead

it can connote something more like ‘speculative’. Addressing the absences and heeding the impulse for fiction, I can offer *versions* of many possible ways to account for a mystery, to elucidate an intrigue or a secret that is nested in the dishevelled clues. (134) [my emphasis]

It is the juxtaposition of “Historical Fiction” and “Fictional History” that Gibson regards as the framework along which “[u]seful, responsible speculation can range” (135) and which makes up Gibson’s approach to characterising Dawes. To Gibson, “to divine is to remember”, or, more accurately, “to re-member”,

what he regards as “a speculative process” in which, “moment by moment, a new version of the world can be proposed” (135). In *26 Views* we are presented with this *new version* of the world, which is necessarily subjective and which hence makes a psychogeographical approach, that is one geared towards an emotive perception of the environment, especially fruitful. Due to the fact that this new version of the world is closely entangled with the ‘new world’ Dawes was confronted with, I shall now turn towards the place that surfaces in the notebooks.

### 3.2.3 The Geographical Component: Dawes, the Eora and ‘Country’<sup>172</sup>

As Gibson states in the prologue to *26 Views*, he adopted an approach similar to the one he had employed earlier for his *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland* (2002),<sup>173</sup> “a book responding to a landscape that is comprised of paradoxes and absences” (vii). In *26 Views*, the landscape is again comprised of absences, but in a different way: the natural surroundings are only vaguely and indirectly perceptible. Instead, the main focus is on the one hand on the character of Dawes who moves within this landscape and explores it and on the other hand on the Eora, the Indigenous inhabitants of this area. Neither the Australian landscape in general nor Sydney Cove in particular are the actual objects of study for either Dawes in his notebooks or for Gibson in his writing *about* the notebooks. As Dawes proceeds with his language recordings, he little by little makes contact with the Eora and starts to understand via the medium of language the way in which their worldview, which is so closely intertwined with an attachment to ‘country’, discloses a portrait of Sydney Cove at the end of the eighteenth century. His vocabulary listings are therefore not only revealing from a linguistic but also from an anthropological standpoint. The reader is thereby equipped, through the language notebooks, with an insight into the Indigenous people and the locale.

---

<sup>172</sup> “Country is a word currently invested with very different cultural and cross-cultural meanings. While it defines specific places of Indigenous habitation and of Indigenous-settler histories, it is also a kinship term, implying familial and personal responsibilities and a differently conceptualised sense of ownership” (Philip Mead (2009), “Nation, literature, location”. In: Pierce, Peter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 555).

<sup>173</sup> Ross Gibson (2002), *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

Gibson realises that he has now “refined and extended the ‘versioning’ method with this kaleidoscopic study of Dawes” (vii). As a result, the entanglement of person and geographical environment comes to the fore, which I read as an indication that the text qualifies as a ‘bio-geo-graphy’, that is, a characterisation arrived at by taking as a starting point the environment surrounding the person in question. As Gibson states,

[w]e can make sense of the notebooks thus: at Sydney Cove, Dawes started to understand a local mentality that was organised both through a directly felt, personal obligation to place and through a network of relationships binding all people and sentient beings together as one entity in that place. He began to sense how all beings might connect, communicate and be interdependently cognate. This encouraged in him an immersive relationship to the world. He caught enough evidence to suggest that this sense of relationship was sustained in Eora country both as an intelligence shared with all matter and an attentiveness to the collective integrity and vitality of all the people who comprise the society that wraps around and carries you through this lively world. (10-11)

This “kind of epiphany” (11), which Dawes experiences as a result of his interaction with the Eora makes him realise the importance of ‘place’ for the Indigenous people of Sydney Cove. Each one of them constitutes one link in the long chain that binds them together and connects them to and with nature. This is an approach to the natural surroundings hitherto unheard-of for Dawes, but he seems all the more fascinated by it. Gibson depicts a young man absolutely taken by the people and the place, both of which make up his new points of reference:

We see him [Dawes] reading and rereading this place in space and time with reference to every context that is formed in every new instant. We see him always ever emergent within a new world of systematic factors, all of them changing, relative to each other, moment by moment. (44)

In Gibson’s interpretation of Dawes’ connection to place, the astronomer must have realised “that the Eora world never seems to get much more solid, that the

meanings of this world seem to keep shifting like a starburst” (45). And the longer Dawes stayed and the more he became acquainted with the Eora and their worldview, the more he became part of that country: “Furthermore, he developed a genuine fellow-feeling for the country around Sydney Cove, so much so that he applied a continuous absorbing attentiveness to it” (53). According to Gibson, Dawes became mindful of “the way the Eora cared for the place that evidently defined them. Studying the Eora, Dawes transcended his customary detachment” (53). As he developed a feeling for his surroundings (in contrast to the purely scientific interest in landscape he had previously exhibited),

he worked the country into himself, thus diminishing the space between himself and his new environs. In doing so he began to know the place in ways that were partly intellectual, partly emotional, perhaps partly spiritual. (53)

The emotional component is highly reminiscent of a psychogeographical attachment to or concern for place. However, accepting and adopting this state of mind, especially in relation to his surroundings, must have been a huge hurdle for Dawes to overcome, as he was ingrained with a very European epistemology that was governed by a “rational and regulated” (241) approach to the outer world – an approach obviously at odds with the “swirling and shifting” (243) worldview the Eora embodied. Placing the two epistemologies, his European and the Eora’s, in juxtaposition with each other highlights their different approaches to cartography, which I shall elaborate on in the next section.

In *Lines: A Brief History* (2007), Tim Ingold addresses “two knowledge systems” which he terms “habitation” and “occupation”<sup>174</sup> and in which can be seen a striking parallel to the epistemologies depicted in *26 Views*. I would argue that the state of *habitation* pertains to the Indigenous Australians who inhabited their country and interacted with it in a way that was mutually beneficial to both people and land whereas the British settlers, who arrived in Sydney Cove with a very different set of values and belief systems regarding the environment, *occupied* the country by making use of it and traversing it. In

---

<sup>174</sup> Tim Ingold (2007), *Lines: A Brief History*. London/New York: Routledge. 89.

order to clarify the quote below, I shall briefly summarise Ingold's starting point: he makes a distinction between wayfaring and transport. Wayfaring, like the line that 'goes out for a walk' (Ingold quoting Paul Klee, cf. Ingold 2007: 73), is a very dynamic way of interacting with the world in which 'being on the move' is more important than reaching the destination (cf. Ingold 2007: 75); transport, in contrast, is solely "destination-oriented" (cf. Ingold 2007: 77, 81). Employing this two-part division in my interpretation of *26 Views*, I would attribute the practice of the wayfarer to the Aboriginal Australians and that of the traveller to the Europeans who merely go *across* the surface instead of moving *along* as do many Indigenous nations with a stronger attachment to their country. Ingold provides the example of the Inuits (cf. 2007: 75). He writes:

And this finally brings us to the crux of the difference between these two knowledge systems, of habitation and occupation respectively. In the first, a way of knowing is itself a path of movement through the world: the wayfarer literally 'knows as he goes' (Ingold 2000: 229-30), along a line of travel. The second, by contrast, is founded upon a categorical distinction between the mechanics of movement and the formation of knowledge, or between locomotion and cognition. Whereas the former cuts from point to point *across* the world, the latter builds *up*, from the array of points and the materials collected therefrom, into an integrated assembly. (2007: 89-90)

Ingold's research into the history of lines supports Gibson's juxtaposition of the two worldviews. Although Ingold uses different terms, I regard *Lines* as very useful for my discussion of *26 Views*.

Gibson, who backs up his considerations with scientific or academic research throughout his book, consults Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* (1990) in which Crary discusses "the new mentality" as a result of the assumption that many Europeans who experienced the Pacific cultures in the eighteenth century "found themselves becoming modern unusually early" (241), which he explains by pointing out that

the rational European analyst who had been trained in detached, Cartesian critique was knocked from his equanimity by the unprecedented devices and experiences of the fast-changing new era. (241)

As we know from Watkin Tench's notes, with the arrival of a ship at Sydney Cove, a notion of this new era that came along with the French Revolution reached Australia in June 1790 (cf. 181). Gibson conceives an indirect connection between the impact of the French Revolution and Dawes:

Not long after the news of the French Revolution arrived, Dawes started writing in his language notebooks. France was not the cause of the project, but it was a major part of the context. As he delved into Eora consciousness, the wonderment of the Revolution must have been buffeting his mind. (182)

In fact, Gibson believes that "Dawes would have been reassessing his precepts constantly" (244) and in the meantime adopted the Eora ideology as best as he could:

In his readiness to learn from the Eora, in the way he sought to incorporate the country evermore knowingly, Dawes was an exception to the colonial rule. He used his notebooks to describe some special spaces unaccustomed to most colonists, spaces that were defined more by consent than by conquest, that were measured not by extensive technologies (guns, sextants, telescopes) but by intensive involvements – quiet conversations at campsites, looks and gestures offered in the observatory rooms, hands-on instructions and playful interactions at fishing shoals and beaches. (54)

The key words in this passage, "to incorporate the country" and spaces defined by "intensive involvements", express Gibson's interpretation of the gradual way in which the Eora's state of mind permeated Dawes as he started to feel the impact of the land and the people surrounding him. This seems to be a plausible interpretation as the formal criteria that distinguish Notebook A from Notebook B as outlined before give indication of his changing of attitude and his new understanding of the world around him. Yet it is Dawes' relationship with the young Aboriginal woman – or rather girl, as she is assumed to have been only about fifteen years old at the time when she met Dawes (cf. 80) – called

Patyegarang (or Patye, as Dawes used to refer to her in his notebooks) that would have had the most significant impact on him. Although no facts are known about her as a person (cf. 85), she was not only his main source of information, but also an affectionate companion, if not sexual partner, as alluded to by the notebooks (cf. 78, 80, 85). Although Gibson knows “that there were metaphysical as well as physical dimensions to the bonds that Patyegarang shared with Dawes” (85), the nature of their relationship, despite playing an important role in *26 Views* (as Patye was the person who seemed to have served as the link between Dawes and the Eora world and ‘country’) remains enigmatic. However, “their shared exploration must have been erotic in a rare way” (86), Gibson concludes. With the help of Paytegarang, Dawes could glimpse the two components that were at the centre of his engagement in the Eora world: “[t]ime and space were the motors of Dawes’ ambition”, in fact “his research into the Eora language was also spatio-temporal” (79). From the Eora Dawes learned “a fluid, instantaneous experience of space and time” (139). Gibson even claims Dawes was “the first European to have an inkling of the Indigenous Australian notion of ‘country’, that utterly local varietal of space and time” (59). Gibson thereby affords his reader with an idea of the way in which Dawes’ notebooks represent merely the surface of the concepts that Dawes must have started to reassess.

### **3.2.4 Mapping**

In this final section I shall elaborate on how Gibson arrives at a form of characterisation of the young Englishman by looking in detail at a very rudimentary eighteenth-century century map of Sydney Cove, sketched by Dawes. This technique is especially interesting for my thesis as, with regard to psychogeographical mapping, it takes the idea of the map as an ‘urban tool’ one step further: instead of merely being read as a depiction of a specific site or the erratic wanderings of a subject through a geographical location, here the map is interpreted as depicting the subject (Dawes) himself. In the second chapter, Gibson states that “[t]his is what I will try to make of this book: a simultaneous living map of what Dawes encountered and began to understand” (17). The idea of the “living map”, that is a map that represents something



animated, is then reiterated in the next chapter in which the very first page of Notebook A has been reproduced (cf. 20) (Fig. 5., p. 222). At a first glance this looks like a faded doodle; all there is to see is a curve and some Aboriginal words that are hard to discern. Yet to Gibson, there is more to read out of this map: “it is a rudimentary survey-record representing the shimmering harbour as the most minimal flat abstraction” (22), but at the same time “it is a self-portrait too, hermetic and uncooperative. In these difficult characteristics, the page is typical of its author” (22) in opening up, first of all, “the blankness all about him”, the water of Sydney Harbour (27). Gibson depicts Dawes as in search of a means of coming to terms with his new surroundings without being “exactly *lost* here”, but still in the process of “compos[ing] himself” (22). In the following, Gibson suggests different possible ways of interpreting this page, but throughout he maintains his idea of the map being a self-portrait of Dawes: “So the map shows a place that is almost him, in name and in prospect” (24), but

[t]he map can also be interpreted as a record of how much readiness for revision Dawes needed to carry in himself as he worked into the country, as he and the country and the people altered each other from moment to moment. (25)

Over the next few pages, Gibson imagines how this map might have come into being and wonders whether it was influenced by the Eora who had obviously provided Dawes with the vocabulary and who might have had “some larger conception of the harbour as a living, integrated body”, representing “a great creature” with “limbs and organs” (27). In the following passage Gibson summarises why he reads the fragmentary map as a self-portrait of Dawes:

In its lean but fascinating disarray, the map is exactly right as a kind of self-portrait of Dawes, for it is just a few scratched lines from him, and mostly it is *absence*. A self-portrait, sketched in maybe less than a minute, its dimensions reach out to the whole cove.

The map could be telling, if only we knew for sure how to loosen its muteness. Certainly it is ambitious and momentous, but it gives us no rest with all its possible meanings. (29)

Absence and muteness here indicate that a characterisation of Dawes simply cannot be based on factual knowledge as the gaps and absences simply would not allow certainty. Instead, the geographical depictions of what Gibson recognises as Sydney Cove give some indication of the man who produced them.

In the next chapter, Gibson takes the discussion further by juxtaposing “the conventional English mentality”, in which Dawes was deeply entrenched and in which “a map is meant to offer a quick and pragmatic survey”, with the Indigenous Australian understanding of mapping that was so far removed from how Dawes understood the word (39).<sup>175</sup> Gibson wonders whether Dawes was aware of this difference and, pursuing his speculations, asks: “Is this why he started with a map of everything he did *not* know, to force change into his own way of seeing and thinking?” (39).

Ingold establishes a relationship between storytelling and mapping, an idea that can also be employed on Gibson’s reading of a map as a self-portrait of Dawes:

I have suggested that drawing a line on a sketch map is much like telling a story. Indeed the two commonly proceed in tandem as complimentary strands of one and the same performance. Thus the storyline goes *along*, as does the line on the map. The things of which the story tells, let us say, do not so much exist as occur; each is a moment of ongoing activity. These things, in a word, are not objects but topics. Lying at the confluence of actions and responses, every topic is identified by its relations to the things that paved the way for it, that presently concur with it and that follow it into the world. (2007: 90)

This supports Gibson’s depiction of the map as a self-portrait: it is a story that is told – the story of the man who made this geographical map and thereby told and exposed his own story. Storytelling and mapping (of a geographical location) are closely entangled in this passage that depicts the map as a self-portrait and, in turn, *fall into line* with my reading of *26 Views* as an instance of

---

<sup>175</sup> Cosgrove mentions, among other non-Western “mapping traditions” which hint at the “connections between cartography and territorial authority”, “the narrated songlines of Australian native peoples” as an example of Aboriginal ‘mapping’ (2005b: n. pag.).

psychogeographical writing, because on multiple levels the interweaving of a geographical site with a character is addressed. It might at first glance appear as striking and far-fetched to read Dawes' map of Sydney Cove as a self-portrait – to read the faded doodle, in the words of Ingold, as a 'story' or 'autobiography' – but with regard to the overall approach Gibson uses to characterise Dawes on the basis of '26 views' or possible 'versions' of his character, this reading becomes more plausible. In addition, due to an omnipresence of maps in everyday life,<sup>176</sup> one has become increasingly used to visualisation in the form of maps. An essay which also deals with mapping from an unconventional perspective and which could be instanced as a reinforcement of Gibson's reading of Dawes' map is James Corner's "The Agency of Mapping" (1999), from which I have already quoted. Here, Corner, while waiving the "countless examples of authoritarian, simplistic, erroneous and coercive acts of mapping", rather decides to "focus [...] upon more optimistic revisions of mapping practices" (1999: 213). He specifies:

These revisions situate mapping as a collective enabling enterprise, a project that both reveals and realizes hidden potential. Hence, in describing the 'agency' of mapping, I do not mean to invoke agendas of imperialist technocracy and control but rather to suggest ways in which mapping acts may emancipate potentials, enrich experiences and diversify worlds. (1999: 213)

Gibson's reading of the map as a self-portrait would be exactly such a kind of "optimistic revision" as he manages to free the map from the traditional reading which would see it as a mere representation of Sydney Cove (maybe even from the imperialist viewpoint of the coloniser) and unlock its potential. As argued by Corner, the map's "agency lies in neither reproduction nor imposition but rather in uncovering realities previously unseen or unimagined" (1999: 213). These "unseen" or "unimagined" realities then point towards the map's potential as a self-portrait: the lines do not merely depict Sydney Cove and the harbour, but also the map maker himself. Gibson thus turns the idea of 'mapping' on its head

---

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Denis Cosgrove (1999), "Introduction: Mapping Meaning". In: Cosgrove, Denis (ed.), *Mappings*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 2.

on the basis that “[b]y showing the world in new ways, unexpected solutions and effects may emerge” (Corner 1999: 217).

Another aspect of mapping in *26 Views* is Dawes’ habit of mentally mapping the land by a “quiet chanting of numbers” (59). Here, we encounter again the way in which Dawes’ European approach to land defined him and set him apart from the Eora, “[f]or surveying is a mode of occupation, not habitation” (Ingold 2007: 89). Dawes’ mapping technique of endlessly counting his steps was very rigid and stringent, if not obsessive, and thus at odds with the Aboriginal connection to land he only gradually began to absorb:

When he walked into native country, for example, he behaved like a marine navigator on the land. He counted and remembered every step, using the maritime method of ‘dead reckoning’, as he mapped the land’s expanses in his mind. Through strenuous daily exertion he charted the country, walking, counting, usually talking with Watkin Tench. Tracts of country became tracks of his person. Only later, usually at night, would he think the body-map out from himself and chart it on paper. (58)

Corner makes a distinction within mapping which seems fitting with regard to Dawes’ counting. On the basis of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s declaration ‘Make a map, not a tracing!’ (Corner 1999: 213), he distinguishes “between mapping as equal to what is (‘tracing’) and mapping as equal to what is *and* to what is not yet” (1999: 214):

Unlike tracings, which propagate redundancies, mappings discover new worlds within past and present ones; they inaugurate new grounds upon the hidden traces of a living context. The capacity to reformulate what already exists is the important step. And what already exists is more than just the physical attributes of terrain (topography, rivers, roads, buildings) but includes also the various hidden forces that underlie the workings of a given place. (1999: 214)

If one applied this distinction between tracing and mapping to the above quote from *26 Views*, one could read Dawes’ almost manic pacing and counting as an instance of tracing, as he has not yet achieved the next step, namely “the

productive reformulation of what is already given” (Corner 1999: 217). He merely charts the “physical attributes of terrain” but has not yet fully grasped the “hidden forces” that linger underneath and have a much greater potential than what is obvious. However, Gibson believes that the young lieutenant was slowly beginning to learn. As much as Dawes was obviously deeply entrenched in this mapping-via-counting process, “he was reorganising himself with the environment” (59), as Gibson interprets this form of charting. According to Gibson, Dawes was

understanding the country by bringing it into himself – *incorporating* this place that he was beginning to consider as home, this self-defining place that was making him as he investigated it. (59)

Thus, one could say that Dawes slowly began to reassess his tracing of the country and started to engage in mapping, “an eidetic fiction constructed from factual observation” (Corner 1999: 215).

It is this mutual connectedness between person and place that Gibson foregrounds time and again and which, in my view, renders this form of characterisation psychogeographical. Dawes’ alleged “reckoning by walking” while “muttering the country into his memory” (60) further supports this claim.

### **3.2.5 Conclusion**

As I tried to show throughout my discussion of the book, Gibson approaches Dawes from different angles at once: via his notebooks/the language recordings, the gaps that emanate from these notes, his (changing) connection to the new country around him as well as his relationship to the local Eora and the way they shaped and influenced him in his worldview. Due to this interplay, I have termed this book an example of ‘bio-geo-graphy’. *26 Views* is not at first glance an obvious psychogeographical book in which a particular urban place is explored, typically on foot. This book is, as stated at the very beginning, extremely hard to categorise as it plays with and incorporates many different genres and styles. However, because the intimate, emotional relationship between a person and a place, that is, the impact of a place (Sydney Cove) on

a character who moves and lives in this place, is central to this text, I would regard it as conducive to a psychogeographical reading. Although *26 Views* does not deal with modern Sydney, the text establishes a historical context for the city's modern-day character. Read in conjunction with Falconer's work, it provides an insightful explanation of her portrayal of a city of hidden secrets, underneath which lurks a past which continues to colour the present.

### 3.3 Urban Islands: Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour

Cockatoo Island, named after the sulphur-crested cockatoos that used to visit the place,<sup>177</sup> is the largest island in Sydney Harbour.<sup>178</sup> Used for diverse purposes over its history, the island is a unique location within the city and a testament to a long and multi-layered past. In this sub-chapter, following a brief history of the place, I shall focus on the peculiarity of Cockatoo as an *urban island* and a fascinating psychogeographical location. Today the island acts, amongst other things, as a site for contemporary art exhibitions and installations as exemplified by four architectural projects that were part of the 2006 Urban Islands Symposium, two of which shall be elaborated on in the following. The island's current situation allows for further discussion and reinterpretation of the concepts of silence and absence.

It is crucial to establish the importance of the harbour, as one cannot imagine Sydney without it: the city has been shaped by its surrounding waters since its very beginnings. As Sydney-based writer, critic and architect Elizabeth Farrelly points out in her essay "Pipedreaming the Harbour (A Work in Progress)" (2005): "Face it, the dependence is total. If Sydney hadn't been gifted a harbour we'd have to invent one".<sup>179</sup> Yet the impact of Sydney Harbour on the city is not only unilateral: "Spatially, too, the harbour's influence on Sydney has been profound if ambiguous – dividing as well as connecting, at once egalitarian and intensely hierarchical" (Farrelly 2005: 104). It is the harbour's role as divider and connector which underpins my focus on Cockatoo Island. In the following analysis of Cockatoo as a psychogeographical place of special significance within the harbour, the role of the surrounding waters will be referred to, if only indirectly, throughout the discussion.

---

<sup>177</sup> This fact and the following outline of the history of Cockatoo Island are drawn from the historical timeline printed in the booklet *Cockatoo Island: History re-energised* by Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. 16-17. (Henceforth: SHF Trust [2013]).

<sup>178</sup> Patrick Fletcher (2005), "Sydney Harbour: Place and Mythology". In: [Flannery et al.], *Sitelines: Aspects of Sydney Harbour*. Sydney: Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. 144.

<sup>179</sup> Elizabeth Farrelly (2005), "Pipedreaming the Harbour (A Work in Progress)". In: [Flannery et al.], *Sitelines: Aspects of Sydney Harbour*. Sydney: Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. 95.

### 3.3.1 A Historical Outline of the Island's Development

Before the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, Cockatoo Island – or *Wareamah* in the local Aboriginal language of the Wangal clan<sup>180</sup> – would have been used as a fishing base by the Indigenous people but, as the island has no permanent water source, it is unlikely that they would actually have lived on the island. Apart from this fact, information on the pre-European use of the island is scarce. In the wake of colonisation, however, Cockatoo Island was fundamentally altered; its original condition is no longer visible due to its industrial development: “[i]ts size, shape and texture today bear little resemblance to the uninhabited, rocky, tree-covered island it was in 1839” (Fletcher 2011: n. pag.), the year when the British started to use it for their colonial needs. Being an island, Cockatoo must have seemed particularly desirable for the British when they first settled in Sydney Cove. As Maeve McCusker and Anthony Soares point out in their introduction to *Islanded Identities: Constructions of Postcolonial Cultural Insularity* (2011): “Historically, the island was considered as an ideal locale, or even a laboratory, in which to materialize the colonial will, free from undesirable alien influences emanating from the outside”.<sup>181</sup> This also reflects Cockatoo's fate. In 1839, Governor George Gipps chose this island as the location for a new convict gaol. Due to its relative isolation as an island, it must have seemed like the ideal site for a prison. In fact, Gipps regarded Cockatoo as perfectly suitable due to its being “surrounded [...] by deep water, and yet under the very eye of Authority” (Gipps quoted in Fletcher 2011: n. pag.). The convicts who were kept in this “harsh gaol for secondary offenders” (SHF Trust [2013]: 18) were made to build many of the island's edifices, including Fitzroy Dock (1850-70) and “prison barracks, a military guardhouse, isolation cells and official residences” (SHF Trust [2013]: 16) as well as seventeen storage silos which they had to carve “out of the solid rock” and which still bear testimony to the island's dark history today (Fletcher 2011: n. pag.). Living conditions in general left much to be desired with at times up to five hundred prisoners “crammed at night into the inadequate barracks accommodation” (Fletcher 2011: n. pag.). In 1869, the penal settlement was

---

<sup>180</sup> Patrick Fletcher (2011), “Cockatoo Island”. *Dictionary of Sydney* (web). Accessed 16 April 2016. (n. pag.) [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/cockatoo\\_island](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/cockatoo_island)

<sup>181</sup> Maeve McCusker and Anthony Soares (2011), “Introduction”. In: McCusker, Maeve, and Anthony Soares (eds.), *Islanded Identities: Constructions of Postcolonial Cultural Insularity*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi. xi.



closed for the time being and the island was briefly re-named Biloela (after the large house on Cockatoo where the Superintendents lived with their families), “to soften its reputation as a hell-hole for recalcitrant men” (Fletcher 2011: n. pag.). Between 1870 and 1880 the island and the already erected prison buildings were transformed into an Industrial School for Girls and a reformatory. A training ship that accommodated “wayward and orphaned boys” anchored in close vicinity to the island (SHF Trust [2013]: 16). During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Sutherland Dock was completed and the “shipbuilding and repair activities expand[ed]” (SHF Trust [2013]: 16). In the process, this urban island became the “NSW Government Shipyard” while “[t]he top of Cockatoo Island revert[ed] to a gaol from 1888-1908 due to overcrowding elsewhere” (SHF Trust [2013]: 16), now “hous[ing] both male and female prisoners from ‘the broken down class of metropolitan vagrants’” (quoted in Fletcher 2011: n. pag.). In 1913, Cockatoo became “the Commonwealth Naval Dockyard” and the first Australian steel warships were built here. During the Second World War, the island developed into “the major shipbuilding and dockyard facility for the South West Pacific” (SHF Trust [2013]: 17). From the mid-forties to the mid-sixties, more buildings were erected in order to master the increasing shipbuilding and repair activities, which included the refitting of submarines and warships. From 1991, the island’s importance in terms of shipbuilding and repair services waned and one year later the dockyard closed. Cockatoo lay idle until 2001, but finally the Harbour Trust started to reintegrate the place into Sydney’s cultural landscape. Four years later, the island opened to the public and in 2010 it was inscribed on the World-Heritage-list for its convict history (SHF Trust [2013]: 17).<sup>182</sup>

The transformations the island has undergone over the centuries are immense: in broad outlines from a natural to a penal to a (post-) industrial site. However, there are also a number of factors that make Cockatoo Island a productive place for psychogeographical exploration. Firstly, as an urban island, Cockatoo is part of the metropolis and therefore central, yet at the same time remote and peripheral in that it is surrounded by water, only accessible by ferry

---

<sup>182</sup> Stephen Gapps points out that many Aboriginal people question the injustice of the World Heritage listing by remarking that “the first cultural World Heritage listing in Australia was not Indigenous, but European”, which seems wrong and unfair as this means that the Indigenous past of the island which outlives the European colonisation remains unacknowledged. (Stephen Gapps (2011), “Review: Cockatoo Island, Sydney, Australia. Sydney Harbour Federation Trust”. *The Public Historian* 33.2 (Spring 2011). 147, 149.)

and hence detached from the inner city. Secondly, new light can be shed on the concepts of silence and absence, which are both significant in terms of the isle's historical development and the most recent shut-down of the shipyard. Thirdly, the contemporary use of the island is cultural and artistic in nature: it hosts a section of the Biennale of Sydney as well as other events such as sound installations. Many of the artworks are site-specific and interact with the place around them and could hence be termed psychogeographical as they enter into a dialogue with their surroundings. In the following, I shall examine whether and, if so, how the history and peculiarity of the place have been given artistic form.

### 3.3.2 Cockatoo as an Urban Island

In *A Geography of Islands* (2001), Stephen A. Royle names two factors that make islands special, "isolation and boundedness".<sup>183</sup> These factors also apply to urban islands: on the one hand they are part of the city and hence metropolitan and on the other hand they are separated from the city by water, which can be as minimal a distance as in the case of Berlin's Museum Island or more prominent and obvious in the cityscape as in the case of Cockatoo Island. Cockatoo is less than a fifteen-minute ferry-ride from Circular Quay, close enough to enable a view of the city's skyline and the iconic Harbour Bridge from the island, but it is nevertheless detached from Sydney's Central Business District. One feels close to the city yet far away at the same time. In "Cockatoo: D'Érive as Program" (2006), Matias Echanove also comments on the way in which the fact that an urban island is naturally sealed off from the rest of a city blurs the boundaries between inside and outside:

Cockatoo can only be accessed by sea. The waters around it give it a special autonomy from Sydney. At the same time in and out, it is a space of compensation where the city's fantasies can be lived up. Cockatoo

---

<sup>183</sup> Stephen A. Royle (2001), *A Geography of Islands: Small Island Insularity*. London/New York: Routledge. 11.

escapes the mainstream. It is a disconnected location for people to free their crazy geniuses. Cockatoo is far out.<sup>184</sup>

This dialectic is part of the allure this island has to offer to its visitors, it is both *in* the city and *outside* of it. I argue that Cockatoo Island can therefore be termed a liminal space, as it is *in-between* the city and the natural surroundings of the harbour and the Parramatta River. Cockatoo is hard to grasp – is it an urban, suburban or even bucolic place? The latter certainly not any longer, because “the physical shape of the island was also totally transformed to accommodate its new purpose”<sup>185</sup> and the usual connotation of islands being “often rather unusual and interesting places in biological terms” (Royle 2001: 33) certainly no longer applies to post-industrial Cockatoo, but to pigeonhole it is difficult nevertheless as none of the categories seems to fully satisfy what the island actually is. However, the very fact that it is an island gives rise to some unique characteristics and associations. The most basic dictionary definition (*Pocket Oxford Dictionary*) defines an island as a “piece of land surrounded by water” (quoted in Royle 2001: 8), a statement that is principally true yet at the same time limited as it does not include a distinction compared to, for instance, rocks in the water or “periodic islands” like Normandy’s Mont St Michel, which is accessible on foot at low tide (Royle 2001: 8). However, for my particular focus on Cockatoo, the basic definition of an urban island as a piece of land surrounded by water, yet still in the realm of a metropolitan area and large enough to enable a landing, shall suffice as a definition. As Matthew Boyd Goldie points out in “Island Theory: The Antipodes” (2011), there is a “recognizable insular discourse in science and literature” even today that goes as far back as the Early Modern period; Goldie terms it “continental island discourse” in which islands “are thought of as opposed to the sea, isolated, delimited, conversely paradisiacal or hellish, enclosed habitats, fragile environments, and individuated containers for archaic biologies and cultures”.<sup>186</sup> McCusker and Soares add to this discussion by claiming that

---

<sup>184</sup> Matias Echanove (2006), “Cockatoo: D’Érive as Program”. In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 153.

<sup>185</sup> Chris Abel (2006), “Soft Responses to a Hard Place”. In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 175.

<sup>186</sup> Matthew Boyd Goldie (2011), “Island Theory: The Antipodes”. In: McCusker, Maeve, and Anthony Soares (eds.), *Islanded Identities: Constructions of Postcolonial Cultural Insularity*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi. 4.

[a]s well as signifying incompleteness, vulnerability, and instability, of course, the island, as Chris Bongie notes, can also be seen as a 'space complete unto itself,' and as an ideal metaphor for a 'unified and unitary' identity. So, in parallel to tropes of vulnerability and miniaturization, which suggest a space especially susceptible to external aggression, the island has also been imagined as a uniquely sovereign space. (2011: xii)

Goldie goes further into the history of island theory, which is not so relevant for my thesis as it would lead too far away from my particular focus on Cockatoo Island as a psychogeographical location, yet it is crucial to note that a theoretical as well as fictional engagement with the island as an object of mystery and allure and, at times, also danger goes back to the Ancient Greek and Roman investigation of the earth's geography (cf. Goldie 2011: 15ff.). Islands have always been regarded as something special and not easily graspable – the reason precisely why they have always seemed so fascinating and alluring.

### **3.3.3 Silences and Absences on Cockatoo**

Building on the aforementioned transformations and the different stages the island has undergone, I shall now resume the discussion of the silences and absences, which occur so frequently in large metropolises and in particular in urban locations that are replete with history yet seem to suppress the past. Cockatoo has been silenced in two different ways, I believe. On the one hand, there has occurred a metaphorical silencing of the Indigenous past, which is hardly discernible when walking around this "industrial graveyard situated amidst the city's upmarket suburbs" (Abel 2006: 175). However, this 'silence' concerning the expulsion of the Aboriginal people from the island might also be due to the fact that not much is known about the time before the British occupied Cockatoo. On the other hand, the island is also silent in the very literal sense of the word. It is a quiet, almost peaceful place as the dockyards, once roaring with activity, have now been decommissioned and are lying dormant, the formerly used cranes and turbine hall are rusting away, expressing a very special aesthetic, while the thousands of workers who flocked to the island on a

daily basis remain absent as well. It is impossible to shake off the feeling that there was once something here that no longer is; there is an eerie overtone that haunts this place, fascinating as it may be. Today, although all activity seems to have abandoned Cockatoo, this is not quite the case. Over the past few years, the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust has made a point of rehabilitating and transforming the urban island into a cultural location for Sydney. Nevertheless, Cockatoo will remain a place marked by dislocation, as Dagmar Reinhardt argues:

Isolated and detached from urban structures of multiple layers, the presence of the island's topography and objects becomes more apparent. Here, time comes to a halt.<sup>187</sup>

Reinhardt alludes to the art/architectural objects that now 'inhabit' this post-industrial island and the very fact that it is an urban island seems to foreground, in her opinion, their very presence. She continues,

Cockatoo is the site of various degrees of dislocation; the removal of architectural objects or substantial parts, the discontinuation of a program, the displacement of mass and material in the topography. [...] The whole island is the object that is displaced. Such an exposed, stripped-bare territory is in need of readjustment in context and content. On Cockatoo Island, matter was always a matter of reinterpretation. [...] Traces and tracing describe what has been there, what is in progress, and what might come. These traces evoke simultaneity of present, past and future. (2006: 140-41)

Reinhardt responds to the shift in ambience that Cockatoo has undergone and sums up the island's changing nature by pointing out that the place is full of traces indicating the constant reinterpretations it has been subject to. Dislocation and displacement mark the island's shifting history. It is a place in which even time and space are 'displaced' – several different locations appear to coincide with each other and synchronise with different points in time. For

---

<sup>187</sup> Dagmar Reinhardt (2006), "The Fat, the Old and the Beautiful: Material Process and Frictional Resistance on the Body of Architecture". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 140.

instance, markers of the different eras (shipyard, convict gaol, etc.) stand in dialogue with each other and have become part of the island's present temporal and spatial condition. One could call it a time warp, a condensation of time, but also of place(s). In her book on traces ("Spur") and tracing ("Spurenlesen"), Sybille Krämer, a German Professor of Philosophy, analyses the intersection of different temporal levels as a typical feature of the trace and identifies the disruption of time ("Zeitenbruch") as one of its attributes: a trace can only occur when what it refers to or indicates is irreversibly bygone,<sup>188</sup> which is also the case on Cockatoo. This also means that a trace always represents an absence – of something that or someone who is no longer present (cf. Krämer 2007: 14). On Cockatoo, these absences abound, as do the traces and remnants of several 'pasts'. Time stands still in what Farrelly calls a "babbling ghost-town" (2005: 111), exemplified by the disused industrial sites and abandoned convict buildings. Paradoxically, "babbling" which presumably alludes to the many different stories the island could tell, stands in contrast to the image of absence and silence conveyed by ghost-towns. Yet this paradox merely serves to highlight the fact that Cockatoo Island is a heterogeneous place in which contradictions are possible. Simultaneously, different layers of temporality interweave here, as remnants of various times in the past stand next to each other and are confronted with the newest additions to the island such as the tourist campground. It is as if "[t]ime also collapses onto itself in Cockatoo" (Echanove 2006: 153). In "Parallelisms" (2006a), Jaime Rouillon draws attention to the fact that entities from different eras and periods of time that have shaped the island now seem to co-exist here *in parallel*:

This exactly represents the quality of structures on the island; some were never meant to withstand the test of time while others like the Turbine Hall allow new flexible and potential use.<sup>189</sup>

This, again, seems to suggest a heterogeneity that characterises the island. Old and new are intermingled, its original, natural structure (rocks, trees) and its

---

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Sybille Krämer (2007), "Was also ist eine Spur? Und worin besteht ihre epistemologische Rolle? Eine Bestandsaufnahme". In: Krämer, Sybille, Werner Kogge, and Gernot Grube (eds.), *Spur – Spurenlesen als Orientierungstechnik und Wissenskunst*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft. 17.

<sup>189</sup> Jaime Rouillon (2006a), "Parallelisms". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 137.

Aboriginal use as a fishing base is at odds with its later usages as a penal colony and an industrial site, the latter which has changed the island beyond recognition. Hence, Cockatoo is historically loaded. Echanove argues that “Cockatoo mirrors and inverts its geography and history” and “is a space of contradiction where incompatible worlds meet” while “[t]he juxtaposition of different worlds creates hybrid forms” (2006: 152). It is a place in which various ‘pasts’ are condensed.

Absence and silence, then, are felt very strongly on Cockatoo due to their omnipresence in the various structures that reflect the development of this urban island. Not only do the old buildings and disused dockyards convey a certain atmosphere of abandonment, but the layers of history that these artefacts represent also allude to stories buried beneath. However, a group of students and their tutors seem to have removed this silence, at least to a certain extent, with their innovative engagement in the island and its past.

### **3.3.4 Contemporary Psychogeographical Explorations of the Island**

Cockatoo Island has been turned into a tourist destination as well as a site for art venues and artistic experimentation, some of which, as I will argue in the following, can be termed psychogeographical expressions of an engagement with this specific site. Edited by architect Joanne Jakovich, the book *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1* (2006), which I have already cited on several occasions, focuses on Cockatoo and provides an overview of the task that a number of international architects and their Sydney-based students set themselves: to look back at and reappraise the history of the island while at the same time approaching it from a contemporary perspective. The suitability of Cockatoo Island for this endeavour becomes obvious in remarks by German architect Henri Praeger (who was involved in the project as a tutor) in which he identifies Sydney as a city already in itself highly responsive to emotions and hence full of potential for psychogeographical exploration and experimentation:

Sydney presents itself as a vital place offering one thing in particular, alongside the monuments (opera, harbour bridge and museums) – a heightening of senses. [...] Sydney as a tourist destination does not just

present images; it offers locations, specific urban milieus, and atmospheres representing the nodes within a network of metropolitan conditions.

These atmospheres are hardly readable in an image; they are experienced rather than read. Atmospheres do not succumb to classification, like typologies, functions or characters. They are much more embedded in the urban context and in subtle transformations.<sup>190</sup>

Cockatoo is one of these unique urban places. Praeger goes on to emphasise what exactly makes this part of Sydney so special: “Cockatoo Island is overloaded with this kind of raw material waiting for interpretation” (2006: 125). It is this raw material that the students were to engage with. The project was launched with the on-site Urban Islands Symposium focusing on Cockatoo as the location for site-specific artworks. As the organisers Olivia Hyde, Thomas Rivard and Joanne Jakovich state,

Urban islands are places for experimentation; urban labs for acting and reflecting.

Cockatoo Island is a place at once vacant and full, near and far, real and imaginary. As a place that has been continuously inhabited, altered and re-inhabited throughout its history, the physical character of the island itself is entirely open to interpretation. Cockatoo Island thus presented an ideal site for the first Urban Islands workshop, allowing studio investigations to traverse phenomenological, conceptual, material and interpretational concerns.<sup>191</sup>

The forty-five architecture students from the University of Sydney who participated in this two-week workshop in August 2006 were divided into four groups (cf. Hyde/Rivard/Jakovich 2006: 172; Abel 2006: 176), “focusing on different aspects or parts of the island” (Abel 2006: 176) and led by “theorists,

---

<sup>190</sup> Henri Praeger (2006), “Systems of Change, Reality and Revelation”. In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 122.

<sup>191</sup> Olivia Hyde, Thomas Rivard, and Joanne Jakovich (2006), “Introduction to Part III: Works + Critiques”. In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 172.



practitioners or educators” in the field of architecture (Hyde/Rivard/Jakovich 2006: 172). The aim of this workshop/studio was

to establish an architectural discourse with Cockatoo Island, the harbour and the city, and their historical and cultural context, and to communicate visions for reintegrating the island within the city’s fabric to a broader audience.<sup>192</sup>

Distinct as the four groups were, “a common approach [...] quickly emerged” amongst them, namely “an unselfconscious use of both digital and more conventional media [...] bolstered by an equally confident disregard for disciplinary boundaries” (Abel 2006: 176-77). This blurring of boundaries between disciplines and media supports my argument that psychogeography has been moving into a more transdisciplinary field over the past few years. Schnabel describes the projects conducted in the wake of the Urban Islands Studio as “a parametric rethinking of its [Cockatoo Island’s] earlier development, which failed to anticipate changes that arose over the years, thereby excluding the island from the city” (2006: 189). In these workshops, “the boundaries between theoretical and practical realms” were “successfully dismantled”, with the result that the students’ “design creations, reflections and communications” were developed “into a comprehensive urban proposal” (Schnabel 2006: 190). However, the interplay between city and nature remains visible in the finished designs which “describe form by creating both dependencies and parameters that define the urban spaces as well as the landscape”, as Schnabel argues (2006: 191).

Most of the four studios – the Responsive Environment Studio led by Satoru Yamashiro and Jin Hidaka (Japan),<sup>193</sup> the Void/Threshold Studio under the supervision of Jaime Rouillon (Costa Rica), the Subtractive Networks Studio led by Lisa Iwamoto and Craig Scott (USA) as well as Henri Praeger’s and Chris Abel’s Ambient Loop Studio (Germany/Australia) – did not alter the existing structure or buildings on the island but instead “allowed soft responses to hard places” (Schnabel 2006: 191). I shall briefly outline, using the first two

---

<sup>192</sup> Marc Aurel Schnabel (2006), “Rethinking Parameters”. In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 190.

<sup>193</sup> “Responsive Environment (RE) is a unit engaged in spatial expression through collaboration, crossing over diverse boundaries drawn between architecture, image, music, dance and design” since 1993. Accessed 24 October 2015. [page expired, March 2016]: <http://responsiveenvironment.com/wp/#about>

studios as examples, how these “soft responses to hard places” were implemented in the individual cases.

As Liz Bowra points out in her essay “Emancipation of the Surface: Architecture of Spatial Dislocation” (2006), the Tokyo-based multidisciplinary Responsive Environment art group’s installation *Soft Inversions* applies the term ‘Soft Architecture/Soft Urbanism’, in which

they seek to disturb the historical formal ritual of architecture and planning by exploring the potential of software and thereby ‘... increasing the proportion of (architecture’s) intangible aspects,’ realising the possibility of dissolving architecture within the urban network.<sup>194</sup>

The tutors Yamashiro and Hidaka explain *Soft Inversions* by stating that “[t]o design a responsive environment is to understand the dependencies of space and human behaviour”,<sup>195</sup> a definition that resonates with the psycho-geographical interdependence of *geography* and *psyche*. Thus, by employing the term ‘Soft Architecture/Soft Urbanism’ on their “site-specific installation at Cockatoo Island they used these methods to blur the distinction between inside and out, reality and illusion, using the entire expanse of the Turbine Hall” (Bowra 2006: 198). What provides *Soft Inversions* with such a powerful message is the discrepancy between its simplicity of design yet fascinating and seemingly complex effect: “the installation consisted of the two basic elements, water and light, each of which could only be appreciated at different times of the day” (Abel 2006: 177). Abel describes the installation<sup>196</sup> as follows:

First, the vast floor of the hall [Turbine Hall] was flooded in daytime with a thin layer of water, just sufficient to transform the surface into a giant mirror, reflecting the roof of the hall and visually doubling the size of the space [...]. This was followed in the evening by the insertion of row upon row of small candles into the shallow water in straight lines down the full

---

<sup>194</sup> Liz Bowra (2006), “Emancipation of the Surface: Architecture of Spatial Dislocation”. In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 198.

<sup>195</sup> Satoru Yamashiro and Jin Hidaka (2006), “Responsive Environment Studio”. In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 207.

<sup>196</sup> The term ‘installation’ seems more applicable to *Soft Inversions* than architecture, as it seems too ‘soft’ and fluid to be an architectural construction. However, I make use of both terms here as *Soft Inversions* counts de facto as an architectural project.

length of the darkened hall, so that they seemed to stretch to infinity – an awesome sight, which left many observers stunned into silence. (2006: 177)

What makes *Soft Inversions*, with its sacral and cathedral-like aura (cf. Bowra 2006: 199), psychogeographical in my interpretation of the method is a “magical combination of these simple but powerful elements with minimal and only temporary disturbance to the existing structure” (Abel 2006: 178) while simultaneously making reference to this very structure. In fact, as the water (as a natural ‘tool’) reflects the surrounding building, it is a mirror image of this specific site that is characterised by abandonment and appears to echo with its past. As Cat Downie explains,

[t]he eerie emptiness of the Island’s vast expanses and the initial sense of isolation experienced were however tempered by the occupation, but a means by which one could make sense of the overwhelming scale of place and history by coming to a phenomenological understanding.<sup>197</sup>

As a consequence, the “eerie emptiness” exists in parallel to the various historical layers that started to ‘fill’ the island bit by bit, passing through various transformations, yet they did not manage to fully ‘occupy’ the empty gaps. It is this echoing and re-echoing between place and history that counts for a psychogeographical understanding of Cockatoo and its implementation into an artistic and architectural project. The concepts of silence and absence resonate with this installation; it is a silent work of art – literally and metaphorically – that nevertheless draws attention to the building’s and the island’s past, yet without making this reference too obvious as it would destroy the special aura, the ‘silence’, that is part of this “phenomenological understanding”. The interplay between place and ambience, both shaped by the location’s history, has a strong force of expression. Bowra believes that

---

<sup>197</sup> Cat Downie (2006), “[Memories]”. In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 210.

[t]he expansive volume and the intermittent darkness and flickering light revoke the static nature of enclosed space and in its place conjure the masterly illusion of a fluid environment. (2006: 199)

It is here that the idea of 'soft architecture' becomes more apparent: this installation, while it does not physically change the surrounding structure, nevertheless has an impact on the 'hard place' (cf. Schnabel 2006: 191) around it, which it tries to challenge. Or, to put it in Downie's words: "The installation uses 'soft', temporal layers to reveal place through interactive enticement. As a consequence the installation operates through, and is successful because of human involvement" (2006: 211). This means that the installation only 'works' once one interacts with it, once one embarks on the illusion it conveys and thus enters into a dialogue with the place where it is set.

The breaking up of the static appearance of the vast Turbine Hall was also the concern of the Void/Threshold Studio. This group focused on the space between the Turbine Hall and the adjacent sandstone escarpment, which has been radically altered over the centuries. As the group's tutor Jaime Rouillon remarks, his "[s]tudents were confronted here with the notion of space, time and place".<sup>198</sup> According to Rouillon, this gap is a feature of the urban:

It is through the absence of mass that the void is perceived. [...] All urban situations have conditions where the buildings create planned or unplanned 'in between spaces' which eventually become a part of the civic landscape. [...] The objective of the studio was to address and explore these issues which constitute our perception of architecture and place: void, thresholds, material, tectonics, tension, light and shadow. (2006b: 229)

One group of students set themselves to deal with this man-made threshold while paying attention to the different "layers" of history that have been accumulating on this island, resulting in "historical strata".<sup>199</sup> As they explain,

---

<sup>198</sup> Jaime Rouillon (2006b), "Void/Threshold Studio". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 229.

<sup>199</sup> Simon Wilson, Rebecca Simons, and Tasmin Dunn (2006), "[Reconcile]". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 234.

[i]n this site the two pasts of Cockatoo Island do not merge into a single historical entity but stand instead across a 4m wide manmade chasm. [...] Our design sought to reconcile this division without lessening the heightened drama of the void. The Turbine Hall becomes an inhabited wall with manipulated fenestration that unfolds to service each internal space but in so doing performs a conciliatory gesture across the void. The bridge that culminates a grand sweeping swathe through the sandstone cliff makes a similar gesture of reconciliation. Yet the two do not touch. (Wilson/Simons/Dunn 2006: 234-35)

Without attempting to alter the existing structures on Cockatoo and hence similar to the Responsive Environment Studio, this group's proposal draws attention to the historical layering of the island by focusing on the point of contact between two different 'eras' that now shape and characterise this urban island. Interestingly, this point of contact is a gap, a space between a rock and a manmade building. This void corresponds very closely to the concept of absence which I have been tracing in my analyses of texts and (site-specific) artworks with the aid of psychogeography as a methodological approach. The plan for a 'bridging' of the gap in order to reconcile the different pasts of the island, represented by different structures and materials (sandstone versus metal building or 'nature' versus 'culture'), is very symbolic, yet the fact that the bridge is not designed to reach the other side can either be read as a failure or, more positively, as an expression of hope that the various histories of Cockatoo Island might at some stage 'meet' and hence be reconciled. Once again, we encounter gaps or voids that point back to the place's past through the continued opposition between the different structures of the island. Although the absences are made up of 'nothingness', they do, in fact, represent these histories.

### **3.3.5 Conclusion**

To conclude, Cockatoo Island can be counted as a place of psychogeographical interest. It features abandoned buildings and dockyards as well as gaps, silences and absences that point back to its various pasts, yet the contemporary artistic/architectural installations force its visitors to enter into a dialogue with the place. Through these installations, an engagement with the place's history and its possible future seems inevitable. I wanted to include Cockatoo Island into my chapter on Sydney as I aim to show that psychogeography does not necessarily have to be conveyed on a literary basis but that an artistic – or as in this case architectural – engagement with a place and an innovative approach to tackling its past might as well be termed psychogeographical. The projects that were developed in the course of the Urban Islands Symposium bear testimony to the different contemporary expressions of psychogeography and its ability to develop further over time.

### 3.4 Artistic Engagement with Place and History: *Maps That Cried*

The artwork *Maps That Cried* (1995-2005) is another example of an artistic expression of the silences and absences already discussed in relation to literary engagements with Sydney's Aboriginal past. Created by the New Zealand-based artist Ruth Watson, it was part of the research project *Mapping Sydney: Experimental Cartography and the Imagined City*<sup>200</sup> which was curated and edited by Naomi Stead in 2009.<sup>201</sup> While Gibson, in *26 Views*, also seizes on the idea of mapping Sydney in one instance when he reads a sketched map of Sydney Cove as a self-portrait of the map maker, Watson uses the map as a means of foregrounding and coming to terms with the city's 'shadow sides', the cruel and sad events of the past and of the present which are rarely depicted, let alone addressed, in most conventional, tourism-driven representations of Sydney's brighter side. As Wystan Curnow points out, Watson "has a special interest in the history of global projections, and over a ten-year period has returned periodically to the task of elaborating on and exposing their ideological subtexts";<sup>202</sup> *Maps That Cried* is a more local example of this engagement.

As Stead writes in the booklet accompanying *Mapping Sydney*, "[t]he commission was to design and make an experiential or experimental, alternative or idiosyncratic map of Sydney" (2009: 7). The scope of the maps was reminiscent of psychogeographical mapping: the maps were "directed at getting lost" rather than acting as a guide for tourists and were supposed to be subjective expressions of the city, while the term "map" was to be understood very broadly (Stead 2009: 7). However, despite being given creative freedom to create an expressive map of Sydney, the six map makers were obliged to fulfil the following criteria: the work had to be "spatial" and identifiable as a map, and was supposed to "employ (or work against) some of the conventions or ordering systems of mapping", while being more experimental, subjective and open to different interpretations (Stead 2009: 8). It is this innovative approach to and interpretation of mapping a metropolitan area that very productively juxtaposes this project with Gibson's reading of a sketched map of the area as the

---

<sup>200</sup> Naomi Stead (ed.) (2009), *Mapping Sydney: Experimental Cartography and the Imagined City*. Sydney: Local Consumption Publications.

<sup>201</sup> The project was first planned as "'Mapping Sydney: A Theoretical Analysis of Tourist Maps, Itineraries and Guides to the City', which was funded in 2007 as an early career research grant by the University of Technology Sydney" (Stead 2009: 8).

<sup>202</sup> Wystan Curnow (1999), "Mapping and the Expanded Field of Contemporary Art". In: Cosgrove, Denis (ed.), *Mappings*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 262.

draughtsman's self-portrait. Neither Gibson nor Watson aim at representing Sydney true to scale; they are neither geographers nor cartographers interested in precise mapping. Rather, they try to capture what the city conveys, how it resonates back to them (or to the character in focus as in Gibson's/Dawes' case), what stories it tells.

Having abandoned the initial idea of investigating "the way that tourist media [...] represent the city of Sydney" (Stead 2009: 8), the six maps that were created succeeded instead in shedding a light on "the numerous other Sydneys suppressed or overlooked by conventional maps" (Stead 2009: 9). This is what makes the project so important to my research as it moves away from the 'postcard' images typically associated with Sydney and instead grapples with the not-so-glamorous events which have happened and continue to happen here.

Of the six maps, I have chosen Watson's *Maps That Cried* (Fig. 6., p. 222) because it lends itself to interpretation as a visual representation of the silences and absences that hover beneath the city's glitzy surface and is therefore of particular pertinence to my research. It is "a collage of fragments" from nine different maps that represent Sydney, including the Sydney railway map, various tourist maps with enlarged foci on specific sites and a map representing the Aboriginal nations of Greater Sydney (Stead 2009: 13-14). These maps are "united by the fact that each is 'crying' globular glass tears", which act as magnifying glasses while distorting or "magnifying parts of words and names [or specific locations] from the map beneath" (Stead 2009: 13). In the map legend, Watson points out that "'map' is slang for face", making plausible the interpretation of this fragmentary assemblage of maps as "a bold, colourful, and bright mask" that Sydney has slipped on (Stead 2009: 14). But what is hidden behind this mask or façade? Who is crying these tears? The map in the top left corner hints at the answer:

These complex territorial dispositions, laid down over millennia, were completely ignored at the time of white settlement, over-written by new documents that claimed the land simultaneously as they measured and mapped it. (Stead 2009: 14)

Yet different fates also enter the limelight in the other maps:



The maps are 'crying' for the dispossessed, for the incarcerated and the institutionalized, for convicts as well as the present day asylum seekers detained at Villawood Detention Centre. (Stead 2009: 14)

In *Maps That Cried*, past and present are brought together: for instance the suppression and persecution of the Indigenous people or the fate of the eighteenth-century convicts are positioned in relation to the treatment of today's asylum seekers who are equally excluded from the Sydney represented in the colourful maps. Watson states that her aim was "to create some tension between the contemporary, overly cheerful promotional view of Sydney via its maps" which seem so bright and happy at first glance, and those sad and cruel events the city has seen in the past (Watson cited in Stead 2009: 13). In this respect, Watson's map could be described as a visual representation of Delia Falconer's remark cited previously: colourful and cheerful from outside, but full of darkness inside. As Stead notes: "This might be described as a map of affect, of emotion – silently noting the tragedies of history, as they remain marked in place", and Watson's map seems to zoom in on exactly those spots in the cityscape by acting as "a kind of lens, drawing our attention to sites of trauma and sorrow in Sydney's history" (2009: 14). In the map legend, Watson expresses her empathy with the people affected by these tragedies in a poem-like statement of solidarity:

Some tears are mine  
and some are by others,  
or for others. Some are offered  
in sorrow, or remembrance,  
or gratitude.  
Margin for error: none  
and all the time and spaces...

As *Maps That Cried* has shown, an emotional engagement with the city is not confined to writing but can also be expressed in artworks that are closely connected to specific urban sites and deal with the interconnection between place and inhabitant. Watson's map addresses the psychogeographical 'spirit of

place', while spanning the whole history of the city from its Indigenous beginnings to the present day.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Sydney, like presumably every metropolis, is a city of contradictions where the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the light and the dark are never too far apart. However, as the beautiful sides are so apparent and omnipresent in this city, its silences and absences are more difficult to imagine and to disentangle than is the case for other cities, for instance Berlin, as we will see shortly. The ways of dealing with these silences and absences may differ from each other, yet what the texts/projects share is a profound interest in the layering of the city of Sydney and an attention to its hidden stories, which often point back to the Aboriginal past. I aimed to demonstrate on the basis of the chosen primary sources why I believe that a psychogeographical reading/approach enables a foregrounding of these silences and absences (at least to a certain extent). The texts and projects either address the *inside*, the city's 'soul' or 'character', or the close entanglements between an urban location and the people who move within it and are affected by it, which I read as their respective psychogeographical potential.

I shall now turn to my third city example, Berlin, in which the silences and absences play an equally important yet, paradoxically, more visible role.

## 4. Berlin – City of Scars

Imagine Berlin. Imagine a city of fragments and ghosts. Imagine a metropolis which inspired countless artists and witnessed uncountable murders. Imagine a laboratory of ideas, the fount of both the brightest and darkest designs of history's most bloody century. Imagine the most arrogant capital of Europe devastated by Allied bombs then divided. Imagine it reunited and reborn as one of the creative centres of the world.<sup>203</sup>

Berlin's history is intricately interwoven with the events of the twentieth century, whose aftermath still has an impact on the city today. These 'scars', which often manifest themselves as silences and absences which refer back to the past, are pervasive in Berlin and have become part of the German capital. To a large extent they are visible in the cityscape, for instance in the form of bullet holes in buildings, gaps in rows of houses, or the double line of cobblestones which winds its way through the city, indicating the pathway of the former Berlin Wall. Yet these scars apply not only to buildings or objects but can also be perceived on a more metaphorical level, very often making reference to the absence of large sections of the population: the Jewish Berliners who were forced into exile or killed during the Holocaust. According to Fulbrook, the question of how this absence is being dealt with is central to contemporary Berlin:

[...] the overriding impression to be gained from the ubiquitous commemoration of former Jewish residents of Berlin is one of absence. The visual recognition of their absence, and of the memorialization of their absence, in a city full of ghosts, has been highly ambivalent.  
(2009: 135)

The Second World War and the Holocaust, the division into East and West Berlin, the fall of the Wall and the subsequent reunification of the two inner-German states have turned Berlin into a city which is self-conscious not only of its fragmentariness but also of the legacy of its turbulent history. In fact, "[h]istorical tourism" (Fulbrook 2009: 137) booms in Berlin: tourists visit the

---

<sup>203</sup> Rory Maclean (2014), *Berlin: Imagine a City*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 391.

Topography of Terror at the former site of the headquarters of the Third Reich's Secret State Police (SS) and the Reich Security Main Office,<sup>204</sup> they visit the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,<sup>205</sup> the Berlin Wall Memorial at Bernauer Straße,<sup>206</sup> the 'Wall Museum' at Checkpoint Charlie<sup>207</sup> and the East Side Gallery<sup>208</sup> and explore the subterranean structures and bunkers under the city in guided tours,<sup>209</sup> to name just a few popular tourist destinations. There is no escaping the past, which is part and parcel of the cityscape, tourism and everyday life in Berlin:

Probably most Germans and most Berliners feel this way, but at every step they find they must defend their wish to forget against fellow citizens who insist on remembering. The calls for remembrance – and the calls for silence and forgetting – make all silence and all forgetting impossible, and they also make remembrance difficult.

Memories often cleave to the physical settings of events. That is why buildings and places have so many stories to tell. They give form to a city's history and identity.<sup>210</sup>

As Uta Staiger and Henriette Steiner point out, “the late twentieth century” experienced a veritable “memory boom” (Jay Winter).<sup>211</sup> However, although my primary focus in this chapter will not be on the city in relation to a memory culture, the primary sources I have selected as psychogeographical examples of Berlin also refer to the memories or feelings connected to certain places and explore – each in their own way – why the city continues to tell stories of its past. Generally speaking and despite their obvious differences, the primary sources either refer to the (impact of the) Second World War or (the absence of) the Wall, or both.

---

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Topography of Terror website (accessed 21 January 2016): <http://www.topographie.de/en/>

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Holocaust Memorial website (accessed 21 January 2016):

<http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/en/home.html>

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Berlin Wall Memorial website (accessed 21 January 2016): <http://www.berliner-mauer-gedenkstaette.de/en/>

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Mauermuseum website (accessed 21 January 2016): <http://www.mauermuseum.de/>

<sup>208</sup> Cf. East Side Gallery website (accessed 21 January 2016): <http://www.eastsidegallery-berlin.de/>

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Berliner Unterwelten website (accessed 27 January 2016):

<http://berliner-unterwelten.de/home.1.1.html>

<sup>210</sup> Brian Ladd (1997), *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press. 1.

<sup>211</sup> Uta Staiger and Henriette Steiner (2009), “Introduction”. In: Staiger, Uta, Henriette Steiner, and Andrew Webber (eds.), *Memory Culture and the Contemporary City: Building Sites*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 1.

Following the structure of the Sydney-chapter, I have selected different 'voices' and approaches to Berlin – two non-fiction texts, two documentaries and one memorial/artwork – which I read as psychogeographical as they share a sensitivity towards Berlin's scars and the city's coming to terms with its past.

Hanns-Josef Ortheil's *Die Berlinreise* (2014) is a travel journal, which the author wrote as a boy for his father in memory of the days they had spent together in Berlin that same year, in 1964. One encounters the divided Berlin three years after the Wall was built through the eyes of a child confronting in this city for the first time his family's traumatic secrets which hark back to the Second World War and which, for the Ortheil family, are emotionally linked to the city of Berlin. *Die Berlinreise* can be read through the lens of psychogeography, because the text illustrates the way in which a place can impact very strongly on a group of people by conjuring up haunting and painful memories.

The other primary text is Cees Nootboom's *Roads to Berlin* (2013), in which the Dutch author covers almost fifty years of Berlin's history from the perspective of a well-informed onlooker, paying close attention to the immediate post-Wall period he witnessed as a part-time resident in Berlin, yet referring back time and again to the Second World War and the Holocaust. Nootboom is susceptible to atmospheres and incidents, especially during the times of turmoil immediately before and after the fall of the Wall, and provides his readers with a subjective assessment of the events around him while retaining a distance from these events himself. In the tradition of the writer-as-walker, Nootboom wanders the city and reports what he sees and feels in this fast-changing city which he finds both fascinating and slightly intimidating.

The two documentary films, *Cycling the Frame* (1988) and *The Invisible Frame* (2009), both directed by Cynthia Beatt and featuring actress Tilda Swinton cycling along the (former) border, deal respectively with the impact of the Wall and its absence. With attention to detail and atmospheres, the documentaries convey a feel for the constant menace emanating from the presence of the Wall (in 1988) as well as for the fact that its physical disappearance still continues to raise questions twenty-one years later.

The decentralised memorial in the so-called Bavarian Quarter (Bayerisches Viertel) in the district of Schöneberg, designed by the artist Renata Stih and the art historian Frieder Schnock in 1993, commemorates the

former large Jewish population of this neighbourhood. Stih and Schnock mounted signs on lampposts scattered over the streets surrounding the local central square. On the one side the signs feature short versions of the anti-Semitic decrees which were issued by the Nazis and which entailed the gradual disenfranchisement of the Jewish population, while on the other side pictograms illustrate (or reverse or challenge, respectively) these laws. The memorial thus initiates an engagement with the legacy of anti-Semitism in the everyday by drawing attention to the absence left behind by the people who used to be residents of this neighbourhood.

Before elaborating on the close readings of the primary sources, I shall provide a general (and by no means complete) overview of both contemporary as well as late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Berlin texts. The urban drifts of the early 'Berlin *flâneurs*' – Theodor Fontane, Siegfried Kracauer, Franz Hessel and Walter Benjamin – convey a feel for the city about a century ago and describe Berlin at a time before the Second World War and the Wall changed the city forever. All these texts, though to varying degrees, focus on capturing the *genius loci* of Berlin and what they associate with this city.

Collected and edited by Gotthard Erler, '*Wie man in Berlin so lebt': Beobachtungen und Betrachtungen aus der Hauptstadt* (2012 [2000]),<sup>212</sup> a compilation of excerpts of texts by Fontane, gives an impression of Berlin from the 1830s to 1890s. Fontane's sharp eye and often teasing tone shows Berlin in the nineteenth century as a city in the process of developing into a metropolis (cf. 2012: 68) and making its contribution to the world events. '*Wie man in Berlin so lebt*' provides the background to the texts written at the beginning of the twentieth century as it alludes to the way in which Berlin could become the city we encounter in Kracauer's, Hessel's and Benjamin's texts: a city of automobiles, cabarets, dance halls and department stores, yet also of poverty, prostitution and hardship.

Kracauer's *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo* (2009),<sup>213</sup> comprising sketches and essays from the years 1926 to 1933, yet not published until 1964, is a loose selection of street scenes, many of which take place in Berlin. Though set in

---

<sup>212</sup> Theodor Fontane (2012 [2000]), '*Wie man in Berlin so lebt': Beobachtungen und Betrachtungen aus der Hauptstadt*. Ed. Gotthard Erler. Berlin: Aufbau Verlag.

<sup>213</sup> Siegfried Kracauer (2009 [1964]), *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Paris, the opening essay describes his seemingly aimless walks through the city (cf. 2009: 10), which brought him to a kind of 'street frenzy' ("Straßenrausch") (cf. 2009: 9) – a depiction reminiscent of the Situationist *dérives* of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>214</sup> His depiction of the famous Kurfürstendamm testifies his feel for the city:

Scheinen manche Straßenzüge für die Ewigkeit geschaffen zu sein, so ist der heutige Kurfürstendamm die Verkörperung der leer hinfließenden Zeit, in der nichts zu dauern vermag. (2009: 20)

Born to an affluent Jewish family, world-famous philosopher, cultural critic and Parisian *flâneur* Benjamin has also focused on his hometown Berlin in his writing. His *Berliner Chronik*,<sup>215</sup> first written in 1932, is a slightly fragmentary chronicle recounting memories of his childhood in Berlin at the turn of the century. Six years later, this text was transformed into his famous *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert*.<sup>216</sup> Both books provide an impression of the author's childhood in Berlin and conjure up a picture of the city around the turn of the century. Benjamin captures the spirit of the city at the beginning of what was to become a turbulent century.

In *Spazieren in Berlin* (2012 [1929]),<sup>217</sup> Hessel situates himself in the tradition of the 1920s' *flânerie*: "Langsam durch belebte Straßen zu gehen, ist ein besonderes Vergnügen. Man wird überspült von der Eile der andern, es ist ein Bad in der Brandung" (2012: 23). He notes that everyone, except for himself, the *flâneur*, seems to have a destination: "Hier geht man nicht wo, sondern wohin. Es ist nicht leicht für unsereinen" (2012: 26). This urban wandering, in combination with a poetic, at times metaphorical and slightly more old-fashioned language than his friend Benjamin's, accounts for Hessel's unique style and perspective on Berlin.

---

<sup>214</sup> I do not think the Situationists knew of Kracauer, but as he had been to Paris, it is not impossible.

<sup>215</sup> Walter Benjamin (1988 [1970] [1932]), *Berliner Chronik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

<sup>216</sup> Walter Benjamin (1987 [1938]), *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

<sup>217</sup> Franz Hessel (2012 [1929]), *Spazieren in Berlin - Ein Lehrbuch der Kunst in Berlin spazieren zu gehn ganz nah dem Zauber der Stadt von dem sie selbst kaum weiß. Ein Bilderbuch in Worten*. Berlin: Bloomsbury Verlag.



With this brief overview of earlier Berlin writers in mind, I shall take a leap in time to the turn of the next century. Since the early 1990s a plethora of (non-fiction) books on Berlin has been published, most of which share the aim of capturing either 'the Berlin spirit' or the legacy of its past and how it has changed and continues to do so. They attest to a general fascination with Berlin, especially the post-Wall Berlin, which has become increasingly popular and 'trendy'. Most contemporary non-fiction texts with a focus on Berlin seem to go in broadly two directions: one group of authors provides short, often humoristic 'sketches' of contemporary Berlin life while another group explores the specific past of a particular house, road or 'Kiez' (neighbourhood). However, the books which fall within the first 'category'<sup>218</sup> shall not be elaborated on here any further as they do not lend themselves to a psychogeographical reading. The majority of them depict short, everyday scenes connected to particular locations in Berlin. They are captured in humorous, colloquial language from the subjective point of view of the respective author, yet they do not go beyond the playful rendering of street life in Berlin to engage in a more sophisticated dialogue with the urban places and their history.

The second category of texts could be termed 'local history' and is much more relevant for my project but, unlike the London psychogeographers' research into hidden stories and mythical urban edges, the particular focus of the Berlin-based writers is on the former inhabitants of a particular street, house or neighbourhood to which they have a personal connection – a similar incentive initiated the memorial in the Bavarian Quarter.

Regina Scheer started to interview the neighbours of her former school in Auguststraße in Mitte and discovered that the building had a chequered history, housing at one point, among other institutions, a Jewish children's home. In *AHAWAH – Das vergessene Haus. Spurensuche in der Berliner Auguststrasse* (2004),<sup>219</sup> the reader follows her search for today's mostly hidden Jewish traces in Mitte.

---

<sup>218</sup> Examples of this 'group' of books would be David Wagner's *In Berlin* (2001), *Welche Farbe hat Berlin* (2011) and *Berlin Triptych* (2014), René Hamann's *Das Alphabet der Stadt: Berliner Szenen* (2008), Björn Kuhligh's *Grossraumtaxi: Berliner Szenen* (2014), Annett Gröschner's *City Spaces: Filling in Berlin's Gaps* (2015) and Ilma Rakusa's *Aufgerissene Blicke: Berlin Journal* (2013), although the latter is different in style (less humoristic).

<sup>219</sup> Regina Scheer (2004 [1992]), *AHAWAH – Das vergessene Haus. Spurensuche in der Berliner Auguststrasse*. Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH.

In *Ruhige Straße in guter Wohnlage – Die Geschichte meiner Nachbarn* (2013),<sup>220</sup> French journalist and long-time Berlin resident Pascale Hugues traces the history of her street in the district of Schöneberg and, with a mixture of archival research, interviews of neighbours and her own personal thoughts and observations, creates a ‘characterisation’ of a street and its inhabitants.

Knut Elstermann’s *Meine Winsstraße* (2013),<sup>221</sup> published in the series ‘Berliner Orte’, is a portrait of the street he grew up in in Prenzlauer Berg in which he pursues a search similar to Hugues’ and Scheer’s. During the course of a year he visits Winsstraße on a regular basis, notes what has changed or remained the same, talks to old and new residents and mixes their thoughts and feelings with his own memories and new impressions.

Andreas Ulrich’s *Torstraße 94* (2015)<sup>222</sup> was published in the same series as *Meine Winsstraße*. Here, Ulrich contacts former and current residents of the house in Mitte where he grew up for most of his childhood and writes a sort of chronicle of this particular house.

As this latter group of texts has shown, there is a tendency in contemporary non-fiction dealing with Berlin to engage in research into particular places of residence and their former tenants, which often (at least indirectly) leads back to the Holocaust or the Cold War. Although not always in a psychogeographical manner, these non-fiction texts nevertheless add to a multifarious picture of Berlin’s history and encourage a glimpse beneath the surface.

As I hope to have shown with this broad overview, in the last few years in particular there has been an increasing demand for non-fiction books on Berlin’s residential areas and the personal stories connected to certain places or buildings. I shall now turn to a close reading of my first primary text, Ortheil’s *Die Berlinreise*.

---

<sup>220</sup> Pascale Hugues (2013), *Ruhige Straße in guter Wohnlage – Die Geschichte meiner Nachbarn*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag GmbH.

<sup>221</sup> Knut Elstermann (2013), *Meine Winsstraße*. Berliner Orte. Berlin: be.bra Verlag GmbH.

<sup>222</sup> Andreas Ulrich (2015), *Torstraße 94*. Berliner Orte. Berlin: be.bra Verlag GmbH.

#### 4.1 The Silence of Memory: Berlin in the 1960s through the Eyes of a Child

Hanns-Josef Ortheil's *Die Berlinreise – Roman eines Nachgeborenen* (2014)<sup>223</sup> is based on the extensive notes that the author gathered as a twelve-year-old during his first visit to Berlin with his father in 1964. The book oscillates between diary, travelogue, biography (of his parents) and autobiography and creates a vivid and very unusual picture of the city three years after the building of the Wall. Ortheil turned the notes he had taken in Berlin between 30 April and 08 May 1964 over the following months into what he called “a travel diary” (“Reisetagebuch”) – a small travelogue which he gave to his father as a Christmas present. As stated in the prologue of the current edition, *Die Berlinreise* exists in its original 1964 version, except for a few minor “orthographic and stylistic corrections” (8) which his father undertook shortly after he was given the book. I argue that, because of the fact that the text under discussion represents the ideas and feelings of a child, it is a special city portrait, which, not only due to its unconventional language, creates a distinct and unique view of Berlin in the 1960s – a view which is of relevance even today. In order to provide a feel for the idiosyncratic language and descriptions the boy uses, I will quote quite extensively from *Die Berlinreise*. It should also be noted that hardly any secondary literature exists on *Die Berlinreise* as the book only came out in 2014.

The tense situation between East and West Berlin was skilfully captured by the young Ortheil, yet what makes this in my opinion an outstanding text and one classifiable as an example of psychogeographical writing is the fact that it is not merely a portrait of the city during times of unrest in the East-West conflict but, at the same time, an interpretation of Berlin on the basis of his parents' reminiscences reaching back to the Second World War. Ortheil is extremely susceptible to the manner in which Berlin and the memories connected to it affect his father and only gradually, by means of experiencing the city and certain places himself, does the young boy find out about the deaths of his four

---

<sup>223</sup> Hanns-Josef Ortheil (2014), *Die Berlinreise – Roman eines Nachgeborenen*. München: Luchterhand Literaturverlag. Subsequent references are to this edition and cited parenthetically in the text. All translations into English are my own.

older brothers, extremely traumatic events which haunt his family and provide an explanation for the subtitle which refers to him as “*a later-born*”.<sup>224</sup>

In the following, I shall elaborate on this interconnection between the city, the author and his parents and how they are affected by each other. I argue that Ortheil reads Berlin through the past of his parents; to a certain extent, the text is both a re-enactment of a bygone Berlin and a coming to terms with the contemporary (that is, 1960s') state of the city. The Berlin portrait drawn by Ortheil is one tainted with the sad memories but also nostalgic moments his father experiences during this visit. At the same time it is an important journey for their father-son relationship, as becomes apparent at several instances in the text. I read *Die Berlinreise* as a rendering of how the feelings of his parents towards the city are mediated, transformed and reflected on by their son. He describes what Berlin triggers (and has triggered) in his father and finds out indirectly why his mother avoids Berlin. The pivotal role of the mother, who is not physically present during this Berlin trip but indirectly seems to haunt the city and thus influences her son's perception of Berlin, will become more lucid in the course of this discussion. She remains an absence in the present. The young author explores what I would term a psychogeographical interaction between the city and his parents' reactions and sets out on his own psychogeographical wanderings of the city, always following in his parents' tracks. Thus, one could read *Die Berlinreise* as a psychogeographical biography of his parents (especially of the mentally fragile mother) and how their past is intricately connected to Berlin, as well as a psychogeographical autobiography focusing on how Ortheil experiences the city and deals with the secrets that come to the fore during the course of their Berlin trip.

It seems almost unbelievable that a twelve-year-old has written this book all by himself, yet when considering Ortheil's biography, it becomes apparent how closely his family situation is connected to his development as a writer from an early age. Only by means of this background information can the complexities illustrated in the text be fully grasped on a more profound and psychogeographical level. Therefore a brief biographical overview seems relevant to precede the close reading. As the text at hand is not a piece of fiction (despite its subtitle) but an (auto-) biographical travel diary, running the

---

<sup>224</sup> Although *Die Berlinreise* is based on his diary-like entries and is therefore not a piece of fiction, Ortheil calls it a novel in the subtitle, which leads one to speculate to what extent he might have changed his original notes after all.

risk of drawing inferences from the author's biography about the content of the book does not apply here.

#### 4.1.1 Biographical Background

Ortheil's childhood was informed by silences and absences – literally and metaphorically speaking – which were connected to his family's traumatic experiences during the war. Paradoxically enough, these traumas, despite the many disadvantages they entailed, had a positive impact on the author's early writing career. In an interview with Hartmut Steinecke, Ortheil states that he started at a very young age to put his own life into writing and produced mostly chronicles.<sup>225</sup>

Born in Cologne in 1951, Ortheil was the fifth son of his parents but the only one who survived. The first son was a stillbirth, born during an air raid on Berlin. The second child died on 06 April 1945 during the last weeks of the Second World War when American troops stormed 'Hecke' (Hedge),<sup>226</sup> the farm of relatives near his mother's hometown in the Westerwald region to which she had fled. Tragically, friendly fire, shrapnel from a German tank, hit the three-year-old boy and he died immediately, a most traumatic event, which, in combination with a head injury that had damaged his mother's speech centre, caused her to remain mute for years.<sup>227</sup> This tragedy haunted the Ortheil family forever and had a lasting impact – not only on his mother. It is one of the secrets the author and his father talk about during their first – and only – visit to Berlin together as rendered in *Die Berlinreise*. His mother gave birth to two more children before Hanns-Josef was born, but both boys died within days (cf. Ortheil 1994: 11). The fact that before him four older siblings had once existed and, in particular, the death of the second brother, are important to gaining a better understanding of how Ortheil became the author he is now. It also partly explains why the child we encounter in *Die Berlinreise* appears to be such an unusual boy.

---

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Hartmut Steinecke (1999), *Gewandelte Wirklichkeit – verändertes Schreiben? Zur neuesten deutschen Literatur: Gespräche, Werke, Porträts*. Oldenburg: Igel Verlag. 49.

<sup>226</sup> Ortheil's second autobiographical novel, in which he reappraises the past and this traumatic family secret, is named *Hecke*, after this farm.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. Hanns-Josef Ortheil (1994), "Familienbande: Die Anfänge des Schreibens". In: Freese, Peter (ed.), *Paderborner Universitätsreden*. Paderborn: Hausdruckerei. 11-13.

The falling silent of his mother due to the shock connected to the death of her children played a central role in the early childhood development of Ortheil who describes her in his autobiographical account<sup>228</sup> *Das Element des Elephanten* (2001) as “terror-stricken”:

Meine Mutter überlebte, verstört und geschädigt, denn der in den Kopf eingedrungene Splitter hatte das Sprachzentrum verletzt. Seit dem Tod meines Bruders war meine Mutter eine lange Zeit stumm, ein lebendes, in sich erstarrtes, zu Tode erschrockenes Bündel, das aufhörte, weiter an das Leben zu glauben.<sup>229</sup>

His mother, diagnosed with aphasia, was incapable of teaching her fifth son how to speak. Any efforts to invite other people who tried to make him talk failed: “Doch ich schwieg” (Ortheil 2001: 23). The child Ortheil, in turn, was diagnosed with a form of autism and existed in his own private world. The only other person whom he admitted to his cocoon was his mother, whose muteness set him an example:

So lebte ich lange im Reich meiner Mutter, mit ihr war ich am liebsten allein. Ich sah ihre Gesten, die ganze Mimik der Zutraulichkeit, wir gingen zu zweit spazieren, und es war, als gehörten wir so zusammen für immer.

Die Urphantasien, die aus diesem Kammerspiel entstanden, haben mein bisheriges Schreiben geprägt wie sonst nichts. (Ortheil 2001: 23-24)

His mother’s “realm” was the only world he knew for the first years, no one else was admitted to it, he kept her for himself.<sup>230</sup> They were like mirrors, writes Ortheil, and as she did not speak, nor did he (cf. 2001: 27-28). This extremely close bond was only endangered by one other entity: books (cf. Ortheil 2001: 29). When his mother read, there was no longer room for him, he felt excluded

---

<sup>228</sup> In an interview with Steinecke, Ortheil admits that *Das Element des Elephanten* is not easily classifiable in terms of genre (cf. Steinecke 1999: 43), but ‘autobiographical account’ seems to come close to describing this text.

<sup>229</sup> Hanns-Josef Ortheil (2001 [1994]), *Das Element des Elephanten – Wie mein Schreiben begann*. München: Piper. 21. All translations into English are my own.

<sup>230</sup> I shall refrain from an interpretation of his relationship to his mother as presented here although it would lend itself to a Freudian psychoanalytical analysis (for example cf. Ortheil 2001: 43), yet this is not the focus of my interest in his autobiography.

from her realm and distanced from her (cf. Ortheil 2001: 29-31). He reacted to his mother's reading by physically and violently engaging himself in the books: he carried them around, ripped them apart, even ate them. Later this behaviour turned into a passion for libraries (cf. Ortheil 2001: 31-32), a "reading addiction" ("Lesesucht"), which physically stimulated him (Ortheil 2001: 33): "Lesen war die triebhafte Passion der Schweigsamen" (Ortheil 2001: 34), a kind of compensation for his inability to speak.<sup>231</sup> It is obvious from his autobiography that his parents actively encouraged his reading and writing from an early age. As his initial destructive obsession for books was unstoppable, his mother cut out paper letters for him and began to "whisper" ("hauchen") the sounds of the respective letters to him (Ortheil 2001: 36), yet the child hated these letters, they were intruders that disrupted the bond between him and his mother:

Die Buchstaben waren wie Unholde, kleine, springlebendige Geister, die sich einnisteten zwischen meiner Mutter und mir, die die fremden Provinzen bevölkerten wie rastlose Ameisen, denen kein Weg zu weit und keine Mühe zu groß war. (Ortheil 2001: 37)

In consequence, he tried to "exterminate" the letters, and only when, in May 1956, his mother gave him – the then four-year-old – a notebook into which he copied them did he succeed in "killing the dangerous letters" ("tötete ich die gefährlichen Buchstaben") (Ortheil 2001: 38-39). This is how his writing began – an occupation that has become part of him ever since this day. The heightened perception of his surroundings seems to have been a consequence of his early autism – as argued by Johanna Cattus, Ortheil seems to fancy himself in the persona of the autistic child who, due to his unconventional introduction to language, has developed a special sense of perception.<sup>232</sup> Connected to the writing process was a state of physical and mental exception, an "inner heat" which "glowed" in him (Ortheil 2001: 40), yet it was not always a productive condition but one connected to a deep-seated sensation of fear:

---

<sup>231</sup> Cf. Heinz-Peter Preusser (2003), *Letzte Welten – Deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur diesseits und jenseits der Apokalypse*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter. 252.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Johanna Cattus (2009), "Kokettieren mit Autobiographie: Hanns-Josef Ortheil und das Spiel mit dem Autobiographischen in seinen jüngeren Texten: *Das Element des Elefanten, Lo und Lu, Die weißen Inseln der Zeit, Im Licht der Lagune, Die Nacht des Don Juan, Die große Liebe und Das Verlangen nach Liebe*". In: Bartl, Andrea (ed.) (assisted by Hanna Viktoria Becker) (2009), *Transitträume. Beiträge zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*. Germanistik und Gegenwartsliteratur, Band 4. Augsburg: Wißner-Verlag. 366.

In der Tiefe dieses Innern aber brodelte die Angst, die alte, nie auszulöschende Empfindung, die Weltraserei, hin auf das dunkle, verschlingende Loch, hin auf die Vernichtung. Manchmal glaube ich, es ist die Kriegsangst, die da in mir rast, manchmal denke ich, ich wurde schon in früheren Zeiten geboren, Jahre vor meiner Geburt war ein Teil meines Ich im Krieg, manchmal glaube ich, die Angst ist eine Kriegskindangst.

So sind die ersten Stunden des Schreibens jedes Mal, wenn es gelingt, Anfällen von Überhitzung vergleichbar, die Außenwelt verblaßt, verfällt und verglüht, während in mir nicht mein eigenes, sondern ein mit der Zeit immer fremderes Sprechen die Herrschaft anzutreten scheint. (Ortheil 2001: 41)

Fear seems to have accompanied Ortheil all his life; it is one of the first sensations he remembers. Due to their close relationship, his mother over-protected her only child that had survived and passed on her own anxiety:

Jahrelang habe ich daher in meiner Mutter die Angst gesehen. Die Angst war das erste, das intensivste körperliche Empfinden. Es war eine Art Grauen, ein plötzliches Abrutschen der inneren Stimmungen, ein heißes, chaotisch werdendes Brennen, so, als könnte einen jeder Gegenstand, noch der harmloseste, verletzen. Im Zustand der Angst war ich gelähmt, ich spürte den kalten Schweißfilm, der allmählich die Haut überzog, während in mir die Gewißheit wuchs, nichts werde sich ordnen lassen.

In der Angst gibt es nur die Bedrohung. (Ortheil 2001: 28)

Fear also plays an important role in *Die Berlinreise*, especially when father and son visit East Berlin. In an interview, Ortheil states that this fear of Berlin – “ein geheimes Berlin-Angst-Zittern” – has never fully left him, it still grows on him whenever he visits this city.<sup>233</sup> This sensation that manifests itself mentally and physically in response to a certain location can be read as an instance of psychogeography, as shall be demonstrated in the following.

---

<sup>233</sup> Cf. “Hanns-Josef Ortheil, Die Berlinreise”, presented by Max Moor. RBB “Bücher und Moor”. 05 June 2014, accessed 03 July 2014. <http://www.rbb-online.de/buecherundmoor/archiv/buecher-und-moor-christian-berkel/hanns-josef-ortheil--die-berlinreise.html>



#### 4.1.2 East Berlin

On the fifth day of their Berlin trip (04 May 1964), father and son decide to go on a sightseeing tour by bus, which also crosses the border to East Berlin – a novel experience for the young author who has never been to the German Democratic Republic before. From the moment the bus approaches the Wall, the author seems to sense that something is in the air, a feeling of menace and threat. He is susceptible to the individual spirit of the places he visits. With the bluntness and directness of a child he records what crosses his mind and what draws his attention as the bus enters East Berlin:

Wir fahren an der Mauer vorbei, und ich spürte, dass ich wieder (wie schon gestern Abend) einen trockenen Mund bekam. Die hässliche Mauer und der viele Stacheldraht machten mir nämlich Angst, und noch mehr Angst machten mir die Wachsoldaten, die man auf der anderen Seite der Mauer lauern und über die Mauer hinweg zu uns hinschauen sah. Einige beobachteten unseren Bus mit Ferngläsern, und ich überlegte, ob ich auch mein kleines Fernglas aus dem Rucksack holen und die Ost-Soldaten damit beobachten sollte. Das aber tat ich dann doch nicht, ich hatte einfach zu viel Angst, denn es hätte ja sein können, dass ich einen Ost-Soldaten durch mein Fernglas beobachtet hätte, der wiederum gerade mich mit seinem Fernglas beobachtete. Wir hätten uns also durch unsere Ferngläser gegenseitig beobachtet, und das wäre dann etwas schon beinahe Kriegerisches gewesen, ich meine natürlich nicht richtiger Krieg, sondern: Beobachtungskrieg. (125-26)

The sight of the Berlin Wall, the soldiers and barbed wire prompt a physical and mental sensation in him: fear, which manifests itself physically in the dryness of his mouth. As they pass the Soviet Memorial, Ortheil describes very precisely the surroundings and notes that it is the first time he has seen a tank and soldiers. He ponders on tanks in a separate little passage, as he does throughout the book with other words or objects he encounters (cf. 127). The menace of war is omnipresent and, although he is impatient to ask his father many questions, he restrains himself from doing so as he notices his father's reluctance to talk about the war (cf.127). This behaviour is rather atypical of a

child, but it seems characteristic of the boy as he often chokes back what is at the tip of his tongue in order to not upset his father (for instance cf. 26, 28, 41, 42). Instead, his notes bear witness to his feel for the place:

Hinter der Mauer war es ganz leer und öde und grau, und die ganze Gegend um das Brandenburger Tor herum erschien mir noch immer wie eine Kriegsgegend. Am schlimmsten sah das Reichstagsgebäude aus: dunkel und zerfetzt. (128)

As they are about to cross the border, their guide disembarks and a guide from East Berlin enters the bus on the other side of the Wall. Ortheil observes the new guide very closely and considers the differences between East and West Berliners:

Der Ostberliner Führer sprach sehr rasch und als sagte er etwas auswendig Gelerntes auf, jedenfalls brauchte er anscheinend überhaupt nicht über das Gesagte nachzudenken. Anders als der Westberliner Stadtführer machte er auch keine Witze oder gab sich sonst irgendeine Mühe, flott oder gut gelaunt zu wirken. (130)

What I find striking about *Die Berlinreise* is the combination of, on the one hand, thoughts and impressions of a twelve-year-old<sup>234</sup> and, on the other hand, very carefully considered accounts of his surroundings which could have been made by an adult. It is this balance between a highly reflected city portrait and the diary entries of a boy that makes this a special Berlin account.

There are a number of things in East Berlin that attract the boy's attention as he identifies them as different from what he is used to: he notes the many big holes which line the streets and the rubble everywhere (cf. 133); he sees fewer people in the East and the roads seem even broader than in West Berlin; and he notices that the guide only talks about the present but omits the past (cf. 134). Ortheil compiles a list of questions he would like to ask the East Berliners (cf. 136), which are to the point and intelligent and, once again, very unusual for a child.<sup>235</sup> The atmosphere of another Soviet Memorial they visit afterwards in

---

<sup>234</sup> The fact that throughout the book he refers to passages from his Karl-May novels, for instance, reveals that the author is indeed a child, sensible and circumspect as he might be.

<sup>235</sup> One starts to wonder how much Ortheil might have changed his notes from the 1960s after all.

Treptow is equally well captured (cf. 136-41). As they are about to leave East Berlin, he feels his own tenseness and a palpable and pervasive sense of fear:

Ich fühlte mich selbst auch ein wenig erschöpft, denn die Anspannung und die manchmal spürbare Angst waren sehr anstrengend und machten nicht nur müde, sondern auch erschöpft. Kurz bevor der Ostberliner Stadtführer ausstieg, forderte er alle Mitglieder der Reisegruppe auf, den Osten Berlins bald wieder zu besuchen. Und dann sagte er: ‚Riskieren Sie es doch ruhig einmal auf eigene Faust.‘ Das hörte sich an, als bestünde die Reisegruppe aus lauter Angsthasen und Dahertripplern, und genauso war es ja auch gewesen: lauter Angsthasen und Dahertrippler! (142)

The words “Angsthasen” and “Dahertrippler” indicate the childlike and almost naive language of the author, yet the mood of East Berlin he conveys is nevertheless representative of the Cold War tensions. On the one hand he seems fascinated by the East as it is so different, but on the other hand he is also intimidated by this otherness, which he describes as follows:

Einerseits hatte ich mir stark gewünscht, einmal ohne Bewachung durch Ost-Berlin gehen zu können, andererseits hatte ich aber auch etwas Angst davor. In Ost-Berlin war alles irgendwie angespannt und sehr anstrengend, und es lag eine Art von Knistern in der Luft, denn nichts war so, wie wir es aus dem Westen gewohnt waren. (143)

East Berlin, he states, seems so foreign because one always expects something Russian (cf. 143). Back in the bus in West Berlin he realises that his father feels as nervous and anxious as he does, which does not help him to calm down. They pass the “inhuman Wall” (145) that divides the city and feel exhausted from the day’s events:

Wir waren nämlich einfach erschöpft, und wir hatten viel nachzudenken, und es kribbelte in uns, und das Kribbeln entstand, weil das große Knistern von Ost-Berlin noch immer nachwirkte. (145)

Two days later, on 06 May 1964, they decide to go to East Berlin once again, but this time on their own, and Ortheil is uncertain and anxious about this. As they approach the checkpoint, he senses “a peculiar atmosphere”:

Am S-Bahnhof Friedrichstraße stiegen wir aus und gingen dann zum Grenzübergang. Auf dem Bahnhof war eine seltsame Stimmung, denn es standen viele Leute herum, die nicht auf Züge warteten, sondern darauf, zum Grenzübergang zu gehen. (195)

Ortheil describes the claustrophobic atmosphere, which frightens him:

In eine dieser Schleusen sollten wir eintreten, um unsere Ausweise zu zeigen, ich fand die Schleusen jedoch sehr eng und sehr hässlich, und sie machten mir auch gleich etwas Angst. In ihrem Innern saß nämlich ein Grenzsoldat in Uniform hinter einer Scheibe, und von oben brannte ein sehr helles Licht. (195)

When his father quarrels with the border guard and pretends to not have understood what the guard just said, Ortheil immediately rates this encounter as “dangerous” and “unpleasant” and even comes up with a white lie in order to ease the situation; he is desperate for his father to stop joking (196). Throughout, he seems anxious not to attract attention.

As they walk along Friedrichstraße, one of the most famous roads in East Berlin, Ortheil contrasts the area’s glorious past his father describes with the disillusionment of what he sees:

Papa erzählte dann auch von der früheren Pracht, und er zeigte mir lauter Häuser und große Gebäude, die er von früher gut kannte. Jetzt sahen sie aber nicht mehr prächtig aus, sondern hatten jede Farbe verloren (wie überhaupt alles sehr farblos aussah, farblos und blass, als hätte man über die Farben drübergewaschen). Das Farblose und Blasse entstand dadurch, dass es beinahe nirgends Werbung gab, also keine richtig bunten Plakate und Aufschriften, sondern nur sehr versteckte Täfelchen und Hinweise auf das, was sich in den großen Gebäuden befand. Zu der Farblosigkeit kam noch hinzu, dass auf der früher so prächtigen

Friedrichstraße kein richtiger Verkehr tobte. So waren nur sehr merkwürdige Autos (deren Marken ich nicht kannte) unterwegs, merkwürdig und klein (und wie geschrumpft). Auch zu Fuß waren nicht besonders viele Menschen unterwegs, jedenfalls nicht so viele, wie ich es mir vorgestellt hatte, als der Grenzsoldat von der ‚Hauptstadt der DDR‘ gesprochen hatte. (In einer richtigen Hauptstadt sollte eigentlich mehr los sein.) (199)

Ortheil's account of the colourless, pale and deserted Friedrichstraße immediately conjures up images of old GDR photographs of this area and the fact that this account consists of the perceptions of a child unfamiliar with adult terminology makes this city portrait even more astonishing (provided that it was indeed all written in 1964 and not revised since then). He is disappointed by what he sees but relieved that the alleged danger of an unguided visit to East Berlin proves unsubstantiated (cf. 199). The boy's disappointment results from the fact that the Berlin his father refers to is not in accord with the city Ortheil experiences himself; there is an incongruity between the two Berlins. He has difficulty formulating what exactly makes East Berlin so strange to him, but his unusual wording provides a precise picture of 'his' Berlin:

Es war seltsam, und ich kann es nicht gut erklären. Denn wie soll ich das beschreiben, was ich in den Straßen des Ostens sah? Alles sah sehr anders aus als im Westen und ein wenig so wie in Zeitlupe oder wie in einem Traum ohne Farben. Die Menschen waren viel ruhiger, und sie gingen auch langsamer und so, als hätten sie eigentlich gar kein dringendes Ziel. Es war nicht verschlafen, das nicht, höchstens ein wenig. Ich finde, es war gebremst, stark gebremst, ohne Schwung und ohne richtige Lust. Ja, das war wohl das Seltsame: dass alle so umher gingen, als hätten sie eigentlich dazu keine Lust. (Die meisten gingen sogar so umher, als hätten sie zu überhaupt nichts mehr richtig Lust.) [...]

Als ich hinschrieb, was ich beobachtet hatte, bemerkte ich aber sofort, dass ich kaum etwas darüber wusste, wie die Menschen im Osten lebten. Gleichzeitig hatte ich aber das starke Empfinden, dass sie nach bestimmten Regeln und Gesetzen lebten, die man genau kennen musste,

um sie zu verstehen. Jedenfalls waren es ganz andere Gesetze als im Westen, vollkommen andere. (200-01)

Given the fact that he is obviously not aware of the GDR politics, his description of a noticeable regimentation could not be more fitting; his intuitive 'sense of place' captures the mood very well. With his imaginative and unusual description of the coffee and tea's taste ("stark gebremst und lustlos") (201), the reader experiences East Berlin through the eyes of a very eloquent child. Rather striking is his wish to talk to East Berliners about "the eastern version of Berlin" and the rules and laws that govern it (203). Despite not knowing much about the political background, he is able to draw inferences from the city about its social structure.

As his father becomes more and more upset about the voids<sup>236</sup> that mark East Berlin ("Fast alles ist verschwunden. Weg. Ausgelöscht. Zerbombt. Die Mitte Berlins. Das Herz. Es gibt diese Stadt eigentlich nicht mehr.") (205), his son calls on him to write down his memories of Potsdamer Platz, yet they are too painful for his father, who does not want to revisit the place, and so it is the son who records in this 'oral history' the Berlin his father remembers:

### **Der Potsdamer Platz**

Von allen Seiten stoßen große Straßen auf den Potsdamer Platz. Und jede Minute rollen viele Straßenbahnen, eine nach der anderen, auf den Platz. Und neben den Straßenbahnen fahren die Doppeldeckerbusse. Und dazwischen laufen die Menschen umher, viele, sehr viele Menschen, und alle sind auf Vergnügungen aus. [...] (205)

Potsdamer Platz only exists in his father's memories and in the mind of Ortheil who struggles with uniting what he sees himself with the images his father evokes. As they are about to spend their remaining "Ostgeld" (East German money) in a bookshop before returning to West Berlin, Ortheil notices the odd numbers of the prices ("die krummen Preise") and the lack of proper window displays ("aber vielleicht lagen die Waren auch nur so lustlos herum, weil sie sowieso niemand wollte") (207). He agrees with his father that translations might in general be better here as the GDR makes more time for everything:

---

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Andreas Huyssen (1997), "The Voids of Berlin". *Critical Inquiry* 24.1. 57-81.

Das verstand ich sofort, denn ich hatte ja auch beobachtet, dass man sich im Osten anscheinend für alles viel Zeit nahm. Man ging langsamer als im Westen, man fuhr langsamere, kleinere Autos, und man kaufte nicht rasch und hektisch irgendetwas Neues, sondern kaufte in einem der vielen unscheinbaren Läden Sachen, die man längst kannte und die seit ewigen Zeiten 1,21 Mark kosteten. (208)

Unconsciously, Ortheil summarises what one could term the opposite of capitalism or a capitalist buying behaviour. As they are about to leave, Ortheil captures one last glimpse of East Berlin:

Papa und ich standen hier wieder dicht nebeneinander in einer miefigen, viel zu hellen Kabine, und ich spürte sofort, dass es Papa richtig juckte, wieder einen Scherz zu machen oder etwas Bitteres zu sagen. (211)

Throughout *Die Berlinreise*, Ortheil observes his father's reactions, which also affect his own behaviour. In East Berlin he feels frightened and intimidated most of the time, a consequence of external circumstances he cannot fully understand or interpret and which, therefore, make him feel uneasy and self-conscious. Yet Berlin as a whole has an impact on him, which, I argue, is closely connected to his parents' past in this city, as shall be elaborated in the following.

#### **4.1.3 Traumatic Memories**

Shortly before their arrival in Berlin by train, his father prepares his son for the days that lie ahead of them and warns him that they are not going to be easy (cf. 25). There is a sense of foreboding, which proves justified when Ortheil mentions one of the "family secrets" ("Familiengeheimnisse"), the deaths of his four older brothers about whom he knows nothing except for the fact of their brief existence (43). This family secret proves to play an indirect yet vital role during their Berlin trip, which not only affects his father's behaviour but also shapes Ortheil's first impressions of the city. I interpret this secret as the key

element that his father intricately connects to his former life in this city during the Second World War, the repercussions of which he, possibly involuntarily, transmits to his fifth son. Ortheil is deeply influenced by his father's behaviour when confronted with the past, and it is obvious how much the author feels at a loss when he notices the changes that take place in his father. For instance, as they visit the house where his parents once lived in Lichterfelde, the first sight of it does something to his father:

Es war wieder so ein Moment, in dem ich nicht genau wusste, was gerade los war mit Papa, und gleich hatte ich auch wieder diese merkwürdige Angst, die anscheinend eine Berliner Angst von mir war. (65)

The author is very sensitive to the mood and remembrances the places conjure up in his father, whose absentmindedness has a strong impact on the boy. Ortheil's sensitivity towards these moods expresses itself as what he terms his "Berliner Angst" – an unpleasant sensation he connects to this city. Helmut Schmitz reasons that Ortheil's later novels deal with the transmission of the parent generation's mental scars to their children, which seems also true of *Die Berlinreise*.<sup>237</sup> While being perceptive to his father's reactions, the author constantly feels the 'present absence' of his mother:

Da sagte Papa: ‚Im Botanischen Garten ist Deine Mutter früher fast jeden Tag spazieren gegangen.‘ Alle waren plötzlich still und sagten nichts mehr, aber ich dachte daran, dass ich eben noch stark an Mama gedacht hatte, weil Mama die Orte, an denen ich gewesen war, sehr gemocht hatte. (74)

Ortheil feels a strong connection to his absent mother through 'her' places – a connection which I would describe as psychogeographical. To the boy, Berlin in the 1960s seems to be haunted by the mother and her experiences in this city two decades earlier. As they visit his parents' former flat, his father walks around slowly and, bit by bit, his memories reappear and he starts mumbling

---

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Helmut Schmitz (2009), "Traumatische Räume: Autobiographie, Familiengeschichte und Raumerfahrung in Hanns-Josef Ortheils 'Nachkriegs'-Zyklus". In: Catani, Stephanie, Friedhelm Marx, and Julia Schöll (eds.), *Kunst der Erinnerung, Poetik der Liebe. Das erzählerische Werk Hanns-Josef Ortheils*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag. 47.



incoherent sentences (“Papap Erinnerung an früher besteht aus kunterbunten Sätzen, kunterbunt durcheinander”) (78). As father and son open the two suitcases the mother had left with their friends in Berlin, his father asks him not to mention them to his mother in order to not remind her of the horrors she had to endure in Berlin. Ortheil requests clarification, but the father keeps the secret and promises to tell him little by little (cf. 82), which, again, alludes to the mystery that hovers over the absent mother. A day later they visit Annenkirche, the local church his parents had frequented, yet when the parish strikes up the final song, his father does not feel well and starts to cry. This emotionality unsettles his son; he is terribly scared (“ich bekam eine furchtbare Angst”) (93), his fear intensifies even more (“und ich bekam immer mehr Angst”) (94) and seems to have been a pervasive sensation. Later his father apologises and says he was not prepared for this song which had suddenly brought back vivid memories of the past (cf. 96). However, he still does not go into detail, which quite understandably contributes to the insecurity of his son. So much is left unsaid, creating a looming suspense. After having suppressed his urge to hug his father, Ortheil suddenly and only very briefly lays his arm around his father’s shoulder (cf. 97), a moment which I regard as a key turning point between the two. The boy seems to have realised at this stage that Berlin awakens memories with which his father would rather not be confronted. Again, the self-control of this twelve-year-old is rather striking; his behaviour, except for this one brief touch, is so well considered. As Ernestine Schlant argues in *The Language of Silence* (1999) with regard to Ortheil’s later novel *Hecke* (1983), the “profound parental disorientation, a consequence of Nazism, [...] deeply influenced the narrator/son” (1999: 106). This observation also applies to *Die Berlinreise*, a trip characterised by insecurity and fear, which is exacerbated by the father’s (and indirectly also the mother’s) mental instability.

As Ortheil is finally allowed to read his mother’s housekeeping books, which she had left in the two suitcases, he immerses himself even more in the past of his parents (cf. 116-18) and, at first mentally, later in person, re-enacts his mother’s walks through the neighbourhood. He imagines himself with his mother in the Berlin of the 1940s and is determined to have a share in the bygone experiences of his parents, at least in his imagination:

## Postkarte 5

Liebste Mama, ich weiß genau, dass ich heute Nacht von Dir träumen werde. Ich werde davon träumen, wie Du früher durch Berlin gefahren bist und wie Du Dir alles angeschaut hast. Und ich werde davon träumen, wie Du in der Wohnung mit Papa gelebt hast. Schließlich aber werde ich auch davon träumen, dass ich bei Dir bin, und zwar damals, früher. Das stimmt natürlich nicht, denn ich war ja nicht bei Dir. Aber im Traum stimmt es dann eben doch. Alles Liebe von Deinem Bub

He continues reading the housekeeping books and recounts his mother's pregnancy with the first child, yet becomes suddenly confused as he feels that his mother, although in fact dedicating her writing to his deceased brother, was addressing himself. The fact that he once had a brother who no longer lives makes him sad (cf. 165); he becomes deeply immersed in and obsessed with this other Berlin, the Berlin of his young parents and his older brother. He decides that he has to stop reading and goes for a walk in Lichterfelde, which suddenly is a much more interesting neighbourhood to him as he can relate to the places by referring back to what his mother wrote about them. In a psychogeographical manner, he aims at recreating the path of his mother of many years earlier:

Es war spannend, auf den Spuren von Mama durch Lichterfelde zu gehen, und es war noch spannender, mit Menschen zu sprechen, die sie vielleicht sogar gekannt und mit ihr gesprochen hatten. (168)

He seems almost to enact a play, the past life of his parents, in which he takes part as a character, a son who had lived years earlier. He even pays a visit to his mother's favourite fishmonger who still remembers her and is emotionally touched by the memories of her (cf. 169-70). Although the reader has an inkling of why everyone reacts so emotionally with regard to his mother, much uncertainty remains, and even Ortheil does not understand why he has to cry. To him, Berlin is haunted by the absence of his mother and his deceased brothers.

Ortheil tries to find out more about his first brother from the housekeeping books, yet what he reads are merely intimations, for instance that his

grandmother and aunt came to Berlin and that everyone was very sad, but he does not come across an actual mention of his brother's death (cf. 173). He decides therefore to ask his father directly about it after they have entered the Botanic Gardens, in which his mother had often gone for a walk (cf.179). His father finally tells him about the tragedy of the first son and Ortheil learns that his father and grandmother went for a walk in this very park while the children's clothes were being put away after the first son had died (cf. 179-81). This story affects the boy, yet once again he does not want to show his feelings: "Ich musste viel schlucken (aber heimlich), denn Papa sollte es nicht merken, wie aufgeregt und traurig ich war. Ich sagte nichts, und Papa sagte eine Weile auch nichts" (181). Ortheil feels the urge to leave the city after having heard about these traumatic experiences which befell his parents in Berlin, but he is sensitive enough not to mention it to his father as he understands that, by visiting the Botanic Gardens, they had plunged back into this painful time:

Während wir so gingen, habe ich mir vorgenommen, an diesem Tag nicht mehr in Mamas Haushaltsbüchern zu lesen. Am liebsten wäre ich raus aus Berlin und irgendwohin aufs Land oder an einen großen See gefahren. Ich sagte aber nichts, weil ich Papa nicht in seinem Nachdenken stören wollte. Denn ich sah ja, dass er viel nachdachte und mit den Jahren von früher beschäftigt war. Indem wir in den ‚Botanischen Garten‘ gegangen waren, waren wir mitten hinein in diese Jahre geraten, und jetzt spürten Papa und ich ganz deutlich, wie es damals gewesen war. Papa spürte es, aber ich spürte es auch, denn es kam mir so vor, als gingen wir nicht wirklich durch den ‚Botanischen Garten‘, sondern stark benebelt, also wie in einem Traum. (182)

Although Ortheil has no memories of the places they visit, they resonate with him and he is sensitive enough to imagine everything and to become immersed in these settings. To him, Berlin is full of fear and anxiety, mainly due to the fact that he senses the trauma his parents experienced. In her 2005 book *Traumascapes*, Maria Tumarkin explores the impact of "places across the world marked by traumatic legacies of violence, suffering and loss", in which "the past

is never quite over”.<sup>238</sup> Her definition of ‘trauma’, namely “an individual and collective response to loss and suffering” (2005: 13), also applies to *Die Berlinreise*, I argue, as Berlin constitutes a ‘traumascapescape’ to the Ortheil family (mainly to the parents, but the father indirectly projects his fears onto his son). Tumarkin states that “the idea of place is distinguished by its direct link to meaning and memory” (2005: 128), a link which one can observe in the father’s reaction to returning to a place that for him is replete with meaning and memory.

The same day, Ortheil learns even more about his deceased brothers after he and his father leave the theatre where they had watched Wolfgang Borchert’s *Draußen vor der Tür* (*The Man Outside*), a play reflecting on the fate of a post-war soldier. One gets the impression that his father would have deliberately chosen a play with such a theme in order to subsequently talk to his son about his own war experiences. This is indeed what happens (cf. 188-89) and, during the course of this conversation, the boy finally learns about the death of Karl-Josef, his second-oldest brother. For the first time, Ortheil hears his name: “Ich erschrak richtig, als ich den Namen hörte, aber ich sagte nichts” (190). Again, he suppresses his urge to say something and, just as in the Botanic Gardens, their conversation ends abruptly, as if they were both trying to take their mind off things.<sup>239</sup>

When Ortheil finds in his mother’s housekeeping book a photo of his parents – depicting his father in striped hospital clothing – with Karl-Josef as a toddler, he is moved to tears and imagines how old his brother would be now. He feels that Karl-Josef is looking squarely in his eyes (cf. 213-15), which is an indication of his constant attempt to establish a connection between himself, his deceased brother and his parents’ past.

Ortheil also addresses the ‘present absence’ of his brother in his much later novel *Schwerenöter* (1987),<sup>240</sup> which features many autobiographical aspects<sup>241</sup> and in which he tells the story of different and rivalling twin brothers

---

<sup>238</sup> Maria Tumarkin (2005), *Traumascapes: The Power and Fate of Places transformed by Tragedy*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press. 12.

<sup>239</sup> Ortheil has come to terms with his father’s war past in his (autobiographical) novel *Abschied von den Kriegsteilnehmern* (1992) (cf. Helmut Schmitz (1995), “Ichfiktionen und Landvermessungen. Der Schriftsteller Hanns-Josef Ortheil”. In: Durzak, Manfred, and Hartmut Steinecke (eds.), *Hanns-Josef Ortheil – Im Innern seiner Texte. Studien zu seinem Werk*. München/Zürich: Piper. 28-29.)

<sup>240</sup> Hanns-Josef Ortheil (1987), *Schwerenöter*. München: Piper.

<sup>241</sup> Being familiar with the author’s biography and having read *Die Berlinreise*, one can detect many autobiographical parallels in the protagonist of *Schwerenöter*: his early autism (cf. Ortheil 1987: 45), being the problem child (cf. Ortheil 1987: 53), his virtuosic piano playing (cf. Ortheil 1987: 278-80), the power of

in post-war Germany: Josef, the charismatic older twin, and Johannes, the melancholic first-person narrator. The choice of names already indicates the autobiographical features of the novel; by comparison, in *Die Berlinreise*, his father often addresses the author (Hanns-Josef) as 'Johannes', whereas there seems to be another reference to Karl-Josef, his deceased older brother. In *Schwerenöter*, as the reader follows Johannes from prenatal state into young adulthood, the rivalries with his brother, the political changes with which post-war Germany struggles as well as the narrator's mental instability are at the very centre. The almost 650-page-long novel – dedicated 'To my brothers' – demonstrates how much the (missing) brother(s) continue(s) to occupy the author. Different from the emotional bond the young author imagines between himself and his deceased brother Karl-Josef in *Die Berlinreise*, the brotherly relationship as delineated in *Schwerenöter* is one characterised by fierce rivalry. Nevertheless, it is important to take into consideration that brotherhood is a recurring motif in Ortheil's texts and was established at an early stage in his writing career. In *Schwerenöter*, Johannes also visits Berlin for the first time, but in this instance the setting is the student unrest in which the twins participate following the death of student Benno Ohnesorg, shot by a policeman during a demonstration in Berlin in 1967 (cf. Ortheil 1987: 426-46).

In *Die Berlinreise*, the boy's emotionality could be read as a direct response to the tenseness and suppressed grief of his father, which accompanies their Berlin trip. Again, I find Tumarkin's depiction of 'traumascapes' applicable to *Die Berlinreise* as the past influences father and son enormously: "It is through these places [the traumascapes] that the past, whether buried or laid bare for all to see, continues to inhabit and refashion the present" (2005: 12). 'Traumascapes' are "spaces, where events are experienced and re-experienced across time" (Tumarkin 2005: 12), which is also true of the Berlin with which Ortheil and his father find themselves confronted.

The boy continues to read his mother's notes in the evening (cf. 254-57) and finds out about the years 1942-44, the time when the photo was taken (in 1944, shortly before the death of his brother). He reflects on the war, which expelled his mother from Berlin forever:

---

music to relieve him of his melancholic phlegm (cf. Ortheil 1987: 98) as well as his passionate reading, or what he calls a "Lesehunger" (Ortheil 1987: 125).

Der Krieg war jedoch anscheinend mit der Mama von Berlin bis in den Westerwald gezogen, und der Krieg hatte sie im einsamen Westerwald schließlich gefunden und im letzten Moment doch noch getroffen. (256)

He fully immerses himself in the story of his parents and brother almost to the extent that he feels part of the past, or, in turn, imagines his brother being still alive and part of his life:

„Sei nicht traurig“, sagte ich, „sei nicht traurig“. Eigentlich sagte ich das ja zu mir, aber ich sagte es wohl eher zu meinem Bruder Karl-Josef, denn ich wünschte mir so sehr, das er jetzt hier wäre, genau hier, unten bei Papa und den Franzosen. (257)

He tries to console his brother, but in fact he has to calm himself down as he is fighting back tears once again. This coming to terms with the past of his parents and the fate of his four older brothers affects Ortheil enormously and he connects this emotion to Berlin, the place where he learns about this family tragedy.

On their last day, his father surprises him with a “Tour d’horizon”, a general tour of Berlin in order to gain an overview of the city, which is reminiscent of a psychogeographical *dérive*: “Wir fahren und fahren, und wir steigen aus, wenn es uns gerade gefällt. Wir machen eine abenteuerliche Tour d’horizon” (260). They start off with what the father terms a “ghost train trip” through the abandoned S-Bahn stations, and the first ‘ghost station’ they pass is Potsdamer Platz, which looks “dead and abandoned” and “uncanny” (“unheimlich”) (262). As they reach the West, they climb “Humboldthöhe”, which is not a natural hill but one made of rubble (cf. 262). Thus, the past reappears throughout the city, or, as Tumarkin states: “All kinds of histories are concealed in ruins” (2005: 175). In Berlin, instead of “swallowing the city up, debris would become integrated into its ecology, topography and daily life” (Tumarkin 2005: 176). Once again, father and son are confronted with the past.

They drive further north and almost leave the city as they reach the old village of Lübars, where they take a long walk in the fields as his father had done when he was young. Ortheil mentions for the first time since his arrival in

Berlin that he feels at ease, as the landscape here reminds him of the Westerwald, the area where his parents grew up and which he knows so well from his walks with his father:

Mir gefiel es in dieser Gegend sehr gut, und ich fühlte mich wohl während unseres Gehens, das endlich mal wieder kein Herumgehen in der Stadt, sondern ein Gehen über die weiten Felder war. (Manchmal denke ich, das Gehen über die weiten Felder ist überhaupt das schönste Gehen. Und wenn man dann noch auf einen Bach, einen Fluß oder sogar einen Strom trifft, kann es eigentlich nichts Schöneres mehr geben.) Beim Gehen über die Felder wird man still und braucht sich nicht laufend zu unterhalten. Auch das Tempo ist genau richtig, nämlich ein Tempo der Natur selbst, die ja auch langsam wächst und sich langsam verändert (und nicht von heute auf morgen Zig Kilometer zurücklegt.) (263-64)

In this passage, the writer-as-walker who reflects on the impact the environment has on his moods and behaviour and the psychogeographical aimless drift spring to mind. However, Ortheil prefers walking in the countryside to walking in urban areas as he feels able to “plunge into nature” and he regards it as a “free walking” (264), in contrast to walking in the city.

On their way back they stop at Grunewald, where his parents had spent a lot of time when they were still living in Berlin. Again the reader witnesses a re-enactment of his parents' past, yet this time due to his father's wish to show his son these places and to have him participate in his memories. The author seemingly enjoys this trip with his father and is fascinated by this Tour d'horizon, which he discusses as follows:

Es war schön, so mit Papa auf der Tour d'Horizon zu sein. Auf einer solchen Tour verweilt man an den einzelnen Stationen nicht lange, sondern bleibt immerzu unterwegs.

Eine Tour d'Horizon ist also nichts für das genaue und geduldige Kennenlernen und Schauen, sondern eine Tour, bei der man die einzelnen Stationen und Gegenden im Kopf miteinander verbindet, wie man das bei einem Puzzle tut. Stück für Stück setzt man an- und

nebeneinander, und langsam entsteht im Kopf dann ein Bild (oder auch ein Gemälde). (265-66)

After their return to the guesthouse, Ortheil notices his father's exhaustion and is startled by the sudden change in mood, which I would term something close to an epiphany:

Als ich mich aber umdrehte, schaute ich von hinten auf Papa, wie er da allein und etwas in sich zusammengesunken auf der Bettkante saß. Ich weiß nicht, was in diesem Moment los war, aber ich spürte ganz deutlich, dass es ein seltsamer Augenblick war. Vielleicht lag es daran, dass es unser letzter Tag in Berlin war, oder es lag daran, dass wir beide etwas erschöpft waren. Jedenfalls kam es mir so vor, als wäre er plötzlich gealtert (oder als wäre er schon ein alter Mann). (269-70)

The boy realises that this trip to Berlin has stirred strong emotions in his father, who will never return to this city that has caused him so much pain:

Während ich Papa so anschaute, wie er da still und zusammengesunken (und mit etwas krummem Rücken) saß, erinnerte ich mich, dass er eben noch von unserem ‚allerletzten Rundgang‘ gesprochen hatte. [...] Gleich kam unser ‚allerletzter Rundgang‘ durch die Jahre von früher, und dann käme (für Papa) niemals mehr ein solcher Rundgang (höchstens noch für mich, in späteren Jahren und dann allein).

Ich überlegte, was ich tun sollte, aber ich wollte Papa nicht auf das Alter ansprechen. Und so ging ich um ihn herum und fragte ihn, ob er müde sei. Da schaute mich Papa an und sagte leise, ja, er sei wirklich sehr müde. Ich hielt es nicht gut aus, dass (und wie) er das sagte, aber ich war etwas hilflos, und ich wusste nicht, wie ich ihm zu erkennen geben sollte, dass ich ihn sehr lieb hatte (und sein Alter doch gar keine Rolle spielte). Ich wollte diesen Satz sagen, aber es ging natürlich nicht, ich konnte doch nicht plötzlich so etwas sagen, und außerdem wäre mir der Satz im trockenen Mund stecken geblieben. Und so nahm ich mich zusammen und sagte: ‚Papa, ist alles gut?‘ Und da schaute Papa mich wieder an und



lächelte (sehr) und sagte: ‚Aber ja, mein Junge. Mach Dir keine Sorgen. Alles ist gut.‘ (270-71)

This passage is characteristic of *Die Berlinreise* as a whole, because a lot remains unsaid, up in the air, but they both understand what is at the heart of the matter – the haunting past – which is so intricately connected to the ‘traumascape’ of Berlin:

Traumascapes, of course, were haunting and haunted places. Yet they were not poetic or metaphorical terrains but, rather, concrete, material sites, where visible and invisible, past and present, physical and metaphysical came to coexist and share a common space. (Tumarkin 2005: 233)

It is this concurrence of various layers, of past and present, that makes Berlin so unsettling to the young boy. Following the above-quoted scene from *Die Berlinreise* (cf. 270-71), his father, in an act of spontaneous emotionality unusual for both father and son whose expressions of emotion usually seem premeditated, makes his son sit close to him but then, rather unexpectedly, changes the topic and talks about football. However, Ortheil, obviously relieved to leave the sad topic behind, finally gives his father a hug (cf. 271). They both struggle with expressing their feelings – the feelings that have been triggered by being in Berlin and being confronted with the past.

As they walk past his parents’ former house one final time, Ortheil imagines how his brother Karl-Josef would have played in the courtyard as a toddler, but these thoughts make him so sad that he quickly has to abandon them (cf. 274). It is astonishing that, despite the good relationship between father and son, the Ortheils hardly ever talk about things directly but seem to avoid touching upon the silences and absences that hover above them: for example Ortheil does not dare tell his father directly why he believes that his father will never return to Berlin (cf. 274-75).

After their hosts, old friends of his parents, give him a small album with photos of his parents in Berlin as a farewell present, Ortheil is very pleased and slips once again into the past. He imagines his young parents in Berlin, yet this time he soon returns to the reality of the Berlin he experienced:

Das aber war längst vorbei. Der Bahnhof Friedrichstraße war eine traurige Grenzübergangsstelle, und der Bahnhof Potsdamer Platz lag verdreckt und staubig unter der Erde, und die Züge rasten durch ihn hindurch.

Ich bedankte mich sehr, und dann aßen wir alle zusammen zu Abend, und zum Glück war mit keinem Wort von den früheren Jahren die Rede. Ich musste aber daran denken, dass ich während dieses Berlin-Aufenthaltes sehr viel über diese Jahre erfahren hatte (auch wenn ich viele Einzelheiten noch nicht genau wusste). Am wichtigsten aber war wohl, dass ich alles mit eigenen Augen gesehen hatte, die Wohnung von Papa und Mama, den Stadtteil Lichtenfelde und auch die Orte, die heute ganz anders aussahen und durch den Krieg zerstört worden waren. (279)

As he states, it was most important to him to be able to visualise the past and, at least to a certain extent, to participate in it by reconstructing the walks his parents had taken. His relief that any mention of the past is omitted during their last dinner in Berlin demonstrates how oppressed he feels by it and by the burden of being privy to the silence that afflicts his mother, yet the urge to know more about it is stronger. One last incident that alludes to the traumatic past, which mostly affected his mother, is when Luise, his parents' friend, tells him as they say goodbye: "Und grüße Deine Mama ganz herzlich von mir. Und sag, dass ich ihr viel Glück wünsche *nach alledem*" (280) (my emphasis). Like the other adults around him, she does not clarify either what exactly she refers to, but at this stage Ortheil seems to understand what she alludes to. The silences and absences persist, but Ortheil has found a way of coming to terms with the past and his family secrets.

#### 4.1.4 Psychogeography

*Die Berlinreise* is a very unusual portrait of Berlin, heightened even further by the fact that the author is a child (though in many respects an atypical child). The reader is painted an intimate portrait of Berlin in the 1960s, as one follows the young Ortheil around the city and learns about his first impressions,

opinions and, increasingly, fear, which is not only caused by the Cold War tensions he perceives, but also by the haunting and pervasive atmosphere of grief in combination with nostalgia, which often befalls his father and to which his son very sensitively reacts. This fear is connected to the war years and the family's tragic loss. As Ortheil reads his mother's housekeeping books, he seems to plunge right into the past, the Berlin of the 1940s. At the same time, the text can be read as a psychogeographical biography of his parents which also exhibits autobiographical features. Step by step, by exploring the city and visiting the places that had been important to his parents, he gets a feel for the city, unpleasant as it might be, and starts to understand the issues his parents struggle to come to terms with as they are connected to their past life in Berlin. He learns about the fate of his deceased four older brothers, allies himself to Karl-Josef in his imagination and becomes obsessed with attempting to re-enact his parents' past by reading the housekeeping books and imagining himself as part of their past. The more he reads and the more he explores Berlin, the more strongly he imagines himself as part of their earlier life, central to which is his absent mother. Learning about the family secrets while being in the very city where these events happened – or to which they are closely linked – he unconsciously feels haunted by the past and transfers his parents' Berlin-related trauma onto his own psyche to the extent that he feels a desire to leave the city. According to Schmitz, Ortheil has come to terms with the legacy of his parents' traumatisation in his later novels: "The conclusion of Ortheil's novels [*Hecke* and *Abschied von den Kriegsteilnehmern*] is that the parents unconsciously transmit their traumatic damage onto their child".<sup>242</sup>

To conclude, *Die Berlinreise* is not only a child's travel diary in which Berlin is the 'object of study', but it can also be read as an idiosyncratic literary interaction between the author's parents, himself, his four deceased brothers and the city of Berlin, both in real time, in this case the 1960s, and in the 1940s as imagined by Ortheil. It is his reading of Berlin through the haunting past of his parents, which makes this, in my view, a unique instance of psychogeographical writing.

---

<sup>242</sup> Helmut Schmitz (2011), "Foundational Traumas: On a Figure of Thought in Recent German Literature on Wartime Suffering". In: Schmitz, Helmut, and Annette Seidel-Arpaci (eds.), *Narratives of Trauma: Discourses of German Wartime Suffering in National and International Perspective*. German Monitor No. 73. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi. 147.

Nooteboom's *Roads to Berlin*, which will be discussed in the following, also deals with the division of Berlin into East and West as well as the legacy of the Second World War, making it a text whose relevance persists to this day as the city continues to come to terms with its past. Let us now turn to this other unique interpretation of the city.

## 4.2 The Omnipresence of the Past: Cees Nootboom's Philosophical Forays into Berlin<sup>243</sup>

Dutch writer Cees Nootboom's original *Berlijn 1989|2009* (2009), which in turn was based on his *Berlijnse Notities* (*Berlin Notes*) (1990), was translated into English as *Roads to Berlin: Detours and Riddles in the Lands and History of Germany* (2013).<sup>244</sup> The English title thus discloses a lot more about the content and type of book than the original or the German title, which is a literal translation of the Dutch. On the one hand, *Roads to Berlin* emphasises the notion of approaching Berlin – the 'to' in *Roads to Berlin* is telling here as it indicates a movement or process, which is not yet completed; on the other hand the title suggests that the focus will be the history of the city, yet not a rectilinear conception of history, but rather an unravelling of the mysteries of Berlin, tackled from various angles and by way of detours. The book combines four sections on Berlin, which Nootboom wrote over roughly the past fifty years and which provide his readers with a unique and philosophical assessment of Berlin from a historical viewpoint. In Part I – by far the longest – a prologue in the style of a flashback reaches back to 1963 and precedes the first section, which subsequently describes the immediate pre- and post-Wall era in Berlin from the author's perspective as a part-time resident in 1989-90. Part II then focuses on some shorter visits he made in the 1990s, followed by a retrospective view twenty years after the German reunification (Part III). Part IV, which is new to the English edition,<sup>245</sup> provides a contemporary evaluation of Germany and Berlin in times of political and economic crisis, his meeting with Chancellor Merkel as well as a conclusive epilogue. Despite the focus on the crucial years of 1989-90, which marked the downfall of the German Democratic Republic (GDR)<sup>246</sup> and German reunification, *Roads to Berlin* loosely covers almost half a century of Berlin's history yet never presents its material in the manner of a dry history book, thanks to Nootboom's poetic language and imaginative

---

<sup>243</sup> Large parts of the following section will be published in a similar version in German in my forthcoming article "Cees Nootbooms filosofisch-geschiedliche Streifzüge durch Berlin" (2017). In: Holdenried, Michaela, Alexander Honold, and Stefan Hermes (eds.), *Reiseliteratur der Moderne und Postmoderne*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag.

<sup>244</sup> Cees Nootboom (2013 [2009]), *Roads to Berlin: Detours and Riddles in the Lands and History of Germany*. Trans. Laura Watkinson. London: MacLehose Press. Subsequent references are to this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>245</sup> The German edition, for instance, published in 2009, does not have a Part IV.

<sup>246</sup> The English edition uses the German abbreviation for GDR, "D.D.R.", but I will use the English term GDR.

descriptions but also to his ability to sense the peculiarity of different atmospheres that pervaded Berlin as a divided city. The diary-like entries provide an overview of those months of turmoil that changed Berlin forever – and with it German history – which the author witnessed as a fellow of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) from early 1989 until June 1990.<sup>247</sup> He stresses throughout that, due to his position as a foreigner, he watches the events as a distanced and alienated spectator (cf. 18, 22), and even at the end of his stay he feels detached despite having witnessed ‘die Wende’ (turnaround/German reunification) period and having become, at least to a certain degree, emotionally involved:

I have become so enmeshed in these events that I can no longer extricate myself, that I must keep watching and writing. [...] I became part of it [the city of Berlin], even though I was, and still am, an outsider. (201)

I am interested in this tension between aloofness and integration in which he finds himself due to his status as an “outsider” as it provides another perspective on Berlin: in contrast to Ortheil who depicted the divided city through the eyes of a child intimidated and haunted by his family’s past, Nootboom presents an extremely carefully considered account of a detached narrator capturing the moods and atmospheres of Berlin over decades, yet with a particular focus on those crucial months in 1989-90. He is a contemplative outsider who nevertheless notes how the city and the political events affect him and he echoes what he sees and feels, which makes him an important contemporary witness of the immediate pre- and post-Wall times. Nootboom has assigned the protagonist of his 1998 novel *All Souls Day*, also set in Berlin, the same “critical perspective on the city”, namely that of a “flâneur” taking “the perspective of an outsider”.<sup>248</sup>

In the following, I argue that *Roads to Berlin* can be described as a psychogeographical chronicle of this city: despite the fact that chronicles normally depict historical events in chronological order while dispensing with interpretation or analysis, I believe the text at hand to be classifiable as a

---

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Cees Nootboom (2009), *Berlin 1989/2009*. Trans. Helga van Beuningen and Rosemarie Still. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag. 258.

<sup>248</sup> Philip Broadbent (2009), “Phenomenology of Absence: Benjamin, Nietzsche and History in Cees Nootboom’s ‘All Souls Day’”. *Journal of Modern Literature* 32.3. 102-03.

(psychogeographical) chronicle as Nootboom carefully notes the historical changes that the city of Berlin undergoes over the decades, diverging however from this narrative to provide the reader with his own very personal thoughts and feelings that accompany him on his forays into Berlin. He comments on the urban surroundings and historical events from the more distanced vantage point of a narrator who is nevertheless close to the events and experiences the city at first hand. Although maybe not immediately obvious at first glance, I believe that *Roads to Berlin* can be read as an instance of psychogeographical writing as Nootboom sketches a distinct portrait of the city, its moods and layers of history. In a truly psychogeographical manner he walks the city and often gets lost in philosophical trains of thought, induced by the city itself. What substantiates my reading of *Roads to Berlin* as a psychogeographical account of the city is Nootboom's interest in the everyday encounters he experiences while living in Berlin; he notices, for example, that he has never paid attention to the exterior of his house (cf. 35) and he renders seemingly ordinary details in the prologue, which add to the aptly conveyed atmosphere (cf. 13-14). The fact that he is not a Berliner himself seems to reinforce his perception of the city's fate and affords him a fresher insight into the place and its inhabitants. By reference to *Roads to Berlin* I argue that psychogeographical writing can adopt yet another form, namely the form of the chronicle, in order to gain insight into urban life. Psychogeography can not only be characterised by a diversity of writing methods, it can also be applied to various forms of text, I believe, which range from (auto-) biography via travel writing, memoir and city portrait to history-charged chronicle. What all the texts discussed so far have in common, despite their focus on different cities and approaches, is a preoccupation with the city's 'character', its impact and with innovative ways of representing this, in writing. Without doubt, *Roads to Berlin* is a book that allows the reader to absorb the urban atmospheres pervasive in Berlin. At the same time, it is not merely a description of the city and the historical events that have shaped it but also an account of how Berlin makes an impact on Nootboom as an author and (temporary) inhabitant. He explains how his own mood changes according to the atmospheres in the city, which is a quintessential psychogeographical technique.

As Jürgen Hasse points out in *Atmosphären der Stadt: Aufgespürte Räume* (2012): “atmospheres are ubiquitous”,<sup>249</sup> we cannot escape them. Many places are characterised by their atmospheres; they ‘address’ us more or less palpably and, once they interfere with our condition, turn into moods (cf. Hasse 2012: 7). Nootboom describes in several instances the impact that Berlin has on him, how his own mood changes according to the atmosphere of the city, and it is this influence that I shall focus on in this discussion of *Roads to Berlin*.

#### 4.2.1 Nootboom’s Psychogeographical Pursuit: Urban Roaming

Conquering a city. Just as with a real war, it begins with topographic maps, reconnaissance. Friends provide covert intelligence. The house serves as the base of operations and always offers the option of strategic retreat. The lines of communication: tram, underground train, bus, feet.  
(24)

The ‘method’, which Nootboom pursues – consciously chosen or not – in order to get to know Berlin is highly reminiscent of the Situationists’ urban wanderings or other contemporary psychogeographers’ explorations on foot, for instance Iain Sinclair’s London walks. To the best of my knowledge, Nootboom has never before been associated with psychogeography, but, as I aim to show in the following, this approach lends itself to an interpretation of *Roads to Berlin* and adds another perspective to the diverse range of writers I have discussed so far, each of whom contributes to the urban jigsaws of London, Sydney and Berlin, respectively. It is worth noting that Nootboom compares his roaming in the city to a military campaign; the verb ‘to conquer’ here indicates that ‘getting into the place’ entails an effort for him. It is particularly Nootboom’s status as a foreigner in Germany, describing and partaking in Berlin life, that adds a new angle to my selection of authors who, so far, have all written about a metropolis (London and Sydney, respectively) in their own country. However, comparable to Ortheil, for whom Berlin constitutes an encounter with something foreign, strange and uncanny, Nootboom is also a visitor, more specifically an

---

<sup>249</sup> Jürgen Hasse (2012), *Atmosphären der Stadt: Aufgespürte Räume*. Berlin: jovis Verlag. 7. All translations into English are my own.



academic guest invited to Germany to write about the city. Nootboom's stay is temporary and his interest is in the city as character, not in himself as a character settling *into* the city.

At the beginning of his longer stay in Berlin in 1989-90, he notes that, little by little, the city establishes itself in him as "the surrounding city begins to take shape" (24). It is "the scale of things in this city" that impresses him; he feels "constantly dwarfed by vast empty squares, wide avenues" (25), yet he tries to understand the German mentality by adopting certain habits, such as reading the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which he describes as "a serious business" and leads him to comment that "[t]his country does not treat itself frivolously" (25) – an observation that is to become increasingly justified as he spends more time in Germany and notices to what extent accounting for the past is a serious endeavour for the country. He feels the impact of the city on himself, especially on Sundays, which he notices have a strange and almost gloomy atmosphere:

Sunday here starts on a Saturday. Everything is closed, the streets are empty; on the day of rest itself the bells ring out as though all the dead from Charlemagne onwards need to be summoned. No-one responds. An awful silence fills the wide streets; the hours stretch out, following some mysterious law: it is time to think about time. (27-28)

He often feels an urge to leave the city and retreats to the village of Lübars in the north of Berlin on a regular basis. Curiously enough, this is the same place where Ortheil and his father escape the city's haunting past and where the boy feels comfortable for the first time since his arrival in Berlin, a feeling comparable to Nootboom's reason to leave the inner city once in a while:

At times it feels claustrophobic. I never felt that way when I was just a visitor. The Wall, the border – you know you can just go over, get out. So it can't be that. Yet even so. I notice it on Sundays. That is when I want to get out. (37)

Berlin, quite clearly, has an impact on his moods and behaviour. By means of exploring the different faces of the city on foot as well as intellectually,

Nooteboom starts to let himself be taken in by Berlin. He is an attentive observer from the very beginning, fully conscious of his outsider-role:

I am still not sure how to act around them [the German people], and I cannot speak their language with confidence. I prefer just to walk in between them; after all, you do not really need to say very much. I sit on the U-Bahn and observe them. (37)

Nooteboom once stated in an interview that his life consists of travelling, looking, and subsequently illustrating these impressions,<sup>250</sup> a talent he also makes use of in *Roads to Berlin*, as the above quote has shown. With his heightened attention to the flow of the city around him, of which he is a part but simultaneously also distanced from, Nooteboom allows Berlin to take possession of him; the city starts to guide him on his wanderings. Shortly after the fall of the Wall, he finds himself merged in the crowd and drifts through the city:

When I finally reach Kurfürstendamm, Berlin is one big party. Cars can no longer get through, and the city has descended into madness. The people have become one whirling body, a creature with thousands of heads, undulating, ripping, flowing through the city, no longer knowing whether it is moving or being moved, and I flow along with it, having become crowd, news picture, nobody. (83)

The city seems to take possession of him as he becomes “nobody” – it is no longer a question of him analysing Berlin but of him having become part of it and the people who shape it. To witness on site the atmosphere that emanates from the city and its inhabitants is an example of what American philosopher Edward S. Casey regards as the importance of the “sense of being in a place” as argued in his phenomenological essay “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time” (2009 [1993]), in which he stresses:

---

<sup>250</sup> Cf. Daan Cartens (1995), “Cees Nooteboom, Der Augenmensch – Einführung”. In: Cartens, Daan (ed.), *Der Augenmensch Cees Nooteboom*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch. 7.

There is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it. Knowledge of place is not, then, subsequent to perception – as Kant dogmatically assumed – but is ingredient in perception itself.<sup>251</sup>

This statement can also be applied to Nootboom's experiencing of Berlin, as this understanding of feeling part of a place, of *sensing* it, seems paramount to the Dutch writer in his urban deambulation and investigation of the city's past. Although he has difficulties articulating what it feels like – quite uncharacteristic of Nootboom who normally seems talented at putting his thoughts in a nutshell – he knows of the necessity of *being in that place* in order to fully understand and be immersed in it, which is a psychogeographical prerequisite:

'So, what is it like now?' my friends ask me on the phone. That is a good question, but I do not have an answer. 'It is,' I would like to answer. 'It is. I am here.' I live in Berlin. It is not only different from the Netherlands; it is different from anywhere else. But I cannot quite express that difference, that *otherness*, in words yet. (36-37)

At times, one gets the impression that Nootboom describes himself from a distance, as if he were observing himself from above. Yet some of his almost dry, very short sentences, occasionally consisting only of a few words or enumeration, nevertheless provide the reader with a very lively account of the pervasive atmosphere, paradoxical as that might sound. The following quote capturing his first impressions after having passed the checkpoint entering East Berlin exemplifies his writing style and psychogeographical pursuit very well:

You shoot out of the channel on the other side, change the obligatory amount (25 DM), and suddenly you are outside. You are there. There. And you find that the world is there too. Trams, cars, Trabants. They roar and let out a stink. I stroll to Unter den Linden. Nothing special. People, shops, footsteps. Not much traffic; work is over for the day. (42)

---

<sup>251</sup> Edward S. Casey (2009 [1993]), "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time". *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 321.

Unemotional as this account might appear at first glance, it provides a well-captured snapshot of this part of the city, precisely because it prosaically focuses on the very moment. As Berlin gains momentum, Nootboom lets himself drift along with it and explains by the following analogy how he perceives the metropolitan atmosphere that takes hold of him:

How does a fish see the river it is swimming in? It cannot leave the water to gain distance or perspective. Something like that is happening in Berlin. Everything is flowing. (72)

The interaction between the city and the author is mutual: on the one hand Nootboom actively sets out to explore his new surroundings, and on the other hand Berlin swallows him up as he finds himself in the urban vortex of city-life that is still new and unfamiliar to him and which he is ready to embrace.

Later in *Roads to Berlin*, Nootboom inserts two intermezzos set in Munich, in which he shifts the reading perspective to the third person ('the traveller'), thereby adding to the almost distanced self-perception mentioned above. He realises that it is the past that constantly guides him: "Again it made him think about the past, where most of his points of reference were evidently anchored" (121), and he wonders whether his preoccupation with things past is, in fact, an ailment: "The past as an occupation – it must be a disease" (123). This engagement with the past can be seen as another psychogeographical characteristic as it is the layering of history that is often of pivotal interest for psychogeographers. Nootboom reflects upon why Germany is different from other European countries, and why the past here resurfaces time and again:

It seemed to him that this was a vantage point from where one might look deep into time and see just how much those remote areas had once belonged, how deep the wounds were. Retrieving them would mean descending deep into a mine. He did not have the same feeling in France, in Italy, or in his own country. Those places had enough past, but somehow it had transformed more or less organically into a present. Here, the transition was not complete. The past had become stuck, bogged

down, coagulated, curdled, been torn away. But it was still there. Perhaps it was just waiting. (123)

This statement becomes particularly weighty with regard to the political times in which it was written, namely immediately after the fall of the Wall. What I would term Nootboom's psychogeographical pursuit, although unintentional, is on a level similar to the London psychogeographers' interests in their city's stories and (hidden) layers of history.

#### **4.2.2 Silences in a Divided Berlin**

The years 1989-90 were marked by turmoil in post-war Germany – a time of political unrest, fear and hope, which finally resulted in the fall of the Wall and German reunification. Nootboom finds himself in the middle of this politically difficult situation and, although he tries not to solely focus on it in his writings, he regards the Wall dividing the city as an inescapable force (cf. 48) by which the life of the whole city is determined. What is crucial for my analysis of Nootboom's rendering of Berlin just before, during and shortly after the Wall came down is his highly subjective and idiosyncratic – what I would term psychogeographical – exploration of the German metropolis so familiar with historical upheaval. *Roads to Berlin* is a highly personal book which is very much focused on the impact of Berlin on its inhabitants and on the author himself, despite the fact that he largely remains a detached onlooker. At the same time Nootboom stresses that it is history that fascinates him and guides his thinking, yet the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. I argue that the concept of silence, which I have employed throughout my dissertation, can take another shape in the case of Berlin. Whereas I argued on the basis of my selection of texts and metropolitan sites that Sydney's silences refer to the more or less concealed Aboriginal history of the city, Berlin's silences in times of the Cold War were similarly subtle yet, of course, of a very different nature. I read Nootboom's portrayal of the reticence or resignation he encounters among many Berliners with respect to the division of their city shortly before the fall of the Wall as a silent acceptance of their fate. According to Alois Hahn, this would be a case of concealment (as opposed to silence), of withholding something

that cannot be said, or, in fact, cannot be addressed.<sup>252</sup> A further distinction can be made in the German language by differentiating between 'Stille' (the absence of sounds more generally) and 'Schweigen' (the absence of words/language), which, in English, are pooled in the word 'silence', as Aleida Assmann remarks.<sup>253</sup> The silence captured in *Roads to Berlin* is therefore that of those Berliners who seemed to condone their fate of living in a divided city, a silence which would be best translated into German as 'Schweigen': a conscious decision not to speak out, an attempt to suppress the uneasy events right in front of their eyes. At least this is Nootboom's impression during his stay in the city. Assmann also mentions a strategic form of silence: in difficult or even traumatic situations, silence ('Schweigen') can create a distance, a form of self-protection, often highly charged with emotion (cf. 2013: 57), a characteristic that Nootboom observes in the Berliners' daily routine.

Due to his powers of observation, the Dutch author is sensitive to the heaviness of spirit in the city. His focus is, for instance, not on the tragic fate of an individual trying to escape the GDR regime but rather on a more general and subtle openness towards the perception and pervasive mood that stays in the air.

The preceding prologue, in which the author describes a border-crossing in 1963 and his attendance as a journalist of the VI. party congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), matches Ortheil's depiction of his first visit to the GDR a year later: a tense atmosphere full of fear and restrictions. Nootboom captures the situation at the crossing very precisely, paying attention to small details, which, however, have an impact on the overall scene: the crunch of the border guard's shoes on the ground, the way they check his passport, the cold air, which also contributes to the chilly atmosphere in a metaphorical sense (cf. 14).<sup>254</sup> These supposedly trivial details, however, are a 'silent' reminder of the situation in the GDR. What strikes him from the very first moment is the 'Germanness' of everything he encounters in the East (cf. 14, 16, 17). Seemingly contradictory statements, for instance that cities behind walls

---

<sup>252</sup> Cf. Alois Hahn (2013), "Schweigen, Verschweigen, Wegschauen und Verhüllen". In: Assmann, Aleida, and Jan Assmann (eds.), *Schweigen. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation XI*. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag. 44.

In the title of his essay, Hahn puns the German word 'Schweigen' (Silence): concealment ('Verschweigen'), turning a blind eye ('Wegschauen') and veiling ('Verhüllen').

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Aleida Assmann (2013), "Formen des Schweigens". In: Assmann, Aleida, and Jan Assmann (eds.), *Schweigen. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation XI*. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag. 65.

<sup>254</sup> Hasse mentions the impact of the seasons on the reality of urban spaces (cf. 2012: 14).

tend to be “the same, yet different” (16), gain unfettered and philosophical validity in Cold War times. Confronted with “the blunt teeth of the Wall” (15), a rather threatening notion, he notes the smell of brown coal that pervades the air in East Berlin (cf. 16). The olfactory sense is crucial when it comes to the perception of urban atmosphere, as a certain smell associated with a particular urban place inscribes itself ‘biographically’ into one’s memory (cf. Hasse 2012: 21). Again comparable to Ortheil’s first impressions as a child, the atmosphere is replete with palpable tensions, reinforced by the sense of smell that again distinguishes the two parts of Berlin. Yet the most powerful emotion is a “feeling of complete alienation” (22). This estrangement forces itself on Nootboom as soon as he enters the GDR and he notices the impact of the past: “And it is this reality, this desiccated, fervent past which claims to be a vision of the future, that creates such a sense of alienation” (18). To him, Berlin cannot be extricated from its past, it is constantly there and makes itself felt: “If there is one place in the world where the past feels at home, it must be Berlin” (29). This constant presence of the past<sup>255</sup> adds to the concept of silence, which is the reason for his feeling of alienation in this city where the layers of history keep emerging at every turn. Nootboom also investigates this phenomenon of the re-emergence of the past in his novel *All Souls Day*, in which the Dutch protagonist reads Berlin’s “empty spaces” as “historical absences” and interprets them “as sites of mourning” (Broadbent 2009: 105-06).

Much later, during his stay in Berlin in 1989-90, Nootboom describes his temporary life in a divided city, in which the atmosphere heats up more and more the closer it gets to 09 November 1989. The Wall – this huge concrete object surrounded by its life-threatening no-man’s-land – makes up part of the ‘wall of silence’ he encounters. Although he is aware of it being “a cliché” and “a caesura in the landscape” that crosses the city like “[a] scar” (40), it is the best comparison he can think of. However, the silence can be most prominently felt among the Berliners themselves – the people who shape the city. Nootboom wonders: “And what does it look like inside the people?” (40). According to him, then, the actual silence that marked the divided Berlin can be read from the Berliners’ mind-set. The author notices this reticence in the faces of the people who pass him: “An old woman with a cane moves very slowly; she has a view of

---

<sup>255</sup> Cf. Andreas Huyssen (2003), *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1, 8.

two countries” (32). A little later, this idea is mirrored in a similar instance when he points out again “the difference between the two countries, the same country” (49). As he watches the bridge Oberbaumbrücke from close by, Nootboom tries to empathise not only with the citizens, but also with the East Berlin border guards as he tries to imagine what they are talking about (cf. 32), possibly in an attempt to at least mentally break down that ‘wall of silence’ for a short period of time. Standing on the West Berlin side of the bridge, he finds it hard to imagine that the other side exists at all, though he has been there numerous times, but as it is invisible from his current standpoint, it seems to be non-existent. To him it is a “city of silence, empty and mythical” (31). Berlin even reminds him of the metaphysical-surrealist paintings of Giorgio de Chirico (cf. 31), which indicates how unreal – or rather surreal – the city feels to him. He is astonished by how indifferent the people are to their city’s division and how implicitly they accept their fates: “People are simply walking across this bridge, even though one of them was shot dead this week” (32). Again, this rather prosaic description conveys a lot about the atmosphere he captures in this instance: the pervasive sense of threat and intimidation, which had become commonplace for the people who lived there. When visiting East Berlin, fully conscious of taking sides with West Berlin by calling the East of the city the “other side” (41), the author notices differences between the two parts of the city on the basis of cars and traffic.

Three days after the fall of the Wall, Nootboom describes how the silence that expressed itself in these palpable tensions and in the attitude of the people is suddenly overcome as “a swirling crowd” (72) celebrates the end of their city being cut in two:

As I write these words, church bells are ringing out on all sides, as they did a few days ago when the bells of the Gedächtniskirche suddenly pealed out their bronze news about the open Wall and people knelt down and cried in the streets. There is always something ecstatic, moving, alarming, about visible history. No-one can miss it. And no-one knows what is going to happen. (72)

The actual fall of the Wall does not take up much space in *Roads to Berlin* as it seems that it is not so much the historical event itself that particularly interests



Nooteboom but rather its impact on the city and its citizens. The future of this metropolis “that has been through so much” (72) is once again up in the air, and it is this highly charged and emotional atmosphere that Nooteboom captures:

The tens of thousands of people flowing through the eastern channels to the West all bring their emotions with them as though they are tangible objects. (72)

With the fall of the Wall Berlin underwent a radical change, as a result of which the silences, identified by Nooteboom as being expressed in Cold War-related tensions, vanished (at least to a certain degree). However, the Wall – or rather its impact or aftermath – has not fully disappeared from the cityscape, as its ‘present absence’ stretches right across the city and has left voids which continue to characterise Berlin long after its fall, and which intermingle with other voids that date back many more decades.

#### **4.2.3 Absences in Post-Wall Berlin**

Building on the silences that marked the divided Berlin, I shall now turn towards post-unification Berlin by considering, first and foremost, the absences that emerged once the Wall was torn down, a political event Nooteboom witnessed at first hand. However, other traumas have also been inflicted on the city over the previous decades and have left their ineradicable scars, often manifested by voids, which might not be as visible in the cityscape as the absence of the Wall but which are certainly no less grievous. As the author roams the streets and engages with “Berlin’s mottled topography” (Broadbent 2009: 106), he is very sensitive towards these missing sections of the city. Before elaborating on his findings, it is pertinent to refer to Andreas Huyssen’s “The Voids of Berlin” (1997), in which Huyssen deals with precisely these absences that have marked the city over the decades and aptly defines Berlin as palimpsest:<sup>256</sup>

---

<sup>256</sup> In contrast, Mary Fulbrook believes that “to remain at this level [of “treating Berlin as palimpsest”] would be to misread Berlin; or, rather, to ignore the multiplicity of conflicting historical significations” (2009: 127). Nevertheless, I find Huyssen’s reading of Berlin as palimpsest suitable for my discussion of *Roads to Berlin*.

Berlin-as-text remains first and foremost a historical text, marked as much, if not more, by absences as by the visible presence of its past, from prominent ruins such as the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche at the end of the famous Kurfürstendamm to World War II bullet and shrapnel marks on many of its buildings. (1997: 60)

Huysen is referring to the historical layering of the city, a fact which also fascinates Nootboom (cf. 159), and uses “the notion of the city as text” (1997: 57) – a concept that “has existed as long as we have had a modern city literature” (Huysen 1997: 58) – in order to characterise the city as a place marked both by absences and its ‘present past’ (to borrow the title of another of his books mentioned previously). Tumarkin equally believes that “[t]here is perhaps no better example of this vision of places as palimpsests than Berlin” as “[n]o other major Western city is as explicitly defined by its voids as Berlin” – “voids created by deliberate and dramatic acts of erasure” (2005: 225). Likewise, Huysen regards these absences as voids, a term that refers back to Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch (cf. 1997: 62). Later, in 1945, “the literal void that was the landscape of ruins” (Huysen 1997: 63) in the aftermath of the Second World War added another palpable sense of absence to the notion of ‘the void’: the absence of what used to be there but no longer was (people, buildings, neighbourhoods). Some traces of this ‘period of voids’ can still be seen in today’s Berlin, for example the shrapnel marks Huysen refers to, but those ‘scars’ from the past are becoming increasingly hard to find. However, more voids were to come and characterise Berlin: the 1950s saw a broad phase of “urban renewal” that erased “entire quarters of the old Berlin” (Huysen 1997: 63-64). When the building of the Wall commenced in 1961, “the no-man’s-land” that surrounded it created yet another and much more dangerous empty space right across the city and, whereas “West Berlin itself always appeared as a void on East European maps”, in return West German TV simply left out the GDR’s weather maps altogether (Huysen 1997: 64), to give just a simple example of how East and West Berlin denied the other’s existence. According to Huysen, the last and most prominent ‘layer’ of absence – and the one I shall mostly focus on in this section with regard to *Roads to Berlin* – was a consequence of the fall of the Wall: in its place, “a seventeen-acre wasteland”, “a haunting space” (Huysen 1997: 64-65), “perhaps the most powerful of Berlin’s voids”

(Tumarkin 2005: 225), crossed the city centre. Nooteboom is confronted with this very absence during his stay in Berlin, although other absences resulting from trauma of previous decades also persist, to a certain degree, in the cityscape. These absences can take different shapes and represent animate beings as well as inanimate things. In terms of material absences, gaps in rows of houses due to Second World War bombing are quite prominent, and I would like to make a brief digression here in order to introduce *The Missing House* (1990), an in situ memorial by French artist Christian Boltanski in the district of Mitte, which deals with exactly these gaps in the cityscape and thereby draws attention to a crucial aspect of Berlin history: the absence of a large part of the Berlin population, the Jewish people who were deported and subsequently murdered in concentration camps during the Holocaust. In *Street Scenes: Brecht, Benjamin & Berlin* (2005), Nicolas Whybrow compares *The Missing House* to British artist Rachel Whiteread's inside-out sculpture *House* in East London, which I have already discussed in the London chapter, and states that "both are offering the same kind of contemplative staging of a mourning for something which has gone, a memorialising process of making strange".<sup>257</sup> *The Missing House* is located on Große Hamburger Str. 15/16 and marks the absence of a house that was destroyed due to bombing in 1943<sup>258</sup> and in which many Jewish people had lived. Boltanski has mounted plaques with the name, date of birth and occupation of each former inhabitant on the wall of the adjoining house approximately where the flat of the respective person had been. Thereby, these people are no longer anonymous figures in statistics, but he creates a space for identification,<sup>259</sup> in fact "a memorial space dedicated to 'absence'".<sup>260</sup> Thus, by very simple means, Boltanski has created "a kind of permanent memorial to loss and absence",<sup>261</sup> which in turn, by being situated in a negative space (the gap between two houses), draws attention to the actual but implied absence, namely the house's inhabitants. The fact that one comes

<sup>257</sup> Nicolas Whybrow (2005), *Street Scenes: Brecht, Benjamin & Berlin*. Bristol: Intellect Books. 105.

<sup>258</sup> The Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies of the University of Minnesota names 1945 as the year of the aerial bombardment. Accessed 16 December 2014. (n. pag.)

<http://www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/memorials/berlin/>

<sup>259</sup> Cf. Lysann Buschbeck (n.d.), *Christian Boltanski, The Missing House (Grosse Hamburger Straße, Berlin-Mitte)*. Accessed 16 December 2014. (n. pag.) <https://www.hgb-leipzig.de/mahnmal/bolti.html>

<sup>260</sup> The Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies of the University of Minnesota. Accessed 16 December 2014. (n. pag.) <http://www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/memorials/berlin/>

<sup>261</sup> Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1998), "Mourning or Melancholia: Christian Boltanski's 'Missing House'". *Oxford Art Journal* 21.2. 7.

across many such sites all over Berlin<sup>262</sup> is testament to the layering of the city – a city that does not seem to have merely one past but many *pasts*, which intermingle in the cityscape.

A similar way of remembering and honouring individual former Jewish citizens is expressed in the *Stolperstein* (“stumbling stone”) project by German artist Gunter Demnig: “by installing commemorative brass plaques in the pavement in front of their [the Jewish people who were deported and killed during the Holocaust, but also other minorities like Roma and Sinti who were persecuted and murdered under the Nazi regime] last address of choice” in which their names, dates of birth and death and place of deportation are engraved,<sup>263</sup> people commemorate the former inhabitants by paying tribute to them and their fates as victims of the Holocaust atrocities. In a way it is a *silent*, modest remembering, but nevertheless a powerful one as the stones are scattered across the whole city and are not limited to Berlin but can be found in their thousands in other German (and in fact even other European) cities as well. The sheer magnitude of their dissemination already has an impact on the city-walker, as one comes across these brass stones at almost every corner in Berlin. Bending down to read the inscription, the pedestrian bows before the person who is being commemorated with this stumbling stone.<sup>264</sup> Unlike the large-scale and more anonymous, state-aided memorials like the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Holocaust Memorial), the stumbling stones are a way of paying tribute to the individual victims, based on the principle of today’s citizens actively espousing the laying of the stones: “[i]ndividuals, families, and school groups conduct historical research and finance the emplacement of these memorial stones”.<sup>265</sup> Thus, citizens are encouraged to deal with the

---

<sup>262</sup> For instance, the former Jewish cemetery on Große Hamburger Straße is literally across the road from *The Missing House* and the memorial *Der Verlassene Raum* (1996) – “the abandoned room” or “more abstractly-speaking, the space of disappearance” (Whybrow 2005: 120) – is at the end of the same road, on Koppenplatz, which gives an indication of the dense concentration of sites, artworks or memorials dealing with absence, especially in the area of Berlin-Mitte.

<sup>263</sup> Quoted from the *Stolperstein* website. Accessed 09 January 2015.

<http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/home/>.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Michael Friedrichs-Friedlaender quoted in: Christine Kühnl-Sager (2014), “‘Die Schicksale hämmern sich in meinen Kopf.’ Ein Gespräch mit Michael Friedrichs-Friedlaender.” In: Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin e.V., Koordinationsstelle Stolpersteine Berlin, Kulturprojekte Berlin GmbH (eds.), *Stolpersteine in Berlin. 12 Kiezspaziergänge*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Berlin: Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand e.V. 31.

<sup>265</sup> Matthew Cook and Micheline van Riemsdijk (2014), “Agents of memorialization: Gunter Demnig’s *Stolpersteine* and the individual (re-) creation of a Holocaust landscape in Berlin”. *Journal of Historical Geography* 43. 138.

stories of their houses' former inhabitants and to engage actively in the history of their city.<sup>266</sup>

As these examples and the preceding brief 'history of absences'<sup>267</sup> have demonstrated, Berlin has for a very long time been a city in which something is missing. By reference to *Roads to Berlin* I seek to identify how Nootboom deals with the voids that the past has inflicted on Berlin. In view of the historical context, the absence of the former Wall features most prominently in Nootboom's rendering of Berlin, yet he also deals with the haunting effects evoked by the traces of the Second World War (cf. 122-23). In fact, Nootboom conflates the two dictatorships, the Nazi and the GDR regime:

[...] so much history has been made in this place that the very air seems saturated with it. I am not only talking about what has been built, but also about what has disappeared: the power of empty spaces, the force of attraction exerted by vanished squares, ministries, *Führerbunker*, torture cellars, the no-man's land around the Wall, the deadly sandbank between the two barriers that were called the *Todesstreifen*, the death strip – all of those places where people and memories have been sucked away. (159)

It is this interplay of various absences – or “void space[s]” (2005: 35), as Whybrow calls the blank space left behind by the demolition of the Wall – that fills the air. Holocaust and Stasi cruelties start to intermingle in Nootboom's perception of the city. He emphasises that it is not only the buildings that are no longer existent but, much graver in consequence, also the people who inhabited those places: the Jewish population of Berlin and those victims who fatally tried to cross the Wall. The following passage shows very clearly that the immediate post-'Wende' times cannot be separated from the lingering legacy of the Second World War:

You pass through those stations and find yourself in a realm of ghosts, a world where everyone has fled or died of the plague. The platforms are

---

<sup>266</sup> Despite the *Stolperstein* project having generally been acclaimed as a 'successful' way of commemorating the individual Holocaust victims, Demnig has also come under fire for employing the 'Nazi jargon' that had been used to denounce the victims during the National Socialist regime – although in inverted commas on the brass plaques – and for refusing to eradicate these 'Nazi terms' from the stones. Cf. Petra Schellen, "Über Sprache stolpern". *Tageszeitung*. 20 October 2014, accessed 12 January 2015. (n. pag.) <http://www.taz.de/Erinnerung-an-NS-Opfer/!147981/>

<sup>267</sup> In the following, I use the terms 'voids' and 'absences' almost synonymously.

eerily illuminated; even from inside the train you can sense the breathtaking silence that fills those spaces. You know that if you were to step off the train, you would instantly be transformed into an ancient man, someone with a newspaper from 1943 in his bag. 'Old' buildings, like the Reichstag or the Pergamon Museum, look a little strange, as if they ran aground on a submerged rock back in some distant past, as if they have difficulty remembering their past or their function. (159)

Here, Nootboom combines two temporal and historical layers: by mentioning the absence that has emerged due to people fleeing, for either religious or political reasons, he alludes to the respective menace of the Nazi and Stasi regimes. At the same time, the empty and "eerily illuminated" stations he comes across in early 1990, in which a threatening silence has proliferated, conjure up images of the 1940s in him (although he would not have witnessed Berlin during the Second World War). On the one hand, the trains evoke the death trains that carried people to concentration camps during the Second World War, and on the other hand the frightening 'ghost stations' underneath East Berlin were a significant characteristic of the GDR, also described and experienced by the young Ortheil. Time and again, Nootboom returns to the notion of absence, which he encounters throughout the city:

Berlin is the city of the negative space, the space where something is not, the bombed-out-of-existence, the closed-off, the mysteriously forbidden. The symbol of this is the bullet holes that you can see so often, small indentations, places where stone or brick should be, but where they are conspicuous by their absence, just as people are absent from closed metro stations. (159)

The material gaps thus represent much greater losses the city has had to endure, and Berlin will always be stigmatised as the city of the former Nazi regime and the city that was divided by a Wall. In fact,

[w]hile the inability to recognize where the Wall once stood is to some degree owed to the desire to see unification succeed, it is perhaps correct

to say that the Wall's absence determines the city today as much as its presence did from 1961 to 1989.<sup>268</sup>

Although I would treat such a statement with some scepticism, as I believe that the Wall when it was physically present determined the city much more than its 'present absence' today, it contains nevertheless an element of truth, as Berlin will not be able for some time to shake off its image as 'the city with the Wall'.

In a similar way, and also reminiscent of Huyssen's focus on 'voids', Richard Shusterman, in his explorations of "the urban aesthetics of absence" (chapter title), still feels the impact of the Wall in 2000, more than a decade after its fall:

In short, the now absent wall dividing East and West remains in many ways the structuring principle of this unified city, just as the divided cities of East and West Berlin were defined essentially by their contrasting absent parts.<sup>269</sup>

A decade before Shusterman, who terms Berlin a "kaleidoscope of absences" (2000: 99), Nootboom describes the atmosphere immediately after the fall of the Wall as a paradoxical one, calm and tempestuous at the same time:

[...] and I see my city as an enclosed district floating in the middle of a country like a large ship battling upon an angry sea, even though it too is playing a part in whipping up the waves. This may be a peculiar image, but I know of no better way to describe it. There is a storm raging all around and yet it is so quiet. (94)

It is striking that for the first time Nootboom refers to Berlin as "my city"; he has started to identify with it. When he leaves Berlin for a trip to Munich, he crosses the still existing GDR and notices the difference and also a melancholy feeling of absence that seems to pervade these parts of Germany:

---

<sup>268</sup> Katharina Gerstenberger and Jana Evans Brazier (2011), "Introduction. After the Berlin Wall: Realigned Worlds, Invisible Lines, and Incalculable Remnants". In: Gerstenberger, Katharina, and Jana Evans Brazier (eds.), *After the Berlin Wall: Germany and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 6.

<sup>269</sup> Richard Shusterman (2000), *Performing Life: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press. 97-98.

Smoke billows from the Trabants, the road surface is ravaged, the service areas look antiquated, and there is none of the dogged luxury that afflicts my part of the world. This is a marked landscape – nowhere else looks like here. The enforced slowness of pace lends it an atmosphere of time forever past, and in a funny kind of way that is not unpleasant. (101)

As he keeps travelling through the newly opened Eastern parts of Germany, he encounters “a world that was kept on ice, but which is now being defrosted” (171), a poetic image which reiterates the slow and silent nature of the changes taking place. Nootboom’s philosophical forays into Berlin and the German mentality include not only musings about history and the past, but also reflections on linguistics, as he notices that “[w]here words are missing, speech falters and fails, and forms of reticence, obfuscation, silence develop. *Sprechen, versprechen*: to speak, to promise” (172). So it is not only the city itself that is marked by loss and absence, but also its inhabitants’ ability to give voice to what has happened – a case of speechlessness, ‘Schweigen’, absence of voice, in a very literal sense.

As Nootboom is about to leave Berlin after his eighteen-month stay, he glances back at the recent history and concludes:

Soon there will be no Wall; soon this will be one country. But even where that Wall no longer stands, it will still be present. Given its slowness, the gradual interpenetration of the two Germanies will be far less visible than the external signs of unity: the same banknotes, advertisements, road signs, uniforms. The invisible is situated in the mind, in the lost protection offered by isolation. (203)

Nootboom’s philosophical forays into Germany’s past have enabled him to establish a (personal) connection to Berlin, a city which can only be ‘unlocked’ in its presence if one is willing to face its past: “Understanding this country involves travelling back in time along lines of written words, over and over again: they draw you into the past in order to clarify the present” (204). The “differentiation between the *present* and the *past*”, which is normally a marker of the beginning of “[m]odern Western history”, as Michel de Certeau states in



“Writings and Histories” (2000),<sup>270</sup> has been rescinded here; the differentiation no longer seems to apply to Berlin, because “its present time” is no longer separated from “a past”, as is normally the case in historiography (de Certeau 2000: 158). When his time as a German Academic Exchange Service guest is up and Nootboom leaves Berlin in June 1990, he concludes that on his return to Berlin as a visitor, “everything will be different, yet still the same, and changed forever” (211) – a statement that might be universally true, but in the case of Berlin in 1990 this is highly significant and points again to a conflation of present and past. On his first return to the city in May 1991, after he had left Berlin a year before at the end of his residency (Part II), Nootboom recounts the strangeness of the places he revisits and how much they are still affected by what they used to be:

Describing a place in terms of what is no longer there can be difficult. The Wall that is no longer there exists in duplicate, because you have to imagine it in the place where it once actually was. Or maybe not, but it happens automatically. You cannot walk through a wound unharmed, and that wound is everywhere. As are the scars. (216)

Yet it is not only from the outside that things are changing – more important, Nootboom notes, is the fact that people will have to change the way they think:

Slowly the big clean-up will begin, but that is outside, in the city. The inner clean-up will have to wait for people who have not yet been born, for the new inhabitants, or for the unthinking, but there are few of those. It seems as though everyone has the Wall in their mind; sooner or later it comes up in every conversation. Are people becoming used to it? Not really. (216)

This statement is reminiscent of the now famous phrase in Peter Schneider’s novel *The Wall Jumper* (1998 [1983]): “It will take us longer to tear down the Wall in our heads than any wrecking company will need for the Wall we can see”.<sup>271</sup> As Christine Leuenberger states:

---

<sup>270</sup> Michel de Certeau (2000), “Writings and Histories”. In: Spargo, Tamsin (ed.), *Reading the Past: Literature and History*. Readers in Cultural Criticism. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 157.

<sup>271</sup> Peter Schneider (1998 [1983]), *The Wall Jumper*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 119.

Indeed, post-1989, the term ‘mental wall’ (*die Mauer im Kopf*), which purportedly signified social divergences and cultural disparities between East and West, became one of the defining metaphors for inter-German relations.<sup>272</sup>

Nooteboom notices with astonishment the “bitterness” (217) with which many of the West Berliners meet the former East Berliners. To him it feels as if “[t]he entire city is sitting in the waiting room of history”, while “a sense of unreality” pervades the city (218). It is the constant retrospective view into the past that marks the unified Berlin: “This city cannot escape history and perhaps that is the issue here, or one of the issues” (218). Nooteboom recognises that “a city that reads like one large memory in stone [...] is not free to move in the present” (218). To him, the day the Wall fell was the very day when history “allow[ed] itself to be hurried along”, although it is normally “invisible because it happens so slowly” (218).

As the author revisits the village of Lübars, a few things have changed: “The tower no longer exists and I look through the absent steel at an absent tower with absent men, an absent Wall” (238). Absence is pervasive, as the repetition indicates, and the fewer traces of the former border there are to be seen, the stronger is its impact felt. It is a feeling of chilling fear that creeps over him in this place and he continues to muse about the role of history in Germany:

I walk across a space where men would once have had to shoot me and I feel a shiver that soon no-one will feel. History erases its traces and that is how it becomes history. (Invisible traces, visible reality.) (238-39)

Those kinds of philosophical thoughts and observations contribute to my reading of *Roads to Berlin* not as a classical chronicle but as a psychogeographical one: Nooteboom not only states the obvious facts but also reflects on how the changes the city undergoes affect him and the Berliners and what long-term consequences they might have. He contemplates the reasons for Berlin’s voids and absences – not only those caused by the fall of the Wall,

---

<sup>272</sup> Christine Leuenberger (2011), “From the Berlin Wall to the West Bank Barrier: How Material Objects and Psychological Theories Can Be Used to Construct Individual and Cultural Traits”. In: Gerstenberger, Katharina, and Jana Evans Braziel (eds.), *After the Berlin Wall: Germany and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 63.

but also those belonging to earlier periods – and these thoughts reflect his interest in the consequences for Berliners of their city's history:

I feel that here, on an infinitely larger scale, and with horrifying consequences for the fates of so many people, somehow the same has happened as happened to me, that the ruins and the gaps I encountered here that first time had something to tell me that I did not yet truly understand. That something was, at first, nothing. All of those gaps, those lacunae, those absences wanted to speak to me about nothingness, about destruction, which in both German (*Vernichtung*) and Dutch (*vernietiging*) is founded on the notion of turning something into nothing, the negative, negation, *nicht*, *niet*, not, a city become nothing. This emptiness and absence resulted from the actions of a man who, back in the 1920s, wrote a book that loudly and clearly proclaimed a programme: the *Vernichtung* of a *Volk*. (258)

To Nootboom, the voids he feels confronted with are pointing back to the atrocities of the Holocaust and thus leave an even more gruesome aftertaste. One is confronted in Berlin with a constant intermingling of various layers of history and it is this to which Nootboom is very susceptible.

As the author returns to Germany for a third time, now at the government of North Rhine-Westphalia's invitation, in 2008/09 (Part III), he decides to "surrender [him]self to the city once again" and he notices that he is "simply unable to delete the past from [his] system" (270). As he plunges back into city life, he realises something that appears as "a miracle" to him, namely the fact that "Germany has succeeded, as far as such a thing is possible, in coming to terms with one past through grief and understanding, by realising that it will never entirely disappear" (271). In shorter sections, Nootboom describes how he revisits familiar places after so many years, yet he comprehends that the city has changed so much that he "shall have to get to know Berlin all over again" (272). Some of the absences have vanished, for instance the former 'ghost station' of Potsdamer Platz is now a place teeming with tourists. Yet the most obvious absence, the void left behind by the former Wall, is still part of the city, although its absence has been integrated into the cityscape as well as eradicated by new constructions.

#### 4.2.4 Conclusion

To conclude, *Roads to Berlin* emphasises that Berlin's past – and with it its silences and absences – keeps resurfacing in the present to such a degree that Nootboom wonders whether “this city does it on purpose – the constant intermingling of now and then, and the associated layers of memory” (274). By “creating [his] own daily chronicle” (319), which I have termed a psychogeographical chronicle, the author comes to the realisation that

the country has also internalised, again as far as it is possible, that other past and, without wiping it out (you can never do that to a past), has transformed it, through accountability, habituation, wear and tear, into a present that looks like today. (271)

As I aimed to show in this section on Nootboom's philosophical forays into Berlin, his rendering of the atmospheres in the city that he perceived over several decades provide a distinct and highly idiosyncratic picture of Berlin shortly before and shortly after the fall of the Wall up to a period in time almost twenty years later. By focusing primarily on the past and its impact on the present, Nootboom tells the recent history of a city through the lens of a foreigner, though a foreigner well acquainted with the place and highly receptive towards its moods. By conflating the two major historical events that have left their marks on this city, the Holocaust and Second World War on the one hand and the division of the city by the Wall on the other hand, he focuses on ambivalent absences: not only the most obvious one, the gap in the cityscape after the fall of the Wall, but also the voids that metaphorically represent the Holocaust victims: “[p]hysical voids, psychological voids, metaphysical voids ... Voids that cannot be filled” (Tumarkin 2005: 225). Joachim Sartorius refers to Nootboom's meditations on the German past as a holding up of a mirror to the German people.<sup>273</sup> Thus, I regard *Roads to Berlin* as another unique example of contemporary urban writing that can be termed psychogeographical in its sensitive and circumspect approach to the city.

---

<sup>273</sup> Cf. Joachim Sartorius (1995), “Ich roch den Mondstaub zu meinen Füßen – Ein Schriftsteller aus den Niederlanden erzählt den Deutschen ihre Geschichte”. In: Cartens, Daan (ed.), *Der Augenmensch Cees Nootboom*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch. 270.

### 4.3 Along the (Former) Wall: *Cycling the Frame* and *The Invisible Frame*

Closely linked to Nootboom's pursuit in *Roads to Berlin*, the impact of the Wall's absence and its legacy today which bears witness to so many silences shall be shown from yet another (psychogeographical) perspective with reference to two documentary films, *Cycling the Frame* (1988)<sup>274</sup> and *The Invisible Frame* (2009).<sup>275</sup> One year before the fall of the Wall, director Cynthia Beatt and actress Tilda Swinton embarked on a documentary cycling tour on this inner-German border which resulted in *Cycling the Frame*. Twenty-one years later they revisit Berlin in *The Invisible Frame* and retrace once again the line of the former Wall by bike.

In *Cycling the Frame*, the young Tilda Swinton starts her cycling tour on the West Berlin side in front of the Brandenburg Gate but soon leaves the well-known parts of the city centre and cycles through industrial sites along the river Spree until she reaches the outskirts. The film is very calm, showing long takes of Swinton on her bike as she crosses the different sectors, leaving enough time to absorb the area she passes through and its changing atmospheres, especially as there is not much dialogue. With each take, not only the perspective and surroundings change, but also the sounds that evoke her passage through different ambiances, to put it psychogeographically. The film seems old-fashioned to today's viewers, especially due to the pale colours, but captures vivid images of the divided Berlin in the 1980s.

The areas that Swinton cycles through are mostly anonymous; some are beautiful, others fairly ugly, with depressing *Plattenbauten* – prefabricated buildings so typical of the former GDR – in the background. The actual Wall does not feature very often but it is constantly on her mind. Knowing that she *cycles its frame* reminds one that this is not a pleasant outing but aims at capturing the oppressive and dangerous atmosphere and silently points out what the Wall has divided or even destroyed, for instance abandoned railway lines that lead nowhere, the rails simply ending in some kind of no-man's-land: "Looking. It's like the tracks are looking over the Wall. Really sad, [...] truncated" (06:23-06:32). Swinton does not speak very much, but once in a

---

<sup>274</sup> *Cycling the Frame*. Dir. Cynthia Beatt. Perf. Tilda Swinton. Filmgalerie 451, 1988.

<sup>275</sup> *The Invisible Frame*. Dir. Cynthia Beatt. Perf. Tilda Swinton. Filmgalerie 451, 2009.

while she interposes some rather cryptic, almost surrealist remarks about her immediate surroundings, yet sometimes she also makes explicit reference to the Wall, often in poetic form (cf. 20:02-20:45).<sup>276</sup> She wonders (and hopes), “what if it just fell down?” (12:13-12:16). In a subtle way one is constantly being confronted with the fact that the menace emanating from the Wall is omnipresent. Even the picturesque Griebnitzsee (Lake Griebnitz) cannot be blithely enjoyed; Swinton realises that “people living here cannot go swimming” (13:42-13:45) because the border runs through the middle of the lake and the threatening atmosphere is emphasised by the sound of a shot. Thus, even the most idyllic spots are ruined, in a way, and one can feel Swinton’s unease and at times anger with the oppressive situation. Returning to Brandenburg Gate and stepping off from her bike, she hopes: “Everything will be as it should be. And that is it. Finito. Closed” (26:10-26:23). With hindsight, this is an almost clairvoyant ending with regard to the fall of the Wall in the following year.

In 2009, Beatt and Swinton return to retrace the former Wall.<sup>277</sup> Berlin has changed in the meantime: the Wall has gone, refurbishment has taken place, the Brandenburg Gate and government buildings look shiny and new, the colours are brighter and clearer, there is a beach bar catering for tourists along the banks of the river and the city seems to have a new face. The opening scene in *The Invisible Frame* mirrors that of 1988: once again, the film starts with Swinton on her bike cycling towards the Brandenburg Gate, where she also returns to in the end. Despite its factual absence, the Wall is still fairly present in today’s Berlin: memorials to the victims of the Wall are scattered over the city and a double line of cobblestones marks the ground where the Wall once cut through the city. Berlin looks peaceful and more colourful now, but one is constantly reminded of the fairly recent past. Swinton’s aim of “want[ing] to know what the Wall was like from the other side” (04:10-04:16) drives her to explore Berlin once again: “All I have to do is stay on this bike, keep my eyes and my mind open and keep my mind as free as I can” (03:00-03:10). Having left behind one of the last remaining and nowadays very tourist-focused border

---

<sup>276</sup> Some of the film texts are based on poems or texts by W.B. Yeats and Robert Louis Stevenson, among others, while some “were improvised by Tilda” (Beatt quoted on the film’s website, accessed 22 April 2016): [www.invisible-frame.com/en/the-film/interview](http://www.invisible-frame.com/en/the-film/interview)

<sup>277</sup> In an interview, Beatt stresses that the second film “is not a repeat, a remake, a sequel. It had to stand independently of the first film. Tilda expressed it eloquently: the print of a second foot, twenty years and a wall’s fall later” (Beatt quoted on the film’s website, accessed 22 April 2016): [www.invisible-frame.com/en/the-film/interview](http://www.invisible-frame.com/en/the-film/interview)

strips at Bernauer Straße, Swinton once again heads to the outskirts. She compares the city she cycles through to the divided Berlin of twenty-one years earlier and, similar to Nooteboom, notices how palpable the absence of the Wall still is: “Now you see it, now you don’t, it’s like a trick of the light. You come round a corner and there it is, and something is completely unchanged” (14:55-15:13). This time, her route is not confined to the Western side of the former border but she also explores some areas she could only see from the distance in 1988.

In the suburbs, modern, expensive houses alternate with old ramshackle and dilapidated, abandoned blocks of flats with smashed windows, covered in graffiti. Swinton seems reminded of the areas she passed through in 1988 and, after having climbed a former watchtower, she is left puzzled:

All these odds and ends, these bits of Wall and watchtowers and binoculars and uniforms and photographs...They are like the archaeological remains of some long, long, long dead civilisation, sort of pre-thirteen-hundred, maybe Byzantine, so far prehistoric really that there is no way of understanding how it really worked. But it was twenty years ago! Where is everybody? Where are the people who manned these watchtowers? Why must we guess everything? It’s all underground, it’s like a trapdoor has just shut and a carpet has been rolled over it. And it’s vanished underneath the acres and acres and acres of shame and rewritten history. Such a bad idea. It will all come out in the wash.

It will all come out in the wash. (21:05-22:15)

The areas Swinton passes through resonate with history and the documentary captures this eerie, uncanny feeling very well. This was Beatt’s intention, as she stated in an interview: “I had done a good deal of research into the process of coming to terms with the Nazi past, and I was very involved with the question of how that affects contemporary Germany”.<sup>278</sup> Then again the surroundings appear anything but oppressive and Swinton cycles through beautiful woods and past open meadows. Yet the past cannot be erased, not even in such a

---

<sup>278</sup> Beatt quoted on the film’s website (accessed 22 April 2016): [www.invisible-frame.com/en/the-film/interview](http://www.invisible-frame.com/en/the-film/interview)

seemingly peaceful setting where the actress reflects again on the impact of the Wall:

When this Wall, this ex-Wall, this manifestation of this ghost wall, was here, it felt so much more invisible than it is now. It has my attention in a way that it never did before. One can really taste the brutality of when it was put up, because one sees that what it divided was just space, just land, just streets, and just people, and families and communities, and a nation. And the brutality was submerged before, and ameliorated and translated into some kind of stoic acceptance. (22:32-23:35)

This stoic acceptance is also what Nootboom noticed on his Berlin walks: people had become reconciled to their fates.

The impact of the surroundings is felt strongly where an absence dominates the overall atmosphere. The Wall is no longer there, but the memories are. Swinton wonders:

Where am I now? Am I in the East or in the West? Does it matter? Why does it matter? Because it does. Because it means history and it means a point of view and it means a perspective. (42:21-42:52)

All these stories and viewpoints and feelings lie hidden in Berlin but resurface when paid attention to. Swinton re-enters the inner city and passes the now famous East Side Gallery and later Checkpoint Charlie, where traffic and tourists dominate the street scene. This is a Berlin completely different from the one she encountered in 1988. On her way back to her point of departure, she passes the Holocaust Memorial and returns to the Brandenburg Gate. In contrast to 1988, she does not have to stop in front of the then fenced off gate but can cycle through it, an experience she utters in the following poem-like incantation:

Open doors, open eyes,  
Open ears, open air,  
Open country, open season,  
Open fields, open hearts,



Open minds, open locks,  
Open borders, open future,  
Open sky, open arms,  
Open sesame! (56:22-56:50)

In the last take, Swinton turns around towards Brandenburg Gate. Her call “Open sesame!” was answered in the case of Berlin.

The calm but emphatic takes, the shifting city- or landscape around Swinton, the poetic and powerful political remarks enable a psychogeographical reading of these two documentary films, I believe. Temporally almost exactly mirroring Nootboom’s Berlin encounters in 1989 and 2009, these two documentaries provide yet another view on Berlin during the time just before the fall of the Wall and twenty years later. What unites *Cycling the Frame* and *The Invisible Frame* with Nootboom’s and Ortheil’s texts is a sensitivity towards the silences and absences that lie underneath the postmodern, often refurbished and polished surface. The pictures and scenes mostly speak for themselves but are emphasised by the short, poetic monologues referring to the ambiances which can be felt in places such as Berlin, where the past keeps resurfacing at every corner.

#### 4.4 Orte des Erinnerns/Places of Remembrance<sup>279</sup>

Finally, I would like to introduce another non-literary engagement with the silences and absences pertaining to the legacy of the Holocaust: a memorial/installation by the artist Renata Stih and the art historian Frieder Schnock in the Bavarian Quarter (Bayerisches Viertel) in the district of Schöneberg. It was inaugurated in 1993 yet was already “established or proposed before unification, and [...] subsequently relocated in the space-times of the New Berlin after 1990” (Till 2005: 9). Before the Second World War, the Bavarian Quarter “was popularly called the Jewish Switzerland due to the large number of prosperous Jewish residents living there”.<sup>280</sup> The memorial is dedicated to the six thousand Jews of the Schöneberg district who were deported to concentration camps and murdered there during the Nazi years.<sup>281</sup> The installation is part of the delicate discussion around a culture of remembrance in Berlin and I am fully aware of the fact that in the limited scope of my thesis I cannot provide an adequate account of this highly sensitive topic in its entirety. Therefore, I have chosen this memorial as just *one* example of an attempt at a visualisation of the silences and absences the past has left behind in this very neighbourhood.<sup>282</sup>

The Bavarian Quarter memorial, which is scattered over the area surrounding its central square, the Bayerischer Platz, is

an installation consisting of eighty signs bearing stylized images on one side and the texts of Nazi laws and decrees on the other [...] which recreates on linguistic and pictorial levels the political violence that had gone on in everyday life. The governing principle of the memorial is, in Stih’s words, to ‘make visible the conditions which led in an insidiously logical way to the destruction of the Jewish inhabitants.’<sup>283</sup>

---

<sup>279</sup> The exact title of the memorial by Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock is: *Orte des Erinnerns im Bayerischen Viertel – Ausgrenzung und Entrechtung, Vertreibung, Deportation und Ermordung von Berliner Juden in den Jahren 1933-1945*.

<sup>280</sup> Bill Rebigier (2005), *Jewish Berlin: Culture, Religion, Daily Life Yesterday and Today*. Berlin: Jaron Verlag. 94.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Barbara Straka (1994), “Normalität des Schreckens: Ein Orbis Pictus des alltäglichen Faschismus als Denk-Installation für das Bayerische Viertel in Berlin”. In: Kunstamt Schöneberg, Schöneberg Museum in Zusammenarbeit mit der Gedenkstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz (ed.), *Orte des Erinnerns*, Band 1. *Das Denkmal im Bayerischen Viertel. Beiträge zur Debatte um Denkmale und Erinnerung*. Berlin: Edition Hentrich. 8.

<sup>282</sup> However, the *Stolpersteine* would be another example.

<sup>283</sup> Caroline Wiedmer (1995), “Remembrance in Schöneberg”. Retrieved from Renata Stih’s and Frieder Schnock’s website. Accessed 02 December 2015. 2. <http://www.stih-schnock.de/remembrance>

A striking and important aspect of the installation is that “the relationship between the information given and the image represented varies from sign to sign” (Fig. 7. + Fig. 8., p. 223): while “[o]ne group of signs shows a one-to-one correspondence between picture and information”, “[o]ther signs consciously and ironically make clear the discordance between image and inscription”,<sup>284</sup> “[a]nother group of signs consists of symbols for public services which remain the same today”, as for instance the “U” for “U-Bahn” (metro) or “H” for “Haltestelle” (bus stop); the last group only consists of very few signs, the most startling being the one which is completely black on the ‘picture side’: “the law stated [“Ban on Jewish emigration. 23.10.1941”] bears implications that go beyond pictorial comment and can only give way to visual silence” (Wiedmer 1995: 3). Part of the installation are also “three large billboards” (in front of the local town hall Rathaus Schöneberg, the metro station Bayerischer Platz as well as a school in Münchener Straße) which indicate the location of the eighty signs, each billboard “show[ing] pre- and postwar maps of the area, one from 1933 and the other from 1993” which are “superimposed upon each other”, thereby creating “a topographical palimpsest of the past and present contours of the area” (Wiedmer 1995: 3) and “inviting an exploration of the Bayerisches Viertel in both its past and present forms”.<sup>285</sup> Thus, “the three aspects of image, text, and location powerfully restage the persecution of a people within the space of the quarter” (Wiedmer 1995: 4). In addition,

[t]his mapping of the city, of continuities and gaps, invites the viewer who has become curious about these signs to make sense of his or her *Standort*, location or place of standing, in both past and present.<sup>286</sup>

The pictures’ “aesthetics of normality” (Stih) (Wiedmer 1995: 3) on the one side of the signs as well as the fact that the anti-Semitic decrees on the other are deliberately written in the present tense and not in the past tense make them “especially disturbing” (Till 2005: 155) and force the passerby “to take notice

---

<sup>284</sup> Straka also refers to the non-conformity between text and image in the paintings of the Surrealist artist René Magritte, of which the signs might also be reminiscent (cf. 1994: 10).

<sup>285</sup> Caroline Wiedmer (1999), *The Claims of Memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press. 111.

<sup>286</sup> Karen E. Till and Julian Jonker (2009), “Spectral Ground in New Cities: Memorial Cartographies in Cape Town and Berlin”. In: Staiger, Ute, Henriette Steiner, and Andrew Webber (eds.), *Memory Culture and the Contemporary City: Building Sites*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 100-01.

and confront the past in the present” (Till 2005: 158). The signs give thought-provoking impulses as one is being faced at every corner with the past and the gradual disenfranchisement and degradation of the Jewish residents of this neighbourhood under the Nazi regime.<sup>287</sup> However, the memorial is also controversial in using the ‘Nazi jargon’ (without inverted commas and in the present tense), which resulted in alarmed local residents calling the police when the signs were first mounted, as they believed them to be acts of neo-Nazis (cf. Wiedmer 1995: 1). As a result, “a smaller sign noting the context of the decree had subsequently to be attached to the bottom of each plaque” (Wiedmer 1999: 103) in order to avoid further misunderstandings. Nevertheless, Jewish visitors to the area have expressed that the memorial causes them discomfort.<sup>288</sup> At the invitation of Berlin’s federal state government, Jewish former residents of the Bavarian Quarter visited the monument one year after the signs were put up and most found it hard to talk about the memorial at all, although they acknowledged its importance as a reminder to the German people (cf. Bendkowski 1994: 125).

The culture of remembrance is a very complex issue and its full discussion would go beyond the scope of my focus in this project. However, I would like to foreground the memorial’s potential as a powerful reminder of the painful past so closely linked to this very neighbourhood. In a way, one could say that it encourages a psychogeographical engagement with the area: looking at the seemingly harmless pictures only to understand that they are juxtaposed with Nazi laws on the other side, one gets a feel for the oppressiveness and imminent danger the Jewish residents of the Bavarian Quarter were subjected to. The signs force one to face this difficult legacy and to try to imagine what impact the absence of around six thousand residents had and has on daily life, then and now. Although *Places of Remembrance* is “dedicated to the victims of the quarter, it also asks precisely this question: How could thousands of people ignore the politics of marginalization and destruction?” (Wiedmer 1995: 2). This

---

<sup>287</sup> Franziska Kirchner points out that there has been a tendency since the 1980s to raise monuments at the very ‘scene of event’, as is the case with the memorial in the Bavarian Quarter. (Cf. Franziska Kirchner (1994), “Zur Frage der Abstraktion oder Gegenständlichkeit im heutigen Denkmal”. In: Kunstamt Schöneberg, Schöneberg Museum in Zusammenarbeit mit der Gedenkstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz (ed.), *Orte des Erinnerns*, Band 1. *Das Denkmal im Bayerischen Viertel. Beiträge zur Debatte um Denkmale und Erinnerung*. Berlin: Edition Hentrich. 44.)

<sup>288</sup> Cf. Halina Bendkowski (1994), “Zumutungen der Erinnerung: Jüdische Reaktionen auf das Denkmal im Bayerischen Viertel”. In: Kunstamt Schöneberg, Schöneberg Museum in Zusammenarbeit mit der Gedenkstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz (ed.), *Orte des Erinnerns*, Band 1. *Das Denkmal im Bayerischen Viertel. Beiträge zur Debatte um Denkmale und Erinnerung*. Berlin: Edition Hentrich. 125-26.

silence was the prerequisite for the absences that were to follow and which still mark this neighbourhood.

## 4.5 Conclusion

Many visitors to and residents of Berlin encounter a city that still struggles to come to terms with its twentieth-century past. The events of this in many respects traumatic century have imprinted their scars in the cityscape and have left in their wake many confronting silences and absences. I have aimed at providing examples of how these silences and absences can be foregrounded on the basis of Ortheil's and Nootboom's books, the two documentaries and the memorial in Schöneberg. The past is still palpable in Berlin and tends to resurface in different shapes. As Till states: "Berlin is a place haunted with landscapes that simultaneously embody presences and absences, voids and ruins, intentional forgetting and painful remembering" (2005: 8). The city cannot easily shake off its legacy and it is here, in its sensitivity towards what lingers below the surface but nevertheless impacts on the present, that my psychogeographical reading of *Die Berlinreise*, *Roads to Berlin*, *Cycling the Frame*, *The Invisible Frame* and *Places of Remembrance* has aimed at making a contribution. Again, I have deliberately chosen different 'voices' that shine a light on Berlin's difficult past from various angles and have hence broadened my focus from literary texts by including also documentary films and a memorial. Despite their different approaches, what my primary sources share is an engagement with and awareness of the city's history and a feel for how past events resurface today in the form of silences and/or absences. While Ortheil's 'Berliner Angst' is the result of palpable Cold War tensions he is confronted with in East Berlin, it is primarily the absence of his mother during this Berlin trip as well as the mystery that surrounds her time in Berlin, but also the father's reactions to the memories that befall him while revisiting certain places, which have a strong emotional (psychogeographical) impact on the young author. Nootboom identifies the silences as a stoic acceptance of the West Berliners' fate and notes the absences in the aftermath of the fall of the Wall, yet to him the legacies of the Second World War and the Cold War are intricately connected. The two documentary films address the silences of the Wall as well as the absences of the post-Wall times in beautiful, thought-provoking images. Finally, the installation in the Bavarian Quarter is a powerful reminder of the past and forces the passerby to face up to the horrors that resulted in the silences and absences of this neighbourhood.

## 5. Conclusion

Psychogeography is commonly associated with its Situationist origins in Paris and its revival in London, yet this thesis has aimed at a further development of the approach on various levels while taking advantage of the term's pliancy. Firstly, I have argued for psychogeography being a practice not only suitable for identifying the effects of the surroundings on an individual, but also for noting how, in the urban context, the past has repercussions on the present. These repercussions, I argue, are expressed in the form of what I have identified as silences and absences, which take different shapes in each city. Secondly, I have applied the approach to two 'new' cities, Sydney and Berlin, which have never before been investigated in the light of psychogeography but which I regard as congenial to such an analysis, because of the ways in which, during the 1990s, their relationships with their own pasts underwent profound changes. And thirdly, I applied a psychogeographical reading to non-fiction texts as well as artworks which are not part of the tradition of psychogeography but which exhibit psychogeographical potential in terms of the means by which they engage with the respective city's *genius loci* and echo the city's silences and absences.

The introduction provided a general overview of this project – its aims, methods and primary sources. Apart from a broad outline of psychogeography as a practice traditionally receptive to the impact of the surroundings on the individual, I argued for my extended reading of psychogeography as also suited to drawing attention to how the past finds expression in (metaphorical and actual) voids in postmodern cities. Particular focus was laid on my choice of cities: Sydney and Berlin were chosen on the grounds that both metropolises underwent a process of coming to terms with their respective pasts in the last decade of the twentieth century. They have, however, developed different ways of dealing with their silences and absences.

The second chapter focused on the 'spiritual forerunners' to my thesis, namely the two cities in which psychogeography has already been well-established. The first part of the chapter provided an overview of the Situationist International in Paris in the 1950s and 60s, which invented psychogeography and was driven by its radical, avant-gardist attitude towards the city. I selected those aspects of their agenda that proved pivotal to my focus on literary and

artistic expressions of psychogeography, while dispensing with an analysis of their political, anti-capitalist goals, which do not contribute to my application of the practice. I gave the definitions of some of the most important terms on the basis of the Situationists' theoretical ideas and aimed at an overview of what the avant-garde group generally represented and targeted, namely a novel way of dealing with their rapidly changing urban surroundings. The second part of the chapter was dedicated to the London scene, which emerged in the 1990s and has ever since been committed to exploring the city's local stories and histories, hidden corners and urban edges. Apart from having introduced some of the most famous and popular London psychogeographers, I consciously selected a wide range of approaches (including the arts more generally), some of which have not yet been identified as psychogeographical but which I have deemed qualified as illustrating the diverse nature of the psychogeographical method and London's still burgeoning psychogeography scene.

In chapters 3 and 4 I applied my reading of psychogeography to two new cities. Chapter 3 focused on Sydney as a city of contradictions, which, in addition to its apparent beauty, also has some darker undertones. These, however, are not immediately obvious. The Aboriginal history of the city does not feature prominently in the cityscape but, upon closer consideration – on the basis of close readings of the selected primary sources – it appears that one does not have to scratch the surface too deeply to understand that the 'postcard' image of Sydney is only one part of the truth. In *Sydney*, Delia Falconer reads her hometown as an inherently melancholy place, light and dark all at once, which is to a large extent still haunted by the loss of the culture of the Indigenous population of the geographical expanse now referred to as Sydney, the Eora. With his *26 Views of the Starburst World*, Ross Gibson has created an idiosyncratic (fictional) biography of the First Fleet's William Dawes as well as an account of early contact between Dawes and the Eora by resorting to a form of speculative writing on the basis of the omissions and silences found in Dawes' Aboriginal language notebooks. Architectural projects on Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour have tackled the urban island's metaphorical and literal voids and have drawn attention to the place's various layers of history. Lastly, Ruth Watson's artwork *Maps That Cried* is the result of an alternative mapping of Sydney that pays tribute to the dispossessed and those excluded from representations of the city on colourful tourist maps.



Chapter 4 dealt with Berlin, where the past has become a prominent element of the contemporary cityscape. It is mainly the events of the twentieth century, more precisely the Second World War and the Holocaust as well as the city's division by the Wall, that have left their imprints on Berlin, which is, necessarily, still a place full of silences and absences. Two non-fiction texts, Hanns-Josef Ortheil's *Die Berlinreise* and Cees Nooteboom's *Roads to Berlin*, have provided subjective, emotionally involved outsiders' perspectives on the historical events that have shaken Berlin in the twentieth century. In Ortheil's case, the Cold War tensions and the pervasive sense of fear the boy experiences in the divided city are complemented by the absences of his dead older brothers and the silences connected to his traumatised mother who eschews Berlin – family secrets which haunt his perception of the city and which the young author only comes to know during his first Berlin trip. Nooteboom reads the silences in the divided city as the Berliners' acquiescence of their fate and identifies the voids in post-Wall Berlin not only as a consequence of the fall of the Wall, but also as that of the Holocaust and the Second World War. By means of two cycling tours conducted by actress Tilda Swinton along the (former) border, Cynthia Beatt's documentary films *Cycling the Frame* and *The Invisible Frame* have provided an almost meditative take on the (absent) Wall and the silences palpable in the air, both a year before and twenty years after its fall. Finally, the memorial *Orte des Erinnerns/Places of Remembrance* has addressed the large-scale disappearance of Jewish life in the district of Schöneberg and confronts today's residents and visitors with the legacy of this absence at every turn.

In summary, it can be said, therefore, that the primary sources selected here address to a variable extent and by different means the respective city's pasts, which time and again resurface in the postmodern cityscapes of Sydney and Berlin. Whereas Sydney's underlying melancholy is often (though not exclusively) connected to the largely hidden Indigenous history of the city, Berlin's dark chapters of twentieth-century history have been incorporated into the city and have shaped Berlin considerably. Both cities, however, are still haunted by their silences and absences, which, if one strives to notice them, come to the fore. The psychogeographical method, with its feel for the less obvious, has proved to be an approach suitable for drawing attention to what is not immediately graspable.

I have aimed at illustrating in this thesis the versatility of contemporary psychogeography, which can take many different shapes and can be applied to various concepts, literary genres and media, which are influenced by the city/place under consideration. In recent times, especially, an interest in a novel engagement with 'place' in the widest sense has proliferated, and what these new 'varieties' or 'versions' of psychogeography prove is that the practice has largely moved away from the subversive, counter-culture environment into which it was born and has become much more applicable to all sorts of genres and media. It is this malleability which has enabled me to apply this practice to my aims in this dissertation. A psychogeographical concern for the (urban) surroundings can even be found in recent magazines: Austrian *dérive – Zeitschrift für Stadtforschung*,<sup>289</sup> a 'Magazine for Urbanism' which also features its own radio programme, or Berlin-based, English-language magazines *Flaneur*<sup>290</sup> and *Elsewhere – A Journal of Place*,<sup>291</sup> for instance, focus on all things urban (*dérive*), one particular street of a different metropolis per issue (*Flaneur*), and 'place' more generally in all its shapes and colours, whether urban, suburban, rural or imaginary (*Elsewhere*). However, one should be careful not to automatically label every text dealing with place as psychogeographical. Admittedly, the boundaries between psychogeography and local history have become blurred – a tendency which I do not regard as problematic per se – but what still distinguishes the two approaches and what is crucial to be taken into consideration is the distinct psychogeographical attitude towards the geographical location: psychogeography is not concerned with compiling facts, but capturing moods and atmospheres connected to a certain place. As a consequence, this aim frequently overlaps with an engagement with a place's past. It is this overlap that also characterises most of the primary texts chosen for this dissertation.

I regard Tina Richardson's *Walking Inside Out* as exemplary not only of the current British state of research, but also of the full range and broad application of contemporary psychogeography. The fact that its contributors hail from different disciplines and have diverging interests in psychogeography – or immersion in place more generally – makes it an inspiring example of the international impact and scope of the approach. A psychogeographical

---

<sup>289</sup> Cf. *dérive* website (accessed 28 April 2016): <http://www.derive.at/>

<sup>290</sup> Cf. *Flaneur* website (accessed 28 April 2016): <http://flaneur-magazine.com/>

<sup>291</sup> Cf. *Elsewhere* website (accessed 28 April 2016): <http://www.elsewhere-journal.com/>

understanding of the surroundings does not necessarily assume a direct legacy from the Situationists or the established London psychogeographers; however, allowing oneself to be drawn in by one's environment, whether urban or not, is a prerequisite for engaging psychogeographically with a place. This psychogeographical state of mind can be easily applied to other locations and concepts, as I have tried to point out on the basis of Sydney and Berlin: the texts and artworks which I have selected to be read through the lens of psychogeography foreground the impact that the past can have on the contemporary experience of a city through their preoccupation with the silences and absences of history. Due to the fact that psychogeography was meant to be a pliant term from the start, the London psychogeographers have shaped it according to their needs and interests and I have aimed at stretching it even further with regard to silences and absences in Sydney and Berlin, but the approach is nowhere near exhausted. What the different possible fields of application indicate is that psychogeography has not yet passed its use-by date, but offers potential for further revivals and engaging analyses of other places and concepts. I hope that this thesis has made a small contribution in this direction.

## 6. Illustrations



Fig. 1. Daniel Boyd, *We Call Them Pirates Out Here* (2006), oil on canvas. 226 x 276 x 3.5cm. Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.



Fig. 2. E. Phillips Fox, *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770* (1902) (National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne).

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions]

Fig. 3. Guy Debord with Asger Jorn,  
*Guide psychogéographique de Paris* (1956).  
Reproduced from: <http://imaginarymuseum.org/LPG/Mapsitu1.htm>

[Image removed due to copyright restrictions]

Fig. 4. Guy Debord with Asger Jorn, *The Naked City* (1957).  
Reproduced from: <http://www.frac-centre.fr/collection-art-architecture/debord-guy/the-naked-city-64.html?authID=53&ensembleID=705>



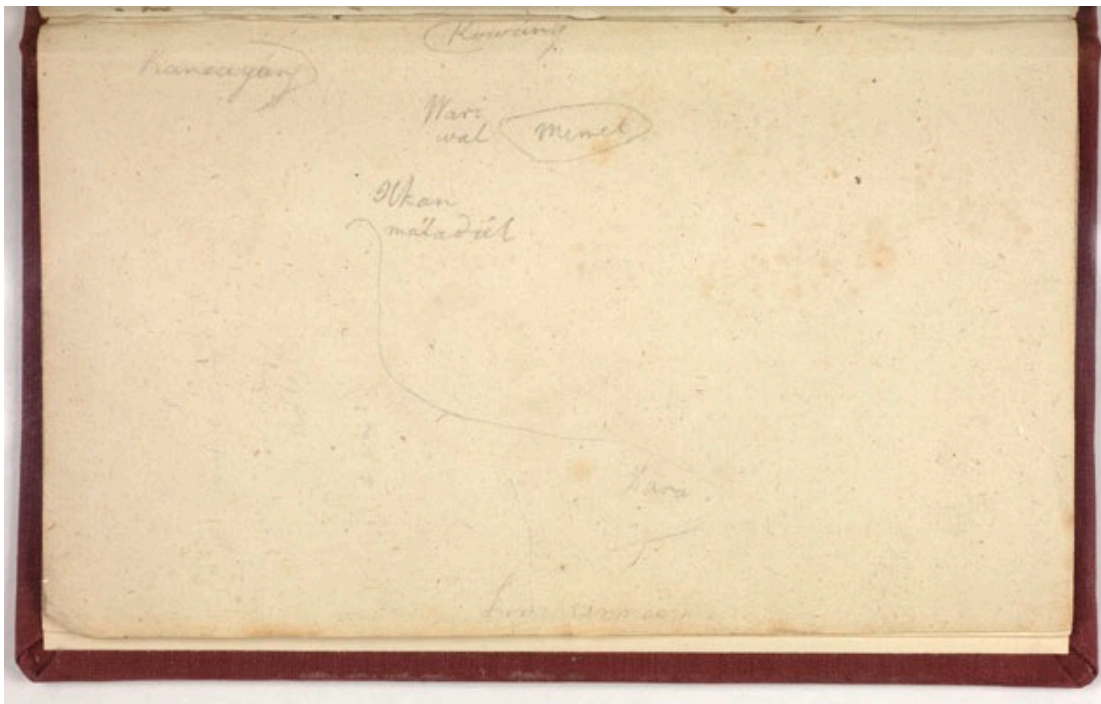


Fig. 5. SOAS Library. The Notebooks of William Dawes, Book A, page 1.  
 Reproduced from: <http://www.williamdawes.org/ms/msview.php?image-id=book-a-page-1>



Fig. 6. Ruth Watson, *Maps That Cried* (1995-2005).  
 In: Stead, Naomi (ed.) (2009), *Mapping Sydney: Experimental Cartography and the Imagined City*. Sydney: Local Consumption Publications.





Fig. 7. Renata Stih/Frieder Schnock, *Orte des Erinnerns* (1993) (Berlin-Schöneberg).



Fig. 8. Renata Stih/Frieder Schnock, *Orte des Erinnerns* (1993) (Berlin-Schöneberg).

## 7. Bibliography

### Primary Literature

Falconer, Delia (2010), *Sydney*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing.

Gibson, Ross (2012a), *26 Views of the Starburst World: William Dawes at Sydney Cove 1788-91*. Perth: UWA Publishing.

Lichtenstein, Rachel, and Iain Sinclair (2000 [1999]), *Rodinsky's Room*. London: Granta Books.

Nooteboom, Cees (2013 [2009]), *Roads to Berlin: Detours and Riddles in the Lands and History of Germany*. Trans. Laura Watkinson. London: MacLehose Press.

Ortheil, Hanns-Josef (2014), *Die Berlinreise – Roman eines Nachgeborenen*. München: Luchterhand Literaturverlag.

Severs, Dennis (2002 [2001]), *18 Folgate Street: The Tale of a House in Spitalfields*. London: Vintage [Chatto & Windus].

Sinclair, Iain (1998 [1997]), *Lights Out For The Territory: 9 Excursions in the Secret History of London*. London: Granta Books.

### Secondary Literature

Abel, Chris (2006), "Soft Responses to a Hard Place". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 175-83.

Ackroyd, Peter (1993), "Cockney Visionaries". *Independent*. 18 December 1993, accessed 05 February 2013. (n. pag.)  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/cockney-visionaries-1468288.html>

Ackroyd, Peter (2001a [2000]), *London: The Biography*. London: Vintage [Chatto & Windus].

Ackroyd, Peter (2001b), "Introduction". In: Severs, Dennis (2002 [2001]), *18 Folgate Street: The Tale of a House in Spitalfields*. London: Vintage [Chatto & Windus]. vii-xi.

Ackroyd, Peter (2011), *London Under*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Adamek-Schyma, Bernd (2008), "Psychogeographie heute: Kunst, Raum, Revolution?". *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 7.3. Accessed 18 April 2016. 407-32.  
<http://ojs.unbc.ca/index.php/acme/article/view/813/671>



- Andreotti, Libero (1996), "Introduction: The Urban Politics of the Internationale Situationniste (1957-1972)". In: Andreotti, Libero, and Xavier Costa (eds.), *Situationists: Art, Politics, Urbanism (Situacionistas: Arte, Política, Urbanismo)*. Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. 11-35.
- Anon (1958), "Definitions". (First published in *Internationale Situationniste* #1, 1958.) In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 51-52.
- Assmann, Aleida (2013), "Formen des Schweigens". In: Assmann, Aleida, and Jan Assmann (eds.), *Schweigen. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation XI*. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag. 51-68.
- Baker, Brian (2007), *Iain Sinclair*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bamford, Christopher C. (2005), "Negative Capability". *Parabola* 30.2. 14-20.
- Bamforth, Iain (2006), "The Future of the Walk". *Quadrant* (January-February 2006). 59-63.
- Bandini, Mirella (1996), "Surrealist References in the Notions of Dérive and Psychogeography of the Situationist Urban Environment". In: Andreotti, Libero, and Xavier Costa (eds.), *Situationists: Art, Politics, Urbanism (Situacionistas: Arte, Política, Urbanismo)*. Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. 40-51.
- Bashford, Alison, and Stuart Macintyre (2013), "Preface". In: Bashford, Alison, and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Australia*. Vol. 2: *The Commonwealth of Australia*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. xxi-xxvi.
- Baudelaire, Charles (1863), "The Painter of Modern Life". In: Mayne, Jonathan (ed. and trans.) (2012), *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. London/New York: Phaidon Press. 1-41.
- Bendkowski, Halina (1994), "Zumutungen der Erinnerung: Jüdische Reaktionen auf das Denkmal im Bayerischen Viertel". In: Kunstamt Schöneberg, Schöneberg Museum in Zusammenarbeit mit der Gedenkstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz (ed.), *Orte des Erinnerns*, Band 1. *Das Denkmal im Bayerischen Viertel. Beiträge zur Debatte um Denkmale und Erinnerung*. Berlin: Edition Hentrich. 120-27.
- Benjamin, Walter (1987 [1938]), *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Benjamin, Walter (1988 [1970] [1932]), *Berliner Chronik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Birmingham, John (1999), *Leviathan: An Unauthorised Biography of Sydney*. Sydney: Random House Australia Pty Ltd.

- Bolton, Geoffrey (1996 [1993] [1990]), *The Oxford History of Australia*. Vol. 5: 1942-1995. *The Middle Way*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Bonami, Francesco (1997), "Nothingness Supplied with Space. Interview with Rachel Whiteread". In: Goetz, Ingvild (ed.), *Art from the UK*. München: Sammlung Goetz. 158-63.
- Bonnett, Alastair (2009), "The Dilemmas of Radical Nostalgia in British Psychogeography". *Theory, Culture & Society* 26.1. 45-70.
- Bowra, Liz (2006), "Emancipation of the Surface: Architecture of Spatial Dislocation". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 196-203.
- Broadbent, Philip (2009), "Phenomenology of Absence: Benjamin, Nietzsche and History in Cees Nooteboom's 'All Souls Day'". *Journal of Modern Literature* 32.3. 99-120.
- Buschbeck, Lysann (n.d.), *Christian Boltanski, The Missing House (Grosse Hamburger Straße, Berlin-Mitte)*. Accessed 16 December 2014. (n. pag.) <https://www.hgb-leipzig.de/mahnmal/bolti.html>
- Butt, Peter, Robert Eagleson, and Patricia Lane (2001), *Mabo, Wik & Native Title*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Sydney: The Federation Press.
- Careri, Francesco (2002), *Walkscapes: Walking as an Aesthetic Practice*. Land & Scape Series. Barcelona: Ingoprint.
- Carlson, Tom (2001), "absence". In: Taylor, Victor E., and Charles E. Winquist (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*. London/New York: Routledge. 1-2.
- Cartens, Daan (1995), "Cees Nooteboom, Der Augenmensch – Einführung". In: Cartens, Daan (ed.), *Der Augenmensch Cees Nooteboom*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch. 7-19.
- Casey, Edward S. (2009 [1993]), "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time". *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 317-48.
- Cattus, Johanna (2009), "Kokettieren mit Autobiographie: Hanns-Josef Ortheil und das Spiel mit dem Autobiographischen in seinen jüngeren Texten: *Das Element des Elefanten, Lo und Lu, Die weißen Inseln der Zeit, Im Licht der Lagune, Die Nacht des Don Juan, Die große Liebe und Das Verlangen nach Liebe*". In: Bartl, Andrea (ed.) (assisted by Hanna Viktoria Becker) (2009), *Transiträume. Beiträge zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*. Germanistik und Gegenwartsliteratur, Band 4. Augsburg: Wißner-Verlag. 361-75.
- de Certeau, Michel (2000), "Writings and Histories". In: Spargo, Tamsin (ed.), *Reading the Past: Literature and History*. Readers in Cultural Criticism. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 156-90.

Chtcheglov, Ivan (1953), "Formulary for a New Urbanism". In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 1-8.

*Cockatoo Island: History re-energised* [2013]. Sydney: Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

Cook, Matthew, and Micheline van Riemsdijk (2014), "Agents of memorialization: Gunter Demnig's *Stolpersteine* and the individual (re-) creation of a Holocaust landscape in Berlin". *Journal of Historical Geography* 43. 138-47.

Corner, James (1999), "The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention". In: Cosgrove, Denis (ed.), *Mappings*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 213-52.

Cosgrove, Denis (1999), "Introduction: Mapping Meaning". In: Cosgrove, Denis (ed.), *Mappings*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 1-23.

Cosgrove, Denis (2005a), "Maps, Mapping, Modernity: Art and Cartography in the Twentieth Century". *Imago Mundi* 57.1. 35-54.

Cosgrove, Denis (2005b), "Mapping/Cartography". In: Atkinson, David et al. (eds.), *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*. London/New York: I.B. Tauris. (n.pag.)

Costelloe, Timothy M. (2013), *The British Aesthetic Tradition: From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Coverley, Merlin (2008), *Occult London*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials.

Coverley, Merlin (2010), *Psychogeography*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials.

Coverley, Merlin (2012), *The Art of Wandering: The Writer as Walker*. Harpenden: Oldcastle Books Ltd.

Curnow, Wystan (1999), "Mapping and the Expanded Field of Contemporary Art". In: Cosgrove, Denis (ed.), *Mappings*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 253-68.

Debord, Guy (1955), "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography". In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 8-12.

Debord, Guy (1957), "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action". In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 25-43.

Debord, Guy (1958), "Theory of the Dérive". In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 62-66.

- Derrida, Jacques (2006 [1993]), *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. London/New York: Routledge Classics.
- Downie, Cat (2006), "[Memories]". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 210-11.
- Earnshaw, Steven (2007 [2006]), *Existentialism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Echanove, Matias (2006), "Cockatoo: D'Érive as Program". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 152-53.
- Edmond, Martin (2011), *Dark Night: Walking With McCahon*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
- Elstermann, Knut (2013), *Meine Winsstraße*. Berliner Orte. Berlin: be.bra Verlag GmbH.
- ErlI, Astrid (2016), "Concluding remarks". In: Dessingué, Alexandre, and Jay Winter (eds.), *Beyond Memory: Silence and Aesthetics of Remembrance*. Abingdon/New York: Routledge. 209-13.
- Falconer, Delia (2012), "History catches up with First Fleet officer whose notebooks speak volumes about Eora". Review of *26 Views of the Starburst World*, by Ross Gibson. *Australian*. 11 August 2012, accessed 18 June 2013. (n. pag.)  
<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/history-catches-up-with-first-fleet-officer-whose-notebooks-speak-volumes-about-eora/story-fn9n8gph-1226446748548>
- Farrelly, Elizabeth (2005), "Pipedreaming the Harbour (A Work in Progress)". In: [Flannery et al.], *Sitelines: Aspects of Sydney Harbour*. Sydney: Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. 93-114.
- Fischer, Susan Alice (2010), "A Room of Our Own: Rodinsky, Street Haunting and the Creative Mind". *Changing English: Studies in Culture and Education* 8.2. 119-28.
- Fletcher, Patrick (2005), "Sydney Harbour: Place and Mythology". In: [Flannery et al.], *Sitelines: Aspects of Sydney Harbour*. Sydney: Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. 137-53.
- Fletcher, Patrick (2011), "Cockatoo Island". *Dictionary of Sydney* (web). Accessed 16 April 2016. (n. pag.)  
[http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/cockatoo\\_island](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/cockatoo_island)
- Fontane, Theodor (2012 [2000]), *‘Wie man in Berlin so lebt’: Beobachtungen und Betrachtungen aus der Hauptstadt*. Ed. Gotthard Erler. Berlin: Aufbau Verlag.

Ford, Simon (2005), *The Situationist International: A User's Guide*. London: Black Dog Publishing Limited.

Foucault, Michel (1967), "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias". Trans. Jay Miskowiec. *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* (October 1984). 1-9.

Foxell, Simon (2007), *Mapping London: Making Sense of the City*. London: Black Dog Publishing.

Fulbrook, Mary (2009), "Historical Tourism: Reading Berlin's Doubly Dictatorial Past". In: Staiger, Ute, Henriette Steiner, and Andrew Webber (eds.), *Memory Culture and the Contemporary City: Building Sites*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 126-44.

Gapps, Stephen (2011), "Review: Cockatoo Island, Sydney, Australia. Sydney Harbour Federation Trust". *The Public Historian* 33.2 (Spring 2011). 145-52.

Gardner, Lyn (1999), "The lost spirit of Spitalfields". Review of *Rodinsky's Room*, by Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair. *Guardian*. 22 May 1999, accessed 01 October 2012. (n. pag.)  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/1999/may/22/books.guardianreview9>

Gerstenberger, Katharina, and Jana Evans Braziel (2011), "Introduction. After the Berlin Wall: Realigned Worlds, Invisible Lines, and Incalculable Remnants". In: Gerstenberger, Katharina, and Jana Evans Braziel (eds.), *After the Berlin Wall: Germany and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 1-17.

Gibson, Ross (2002), *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

Gibson, Ross (2006), "Places – Past – Disappearance". *Transformations* 13 – *Making Badlands* (September 2006). Accessed 17 April 2016. (n. pag.)  
[http://www.transformationsjournal.org/issues/13/article\\_01.shtml](http://www.transformationsjournal.org/issues/13/article_01.shtml)

Gibson, Ross (2008), *The Summer Exercises*. Perth: UWA Press (in association with the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales).

Gibson, Ross (2012b), "Blustertown". *Cordite Poetry Review*. 01 May 2012, accessed 03 February 2014. (n. pag.)  
<http://cordite.org.au/ekphrasis/blustertown/>

Gilbert, Ruth (2006), "The Frummer in the Attic: Rachel Lichtenstein and Iain Sinclair's *Rodinsky's Room* and Jewish Memory". *The International Fiction Review* 33. 27-37.

Goldie, Matthew Boyd (2011), "Island Theory: The Antipodes". In: McCusker, Maeve, and Anthony Soares (ed.), *Islanded Identities: Constructions of Postcolonial Cultural Insularity*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi. 1-37.

Gregory-Guider, Christopher C. (2005), "Sinclair's *Rodinsky's Room* and the Art of Autobiogeography". *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the*

*Representation of London* (September 2005). Accessed 25 October 2012. (n. pag.)  
<http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/september2005/guider.html>

Groes, Sebastian (2011), *The Making of London: London in Contemporary Literature*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gröschner, Annett (2015), *City Spaces: Filling in Berlin's Gaps*. Trans. Katy Derbyshire. (Originally published by Edition Nautilus in: Annett Gröschner, *Parzelle Paradies*, 2008.) Berlin: Readux Books.

Haebich, Anna, and Steve Kinnane (2013), "Indigenous Australia". In: Bashford, Alison, and Stuart Macintyre (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Australia*. Vol. 2: *The Commonwealth of Australia*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 332-57.

Hahn, Alois (2013), "Schweigen, Verschweigen, Wegschauen und Verhüllen". In: Assmann, Aleida, and Jan Assmann (eds.), *Schweigen. Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation XI*. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag. 29-50.

Hall, Tarquin (2005), *Salaam Brick Lane*. London: John Murray.

Hamann, René (2008), *Das Alphabet der Stadt: Berliner Szenen*. Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag.

Hasse, Jürgen (2012), *Atmosphären der Stadt: Aufgespürte Räume*. Berlin: jovis Verlag.

Hessel, Franz (2012 [1929]), *Spazieren in Berlin - Ein Lehrbuch der Kunst in Berlin spazieren zu gehn ganz nah dem Zauber der Stadt von dem sie selbst kaum weiß. Ein Bilderbuch in Worten*. Berlin: Bloomsbury Verlag.

Hugues, Pascale (2013), *Ruhige Straße in guter Wohnlage – Die Geschichte meiner Nachbarn*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag GmbH.

Huysen, Andreas (1997), "The Voids of Berlin". *Critical Inquiry* 24.1. 57-81.

Huysen, Andreas (2003), *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Hyde, Olivia, Thomas Rivard, and Joanne Jakovich (2006), "Introduction to Part III: Works + Critiques". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 172-73.

Ingold, Tim (2007), *Lines: A Brief History*. London/New York: Routledge.

Jeffries, Stuart (2004), "On the road". Review of *Dining on Stones*, by Iain Sinclair. *Guardian*. 24 April 2004, accessed 01 October 2012. (n. pag.)  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/apr/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview14>

Jones, Gail (2011), *Five Bells*. Sydney: Random House Australia Pty Ltd.

Kent, Sarah (1994), *Shark Infested Waters: The Saatchi Collection of British Art in the 90s*. London: Zwemmer.

Kershen, Anne J. (2005), *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields 1660-2000*. London/New York: Routledge.

Kirchner, Franziska (1994), "Zur Frage der Abstraktion oder Gegenständlichkeit im heutigen Denkmal". In: Kunstamt Schöneberg, Schöneberg Museum in Zusammenarbeit mit der Gedenkstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz (ed.), *Orte des Erinnerns*, Band 1. *Das Denkmal im Bayerischen Viertel. Beiträge zur Debatte um Denkmale und Erinnerung*. Berlin: Edition Hentrich. 44-52.

Kracauer, Siegfried (2009 [1964]), *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Krämer, Sybille (2007), "Was also ist eine Spur? Und worin besteht ihre epistemologische Rolle? Eine Bestandsaufnahme". In: Krämer, Sybille, Werner Kogge, and Gernot Grube (eds.), *Spur – Spurenlesen als Orientierungstechnik und Wissenskunst*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft. 11-33.

Kuhligk, Björn (2014), *Grossraumtaxi: Berliner Szenen*. Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag.

Kühnl-Sager, Christine (2014), "Die Schicksale hämmern sich in meinen Kopf.' Ein Gespräch mit Michael Friedrichs-Friedlaender." In: Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin e.V., Koordinationsstelle Stolpersteine Berlin, Kulturprojekte Berlin GmbH (eds.), *Stolpersteine in Berlin. 12 Kiezspaziergänge*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Berlin: Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand Berlin e.V. 29-31.

Ladd, Brian (1997), *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.

Laqué, Stephan (2008), "'A deconstructed shrine': Locating Absence and Relocating Identity in *Rodinsky's Room* (2000)". In: Eckstein, Lars, Barbara Korte, Eva Ulrike Pirker, and Christoph Reinfandt (eds.), *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi. 369-82.

Lehan, Richard (1998), *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*. Berkeley/LA/London: University of California Press.

Leuenberger, Christine (2011), "From the Berlin Wall to the West Bank Barrier: How Material Objects and Psychological Theories Can Be Used to Construct Individual and Cultural Traits". In: Gerstenberger, Katharina, and Jana Evans Braziel (eds.), *After the Berlin Wall: Germany and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 59-83.

Lichtenstein, Rachel (2008 [2007]), *On Brick Lane*. London: Penguin Books.

- Lingwood, James (1995), "Introduction". In: Lingwood, James (ed.), *Rachel Whiteread's House*. London: Phaidon Press Limited. 6-11.
- Maclean, Rory (2014), *Berlin: Imagine a City*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Martin, J.V., Jan Strijbosch, Raoul Vaneigem, and René Viénet (1963), "Questionnaire". (First published in *Internationale Situationniste* #9, 1963.) In: Knabb, Ken (ed. and trans.) (2006 [1981]), *Situationist International Anthology*. Rev. and exp. ed. Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets. 178-83.
- Massey, Doreen (1995), "Space-Time and the Politics of Location". In: Lingwood, James (ed.), *Rachel Whiteread's House*. London: Phaidon Press Limited. 34-49.
- McCusker, Maeve, and Anthony Soares (2011), "Introduction". In: McCusker, Maeve, and Anthony Soares (ed.), *Islanded Identities: Constructions of Postcolonial Cultural Insularity*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi. xi-xxviii.
- McDonough, Tom (2002), "Situationist Space". In: McDonough, Tom (ed.) (2002), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*. Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press. 241-65.
- McMaster, Rhyll (2010), "Glitz and Rot". *Australian Book Review*. November 2010, accessed 06 June 2013. (n. pag.)  
<https://www.australianbookreview.com.au/prizes/peter-porter-poetry-prize/60-november-2010/580-delia-falconer-sydney>
- Mead, Philip (2009), "Nation, literature, location". In: Pierce, Peter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press. 549-67.
- Modjeska, Drusilla (2010), "Under the Bridge". Review of *Sydney*, by Delia Falconer. *Monthly*. 04 November 2010, accessed 06 June 2013. (n. pag.)  
<http://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2010/november/1288836098/dtusilla-modjeska/under-bridge>
- Muecke, Stephen (2011), "Speculating with History: The Wreck of the *Sydney Cove*". *Wasafiri* 26.2 (June 2011). 37-40.
- Nooteboom, Cees (2009), *Berlin 1989/2009*. Trans. Helga van Beuningen and Rosemarie Still. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Nowra, Louis (2013), *Kings Cross: A Biography*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing.
- Ortheil, Hanns-Josef (1987), *Schwerenöter*. München: Piper.
- Ortheil, Hanns-Josef (1994), "Familienbande: Die Anfänge des Schreibens". In: Freese, Peter (ed.), *Paderborner Universtitätsreden*. Paderborn: Hausdruckerei. 5-26.
- Ortheil, Hanns-Josef (2001 [1994]), *Das Element des Elephanten – Wie mein Schreiben begann*. München: Piper.



Papadimitriou, Nick (2006), "Bedfont Court Estate". In: Sinclair, Iain (ed.), *London: City of Disappearances*. London: Penguin. 612-19.

Peel, Mark, and Christina Twomey (2011), *A History of Australia*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pinder, David (2001), "Ghostly Footsteps: Voices, Memories and Walks in the City". *Ecumene* 8.1. Accessed 02 May 2016. 1-19.  
<http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/docs/staff/6729.pdf>

Pinder, David (2005), *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Plant, Sadie (1992), *The most radical gesture: The Situationist International in a postmodern age*. New York/London: Routledge.

Praeger, Henri (2006), "Systems of Change, Reality and Revelation". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 122-25.

Preusser, Heinz-Peter (2003), *Letzte Welten – Deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur diesseits und jenseits der Apokalypse*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.

Rakusa, Ilma (2013), *Aufgerissene Blicke – Berlin Journal*. Graz/Wien: Literaturverlag Droschl.

Rebiger, Bill (2005), *Jewish Berlin: Culture, Religion, Daily Life Yesterday and Today*. Berlin: Jaron Verlag.

Rees, Gareth E. (2013), *Marshland: Dreams and Nightmares on the Edge of London*. London: Influx Press.

Reinhardt, Dagmar (2006), "The Fat, the Old and the Beautiful: Material Process and Frictional Resistance on the Body of Architecture". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 139-51.

Richardson, Tina (2015a), "When is a Ley Line not a Ley Line? When it is a Perambulatory Hinge!". *Driftmine*. 4 June 2015, accessed 3 July 2015. (n.pag.)  
<http://driftmine.org/when-is-a-ley-line-not-a-ley-line-when-it-is-a-perambulatory-hinge/>

Richardson, Tina (2015b), "Introduction: A Wander through the Scene of British Urban Walking". In: Richardson, Tina (ed.), *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Place, Memory, Affect. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International. 1-27.

Richardson, Tina (2015c), "Developing Schizocartography: Formulating a Theoretical Methodology for a Walking Practice". In: Richardson, Tina (ed.),

*Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Place, Memory, Affect. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International. 181-93.

Richardson, Tina (2015d), "Conclusion: The New Psychogeography". In: Richardson, Tina (ed.), *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Place, Memory, Affect. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International. 241-51.

Rose, Morag (2015), "Confessions of an Anarcho-Flâneuse, or Psychogeography the Mancunian Way". In: Richardson, Tina (ed.), *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Place, Memory, Affect. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International. 147-62.

Rouillon, Jaime (2006a), "Parallelisms". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 136-37.

Rouillon, Jaime (2006b), "Void/Threshold Studio". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 229.

Ross, Kristin (2002), "Lefebvre on the Situationists: An Interview". In: McDonough, Tom (ed.), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*. Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press. 267-83.

Royle, Stephen A. (2001), *A Geography of Islands: Small Island Insularity*. London/New York: Routledge.

Sadler, Simon (1999), *The Situationist City*. Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press.

Sandhu, Sukhdev (2006), *Night Haunts: A Journey Through the London Night*. London/New York: Verso.

Sartorius, Joachim (1995), "Ich roch den Mondstaub zu meinen Füßen – Ein Schriftsteller aus den Niederlanden erzählt den Deutschen ihre Geschichte". In: Cartens, Daan (ed.), *Der Augenmensch Cees Nooteboom*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch. 265-71.

Sartre, Jean-Paul (1947), "For a Theatre of Situations". In: Brandt, George W. (ed.) (1998), *Modern Theories of Drama. A Selection of Writings on Drama and Theatre 1850-1990*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 42-44.

Schaub, Mirjam (2007), "Die Kunst des Spurenlegens und –verfolgens. Sophie Calles, Francis Alÿs' und Janet Cardiffs Beitrag zu einem philosophischen Spurenbegriff". In: Krämer, Sybille, Werner Kogge, and Gernot Grube (eds.), *Spur: Spurenlesen als Orientierungstechnik und Wissenkunst*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag. 121-41.

Scheer, Regina (2004 [1992]), *AHAWAH – Das vergessene Haus. Spurensuche in der Berliner Auguststrasse*. Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH.

Schellen, Petra (2014), "Über Sprache stolpern". *Tageszeitung*. 20 October 2014, accessed 12 January 2015. (n. pag.)  
<http://www.taz.de/Erinnerung-an-NS-Opfer/!147981/>

Schlant, Ernestine (1999), *The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust*. New York/London: Routledge.

Schmitz, Helmut (1995), "Ichfiktionen und Landvermessungen. Der Schriftsteller Hanns-Josef Ortheil". In: Durzak, Manfred, and Hartmut Steinecke (eds.), *Hanns-Josef Ortheil – Im Innern seiner Texte. Studien zu seinem Werk*. München/Zürich: Piper. 13-36.

Schmitz, Helmut (2009), "Traumatische Räume: Autobiographie, Familiengeschichte und Raumerfahrung in Hanns-Josef Ortheils 'Nachkriegs'-Zyklus". In: Catani, Stephanie, Friedhelm Marx, and Julia Schöll (eds.), *Kunst der Erinnerung, Poetik der Liebe. Das erzählerische Werk Hanns-Josef Ortheils*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag. 31-49.

Schmitz, Helmut (2011), "Foundational Traumas: On a Figure of Thought in Recent German Literature on Wartime Suffering". In: Schmitz, Helmut, and Annette Seidel- Arpacı (eds.), *Narratives of Trauma: Discourses of German Wartime Suffering in National and International Perspective*. German Monitor No. 73. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi. 143-62.

Schnabel, Marc Aurel (2006), "Rethinking Parameters". In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 185-95.

Schneider, Peter (1998 [1983]), *The Wall Jumper*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Self, Will (2007), *Psychogeography*. (Pictures by Ralph Steadman.) London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Self, Will (2009), "Introduction: Walking to the World". *Psycho Too*. (Pictures by Ralph Steadman.) London: Bloomsbury Publishing. 11-75.

Sheppard, Robert (2007), *Iain Sinclair*. Horndon/Tavistock: Northcote House Ltd.

Shusterman, Richard (2000), *Performing Life: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.

Sinclair, Iain (1995), "The House in the Park: A Psychogeographical Response". In: Lingwood, James (ed.), *Rachel Whiteread's House*. London: Phaidon Press Limited. 12-33.

Sinclair, Iain (2015), *London Overground: A Day's Walk Around the Ginger Line*. London: Hamish Hamilton [Penguin Random House].

Slessor, Kenneth (1937), "Five Bells". In: Langford, Martin (ed.) (2009), *Harbour City Poems: Sydney in Verse 1788-2008*. Sydney: Puncher and Wattmann. 51-54.

Smith, Phil (2015), "Psychogeography and Mythogeography: Currents in Radical Walking". In: Richardson, Tina (ed.), *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography*. Place, Memory, Affect. London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield International. 165- 79.

Solnit, Rebecca (2002 [2001]), *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. New ed. London/New York: Verso.

Solomon-Godeau, Abigail (1998), "Mourning or Melancholia: Christian Boltanski's 'Missing House'". *Oxford Art Journal* 21.2. 3-20.

Staiger, Uta, and Henriette Steiner (2009), "Introduction". In: Staiger, Uta, Henriette Steiner, and Andrew Webber (eds.), *Memory Culture and the Contemporary City: Building Sites*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 1-13.

Stamp, Gavin (2000), "Dennis Severs" (obituary). *Guardian*. 10 January 2000, accessed 01 October 2012. (n. pag.)  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2000/jan/10/guardianobituaries>

Stead, Naomi (2009) (ed.), *Mapping Sydney: Experimental Cartography and the Imagined City*. Sydney: Local Consumption Publications.

Stead, Naomi (2010), "Writing the City, or, The Story of a Sydney Walk". *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 18.4. 226-45.

Steinecke, Hartmut (1999), *Gewandelte Wirklichkeit – verändertes Schreiben? Zur neuesten deutschen Literatur: Gespräche, Werke, Porträts*. Oldenburg: Igel Verlag.

Stöver, Bernd (2010), *Geschichte Berlins*. München: Verlag C. Beck.

Stracey, Frances (2014), *Constructed Situations: A New History of the Situationist International*. London: Pluto Press.

Straka, Barbara (1994), "Normalität des Schreckens: Ein Orbis Pictus des alltäglichen Faschismus als Denk-Installation für das Bayerische Viertel in Berlin". In: Kunstamt Schöneberg, Schöneberg Museum in Zusammenarbeit mit der Gedenkstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz (ed.), *Orte des Erinnerns*, Band 1. *Das Denkmal im Bayerischen Viertel. Beiträge zur Debatte um Denkmale und Erinnerung*. Berlin: Edition Hentrich. 7-13.

Tench, Watkin (1793), "A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson". In: Flannery, Tim (ed.) (2009 [1996]), *Watkin Tench's 1788*. Melbourne: Text Publishing. 85-274.

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

Till, Karen E., and Julian Jonker (2009), "Spectral Ground in New Cities: Memorial Cartographies in Cape Town and Berlin". In: Staiger, Ute, Henriette Steiner, and Andrew Webber (eds.), *Memory Culture and the Contemporary City: Building Sites*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 85-105.

Tuan, Yi-Fu (2011 [1977]), *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Tumarkin, Maria (2005), *Traumascapes: The Power and Fate of Places transformed by Tragedy*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.

Ulrich, Andreas (2015), *Torstraße 94*. Berliner Orte. Berlin: be.bra Verlag GmbH.

Wagner, David (2001), *In Berlin*. Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH.

Wagner, David (2011), *Welche Farbe hat Berlin*. Berlin: Verbrecher Verlag.

Wagner, David (2014 [2013]), *Berlin Triptych*. Trans. Katy Derbyshire. (Originally published as "Friedrichstraße", "Schönhauser Allee" and "Kuchen im Aquarium" in *Mauer Park* by Verbrecher Verlag, Berlin.) Berlin: Readux Books.

Walker, John A. (1999), "Rachel Whiteread: *House*, London (1993)". Excerpt from *Art & Outrage* (1999). *Artdesigncafe*. Accessed 08 July 2012. 1-4. [page expired, October 2015]  
<http://www.artdesigncafe.com/Rachel-Whiteread-House-1993-library-2010>

Watts, Peter (2008), "Director's Note". In: Gibson, Ross (2008), *The Summer Exercises*. Perth: UWA Press (in association with the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales). 6-8.

Whybrow, Nicolas (2005), *Street Scenes: Brecht, Benjamin & Berlin*. Bristol: Intellect Books.

Wiedmer, Caroline (1995), "Remembrance in Schöneberg". Retrieved from Renata Stih's and Frieder Schnock's website. Accessed 02 December 2015. 1-4.  
<http://www.stih-schnock.de/remembrance>  
(The article appeared in unabridged form in: *Alphabet City* No. 4+5, Toronto 1995. 6-12.)

Wiedmer, Caroline (1999), *The Claims of Memory: Representations of the Holocaust in Contemporary Germany and France*. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press.

Wilson, Elizabeth (1995), "The Invisible *Flâneur*". In: Watson, Sophie, and Katherine Gibson (eds.), *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*. Oxford/Cambridge, MA: Blackwell. 59-79.

Wilson, Simon, Rebecca Simons, and Tasmin Dunn (2006), “[Reconcile]”. In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 234-35.

Wollen, Peter (1999), “Mappings: Situationists and/or Conceptualists”. In: Newman, Michael, and Jon Bird (eds.), *Rewriting Conceptual Art*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 27-46.

Woolf, Virginia (1999 [1992] [1922]), *Jacob’s Room*. Oxford: Oxford University Press/Oxford World’s Classics.

Wright, Patrick (1993 [1992]), *A Journey Through Ruins: A Keyhole Portrait of British Postwar Life and Culture*. London: Flamingo.

Yamashiro, Satoru, and Jin Hidaka (2006), “Responsive Environment Studio”. In: Jakovich, Joanne (ed.), *Cuttings: Urban Islands Vol. 1, Cockatoo Island*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press. 207.

## **Documentary Films**

*Cycling the Frame*. Dir. Cynthia Beatt. Perf. Tilda Swinton. Filmgalerie 451, 1988.

*Dan Cruikshank and the House That Wouldn’t Die*. Dir. Dan Cruikshank. BBC, 2005.

*Rachel Whiteread*. Dir. [n/s]. theEYE. Illuminations, 2005.

*The Invisible Frame*. Dir. Cynthia Beatt. Perf. Tilda Swinton. Filmgalerie 451, 2009.

*The London Perambulator*. Dir. John Rogers. [n/s], 2009.  
Accessed 09 October 2015.  
<https://londonperambulator.wordpress.com/>

## **Audio / Podcasts**

Cardiff, Janet (1999), *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*. Artangel. 19 June 1999, accessed 08 April 2016.  
<https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-missing-voice-case-study-b/>

“Hanns-Josef Ortheil, Die Berlinreise”, presented by Max Moor. RBB “Bücher und Moor”. 05 June 2014, accessed 03 July 2014.  
<http://www.rbb-online.de/buecherundmoor/archiv/buecher-und-moor-christian-berkel/hanns-josef-ortheil--die-berlinreise.html>

“Interview with Iain Sinclair on his book ‘London Orbital’”, presented by Harriet Gilbert. BBC World Book Club. 10 January 2002, accessed 06 April 2016.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02r7gkc>

“Psychogeography: Discovering the Mental Terrain of the City”, presented by Lynne Malcolm. ABC Radio National “All In The Mind”. 05 September 2009, accessed 10 May 2013.  
<http://www.abc.com.au/radionational/programs/allinthemind/psychogeography-discovering-the-mental-terrain-of/3062988>

“Sydney, Delia Falconer”, presented by Peter Mares. ABC Radio National “The Book Show”. 04 October 2010, accessed 19 October 2015.  
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bookshow/sydney-delia-falconer/2957036>

“The Notebooks of William Dawes”, presented by Maria Zijlstra. ABC Radio National “Lingua Franca”. 18 August 2012, accessed 27 April 2013.  
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/linguafranca/2012-08-18/4204560>

## **Artworks**

Boltanski, Christian (1990), *The Missing House*.

Demnig, Gunter (ongoing), *Stolpersteine*.

Stih, Renata, and Frieder Schnock (1993), *Orte des Erinnerns/Places of Remembrance*.

Watson, Ruth (1995-2005), *Maps that Cried*.

In: Stead, Naomi (2009) (ed.), *Mapping Sydney: Experimental Cartography and the Imagined City*. Sydney: Local Consumption Publications.

Whiteread, Rachel (1993), *House*.

## **Websites**

Artangel (accessed 04 October 2015):  
[www.artangel.org.uk/about-us](http://www.artangel.org.uk/about-us)

Artangel, Janet Cardiff, *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*,  
“Audio Walk: The Missing Voice (Case Study B) (Part One)”,  
“Making The Missing Voice (Case Study B)” (accessed 08 April 2016):  
<https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-missing-voice-case-study-b/>

Australian Government, "Sorry Day and the Stolen Generations" (accessed 22 February 2016):  
<http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/sorry-day-stolen-generations>

Berliner Unterwelten (accessed 27 January 2016):  
<http://berliner-unterwelten.de/home.1.1.html>

Berlin Wall Memorial (accessed 21 January 2016):  
<http://www.berliner-mauer-gedenkstaette.de/en/>

'Biogeography' (accessed 03 November 2015):  
<http://www.nyu.edu/projects/fitch/courses/evolution/html/biogeography.html>

Dennis Severs' House (accessed 16 and 17 February 2016):  
<http://www.dennissevershouse.co.uk/>  
<http://www.dennissevershouse.co.uk/the-tour/>

East Side Gallery (accessed 21 January 2016):  
<http://www.eastsidegallery-berlin.de/>

Farrelly's Famous Urban Rhubarb (Elizabeth Farrelly's blog) (accessed 18 February 2014):  
<http://www.leflaneur.mobi/>

Fife Psychogeographical Collective (accessed 22 April 2016):  
<https://fifepsychogeography.com>

Holocaust Memorial/Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (last accessed 29 April 2016):  
<http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/en/home.html>  
<http://www.stiftung-denkmal.de/en/memorials/the-memorial-to-the-murdered-jews-of-europe/history.html>

Jewish Museum Berlin, "The Libeskind Building" (accessed 02 March 2016):  
<http://www.jmberlin.de/main/EN/04-About-The-Museum/01-Architecture/01-libeskind-Building.php>

Mauermuseum (accessed 21 January 2016):  
<http://www.mauermuseum.de/>

Museum of Contemporary Art, brochure on Garry Trinh's *Within Walking Distance* (accessed 20 February 2014):  
[http://www.mca.com.au/media/uploads/files/Online\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.mca.com.au/media/uploads/files/Online_PDF.pdf)

National Sorry Day Committee (accessed 22 February 2016):  
<http://www.nsdsc.org.au/stolen-generations-history/>

Orte des Erinnerns – Denkmal im Bayerischen Viertel (1993)/  
Places of Remembrance – Memorial in the Bavarian Quarter (1993)  
Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock (accessed 22 April 2016):  
<http://www.stih-schnock.de/remembrance>



Performance Space (accessed 20 February 2014):  
<http://www.performancespace.com.au/us/vision-statement/>  
<http://www.performancespace.com.au/2012/micro-parks/>

Responsive Environment (accessed 24 October 2015) [page expired, March 2016]:  
<http://responsiveenvironment.com/wp/#about>

Situations (accessed 09 October 2015):  
[www.situations.org](http://www.situations.org)

Stoke Newington Literary Festival (accessed 13 October 2015):  
[www.stokenewingtonliteraryfestival.com/about](http://www.stokenewingtonliteraryfestival.com/about)

Stolpersteine (accessed 09 January 2015):  
<http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/home/>

Sydney Architecture Walks (SAW) (accessed 20 February 2014):  
<http://sydneyarchitecture.org/pages/opening.htm>

The Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies of the University of Minnesota (accessed 16 December 2014):  
<http://www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/memorials/berlin/>

The Invisible Frame, interview with Cynthia Beatt (accessed 22 April 2016):  
[www.invisible-frame.com/en/the-film/interview](http://www.invisible-frame.com/en/the-film/interview)

The London Perambulator (accessed 09 October 2015):  
<https://londonperambulator.wordpress.com/>

The Notebooks of William Dawes on the Aboriginal Language of Sydney (accessed 22 April 2016):  
<http://www.williamdawes.org/>

Topography of Terror (last accessed 29 April 2016):  
<http://www.topographie.de/en/foundation/>  
<http://www.topographie.de/en/>

## **Magazines**

*dérive – Zeitschrift für Stadtforschung* (accessed 28 April 2016):  
<http://www.derive.at/>

*Flaneur – Fragments of a Street* (accessed 28 April 2016):  
<http://flaneur-magazine.com/>

*Elsewhere – A Journal of Place* (accessed 28 April 2016):  
<http://www.elsewhere-journal.com/>

## **Curriculum Vitae**

[This curriculum vitae has been removed due to data protection.]

[This curriculum vitae has been removed due to data protection.]