Postmodernism and the Fall of the Berlin Wall: the role of postmodernism in Berlin's aesthetic before and after 1989

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ABSTRACT

This thesis takes as its focus the impact of postmodern critical theory on the vanishing Berlin Wall and on the work of selected German artists working before, during and after the fall of the Wall. It discusses the Wall itself as a sign that has been subjected to various discursive translations: from divider of a nation to exhibition space; concrete monstrosity to stage-prop. This thesis draws parallels between art theory, political history and aesthetic urban development, arguing that the fall of the Berlin Wall can be interpreted as a result of postmodern theory. As such, this study contributes to the existing canon of literature on Berlin's reunification an account of postmodernism's role within the regenerating city.

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INTRODUCTION

The term 'postmodern' has multiple meanings. For Jean Francois Lyotard, it is a 'condition', for Jean Baudrillard, a 'new, "schizophrenic" mode of space and time'.[1] In Hal Foster's writing, postmodernism is presented either as a deconstruction of modernism, the aim being 'to rewrite it; to open its closed systems [...] to rewrite its universal techniques [...] to challenge its master narratives',[2] or as a strategic reaction to modernism. This thesis will consider postmodernism in the light of Lyotard's assertions on *The Postmodern Condition*, as well as the ideas of Jean Baudrillard. Lyotard's portrayal of postmodernism differs from Baudrillard's in many ways: where Baudrillard argues that postmodernism is synonymous with the disintegration of history, 'Lyotard insists upon the importance of continuing to think and write history in the face of the disruption of the grand narratives'.[3] For both, however, 'an incredulity towards metanarratives'[4] is a characteristic feature of the postmodern condition. This observation has fuelled much debate on the nature of postmodernism and, in the absence of one distinct definition, my own observations are based upon this premise.

Postmodern, postmodernism, postmodernity; all are derived from the modern, and not only in name. The 'post' prefix denotes a following-on from the modern but also a break from its traditions. The consequence of this break is that an awareness of postmodernism must be preceded by an awareness of modernism, since the two are inextricably linked. Indeed, for Lyotard, the postmodern is 'undoubtedly a part of the modern'[5] and as such, for him, all

[1] Hal Foster (ed), *Postmodern Culture*, London, 1985, vii.
[2] *Ibid*., ix.
[3] Simon Malpas, *Jean François Lyotard*, London, 2002, 77.
[4] Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, 1984. First published in French, Paris, 1979.
[5] *Ibid.*, xxiv-xxv.

assessments of postmodernism must be carried out in the light of the narratives of modernism (the very narratives that postmodernism seeks to deconstruct). Modernism then, needs to be defined briefly in order for this thesis to make any assertions about postmodernism. Clement Greenberg has drawn some of the best-known conclusions about the modern condition. In his essay 'Avant Garde and Kitsch' of 1939, Greenberg explains what it is to be a modern artist:

> The avant-garde poet or artist tries in effect to imitate God by creating something valid solely on its own terms, in the way nature itself is valid, in the way the landscape – not its picture – is aesthetically valid; something *given*, increate, independent of meanings, similar or originals. Content is to be dissolved so completely into form that the work of art or literature cannot be reduced in whole or in part to anything not itself.[6]

It is clear from Greenberg's assertions that postmodernism not only begins with modernism but breaks from it to challenge its principles. Greenberg's idea that an object should exist 'independent of meanings, similar or originals' is a starting point for postmodern theorists, who largely agree that an artwork cannot possess a meaning that is not allocated to it by an observer. Postmodernism goes further though, deconstructing the very idea of originality, alongside the modern prominence of the author.[7]

The suffixes that can be applied to the term correspond with those that can be applied to 'modern'. Modernism becomes postmodernism and these terms refer to (amongst other things), the cultures that exist around each respective epoch; the art and literature of a time period, for example.[8] Charles Harrison notes that 'the concept of modernism is also used in a more specialised sense, however, not to evoke the whole field of modern social existence but to distinguish a supposedly dominant tendency in modern culture'. [9] Accordingly, this can be

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[6] Clement Greenberg, 'Avant Garde and Kitsch', *Partisan Review*, VI, no. 5, 1939, 34-49.
[7] This is a reductive view of modernism but the limits of an MPhil thesis prevent me from digressing further at this stage. For an in-depth account of modernism and its principles, see Peter Childs, *Modernism*, Abingdon, 2000 or Lawrence Rainey (ed), *Modernism: an Anthology*, Oxford, 2005.
[8] I speak very broadly here. Mike Featherstone provides a comprehensive delineation of the meanings of postmodernity and postmodernism in *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, London, 1990, 1-12.
[9] Charles Harrison, 'Modernism' in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff (eds), *Critical Terms for Art History*, Chicago, 1996, 191.

said of postmodernism, a term that also refers to a dominant cultural tendency as well as the just socio-cultural motions of the epoch. Broadly speaking, the terms modernity and postmodernity make reference to the epochs themselves and the chronological changes that result in a paradigm shift from one to another.[10]

I have chosen Lyotard's writing in particular, rather than the work of German writers who consider postmodernism such as Wolfgang Welsch, because of its specific affinity with the overriding principles of a global postmodernism, as opposed to a specifically German approach. Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge* is perhaps the best-known text on the dissolution of the grand narrative and approaches postmodernism from a particularly Western perspective. The postmodern debate, explained Hans Bertens in an interview with Geoffrey Lord, 'was almost totally dominated by what was borrowed from the French poststructuralists: first Derrida, later on Foucault, and of course there's the immense influence of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*'.[11] Lyotard's text is widely acknowledged to be vital to an understanding of postmodernism. In addition, this thesis considers the fall of the Berlin Wall in the light of the events of '9/11', a topic that Jean Baudrillard has written about extensively, and Wolfgang Welsch has not. As well as being a prolific writer on postmodern theory, Baudrillard's take on the events of '9/11' in 'The Spirit of Terrorism' and on the status of the Berlin Wall in 'The Anorexic Ruins'[12] bear a specific relevance to the topics of my research. Bertens asserts that postmodernism is 'to a large extent, a French debate transplanted to American soil' and to this extent, it is relevant to consider an American event such as '9/11' in the light of a French theory of postmodernism.

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[10] The notion that postmodernism follows on from modernism in a linear fashion is problematic, since postmodernism disputes linear history. This following-on is therefore conceived of as a break from the traditions of modernism and a reassessment of its discourses, as opposed to a chronological overcoming.

[11] Geoffrey Lord, 'Talking about Postmodernism; an Interview with Hans Bertens', *Postmodernism and Notions of National Difference*, Amsterdam, 1996, 147.

[12] Jean Baudrillard, 'The Anorexic Ruins' in Kamper and Wulf (eds), *Looking Back on the End of the World*, 29-45.

In 2007, the EU funded a project entitled *Overcoming Dictatorships*, which researched artistic practices in Eastern European countries in the aftermath of dictatorship. This particular exhibition aimed at 'creating a dialogue on experiences of the change from dictatorship to democracy between writers and artists'[13] in order to facilitate European communications, which are still stifled twenty years after the dissolution of communism. In his accompanying paper 'Supported, Tolerated or Forbidden: Contemporary Art and Memory Politics', Dr Reuben Fowkes discussed the paradigm shifts that occurred in 1989 and 2001, suggesting that recent political history can be categorised in terms of 'pre 1989, post 1989 and post 2001'.[14] This title of this thesis reflects a desire to investigate Fowkes' claim, using the work of the prolific Anselm Kiefer as a case study through which to assess the progress and popularity of postmodernism before 1989, after 1989 and after 2001, as well as its usefulness as a methodology. This thesis also investigates the parts of the Berlin Wall that remain in the city, assessing both their contribution to Berlin's aesthetic and the role of postmodernism in the decision to let them remain. This thesis aims to consider the origins, purposes and effects of postmodernism, but also what happens when 'the postmodern condition'[15] becomes a condition of the past.

Literature Review

The impulse to research the correlation between art, memory and urban regeneration in Berlin is by no means a new one; researchers are fittingly prolific in the year that sees the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Nor are Kiefer's biographers and critics few. My

[13] Jutta Vinzent, 'Ideological Locations and Dis-locations: Visual Responses from Post-Communist Countries', http://lehrstuhl-europastudien.eu/eu/Vinzent_Ideological_Locations_Dis-locations.pdf, accessed 4 January 2009.
[14] Maja and Dr Reuben Fowkes, 'Supported, Tolerated or Forbidden: Contemporary Art and Memory Politics', presented in the conference that accompanied the opening of *Overcoming Dictatorships* at The University of Birmingham, 9 October 2008.
[15] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.*

research, however, contributes to the canon of existing scholarship by bringing to it an awareness of the specific roles of postmodernism in Berlin's regeneration. In working to establish the reception of postmodernism in Berlin, as well as the consequences of this reception, this thesis promotes an idea that German histories are plural and traversable; obstacles to overcome, not barriers impossible to cross.

It is not to denigrate this research project to say that the extended bibliography I have consulted contains almost one hundred essays, book chapters and articles, all of which take the New Berlin and its creative community as their focus. Of this bibliography, the texts of Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz, Jennifer Jordan and Peter Carrier come close to considering the topics that I have researched, but much of their writing focuses specifically on Berlin's memory of the Holocaust. In *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust,* [16] edited by Hornstein and Jacobowitz, Daniel Libeskind writes about the difficulties inherent in representing traumatic experience through architecture, Mark Godfrey writes about Berlin's war memorials and Rebecca Comay discusses Kiefer's sculpture, *Zweistromland*. These essays are useful to my research but all take Berlin's history before 1989 as their focus. Peter Carrier writes exclusively about monuments in his book, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany Since 1989: The Origins and Political Function of the Vel D'Hiv in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin*. [17] Memorial culture is one of the topics broached in this thesis, but only when I discuss the commemorative role of the Berlin Wall as it exists today, a topic Carrier does not touch upon. Jennifer A. Jordan writes specifically about the Berlin Wall in *Structures of Memory:*

[16] Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (eds), *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, Bloomington, 2003.
[17] Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany Since 1989: The Origins and Political Function of the Vel D'Hiv in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin*, Oxford, 2006.

Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond,[18] but hers is a book about the effects of memory, and not postmodernism, upon the urban landscape.

The texts that perhaps come closest to echoing the topics of my research are Sunil Manghani's *Image Critique and the Fall of the Berlin Wall*,[19] and Karen E. Till's *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place.*[20] Manghani writes about the ways in which the fall of the Berlin Wall was received by the public, offering a 'potential "other" story', in opposition to the dominant Western perception of the fall, which he describes as a 'one-sided perspective; a greying out of the East as either a mere object of the past or place of the mundane'.[21] Although Manghani uses postmodernism as a methodology in his research, he does so whilst critiquing images of the Wall, as opposed to the Wall itself and the way it looks in the city today. Karen E. Till makes reference to postmodern critical theory too, in *The New Berlin*, but Till is a geographer and her book focuses specifically on the architectural landscape and urban spaces of Berlin. Till's account of the changing shape of the city between 1989 and 2005 is useful to my understanding of the role of space within the city, but her main focus is on Berlin's post-Holocaust landscape, where mine is on the look of the city after 1989.

Writers who consider postmodernism and its principles are also prolific. Prasenjit Duara's *Rescuing History from the Nation*,[22] for example, is useful to my understanding of postmodernism's rejection of linear history, as is *Looking Back on the End of the World*,[23] a critical anthology edited by Dietmar Kamper and Christoph Wulf, in which Baudrillard's 'The Anorexic Ruins' is published. Duara explains that 'the last two centuries have established History as we know it – a linear, progressive history – not only as the dominant

[18] Jennifer A. Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond*, London, 2006.
[19] Sunil Manghani, *Image Critique and the Fall of the Berlin Wall,* Intellect Books, Bristol, 2008.
[20] Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, Minneapolis, 2005.
[21] Manghani, *Image Critique and the Fall of the Berlin Wall,* 141.
[22] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, Chicago, 1997.
[23] Dietmar Kamper and Christoph Wulf (eds), *Looking back on the End of the World*, New York, 1989.

mode of experiencing time but as the dominant mode of being'.[24] If we agree with Lyotard and Baudrillard that the grand narrative must be rejected, its conventions exposed and deconstructed, this Hegelian linear history must itself be rejected. Duara writes that for

> Hegel, the telos of History - the structure governing its progress - is the unfolding self-awareness of Spirit which is Reason. There are two moments in this self-awareness: that of Spirit itself embodied objectively in the rationality of religion, laws and the State, and that of the individual subject.[25]

For Lyotard and Baudrillard, postmodernism rejects narratives such as rationality and objectivity, questioning the origin of their governing principles and drawing attention to the conventions that have been put in place to reinforce their influence. Simon Malpas, in his book *Jean François Lyotard*, explains that the

> Task of the postmodern critic is not to condemn or celebrate some new age following on from the grand narrative of modernism, but to return continually to those events that have shaped contemporary genres of discourse in order to discover in them the voices that have been silenced.[26]

As such, the task of this thesis is not to portray a linear history of the falling Berlin Wall, nor to create a narrative affecting truthfulness or legitimacy, but to assess the usefulness of postmodern theory as a tool for understanding the perception, interpretation and prediction of the falling Wall.

Structure

The first chapter of this thesis introduces a theory of postmodernism, considering the work of the East German photographer, Harald Hauswald, and the West German painter and sculptor, Jörg Immendorff. Concepts of performativity and performance are also introduced to my argument as the thesis debates the contribution of each to representations of the Berlin Wall. It is important to outline the crucial differences between these terms at this early stage. The

[24] Duara, 'Linear History and the Nation State' in, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 17.
[25] *Ibid*.
[26] Malpas, *Jean François Lyotard*, 80.

use of the term 'performance' in this thesis refers to theatricality and dramatic expression but also to artifice. The first chapter, for example, argues that selected paintings from Immendorff's *Café Deutschland* series suggest that a degree of artifice can be found in the performance of political leaders around the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Meanings and interpretations of performativity are just as varied and plentiful as interpretations of postmodernism. Of course, the word itself is a derivative of 'perform' and 'performance' and has a range of meanings within theatrical theory and practice, but this thesis uses the term as it is used by Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, to explain the processes by which identities are generated by the very meanings they themselves produce.

The second chapter of the thesis begins by considering Anselm Kiefer's presentation of significant figures from Germany's history in selected paintings made before 1989. It compares Kiefer's and Immendorff's representations of twentieth-century German histories, arguing that Kiefer's works are postmodern in their demonstrating a rejection of linear history.[27] The chapter goes on to discuss Kiefer's sculptural work, some made after 1989 and some after 2001, in the light of postmodern and post-postmodern theories. Postmodernism is considered by some, including Simon Malpas in his guide to Lyotard's work,[28] to have come about as a result of the many wars of the twentieth century. The victims of these wars are some of 'the voices that have been silenced'[29] by modernist discourse and that have been uncovered by the deconstruction of grand narratives. Theorists including Eric Gans are somewhat weary of deconstruction, believing that postmodern theory favours these victimary

[27] Hauswald's work would be equally valuable to a consideration of the reception of postmodernism in Berlin were he not an East German artist. Frans Reuter, in his essay 'Postmodernism in the German and Dutch-Speaking Countries', notes that 'it was only from 1984 that postmodernism became something of a topic in East Germany', where it was 'described as a phenomenon restricted to the Bourgeois society'.
[28] Malpas, *Jean François Lyotard.*
[29] *Ibid.,* 80.

voices. Gans in particular calls for a post-victimary approach in which all voices are equal,[30] and considers this to be a post-postmodern approach.

The final chapter concentrates on the look of Berlin itself, moving away from the representations of Berlin discussed in the first chapter, and the relationship between postmodernism and German histories considered by the second. As well as making reference to Baudrillard's essay, 'The Anorexic Ruins', I consider the ideas that Andreas Huyssen puts forward in *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*.[31] This chapter focuses on the appearance of the Berlin Wall as it remains in the city today, evaluating the significance of its various locations and purposes. This thesis will therefore draw its conclusions based upon evidence from before, during and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, evaluating the usefulness of postmodernism as a methodology for deconstructing the fall of the Wall, its representation by German artists and its presentation within the city today.

[30] Eric Gans, *Chronicles of Love and Resentment*, http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/views/home.html, accessed 20 August 2009.
[31] Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, Stanford, 2003.

THE BERLIN WALL IN THEORETICAL DISCOURSE: BAUDRILLARD, LYOTARD AND POSTMODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF THE FALL OF THE WALL

This chapter introduces and discusses Jean François Lyotard's and Jean Baudrillard's theoretical interpretations of the fall of the Berlin Wall. It also considers concepts of postmodernism and performativity, as defined in the introduction to this study. As the chapter progresses, I discuss the symbolic role of the Berlin Wall but also consider the limitations of a view of the Wall as a purely symbolic structure. Baudrillard's views are contentious, as this chapter will go on to explain, and in order to regard the fall of the Wall from the perspective of one who has lived and worked in Berlin, as well as from the perspectives of French philosophers, this chapter analyses two photographs by the East German photographer, Harald Hauswald. It concludes with a consideration of the work of the West German painter and sculptor, Jörg Immendorff. Immendorff's work is interesting, in the light of my analysis of Hauswald's, because the two represent their views on the fall of the Berlin Wall very overtly and both use the Brandenburg Gate as a motif in various pieces of their work.

In his essay, 'The Spirit of Terrorism', Baudrillard describes the Cold War as a Third World War because of its bringing about the downfall of European communism. Both the 1914-18 war and the 1939-45 war, Baudrillard argues, resulted in the demise of colonialism and fascism, respectively.[32] The significance of 2001 is that, after the incidents of '9/11', the 'events strike' of the 1990s made way for 'the fourth and only truly World War'.[33] This universal status is gained because this war 'has as [*sic*] stakes globalization itself'.[34] Baudrillard's 'The Spirit of Terrorism' was published in *Le Monde* only two months after the

[32] Baudrillard, 'The Spirit of Terrorism', 1-34.
[33] *Ibid.*, 3.
[34] *Ibid.*

fall of the Twin Towers, in the light of Jean François Lyotard's musings on 'The Postmodern Condition'.[35]

Western culture after Derridian deconstruction seeks to reject the idea of a fundamental 'truth'; of objective, original, authentic experience. In doing this, though, it almost searches for a 'truth beyond the truth', announcing subjectivity and performativity as the narratives of postmodernism. This paradoxical theory finds an element of performativity at the root of much ideological discourse; that of gender, religion and history. Judith Butler defines performativity as 'that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains',[36] and although Butler is referring to processes of gendering, her definition can be applied to postmodern discourses in general.

In 'The Spirit of Terrorism', Baudrillard notes that 'power is complicit with its own destruction'.[37] His suggestion is that New York's Twin Towers invited their own destruction by embodying the hegemonic power of the West in their appearance and positioning; 'when the two towers collapsed, one could feel that they answered the suicide of the kamikazes by their own suicide'.[38] This assertion is problematic since it apportions blame for the '9/11' attacks, at least in part, to the aesthetics of the World Trade Center. Nonetheless, Baudrillard implicates performativity by suggesting that the identity of the Twin Towers (presented here as a threatening embodiment of U.S. power and authority) was constructed by the expressions that those Towers produced (their alleged provocation of the '9/11' attacks). Although contentious, Baudrillard's ideas in this essay are also postmodern: by claiming that the West's 'god-like position (of divine power and absolute moral legitimacy)'[39] can be challenged, he

[35] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.*
[36] Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer' in Paul du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman (eds), *Identity: A Reader*, London, 2000, 109.
[37] Baudrillard, 'The Spirit of Terrorism', 18.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] *Ibid.*

deconstructs narratives of power and legitimacy, simultaneously rejecting linear history in favour of a cyclical process in which absolute authority turns on itself.

Lyotard's assertion that postmodernism is characterised by a rejection of grand narratives is reflected, it can be argued, in the fall of the Berlin Wall, ten years after *The Postmodern Condition* was first published in its original French. His 'working hypothesis' was something of an accurate prediction, the communist grand narrative having finally dissolved in a matter of months at the end of the 1980s. Arthur Danto is in agreement with Lyotard in his essay 'The End of Art History', as is Hans Belting in 'The End of the History of Art?' Both writers discuss the possibilities of art before and after the era of art, suggesting that art itself is a grand narrative whose conventions ought to be exposed and whose mysticism ought to be dispelled: 'today the artist joins the historian in rethinking the function of art and challenging its traditional claim to aesthetic autonomy',[40] Belting notes, announcing the end of the art historical grand narrative and threatening its claim to autonomy and originality.

Lyotard's text explores an idea that knowledge is itself a commodity; it exposes capitalism as a performative practice which relies not on the control of money or territory but on an almost artificial process of symbolic exchange. 'Knowledge in the form of an informal commodity indispensible to productive power is already, and will continue to be, a major – perhaps the major – stake in the worldwide competition for power',[41] he writes, arguing that knowledge is as important to the postmodern condition as money is to capitalism. Fredric Jameson makes an important distinction when he considers that 'postmodernism in economics is not at all the same as postmodernism in thinking or in philosophy':[42] this thesis is not concerned with the elements of economical postmodernism that Lyotard discusses in

[40] Hans Belting, 'The End of Art History?' in Eric Fernie (ed) *Art History and its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, London, 1995.
[41] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 5.
[42] Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, London, 2005, 165.

his text, but with his implication that performance, in the sense of theatrical artifice and pretence, is of significance to the postmodern condition.

Baudrillard suggests, perhaps in the light of Lyotard's thoughts, that all wars are performances, played out on a global scale out of necessity: '[The "fourth world war"] is a conflict so unfathomable that, from time to time, one must preserve the idea of war through spectacular productions such as the Gulf (production) and today Afghanistan's'.[43] His assertion that these conflicts were generated only to 'preserve the idea of war' is, once again, problematic because it implies that the trauma of war was only endured in order to support a political method. If, however, something as globally memorable and significant as the Gulf War can be seen as a prop in a political performance, perhaps the formation and fall of the Berlin Wall can, too. In his book, *The Vital Illusion*, published in 2001 before the attacks of '9/11', Baudrillard writes that the

> linear tension of modernity and progress has been broken, the thread of history has become tangled: the last great 'historic' event – the fall of the Berlin Wall – signified something closer to an enormous repentance on the part of history. Instead of seeking fresh perspectives, history appears rather to be splintering into scattered fragments, and phases of events and conflicts we had thought long gone are being reactivated.[44]

This idea of a broken linear history is typical of the postmodern thinking Lyotard put forward in 1979. Assigning to the falling Wall its role as a signifier of the dissolution of linear history, Baudrillard accuses the Wall of being an actor of sorts; taking to the stage as a representative of the triumph of postmodernity over history.

One of Baudrillard's best-known essays is also one of his most controversial. In 'The Gulf War Did Not Take Place', Baudrillard describes 'the self-dissolution of the Eastern Bloc'[45] and likens the feeling of global dissatisfaction after the Cold War and Gulf War to that 'after

[43] Baudrillard, 'The Spirit of Terrorism', 18.
[44] Jean Baudrillard and Julia Witwer, *The Vital Illusion*, New York, 2001, 39.
[45] Jean Baudrillard, 'The Gulf War Did Not Take Place' in Mark Poster (ed), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, Cambridge, 2001, 231.

an unsuccessful copulation'.[46] Clearly, Baudrillard's views can be difficult to comprehend in their generalisation of many individually specific and significant events and in their rather merciless omission of the impact of war on human experience. Baudrillard's views might be tempting in their simplicity, particularly in the midst of theory-laden discourses on the postmodern world, but comments such as these, about conflicts that killed and injured thousands, must not be left to stand without criticism. Even if one yields to Baudrillard's overriding sentiments (such as his ideas about the ability of a building to bring about its own fall in the case of '9/11', for example), it is important to consider his writings as theories and not histories, because to gloss over the specifics of these globally significant events is to forget human experience and the individual mini-narratives so celebrated by postmodern thinkers.

The title of this particular essay is a paraphrase of the title of Jean Giraudoux's 1934 play, *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas Lieu,* so is perhaps not as controversial as it first seems. Baudrillard is reappropriating a previously existing title to imply that there is a degree of hyperreality inherent in the media's presentation of the Gulf War, rather than claiming that the War literally did not occur.[47] Hyperrealism is, for Baudrillard, the characteristic mode of postmodernism: 'a generation by models of a real without origins or reality; a hyperreal'.[48] The title of this essay then, reflects an idea that the presentation by the media of the Gulf War became more of a reality than the war itself. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam believe that Baudrillard was accurate in his prescriptions, despite his controversial choice of title, because 'the representation of the most media-covered war in history did indeed seem to shift from

[46] Baudrillard, 'The Gulf War Did Not Take Place', 237.
[47] A more detailed discussion of reappropriation will take place in the second chapter of this thesis, with reference to Anselm Kiefer's reappropriation of the titles of Paul Celan's poems.
[48] Baudrillard, *Simulations*, New York, 1983, 2.

classical realist representation to the brave new public relations world of hyperreality'.[49] Accordingly, this thesis will consider Baudrillard's 'spectacular productions'[50] not as artificial events but as episodes of global significance brought about by some element of theoretical necessity. It will avoid categorising the fall of the Berlin Wall as an artificial production, but will investigate the impact of performativity on the fall of the Wall and the impact of postmodernism on the city of Berlin after 1989.

Being in the centre of Europe, the Berlin Wall was perfectly placed for a play-off between the two superpowers, the US and the USSR, both fighting for the dominant position in the global order, each hoping to assert itself as a subject to the other's object. In addition to this, the Wall was a symbolic capital city under the control of two political systems: Western-European Democracy and Eastern-European Communism; an inherently dual city. Baudrillard writes extensively about duality and dichotomy, suggesting that New York's Twin Towers 'embodied perfectly, in their very double-ness'[51] a definitive global order. He writes about the Cold War in terms of a battle between the binary opposites, good and evil, both of which, he notes, inevitably rise together and at the same rate. He wrote that,

> In the traditional universe, there was still a balance of Good and Evil, according to a dialectical relation that more or less ensured tension and equilibrium in the moral universe; a little [*sic*] as in the Cold War, the face-to-face of the two powers ensured an equilibrium of terror. Thus, there was no supremacy of one on the other.[52]

Binarisms are a key feature of Baudrillard's argument about the events of '9/11'; good and evil, capitalism and communism, aggression and passivity. The binary is also important to concepts of performativity; for many theorists, including Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida,

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[49] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, 'The Imperial Imaginary' in Kelly Askew and Richard R. Wilk, *The Anthropology of Media: a Reader*, Oxford, 2002, 141-142.
[50] Baudrillard, 'The Spirit of Terrorism', 19.
[51] *Ibid.*, 14.
[52] *Ibid.*

the binary supports the construction of the performative.[53] Writing in the late 1980s, Baudrillard categorises the Berlin Wall as an 'anorexic ruin'[54] that 'embodies the absolute character of the Cold War and its ambiguities'.[55] Writing before its fall, Baudrillard describes those whose lives were affected by the Berlin Wall as its 'protagonists',[56] as though they were characters in a fictitious narrative.[57] This draws attention to the element of artificiality and performance that Baudrillard finds inherent in the Wall's construction and supports the idea that postmodernism played a role in maintaining and then deconstructing the Berlin Wall and its power.

Harald Hauswald's Brandenburg Gate

The East German artist Harald Hauswald takes photographs that depict Berliners going about their everyday business, drawing material from the unremarkable and the routine. As a result, his photographs have an air of indifferent frankness; they capture ordinary people going about ordinary tasks and display their visible reactions and responses to the Wall. In his *Time Travels* series, shown at the *Overcoming Dictatorships* exhibition of 2008/9, Hauswald includes six photographs of the iconic Brandenburg Gate. Two are particularly resonant with my research; the first taken in 1982 (Fig. 1), the second in December 1989 (Fig. 2), on the day the gate was reopened to East Germans.

In the earlier photograph, Berliners lean over the fencing that prevents them from approaching the Brandenburg Gate. Constructed in 1791 as a symbol of German strength and

[53] For Butler, the male/female binary assists the performative construction of sexual difference (see Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London, 1990, 187), whilst for Derrida, performative utterances exist in binary opposition to constative utterances (see Derrida, *Limited Inc.*, Evanston, 1988, 18).
[54] Baudrillard, 'The Anorexic Ruins' .
[55] *Ibid.*, 37.
[56] *Ibid.*
[57] This does not mean to suggest that all narratives are fictitious, rather that Baudrillard's use of the term 'protagonists' implicates the Berliners he refers to as characters in a performance; acting out artificial rituals as directed by the Berlin Wall.

nationalism, the Brandenburg Gate first became a symbol of Prussian power, then a representative of the strength of the Nazi party in the 1930s. After the division of Germany into East and West, and particularly after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, it became a landmark not only for the division of Germany but of the world into East and West. Simplifying broadly, the Brandenburg Gate came to represent the battle between democracy and communism, becoming a symbol of some German people's hopes for a national reunification in the years leading up to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In this image, *Time Travels (Brandenburg Gate) 1*, a child plays on the fencing, two men talk, one with a foot resting casually on the metal barrier, and a couple gaze at the Gate at the right hand side of the image. The figures in the photograph's composition are not posing; they have been captured unwittingly but they appear to be standing on a stage of sorts (an observation perhaps made in the light of the purpose of this thesis - to seek out any elements of performance and theatricality in the division and reunification of Berlin). By photographing these people from behind, Hauswald locates himself alongside both the subjects and the viewers of the photograph; in the East, looking towards the West. An East German photographer, Hauswald was watched keenly by the GDR Stasi during the 1980s (he moved to Berlin in 1977, having been born near Dresden in 1954), so most probably had to hide in order to take this photograph, adding to the elements of anonymity and voyeurism connoted by the image.

Immediately apparent is the sheer size and the emptiness of the space between the people in Hauswald's photograph and the monumental Brangenburg Gate. Lutz Rathenow, who wrote the text that accompanies Hauswald's photographs in their book *Ost Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall,* recalls that 'the Brandenburg Gate is the only place where anyone may

look at and photograph the border without attracting attention'.[58] On noticing this void, the apparent innocence of the figures in the composition is suddenly overpowered by a peculiar tension. That such a space could exist free of people in a European capital city is a reminder of the Wall's role as a physical barrier, the crossing of which had death as a potential consequence. The image of the child climbing happily along the fence, and of the man whose foot rests on its metal bar suddenly lose their sense of playfulness. Rathenow writes that 'rabbits hop over the green areas in the prohibited zone'.[59] Even a viewer who is unaware of the Berlin Wall could understand that there was a reason, either actual or internalised, as Michel Foucault might suggest,[60] for not crossing this fence into the open space behind it. Along the Wall itself, the presence of border guards posed a very real threat, not just an internalised fear, and the same can be said for the surveillance techniques of the Stasi. Hauswald's photograph, however, emphasises the void, connoting a threat without overtly displaying its source.

This tension between the relaxed atmosphere connoted by the figures chatting and interacting with the barrier, and the dangerous emptiness beyond it is, like many of Berlin's voids, 'saturated with invisible history'.[61] These voids, which Berlin struggled to conceal, can still be observed by a visitor to the city in 2009. The tension between what is seen and unseen, repressed and released, remembered and forgotten forms a large part of Berlin's identity as a city and Hauswald captures this strained feud between absence and presence succinctly in his photograph of 1982. Perhaps however, it is only possible to make such an

[58] Lutz Rathenow in Harald Hauswald and Lutz Rathenow, *Ost Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall*, Berlin, 2005-2008, 54.
[59] Rathenow in Hauswald and Rathenow, *Ost Berlin: Leben vor dem Mauerfall*, 54.
[60] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* New York, 1977. Foucault assesses the effectiveness of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison design, concluding that 'without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, [the Panopticon] acts directly on individuals; it gives "power of mind over mind"' (206). The visibility of the Panopticon, for Foucault, amplifies its power over prisoners. This assertion could also be made of the Berlin Wall as it is represented within Hauswald's photograph.
[61] Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, 58.

assertion when juxtaposing the image with Hauswald's photograph of the same area taken in 1989, or with the appearance of this part of Berlin in 2009.

Time Travels (Brandenburg Gate) 2, of 1989, shows the previous void filled by people running towards the Gate to witness the West German Chancellor greeting the East German Prime Minister, ceremoniously marking the end of the city's division.[62] Their dream had been realised but Hauswald himself says that he captured these rushing figures in order to symbolise the East German people 'running into the wider world but also running into consumerism'.[63] There is a very inviting space in the lower part of the image (presumably because Hauswald was standing here to take his photograph) which entices a viewer to join the dash from East to West. A diagonal object above the Gate breaks the horizon though, and offsets the otherwise near-symmetrical composition of the image; a reminder of the still confused and disorderly political situation Berlin found itself in after its reunification.

Hauswald's photograph of the same area, *Pariser Platz* (Fig. 3), of 2005, introduces these representations of Berlin to the twenty-first-century. In showing the city attempting to move forward, Hauswald highlights the difficulties inherent in doing so and these three photographs could be used to illustrate Reuben Fowkes assertion, introduced at the beginning of this thesis, that it is possible to categorize recent history in terms of 'pre 1989, post 1989 and post 2001'.[64] The image from 1982 depicts the tensions of division with its large, empty space and sense of enforced stillness, whilst the image from 1989 shows the very opposite; the rush through broken boundaries into the wider world (as noted by Hauswald). In contrast to these two extremes, the image from 2005 was taken in Pariser Platz, much closer to the

[62] Vinzent, 'Ideological Locations and Dis-locations: Visual Responses from Post-Communist Countries', accessed 16 November 2008.
[63] Harald Hauswald in a discussion about his work at the opening of *Overcoming Dictatorships*, 8 October 2008.
[64] Fowkes and Fowkes, 'Supported, Tolerated or Forbidden: Contemporary Art and Memory Politics'.

border that was formerly inaccessible to Hauswald, and depicts the city as might look to a tourist today, calm in the aftermath of the city's turbulent late twentieth century.

Jörg Immendorff's political stage

Another artist who tackles the subject of Berlin's division is Jörg Immendorff, whose work before the fall of the Wall anticipates, or at least hopes for, the reunification of Berlin. In two paintings belonging to Immendorff's *Café Deutschland* series of 1977 onwards (Figs. 4 and 5), the artist articulates Germany's divide through his 'direct confrontations with specifically German subject matter'.[65] Rejecting the fashionable shift towards more conceptual art in the West, Immendorff and his contemporaries, often classed as German Neo-Expressionists, are alleged to have seen painting as a way to 'relocate painting in relation to history'.[66] The idea that artistic development in Germany and Eastern Europe was stunted by the Iron Curtain and its politics is a popular one, but at the same time as repressing artists, the Berlin Wall provided artists, writers and musicians (to name but a few) with a significant political focus for their work.

In *Café Deutschland I* (Fig. 4), of 1978, and *Café Deutschland, Contemplating The Question – Where Do I Stand* (Fig. 5), of 1987, Immendorff's desire for reunification is made clear by divided canvasses featuring painted sections of Wall and political figures in action. The artist appears, in 1978, to wish vehemently for reunification, depicting Erich Honecker and Helmut Schmidt at a table covered by a German flag with the emblem of the GDR visible on its surface. The flag itself is cut in two, indicating the city's division, but the emblem is faded, perhaps in order to show the decreasing popularity and relevance of GDR ideals in 1978. In addition, the hand of the artist's East German contemporary, A.R. Penck, reaches

[65] Edward Lucie Smith, *Art Today*, New York, 1995, 178.
[66] Yve Alain Bois, Benjamin Buchloh, Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, *Art Since 1900; Modernism, Antimodernism and Postmodernism,* London, 2004, 612.

through the Wall to meet Immendorff, whose face is reflected in the mirrored surface above.[67] Geert Lernout suggests that these characterisations are in fact represented the opposite way, with Immendorff reaching through the wall to Penck,[68] and indeed either could be the case. Both artists are shown with beards, dark hair and similar complexions so it is difficult to tell. On closer inspection, however, the face in the mirror is shown in front of the shape of the Brandenburg Gate. This would imply that 'we as observers are on Penck's side of the Wall, in East Berlin'.[69]

Clare Hurley, writing for the World Socialist website, identifies the figure at the top right of *Café Deutschland I*, noting that, 'a swastika-decorated disco on the Western side is walled off from the somewhat thuggish-looking proletarian workers of the East, who are presided over by the image of dramatist Bertolt Brecht'.[70] Brecht's presence in the painting introduces theatricality to the image in a specific way. Opposed to Aristotelian ideas about a theatrical experience that should induce a cathartic reaction in its audience, Brecht's theatre was postmodern in that its creator appropriated previously well-known narratives and reworked them to investigate the possibility of different receptions.[71] To simplify broadly, his concept of 'epic theatre' involved a breaking down of the grand theatrical narratives of tragedy, comedy, history and so on, and the drawing of an audience's attention to these conventions. Walter Benjamin notes that 'the job of epic theatre [...] is not so much to

[67] https://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/oct2007/rauc-o08.shtml, accessed 28 June 2009.
[68] This is noted by Geert Lernout in 'Postmodernism, the case of Berlin' in Theo D'Haen and Hans Bertens (eds), *History and Post-War Writing*, Amsterdam, 1990, 90.
[69] Lernout, 'Postmodernism, the case of Berlin', 90.
[70] Clare Hurley, 'Enigma and perhaps evasion (or "hide and seek"): the realism of German painter Neo Rauch', https://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/oct2007/rauc-o08.shtml, accessed 28 June 2009.
[71] Walter Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, London, 1998 (first published in 1973) xii and 1-26. Also Elizabeth Wright, *Postmodern Brecht: a re-presentation*, London, 1988, 36-38. Benjamin notes that 'Brecht's "plagiarism", his rewriting of Shakespeare and Marlowe, are experiments in whether a historical event and its literary treatment might be made to turn out differently or at least be viewed differently, if the processes of history are revalued'. The implication here is that Brecht's interest in revising previously existing literary works comes from a desire to reconsider the very processes of history itself, exchanging them for the plural histories favoured by so many postmodernists.

develop actions as to represent conditions',[72] and postmodernism is certainly one of these conditions. Brecht's inclusion in Immendorff's painting then, can be interpreted as a comment not only on his role as a prominent German playwright, celebrated in the GDR, but on the self-knowing theatricality of postmodern Wall-politics, an idea reinforced by the self-conscious acting out of political rituals by Honecker and Schmidt behind the painted Wall.

In 1987, the artist's desire appears to be of an altogether different sort; more passive than active, perhaps because Immendorff's hope for the Wall's collapse was becoming an increasingly realistic one. In *Contemplating the Question - Where Do I Stand* (Fig. 4) the division of Berlin is made apparent by the horizontal division of the canvas, its opposing colours making clear the idea of separation. Political emblems appear again in the shape of the Soviet sickle, Socialist fist and German eagle but are represented in their most basic, delineated form, almost as emblematic logos. The cast of characters are not immediately identifiable as political figures and the painting has an air of confusion and chaos about it. The voices of the characters from the 1978 painting have been lost in the furore of the theatre, whose audience, as well as its actors, are depicted in this later painting. A figure at the left of the composition pulls at a rope, presumably to bring down the final curtain on the performance. This curtain will separate the viewer, who looks in from the rear of the stage, from the audience, leaving the actors on stage with their peculiar, floating symbols. David Elliot suggests that these symbols 'dwarf the characters who passed in their vicinity and create an overwhelming impression of stasis and impassive force'.[73] For Elliot, the daunting and unavoidable presence of the symbols in this painting is the very reason for the ambiguity of its characters where they were, in previous years, much more obviously identifiable.

[72] Benjamin, *Understanding Brecht*, 4.
[73] David Elliot, 'Expressionism: a health warning' in Shulamith Behr, David Fanning and Douglas Jarman (eds), *Expressionism Reassessed*, Manchester, 1994, 47.

In asking 'where do I stand?' Immendorff questions his role as a member of the general public as well as his role as a cultural commentator. The merging of the high-status characters of the 1978 painting into an indistinguishable rabble in the 1987 piece moves towards their complete absence from Immendorff's later paintings such as *Solo*, of 1988 (Fig. 7), suggesting that the significance of political figureheads is diminishing. The presence of such a variety of public figures in Immendorff's earlier paintings, from Marcel Duchamp to Hitler to Honecker, suggests that history is not a linear process that will be overcome and forgotten in time. References to these figures to not exist to represent certain chronological periods; on the contrary, they appear together, alongside unknown faces, proposing that the history of a celebrated individual is no more important than that of any other citizen in constructing a collective national history.

As well as paintings that depict the Berlin Wall, there are Immendorff's sculptures to consider. One stands out as being of particular significance to this research by representing the Brandenburg Gate; the monument to German nationalism that features in Hauswald's photographs. *Brandenburger Tor Weltfrage* (Fig. 8) of 1982 is a hefty bronze sculpture, six metres in width and roughly three in height. It comprises a base, four pillars and an entablature, and was a part of the 1982 Documenta IV exhibition in Kassel. Its base takes the shape of a pair of wings, those of the German eagle, the left of which appears to be covered with snow and ice. On this wing are engraved the words 'Folge', 'Naht' and 'Weltfrage Brandenburger Tor',[74] words that emphasise the role of the Gate as a suture linking two political systems whose impact is felt all over the world. In Immendorff's sculpture, the Gate's twelve Doric columns have become totem poles, not unlike those featured in *Café Deutschland I*, with ambiguous shapes, symbols and human figures supporting a leaf-shaped

[74] Website of the Virtuelles Museum Moderne NRW, http://www.nrw-museum.de/output/controller.aspx?cid=123&detail=2&detail2=8, accessed 28 June 2009.

entablature. The influence of postmodernism can be detected here in the subversion of iconic symbols which give the artwork an air of parody, rendering Immendorff's sculpture a postmodern pastiche of the Brandenburg Gate itself.

The Brandenburg Gate itself is a rather stage-like structure, with pillars and a proscenium arch of sorts that make way either to the sweeping stage of Pariser Platz or to the main road which, at one stage, led through the Gate. Indeed, the Gate formed the backdrop for the speeches of many politicians, including US Presidents Kennedy and Reagan, so it was used as a stage in the most literal sense. A set designer himself, Immendorff's preoccupation with the theatrical[75] is unsurprising, as is his decision to use the grandiose Gate as a model for his work. Many of Immendorff's works make reference to the stage, as well as to political events, and this commonality highlights Immendorff's keen interest in the relationship between politics and performance. The presentation here of yet another stage supports my argument that both performance and performativity played a role in the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Brandenburg Gate was the setting for many literal performances and, as both Hauswald and Immendorff show in their representations, it was (and still is) a symbol that aided the performative construction of Berlin's identity as a divided, then unified city.

The choice, by Immendorff, to use bronze to make this sculpture lends not only literal weight to the piece and to the entablature held up by the pillars, but leads this viewer to an estimation of the artist's belief that the weight of history itself bears heavily upon the collective German conscience. Bronze is a material associated with commemorative art and it lends a memorial status to Immendorff's sculpture. The artist's appropriation of an icon such as the Brandenburg Gate, and his subversion of its motifs, makes reference to the

[75] This thesis uses the term 'theatrical' to refer to processes of dramatic expression. The work of the aforementioned Brecht, like that of Immendorff, 'focuses on the aesthetic choices that would most likely inspire a spectator to become a critically engaged citizen' (Tracy C. Davis, Thomas Postlewait, *Theatricality*, Cambridge, 2004, 147).

polysemicity, or many possible meanings, of this national symbol. It is also a parody, diminishing the status of these symbols and drawing attention to the performativity of signs and symbols in general. Here, the divide referred to by the text on the left wing (divisions and text are used as motifs regularly by this artist) is the seam between the wings themselves, and the two halves are held together by the Brandenburg Gate.

The title of this sculpture, 'Brandenburg Gate World Issue' or 'World Question' announces the artist's awareness that the implications of Germany's divide are felt the world over. In this respect, Immendorff's take on the Brandenburg Gate is similar to Baudrillard's on the World Trade Center. For Baudrillard in 'The Spirit of Terrorism', the Twin Towers posed a question that was responded to by attack, and for Immendorff, The Brandenburg Gate poses a 'world question'. The latter would presumably be answered by the destruction of the Berlin Wall, which Immendorff anticipates so keenly in his *Cafe Deutschland* series. This then, is a theme broached in both the painted and sculpted works of Immendorff that this chapter has considered.

POSTMODERNISM AND ANSELM KIEFER'S REPRESENTATIONS OF GERMAN HISTORIES

This chapter discusses the reception of Anselm Kiefer's work before and after 1989 and after 2001 in order to consider Reuben Fowkes statement that recent political history can be categorised in the terms, 'pre 1989, post 1989 and post 2001'.[76] Kiefer is a relevant artist to consider, in the light of the focus and arguments of this thesis, because he is frequently associated with representations of Germany's Second World War history, and rarely credited with being a postmodern artist. My research into Kiefer's work, along with the postmodern lexicon I bring to my interpretations of his pieces, lead me to argue in this chapter that Kiefer is, in fact, a postmodern, and perhaps even post-postmodern artist.[77]

Kiefer's work has very strong thematic connections to German history and the possibility of overcoming the past. Indeed, it is almost impossible to read about this artist or his work without also reading about his relationship with and representation of his country's history. Lisa Saltzman, in her introduction to *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz,* states that 'Kiefer's work […] is always marked by its place in and relation to history',[78] asserting from the very beginning that Kiefer and history are inseparable. This particular book was first published in 1999 so cannot offer any opinion on Kiefer's work after '9/11', as my thesis does, but Saltzman discusses at length Kiefer's attitudes towards memory, trauma and the burden of history; subjects she explores in further detail in her 2006 book, *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art*. Another scholar of Kiefer whose writing assists my research is Charles Molesworth. In his essay 'The Art of Memory: Anselm

[76] Fowkes and Fowkes, 'Supported, Tolerated or Forbidden: Contemporary Art and Memory Politics'.
[77] I will go on to explain the term 'post-postmodern' in greater detail later in this chapter.
[78] Lisa Saltzman, *Anselm Kiefer and Art After Auschwitz*, Cambridge, 1999, 2.

Kiefer and the Holocaust',[79] Molesworth discusses Kiefer's attitude towards remembering the Holocaust but also considers the artist's work after 1989, such as the sculpture *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (Fig. 14), of 1989, which I consider myself in this chapter. Similarly, Rebecca Comay refers to Kiefer's more recent works when considering monuments to the Holocaust in 'Memory Block; Rachel Whiteread's Holocaust Memorial in Vienna'.[80] Clearly, the correlation between Kiefer's art and the Holocaust has been keenly researched, but less prolific are those who explore his work in the context of postmodernism. John C. Gilmour, in his essay 'Anselm Kiefer: Postmodern art and the Question of Technology'[81] makes reference to Lyotard's definitions of the postmodern when he defines Kiefer as a fundamentally postmodern artist, but this chapter uses Gilmour's evaluation to argue that Kiefer is not only a postmodern artist but, at times, post-postmodern.[82]

Kiefer's appropriation of German history is interdisciplinary and frequently references historical and mythological figures from pre-war years in an attempt to free German historicity from its association with Nazism. Although he is well-known for his interest in Nazi history, Kiefer is a very prolific artist whose work up to the present day concerns itself with Germany's struggle to overcome its past, so is very relevant to this thesis. In his painting *Germany's Spiritual Heroes* (Fig. 9), of 1973 the names of significant historical figures are written on the walls of a wooden hall; a theatrical space with heavy beams and lamps whose flames threaten to engulf the space. Should the flames hypothetically stray to the walls of this hall, they would burn down the names of these 'heroes' along with their accompanying historical reputations. In this way, Kiefer suggests that their memory is

[79] Charles Molesworth, 'The Art of Memory: Anselm Kiefer and the Holocaust' in Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenburg (eds), *Postmodernism and the Holocaust*, New York, 1998.
[80] Rebecca Comay, 'Memory Block; Rachel Whiteread's Holocaust Memorial in Vienna' in Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (eds), *Image and Remembrance; Representation and the Holocaust*, Bloomington, 2002.
[81] John C. Gilmour, 'Anselm Kiefer: Postmodern Art and the Question of Technology' in Gary Shapiro, *After the Future: Postmodern Times and Places*, New York, 1990, 179-184.
[82] Theories of post-postmodernism will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter.

fleeting and might easily be erased, a comment, perhaps, on the danger of wishing to overcome history too quickly. The hall is a memorial space and a monument to Germany's past at the same time as it is a potential crematorium; the risk of burning is reiterated by the charred edges of the lower part of the canvas which creep into the pictorial space.

Richard Wagner is one of the aforementioned historical figures referred to by Kiefer, largely because of his association with the idea of 'Gesamtkunstwerk', a 'total work of art'. Wagnerian opera is widely considered to incorporate an optimum blend of the visual, the literary and the musical.[83] Wagner's last opera, *Parsifal* (1882), is the subject of Kiefer's series of paintings by the same name (1973) which, like *Germany's Spiritual Heroes*, feature deep, wooden, theatrical spaces layered with text and motifs. The scale of these pieces and indeed of all Kiefer's artworks is noteworthy. The *Parsifal* paintings range in size from six to twelve square metres and this size most certainly effects their reception: a viewer of Kiefer's paintings has a different experience from a viewer of smaller works such as Harald Hauswald's photographs. The impact of Kiefer's paintings, it can be argued, is therefore magnified by their size, which in turn intensifies the effect of the total work of art. In this way, Kiefer's paintings embrace theatricality and dramatic expression just as much as Immendorff's, albeit in a different way.

Of the four Parsifal paintings, *Parsifal III* (Fig. 12) is the most stage-like. The space within it is wide, with areas of light and shadow, and it features more text than its predecessors, *Parsifal I* and *Parsifal II* (Figs. 10 and 11). Its setting, as with the other paintings in the series, is the artist's attic studio and the link between the artist and the stage is just as prominent here as it is in Immendorff's *Café Deutschland* pieces. Both painters show artists to be performers as well as commentators on social, cultural and historical rituals. The

[83] See Christopher John Murray (ed), *Encyclopaedia of the Romantic Era 1760-1850,* Vol. 2, London, 2004, 772.

spear that appears in the centre of the painting is a narrative reference[84] and pierces the stage set, balancing the composition and drawing the eye to the window, on which 'Fal-parsi' is written.

Also featured in the composition are the names of the characters in the opera's narrative and, in the upper left part of the piece, the names of members of the Baader Meinhof group, the left-wing guerrilla faction who took part in violent resistance against what they considered to be a fascist state. These names are particularly significant in this theatrical space because the Baader Meinhof group were regarded as being performers, relying on the attention of the media to popularise themselves and their beliefs. Indeed, it was the media who gave the group their name; they called themselves the Red Army Faction. The Baader Meinhof group were 'middle class by origin, which they regarded as a blemish'[85] and were known for their admiration, influenced by their 'Marxist-Leninist'[86] principles, of East Germany's Socialist Realism, or lived communism. Their inclusion in this composition, a painting of a theatrical stage, is similar to Immendorff's inclusion of the dramatist Bertold Brecht in his *Café Deutschland I*, pointing towards Kiefer's awareness of the importance of performance and artifice to German politics in the late twentieth century. Additionally, the juxtaposition of references to the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk and the Baader Meinhof group creates a tension in the panting and suggests that Kiefer, like Immendorff, has a comment to make about political expedience as well as memory.

Kiefer's preference for representing German histories from a post-Nazi perspective has led to his unfavourable comparisons with Gerhard Richter, much of whose work makes explicit reference to Cold War history, and whose series of repainted photographs, *18*

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[84] 'It was Parsifal's task to recover the spear from Klingsor so that peace could be restored to the kingdom of the Grail', Tate Gallery website, www.tate.org.uk, accessed 13 June 2009.
[85] Walter Lacquer, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*, Oxford, 2000, 27.
[86] John Brady, Beverley Crawford, Sarah Elise Wiliarty, *The Postwar Transformation of Germany: Democracy, Prosperity and Nationhood*, Ann Arbor, 1999, 47.

October 1977, of 1988, (Fig. 13) depicts the actions of the Baader Meinhof group. It would seem that, whilst Kiefer is certainly preoccupied with the implications of Nazi history upon Germany's past and present, his work is entirely contemporary in its subtle recognition of the impact of more recent political events upon Germany's collective history. Kiefer's allocation of figures from so many different eras in German history to the political stages of his paintings shows his postmodern take on remembering German history. By using the names of characters whose place within historical narratives is so very different, Kiefer rejects chronological history in favour of a collection of histories, in which the role of a contemporary figure can appear next to one from pre-twentieth-century history. The juxtaposition of Wagnerian aesthetics, with their right-wing associations, and the names of the left-wing terrorist Baader Meinhof group supports an evaluation of Kiefer as a postmodern artist, because the tensions between Germany's many histories collide within one painting. To overcome Germany's past then, suggests Kiefer, is to depict history not as one narrative that moves from year to year and from event to event, but to dispel notions of historicity and depict the past as a plurality of experiences.

Postmodernism in three dimensions

This second chapter has, so far, veered away from the topics considered by the first, having considered performance (both in the sense of artifice and dramatic expression) more than performativity, as defined in the introduction to this thesis. It has also momentarily set aside the search for links that can be made between the postmodern warfare of '9/11' and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Through a discussion of the later works of Anselm Kiefer at this stage, however, it is possible to return to the relationship between these two significant moments.

Like Immendorff, Kiefer is a sculptor as well as a painter, and made a number of three-dimensional works around the time of the fall of the Wall. One of these is *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (Fig. 14), of 1989, which currently stands in the atrium of the Altes Museum in Berlin. The title of this piece makes reference to a poem of the same name by Paul Celan which this chapter will discuss at a later stage. Made from sheets of lead welded into the shape of an aeroplane, the sculpture appears to be light in weight because of the delicacy of the sheets used to construct its body. There are also bunches of dried poppies emerging from the piles of lead books (themselves about the size of an adult human torso) that weigh down its wings. The weight of that lead, like the bronze in Immendorff's *Brandenburger Tor Weltfrage* (Fig. 8) connotes immovability, solidity and impenetrability, contradicting the flimsy delicacy of the plane itself. This heaviness is also set against the inherent purpose of the aeroplane; this one can fly nowhere with the dense volumes of history bearing down so heavily on its wings.

In its overall appearance, this plane is bird-like, but it has something in common with aircraft from the end of the 1939-45 war in that it has jet engines attached to its wings.[87] More striking though is its similarity to the B58 Hustler aircraft (Fig. 15) used by the United States air-force in the 1960s. Although the two are not identical, the B58 was notoriously the first supersonic bomber and was nuclear-armed; a plane Kiefer is likely to have known about when making his sculpture. The B58 is delta-winged where Kiefer's model has swept wings, but swept wings were a common feature of post-war aircraft as the money and technology became available to make high-performance aircraft. Perhaps these post-Second World War features suggest that Kiefer was, in 1989, beginning to sever his ties with his country's Nazi history and take a more active interest in its Cold War past. An additional reference might be

[87] The German Messerschmitt 262 was first used by the Luftwaffe in the mid 1940s but only had two jet engines, rather than Kiefer's six. Information about aircraft from an email correspondence with a member of the Royal Air Force.

to the Luftbrücke, the fifteen-month airlift that supplied Berlin with provisions between June 1948 and September 1949, whilst Stalin attempted to resist allied control within the city by freezing the movement of traffic into and out of Berlin.

The books that garnish the wings of Kiefer's aeroplane are a recurring motif in his work; indeed, 'more than half of his output consists of book-like objects',[88] as Rod Mengham notes in a review for the Royal Academy magazine. Some of his better-known sculptural works, such as *Zweistromland* of 1986-1989 (Fig 16) comprise shelves laden with books the height of a human torso, vast and impossibly weighty. In this particular work, the shelves themselves are angled like the pages of an open book, inviting a viewer to 'read' the sculpture. Rebecca Comay writes about *Zweistromland* in comparison with Rachel Whiteread's Holocaust Memorial in Vienna, noting that 'these monumental lead books […] announce absolute ruin both in their substance and in their content'.[89] She also argues, however, for the 'monumental positivity' of the sculpture, suggesting that 'redemption glimmers in the very ciphers of destruction'[90] and noting the alchemical and anti-radioactive properties of the lead Kiefer uses so liberally. Comay's experience of *Zweistromland* is subjective, of course, but it would appear that her discovery of 'monumental positivity' is made with the benefit of hindsight. This sculpture was made between 1986 and 1986 and, as such, Comay is able to guess that Kiefer's attitude towards Germany's reunification was becoming more positive as the fall of the Berlin Wall drew nearer. It is, after all, easy for a critic writing after the fall of the Berlin Wall to suggest that artists working before 1989 conveyed their anticipation of German reunification through their work, as this thesis has done whilst discussing the work of Immendorff.

[88] Rod Mengham, 'Tour de Force', review of Kiefer's *Jericho* in *RA Magazine*, Issue 94, Spring 2007.
[89] Comay, 'Memory Block; Rachel Whiteread's Holocaust Memorial in Vienna', 263.
[90] *Ibid.*

These assumptions are easily made when considering Immendorff, who explicitly paints walls being broken down on divided canvasses by East and West German characters, but Kiefer's books are rather more enigmatic. Without wishing to disagree with Comay's assessment of *Zweistromland*, it is useful to borrow from semiotic terminology the concept of polysemicity. This term is a poststructuralist response to Ferdinand de Saussure's concepts of signifier and signified (word and concept, respectively).[91] Polysemicity is a term that attempts to explain the ways in which all signs have an infinite number of potential meanings, none of them fixed.[92] When considering an art object, polysemicity provides a means of understanding the many, vastly different takes on the same piece of art that can be had by many different viewers, depending on the set of knowledge (or lexicon)[93] they bring to the object. This notion explains how, for Comay, this artwork anticipates the fall of the Wall (just as this thesis considers Immendorff's *Café Deutschland* series to), whereas to this viewer, *Zweistromland* connotes impenetrability and suggests that history is inaccessibly hidden within these heavy volumes.

During the 1990s, concrete began to make an appearance amongst the lead in Kiefer's sculptures, along with rusted steel that adds a different hue to his predominantly grey three-dimensional catalogue. In the artist's much written-about work of 2002, *Etroits sont les Vaisseaux* (Fig. 17), an eighty-two foot undulating concrete ribbon is interspersed with sheets of lead that lend a delicate quality to an otherwise monstrously large and daunting sculpture. The waved shape of this sculpture automatically connotes a connection with the sea but the piece is firmly of the earth, being made from a domestic building material and interrupted by

[91] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* trans. Wade Baskin, New York, 1959.
[92] This term is explained in more detail by Chris Barker in *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, London, 2008, 81.
[93] Saussure uses the term 'lexicon' to describe a person's vocabulary which, unlike grammar, is 'a matter of speaker choice, to be investigated historically and etymologically' (Carol Sanders, *The Cambridge Companion to Saussure*, Cambridge, 2004, 90).

sharp skewers. If this artwork is in any way reminiscent of the sea, the association is with the unexploded bombs of the 1939-45 war that are still found on the sea bed, rather than with the waves themselves.

Having discarded the idea of the sculpture's link to the ocean, a similarity can be found between the concrete, with its apparently structural lengths of metal, and the broken Berlin Wall. Because of the sheer size of the sculpture, the piece itself has the characteristics of a boundary or wall; in its tallest parts, a person cannot jump over it, and the metal that is visible amongst the concrete recreates the appearance of the Berlin Wall after its partial destruction by the public. The textured layers of rough concrete and delicate lead also resemble the weather-beaten pages of an old book or manuscript, but perhaps this perception is informed by this viewer's knowledge of Kiefer's use of books as a motif in other works.

Without wishing to assert any supposed meaning for these page-like layers, it is worth noting that many critics[94] have considered Kiefer's depictions of books, pages and text to represent the weight of history bearing down upon a collective German consciousness. They are also broadly assumed to make reference to the writing of Paul Celan and Walter Benjamin, whose work has influenced Kiefer's. Thomas Michelli, however, writing for the magazine *The Brooklyn Rail*, finds Kiefer's expanse of concrete strikingly similar to that of 'the infamous Highway of Death',[95] the road running from Kuwait to Basra that was used during the United Nations Coalition Offensive in the Gulf War in 1991. In addition, Ken Johnson of the *New York Times* commented, in his review of *Etroits sont les Vaisseaux*;

> Prompted by a portentous title […] and by a museum label explaining Mr. Kiefer's themes, including war, the Holocaust and Nazis, we also read the apparent wreckage metaphorically, as a symbol of human violence. It is a kind of war memorial. (It was

[94] Amongst these critics are Rebecca Comay, Roger Launius and Lisa Saltzman.
[95] Thomas Michelli, 'Anselm Kiefer: Paintings and Sculpture', *The Brooklyn Rail,* February 2008, http://www.brooklynrail.org/2008/02/artseen/anselm-kiefer-paintings-and-sculpture, accessed 14 July 2009.

made in 2002, but whether or not Mr. Kiefer had 9/11 in mind, the museum labels aren't saying) [96]

These various associations would suggest that Kiefer has, in the years since 1989, managed to break free from his involvement with representing Germany's Nazi past. However, we have no way of knowing what the artist himself was concerned with when making *Etroits sont les Vaisseaux*. Even if we read an interview in which Kiefer explains his motivations, we are then faced with a dilemma over the reliability of intentionality as a marker of meaning in a work of art. The only conclusion we can draw about the interpretations made of Kiefer's work since 1989 is that the lexica of the art critics, the gallery visitors, the readers of reviews (as well, quite possibly, as Kiefer himself), have changed since the Berlin Wall fell; they now include this event as a historical point of reference for their interpretations.

Kiefer's monumental towers

Critics of Kiefer's very recent exhibitions have made a point of mentioning his concern 'not with the end of history but with its cyclical nature'[97] suggesting that Kiefer's work no longer reflects postmodern ideas about the irrelevance of the grand narrative. Jonathan Harris notes that postmodern thinking 'intrinsically sees its theoretical and critical predecessors *retrospectively*: in a concluded past'.[98] This idea draws attention to a fundamental problem posed by postmodernism's rejection of linear history: time continues to move forward in a linear fashion and, unless postmodern theorists suppose postmodernism to be eternally useful and valid, it is necessary to consider what happens after postmodernism.

After 1989, it can be said that Kiefer's work takes on different themes than those he so keenly explores in his pre-1989 works. It can also be noted though, that his works themselves

[96] Ken Johnson, 'The Tragic Sublime and Concrete Rubble' in the *New York Times*, 4 January, 2008.
[97] Mengham, 'Tour de Force', *RA Magazine*, Issue 94, Spring 2007.
[98] Jonathan Harris, *Art History: The Key Concepts*, London, 2006, 246-247.

'contain' only what a viewer attributes to them. To borrow again from semiotics, a viewer after 1989 (but before 2001) arrives at a piece of Kiefer's work with a certain cultural lexicon, or bank of knowledge, with which to make an interpretation.[99] A viewer after 2001 most probably arrives with a different set of interpretative questions and might decide, as this viewer has, that Kiefer himself is communicating ideas that might be classified as post-postmodern; a concept this thesis will discuss presently.

Eric Gans, the American theorist, has written extensively about post-postmodernism, or 'post-millenialism', as he calls it, in his online blog, *Chronicles of Love and Resentment*.[100] In his entry of 3 June, 2000, Gans wrote that postmodernism is characterised by its association with the victims of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, which he uses as microcosmic examples of the Holocaust and the age of Nuclear warfare. 'Dominated by victimary resentment and the fear of arousing it', notes Gans, 'the postmodern era saw the dismantling of virtually all explicitly hegemonic structures and institutional behaviors'.[101] Gans agrees then, that a rejection of the grand narrative is fundamental to postmodernism, but believes that this rejection is a reaction to the warring - and the consequent generation of perpetrator-versus-victim relationships – of the twentieth century. 'The post-postmodern era, in contrast, cannot afford the automatic validation of victimary credentials', he explains, arguing that postmodernism is replaced by a 'post-victimary'[102] era in which everyone is equal in the aftermath of the 'victimary' thinking of the twentieth century.

The German-American theorist, Raoul Eshelman, uses the term 'performatism' to describe the cultural situation after postmodernism. In his book *Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism,* Eshelman considers that postmodernism relies on knowledge as a

[99] This concept is explained by Robert Ian Vere Hodge and Gunther R. Kress in *Language as Ideology*, London, 1993, second edition.
[100] Gans, *Chronicles of Love and Resentment*, accessed 20 August 2009.
[101] Gans, *Chronicles of Love and Resentment*, 'The Post-Millennial Age', accessed 21 August 2009.
[102] Gans, *Chronicles of Love and Resentment*, 'Moral Heroism', accessed 18 August 2009.

commodity (Lyotard expressed a similar sentiment in *The Postmodern Condition).* Focusing specifically on the arts, he explains that, for the postmodern viewer of an artwork, film or architectural structure, knowledge is of the utmost importance. An awareness of conventions, and of the conditions that have brought a piece of artwork into being (in other words, an incredulity towards its originality or authenticity), are essential for the postmodern thinker. Eshelman notes that, 'performatism disarms this attitude by demonstrating from the very beginning that knowledge isn't the most important part of human experience',[103] proposing instead that experiences themselves, along with emotional states of being, are more relevant to a post-postmodern viewer. Eshelman uses contemporary French cinema as a medium through to explain his choice of the term 'performatism', which 'sets characters up [within a film] in such a way that they experience something truly new and profound'.[104] The performance (or series of actions) that lead to this new, original experience, give Eshelman's version of post-postmoderism its name. An exploration of Kiefer's works after 2001, particularly those that feature the use of towers as a motif, in the light of post-millennial theory and performatism, will reveal Kiefer to be a post-postmodern artist to the same extent that he is postmodern.

Kiefer's installation sculpture, *Jericho* (Figs. 18 and 19), was shown in the courtyard of London's Royal Academy in 2007, as part of that year's Summer Exhibition. This work comprised two towers, made from reinforced concrete, both supported at their base by yet more lead books. One tower stood fifteen metres tall and featured five room-like structures on top of one another. The other was over seventeen metres high, made up of six of these 'rooms'. Door-shaped holes are cut into the concrete wall of each room, inviting a viewer to

[103] Raoul Eshelman, 'Performatism, or What Comes after Postmodernism. New Architecture in Berlin', *Anthropoetics* 7, 2 Fall 2001/Winter 2002.
[104] Eshelman uses Jean Pierre Jeunet's film, *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain*, of 2001, as an example of this.

take a closer look inside the installation. The height and shape of a standard domestic doorway, these holes make the work accessible and inviting, much in the same way that the angled bookshelves of *Zweistromland* do. Of course, there are invisible boundaries in place when approaching a legitimated artwork so actually entering the installation (Fig. 18) is a contentious matter. The Royal Academy website announced, however, that 'the floor pieces have a rough open centre allowing the viewer to look up from the base unit to the sky through a series of levels',[105] so permission to enter was officially granted. Despite its formal accessibility, the installation has a precarious look about it, towering dangerously as though it might topple at any moment. Kiefer also installed metal poles, much like those of *Etroits sont les Vaisseaux,* which protrude threateningly from its walls; an intimidating deterrent.

It is fairly inevitable, in the cultural moment of 2007 - one in which anybody with a degree of cultural knowledge or access to visual media is aware of the '9/11' attacks[106] – that many viewers of Kiefer's *Jericho* will immediately associate his tall, derelict, distinctly architectural installations with the towers of the World Trade Center. In addition, the metal spikes that extend beyond its surface are reminiscent of the structural remnants of both the Berlin Wall and the Twin Towers, following their destructions. A writer for the publication *Artvehicle* agrees that,

> In a metropolitan context, paired as they are outside the RA, the 'twin towers' assume more sinister, even apocalyptic associations, suggesting the hubris and precariousness of great civilisations that have fallen or been humbled, whether past (Jericho) or present (New York).[107]

[105] Royal Academy website, 'Jericho by Anselm Kiefer Hon RA', http://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibitions/kiefer/, accessed 15 July 2009.
[106] See, for example, 'Falling Man', an article written by Tom Junod and published in *Esquire* magazine, based on a photograph of the same name taken by Richard Drew on '9/11' of a man falling from the World Trade Center. The photograph and article inspired a documentary of the same name, directed by Henry Singer and aired on 16 March 2006 on Channel 4.
[107] NM, 'Anselm Kiefer, Aperiatur Terra', *Artvehicle*, Issue 9, Spring 2007.

Towers made previous appearances in Kiefer's canon, featuring in an installation he made for display in the Hangar Bicocca on the Pirelli estate in Milan in 2004, virtually identical to the towers of *Jericho* and entitled *Seven Heavenly Palaces* (Fig. 20).

The use of towers as a motif makes a reappearance in the 2009 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. In it, Kiefer has exhibited *Triptyque* (Fig. 21); a large, wall-mounted trio of glass boxes containing artworks that display the artist's further experimentation with mixed media. Each of the three boxes is separated by transparent glass but, as a triptych, the three appear inseparable and form one unified artwork. The boxes, which are a part of the artwork and not just the installation equipment, reach approximately thirty centimetres into the gallery space, thus giving a foreground to the images within them, and keeping the viewer at a distance. Although the triptych format is not related exclusively to painting, Kiefer references the painted medium here in his selection of a title, as well as his division of his canvas into three. The spiritual, if not directly religious qualities of his earlier paintings, such as *Germany's Spiritual Heroes* (Fig. 9) are present in this work too, which features the layering of paint and natural materials, a technique the artist is fond of.

All three glass boxes have a painted backdrop that features a woodland scene, continuing from one panel to another. Long, branch-like silhouettes stretch to the top of the composition and beams of moonlight appear to pass between them into the foreground. Because the boxes are three-dimensional, they have a floor; glossy and uncluttered, supporting the bases of the spiked branches that fill most of each box. The leftmost box contains a miniature, sculptured replica of one of the towers Kiefer exhibited in *Seven Heavenly Palaces* and *Jericho*, four crooked storeys high but less than a metre in height. The tower is supported and adorned by small lead books and its second and fourth storeys have rectangular doorways, identical to those in *Jericho*. Being on a small scale and trapped behind

glass, this tower is not literally accessible, but the work is not fenced off within the gallery space so a close viewing is permitted, upon which parts of the interior of the small tower are visible. This mixing of different media is reminiscent of the work of German assemblage artists such as Kurt Schwitters (Fig 22), and Kiefer's use of a box is perhaps a reference to Marcel Duchamp's series *Boîte en Valise* (Fig 23), of 1935-1941. Duchamp is often considered to be the first postmodern artist, because so many of his works, particularly his 'readymades', expressed discontent with the concept of originality, one of the many grand narratives postmodernism seeks to dispel. This particular series is 'a portable mini-monograph including sixty-nine reproductions of the artist's own work',[108] In the same way, Kiefer's glass *Triptyque* serves as a display case for these small reproductions of the towers from his previous works. Even more postmodern, in the Lyotardian sense, than his reference to Duchamp, is Kiefer's reference to himself. By replicating motifs from his own earlier work, the artist is self-consciously creating his own mini-narrative, showing that he counts himself amongst the artists whose work he appropriates.

The central box contains no tower but its background features the boldest, most dynamic of the vertical shapes and the brightest of the trails of light that emerge through them, giving it a rather more painterly air than its neighbours. The quality of this paint is notable too: in some places dense and applied in thick layers, like bark; in others thin and dripping. It too is filled with real branches that will presumably decay as time passes, in keeping with the macabre, post-apocalyptic look of the installation. The rightmost box features another miniature tower but this one is only one storey high and is, again, propped up by lead books with a roof set at a precarious angle. Interestingly, this third box contains not only rose branches but dried brown poppies of the same variety used by Kiefer in *Mohn and*

[108] Museum of Modern Art (New York) website, http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1999/muse/artist_pages/duchamp_boite.html, accessed 23 August 2009.

Gedächtnis. These poppies are an easily recognisable reference to the 1914-18 war and appear briefly in the central box too, most likely for the benefit of a harmonious composition. However far this triptych might remind a viewer of a post-apocalyptic urban landscape, with its two dilapidated towers eclipsed by overgrown branches, the inclusion of poppies reintroduces the early twentieth century to Kiefer's work at this very recent stage in his career. This observation supports the idea that Kiefer's work is post-postmodern because rather than rejecting linear history, this artwork uses visual markers to reference disparate historical events and eras. In doing so, the artwork depicts history as a series of important events whose chronology is irrelevant to their acquisition of historical significance.

Triptyque, along with *Jericho* and *Etroits sont les Vaisseaux,* shows a preoccupation not with overcoming specifically German histories but with revealing history to be a pattern of plural, layered, shared experiences that cross nations and generations. To borrow from Eric Gans' interpretation of the post-postmodern, this work demonstrates a 'post-victimary'[109] approach to history because it does not dwell too heavily on the impact of German pasts upon German people. After 1989, the histories Kiefer refers to are not necessarily represented as continual burdens on the German consciousness, rather as memories of experiences. This could, at first, be considered a postmodern trait in Kiefer's work, since he appears to be celebrating the mini-narrative, but Eshelman too would consider this to be an example of post-postmodernism, or performatism. As aforementioned, Eshelman considers human experience to be vital to the post-postmodern era in the same way that knowledge is essential to postmodernism. Kiefer's work after 1989 demonstrates performatism in prioritising subjective human experiences over an awareness of the constructed nature of history.

[109] Gans, *Chronicles of Love and Resentment*, 'Moral Heroism', accessed 18 August 2009.

Although any interpretation this thesis makes of *Triptyque* is entirely subjective, there are certain elements of the work which are denoted and which are likely to make an impact on any person's reception of the piece. *Triptyque* is of a large scale, so it commands a viewer's attention, and it enters into the gallery space with its three dimensions. In addition, many of the features of the artwork are hidden by the layers of materials Kiefer has used. The woodland scene in the background, for example, is concealed by the branches that encircle the towers, and the light of the gallery plays on the glass boxes, contrasting with the roughly textured interior. A viewer has to become more involved in the artwork, searching to experience all of its components, before making an assessment. This entire experience, and the emotional states of being that result from it, suggest that Eshelman's theory of performatism is useful to an interpretation Kiefer's art.

Kiefer's choice of format and title for his work references the monumental triptych form so often used in Christian altarpieces and Kiefer seems to have self-consciously anticipated the reception of a triptych in a contemporary gallery setting. The use of poppies (a symbol of the death of a generation), alongside crumbling towers (associated, in a post-2001 context, with the fallen World Trade Centre), as well as this nod to the Renaissance, to religion and spirituality, means that Kiefer's work demands a cross-historical evaluation. The artist's reference to Duchamp is particularly Lyotardian because it suggests that, in order to be postmodern, one must first be modern, an assertion Lyotard makes in *The Postmodern Condition*.[110] *Triptyque* then, because of its association with Duchamp's *Boîte en Valise* of 1935-1941, is both modern (in its celebration of the role of artists in creating it) and postmodern (in its reappropriation of an older artwork). A reference to the ancient towers of

[110] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, xxiv-xxv.

Jericho, as well as its post-postmodern qualities, gives *Triptyque* a status as an artwork that defies chronological categorisation.

Titles and other linguistic signs

The titles Kiefer attributes to his works provide yet more evidence of his attitude towards histories. The title *Triptyque* leads a viewer with some knowledge of Western art history to form a link between this installation and a renaissance Christian altarpiece, but the use of a quasi-religious reference in a title is not limited to this work alone. *Jericho* is the name of the city to which the Biblical prophet Joshua, successor of Moses, is alleged to have led the Israelites, freeing them from slavery in Egypt. This title, when combined with the image of towering structures, also informs a certain viewer of a connection between Kiefer's tower and the Neolithic tower (Fig. 24), dated 8000 to 7000 BC and uncovered in Jericho by the archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon.[111] The book of Joshua, in both the Hebrew and Christian bibles, tells the story of the battle of Jericho, whose walls allegedly fell after having been surrounded by the Israelites. It was circled once a day for six days, then on the seventh day, 'it came to pass […] that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city'.[112] The reference here to a falling wall might also remind a viewer of the fall of the Berlin Wall, whilst the collapse of this city could easily be associated with the widespread panic in New York after the '9/11' attacks.

Zweistromland is another title that makes a historical reference. The word translated literally into English means 'two river country' or, idiomatically, 'Mesopotamia', the area along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the Middle East that includes areas of modern day Iran and Iraq, Turkey and Syria. This area is known as the 'cradle of civilisation' with the

[111] Bible Places website, http://www.bibleplaces.com/jericho.htm, accessed 16 July 2009. The dating by Kathleen Kenyon of this Neolithic tower led archaeologists to consider Jericho the 'oldest city in the world'.
[112] *Holy Bible*, King James version, New York, 1999, Joshua 6: 20.

earliest known civilisations having formed there around 6000 BC.[113] The Middle East, as well as having being so civilised so very early, is well known to a contemporary Western audience for being an area in political turmoil. As such, *Zweistromland* may also refer to one of the two Gulf Wars that have taken place since the Berlin Wall fell. The first Gulf War had not begun when Kiefer first created his heavy volumes, however, so perhaps he refers to another pair of rivers: the Spree and the Havel in Berlin. On observing this, a viewer can impress upon the work a new set of meanings, just as she can if she sees the work in the early 1990s, during the first Gulf War, or in 2009, during the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts.

Kiefer will, presumably, have been aware of the polysemicity of any sign that he might offer to a gallery audience for its consumption. He will have been aware then that, whilst he may or may not have intended to make reference, in *Jericho*, to either the Neolithic tower or the World Trade Center, or to the modern-day conflicts in the Middle East in *Zweistromland,* such assumptions would be made of his work regardless. The fact that the signs Kiefer does choose to exhibit are so open-endedly polysemic,[114] however, implies his similarly open-ended view of history; plural and traversible. Polysemy is certainly a postmodern concept, emphasising, as it does, the contribution of individual experiences (or mini-narratives) to the perceived meanings of an artwork. According to many semioticians, including Roland Barthes, it is the viewer, not the artist, who allocates meaning to an artwork. In the light of an assessment of Kiefer's work as explicitly self-referential, it can be said that the artist places himself in the position of a viewer, rejecting the grand narratives of authorship and ownership, and is therefore able to bring his own lexicon to an interpretation of the work. Barthes argues that polysemy is both historical and political because a viewer

[113] See, for example, the website of the British Museum.
[114] Kiefer's sings are open-endedly polysemic in comparison with the signs offered by Jörg Immendorff, for example, in his *Cafe Deutschland* series, in which flags, national emblems and well-known politicians appear without abstraction.

draws upon her own cultural competencies to form an interpretation. Historical evidence (here the fall of the Berlin Wall or the '9/11' attacks) contributes to interpretive activity and accounts for the many different meanings that are attributed to the same piece. Barthes seeks to deconstruct these meanings by establishing the dominant modes of interpretation at any given time.[115]

The titles of some of Kiefer's works are taken from the titles of literary works, notably from the poems of Paul Celan. Kiefer's *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (Fig. 14), of 1989, discussed earlier in this chapter, takes its name from Celan's poem of the same name, written in 1952. In this poem, suggests Sheridan Burnside, writing in the journal *German Life and Letters*, 'the terms "poppy" and "memory" are thematically significant for an understanding of Celan's traumatic remembrance of death and suffering during the Holocaust'.[116] These particular emblems are just as significant to an understanding of Celan's poem as they are to an interpretation of Kiefer's sculpture, where they point towards the artist's acknowledgement of the 1914-18 war. Burnside also notes that, in Celan's poetry, 'sensory memory is always threatened by the catastrophic knowledge of the Holocaust',[117] implying that Celan's awareness of the Holocaust inflicts itself upon his poetry relentlessly. Given that this work shares a title with Kiefer's, can the same be said of the sculpture, *Mohn und Gedächtnis*? Using biographical information about both works, it would seem not, because Kiefer's work was created within a postmodern historical field and Celan's was written seven years after the end of the Second World War, at a time when truths about the Holocaust were becoming firmly established in popular discourse. In addition, Celan was himself a German-Romanian Jew whose parents died in internment camps and who was himself 'interned in a

[115] See Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. A. Lavers and C. Smith, London, 1967, 89-90 and Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. A. Lavers, London, 1972, 129-30.
[116] Sheridan Burnside, 'Senselessness in Paul Celan's *Mohn und Gedächtnis*' in *German Life and Letters*, Volume 59, Issue 1, published online 16 December 2005, 140-150.
[117] *Ibid.*, abstract.

Romanian labor camp, where he shovelled stones and built roads and camps in horrible conditions until 1944'.[118] Kiefer, on the other hand, was not born until 1945, so he can have no first-hand experience or even a memory of the Holocaust.

A postmodern interpretation of both versions of *Mohn und Gedächtnis* requires a rejection of biography and a recognition of the impact of the viewer, or reader, upon each work. As aforementioned, a word is a sign as polysemic as any other, so a poem is no more or less laden with meaning than an artwork. The significance of the Holocaust to Kiefer's and Celan's work, to a postmodernist, ought to be of equal measure, their mini-narratives being equally important, but an awareness of Celan's personal experiences must alter many readers' reception of the title and words of his poem. Postmodernism fails here because to reject the status of this author is to suggest that his first-hand experiences make his poems no more valuable to an understanding of the Holocaust than Kiefer's sculpture of the same name. Kiefer's very postmodern take on the title of Celan's poem is only a reappropriation and not an attempt to rewrite histories. Kiefer does not claim any authority on the Holocaust but asserts himself as a German artist with a voice and an apparent concern for the burden of his nation's past upon its present and future. Kiefer does not usurp Celan but borrows a set of signs the poet had used previously, offering the words themselves, and the ideas they connote, for reassessment.

This chapter has shown Anselm Kiefer to be at once a postmodern and a post-postmodern artist. Through an evaluation of his work from 1973 to 2008, it has considered the impact of postmodernism upon the artist and has argued that Kiefer's approach to history is cyclical and not linear; plural and traversable rather than a barrier impossible to overcome. In its next chapter, this thesis will consider the Berlin Wall in the light of postmodern critical

[118] Brett Ashley Kaplan, *Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation*, Champaign, 2007, 24.

theory in order to establish whether the impact of postmodernism was felt as keenly by the German capital city as by Germany's artists.

MEMORY AS PERFORMANCE: CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE BERLIN WALL AFTER 1989

This chapter considers Berlin itself, moving away from the representations of Berlin and the Brandenburg Gate discussed in the first chapter, and the relationship between postmodernism and German history in the second. As well as discussing the main points raised by Baudrillard in his essay, 'The Anorexic Ruins', I will discuss the ideas of Andreas Huyssen, particularly those expressed in *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. This chapter will consider the impact of a rejection of linear history upon Berlin after 1989. My arguments will focus on the Berlin Wall itself, notably those parts of it that remain in the city today.

Secondary literature on the Berlin Wall is naturally abundant, its fall having been so significant a moment in twentieth-century history. Research on the relationship between postmodernism and the Wall, however, has been less plentiful. Sunil Manghani's *Image Critique and the Fall of the Berlin Wall* has a great deal to say about the aesthetic of the Berlin Wall, and refers briefly to the parts of the Wall that can still be found in the city. Manghani does not select any specific examples for a closer analysis though, so whilst his text can inform this thesis, my third chapter will investigate more closely the way that the Wall looks today, evaluating the reasons for its continued existence in various parts of the city. Stuart Sim, in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, notes that 'the Berlin Wall, like postmodernism itself, is now dispersed everywhere'.[119] This observation is typical of the vast amount of literature that mentions the Berlin Wall in the context of postmodernism, but does not investigate the relationship between the two in any particular depth. Jennifer A.

[119] Stuart Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, London, 2005, 111.

Jordan discusses the Berlin Wall in *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond,*[120] and focuses on the way in which certain areas in Berlin have become memorial sites. Jordan's book is useful to my understanding of Berlin's commemorative habits but she does not explore the contribution of postmodernism to these habits at any great length. Similarly, Dirk Verheyen's *United City, Divided Memories: Cold War Legacies in Contemporary Berlin* considers the construction in Berlin of a shared identity between East and West, using memorial sites and museums as points of reference, but only references postmodern theory to a limited extent. Another significant book is Brian Ladd's *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*,[121] which is not dissimilar to Huyssen's *Present Pasts* in that it, too, considers the impacts of history and memory upon the contemporary urban landscape.

Jean François Lyotard refers to the power of performative utterances in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Making reference to Wittgenstein's language games, he explains the reliance of all utterances on a relationship between a sender (or 'knower' of information), a referent and an addressee. These relationships are constructed by the nature of an utterance to be denotative, prescriptive or performative. The latter type of utterance, explains Lyotard, 'can directly affect both the referent […] and the addressee'[122] and to this effect, Gunter Schabowski's announcement, on 9 November 1989, that 'applications by private individuals for travel abroad can now be made without the previously existing requirements',[123] is a decidedly performative utterance. His words affect the referent (the border crossings) and the addressees (the public) and only result in an action because the

[120] Jordan, *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond.*
[121] Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, Chicago, 1998.
[122] Lyotard, 'The Method: Language Games' in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 25.
[123] Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall*, London, 2006, 423.

sender of this information (Schabowski) is 'invested with the authority to make such a statement'.[124]

Schabowski's assigned authority therefore meant that the simple act of speaking a sentence on a radio programme prompted a rush to the Wall that the border guards were unable to sustain. In theory, this might have occurred at any point during the twenty-eight year division of Berlin but the overwhelming of the border guards only happened in the aftermath of this performative utterance. During Berlin's division, there were relatively few successful attempts to cross the border in Berlin. This makes apparent the difficulties, risks and consequences of attempting an escape to the West and it becomes easy to understand why it was only with Schabowski's permission that the public were able to make authoritative demands at the borders. These addressees were 'immediately placed within the new context created by the utterance';[125] a decidedly more powerful one.

'To speak is to fight', Lyotard says, 'in the sense of playing',[126] and in the context of these ideas about performativity, the Berlin Wall can be seen as the very necessary physical manifestation of the artificiality of the Cold War conflict. However 'anorexic' its ruin, its fall demonstrates performativity in being the result of Schabowski's single performative utterance and in being an event. To borrow from Derrida, a performative utterance, as opposed to a constative one, 'produces or *transforms* a situation; it operates',[127] and the Wall was very much an operating symbol, the symbol of 'the absolute character of the Cold War and its ambiguity'.[128]

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[124] Lyotard, 'The Method: Language Games' in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 25.
[125] *Ibid.*
[126] *Ibid.* Lyotard notes this with reference to the 'language games' whose rules he cites as being of utmost importance to the operation of language..
[127] Jacques Derrida in Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, Cornell, 1993, 89.
[128] Baudrillard, 'The Anorexic Ruins', 37.

As well as having a performative role, the Wall was a performer in the acting out of the Cold War on its global stage. Taking centre stage in Berlin, the Wall was at once part of both the scenery and the action, becoming the principal performer in this play of postmodern politics. The Wall acted to still people's movement in what would have been a momentous shift of population from East to West, and by pausing this flood of action, stabilised the process of the war as though making a move in a game of chess. To continue with the analogy of chess (the rules of which are regularly cited by Lyotard and Wittgenstein in their writings on the performative nature of language), the Wall became a pawn in the political game itself; a performative device used to ensure a stalemate, rather than a determined plot of attack made by either opponent. The performance of Cold War politics is thus exposed in the creation of the Berlin Wall, built in a move towards the anorexic action Baudrillard writes about, towards 'these plans, programs and decisions that do not lead to a single event, all these refined and sophisticated weapons that do not lead to any war!'[129] This thesis has explored the idea of the Berlin Wall as an actor through its previous evaluation of Jörg Immendorff's paintings, *Café Deutschland I*, of 1978 (Fig. 4) and *Café Deutschland, Contemplating The Question – Where Do I Stand*, of 1987 (Fig. 5). This chapter will explore this idea further by considering the role of the Berlin Wall in the city today; its location, its appearance and its many purposes.

The fall of the Berlin Wall obviously had social, geographical and political outcomes but also had an aesthetic impact - how would a city as large and as important as Berlin manage the collapse of the system that had structured it for twenty-eight years? Visibility and invisibility, suggests Andreas Huyssen in 'After the War', have played a crucial role in the restructuring of Berlin after the fall of the Wall. What can actually be seen of Berlin's history and what the city itself seems to be acutely aware of are two very different things. For Karen

[129] Baudrillard, 'The Anorexic Ruins', 31.

E. Till, too, Berlin is filled with 'Hypervisible spaces'.[130] In 'The Anorexic Ruins', Baudrillard writes about the postmodern realm of the mini-narrative, the excessive production of which results in the world 'sliding into hypertrophy', where 'this dual process of lockjaw and inertia […] reflects the increase in visibility where there is nothing to see'.[131] This issue is also highlighted in Huyssen's assessment of Berlin, whose voids are, he notes, 'saturated with invisible history'.[132]

For Baudrillard, artificiality and absence are the ultimate end results of this cancerous overdevelopment or hypertrophy:

> Here, at the pinnacle of history self-exposed by its violence, everything is eerily quiet like an abandoned November field […] one can remember it like some nightmare, that is, like fulfilling a desire, but the signs have long since become a true battlefield.[133]

Writing soon before the fall of the Wall, Baudrillard's talk of 'abandoned November field[s]' seems to make reference to the battlefields of the 1914-18 war which ended, anticlimactically, one November morning. The flat expanse of Berlin's Potsdamer Platz (Fig. 25), a no-man's-land wiped clear of its buildings during the city's division, could very well be the 'abandoned field' Baudrillard saw in Berlin when he was struck by an 'increase in visibility where there is nothing to see'.[134] For both Huyssen and Baudrillard, the binary opposition between the visible and the invisible is vital to an understanding of Berlin's relationship with its history and its Wall and the city's attitude towards its redevelopment.

A new identity as a postmodern city, one whose very reunification represents the rejection of linear history, was at once a positive and negative development for Berlin. On the one hand, the city was able to regenerate without conforming to the conventions of an especially

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[130] Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, 204.
[131] Baudrillard, 'The Anorexic Ruins', 31.
[132] Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, 58.
[133] Baudrillard, 'The Anorexic Ruins', 35.
[134] *Ibid.*, 31.

restrictive political grand narrative,[135] but on the other hand, the loss of the tension that characterised the city for so many years did not readily provide Berlin with the building blocks it needed to regenerate. The new Berlin was characterised by the absence of an old system, rather than the positive, constructive presence of a new one. The problem of postmodernism, for Berlin's architects and its government, was that, whilst it offered creative freedom, it also suggested a rejection of the commemorative habits that had been commonplace after the 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars. How then would a city, trying to regenerate rapidly, remember its past whilst translating the cyclical, pluralised histories that postmodernism advocates into aesthetic, architectural terms?

Andreas Huyssen attempts to answer this question in *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Writing about the city as a palimpsest, Huyssen implies that what is erased in the city in the pursuit of moving forwards, and the methods by which it is erased, will always be visible beneath any of its new developments. He means this in a metaphorical and literal sense; parts of the Berlin Wall having been left behind in memory of the division, parts having been eradicated and built over. History is, for Huyssen, either being enacted or written over, never created (and never made plural, as Kiefer might prefer). For Huyssen, Berlin is

> A disparate city-text that is being rewritten whilst previous text is preserved, traces are restored, erasures documented, all of it resulting in a complex web of historical markers that point to the continuing heterogeneous life of a vital city that is as ambivalent of its built past as it is of its urban future.[136]

Lutz Rathenow, in the text that accompanies Harald Hauswald's photographs in their book *Ost Berlin*: *Leben vor dem Mauerfall*, mentions the idea of concealing history with reference to Adolf Hitler's bunker (Fig. 26). He writes;

[135] The West absorbed the East and worked to eradicate GDR ways of life: for example, many of the uniform housing blocks of the GDR were quickly erased after the fall of the Berlin Wall.
[136] Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, 81.

> Where is the former Fuehrer bunker?
> My arm points left. The mound of earth can't be seen. The final refuge of the leading criminal amongst the Germans is currently being filled in. Apartment houses are to be built, a park to cover Hitler's hideout. Is this history dead and buried?[137]

A visitor to the city today can see this park, used by the wealthy inhabitants of the apartments to exercise their dogs. The only indication than this area was once the site of Hitler's underground bunker is a sign, made for the benefit of tourists, who only arrive at this small park by chance, or whilst on a guided tour. This particular example of 'history dead and buried'[138] is a rather appropriate one in the light of Huyssen's ideas about the palimpsestic nature of Berlin's regeneration. Here, Hitler's underground bunker has been literally filled in and covered over, but physical traces remain, not only on the newly-levelled ground but in the sign that marks this place as one of historical significance.

Attention is also drawn to this area many times a day by the guides who take tourists through Peter Eisenman's *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* and onto the nearby bunker: a significance that will be reinforced however successfully the bunker itself is concealed. Eisenman (as well as those officials who assigned to this space its commemorative role) has drawn attention to the bunker by creating this memorial so near to it, at the same time drawing attention to the Nazi legacy that Berlin is keen to overcome. In this way, the two landmarks accentuate one another and will draw attention to one another, as well as to the histories they represent, as long as tourists are still interested in Berlin's past.

Some parts of the Berlin Wall have been treated in a similar way to Hitler's bunker, having been erased and covered up entirely, hinting at Berlin's desire to forget this episode in its history. Other sections, however, have been left to stand, allocated to various commemorative roles, both on and off their former path. Baudrillard suggests for the Berlin Wall, even before 1989, a monumental role. 'Like many monuments', he writes, 'it has

[137] Hauswald and Rathenow, *Ost Berlin*, 54.
[138] *Ibid.*

become a nostalgic sign of this division and like many an event all it is able to do any more is express the nostalgia of history'.[139] Baudrillard explains that this nostalgia concerns clear divisions between good and evil, concepts that had been deconstructed by developments in postmodern theory during Berlin's division. This might explain why parts of the Wall have been left behind then: they are memorials not only to the former shape of Berlin and to those who lost their lives crossing the border, but to a time when two grand narratives characterised the city and communism had yet to be exposed and discarded.

Another reason for the existence of parts of the Berlin Wall in the city is to preserve a memory of the GDR. Many people lived happily and prosperously in East Germany; not all longed to escape. Because of this, a memory of the GDR, unpopular though that regime was and still is in the West, ought not to be erased completely, because to forget the GDR is to forget the histories and mini-narratives of GDR citizens, whether or not they embraced their nationality. In this way, the remaining Wall is not a sinister reminder of traumatic division, but an indication of Berlin's willingness to remember the legacy of its communist past, rather than erasing it in the relentless pursuit of moving forward. Andreas Huyssen agrees, noting that 'visibility and invisibility become categories of architectural discourse about the built legacies of the fascist and communist states'.[140] Although the city has managed to preserve a memory of the GDR in some areas, it has been less successful in others, having demolished the Palast der Republik in 2009, a building that was important and well-loved in the GDR but that was considered inappropriate to the aesthetic of the New Berlin.

As a memorial, the remaining Wall plays a significant role in generating tourism for Berlin. Like those who watched televised reports of the '9/11' attacks on the World Trade Center, anybody who witnessed the media coverage of the night on which the GDR opened

[139] Baudrillard, 'The Anorexic Ruins', 38.
[140] Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, 79.

its borders along the Wall has a memory of the event. These memories are in essence, mediated (having been informed by the media), because the vast majority of us, including the majority of Berliners, were not there at the borders that evening. This shows the grand narrative of capitalism in action, generating tourism by perpetrating a romanticised idea of the fall of the Wall as one overnight event with one set of (positive) consequences. Of course, experiences of this night were many and various and the impacts of such an occurrence were different for one person than for the next. As such, the mini-narrative becomes all the more important to an understanding of the fall of the Wall.

The Vanishing Berlin Wall

Of the parts of the Wall that remain in the city, one significant section is displayed at the *Mauermuseum* at Checkpoint Charlie (Fig. 27), a very popular tourist attraction. Here, two or three columns of Wall have been made to look as though they support the walls of the museum, having been uprooted from their original location. The *Mauermuseum* is spoken of scathingly by many of Berlin's tour-guides and is expensive to enter, but welcomes hundreds of international visitors every day. Sitting at a very famous crossing point that had become a symbol of the Cold War, featured in many films[141] and in the media, the museum includes a replica of the checkpoint itself, complete with 'border guards' in uniforms, with whom a tourist can be photographed. A visitor can even purchase Wall memorabilia from the large, adjoining *Mauershop*, including child-friendly replicas of escape vehicles, and postcards depicting the checkpoint at various times.

The museum is devoted to telling the chronological history of the Berlin Wall through the stories of various protagonists it identifies, which are 'haphazardly but well-meaningly

[141] Checkpoint Charlie was recently featured in Miguel Alexandre's *Die Frau vom Checkpoint Charlie*, 2007, and in Hans Jürgen Pohland's *Warum die UFO unseren Salat Klauen*, commonly known as 'Hallo, Checkpoint Charlie', 1980, (Internet Movie Database website, www.imdb.com, accessed 25 April 2009).

chronicled in this private tourist magnet'.[142] The characters in these stories are the 'heroic' border guards who facilitated escapes and ordinary citizens who overcame adversity to escape by any means, over, under or through the monumental Wall. The museum is dedicated to the Wall as a whole, not just to the Wall in Berlin, but many of the stories it tells are the stories of 'normal' Berliners. In this very significant location, the Wall's popularity with tourists becomes evident, the museum façade and interior constructing a romanticised version of the escapes made from East to West. The museum floor is filled with relics including the car that hid people in its bonnet to cross the border, and display cases showing artefacts that add a sense of the real to these tabloid-esque stories. The museum visitor is permitted here to be a voyeur, examining artefacts alongside their corresponding stories and gaining access to the 'real' lives of Berliners during the division. Karen Till writes of Berlin that 'we are all voyeurs here, the researcher, the tourist, the architect'.[143]

More Wall remains can be found as part of an exhibition at the historic Potsdamer Platz (Fig. 28) which was desolate during Berlin's division, sliced in two by the Wall. Potsdamer Platz has recently and hastily been redeveloped in the style of New York's Times Square, with glassy skyscrapers and the offices of multinational corporations at its edges, but during the division, it was completely cleared of its World War II, bomb-damaged buildings in order for border guards to see clearly any potential escapees. It can be argued that the redeveloped square suffers from the same lack of character as the old, empty Potsdamer Platz but nevertheless, the remaining parts of the Wall are adorned here by information panels featuring photographs and facts about the Wall's dissolution. This is another tourist-friendly area and this factor plays a role in determining the ways in which information about Berlin's history is presented here. The writers of text panels can communicate with the public by use

[142] Andrea Schulte-Peevers, *Lonely Planet Berlin City Guide*, London, 2009, 143.
[143] Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, 26.

of the Wall at Potsdamer Platz, appearing to openly publicize Berlin's colourful history without shame or the desire to forget.

This space is interesting to consider in the light of Huyssen's assertions on the palimpsestic nature of Berlin's regeneration because areas of the square have been eradicated and rebuilt so many times that the layering of histories here is quite literal. Traces of Berlin's past are visible on the ground, where the path of the former Wall is marked, and in the somewhat soulless character of the surrounding buildings, whose emulation of structures in Western capital cities is clear to see. The juxtaposition of the remaining Wall and new high-tech architecture is further amplified by the presence, on Potsdamer Platz, of Europe's first set of traffic lights, erected in 1924. The tower from which a solitary policeman controlled these lights remained until 1936, when it was removed to make way for enhancements to the S-Bahn line. A replica tower was installed in 1997 in the location of the original tower and then moved to a more aesthetically-pleasing position in 2000, adding another dimension to this layering of histories.[144] The square has come to resemble a map of twentieth-century German histories, bearing scars and traces of its past, some concealed more successfully than others.

A comparison of the Berlin Wall at the *Mauermuseum* and at Potsdamer Platz addresses very postmodern concerns with authenticity and the appropriation of urban space. The Wall at the *Mauermuseum* has been uprooted and moved from its original location, albeit only by a few yards, in order to complement the exterior of the museum. Smaller pieces of Wall are nailed to the same exterior as though they were legitimate art works in a white cube gallery. In this way, the *Mauermuseum* has appropriated the Wall, translating it into an aesthetic object for a contemporary audience, who have come to look at this relic of the turbulent twentieth century in the cosmopolitan New Berlin. 'Places such as Checkpoint

[144] See Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin*, 115-120

Charlie or the Berlin Wall', Till agrees, 'become exhibitions, even museums, of themselves'.[145]

The sections of the Wall at Potsdamer Platz have been left on their original path, unlike those at the *Mauermuseum*, but they were moved at one time in order that the area could be re-paved, then put back. In addition, some segments have been taken away and replaced by text panels. It could be suggested that this is an effort to preserve the remaining sections of the Wall and use them as a commemorative backdrop, rather than concealing them, but the breaking-up of the Wall here suggests that the looming presence of fifteen metres of the Berlin Wall, unadorned and unaltered, would be unbefitting to the newly regenerated Square. The panels line up with the top of the areas of Wall that bear graffiti, echoing this writing with their own text, and the original Wall stretches out above them, assertively echoing the shapes of the surrounding skyline. Rather than calling attention to a designated narrative, as the Wall at the *Mauermuseum* does, this section is synonymous with the sleek urban planning of the city. Still authentic, this piece of the Wall has been appropriated by the new Potsdamer Platz and it goes to great lengths to express the New Berlin's apparent willingness to remember its history whilst forging a path into the new millennium. Huyssen's assertions on the palimpsestic character of Berlin are relevant to this area not only because the city's histories are still visible beneath new developments, but because this particular memory has been removed, altered and replaced on top of these developments, serving a very different purpose as an exhibition space than it did as a barrier. Postmodern paradoxes can be found here in the tension between exhibition and commemoration, remembering and forgetting and preserving and embellishing the Wall left to stand. Preservation is not especially postmodern, since many postmodernists advocate a

[145] Till, *The New Berlin*, 194.

rejection of chronological history and see no need to remain weighed down by its narratives, but the appropriation of this archaeological site and the regeneration of its identity most certainly are.

Another notable section of Wall is, somewhat ironically, protected by a fence on Niederkirchnerstraβe (Fig. 29) which joins Willhelmstraβe, a major road through the city. One of the longest remaining lengths of the Wall, this section runs for 209 metres but leaves the few tourists who meet it relatively unmoved. Its location is such that a visitor must know where to look in order to find it and is surprised by its short stature, slimness and visible fragility. Tucked behind a more popular tourist attraction, the fearsomely imposing Air Ministry Building, this Wall goes largely unnoticed by the German commuters who drive past it. It also stands directly above the Gestapo Headquarters, and very close to the Topography of Terror, adding physical layers to Huyssen's palimpsestic city-text.

The Wall left to stand here works very well as a memorial because it has not been deliberately transformed into an exhibition or display space; it remains a Wall that was decorated with graffiti by Berliners during division and damaged by perhaps the same people on reunification. As such, this section of the Wall is preserved in memorial to a grand narrative; that of the divide between communism and democracy, and is more open to interpretation than its neighbouring sections, which have their histories prescribed and glued to them on text panels in different languages. Only the metal fence that protects this Wall betrays its status as a relic that must be protected, a precious artefact that must not be touched rather than a conscious memorial to Berlin's past. Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper discusses Niederkirchnerstraβe in her essay, 'The Berlin Wall: an Archaeological Site in Progress',[146]

[146] Gabi Dolff-Bonekämper, 'The Berlin Wall: an Archaeological Site in Progress' in A.J. Schofield, William Gray Johnson and Colleen M. Beck, *Matériel Culture: the Archaeology of Twentieth-Century Conflict*, London, 2002.

noting that the fence around this part of the Wall has not always looked the way that it does today:

> The trouble began when the [first] fence, a razor-sharp metal fence from GDR provisions, was replaced by a prettier and lower one in 1999. The result looked ridiculous, like a monument behind a garden fence. As the fence was judged inappropriate, it was taken away, and for a time, nothing at all protected the street-side of the Wall. Only a sign told visitors that it was forbidden and dangerous to approach.[147]

Ten years after reunification then, Berliners were warned again not to approach the Wall, this time in order to conserve histories, not prevent escape.

Traces of the Wall can also be found in the road in front of the Brandenburg Gate (Fig. 30). A visitor to Berlin can drive down or walk over this road and notice a line of red bricks embedded in the tarmac, indicating the former path of the Wall. This does not continue throughout the city but only in the areas most densely populated by tourists, who can cross this surprisingly thin, red trail without any awareness of its significance. As the first chapter of this thesis asserted, the Brandenburg Gate became a symbol of the hope for Germany's reunification in the years leading up to 1989. It also formed the backdrop for the speeches of Presidents Kennedy in 1963 and Reagan in 1987, and was the gate through which the West German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, walked to shake the hand of Hans Modrow, the East German Prime Minister, on 22 December 1989, signifying the opening of the gateway to all Berliners.

In a sense, allowing anything more than the slightest trace of the Berlin Wall to remain in front of the Brandenburg Gate would be iconoclastic, crudely opposing the gate's current symbolic representation of Berlin's unity. To allow a large section of the Wall to remain here would challenge the ideas associated with the Gate (meanings generated by the Gate's historical and political functions), adding negative connotations to an area presently

[147] Dolff-Bonekämper, 'The Berlin Wall: an Archaeological Site in Progress', 244.

associated with positivity.[148] The Wall's presence is hushed here, left as a path of bricks that are barely detectable beneath the tyres of a passing car. In addition, the idea of Berlin as a palimpsest appears again because even though this path is man-made and not 'original', it bears traces of the past that can still be seen beneath new developments. The Wall in the road resembles closely the 'Mauer im Kopf' mentality in that it is difficult to see, but most definitely there. Huyssen's naming the space left by the dismantling of the Wall 'a void saturated with invisible history',[149] emphasises the paradoxical nature of Berlin's architectural regeneration. The vanishing Wall leaves behind a void that is far from empty and the city's histories are still in evidence beneath Berlin's rewritten, architectural 'text'.

Writing on the Wall

The idea of Berlin as palimpsest is one that can be seen quite literally and physically in the graffiti that covered the Wall and that can still be seen on the parts of the Wall that have been left to stand. In Potsdamer Platz, the layers of graffiti made during Berlin's division have been layered over again with text from recent visitors to the city (Fig. 31). The presence of newer text prevents the 'original' graffiti from turning into a stagnant memorial to the rebellious expressivity of the West Berliners who created it. Instead, this new graffiti shows the creation of histories as well as their preservation, a fittingly postmodern celebration of the mini-narrative after the collapse of the grand narrative that kept the Wall in place.

In 'The Anorexic Ruins', Jean Baudrillard writes about the graffiti on the Berlin Wall, claiming that, in trying to cover the Wall with their own mark-making, Berliners merely aestheticised it, lending to its power, 'like a dog or slave would use flowers to braid the whip

[148] Obviously, the presence of Berlin Wall remains next to the Brandenburg Gate would not instil a feeling of negativity in all Berliners – all signs are polysemic and as such, it could be interpreted in any number of ways - but it might suggest that this part of Berlin's history has not been overcome, thus transforming the Gate into a symbol of division.
[149] Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*, 58.

that beats them'.[150] This unsympathetic view is typical of Baudrillard but is relevant to a discussion about performativity. The Wall, for Baudrillard, prompted its own rebellious decoration by symbolising the repression of a people. It controlled citizens by use of its symbolic and performative power as well as its physical presence. All graffiti on the Wall took place on its Western side so was not made by GDR citizens, who could not access the Wall at all. Sunil Manghani argues that this graffiti made the Wall's job as a screen easier, hiding East from West, because 'like a mirror, the graffiti reflected back the Western World'.[151]

The Eastside Gallery (Fig. 32) is both a Wall and an exhibition space and is so-named because, after years of suppressed creative freedom, artists painted on its Eastern side. The paintings that decorate this Wall have slowly been vanishing, with no protection from the elements, and the murals that decorate it have been added-to by graffiti, some restored and repainted and some allowed to slowly disappear under the layers of new text (Fig. 33). This lends yet more weight to Huyssen's argument for a palimpsestic regeneration; even the layers of paint that cover the Wall's history are themselves written upon. Very recently, during March and April 2009, the Wall at the Eastside Gallery was sandblasted in order that its murals can be reapplied. Like that on the Wall at Potsdamer Platz, the graffiti here added new histories to the work of the artists who formally decorated the Wall. The layering of mini-narratives was entirely appropriate for this postmodern city, generating a plurality of history rather than preserving the decoration of a surface whose identity has already been discursively transformed[152] from an untouchable concrete boundary to an exhibition space.

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[150] Baudrillard, 'The Anorexic Ruins', 37.
[151] Manghani, *Image Critique and the Fall of the Berlin Wall*, 128.
[152] The idea of a discursive 'transformation of signs', is used by Richard Clay in 'Bouchardon's statue of Louis XV; iconoclasm and the transformation of signs', Stacy Boldrick and Richard Clay (eds), *Iconoclasm: contested objects, contested terms,* London, 2007*,* 113.

To remove the mini-narratives of graffiti artists and the pen-wielding public, along with the murals that existed on this Wall, is to suggest that the narratives of originality and legitimacy so favoured before postmodernists exposed them as constructions are still the criteria by which an artwork ought to be judged. The decision to sandblast the Eastside Gallery and reapply its paintings indicates a concern with the legitimacy of the art object because the graffiti that threatened to change the perceived 'meanings' of the murals has been deemed unacceptable. The desire to protect the authenticity of these murals is a peculiar one; graffiti can be defined by its decorating a public surface, which is what these murals did, yet they have been removed to be protected from graffiti themselves. Sunil Manghani notes that 'the graffiti had been the West's signature on the Wall, the first writings on the Wall, laying claim to a communal monument'.[153] How then has the conclusion been drawn that only certain people may express themselves on this surface, and how have these people been categorised? This question can be answered by understanding the impulse, much easier to manage than the postmodern idea that 'anything goes',[154] to stake a claim for the ownership of space, the authentic voice of a legitimate artist painting original art on a legitimate canvas. For Berlin, as previously discussed, postmodernism does not necessarily offer adequate building material, especially after a turbulent past dictated by grand narratives that have since not only been forgotten but dismissed by theorists like Baudrillard.

Despite the Eastside Gallery being designated as a space for the celebration of creative freedom on the Wall's Eastern side, this freedom is measured and is allocated only to certain individuals for certain purposes. Another dilemma is posed by the fact that anti-communist material is hardly a contemporary response to Berlin's current situation. So-called Socialist Realism is no longer a veritable force in the city, so will the artists repaint their 'original'

[153] Manghani, *Image Critique and the Fall of the Berlin Wall*, 126.
[154] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 76.

murals or make new ones? Will graffiti be permitted upon the new murals or will the Eastside Gallery be fenced off like the Wall on Niederkirchnerstraße, a return to its first role as an inaccessible barrier? Brian Ladd notes that, during Berlin's division, 'the effect of this graffiti was to call attention to the injustice, anomaly or artificiality of the barrier',[155] so what will the effect be of redecorating this Wall in 2009? Only the regeneration of the Eastside Gallery over the coming months will tell. In the parts of the Wall that remain in the city, visibility and invisibility, the tension between absence and presence and between history preserved and history erased can all be keenly felt.

This chapter has discussed the impact of postmodernism upon Berlin, paying particular attention to the various remains of the Berlin Wall. These demonstrate a differentiated view of Andreas Huyssen's theories on the palimpsestic nature of Berlin. The *Mauermuseum* at Checkpoint Charlie employs a technique of layering stories and histories that together construct a romanticised view of escaping Berlin, whilst the Wall at Potsdamer Platz has been taken away from its site and put back on top of a sleek, new architectural development. At Niederkirchnerstraße, the Wall forms a physical layer over the Topography of Terror, as well as the Air Ministry Building, and on the road in front of the Brandenburg Gate, the bricks that mark the former path of the Wall carry traces of history far more quietly than the displays on the nearby Potsdamer Platz. As such, the argument that postmodernism played a significant role in Berlin's regeneration can also be seen in the various treatments of the remains of the Wall.

[155] Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, 27.

CONCLUSION

In its first chapter, this thesis demonstrated, by a close study of the selected works of Harald Hauswald and Jörg Immendorff, that both performativity and performance played a perceived role in the fall of the Berlin Wall. Lyotard's theories on *The Postmodern Condition* were explored, whilst the relevance of postmodernism to my research was made clear by references to Baudrillard's postmodern essays, 'The Spirit of Terrorism' and 'The Anorexic Ruins'. I considered the limitations of a view of the fall of the Berlin Wall as a purely performative occurrence but in the light of the theories of Lyotard and Baudrillard, concluded that the fall of the Berlin Wall was postmodern in its assisting the performative dissolution of the grand narrative.

In the second chapter, this thesis discussed selected works by Anselm Kiefer in the context of postmodern and post-postmodern critical theory. Comparisons made between Kiefer's Hauswald's and Immendorff's work drew attention to all three artists' attitude towards remembering and portraying German histories but also made evident some of the problems of postmodernism. References to Kiefer's work before and after 1989 and after 2001 were followed by a exploration of various strands of post-postmodern theory, notably Gans' post-millennialism and Eshelman's performatism. By considering the ways in which very different interpretations can be made of Kiefer's work, the chapter applied semiotic theory and concluded that meanings are applied depending on a viewer's lexicon. This lexicon can be informed (consciously or unconsciously) by the dominant cultural discourses of an historical field, for example by postmodern or post-postmodern theories and frameworks. The second chapter emphasised this by considering Rebecca Comay's

assessment of Kiefer's *Zweistromland* and by discussing the ways in which the titles of Kiefer's works point towards various meanings.

An analysis of selected parts of the Berlin Wall in the third chapter demonstrated the impact of postmodernism upon the city's urban regeneration. This was linked to the previous consideration of the influence of postmodernism upon the works of Hauswald, Immendorff and Kiefer. This chapter considered Andreas Huyssen's notion of Berlin as a palimpsest in a discussion about the different appearances and purposes of the parts of the Wall that remain in the city, and the chapter concluded that Berlin can be characterised by the binary tensions that occupy the city; absence and presence, erasure and exhibition, history forgotten and history preserved.

For Lyotard, the postmodern 'is undoubtedly a part of the modern'.[156] His well-known assertion, that postmodernism can be defined as 'an incredulity toward metanarratives',[157] relies on the dominance of metanarratives in a popular discourse. This idea is not purely Lyotardian; many academics writing today share the belief that the postmodern is ultimately a part of the modern. Jonathan Harris agrees in *Writing Back to Modern Art: After Greenberg, Fried and Clark* that, 'to proceed to examine the "postmodern" requires a re-examination of the "modern" before it'.[158] Although, in 1979, Lyotard was able to consider what had come before postmodernism, he was unable to hypothesise what would come after. Richard Evans, author of *In Defence of History*, spoke about the effects of postmodern theory upon historical practices in an interview with Donald A. Yerxa in 2003. Evans said of postmodernists that

> Their critique has not left the practice of history unchanged, though the extreme skepticism that they voiced has now subsided into a marginal phenomenon. After all,

[156] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, xxiv-xxv.
[157] *Ibid.*
[158] Jonathan Harris, *Writing Back to Modern Art: After Greenberg, Fried and Clark*, London, 2005, 203.

> the only possible reaction from historians who actually did accept these notions was to stop writing history, and more history is being written today than ever before.[159]

Linear history, after all, continues after postmodernism.

One aim of this thesis is to assess Reuben Fowkes' assertion that recent history can be categorised according to its chronology: 'pre 1989, post 1989 and post 2001'.[160] This thesis agrees with Fowkes that 1989 and 2001 were pivotal moments but argues that the events that took place in these years marked the development and popularity of postmodernism. Celebrating historical dates is not a postmodern practice, but this thesis argues that 1989 and 2001 have become significant dates through their reinforcement by historical and theoretical discourse. E. H. Carr notes that history is created by historians; dates and events only becoming significant when historians use them.[161] Whilst Carr is not suggesting that history has ended, or is a fruitless enterprise, he is asserting its ultimate subjectivity and exposing its construction by discourse. Richard Evans, when considering 'Objectivity and its Limits', adds: 'why, after all, if all histories are valid, should we believe postmodernist theories of histories rather than other theories?'[162] This thesis agrees with Evans that a postmodern incredulity towards history had a time-limit and, whilst this thesis celebrates postmodernity, it also considers the origins, purposes and potential future of the condition, highlighting its subjectivity and temporality.

By analysing the influence of postmodernism upon the work of contemporary German artists and by evaluating its impact upon the city's post-Wall landscape, this thesis draws parallels between art theories, postmodern theories and aesthetic urban development. In doing so, it argues that the fall of the Berlin Wall can be interpreted as a postmodern occurrence,

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[159] Richard J. Evans in Donald A. Yerxa, 'On the Current State of History: an interview with Richard J. Evans' in Donald A. Yerxa (ed), *Recent Themes in Historical Thinking: Historians in Conversation*, Columbia, 2008, 24.
[160] Fowkes and Fowkes, 'Supported, Tolerated or Forbidden: Contemporary Art and Memory Politics'.
[161] E.H. Carr, *What is History?* London, 1962, 86.
[162] Evans, 'Objectivity and its Limits', *In Defence of History*, 231.

assisting the performative dissolution of the last twentieth-century grand narrative. As such, this research contributes to the existing canon of literature on Berlin's reunification by adding to it an account of postmodernism's role within the regenerating city.

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