

The Presence and Absence of the Past: Sites of Memory  
and Forgetting in F. C. Delius' *Die Flatterzunge*<sup>1</sup>

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"No one comes to Berlin unscathed."  
—F. C. Delius, *Die Flatterzunge* (93)<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps no site better embodies the juxtaposition of the German past with the challenges of the present and prospect for the future than Berlin. For the city of Berlin, the past (Third Reich, Holocaust) is simultaneously present and absent from view. The perception and awareness of the past in Berlin depends as much on the attitude of the observer as it does on that observer's knowledge of history. Over the past decade debates have raged about which buildings to renovate or raze, where to rebuild and in what style, even how to memorialize victims of the Holocaust and tyranny.<sup>3</sup> Not only have such discussions made the presence or absence of the past in Berlin a topic of daily discourse, but they also have brought to the forefront questions about which history may be memorialized and in what form. The simultaneity and symbolism of the past and the present provide the scenic backdrop and the historical conflict that inform the fable of F. C. Delius' 1999 narrative *Die Flatterzunge* (The Flutter-Tongue).<sup>4</sup>

In *Die Flatterzunge*, Delius confronts the controversies of Berlin's past in an unconventional manner. As the basis for his fable he turns to a rather embarrassing but true incident from 1997, and allows his protagonist Hannes, a trombonist with the orchestra for the German Opera, to falsify his name on the bill in

a Tel Aviv bar: the name Hannes chooses is "Adolf Hitler." As a result, Hannes is sent back to Germany and fired from his position with the orchestra.<sup>5</sup> The narrative unfolds as a stream-of-consciousness diary, in which Hannes attempts to explain his actions in preparation for a court case that he hopes will reinstate him with the orchestra. Encoded in Hannes' ramblings are references to the difficulties that the Germans have had in confronting and dealing with their own history as generation after generation works through its relationship to the Nazi past. Also embedded in these musings are observations about a subconscious desire to forget the Holocaust. An additional level of conflict that complicates Hannes' attempt to come to terms with his act derives from his troubled relationship with his father, who is a former Nazi. Hannes devotes his energies to proving that he is not anti-Semitic, although his deed has anti-Semitic overtones. In actuality, this uncalculated action reveals a deeper level of anti-Semitism as Hannes acts out his subconscious.

As a resident of Berlin for 30 years, Hannes survived the division of the city, but it is only now, after the unification of Germany that he must confront the absences the Nazi period left behind. Currently Berlin, the homeland of the perpetrators, is in the process of rebuilding, an opportunity that allows it to reshape its image and also its history. Deborah Smail and Corey Ross have argued that Berlin faces the test of finding an appropriate form to convey its new role within unified Germany as well as the world, a challenge that implies that Berlin will somehow have to master its past in order to attain such a lofty goal (63). They further equate Berlin's historic division and recent unification as symbols for the past, present and future of Germany as a whole (63). More critical in his assessment, Paul Keating has called the re-building of Berlin "a hoax against post-war German history and achievement" (83). Such a statement highlights the fact that there is no smooth linear approach to revealing and memorializing Berlin's history, but rather the current method is more derivative of the prevalent market strategies that tend toward today's image-building. Hannes is attracted to this idea of image-reconstruction and finds it easy to escape from his problems on the top of the InfoBox

at Potsdamer Platz. There, history is unearthed and “from the death strip arises a piece of cake” (F 108). This flippant observation downplays the greater historical significance of this hotly contested topography, which Brian Ladd has called a “significant void,” whose “significance can only be recovered through memory and history” (*Ghosts* 115). There is a need for a greater awareness of the past than is demonstrated in what is being built there. Even before it became the world’s largest construction site, Andreas Huyssen argues, this geographic space was a “void saturated with invisible history, with memories of architecture both built and unbuilt” (65-66).

On the surface, it would appear that the barrenness of a Potsdamer Platz under construction symbolizes Hannes’ need to detach himself both from his deed and from the weightiness of German history. Delving deeper into Hannes’ motivations and the historical background of Potsdamer Platz, however, I argue, permits us to read him as symbolic of the German nation constantly struggling to master its past and emerge from the burden of its history. On first reading, Delius does not resolve the struggle, but instead incorporates an ironic twist of fate, leaving readers to continue grappling with the issue, long after the reading of the narrative has concluded. In the remainder of the essay, I will show that Hannes’ own struggle is inextricably linked to the concurrent presence and absence of the German past as it manifests itself repeatedly in his encounters with the city.

The story unfolds on a number of narrative planes. On the surface level, Hannes’ account develops in the forms of stream of consciousness and interior monologues within the apparent framework of a diary. His lawyer has instructed him to write down anything that might be relevant for his court appeal to win his job back. In his musings, Hannes speaks directly to the judge, who he hopes will be able to help him “find the truth” (F 28), though exactly what truth Hannes is searching for is unclear at first. While a reader might expect to learn the motivations behind Hannes’ heinous pseudonym in the Tel Aviv bar, one encounters instead a protagonist who, while desperately searching for an explanation for his behavior, is unable to apologize for it. As the narrative

progresses, revelations about Hannes occur only through his first-person perspective, with the singular insight that Hannes suffers simultaneously from delusions of grandeur and an inferiority complex, both of which are important for understanding his actions. Successive levels tackle Hannes' childhood relationships to his father and to his choice of instrument, an unfulfilling love life that leads him through a series of affairs with a variety of women, and a curious approach to current events that lies in weighing his crime against that of others.<sup>6</sup> The backdrop for each of these strains is Hannes' relationship with German history as it is embodied and embedded in Berlin.

As the first trombonist who is the *Stimmführer* for all the lower brass instruments, Hannes has a leadership role within the orchestra, and he is very proud of his accomplishments. Yet, he tends to undermine this pride with constant references to his greatest disappointment: he would have preferred to play the trumpet, an instrument he considers more glamorous. The composition of an orchestra is hierarchical, and an instrument's importance is determined both by its use in a particular musical score and its location within the orchestra pit. As a lower brass musician, Hannes' seat in the pit is in the next to the last row; trumpet players are in the front. The logic behind this is two-fold: on the one hand, a low brass instrument like the trombone has a greater projection, and can therefore be heard at a greater distance; on the other hand, however, composers have hesitated to employ the trombone to a large extent, using it mostly for special effects. In a typical orchestral seating arrangement, then, the trombones are at a great distance from the conductor, who serves as the central authority figure. The presence of trumpets in the front signifies their stature. Thus, despite his accomplished playing, the role accorded to Hannes and his instrument within the orchestra leaves him feeling inferior and dissatisfied. To a certain extent, Hannes overcomes this inferiority in his diary, where he is able to play the starring role.

In his repeated reference to his megalomania, Hannes also indicates that he suffers from a constant need for approval. The opening sentence of the narrative informs readers that it is the

applause that he misses most now that he is no longer a part of the orchestra, a sign that Hannes thrives on the admiration of others. Another curious quirk is his need for constant guidance, which he is accustomed to receive from the conductor—being told when and how to play. In his diary, he refers to the judge as a type of conductor who will guide him in his search. Yet, as an unemployed musician with nothing to do but wander through the city, Hannes quickly learns to appreciate his insignificance as “one among four million” (*F* 23).

Born in 1943, Hannes belongs to that first post-Nazi generation, who grew up during the final stages of Hitler’s dictatorship, surviving Allied bombing attacks and occupation. His early memories would be of the founding of the Federal Republic and the economic miracle; by the time he reached university age, the era of protest had begun, though Hannes expressed little interest in the activism of his peers. In many ways, Hannes is typical of his generation. His only major dealings with Nazism arise in the generational conflict that exists between himself and his father. Delius does not introduce the father as an actual figure; rather he serves as a counterpoint or opposite to Hannes. Hannes’ profession granted him an affordable lifestyle; his fear, now that he is unemployed, is that he will have to “pinch pennies” like his father (*F* 13). In the brief descriptions of his childhood, considerable disdain for his father shines through. Injured in the war and most likely having endured and seen a number of atrocities, Hannes’ father opted for a non-confrontational life following the war; his motto: “Suck it up!” (*F* 29-30). Like most generations Hannes wanted to rebel against everything his father represents, and as the first post-Nazi generation, Hannes and his contemporaries had a moral obligation to be the opposite of their fathers. In Hannes’ case, his sole expression of rebellion is linked to music. In order to learn the appropriate mouth movements for the trombone, his teacher instructed him to spit. For Hannes, this was an opportunity to do something forbidden (for spitting was not allowed in proper society) and get away with it. As a reaction to his father’s constant “suck it up,” Hannes adopted a life motto of “spit it out” (*F* 30). These peculiar insights into Hannes’ character pro-

vide us little help in trying to understand what prompted Hannes to behave the way he did. Hannes' crime, on the other hand, is more revealing.

The opera company for which Hannes plays is invited to Israel for a series of performances: Mozart's *Zauberflöte* and Donizetti's *Zaubertrank*.<sup>7</sup> In order to enter Israel, all visitors must complete visa forms on the plane. One piece of required information is a question about the father's full name. For the briefest moment, this gives Hannes pause, for he knows little about his father's past, and he worries that he might inadvertently betray him. This unsettling feeling that Hannes experiences on the plane sets the tone for the tension he senses for the duration of his stay in Israel. Despite the current conciliatory relations between Germany and Israel, there is always a specter of the past, a need to prove that the Germans of today are not the Germans of their fathers' generation (F 77), which makes every breath that a German visitor takes in Israel a political one (F 76). Hannes demonstrates extraordinary attention to detail, making a concerted effort not to offend: he avoids black shirts and pants and brown jackets so as not to conjure memories of Nazi dress. In packing only neutral colors, he hopes to embody his respect for the Israelis and demonstrate a certain amount of sensitivity to the past problems between Jews and Germans. It is all the more surprising, then, that he was capable of his subsequent actions.

After a lovers' quarrel with his fellow musician C., Hannes retreats to the hotel bar to drown his sorrows with alcohol. While seated at the bar, Hannes notices that the bartender is less than vigilant in controlling the bills as the hotel guests sign them. As a stereotypical "orderly" German Hannes thinks to himself: "Why, anyone can cheat that way, that's how someone could cheat me" (F 131). When Hannes indicates to the bartender that he should scrutinize the bills more closely, the bartender replies: "Thank you, but I know what I'm doing." Hannes does not believe him and thinks: "He doesn't know, he doesn't notice anything, I'm going to test him" (F 131). Ironically, Hannes then points out to the bartender the false name. Hannes' summation of the event: he was "overcorrect" (F 132). The choice of language for many of

the scenes is remarkably telling, as Hannes describes his own role as one of an “overseer” (F 136), a term most frequently associated with concentration camp guards.

As a result of his actions, Hannes is sent back to Germany and removed from his orchestral post. He considers both of these consequences unjust, and he therefore appeals to the justice system for reinstatement. While awaiting a court date, Hannes fills his days writing in his diary and wandering through Berlin. On his walks, he encounters numerous sites that evoke a sense of historical connection or at least serve as reminders of past deeds, many of which serve as the basis for debates currently going on in Berlin. Hannes’ friend Ulli, who unlike Hannes is interested in a variety of historical and political matters, reacts to media coverage he considers outrageous by comparing the gravity of these reports to Hannes’ own deed. For Hannes, this provides a certain degree of solace, that he is not the only “idiot,” but rather everyone seems to “stumble over the cobblestones of German history. There are always little embarrassments when the past threatens [to appear]” (F 32).

In one instance, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reports on a German businessman who had sold materials with a value of more than 30 million DM to Iraq, materials which could aid Iraq in building an atomic bomb. As is well known, Iraq fired strikes at Israel during the Gulf War in the early 1990s. Hannes and his friend see an incredible irony in the story, for the businessman cannot be held accountable for the injuries that may have occurred through weapons produced with his product, but this “crime” is considerably graver than Hannes’ prank. As tensions in the Middle East intensify, German media—for instance, *Der Spiegel*—list the various contributions that German companies have made to the major re-armament of Iraq: missiles and chemical weapons (F 63). Hannes cannot comprehend how Germans can tolerate such activity: “More or less tolerated and supported by the Bonn ministries, seldom punished by German prosecutors, as good as never condemned by German courts. . . . Free line of fire towards Israel, and we can claim that we were a part of it. Does anyone besides me read this? Does anyone else get upset?”

(F 63). Hannes bitterly acknowledges the sharp irony of the situation a few days later, when he records in his diary that Germany has begun delivering gas masks to Israel: 180,000 gas masks will be shipped there by the German government, in compliance with a request from the Israeli government.

Another stumbling block from the past manifests itself in Jewish installations in Berlin (though as we will see, this is not always the case). When Hannes passes the synagogue on Fasanenstraße he muses on the complexity of German-Jewish history. Where once police and SA ordered Germans not to purchase from Jews, German police with machine guns now protect such Jewish installations from possible acts of terror. He then asks: "Why can't we fix it so that Jews can gather just like other people, like the Catholics?" (F 41). In similar fashion, Hannes reflects on the Palestinian scarves that at one time were fashionable with young people. The offset checks are a great pattern and symbolize a type of "sleazy" opposition, though in reality this demonstration of solidarity with the PLO could be construed as an obvious affront to Israel (F 46-47).

There is an additional level of irony, however, in the way that Delius does not allow Hannes to apologize. He is incapable of offering an apology to the Israelis, to the opera, to the Germans, wallowing always in a self-pity that only lets him make excuses for his behavior without actually expressing regret. By his own admission, Hannes is the "devil from Berlin" and the "dog of Tel Aviv" (F 14), an "idiot" who does everything "wrong" and therefore is "guilty" (F 10). He considers himself "apolitical" (F 15), incapable of thinking historically (F 33). This characterization of his detachment from history may provide a superficial explanation for his overall behavior, though another comment characterizes him as someone who "seeks out a sure thing" (F 13). In the end, Hannes is practically convinced that he has done Germany a great service:

If everyone were as free as I am, if everyone would do it like I do, if every German were AH for five seconds . . .

I figured it out once with a calculator: if every five seconds one German could be AH, then twelve would do it in a minute. In an

hour 720, in one day 17,280, in a year 6,307,200 people. In one year, the burden of being a mini-Hitler could be distributed across six million Germans, old men, children, women, the disabled, of course no one could shirk it, even the newly naturalized Turks. After approximately thirteen years, all 80 million Germans would have been on once. Then everyone can breathe easily, even me. If we and the rest of the world like it, then we could start all over again, for the next thirteen years. But first, we'll shove the Austrians in. (F 137)

This passage poignantly demonstrates the way that the Nazi atrocities can weigh down on Germans. In Hannes' case, he seeks to distribute this burden among all Germans, whether or not they have any connection to the Holocaust and Nazi past (particularly disturbing in the reference to the newly naturalized Turkish population). He even goes so far as to include Austria in the mix, further broadening the question of guilt and responsibility, making guilt a Central European issue.

Even more gruesome and startling is Hannes' distorted view of history and of himself, for he views himself as the victim, "the youngest victim of these damn Nazis" (F 82). This type of statement underscores the extent to which the atrocities of the German past are still present and just under the surface. This is a distortion of the status of victimhood, something that according to Charles Maier is now prized. With respect to the problematic legacy of the Holocaust, Maier has indicated that Germans realize that the Holocaust is a continuing component of their history, and Jews insist it is the foundation for theirs (164). These two elements confronted each other head on in the Tel Aviv bar.

Following the events in Israel, Hannes gains renewed interest in developments in Berlin since the fall of the wall, in particular sites such as the InfoBox and Potsdamer Platz. For Hannes, the InfoBox "towers over history" (F 53). But, in many instances, the information that is displayed inside the InfoBox is merely a simulation of what reality can or will be, for not only is this a model for the future skyline of the city, but it is an attempted reproduction and recreation of the once vibrant landscape.<sup>8</sup> Hannes views Potsdamer Platz from the panoramic viewing area atop the InfoBox. Built as a temporary structure in 1995, its mul-

timedia displays projecting the future propelled the site into one of the most visited areas in all of Berlin.<sup>9</sup>

Potsdamer Platz has had a variegated history throughout the twentieth century, but because of the various political, economic, social and cultural upheavals that swept through Germany and Berlin during that century there are relatively few visual reminders of the past. Once renowned as representing the epitome of the hustle and bustle of a metropolis in the 1920s, Potsdamer Platz suffered through Allied bombings and the division of Germany that by the 1960s had left a desolate landscape. What once was a busy intersection became, following the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, a desolate stretch of no-man's-land; a death trap thus replaced the space where once life was lived to the fullest.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly enough, as Berlin seeks to re-establish itself as a metropolis and world city, there has been a concerted effort to shift the locus of power to what is termed the "neue Mitte" or new middle of Berlin, whose heart is located in Potsdamer Platz. For some, there is a sense of accomplishment associated with the names Sony and Daimler-Chrysler whose corporate image now is attached to Potsdamer Platz, an overt testament to Germany's economic prowess. As this corporate glitz replaces the former death strip, one can be lulled into complacency, for it seems that Germany has moved on, in the sense that it has mastered its division.<sup>11</sup> Of course, this type of complacency can make it easy to forget the more distant history of Potsdamer Platz, a history that cannot be seen readily. The absences that linger in the topographical surroundings of Potsdamer Platz and Leipziger Platz lie underneath the surface, yet also threaten to break through that surface at any moment. It is this aspect of Potsdamer Platz that I wish to liken to Hannes' behavior: his anti-Semitism—though he struggles to prove that he is not anti-Semitic—bubbles just below the surface, only to explode in a fake signature in an Israeli hotel bar.

Potsdamer Platz was never a true square, but more of a traffic intersection connecting old, central Berlin to the newer, outlying districts. As traffic increased steadily from the 1880s on, the entire area, which also included Leipziger Platz, expanded with a

train station, hotels, restaurants, and department stores. These physical developments from the 1920s remained relatively unchanged after the Nazi accession to power in 1933. Initially, the Nazis limited their impact on the area to a change of use, exemplified best by the *Volksgerechtshof*, or People's Court, which between 1934 and 1944 meted out more than 12,000 death sentences in quick trials. Similarly, the Nazis established the euthanasia center in a building that had belonged to the Lieberman family since 1910, using the structure as the headquarters for plotting the systematic eradication of the mentally and physically disabled from the German Reich. It was the Allied bombing raids in 1944-45 that erased most traces of history from Potsdamer Platz. Most remaining buildings were destroyed once the East German government built the wall dividing Berlin, though the Weinhaus Huth and remnants of the Esplanade were preserved.

The choice of Potsdamer Platz as Hannes' scene of comfort is not accidental. Brian Ladd has argued that Potsdamer Platz harbors two "ghosts": the radicalism of the 1920s and the Nazism of the 1930s. Both of these movements are closely tied to the Jews in Berlin. The prosperous commercial development was a direct result of Jewish investment, and the bustle of the period also became known as something Jewish, "die jüdische Hast" or Jewish haste as Peter Gay termed it (quoted in Ladd, *Ghosts* 125). Similarly, the deportation of the Jews and the Final Solution virtually erased all of Jewish culture from the Berlin landscape, also notable in the Aryanization of Jewish businesses. The division of Berlin situated Potsdamer Platz in the East, where it was easier for the East Germans to hold fast to their claims as the anti-fascist victors than to acknowledge the obvious gaps (not only in the landscape but also in the population) left behind after the war. It seems in a way that Hannes is returning to the scene of the crime, though here it is not his crime but the historical crime that takes precedence. Ladd asserts that the rebuilding of Potsdamer Platz can serve to move Berlin "out of the shadows of Hitler and the Wall" (*Ghosts* 125). If we take this to be true, then for Hannes, Potsdamer Platz represents the possibility of rebirth, where he too can break out of Hitler's shadow.

The concept of re-birth is one of the factors contributing to the considerable attention that this geographic space has drawn since the fall of the wall. Berlin has become subject to what is known as “critical reconstruction,” that is a concentrated effort to rebuild the city in a particular fashion. In this case, there is specific emphasis on restoring the “lost character” of Berlin’s urbanity (Ladd, “Center” 12). This applies in particular to Potsdamer Platz, where any old background has been for the most part completely erased. The challenge is to find a way to restore that feeling. Critics of developments in this urban landscape typically bemoan the Americanization of the topography in the form of glitzy shopping centers. Bonnie Marranca observes that the overly capitalistic and corporate dimension of the “new” Potsdamer Platz offers “the amnesia of consumerism” (3). The idea of amnesia is intriguing, for that is exactly what Hannes wishes for, to be able to forget what happened. Similarly noteworthy is the fact that many scholars have equated Berlin’s recent construction efforts with a search for identity (Ladd, “Center”). Of course, there can be no real forgetting in Berlin. The barren space of Potsdamer Platz offered what seems to be the opportunity to start over. The question that remains is whether or not this is an illusion. The buildings and institutions that depict Berlin’s rebirth also can contribute to the way that Berlin remembers: “Institutions give memory a structure and an organization that is decisive for its reception. In public institutions, Germans carried, cultivated, and propagated memories, and their activity gave memory social continuity and regularity, and also made memory the ally of evasion” (Confino and Fritzsche 7).

The reason that Hannes finds the InfoBox so appealing is that there he is actually capable of forgetting his problem “for the first time in so many months” (F 55). Even when his glance falls on the proposed site between Potsdamer Platz and the Brandenburg Gate where the monument to the murdered Jews of Europe is to be built, he is not reminded of his actions in Tel Aviv. There is a definite undertone to this passage that may very well be a commentary on the way that Berlin is choosing to memorialize its past. The proposed site for the monument is one that has little

connection to the Jewish fate in Germany and therefore is considered by many to be an inauthentic site, and thus a reason for considerable controversy.<sup>12</sup> In all of Berlin's efforts, there is an undertone of trying to do the right thing, particularly when acknowledging the Nazi past.<sup>13</sup> This is nowhere more apparent than in the debates and controversies surrounding the Holocaust Memorial, the largest ceremonial site in Berlin, occupying five acres of the former no-man's-land in the traditional center and strategically located between the Brandenburg Gate and Potsdamer Platz. As Brian Ladd describes it: "It will be an official, centrally located, architectural acknowledgement of Germany's Jewish victims" ("Center" 15-17). This type of structure brings to the forefront the concerns that once built, this memorial will eradicate the need for Germans to remember. Ladd argues that the memorial's critics "regard the central Holocaust memorial as an attempt to remove all engagement with the legacy of the Third Reich from society, to centralize this painful memory in one place and to bury it under concrete. Its completion, they fear, will mark the end of all performative acts of remembrance" ("Center" 17). Inherent in such criticisms is concern about authenticity, as numerous smaller sites pay homage to the victims of the Holocaust where specific events actually occurred: at the Grunewald train station, site of the massive transports; on the Grosse Hamburger Strasse, where Jews were rounded up for deportation; at the Topography of Terror exhibit, which unearthed the SS and Gestapo headquarters. At Potsdamer Platz, only two historical buildings anchor the new to the old: the Weinhaus Huth, and the ruins of the Hotel Esplanade. The former stands on its original site, though it is now wedged between other buildings near the entrance to the shopping arcades, and on a crowded day, is easy to overlook. The latter has been incorporated into Helmut Jahn's Sony Center, intended to serve as reminders of the preceding historical periods (Kreuder).<sup>14</sup>

Delius drew on a real event from 1997 as the background for his fable, and the depiction of an unfinished Potsdamer Platz in the narrative places the plot at a similar time. Many of the projects have since been completed: the Debis complex opened in 1998,

Sony in 2000; the train station is still under construction. It remains to be seen what the completed topography ultimately will have to offer. Will it contribute to or prevent the development of a relationship with the past? Is there an element of continuity between the old and the new, or is Potsdamer Platz now merely a site to practice selective amnesia as Hannes did?

Delius adds a chilling twist to the tale as the narrative draws to a close. Though from the outset readers have been told that Hannes is preparing for his court hearing, that event never arrives. Rather than attaining reinstatement in the orchestra through the justice system, Hannes is able to re-enter the world of music through a very different venue. He receives an invitation from the Israeli off-theater "Shariot" for a series of solo performances. Spawned by the earlier events in Tel Aviv, this theater group does not want Hannes "to be a parody of a new Hitler. Just be the German you are" (F 140). Is this invitation a precursor to a new type of détente, or as *Newsweek* described it "a strange new love affair"? (F 141) As the narrative concludes, Hannes has received his plane ticket and proclaims that he will only subject himself to the laws of acoustics (F 142).

This ending leaves many questions unanswered. Early on, Hannes implores the judge to help him find the truth, but just what truth is Hannes searching for? He certainly does not seek an explanation for his behavior in Israel, for throughout the course of the narrative he provides a number of explanations, though he is unable to apologize for his actions. Perhaps we can say that what Hannes seeks is the key to his character, the answer to the question of what makes him perceive the world as he does. This answer lies inextricably linked to the power of suggestion and the burden of German history. Whether present or absent, the German past informs Hannes' actions, especially when he is trying to avoid appearing prejudiced or ant-Semitic. In seeking solace in the re-construction of Potsdamer Platz, Hannes gives a form to his own quest—a desire to re-construct his past. As the history that lies underneath Potsdamer Platz is unearthed, there is a chance to almost erase it, to act as if it never happened. What one sees today in Potsdamer Platz has little in common with the once

vibrant traffic intersection, and it does not have much that reminds the visitor visually of what took place there in the 1930s and 1940s. Perhaps Hannes wishes to build over his own past, without a Nazi father, and his impending second trip to Israel can be a possible first step. How Hannes will behave or even be received by the Israelis is left to the imagination of the reader. Though Hannes can never truly explain his actions, he does touch on the way that German history has a tendency to overshadow all actions: "I think I spoke the truth in that one stupid moment in Tel Aviv. Maybe I am crazy, but, doesn't each one of us, and not just we Germans, harbor the smallest splinter of a Nazi inside, no matter how democratic we are, so pro-Semitic, so enlightened?" (F 76) Hannes sees these issues less as manifestations of collective guilt than of something historical (F 76).

Despite the detachment that Hannes purports to experience at the InfoBox, he also remarks that he is unable to breathe easily (F 109) even at this site. For Hannes, the InfoBox and Jericho become closely linked. Because of his behavior in Israel, Hannes was sent home early and therefore unable to participate in the group trip to Jericho, a sort of pilgrimage site for trombone players, where an art form can force a tangible result.<sup>15</sup> Hannes will never be able to breathe freely in Berlin until he can blast down the walls of his own personal Jericho. Delius provides few answers as to the make up of these walls that have closed in around Hannes, but as his complex relationship with the city of Berlin unequivocally demonstrates, Hannes has allowed himself to become boxed in by history. In titling the narrative "Flutter Tongue," Delius may very well be referring to Hannes' loquaciousness as he writes his diary. The volley of words that emerges seems to disallow the reflection that spaces like Potsdamer Platz so urgently need.

## Notes

1 I am indebted to Dr. Rachel Halverson and Dr. James Parsons for their insightful reading of this manuscript.

2 All translations are my own.

3 Two sites in the historic center of Berlin have garnered particularly vociferous defenders and critics. On the first site, the East German parliament, *Palast der Republik*, and a parking lot occupy the space that once was the Hohenzollern Royal Palace. A movement to rebuild the palace has substantial support. The second, the *Neue Wache*, evoked considerable controversy when it was dedicated not only to Jewish victims but also to German soldiers and other victims' groups. The addition of Käthe Kollwitz's *Pietà* further fueled the discussion, particularly because the sculpture plays on a long history of Christian imagery.

4 According to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music* flutter-tonguing is a "type of tonguing demanded by some 20th-century composers in which the instrumentalist rolls the letter 'r' on the tip of his tongue while playing. The technique is particularly effective on the flute, but it is also applied to various other wind instruments." The protagonist is particularly proud of his deftness at flutter-tonguing, suggesting that women find it particularly erotic.

5 As a *Beamter* or civil servant, Hannes can only be removed from his post through some sort of egregious behavior. His position immediately is filled and there is little need for an aging trombonist, even in a city with as many musical institutions as Berlin.

6 There is an interesting subtext in the narrative that focuses on a variety of operas: Verdi's *Otello* and *Rigoletto*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and Puccini's *Tosca*. These four works share a common theme, that of treachery and betrayal through love, and in each piece, a character dies because of love. In many ways, Hannes' search for a mate is closely tied to his interpretations of these operas.

7 The choice of opera is interesting, for *Zauberflöte* can be interpreted as a testimony to the German *Aufklärung* as well as a reflection on harmony. Donizetti's opera focuses on the use of a potion to bring lovers together. This type of trickery stands in opposition to the harmony reflected in the Mozart piece. Because Hannes also reflects on his various love trysts, the symbolism of harmony and love (even if in the form of a potion) play out on another level as well. This line of interpretation lies beyond the scope of this essay. I am grateful to Dr. James Parsons for his help in analyzing this subtext in the narrative. See Parsons, especially 38-39.

8 I borrow the term simulation here from Morshäuser's *Die Berliner Simulation*. In this narrative, Morshäuser criticizes a lack of authen-

ticity where reality is not real but merely a simulation of something else.

9 Huyssen notes as many as 5000 visitors per day (69). The InfoBox was removed in 2001.

10 Among other things, Potsdamer Platz became famous as the location of Europe's first traffic signal.

11 For a further discussion of this, see Smail and Ross, who liken this moving on to the attainment of "normality" (73).

12 The debate surrounding the site as well as the form that the monument will take has been well documented. See Heimrod, Schlusche, Seferens; Cullen for two good examples.

13 I have specifically chosen the term acknowledge to stress the need of Germany not only to come to terms with its Nazi past, but also to call into question the concept of mastery. Can this past ever be mastered; who will determine that mastery has been achieved, by what standards will this mastery be measured? I am indebted to the research of Confino and Fritzsche for helping me to formulate this line of questioning.

14 Kreuder claims that the ruin thus serves as a type of architectural museum; the way that Jahn is employing this marks a "turning point in how German historical memory is represented and preserved" (23).

15 In the narrative, Hannes refers to a false translation for this Bible passage. In the original Hebrew, it was a "Schofar" that blasted down the walls of Jericho. Luther considered this instrument too Jewish-sounding for his Bible translation, and co-incidentally the trombone had just recently been invented. (F. 27)

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