Longings for Berlin: exploring the workings of the psycho-social imaginary in British migration

Stella Maile and David Griffiths

Abstract

This article explores the ways in which the dominant tropes and spaces of Berlin are used affectively and imaginatively to create meaning for individual migrants as psycho-social agents with unique biographies. Depth interpretation, drawing upon psycho-social research methodology can enrich our understanding of the more nuanced, unconscious emotional uses of a city and its symbolic representations. Such insights, we argue, add to an understanding of the non-economic and symbolic aspects of middle class intra-European migration.

Key words: imaginaries; psycho-social, cityscapes, lifestyle, introjection, projection, splitting, biography, topos, void, hauntings, loss, mourning, phantasy

Introduction: Intra-European Migration, Lifestyle and the Emotions

Debates surrounding intra-European migration and transnational mobility (Verwiebe 2004; Scott 2006; Recchi 2006) highlight the complex fusion of cultural, economic, and lifestyle factors in determining movement. The literature on intra-European migration indicates that more individualised, short term, rotational, and commuting forms of movement appear to have superseded the typically permanent mass migration and settlement patterns characteristic of the immediate post war period in Europe (King 2002; Findlay et al 1996; Castles 1986). Highly skilled professionals and transnationally mobile Europeans (Koser and Salt 1997; Favell 2008) also include segments of a broader tranche of the middle classes. These types of intra-European movement are often accompanied by the development of new types of social differentiation based upon mobility as individualised life-strategy and form of consumption (Bauman 2001:38; Beck 1986:88). The individualisation of movement is also evident in the significant number of people moving for relationship purposes within Europe, a factor which points to the significance of affective and emotional ties for this type of migration (Recchi 2008).

Scott's research on the British middle class in Paris is a particularly useful reference point for our research on Britons in Berlin (Scott 2006). His examination of the British middle class in Paris utilises a form of lifestyle typology to explain diversity amongst British migrants. He concludes that while career path remains the most significant motive, lifestyle preference and relationships are of increasing importance. Particularly significant here is the special attraction of particular destination cities, especially for those moving for lifestyle purposes (Scott 2006:1110). This pull cannot be wholly explained in terms of economic considerations alone or, for that matter, in relation to the acquisition of mobility and cultural capital.

In this paper we argue for a closer examination of the biographical, imaginary and emotional factors which underpin the attractions of particular localities. The significance of place is a central theme in the literature on lifestyle migration (Benson and O Reilly 2009; Hoey 2005) which in general is concerned with movement 'to places that, for various reasons, signify for the migrant a better quality of life' (Benson and O Reilly 2009: 609). The notion of a better quality of life is typically associated with a cluster of factors such as climate, cheap property and a range of cultural attributes suggesting an alternative way of living. As we illustrate in the interviews drawn from our fieldwork in Berlin, the idea of quality of life is also overlaid by an array of imaginary and emotional investments which are rooted in individual biography and personal experience.

A central feature of our analysis concerns the ways in which the popular cultural representations of Berlin are intermeshed with the narratives and biographies of individual migrants. Representations of Berlin, as a city which is linked in various ways to the past, are also central to processes of biographical reconstruction and narrativisation. The focus on how individuals invest psychically in Berlin's social imaginaries is a useful supplement to the broader migration literature on the extra-economic motives for middle class movement in Europe.

Our approach is psycho-social in character: the emphasis upon the affective, emotional and imaginary aspects of migration (prefigured in King 2002 and D'Andrea 2006) has both theoretical and methodological implications which we develop in the next section. The remainder of the paper presents an overview of the dominant imaginaries of Berlin and the

background to British settlement in the city. This is followed with a detailed examination of two cases drawn from our larger sample of Britons living in Berlin.

Migration and the Social Imaginary

Several analyses have drawn upon the notion of the social imaginary to deepen understanding of migrants' motivations and representations (Moran Taylor and Menjivar 2005; Pessar and Mahler 2002). The social imaginary in these cases is used to refer to the background, shared social assumptions which inform migrants' choices and to the 'imaging, planning and strategizing' which is an integral part of the act of migration (Pessar and Mahler 2002: 817). Our understanding of the imaginary underpinnings of social relations is rooted in a broader psycho-social approach which is both theoretical and methodological in character. Drawing upon the work of Castoriadis (2007) we argue that the imaginary is constituted by 'the ability …to perceive in just anything, what is not there' (Castoriadis 2007: 203). In contrast to a Lacanian understanding of the imaginary as a specular misrecognition of the self (Lacan 1989; Althusser 1971; Žižek 2009) the imaginary as used here refers neither to ideological illusion nor a simple reflection of a pre-existing world. As we argue in this paper, it is the capacity of individuals to invest imaginatively in the external, object world which renders Britons' representations of Berlin both creative and constitutive.

The social imaginary operates in and through signification and in particular through the construction of myth, legend and narrative (Castoriadis 2007). Social imaginary significations refer neither to reality nor to logic but are primarily creative or imagined (Castoriadis 2007: 73). They are social 'because they only exist if they are shared in the anonymous and the collective' (Mountian 2009). Social imaginary significations therefore function on the level of shared representations, amongst parts or larger segments of societies. Moreover, the social imaginary cannot be separated from individuals' emotional bonds and attachments and the ways in which these are imagined and fantasised (Laplanche and Pontalis l973). The important point here is that the imaginary as a primary creative power functions at both a social and individual level (Castoriadis 1997: 72-4) resulting in the continuous production of novel representations.

These theoretical suppositions have implications for the type of methodology which we pursue in this research. One of our key assumptions is that psychoanalytic techniques can be helpful in drawing out the in-depth interpretative or hermeneutic aspects of interview material and of the research process as a whole. In analysing the contribution of psychoanalytic concepts to sociological enquiry, Clark (2002) has usefully distinguished between (i) the analysis of substantive content, the identification of common themes and associations and (ii) the dynamics of the research process, including the formulation of questions, the conduct of interviews (the use of free association and attention to processes of 'projective communication') and the interpretation of interview material.

In practice, the analysis of substantive content and the psycho-social dynamics of the research process are closely interwoven. For example, our main research questions concerned individuals' motivation for movement and their representations of Berlin. Interviews therefore began with the question 'Can you tell me how you came to be in Berlin'? This was a deliberately open ended question which aimed, in keeping with psycho-social methods more generally, to encourage individuals to free associate about their migratory experiences of the city. The responses to this question elicited factual material as well as more suggestive and ambiguous layers of meaning. A range of authors (Hollway and Jefferson 2000; Clark 2002; Clark and Hoggett 2009) have advocated the use of free association in the interview situation. As in the psychoanalytic practice from which it derives, the aim is to draw out meanings which are available to individuals on a preconscious level. Unconscious meaning is inferred rather than directly accessed, in particular through the identification of repeated themes, the use of language and processes of transference or what Clark terms 'projective communication' (Clark 2002).

Another of our main assumptions is that our interviewees' emotional and imaginary engagements with Berlin can only be understood as part of the process of biographical reconstruction which occurs within the interview process. Our approach draws upon the biographical interpretive method (Wengraf and Chamberlain 2006) in encouraging individuals to order their own biographical narratives. More specifically, we are interested in individuals' motivations for migration and in their experiences of Berlin. Within the literature on the biographical roots of migration Findlay and Li's research (1997) is a useful point of comparison. In general, the authors attempt to relate individuals" migration decisions and

intentions to the broader context of 'their changing social and cultural worlds' (1997: 35). As they clarify, 'We sought through the interviews to discover the origins and meanings of migration decisions in the context of the migrants' whole life experience' (1997: 37). The 'seeds of migration' lie in the totality of the life course and not simply in the moment when the decision to migrate is made. The decision to migrate is itself the product of a diverse range of influences and is inherently poly-vocal in nature.

Although suggestive, it can be argued that Findlay and Li's analysis remains overly confined to the level of practical consciousness. One of the central tenets of psychoanalytically informed social analysis is that individuals are never fully reflexive agents, i.e. that we never quite know why we do what we do at the time that we do it. This is true both at the level of the subject and her desires and in relation to the unconscious dynamics which may occur in the interview process and in the subsequent interpretation of data (Holloway and Jefferson 2000). With these caveats in mind, and reiterating our earlier points on the role of the imaginary, we structured the analysis of interview material around three related questions: firstly, what in each case – and slightly changing Findlay and Li's metaphor – are the *imaginative roots* of migration? What, secondly, is the specific *biographical conjuncture* which had prompted the move to Berlin? And how, finally, does Berlin as an *imagined place* figure in individuals' narrative accounts?

In relation to the dynamics of the research process Holloway and Jefferson's account of the emotional defences used by both interviewers and interviewees is of particular significance to our approach (2000). During interviews and the subsequent playing and replaying of interview material we became aware of the difficulties (shared by both parties) surrounding particular topics such as work and death. The defenses of one of the researcher were particularly present in the encounter with Paul whose story resonated in some ways with his own. It was only during the author's discussion and analysis of the material that the power of the researcher's own defenses became clear. It was difficult, for example, for David to discuss the deeper analysis of Paul's narrative because of resonances with his own biography, this sometimes making it difficult to pursue a potentially painful train of thought with Paul. Although we do not directly analyse processes of projective communication in this paper a focus on the awkwardness or heavy silences in the interview process added another level of meaning and context for interpretation in addition to what was actually said. Narratives, so we

argue, may be functioning as a defense or resistance which attempts to disguise different levels of meaning (Lapping 2007).

Britons in Berlin

Since the departure of the Allies in 1994 an increasing number of Britons have moved to the city. In the period from 2000 to 2009 despite continuing high levels of unemployment in Berlin, there was an increase in British and Irish registered residents, from 8,250 in 2000 to 9,847 in June 2009 (*Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg* 30.6.2007 and 20.10.2009). The number of non-registered British residents is probably considerably higher. As in the case of Britons in Paris (Scott 2006) the British in Berlin constitute a geographically dispersed, largely non-visible population, within a cluster of organisations and a variety of informal networks. There are clear social divisions amongst the British population in Berlin: those of generation, lifestyle, class and status, as well as time spent overseas, participation in organisations and networks and residential patterns.

This broader context provides the backdrop to the current paper. From the total sample of 40 Britons interviewed in Berlin we focus here on two individuals who represent different experiences in terms of length of residence, familial position and motivation for movement. We recruited individuals through a variety of channels including older British organisations, online forums used by Britons and snowballing through contacts associated with English speaking schools. Our broader sample included *Settled Britons*, ten individuals who had lived in Berlin for twenty years or more and six *Highly Skilled Migrants*. Twenty *Lifestyle Migrants* and four *Relationship Migrants* make up the remainder of the sample. The two individuals represented here have been chosen because, in keeping with the aims and context of this paper and in terms of Scott's typology referred to in the introduction, they represent a cross between graduate lifestyle migrants and those who have moved for relationship purposes (Scott 2006). They include Paul who is a self-employed IT worker and Penny, a London theatre administrator who was made redundant before being attracted to Berlin, falling in love with the city and then, on a subsequent visit, her German husband. At the time of interview Paul had lived in *Prenzlauer Berg* for under a year while Penny had lived in *Kreuzberg* for over five years.

In both cases relationships and friendship networks, rather than paid employment, played a key role in cementing the decision to migrate. Within this lifestyle pairing we can note some similar emotional and imaginary investments in popular representations of the city. Berlin, a city which is most commonly associated with reinvention and change (Ritchie 1998: xviii) appears to be associated with a broader attempt to evade the personal and economic constraints experienced by them in London. The bolder statement of migrant types, motivations and characteristics is only the starting point for our analysis of the imaginative underpinnings of individual moves to Berlin. Connecting imaginative roots to biographical conjunctures allows us to gain a clearer sense of what Berlin represents for our interviewees.

 There are clear difficulties in the application of psychoanalytic concepts outside the clinical setting (Freud 2002) and to sociological analysis in particular (Frosh and Emerson 2005). We follow Clark (2002) in arguing for the heuristic value of psychoanalytic concepts in social theory. In order to cross check our interpretative procedures we have worked collaboratively in the analysis of interview material. Systematic cross checking of interpretation was followed up by soliciting the response of interviewees to our analyses where this was possible and subjecting our analysis to peer review (Clark and Hoggett 2009; Hoggett et al 2010). The limited application of psychoanalytic concepts such as *projection*, *introjection* and *splitting* in this paper are derived from Kleinian theory. Klein proposes that 'object relations are moulded by an interaction between introjections and projection, between internal and external objects and situations' (Klein 1986: 176-177). The mechanisms of projection and introjection therefore are important ways for the child (and the later adult) to create their inner world. Projection (for the infant) involves unconscious phantasies of excretion and expulsion while introjection involves phantasies of ingestion. Klein takes the breast as an important example of an object for childrens' unconscious phantasies, explaining that as a 'first object ... the mother's breast ... becomes split into a good (gratifying) and bad (frustrating) breast' (Klein 1986: 176). This then leads to the mother being split herself by the child into a loving object taken in and bad object expelled. It is important to emphasise that splitting, like the processes of introjection and projection also occur throughout adult mental life. We draw more generally upon object relations theory to elucidate the dynamic relation of the psyche to the external world (Gomez 1997). Bollas (1993) for example, suggests that the world around us is at once the repository of subjective states and the means by which these are elicited. This approach is applied here to the ways in which individuals psychically invest in Berlin and in its imaginary representations.

Stella Maile and David Griffiths *Longings For Berlin*

Instability, Voids and Ghosts: the Imaginaries of Berlin

Berlin is a city associated with change rather than stability (Ritchie 1998, xviii). During the course of the 20th century, it underwent a sequence of fundamental social and political changes: five successive forms of government, from Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich and a divided Germany, culminated in 1990 in the city regaining its status as capital of a united nation. Yet the considerable opposition at the time to relocating the capital to Berlin (Ritchie 1998) is part of a more longstanding uncertainty over the city's character and status within Germany as a whole (Large 2000). Partly a question of geographical location, there are also cultural and historical grounds for Berlin's anomalous position – its commitment to modernity and enlightenment, and a tendency to disreputableness and an enthrallment to change. These have sat uncomfortably alongside the conservatism and retention of strong regional identities which have characterised German development (Craig 1991).

The dominant trope of instability and change is incorporated into historical and popular-cultural understandings of the city. Writing at the height of post-*Wende* reconstruction, Marcuse (1998) reworked the by now clichéd observation that Berlin is a city always in a state of becoming and never of being (*Immer zu werden und niemals zu sein*), by noting the role of construction sites as both a physical reality and trope of change. They represented both the city as a process and the consolidation of new forms of political and economic power. The trope of Berlin as a city of change is played on by the *Berlin Senats* 2008 *Sei Berlin* (*Being Berlin*) campaign for Berlin (http://www.be.berlin.de/ accessed 01.09.2010) rendering the city as a mode of experience. This is an interesting example of the way in which Berlin as capital city has consistently engaged in a deliberate process of self dramatisation, or mythologisation (Large 2000; Frisby 2001).

Another rhetorical figure which has dominated cultural representations of Berlin is that of the void. First coined by Ernst Bloch in the 1920s to describe the Weimar Republic (Huyssen 1997), the phrase evokes the war-time devastation of Berlin and the post-*Wende* reappearance of vacant spaces as both a sign of loss and negativity, but also of potential and opportunity (Ritchie 1998: xvii). Stahl suggests that the *topos* of the void continues to be a central feature of the city's imaginative hold and power, […] a vehicle through which the city continues to

talk about and imagine itself' (Stahl 2008: 17). Converted into the euphemism of space, it is now one of the key selling points for the city's Tourist board and property developers (http://berlinpropertyportal.com/#attraction, accessed 01.09.2010). The unresolved character of Berlin's history and the often stark juxtaposition of architecture from different periods have resulted in the well documented sense of ghostliness which pervades particular areas of Berlin (Ladd 1998; Till 2005). The 'ghosts of place' are particularly significant themes in the cultural analysis of Berlin (Pile 2005). Some form of encounter with Berlin's more recent, twentieth century ghosts (whether Wilhelmine, Weimar, Nationalist Socialist or GDR) is now a staple of both the tourist and culture industries and is also an important part of the city's imaginative appeal.

In the post-*Wende* world Berlin was forced to reposition itself nationally, regionally and globally, resulting in competing re-imaginings of the city (Cochrane and Jonas 1999). The attempt to re-imagine Berlin as a global city has to be placed in this context. Despite a wave of credit based property speculation in the early 1990s comparison with other large cities in Germany clearly indicates that Berlin remains undeveloped as a global city. According to the criteria set by the Globalisation and World Cities Research Network (http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc/world2000t.html accessed 01.09.2010), Berlin is a second tier or *beta world city* and not, therefore, directly comparable to such cities as Frankfurt in Germany, for example, or within Europe to London and Paris. Berlin, however, has a more recent claim to global city status, as a 'city of the talents' (Krätke 2004), a notion popularised by Florida (2002) to describe the role of artists and creative personnel in urban renewal. According to Krätke, although Berlin is not a new service metropolis in respect of advanced producer services or the location of corporate headquarters it shows real growth in knowledge intensive media and software.

Ward (2004) following Krätke, has also argued convincingly for the development of a 'creative class' in Berlin. One effect of Berlin's 'seemingly infinite web of self-representation' she claims, is that the City's promotion of a 'virtual Berlin' has had real economic consequences in the development of Berlin into a front ranking global media city (Ward 2004: 246). In this respect the city name itself and certain locations within it such as *Prenzlauer Berg, Mitte, Friedrichshain* and *Kreuzberg* function as brands for a lifestyle associated with countercultural *chic*. Coupled with the cultural *frisson* of these areas are

growing economic attractions for incoming Europeans and Americans. These include the relative cheapness of rents and affordable living standards in addition to various 'quality of life' indicators (Institute for urban strategies 2009; IPSOS 2008). Despite ongoing gentrification, increasing social polarisation and rising rents in the fashionable areas of the city, Berlin is still a mecca for the Gay and Club scene and for varying forms of middle class lifestyle migration (Rapp 2009).

With its weight of historical baggage Berlin remains a heavily contested space. It is the ambiguous and polysemic character of the significations associated with Berlin which need to be emphasised. This includes the popular cultural and historical understandings of the city in addition to its conflicting contemporary significations. The question we seek to address is how the diverse significations of the city as an imagined space are played out for Britons living in the city.

Paul

The surface details of our first interviewee's account of how he came to be living in Berlin is in keeping with the general findings of research on middle class migration in Europe. The pursuit of lifestyle and the importance of friendship networks were particularly important for Paul who singled them out as motivational factors early on in the interview. Paul is in his early 30s, married with a small son and lives in one of the more gentrified areas of *Prenzlauer Berg* with his Norwegian wife. His move to Berlin, after a period of time in London was connected to the existence of friendship networks involving the band that he played in, and the pursuit in general, of a more comfortable lifestyle: this was described as including greater ease in bringing up his son and a lower cost of living compared to London.

He began the interview with a description of himself and his wife as artists, himself in terms of his training and his wife in terms of her full time work. His immediate identification with the role of an artist resonates with the marketing of contemporary Berlin as a virtual, creative, global city. Paul was not drawn to Berlin for employment but described his well-paid computer work for a charity based in London as a means to more important ends - a relaxed lifestyle which allowed him to save money for an artists' studio, freedom to play in a band and a more child-friendly environment in which to bring up his son.

The following quotation illustrates his attitude toward his paid employment and his identity, first and foremost, it would appear, as an artist and musician:

> I trained as an artist and my girlfriend is an artist full time and *I fell into doing this computer work* that pays well for a living…I got used to that but it means that I don't have to work quite so much, I don't spend all my time working, particularly living here. …I sort of have on-going freelance work for an employment rights organisation on line and I maintain a website for a friend.

Attempts to elicit further information about Paul's employment were met with awkward pauses and bored non-committal replies. Work felt like a no-go area.

> D: Tell me more about working for the employment rights organisation.
>
> P: I mean…it's out of…I mean, it's my main income.

This might be regarded as further illustration of Paul's lack of identification with his paid work and his keener interest in lifestyle and cultural pursuits which is typical of a certain type of life-style migrant. However, we also felt there was a debarring of the topic of work during the course of the interview. Having immersed ourselves in the transcript material, this perception was reinforced. Following an awkward pause, Paul quickly alighted on his desire to follow and play with a friend in a band. Our immediate sense was that friendship networks and playing in a band were possible forms of *escape* from work and its associated emotions. This will become clearer in the context of other themes which emerge in Paul's narration of his friend's experience:

> P: A friend of mine who's American, we met in an art college and I had a band with him. After he left…this was about ten years ago after he left college, (he was only in England for a year because…he's American) so he moved back to New York and then eventually ended up here…(pause) …because his girlfriend lives in London and he didn't want to marry her for various reasons, he was living in a kind of half-way house and then he ended up here because it is a quick to get over here. They are more tolerant in letting Americans stay…so he's been living here and we've been in this band for eight years…Part of it was convenience to be able to play together (pause) and part of it has to do with dealing with having a son…it's much easier living here with kids than it is in London
>
> D: Easier?

P: It's got a lot to do with…yeah, you can go out and eat with them without feeling like a leper…I always found Brits are just so conscious of kids in London….This particular area…there is greater acceptance of kids here, they're part of things…

We might regard Paul's immediate preoccupation with a friend's experience as a means of talking about his own barely concealed anxieties surrounding finding a place where he can feel settled, or allowed to 'stay'. This is revealed in the reference to his friend as being in a kind of 'half-way house' and the idea that Berlin is 'more tolerant' of outsiders (Americans) staying. Interestingly in the light of themes which emerged after this, playing with a friend (in a band) becomes associated with childhood – a link made in Paul's immediate reference to his son. This was accompanied by a change in the emotional register of the interview, from an account which suggested a light-hearted desire to follow and play with a friend, to a more serious concern involving the responsibility of 'dealing with (having) a son' and Berlin's 'greater tolerance of children' Paul's reluctance to discuss work, throws his preoccupations with play and matters pertaining to childhood, into sharp relief.

It is in the context of Paul's account of bereavement as an immediate back-drop to his move to Berlin, that the juxtaposition of work, play and related issues of being 'unsettled' or in a half-way house acquire additional explanatory significance. After a circuitous account of wishing to play with this same American friend in a band and wanting to live somewhere which is more tolerant of kids, Paul referred to a string of recent bereavements including that of his mother. His frequent references back to her during conversation suggest a strong tie. The pain associated with a lack of being settled was bound up with memories of a mother who travelled a lot for her work and with whom he was able to enjoy quality time during holidays they shared.

P: I mean, I've never had a great desire to live in the UK.

D: No?

P: I mean, not that I've been desperately trying to leave it, but my mum (pause) my mum lived abroad quite a lot. She lived in Italy, France and (long pause) So she travelled a lot and I ended up travelling a lot as well. I mean, I never lived abroad with her as a child, we always lived (pause) we grew up and stayed in Cambridge, but we travelled quite a lot for holiday, went to different places.

The conjunction 'but' followed by a heavy pause, and reference to his mum having 'lived abroad quite a lot' suggested a grappling with a painful loss and an attempt to recover something of his mother through identification with her. 'So she travelled a lot and I ended up travelling a lot as well', speaks of an imaginative identification with his mother, a desire perhaps to be like her a traveler, or the object of her desire (Freud 1917; Rose 2001). Moreover, a need to recoup after a 'long period of backwards and forwards, dealing with houses and burials and funerals', as well as a sense of recapturing memories of travelling for holidays becomes associated with freedom to 'play around and mess around' – often associated with childhood:

> The nice thing here in Germany for the art things, it's like I was saying, it's a much easier place to play around, and mess around. There's much less risk than in London where it's like a desperate 'make or break'… You have to make it – you can't not!...Whereas here it's easy to fail (laughs) and not notice. I mean it's just so laid-back and relaxed; it's easy to sort of *fall into,* not doing brilliantly but still doing stuff.

It is as though Berlin made the creativity of play – in contrast to the adult benchmarks of 'success' and 'failure' – once again possible for Paul. Difficulties surrounding the topic of work can now also be understood as associated with a mother's absence through work and the pleasures of travelling and holidays (non-work time). Paul's attempts to embrace a more relaxed lifestyle; his preoccupation with a friend's itinerant existence, following him to play (in a band); as well as his concerns about attitudes towards children are deployed free-associatively. These surface details appear to veil a set of unspoken reasons why he had 'ended up travelling' a lot, something connected with both a recent bereavement and a longer formative history.

Concerning his representations of Berlin, we found it interesting that Paul should refer to Berlin as more 'in the past' than other places in Germany, a feature which was an important part of the city's attraction for him. On being asked to elaborate about this he briefly remarked, and without further explanation, 'it's more nostalgic, romantic'. Paul's association of Berlin with the past and nostalgia is in keeping with one of the dominant tropes of the city as an urban surface which both retains and hides the traces of the past (Huyssen 1997). The nostalgia and romance of a veiled past would also appear to have a particular biographical resonance for Paul.

P: Yeah, in fact I kind of like it's, it's like (pause) proximity to Russia.

D: (Laughs) Yeah.

P: You know, it's almost like being on the coast or something. (Laughs) The sort of ocean of Russia just across...I like it. I don't know. I like the cold here. There's just something...Yeah. There is just something about London which is quite (pause) which stinks. Something about it's age (pause) that stinks

D: Yeah? Stinks?

P: Because it's all cramped up together and it's filthy. Which is what is attractive about London in some ways - it's sort of wealth of closely packed history and people. Here it's sort of... wind is blowing through it. But in the end it feels harder to settle here…And I never really felt like... when I lived in London, it's hard to feel like you belong there.

In this passage Paul appeared to split and project anxieties around decay and death onto a dirty, crowded London. Berlin, on the other hand, was idealised as a sanitising, recuperative space. What is interesting here is the ways in which prevailing representations of Berlin are selectively deployed to fulfill a specific emotional function. While London is associated literally with being 'too closely packed with history and people' where 'stench' alludes to decay and death, Berlin acquires a un-peopled, open quality, associated with 'being on the coast', or near the ocean where the cold air blowing in from Russia appears to purify and dispel the stink of death. Interesting here is the ways in which Paul's narrative reproduces the dominant social imaginary of Berlin as a 'void' or space. The city is in some ways being used in phantasy as a sanitising space, to clear away or clarify the complex emotions associated with loss and death. Even so, it is the closeness, the 'wealth' of people in London that remains attractive for Paul. London is also entwined with the longing for companionship, a factor which is made more poignant by Paul's apparent inability to settle there.

Despite the evident splitting between Berlin and London, there is a more balanced ambivalence in Paul's recognition that the '*wealth of closely packed history and people'* is also part of what makes London attractive. A sense of a desire to be part of these closely packed people, is offset by a feeling of never fitting in, 'it is hard to feel like you belong there'. The themes of feeling transient and unsettled which appeared in Paul's narration of his friend's experience of being in a 'kind of half-way house' early on in the interview, is brought

full circle at the end where he reflects upon his own inner restlessness and the impossible character of his own desires: 'Like if we don't want to be here (Berlin), where do we want to be? There's no real (pause) there's no dreamland'.

Penny

Penny, is in her early thirties and is married to a Berliner. She is currently a housewife with two children living in the *Kreuzberg* area of the city. Initially, she had moved from Aberdeen to London in the 1990s to work in theatre administration. Apart from her move to London there was no history of movement in her background. The specific, imaginative roots of her move to Berlin, however, are suggested in the following:

> …the stress of London life, it was just all becoming too much. It was making me very anxious. I knew I had to get out. It just (pause) Berlin was, I suppose, what I was looking for. I didn't realize it before I got here. The great sense of relief that places like that still exist. And I realized this is it and I have to find a way to come here and I did sort of plan to maybe do a TEFL course somewhere, before living here. But as it happened, another holiday here and then I happened to meet my husband and it fell into place.

The phrase, *'Berlin, was I suppose, what I was looking for'*, points to the imaginative root which guided her subsequent actions. There is a sense in which Penny fell in love with Berlin after going there for a holiday in the late l990s. She found relief in the knowledge that 'places like this still exist', the 'still exist', referring to a period in the UK before mass consumerism began to get a grip, sometime for her in the l980s. The circumstances around Penny's move to Berlin combined both economic pressures *and* a sense of personal crisis. Prior to her move she had been made redundant from her job in London and had become increasingly disenchanted with London's 'money culture'. She described London as particularly troubling due to the visible signs of poverty on its council estates (two of which she had lived on). Berlin, somehow, felt right – the non-gentrified area of *Kreuzberg* where she lives is still cheap to live in as it borders some of the poorest areas of the city – and she used her remaining money to move there and live on, while she found her feet in the city. Part of the charm of Berlin for her was the lack of pressure she experienced there, and the ability to feel accepted on her own terms.

'Berlin was what I was looking for', gives the impression of being guided towards something, '*I realised, this is it*', and the sense of relief following this but also the feeling that she 'had to' move. The move itself then *'magically'* as she adds elsewhere, *'fell into place'*. We might speculate about the unconscious motives behind falling in love with Berlin and subsequently her German husband. It would seem that Penny was hoping to be rescued by the city and what it represented for her, following a feeling of being out of control and rejected in the wake of redundancy. It also emerged during the course of the interview that there was a strong identification with her parents who had taken her to Germany as a child. It was only in recounting her concerns about bringing up her own child in Berlin that this early memory surfaced. After talking about the difficulties involved in bringing up her daughter in Berlin, she went onto her own confused feelings of belonging, and her ultimate identification with the city. She then added:

P: I did have an experience of living in Germany as child...

D: Ah?

P: My dad worked in the south of Germany, and that's what introduced me to the place, so there was already an emotional attachment with Germany, and my parents have got a lot of German friends.

D: Oh have they? So you've got that in the background.

P: Yeah and I had the experience of going to a German school, very briefly.

This apparently casual process of recall appears to be the product of an associative link which she makes between her daughter and her own childhood, which then triggers the memory of living in Germany as a child. Within the context of Penny's total narrative there is another link which can be made here between her association of Berlin with an unspoilt past – her surprise, for example, that 'places like that still exist' – and the contrast she had drawn at the outset of the interview between 'uncapitalist' *Kreuzberg*, where she now lives, and 'capitalist' London:

London was just becoming, it was very certain to (pause) it started to become a corruptive place (pause) If you don't have a lot of money life is very difficult. (pause) huge difference between rich and poor, very, very capitalist compared to, not all of Berlin but certainly around here, *Kreuzberg* which is very un-capitalist. It really appealed to me in that sense; it's just far more relaxed. A lot of people that come here feel (pause) not so much a sense of belonging, but that everything seems OK, you

don't have to be a certain (pause) you are accepted however you are, it's a very accepting place.

The spoiling of London by 'Thatcherism' in the 1980s was one of her main, avowed, reasons for wanting to 'get out' of the city. The attraction of Berlin, however, resonated at an imaginary level with an idealised past: London before the Fall, her own life before the disillusionment had set in. Just as Berlin allowed Paul the freedom to 'play', and 'fail' in adult terms, so the city was also an 'accepting' place, almost like a return to a childhood home for Penny.

Interestingly, childhood is a dominant theme in both Paul and Penny's accounts. For Paul childhood was associated with space, play and emotional recuperation. For Penny childhood evoked a lost Britain, a largely imaginary and highly idealised past associated with nostalgia and safety. More generally, the association of Berlin with childhood appears to be closely tied to one of its dominant representations, as a place which is always in a state of becoming and never fully formed.

In Penny's case, despite the initial splitting of Berlin and London into good and bad – 'capitalist' and 'uncapitalist' – there was also a strong ambivalence in her feelings towards both cities. Her claims to feeling accepted in Berlin were countered by her everyday struggles with what she deemed the officiousness of German culture and the difficulties she had in accepting niggling cultural differences. On the other hand, despite her criticisms of London, she nevertheless regarded it as 'the most exciting city on earth', but one in which she could no longer live. She still had after five years in Berlin, as she said, a 'parallel life' in the UK and maintained frequent contact via visits, telephone and the internet with her relatives in Aberdeen and kept up-to-date with British popular culture. She described her strong feelings of pride in Britain which she associated with its popular culture, in particular the BBC, and the achievements of the welfare socialism of the post war period. While this world had now all but disappeared some of the values associated with it appeared to have taken on an after-life in the shifting cityscapes of Berlin.

Conclusions

In this paper we have argued that individual's relations to and representations of Berlin may be regarded as vehicles for their earlier imaginary and emotional investments and attachments. The often subtle, asymmetric relationship between the social psyche - identified with physical spaces (as well as their signifiers), popular representations, discourses, symbols and structures - and the personal psyche as this impinges upon the social imaginary of Berlin, is at the core of our analysis. Our approach has emphasised the mutual determination of the psyche and the social: the construction of the psyche is a social process and the social is simultaneously riven by unconscious phantasy and desire. Connecting imaginative roots to biographical conjunctures allows us to gain a clearer sense of what Berlin represents for the individuals we spoke with. From our other interviewees we observed that there is often a particular biographical conjuncture which is related to the decision to move to Berlin. These 'polyvocal influences' (Findlay and Li 1997) represent a unique combination of biographical circumstances. The importance of relationships; the desire to 'shift down a gear' and to experiment with lifestyle alternatives are common strands across the range of interviews which we conducted with lifestyle migrants and those who had moved for relationship purposes. The highly skilled Britons interviewed also confirmed that Berlin is not typically the city of first choice for those who wish to advance their careers. Munich, Hamburg and Düsseldorf in Germany are the preferred locations for individuals working in the corporate sector and advertising. Berlin, on the other hand, appears to have rather different attractions. It is regarded as a city which opens up possibilities: of shifting down a gear, of not having to succeed or to re-evaluate what is meant by success. The two individuals represented here are therefore broadly representative of the lifestyle and relationship migrants interviewed, while remaining distinctive in terms of their biographical trajectories and in relation to the highly skilled and settled Britons interviewed in Berlin.

What is the broader significance of the two narratives we have outlined? The issue here may not be so much to look for general trends in these few illustrations, but rather to register a common strand in the biographical motifs which structure particular individuals' accounts. The sociological significance of these accounts lay not so much in the generalised phenomenon – there is greater diversity amongst Berlin's nearly 10,000 Britons than is accounted for here – as in the social character of the affective, the individual and the

biographical. Across a range of lifestyle migrants the vocabulary used to describe London is constant: it is hectic, crowded, and expensive; there is a lack of space, or it is old and cramped, and so on. Berlin is conjured up as all of its opposites: it is relaxed and cheap to live in; there is more space and it also has an unfinished quality to it. Berlin is a city on the brink and full of a certain type of possibility. As we have seen, there is also ambivalence in particular individuals' relations to both cities.

What the 'New Berlin' represents, for the Britons interviewed here, is therefore a complex affair. The imagined 'something else' which Berlin contains for them reflects above all the individual's capacity to 'create a world of (her) own' (Castoriadis 2007: 208). Both Berlin and London – cities which are lived in but also imagined – in this sense become the repositories for a range of often ambiguous emotional states. The issue, in these interviews as in the others we conducted, is what a city represents, or comes to represent, for individuals at particular points in time. Economic factors play a role in these accounts but are mediated by an imaginative engagement with the city in which relationships and change in lifestyle are particularly significant. The cultural attractions of Berlin are, moreover, notoriously ambiguous. Both the dominant *tropes* of restlessness and the presence of the veiled pasts of the city, and the *topoi* of voids and spaces, are active in the imaginations of these two Britons living in Berlin. The pull of these factors has, in the individual narratives presented here, a biographical and imaginative significance which is bypassed in many accounts of intra-European migration. A focus on the affective and the imaginary therefore takes us beyond the typological approach to intra-European migration which characterises the literature (Scott 2006; Verwiebe 2004) and deepens our understanding both of migrants' motives and their imaginings of place.

Dr Stella Maile is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Psycho-Social Studies in the Department of Health and Applied Social Science and convener of *Social Science in the City*, University of the West of England.
Contact: stella.maile@uwe.ac.uk

Dr David Griffiths is associate Lecturer at the Open University in the South West. He is currently living in Berlin where he is researching British lifestyle migrants in the city.
Contact: Wörther Str 21, Berlin, 10405, Germany.

Stella Maile and David Griffiths *Longings For Berlin*

Email: david.j.griffiths@web.de

References

Althusser, L. (1971) 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, London: New Left Books.

Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg (2009) *Statisticher Bericht, melderechtlich registrierte Ausländer in Berlin am 20 Okt. 2009*, August 2009, Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg.

Bauman, Z. (2001) *The Individualised Society*, London: Polity Press.

Beck, U. (1986) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London: Sage.

Benson, M. and O'Reilly, K. (2009) 'Migration and the search for a better way of life: a critical exploration of lifestyle migration', *The Sociological Review*, 57(4): 608-625.

Bollas, C. (1993) *Being a Character: Psychoanalysis and Self Experience,* London: Routledge.

Castles, S. (1986) 'Guestworkers in Europe: An Obituary', *International Migration Review* xx(4): 761-778.

Castoriadis, C. (l997) *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Clark, S. (2002) 'Learning from experience: psychosocial research methods in the social sciences', *Qualitiative Research*, 2(2): 173-194.

Clark, S. and Hoggett, P. (2009) *Researching Beneath the Surface: psycho-social research methods in practice,* London: Karnac Books.

Cochrane, A. and Jonas, A. (1999) 'Reimagining Berlin: world city, national capital or ordinary place?' *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 6 (2): 145-164

Craig. G. A. (1991) *The Germans*, Meridian Books, New York.

D'Andrea, A. (2006) 'Neo-nomadism: a theory of post identitarian mobility in a global age', *Mobilities* 1(1): 95-119.

Favell, A. (2008) *Eurostars and Eurocities: free movement and mobility in an integrating Europe*, London: Blackwell.

Findlay, A. M., Li, L., Jowett, A. and Skeldon, R. (1996) 'Skilled International Migration and the Global City: a study of expatriates in Hong Kong', *Institute of British Geographers,* 21: 49-61.

Findlay, A. M. and Li, F. L. N. (1997) 'An auto-biographical approach to understanding migration: the case of Hong Kong emigrants', *Area*, 29(1): 34-44.

Florida, R. (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York, Basic Books.

Freud, S. (2002) *Wild Analysis*, Philips. A. (ed)., London: Penguin Books.

Freud, S. (1917, 2001) *Mourning and Melancholia*, Standard Edition, vol.14., London: Vintage.

Frisby, D. (2001) *Cityscapes of Modernity: Critical Explorations*, Cambridge, Polity Press

Frosh, S. and Emerson, P.D. (2005) 'Interpretation and over-interpretation: disputing the meaning of texts', *Qualitative Research*, 5: 307-324.

Gomez, L. (1997) *An Introduction to Object Relations*, London: Free Association Books.

Hoey, B. (2005) 'From Pi to Pie: Moral Narratives of Noneconomic Migration and starting over in the Postindustrial Midwest', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 34 (5): 586-624.

Stella Maile and David Griffiths *Longings For Berlin*

Hoggett, P., Beedell, P., Jimenez, L., Mayo, M. and Miller, C (2010) 'Working psycho-socially and dialogically in research', *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society,* 15 (2): 173-188.

Holloway, W and Jefferson, T (2000) *Doing qualitative research differently; free association, narrative and the interview method*, London: Sage.

Huyssen, A. (1997) 'The Voids of Berlin', *Critical Inquiry*, 24(1): 57-81.
Institute for Urban Strategies (2009) *Global City Power Index*, *2009, available on* http://www.morifoundation.or.jp/english/research/project/6/pdf/GPCI2009 English.pdf, The Mori Memorial Foundation, accessed 30.08.2010.

IPSOS (2008) *Observatory of Urban Lifestyles*, Paris, Veolia Environnment.

King, R. (2002) 'Towards a new map of European Migration', *International Journal of Population Geography*, 8: 89-106.

Klein, M. (1986) 'Notes on some schizoid mechanisms', in *The Selected Melanie Klein,* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Koser, K. and Salt, J. (1997) 'The geography of highly skilled international migration', *International Journal of Population Geography*, 3, 285-303.

Krätke, S. (2004) 'City of Talents? Berlin's regional economy, socio-spatial fabric and worst practice urban governance', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(3): 511-29.

Lacan, J. (1989) 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the 'I' as revealed in psychoanalytic experience", in *Ecrits: a selection* (1989) London: Routledge.

Ladd, B. (1998) *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Large, D. C. (2000) *Berlin,* New York, Basic Books.

Laplanche, J and Pontalis, J B (l973) *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, London: Karnac Books.

Lapping, C. (2007) 'Interpreting 'resistance' sociologically: a reflection on the recontextualisation of psychoanalytic concepts into sociological analysis', *Sociology* 41: 627- 644.

Marcuse, P. (1998) 'Reflections on Berlin: the meaning of construction and the construction of meaning', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 22(2):331-8.

Moran Taylor, M. and Menjivar, C. (2005) 'Unpacking longings to return: Guatamalans and Salvadoreans in Phoenix, Arizona', Michelle Moran-Taylor, *International Migration,* 43(4): 91-119.

Mountian, I. (2009) 'Some Questions around Social Imaginary and Discourse Analysis for Critical Research', *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, 7: 205-222.

Pessar, P., and S. Mahler 2002 'Transnational migration: bringing gender in', *International Migration Review*, 37(3): 812-846.

Pile, S. (2005) *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life*, London: Sage.

Rapp, T. (2009) *Lost and Sound: Berlin, Techno und der Easyjetset*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Recchi, E. (2006) 'From Migrants to Movers: Citizenship and Mobility in the European Union', in Smith, M. P. and Favell, A. (eds.) *The Human Face of global mobility,* Comparative Urban and Community research, V.8, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

Recchi, E. (2008) 'Cross State Mobility in the EU: Trends, puzzles and consequences', *European Societies,* 10 (2): 197-224.

Ritchie, A. (1998) *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*, New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers.

Rose, J. (2001) 'The Meaning of the Phallus', in du Gay et al (eds.) *Identities: A reader*, Cambridge, OUP/Sage.

Scott, S. (2006) 'The social morphology of skilled migration: the case of the British middle class in Paris', *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 32(7): 1105-1129.

Stahl, G. 2008 'The Art of Ping Pong Country in the New Berlin', *Space and Culture*, 2008;0: 1206331208320483v1, online journal.

Till, K. E. (2005) *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*, University of Minneapolis: Minnesota Press.

Verwiebe, R. (2004) *Transnationale Mobilität innerhalb Europas: Eine Studie zu den sozialstrukturellen Effekten der Europäisierung*, Berlin: edition sigma.

Ward, J. (2004) 'Berlin, the Virtual Global City', *Journal of Visual Culture*, 3, 2: 239-256

Wengraf, T. and Chamberlain, P. (2006) *Interviewing for life-histories, lived situations and personal experiencing: The Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM). The (Longer) Guide to BNIM interviewing and interpretation,* unpublished paper.

Žižek, S. (2009) *The sublime object of ideology*, London: Verso.