Destruction and Reconstruction in Berlin: Ian McEwan's Temporal Topography

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The title of this essay is partly borrowed – it draws on that of the interdisciplinary multimedia project *Berlin: Temporal Topographies,* affiliated with Stanford University.[1] The project attempts to bring together research on a number of perceptual-space representations of the German capital to evoke a complicated picture of the inter-subjective construction of the palimpsestic, history-saturated city. The title of the project, though, could be used as an amazingly convenient label for several fictional representations of Berlin that boast a pronounced perceptual dimension and depict the city as a changing meaningful node in history. The present article aims to focus on one of these, the temporal topography of Berlin, as created by one of the best-known contemporary British authors, Ian McEwan in his Cold War espionage story *The Innocent.* Incidentally, the year of the novel's publication, 1989, is also the year the Berlin Wall came down, thus also serving as a major landmark in political and spatial developments in both the city itself and in Europe as a whole.

At that time, there already existed an established framework in British literature for viewing Berlin as a scene of social and political tensions – a perspective that had been cemented by Christopher Isherwood in his now classic Berlin stories *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939). This outlook can be combined with the view of Berlin as a city of modernity, as well as the image associated with aesthetics and sexual liberties that Berlin evokes. In his autobiography, Isherwood's contemporary Stephen Spender describes his experiences in Berlin and Hamburg as follows: '…a great city is a kind of labyrinth within which every moment of the day the most hidden wishes are performed by people who devote their whole existence to this and nothing else … the hidden life of forbidden wishes exists in extravagant nakedness behind mazes of walls.' (Quoted in Wilson 1992: 90.)

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[1] See *http://www.stanford.edu/group/shl/research/berlin.html*.

In McEwan's novel, the young Englishman Leonard Marnham arrives in the city in 1956 to participate in a British-American joint intelligence operation, which involves digging a tunnel under the city's Russian sector. In Berlin, the innocent Leonard meets Maria, a German divorcee with whom he becomes engaged. Protecting her from her violent ex-husband Otto, Leonard unwittingly kills the man and in order to conceal his deed takes suitcases containing Otto's dismembered body into the tunnel the day the intelligence project is disclosed. He flees Germany and is separated from Maria. The last chapter, however, features his return visit to Berlin in 1987 and suggests a possibility of reunion with the now widowed Maria, who was married to Leonard's American colleague Bob Glass and is living in the US. For most of the novel, the reader shares Leonard's point of view and is allowed to share his perceptions.

The Berlin that appears in *The Innocent*, although it turns out to be the setting for the protagonist's sexual initiation, certainly cuts an image different from the space of infinite promises intimated by Spender. Germany has lost the war and its capital has been submitted to segmentation into clearly demarcated occupation zones so that Berlin has become a strictly divided city, although the Wall has not yet been erected. The aggressive expansion of Germany is a thing of the past, as the nation has failed to realise the mirage of becoming a world empire through acquiring more space (see Tuan 1977: 58). Now, it is the victors' sectors and checkpoints that in their turn draw marked attention to new power politics, which also finds expression in laying claim to space. To enter the Russian sector, Leonard and his companions have to pass through police control and customs.

The critic Kiernan Ryan has provided a symbolic interpretation of the novel as a whole, proposing that McEwan's 'true interest in Berlin, the tunnel, and the politics of post-war Europe is one of rather overt symbolic repercussions: all serve to represent the squalor and confusion of latter twentieth-century society, illustrating that individuals prove to be little more than pawns mired in the cataclysmic struggles of arrogant and unredeemable powers' (Ryan (1994: 59). This reading posits Berlin as a synechdochal figure representing a larger whole and, as such, is certainly valid up to a point. Yet a wholly allegorical interpretation, which would suggest that the place only be read in terms of something else, is a restricted view of the work. Firstly, power relations evolve from human intentions and the latter are closely interrelated with practices of place creation and use. Thus, the power-saturated cityscape does not appear as an allegorical image only, but

is functional and important in its own right. Secondly, evocation and experience of places that are immediately given in the characters' perception are eminently there to be considered. The sensory aspect of such representations testifies to the importance the text assigns to the bodily, material existence of humans.

The political division of the city has inspired Mark Ledbetter to draw a parallel between the political map of Europe and Otto's dismembered corpse, while Leonard, who is both an unwilling killer complicit in international power games, 'willingly severs the communal body in order to control it, creating pieces small enough to pack away' (Ledbetter 1996: 100). Ryan has found a parallel of the same kind recorded in authorial intentions, and quotes McEwan as saying in an interview: 'I wanted to show the brutality man can aspire to by comparing the dismemberment of a corpse to the dismemberment of a city: the bomb-devastated Berlin of the post-war.' (Ryan 1994: 58.) At first sight, this comment might suggest that the city as a perceptual space is of secondary importance in the novel, as it can – and probably should – be read symbolically, in terms of something else. A closer look proves, however, that this is not the case. The two violent activities involve parallel patterns, yet one cannot be said to symbolise the other. Neither does the statement suggest that the author sees Berlin in terms of the well-known metaphor of the city as a body, as the point of similarity lies in the violence of the severing agency, not in the objects dismembered.

Indeed, the novel attempts to engage with a recognisable place in its history, while recognisability provides a touch of the documentary, an evocation of the publicly accessible and the mimetic. It is interesting to mention that this was also typical of British writing in the 1930s, the decade from which the framework of the politicised fictional Berlin derives, a mode most easily summed up in Isherwood's famous sentence on the first page of *Goodbye to Berlin*: 'I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking.' (Isherwood's 1974: 7.) The foregrounding of the impression of recording real-life events is also emphasised in the author's final note, in which he exposes the documentary background of Operation Gold, the intelligence operation that served as the background for the novel's plot, and claims that the final description of the tunnel site Leonard meets on his second visit to Berlin is based on his own evidence from 1989 (McEwan 1991: 305). McEwan's novel abounds in toponyms, which are systematically and meticulously recorded, often referring to the protagonist's immediate environment by place names only. Locations rendered in such a man-

ner suggest objective data to which access can be claimed also by the reader. The main characters have been assigned fixed street addresses: the protagonist Leonard lives at 26 Platanenallee, his fiancée Maria's flat is at 86 'Adalbertstrasse in Kreuzberg, a twenty-minute ride from Leonard's flat' (McEwan 1991: 51), while the headquarters of Leonard's American colleague Bob Glass are at 10 Nollendorfstrasse, off the Nollendorf Platz. Leonard's movements in the city are often meticulously described, complete with street names and modes of transport to be used. For instance, to get to Maria's flat from his own place he 'walked to the Ernst-Renter-Platz station before taking the U-bahn to Kottbusser Tor in Kreutzberg. Almost too soon he was on Adalbertstrasse.' (McEwan 1991: 62.) A correspondence between the layouts of the fictional city and the actual one is emphasised, which indicates a wish to create an effect of verisimilitude. The names of streets and buildings are shared with people in the extra-textual world, and so a certain factual value is attributed to the fictional story.

As place names are closely connected with mapping, the city appears to be laid out as a street plan, with stress on the cognitive type of space that can be taken in and discussed theoretically. Such mapping can stimulate readers' minds, allowing them imaginary access to the space in which the characters move, but it is also within the story that space is conceptualised in the form of maps and, in these cases, it is the cognitive dimension of space that becomes underscored. Both Leonard and Bob Glass possess and use maps of the city within the story. Leonard is disappointed to find a telephone number for his first appointment with Glass, as he would have preferred a face-to-face meeting that would prove his ability to find his way in the unknown environment, i.e. his efficiency in dealing with abstract entities and his intellectual mastery of space: 'He had wanted to spread out the street plan on the dining table, pinpoint the address, plan his route.' (McEwan 1991: 4.) When he first ventures out into the city, he does so having first consulted a map: 'He had memorized a route from the map and set off eastwards toward Reichskanzlerplatz.' (McEwan 1991: 5), and he does the same when he plans his first visit to Maria. On Leonard's return to Berlin in 1987, the receptionist at his hotel shows him the best place to have a look at the Wall – Potsdamerplatz – on the map, and he has to use a street plan to find his way to the site of the tunnel, where he catches his first sight of the Wall, which has been erected during his absence.

Glass has a large map hanging on the wall of his bed-sit; however, for him it is not so much a means of finding his way around as a way to impress Leonard

with his thorough knowledge of what is going on in the city, while the latter has to confess his ignorance and the fact that he has not been around as yet (McEwan 1991: 10). The latter problem can certainly be remedied, but, as Yi-Fu Tuan reminds us, 'Abstract knowledge *about* a place can be acquired in short order if one is diligent. [---] But the "feel" of a place takes longer to acquire. It is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years.' (Tuan 1977: 183.) It will indeed take some time before Leonard adapts himself to the new environment and is capable of moving around in the city without hesitation.

Leonard's first appreciation of Berlin is theoretical and strongly dominated by the feeling of abstract mastery. His initial attitudes do not stem from his immediate experiences of the surroundings, but rather from the ideologies in which he has been immersed – mentally he is still inhabiting his home soil: '…he made his way through this pleasant residential district of Berlin that evening – the wind had dropped and it was warmer – with a certain proprietorial swagger, as though his feet beat out the rhythms of a speech by Mr. Churchill.' (McEwan 1991: 6.) Still, he is spurred on by the wish to gain an actual insider's command of the street space and the first step he takes toward achieving this is to observe the space in which he moves. The first things he notices are the effects of the war everywhere, which have taken the shape of the most finite form of placelessness, place destruction or *Abbau*, as Edward Relph (1976: 119) calls it, using Lewis Mumford's term. Descriptions of the devastation are among the most detailed in the novel. It is both the city's public space and people's homes that have suffered, exposing the vulnerability of the symbolically loaded grandeur of public buildings, and also the fragility of the intimacy of lived-in space:

> The buildings that had once faced directly onto the pavement had been blasted away to expose a second rank of structures sixty feet back, whose empty upper storeys had been sliced open to view. There were three-walled rooms hanging in the air, with light switches, fireplaces, wallpaper still intact. In one of them was a rusted bed frame, in another a door opened into empty space. Further along, only one wall of a room survived, a giant postage stamp of weather-stained floral paper on raised plaster, stuck onto wet brick. Next to it was a patch of white bathroom tiles intersected by the scars of waste pipes. On an end wall was the saw-tooth impression of a staircase zigzagging five storeys up. What survived best were the chimney breasts, plunging through the rooms, making a community out of fireplaces that had once pretended to be unique. (McEwan 1991: 31.)

Gaston Bachelard (1994: 4) holds that inhabited space is the non-I that protects the I. These empty cells have lost the ability to protect and are but ghosts of the inhabited spaces they used to be. They have lost the personal importance they may have had for the people who created these homes. The intimate sites of dwelling, such as bedrooms and bathrooms, have been opened up to the outside, and also the individual meanings that would differentiate the rooms have disappeared, so that they form one continuous space of repeating items that have lost their individuality. Violent political events have also erased the borderline between the public and the private in terms of places.

Meanwhile, some of the changes the war has brought about in the city have been the result not of deliberate destruction, but of the people's survival attempts. For instance the disappearance of the trees from the Tiergarten is explained by the Berliners having used those trees the bombs did not destroy as firewood to keep warm in the Airlift (McEwan 1991: 37). And already on arrival Leonard encounters the rebuilding of partly destroyed streets and planting of new trees, echoing Tuan's (1977: 197–198) optimism about human vision causing the rise of new cities from the ashes of bombed-out ruins: 'The pavement had been newly laid, and spindly young plane trees had been planted out. The ground had been levelled off, and there were tidy stacks of old bricks chipped clear of their mortar.' (McEwan 1991: 6.) While actual and active place destruction that can take place in a war, or the impermanence of places that manifests itself in the continuous reconstruction and redevelopment, or even abandoning, of existing places, can lead to feelings of placelessness, which erases the meanings from places, leaving behind random patterns, everyday life still goes on even in the contemporary world, which, according to several scholars, contains less and less attachment to places (see, e.g., Relph 1976: 83; Bauman 1998: 28–29). So Berlin emerges simultaneously as an expression of the catastrophic events of the past and as a locus for future hopes.

Leonard's first feelings about the devastated Berlin are those of pride and pleasure, as he considers the state the city is in to be both a sign of historical justice and of his countrymen's efficiency. He adopts an outsider's point of view that projects Germany as the defeated enemy, from which he feels distanced. However, after a couple of weeks, during which he has, to a degree, been immersed in the local routines, and involved in daily, habitual activities that embrace bodily use of space, his attitude changes and he finds his earlier pride in the city's de-

struction 'puerile, repellent' (McEwan 1991: 62). Over time, a change in percep-
tion occurs, so that in the end Leonard finds that he prefers Berlin to any other
place he has ever visited or lived in – a development in accordance with Tuan's
conviction, 'Attachment, whether to a person or to a locality, is seldom acquired
in passing' (Tuan 1977: 184).

With the help of Maria, he discovers the Berlin that lies outside his daily
routine, as well as the city's vicinity. The dependence of the couple's movements
on the weather has been emphasised, with the winter cold limiting their use
of space to Maria's bedroom, and the arriving spring allowing for increasingly
longer exploration trips:

> On weekday evenings they walked to the Olympic Stadium and swam in the pool,
> or, in Kreuzberg, walked along the canal, or sat outside a bar near Mariannenplatz,
> drinking beer. Maria borrowed bicycles from a cycling club friend. On weekdays they
> rode out to the villages of Frohnau and Heiligensee in the north, or west to Gatow to
> explore the city boundaries along paths through empty meadows. Out here the smell
> of water was in the air. They picnicked by Gross-Glienicke See under the flight path
> of RAF planes, and swam out to the red-and-white buoys marking the division of the
> British and Russian sectors. They went on to Kladow by the enormous Wannsee and
> took the ferry across to Zehlendorf and cycled back through ruins and building sites,
> back into the heart of the city. (McEwan 1991: 145.)

In this summary the city emerges as a place with definite limits, an inside that
has a centre and an outside that is devoid of buildings. At the same time, it can
also be interpreted as space in the sense of a network of places, as Tuan (1977: 12)
has suggested. Again, the couple's excursions are presented as if on a map, with
even the compass points specified. However, the references to sensory details
– the smell of water, the colour of the buoys – lend a personal touch to the sites
and undertakings; otherwise, the description would appear as a dry and detached
report. The inescapable presence of political power structures, which merge into
sites of peaceful amusement, completes the picture.

It is not only that Leonard's appreciation of the city changes during his stay;
he also learns about the characteristics of the city that marked it before his arrival
and that he has not been able to witness immediately. His self-appointed guide
during his first night out shows him round, making emphatic comparisons with
pre-war Berlin and thus underscoring the changes that the appearance, function
and significance of places may undergo: 'This deserted stretch was once the nerve
centre of the city, one of the most famous thoroughfares in Europe, Unter den

Linden. Over here, the real headquarters of the German Democratic Republic, the Soviet embassy. It stands on the site of the old Hotel Bristol, once one of the most fashionable.' (McEwan 1991: 38.) Unter den Linden has lost its central significance both for the city and for the whole of continental Europe, making post-war Berlin more inverted, more stagnant than that of the Weimar Republic. The fact that an epitome of capitalism, a fashionable hotel that had been named after another Western city, has been converted into a Soviet power centre, testifies to the power shifts' intimate relations with the use and naming of places. The ideological space that is centred around the former hotel finds its spatially arranged objective correlative in the thing that apparently proves most memorable for Leonard on his first visit to the Eastern sector. This is a window of a shopping cooperative (the latter phenomenon in itself indicative of the governing ideology), visually displaying an economic base and a cultural-political superstructure, showing 'a tower of tinned sardines and above it a portrait of Stalin in red crepe paper, with a caption in big white letters which Glass and Russel translated in messy unison: The unshakable friendship of the Soviet and German peoples is a guarantee of peace and freedom' (McEwan 1991: 43).

The differences that have appeared between the Eastern and the Western parts of the city are vividly illustrated by their restaurants. In the East, Leonard is taken to the Neva Hotel, described as follows: 'It used to be the Hotel Nordland, a second-class establishment. Now it has declined further, but is still the best hotel in East Berlin.' (McEwan 1991: 38.) All in all, the Neva leaves an impression of a rundown and dreary establishment, which does little to cater to the mood of its customers. However, the hotel at least casts a shaft of light on the pavement from its lobby, while the co-operative restaurant facing it has but a faint blue neon sign and condensation on the windows to suggest that the place is in use. The replacement of the name is significant, the new name indicating a Russian river. The strategy is patterned on a characteristic move of space colonisation in which place names are transplanted from the old country to emphasise the ownership of the new environment and naturalise its links with the home soil.

The vast and glamorous Resi, in the Western sector, does not attempt to assert a foreign presence by its name, but rather tries to create a vibrant atmosphere suggestive of Berlin's 1930s reputation. An advertising pamphlet describes the technical wonders used to entertain the patrons in words reminiscent of the descriptions of futuristic amusements in Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel *Brave*

New World: 'The famous RESI Water-Shows are magnificent in their beauty. It is amazing to think that in a minute eight thousand litres of water are pressed through about nine thousand jets. For the play of these changing light effects there are necessary one hundred thousand coloured lamps.' (McEwan 1991: 45.) As a link with the image of the decadent Berlin of the 1930s, Maria and Leonard also visit a venue that offers the type of entertainment found in Isherwood's time: '…they went on to Eldorado to see a transvestite cabaret, in which completely convincing women sang the usual evergreens to a piano and bass accomplishment.' (McEwan 1991: 145.)

The entertainment scene, naturally, can be frequented only by those who can afford it – the Americans and the British whose living standards are higher than those of the local people. On the whole, the attitude of the international cast surrounding Leonard towards Berlin in general, and towards the East part in particular, seems to be exploitative (Soovik 2004: 136). They are not engaged in the ongoing massive reconstruction work that is changing the face of the city, nor are they interested in maintaining and caring for the place that offers them employment and entertainment. Leonard's colleagues are also not really interested in the city as an immediate living environment. Besides the material pleasures it offers, Berlin functions for them as a field for the power games of political activities. Even though Glass is proud to show off the developments in West Berlin to Leonard, the reason for this seems to be his wish to underscore his own country's role in the achievements.

When Leonard returns to Berlin in 1987, the city is even more international than before and this has brought along a type of placelessness fairly different from physical destruction. 'Places, whether loved or hated, have always changed by the time the traveller, himself also changed, returns,' J. Douglas Porteous (1990: 134) mentions, and indeed the differences are striking to Leonard, although he can adjust to the changes fairly quickly – for instance it takes but 'a taxi ride from the Tegel airport to the hotel to become accustomed to the absence of ruins' (McEwan 1991: 285). Now, the threat of placelessness is posed by the advent of international commercial chains and masses of tourists, and this appears to be a development that is obviously encouraged. Leonard's experience of the end-of-the-century city is that of a crowded, loud place of sensory overload. He notices restaurants of international fast food chains that give off the smell of burning fat, weaves his way among crowds of foreign tourists, keeps hearing the continuous

traffic roar and disco music emanating from stores, and observes unattractive new buildings erected side by side with the ones he can remember.

This representation of Berlin corresponds to Elizabeth Wilson's idea of the postmodernist city of 'disorientation, meaninglessness and fragmentation' that is 'flickering with competing beliefs, cultures and stories' (Wilson 1992: 135). The Berlin met anew is dedicated to childish consumerism, aesthetically unappealing to Leonard. Although he had been forced to stop and ask the way also in the Russian sector of 1950s Berlin, it is only on his second arrival that he actually loses his bearings in the city, which has become part of the end-of-the-century 'blandscape', 'a European city like any other a businessman might visit' (McEwan 1991: 285). When he wants to ask for directions, everybody surrounding him looks like a foreigner, and so he finally finds his hotel by accident. This transformation of Berlin over time definitely corroborates the interpretation of places as dynamic and developing entities. However, besides places appearing in our perceptual space, which each individual shares subjectively, they also belong to existential space, which is inter-subjective and provides meaning for a whole culture (Relph 1976: 11–12). Thus, if the identity of Berlin has changed in Leonard's perceptual space, this is not to contend that the Berlin known in existential space shared by the whole culture is completely different from the one he left behind. The new Berlin does not hold the same meaning for Leonard, and seems to be devoid of uniqueness, but at the same time the perceiver has changed as well. He is a man in his late fifties, for whom the mores of the younger generation remain less significant than those of his own, and whose aesthetic evaluations, which deem new buildings 'hideous', may be prejudiced to condemn anything that deviates from his fond memories. So, even if the setting of the coda seems to be a scene of inauthentic international tourism, the impartiality of Leonard's perception can also be questioned.

Some of the observable changes in the cityscape are due to the newly erected buildings, and road and street construction. The reconstruction that has taken place in the city centre is overshadowed by the development of the former desolate farmland that used to surround Leonard's workplace, the site of the tunnel. In the fields, where there used to be low, crouching farm-houses and also refugee huts, Leonard had better than anywhere else been able to notice the changes in the vegetation and to sense the change of seasons. When he wishes to re-visit the site, the fields have been filled with new houses. The development plan of the

district has turned an area of refugee shacks and fields into gardens surrounding city dwellers' holiday homes. The gardens are densely packed together and intensely cultivated, showing pride in their 'ornamental trees' and 'immaculate lawns' (McEwan 1991: 290). Leonard is taken aback by the changes, yet realises their inevitability: 'Ahead of him were low apartment buildings, a pink stone cycling path, neat rows of streetlights, and parked cars lining the curb. How else could it be, what could he have expected? The same flat farmland?' (McEwan 1991: 289.) On the one hand, the holiday area contains elements of inauthenticity. It is indicative of placelessness, as the buildings are obviously not designed and erected according to the best wishes and needs of their owners, but rather the people have been made to conform to the necessity of restricted space and to types of one-storey houses that Leonard perceives as eccentric. On the other hand, there is a lived-in atmosphere reigning on the immaculate lawns on which families are having their barbecue parties. Their function as an immediate setting for people's activities lends a degree of homeliness even to a tacky, mass-produced environment (see Relph 1976: 128).

Berlin has changed not only due to the dramatic transformations in the architectural environment. As places are created by people's intentions, it is the inhabitants whose lifestyle produces the prevailing atmosphere. As regards the neighbourhood in which Maria used to live, the bombed-out gaps in the housing have been filled by the 1980s, although there are still marks left by weapons on the walls, and dustbins in the courtyard just as in the old days. However, the street has been settled by a Turkish community; the Turkish shop signs make Leonard feel out of place, while the men standing around on street corners leave an alien impression on him and the whole area has an out-of-place air of southern Europe about it (McEwan 1991: 288).

And finally, there are differences between places as they are remembered and actually met anew, even if they have not changed physically. On the one hand, a place may grow familiar and become dear to one, as testified by Leonard's increasing love for Berlin. On the other hand, an opposite development can take place, as can be noticed in Leonard's appreciation of his parents' home in Tottenham when he visits it while on vacation. His non-judgmental insider's look, which according to Anne Buttimer can blur the owner's vision, has been replaced by a more critical standpoint, which involves an element of comparison of the stagnant Victorian terraces with the tension and purpose of Berlin, and indeed,

locates the home area in a 'wider spatial and social context' (Buttimer 1980: 172). Interestingly, Leonard's experience of Berlin as a liberating expanse, with broader horizons, which contrasts with the restricted atmosphere of his childhood home, can be compared to the experience of the theologian Paul Tillich, for whom Berlin's ocean-like openness stood in intense contrast to the secluded small town of his childhood (Tuan 1977: 4).

Bachelard has suggested that 'whenever space is a value – there is no greater value than intimacy – it has magnifying properties' (Bachelard 1994: 202). In Leonard's memory, places that have been intimately important to him, such as the stairs leading to Maria's flat and the tunnel, have gained in significance and accordingly also in size, while on his second visit he discovers that the stairway is darker and narrower than he remembers, and the tunnel's main shaft is significantly smaller than the one he can recall. But still, it is at the ruins of this site that Leonard seeks contact with his younger self. The site helps him to experience his identity and thus may be considered a centre in his memory of permanence in the flux of time, while also heightening the awareness of the temporal distance that separates him from the 1950s: 'This place meant far more to him than Adalbertstrasse. He had already decided not to bother with Platanenallee. It was here in this ruin that he felt the full weight of time. It was here that old matters could be unearthed.' (McEwan 1991: 292.) The changed setting still contains a core stability that is crucial for the protagonist, while the Berlin of 1987 can, at least in Leonard's subjective view, be viewed as a placeless post-modern city. To use the words of Doreen B. Massey, who has vehemently supported the notion of an unfixed and mobile identity of places, 'attempts to secure the identity of places can … be seen to be attempts to stabilize the meaning of particular envelopes of space-time' (Massey 1994: 5). However, Massey (1994: 3) does make concessions to individual experience and memory, in which things are held fast, and this is the quality Leonard resorts to in his attempts to regain the significance Berlin has had for him personally.

Places grow 'and decline as the site ... or buildings take on and lose significance,' Relph has stated in cadences reminiscent of Ecclesiastes (Relph 1976: 32). McEwan's novel is acutely aware of such properties of places, of transformations that clearly speak of a dynamic identity of places, both as regards the immediate sensory environment and the ideologies and meanings attached to them. McEwan's treatment of Berlin in *The Innocent* would definitely serve as an evocative il-

lustration of the suggestion that places are historically developing entities, rather than stable pillars in the flux of time.

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S o o v i k , Ene-Reet 2004. A legal alien? An Englishman in Berlin in Ian McEwan's *The Innocent*. – *Defining Englishness. Cultural Studies Series* 5. Eds. Pilvi Rajamäe, Krista Vogelberg. Tartu: Tartu University Press, pp. 131–138

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