

5 Popular literature and lost others

While popular cultural texts that focus on the memory of lost others are undoubtedly part of a wider network of mnemonic practices, and their authors part of a wider network of mnemonic actors, these books or films are not simply one-dimensional consumer products: they are texts worthy of analysis in their own right. Before proceeding to this analysis, however, it is important to note that defining a work of literature (or film or art) as straightforwardly ‘popular’ or belonging strictly to mass culture is not easy. The border between high and low culture has, of course, been blurred in various ways throughout the history of culture, but this is especially true in the postmodern age, when the conscious playing with popular genres became *de rigueur* among ‘serious’ artists. Increasingly, popular forms of fiction are being recognized as more than inconsequential generic entertainments, and rather as valuable elements of contemporary culture. The best-selling British novelist David Mitchell, who works in the genre of science fiction, has called the strict separation of ‘genre’ from ‘serious’ fiction ‘a bizarre act of self-mutilation’ for a culture.¹ Most of the texts discussed in the following can be said to straddle the line between pure entertainment and serious art in one way or another, in a way that echoes the ambiguous and multiple functions of the popular forms of commemoration discussed in the previous chapter. The popular entertainment dimension of these texts is always central to their appeal to a wider readership, and consequently to the willingness among publishers to market them. This wide appeal and impact means that analysis of these texts must be a central part of any analysis of the cultural memory of a given place: as Katarzyna Kotyńska has argued in relation to *L’viv*, such texts provide crucial insights into the social frameworks that shape memory.² Crucial also, however, is the fact that this popular, generic dimension provides particular representational strategies and creates particular effects on readers that are not necessarily shared by non-popular, non-genre works. A good example is the detective novel: Paul Connerton notes that the rise of crime fiction coincided with the growth of the increasingly ‘opaque’ modern, capitalist city, and provided the reader with the figure of the ‘virtuoso of memory’, the detective, who would help dispel that bewildering opacity.³ The following discussion will show how this virtuosity and other features of genre fiction function in the context of east-central European cities in the post-communist period, as urban communities grappled with the opacity of cities marked by lost pre-war pasts and decades of post-war oblivion.

Popular literature and the city in post-socialist east-central Europe

Recent decades have seen a remarkable growth in the production and consumption of popular culture across post-socialist Europe. Although popular culture did, of course, exist in various ways in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc after the war, there was nevertheless a sense in the early post-socialist period that a reading public long deprived of detective, romance, fantasy and other types of genre fiction was now ripe for the re-establishment of popular literary culture. A wave of popular and genre fiction (at first to a large extent translated, but later home-grown) ensued in the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁴ While much of this literature was, of course, written for purely commercial reasons, genre fiction was also taken up by writers who have since become respected voices. A notable trend among the various genres that have flourished in recent years has been popular historical fiction, which is often combined with the conventions of crime fiction, and is often focused on the history of particular cities. In the post-Soviet sphere, the Russian writer Boris Akunin is possibly the best-known writer of such fiction, in his case set mainly in Moscow. There are also, however, many writers who have used popular idioms to approach the fragmented histories of the type of cities that are the focus of this study. These works may involve an element of commodification of the past, but this does not imply cynicism: many of these writers profess a genuine love for their cities, and use popular forms to provide a route by which their audiences can access and engage with difficult memories. Indeed, as in the case of the cafes and restaurants discussed in the previous chapter, the very fact that such material successfully lends itself to commodification suggests that there is a wider public need for accessible representations of obscure urban pasts.

Genre fiction, and especially crime fiction, which will form a large part of the following discussion, has often fulfilled the important psychological functions, on the one hand, of exploring the boundary between the apparent and the hidden in the modern city, and on the other, of engaging with the related problem of rapid urban change that makes cities opaque, disorientating and difficult to read.⁵ This type of fiction is, thus, well placed to tackle the hidden pasts of post-war cities in east-central Europe. One of the most striking success stories in this regard is the work of the Wrocław writer Marek Krajewski. Since the beginning of his literary career in the late 1990s, Krajewski has enthusiastically addressed and encouraged the growing interest in the pre-war past of his native city among its inhabitants and wider Polish and international publics. At the same time, the author expresses a very personal motivation for wanting to connect to the city's past. In an interview in 2008 he stated:

I always envied my colleagues from Silesia or Wielkopolska – that they could show me around their cities: my grandfather built this house, and my father that one. Their family memories are tightly bound to place, to its history. My memory is not bound to the place in which I live, in which I was brought up. For that reason, I tried to discover and mythologize my city, to manufacture my own topographical memory. I loved and still love this city, and so its past interests me, and always has.⁶

Krajewski's work performs precisely the function for his readers that his own research does for the author himself: it 'manufactures' a 'topographical memory' that can compensate for absent family or community memory.⁷ Demand for this kind of memory exists not only among contemporary readers in Wrocław, but also among readers throughout Poland, for whom the entire 'Recovered Territories' remain something of a *terra incognita* even today.

Krajewski's series of six retro-detective novels set in pre-war Breslau has made him one of Poland's most popular authors, and he has enjoyed considerable success in translation (particularly in German). His popularity is such that in 2008, he received the Ambassador for Wrocław award from the major daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* for his contribution to promoting the city outside Poland.⁸ Interestingly, Krajewski's more recent work has, following a clear thematic logic, turned to pre-war Polish Lwów.⁹ The author has also been influential in Polish literary processes, inspiring a string of similar, retro-detective novels that pay close attention to evocations of particular cities. Marcin Wroński, for example, another writer with a diverse and prolific output, is best known for his retro-detective novels about Lublin, some of which deal in detail with the city's pre-war Jewish population. Wroński's contribution to the promotion of Lublin has earned him several awards from city and regional authorities.¹⁰ Kraków has been the setting for a historical crime novel by the prominent writer Jacek Dehnel, co-written with Piotr Turczyński under the pseudonym of Maryla Szymiczekowa, while Poznań and Wrocław have been used as the setting for retro-detective novels by Katarzyna Kwiatkowska and Nadia Szagdaj respectively. Other writers, such as Zygmunt Miłoszewski and Joanna Bator, have used the complex pasts of Polish cities as the background to crime thrillers set in contemporary Poland (Miłoszewski and Bator write about Sandomierz and Wałbrzych respectively, and are discussed in detail in what follows), while Szczepan Twardoch, one of contemporary Poland's most popular contemporary writers, has written a highly successful historical gangster novel, *Król* (The King, 2016) set in the world of pre-war Jewish Warsaw.

Ukraine has been slower than Poland in developing a home-grown popular literary culture, to a large degree because of the powerful influence of the Russian-language book market, which provides a huge proportion of the books sold in Ukraine today.¹¹ The popularity of wider Habsburg nostalgia in L'viv, for example, has not been reflected in any huge increase the production of popular historical fiction.¹² The country has, nevertheless, seen a few popular writers take an interest in the past of its cities, most notably of L'viv. While this trend has only really become noticeable in the 2010s, literary treatments of the city's past that could be classed as popular did appear already in the Soviet period, in the works of such prominent writers as Roman Ivanychuk, as discussed in Chapter 1, and Taras Myhal' and Rostyslav Sambuk, two writers who are today rather obscure but enjoyed popularity for their historical fiction in the 1960 and 1970s.¹³ The most significant contemporary writer in this regard, however, is Iurii Vynnychuk, who in his varied output and activities, from cabaret theatre performances to postmodern fiction and popular history, has been consistently preoccupied with L'viv and the region of Galicia since the 1980s. Vynnychuk is best known for his

popular publications on local history and culture, such as *Taiemnytsi L'vivs'koi kavy* (*The Secrets of L'viv Coffee*, 2001), *Knaipy L'vova* (*The Pubs of L'viv*, 2000), *Lehendy L'vova* (*Legends of L'viv*, 1999/2003), and has even written a cookery book, *Halyts'ka kukhnia: istoriia, retsepty ta oblychchia* (*Galician Cuisine: History, Recipes and Personalities*, 2014).¹⁴ He has also edited a series of paperbacks, 'Turii Vynnychuk presents', in which he revives lost classics of popular L'viv and Galician literature from the early 20th century, some originally written in Polish, with an emphasis on ghost stories and detective fiction. His novels, from the experimental *Mal'va Landa* (2000) to *Tango smerti* (*Tango of Death*, 2012) and *Aptekar* (*The Apothecary*, 2014) represent a postmodern pastiche of historical recreations of various periods in L'viv's history and the conventions the thriller or detective fiction. As Kotyńska observes, Vynnychuk stands out from predecessors like Ivanychuk in the way that he avoids nationalistic didacticism in his treatment of history, instead presenting a playful, joyous, easily accessible vision of multi-ethnic L'viv in which the Ukrainian element dominates.¹⁵

Other authors have followed Vynnychuk's example in exploring L'viv's past through popular idioms, some of them venturing into crime fiction. Most prominent among them is Andrii Kokotiukha, a prolific and popular writer well-known for his popular interpretations of Ukraine's history, often written in a nationalistic key, who has written a series of 'retro-detective' novels, published between 2015 and 2017, that are set mainly in L'viv (though Kyiv also features). A similar case is Bohdan Kolomiichuk, a young writer who has written retro-detective novels on L'viv (published in the same series as Kokotiukha's L'viv stories). Vladyslav Ivchenko, meanwhile, a writer from Sumy in north-east Ukraine, published a series of books of stories about a Ukrainian detective in the Russian Empire between 2011 and 2014, most of which are set in Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, in which one minor theme is the situation of the Empire's Jews.¹⁶ An undoubtedly popular writer in terms of readership and critical acclaim, though to whom the category of popular fiction should be applied with qualification, is Sofia Andrukhovych, whose novel *Felix Austria* (2014), set in the early part of the century in Ivano-Frankivsk (then known as Stanisławów in Polish, Stanislaviv in Ukrainian and Stanislau in German), contains elements of historical fiction and the period romance (the novel is discussed in the next section).¹⁷

In most of the preceding cases, the popularity of the texts depends as much on their generic specificities as it does on their spatiotemporal localization. It could be argued in this respect that the popularity of Krajewski, for example, is only in part due to his undoubted skill as a detective writer, and is to a large extent dependent on the appetite among contemporary Poles for stories about the past of the places they inhabit: the relative popularity and critical success of his historical work compared to his novels set in the present certainly points towards this. Also, alongside the simple fact of their commercial success, the prominent role that writers like Krajewski, Vynnychuk and others are afforded in public life, their status as 'ambassadors' for their cities (officially or unofficially) suggests that their work has significance beyond the sphere of entertainment, and that it performs

important social, political and cultural functions in relation to memory at both the local and national (and sometimes international) levels.

This function of literature as a spur for sociocultural processes and urban reinvention is not new: Alasdair Gray, who put Glasgow on the contemporary literary map of the UK with his accessible postmodern fiction in the 1980s and 1990s, wrote in his seminal novel *Lanark* (1981) that 'if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively'.¹⁸ In an interview with the *New Yorker* in 2015, the Scottish playwright David Grieg noted that Gray's book addressed the problem of 'inhabiting imaginatively' the city of Glasgow as it moved away from a period of post-industrial depression and became a city with thriving service and media sectors and a vibrant cultural scene, all fired by its status as European Capital of Culture in 1990.¹⁹ Glasgow is often cited as a success in this regard, as proof both that the institution of European Capital of Culture is effective and that culture can have a major effect in the transformation of cities.²⁰ Popular culture undoubtedly plays an important role in these processes. As Andrews and Phelps note, popular literature, and especially detective fiction, are often associated with developments in 'the physical remapping of urban space through the process of cultural tourism'.²¹ Popular literature, and Krajewski in particular, was important in Wrocław's self-promotion as it followed Glasgow's example in becoming European Capital of Culture in 2016. The city's motto for this event was 'City of Meetings' – a formulation attributed to Pope John Paul II in reference to Wrocław's multicultural past²² – and Krajewski's work was used prominently in its promotional campaign: the city council's official website contained several articles about him, including information on tours it organizes based on his work, while there has also been talk of a new museum that will 'recreate' the early 20th-century apartment of Krajewski's detective, Eberhard Mock.²³

While L'viv, as a non-EU city, cannot run for European Capital of Culture, the importance of culture and writers in helping to reimagine and rebrand the city is not lost on the local authorities, as the co-opting of Vynnychuk and others into tourist and heritage promotion initiatives demonstrates (see Chapter 4). In this regard, it is interesting to note an observation made in 1982 by the L'viv writer Roman Ivanychuk, a pioneer of accessible historical fiction about the city, that is very similar to that made by Gray's character in relation to Glasgow: in his novel *Voda z kameniu* (Water From Stone, 1982), Ivanychuk brings alive two important figures from the 19th-century Polish theatre world, Jan Nepomucen-Kamiński and Aleksander Fredro, who discuss with some dismay the tastes of the local theatre audiences in L'viv: 'Why the full houses?' asks Kamiński, 'For one reason only – for the play itself is rotten – it's because L'vivians get to see themselves there'.²⁴ While there may be something petty in this thirst to see one's city and community represented in art, there is also a hidden subtext cleverly inscribed into this scene: after all, this is a Ukrainian writer reconstructing 19th-century L'viv's Polish society and culture for a late 20th-century Ukrainian audience, many of whose family memories are 'not bound to the place [they] live in', in Krajewski's words. The 19th-century L'viv theatre audience may well have derived a simple pleasure from seeing their own city appear on stage, a pleasure which would

have reinforced their sense of local identity; for 20th-century Ukrainian L'vivians, confronting the Polish history of what is now a Ukrainian city is a more complex experience, one that in fact challenges settled notions of the interplay of identity, memory and place.

Reviving the other city: topography

In order to understand how popular texts seek to create mnemonic resonance among readers, it is necessary to examine some of the literary techniques used in them. The basic challenge the writers of these texts face is the need to instil a sense of the cultural memory of pre-war cities in a reading public that, to a large extent, does not possess such a memory. In tackling this common problem, writers working in quite different literary and geographical contexts resort to remarkably similar literary strategies.

The first common strategy is topographical precision. In Krajewski's first novel, *Śmierć w Breslau* (*Death in Breslau*, 1999), the writer uses a footnote each time a street, building or other topographical feature is mentioned to indicate its present-day Polish equivalent. This is Krajewski's 'topographical memory' in action. In later novels, footnotes are replaced by a glossary. It is tempting to think that footnotes and glossaries would be a nuisance to the reader, and we might expect the author to keep them to a minimum: for Krajewski's purposes, however, they are important tools in the construction of the desired memory effect. He makes sure to inform the reader at every opportunity where the action is taking place and which routes the protagonists take through the city, as in the following passage from *Death in Breslau* (footnotes in the original are indicated by numbers in brackets):

Travelling via Agnesstrasse (1), they arrived at the Police Headquarters, where Ehlerz and Smolorz got out. Mock and Anwaldt turned into Schweidnitzer Strasse, and then onto Zwinger Platz (2), and after passing the coffee-roasting factory and the merchants' union came out onto the busy Schuhbrücke. (3) They passed by the Petersdorff (4) and Barasch Brothers' (5) department stores, the latter crowned by its glass globe, and then the Paleontology Museum and the old Police HQ. They arrived at the Odra. At St. Matthew's Gymnasium then turned right and found themselves on Cathedral Island. They passed by the medieval cathedral and the red building of the Georgianum Seminary, and found themselves on Adalbertstrasse. (6) A moment later they were met by the bowing bellboy of Lessing's restaurant.

- 1 Łąkowa Street.
- 2 Teatralny Square.
- 3 Szewska Street.
- 4 'Kameleon' Department Store.
- 5 'Feniks' Department Store.
- 6 Wyszyński Street.²⁵

The use of footnotes and glossaries indicate that Krajewski's intended audience is one that knows, at least to some degree, the present-day city, so will be able to cross-reference the locations. The novels serve as an exercise in the classical art of memory through reference to topography: Krajewski's readers associate the German place-names with their Polish equivalents, thus associating the 'ideas' of German Breslau with the concrete topographical loci of contemporary Wrocław. Through this, the contemporary Polish reader commits the German city to memory. Krajewski's crime fiction thus achieves precisely what Margeret Atack describes here in relation to detective fiction set in Paris:

the details of the route of the investigator or indeed the criminal through Paris is a key part of the creation of Paris as an entity, as a coherent whole. It also has the important function of positioning the implied reader, and interpellating the actual reader, as equally knowing, and as recognizing Paris as knowable.²⁶

This strategy of making the city knowable through precisely mapped and named routes is found in almost all of the writers discussed in this chapter, and is used in relation to cities with varying histories of resettlement and destruction, from Krajewski's Wrocław to Wroński's Lublin. In some cases, this approach even constitutes the structural principal on which the text is built: the Szczecin author Artur Liskowacki's collection of essays *Ulice Szczecina* (Streets of Szczecin, 1995), for example, consists entirely of texts based around rich descriptions of the city's streets and detailed accounts of the changes in their names. Similarly, Iurii Vynnychuk's publications on L'viv cafes and bars focus less on cross-checking names as such, and on fuller descriptions of the precise location of the establishments:

The famous Monopol café was housed in a building belonging to Prince Poniński (8 Mariis'ka Square) from 1902 to 1912, in place of which the Sprecher tenement was later built, and which is today the House of Books.²⁷

Vynnychuk attaches vivid historical anecdotes to each location. These may take the form of stories about famous people, or of some strange or comic anecdote associated with the place. In *The Secrets of L'viv Coffee*, for example, Vynnychuk quotes secondary literature at length to give details of exactly which writers of the early 20th century (mainly Ukrainian ones) frequented which café, and what their impressions of the places were.²⁸ A similar approach can be seen in *Legends of L'viv* where each short 'legend' is given a precise location, such as in these opening lines selected from various entries:

In the 19th century in the Stryis'kyi Park there was an old abandoned cemetery.²⁹

In the year 1751, at Kastelivka, which got its name from the architect Antonio Castelli, a strange thing happened.³⁰

Once a couple of musicians were walking along Zamarstynivs'ka Street when they were overtaken by several richly decorated carriages.³¹

While Vynnychuk's emphasis is generally on recovering memories of Ukrainian L'viv from periods when the city was dominated by others, or indeed on the role played by more exotic European others, like Italians, he nevertheless gives space to the city's Poles and Jews.

In all of the preceding examples, topographical exactness – whether through detailed spatial mapping, the recovery of lost names, or the fleshing out of lost locations with vividly recreated memories – is important for popular writers in the context of numerous cities. By deploying these variations on the art of memory, the recovery of memory through the spatial imagination, these writers recover and re-inscribe Michel De Certeau's 'local authorities' – the small, local, place-based stories that help make cities 'inhabitable'.

Sensing the other city

Alongside the topographical dimension of memory, another important feature of popular literary representations of other cities is attention to the sensory nature of the experience of the lost place. As the previous chapter discussed, the relationship between the senses and memory is well established: particular smells, tastes and sounds are able, for individuals, to bring back vivid emotions and experiences from the past. This, as I have argued, is key to the appeal of nostalgic restaurants and cafes, where the senses can be directly stimulated; it is also a key element of popular literature, which can powerfully evoke sensual experience. The writers described in this section respond to a feeling of detachment from the lost, other city by performing a sensory reconstruction of these cities, creating, in fiction at least, something like Connerton's memory 'locus'. This is a literary equivalent to the process I have described previously in relation to nostalgic restaurants, and paraphrasing Marianne Hirsch, as 'post-involuntary memory'.

Krajewski's novels provide plentiful examples of this sensory effect. Smell and taste play a significant role in evoking the period in which his work is set: scenes of (often excessive) eating and drinking are frequent, featuring specifically named and carefully described local dishes or specific brands of alcoholic drinks or cigarettes popular in pre-war Breslau. Krajewski's detective spends a great deal of time in restaurants, and the reader is given precise details of everything he consumes there. The cumulative sensory effect can often be nauseating:

The Bischofskeller on Bischofstrasse was full of life and movement. The first room was full of fat warehouse owners who scoffed down with great appetite huge dumplings covered in hard, fried lumps of bacon [. . .] [Mock] ordered dumplings to go with his roast pork and thickened white cabbage. Without being asked, the waiter brought a mug of Schweidenitzer beer for the criminal counselor, a shot of clear vodka and some jellied chicken decorated with a halo of pickled mushrooms. Mock stuck his fork into a trembling gelatin cube and bit into the crisp crust of the roll. The bland chicken was given some extra flavor by a drop of vinegar that dripped from a mushroom. Next, he took a drink from his mug, and with true relish washed away the stubborn taste of nicotine.³²

Similar sensory scenes can be found, for example, in Marcin Wroński's work, as in one novel where the protagonist walks through a Jewish part of the city taking in the smells of a Jewish bakery, or throughout Szczepan Twardoch's *Król*, which features numerous carefully described scenes of drinking and eating in Warsaw cafes, restaurants and in the brothel that is at the heart of the novel.³³

Ukrainian writers are also alive to the importance of the evocation of the senses when recreating pre-war cities. In an interview in 2015, Iurii Vynnychuk lamented the fact that while writers like the historian Peter Ackroyd have researched in detail the sensory experience of old London, 'the sounds and smells of L'viv have not been described'.³⁴ Vynnychuk consciously sets himself this task his own work, and others have followed suit. The Jewish districts of pre-war western Ukrainian cities, for the first time in post-war Ukrainian literature, were depicted in Ukrainian popular fiction in the mid-2010s. In the first of a series of detective novels set in early-20th-century L'viv, *Advokat z Lychakivs'koi* (*The Lawyer from Lychakivs'ka Street*, 2015) Andrii Kokotiukha describes how the protagonist, a young Ukrainian lawyer who has come to L'viv to escape political persecution in the Russian Empire, is amazed by the bustling, multicultural Austro-Hungarian city. Kokotiukha's description of the protagonist's walk through the Jewish part of L'viv includes exact topographical locations that are traceable in the present city and vividly evoked sights, sounds and smells. The culmination is a visit to a Jewish household, where the protagonist is given his first taste of Jewish food:

It was a plate of ground, spiced herring sprinkled with onion. The grey substance that the skilled hands of the lady of the house had made from the salted fish had been evenly and carefully spread across something greenish, similar to grated vegetables. There was a clash of contrasting smells in the air. While Klym wondered at the dish, Esther explained:

Herring on apple.³⁵

Kokotiukha's choice of the young man, Klym, from Kyiv, who is visiting L'viv for the first time allows the author to use the wonderment of the protagonist at his new surroundings as a vehicle through which to display, emphasize and explain early-20th-century L'viv to a reader equally unfamiliar with the city.

A similar foray into the Jewish city, this time in pre-war Stanislaviv/Stanisławów (today Ivano-Frankivsk), can be found in Sofia Andrukhovych's historical novel *Felix Austria*, albeit in a less straightforwardly generic setting. Andrukhovych's descriptions of the pre-war city are remarkable for their attention to topographical exactness, pre-war names, historical and particularly architectural detail, as well as for their descriptions of the complex interactions of the various ethnic groups; particularly rich in detail, however, is one episode where the protagonist visits the Jewish district ('a completely different world') to buy fish:

The streets here get smaller and narrower, and lining them, like mushrooms, are squat little wooden buildings. The buildings are stuffed with shops, watchmakers', tailors' and cobblers' workshops. I enter an invisible cloud of heavy smells: it smells of garlic, rubbish and goats.³⁶

While for writers like Andrukhovych, evoking smells or tastes is just one element of recreating the lost city; for others it becomes the very centre of attention. Vynnychuk's *Secrets of L'viv Coffee* focuses on the taste of the coffee served in L'viv's legendary pre-war coffee houses, or of coffee manufactured in L'viv itself. The book features recipes for coffee from L'viv and various other towns in Galicia, which are designed to inspire the reader to experiment with and experience the 'genuine' taste of those vanished places for themselves. *The Pubs of L'viv*, meanwhile, opens with a bold statement defining the city by its alcoholic drinks, and placing them within the predominantly Polish context of the time, mentioning Jan Baczewski, the Polish-Jewish vodka entrepreneur who, as described in the previous chapter, inspired one of the contemporary city's many nostalgic restaurants:

'L'viv likes to drink, knows how to drink and has plenty to drink', L'vivians used to say with pride. For our city was famous for the best beer in Poland from the brewery on Klepariv'ska Street, for Baczewski's luxurious vodka, and for its pubs – a highly idiosyncratic phenomenon and, in the opinion of those around at the time, unequalled in the world.³⁷

Just as L'viv's politicians and entrepreneurs may wish to appeal to a more exotic, rosier, more European, and, of course, tastier pre-communist past in their attempts to rebrand their cities in the post-communist era,³⁸ so writers like Vynnychuk use food and drink traditions to literally whet the appetite of the reader for the 'authentic' and long-hidden pasts of their cities. In Vynnychuk's account of L'viv's café tradition, the vibrant, multicultural and very European coffeehouse culture of the city was destroyed precisely by the onset of the Soviet era: 'After the war the coffeehouse traditions lay entirely in ruins. The "liberators" simply had no idea what these cafes were'.³⁹ This view is corroborated to an extent by the historian Aleksandra Matiukhina, who points out that cafes died out in L'viv after the war, until their gradual return in the 1960s. This is something that Vynnychuk also notes, though where Matiukhina departs from his view is in her contention that the new inhabitants of L'viv who had migrated from eastern Ukraine or elsewhere in the Soviet Union, rather than facilitating the decline in the tradition, in fact enthusiastically adopted the city's café culture as an element of a new local identity.⁴⁰

A similar attention to drinking traditions can be found in Aleksandr Popadin's collection of reminiscences, myths and anecdotes about Kaliningrad-Königsberg *Mestnoe vremia* (Local Time, 1998; second volume 2010). Popadin's account differs from Vynnychuk's in that it embraces the Soviet-era cafeterias and beer cellars that characterized the city of his own youth. At the same time, however, a central theme of his book remains regret at the fact that contemporary Kaliningraders

'know little, understand little, and do not entirely understand what it means to live in a city with history'.⁴¹ As a way of correcting this situation, Popadin intersperses the descriptions of these insalubrious, though characterful, Soviet establishments with lengthy footnotes detailing the distinguished brewing traditions of the pre-war German city, including evocative descriptions of the quality of the beer. He also describes a local myth that circulated in Soviet times and stated that the reason Kaliningrad beer enjoyed a good reputation was that the old traditions had been kept alive by a Lithuanian who had worked in the pre-war brewery and had held on to the secret Prussian recipe: Popadin thus, entertains the possibility of the pre-war traditions remaining alive, albeit hidden, in the Soviet city, and being taken up by the new inhabitants.

As well as a reliance on smell and taste as memory aids, popular literature also has an important visual element. This is a central part of Vynnychuk's popular publications, which reproduce old postcards, illustrations, advertisements and newspaper clippings, many in Polish or German, as well as new photographs posed to appear old. Some Polish authors do the same: Nadia Szagda, for example, incorporates black and white photographs of Wrocław locations mentioned in her novels directly into the text. Krajewski's novels do not include images within the text, but each one features a grainy black and white shot of old Breslau on the cover. While these may not be specifically chosen by the author, their use coheres with his attitude to his city's past: in an interview, Krajewski stated that he was inspired to start writing about the German city because he wanted to 'step into an old photograph' of Breslau.⁴² The author also provides highly visual descriptions of the appearances of buildings, of the city's inhabitants (he pays particular attention to period dress) and other details of the urban landscape. These descriptions function very much like snapshots of Breslau's streets. This very visual orientation aimed at reconstructing the appearance of streets, buildings and people is also characteristic of writers like Andrukhovych and Kokotiukha.⁴³

Sound, and particularly music, is also important in popular literature. When Wroński's detective smells the bread from the Jewish bakery in the passage mentioned earlier, he also hears the sound of singing from the open windows of the nearby *cheder*, or Jewish school. A central motif in Krajewski's *Widma w mieście Breslau* (*Phantoms in Breslau*, 2005) is the sound of the hurdy-gurdy, and an invented urban folk song with the detective as its hero.⁴⁴ The sound of the hurdy-gurdy also appears repeatedly in Koktiukha's *The Lawyer from Lychakivs'ka Street*, floating into his protagonist's apartment from the streets of L'viv. Krajewski is also fond of having characters whistle or hum tunes from operettas that would have been popular at the time. Characteristically, Vynnychuk's *Secrets of L'viv Coffee* goes further than this, and opens with the lyrics of a song about L'viv coffee, which has in fact been recorded in retro-style by Viktor Morozov, L'viv's *batiar* bard, with lyrics by Vynnychuk himself, and will be known to many L'viv readers. Songs of L'viv's urban folklore, particularly of the *batiary*, also appear in *Legends of L'viv*.⁴⁵

Finally, the city in the work of the authors described here is very tactile. Characteristically for detective novels in particular, characters (usually, but not always,

male detectives) are engaged in a very physical relationship with their city, which manifests itself through violence or sexuality: in Krajewski's novels, and in those of contemporaries like Wroński and Twardoch, encounters with prostitutes are a common feature; Vynnychuk's novels, in turn, are renowned for their often explicit sex scenes, and while the erotic is more muted in his popular history publications, even here it appears, such as in the descriptions of which cafes were frequented by prostitutes in *Secrets of L'viv Coffee*.⁴⁶ Actual physical contact with the city, its buildings and pavements is also common, particularly in the frequent scenes of violence that are *de rigueur* for the detective genre. Krajewski's detective is frequently thrown to the pavement, injured by broken glass, burning buildings, falling masonry and other such hazards; Wroński's Maciejewski, who is a boxer and trains in a Lublin basement, is similarly prone to being involved in drunken scuffles on the city streets. In *Festung Breslau (Fortress Breslau, 2006)*, set during the final days of the siege of Breslau near the end of the Second World War, Krajewski repeatedly emphasizes the dust and dirt of the crumbling city that constantly coats his detective's elegant suits. This alarming, visceral tactility evokes both a reconstruction of memory for Krajewski's readers and a sense of the traumatic destruction of the city, together with the community that inhabited it.

Popular literature and inhabiting inattentively

As the preceding demonstrates, writers of popular fiction invest their cities with memory through an intensive literary 'inhabiting' of urban space, guiding their readers around its topography and immersing them in its sensory reconstruction. These strategies seem to be in tune with Paul Connerton's idea that the inhabited, physically experienced city 'locus' is more resonant for memory than any monument or memorial deliberately created to cultivate memory, since the former is experienced 'inattentively', taken for granted, and thus the memories engendered by it are more easily internalized.⁴⁷ In this respect, Connerton sees the ideal city locus as being one whose 'rhetoric', i.e. the encoded space that comprises it, what we might call, after Lotman, the urban mnemonic semiosphere, is not simply consciously 'known about' but is directly and instinctively 'known'.⁴⁸ In some ways, however, these popular works (along with the touristic and leisure engagements with the memory of other pasts described in the previous chapter) depart significantly from Connerton's idea. These authors posit the possibility of the revival of memory in an unfamiliar, fragmented city that is marked by destruction and deportation, precisely the kind of location that, for Connerton, represents the disruption of a stable and legible system of places that brings about modern forgetting. Writers like Krajewski show that unknown or partially unknown cities can be made known, that memory can be recovered, or more accurately recreated ('manufactured', to use his word), even when the past to which that memory refers belongs to others, is inscribed in foreign languages, and is separated from the present by a history of destruction and displacement. Memory, albeit a simulacric or staged kind of memory, manages to take root in a distinctly unstable system of places.

The memory effects achieved through the medium of popular literature show the city functioning quite differently from the way in which urban spaces are, ideally, assumed to facilitate memory. The city here is not an intuitively familiar memory locus that embodies the history and traditions of a more or less stable and continuous community, as imagined in different ways by Connerton or Halbwachs. Rather, the city functions as a medium for postmemory, whereby the power of inherited memories carried in stories, objects, photographs and other media is such that the un-experienced past is internalized as one's own.⁴⁹ There is, of course, as Hirsch recognizes, a high degree of imaginative investment in the creation of this kind of memory, and it may be described, after Eleanora Narvse-lius, as 'compensat[ing] a shortage of trustworthy and emotionally engaging first-hand accounts by means of stitching together various representations originating from secondary sources of hearsay, media, literature, popular culture and arts'.⁵⁰ Yet the case for considering it a kind of memory all the same is compelling, given its emotional weight and its power to shape understandings of collective past and the formation of present identities. Memory, after all, is, as Erll and Rigney have argued, always a process that is mediated and re-mediated.⁵¹

An important difference from Hirsch's conception of postmemory in the cities in question, however, is the fact that the previously described processes are not necessarily rooted in traumatic memories. Hirsch's idea relates to the Holocaust, the scale and power of which is such that it persists as keenly felt memory across generations. In post-mnemonic popular fiction, manufactured memories gain their power not through the power of collective trauma, but through the vividness and emotional punch of popular, even carnivalesque cultural forms that are oriented towards leisure and pleasure, rather than towards traumatic experience. Vynnychuk and Popadin, for example, utilize the accessible forms of nostalgic consumerism – the guidebook, the coffee-table history book, the illustrated collection of anecdotes – to create a vision of the past that is filtered entirely through the very modern, transitory consumerist culture of which Connerton, among others, laments the dominance, and which he and observers like Boyer or Nora in their varying ways associate with modern forgetting. Popular writers show that the rise of consumer culture does not necessarily produce forgetting, but rather facilitates particular forms of cultural memory that are not linked to anxiety over forgetting historical traumas or wrongs, preserving collective honour or competitive victimhood, but are focused rather on the consumption and enjoyment of the past.

In order to make this past enjoyable, however, some writers are inclined to present it in a way that eliminates conflict and trauma. Vynnychuk, for example, foregrounds the Ukrainian thread of L'viv's past, often heavily, but the other elements are never neglected: instead, all the threads are woven together into one colourful spectacle, designed to both entertain and inform. His vision is joyous and carnivalesque, in a way that recalls the presentation of the past in the restaurants discussed in the previous chapter: where the Golden Rose café in L'viv encourages customers to try on hats with sidelocks, a scene in *Tango of Death* involves the non-Jewish protagonists dressing up in traditional Jewish costumes to impersonate mourners at a funeral, to supposedly comic effect. The city's history of

oppression, armed conflicts, mass murder, pogroms and deportations fades to the background, or is blamed solely on outsiders. In Vynnychuk's case, although his novel expresses horror at the fate of L'viv's Jews, even the 1941 pogrom becomes an element of the carnival and a source of humour.⁵² Aleksandr Popadin, albeit in a more measured way, presents the Prussian past of Kaliningrad as something akin to a fairy-tale world, full of whimsical eccentricity, and, while he wistfully regrets the present-day neglect of this past, the conventions of his chosen genre dictate that the brutality of the destruction of the city and the difficult fate of its pre-war inhabitants remain in the background. This approach, which may in some ways be productive in that it provides the contemporary inhabitants of these cities with more accessible, non-traumatic, non-antagonistic connection to the other past, ultimately achieves its effect by eliding unresolved historical wrongs.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that popular cultural evocations of the past always replace critical thinking with blind nostalgia. It is perhaps no coincidence that it is precisely crime fiction that has become such an important genre in relation to the cities in question: the genre, after all, is known for confronting readers with violence and vice, with the disturbing and the uncanny, albeit within 'safe' generic coordinates. Where Vynnychuk aims in his popular publications to make the Ukrainian reader feel more at home in L'viv by emphasizing Ukrainian roots alongside safe representations of lost others, Krajewski and other detective writers, with the grittiness of their storylines and extremity of violence and depravity they uncover in the unknown city, also elicit a feeling of discomfort or unhomeliness, even as they make the city known to the reader. Here we can return to Connerton's idea of 'knowing' and 'living' urban space: Krajewski's work certainly allows the contemporary reader to know the city (not just know about it) by providing the detailed, sensory memory map discussed previously, but in the end this is an uncomfortable knowledge.

Connerton compares the relationship of the subject to the memory locus with that of the subject to the body; the experience of disjunction between the subject and the locus is, in this view, similar to the experience of amputation.⁵³ One could elaborate on Connerton's analogy in a way perhaps befitting genre fiction by suggesting that Krajewski does not return mnemonic-bodily familiarity to the Polish subject, but rather allows that subject to take possession of a body that is not its own, thus producing the uncanny sensation of possessing a corpse. While frightening, Krajewski's work functions along the defining principles of its genre, the violent crime thriller or horror story: it confronts the reader with something threatening, horrific and/or uncanny, but contains this within familiar generic conventions that, on the one hand, the reader knows she does not have to take seriously, and, on the other, guarantee a safe outcome (the villain is always caught, the crime is explained, the unknown becomes known). As Catherine Phelps and Lucy Andrews note, '[l]ooking through the detective's eyes, armchair *flânerie*, if you will, the reader can safely walk the streets that normally they may fear to tread. The dangerous underbelly is safely caught between crime fiction's pages'.⁵⁴ Krajewski's fiction allows the contemporary Wrocławian reader to come back from the nightmarish vision of the past with a new knowledge of what memories

lie buried in the stones around her, but also affords her a sense of security, since the troubling elements of those memories are firmly divided off from her by temporal distance. Thus, while Krajewski certainly aims to disturb his readers, the effect is ultimately not so distant from that achieved by Vynnychuk: the truly disturbing nature of the past is, again, neutralized by the popular form in which it is presented.

What lurks beneath . . .

The discussion so far has focussed on techniques used by writers to recover lost urban pasts. However, the evocation of the frightening, uncanny past that lurks in the traces of the other city – what Andrews and Phelps call ‘the duplicitous city’ – is not always used to facilitate access to the other city. It can be used to present that city’s otherness as threatening. This approach can be found in one of the earliest popular literary texts from the region that deals with the problem of lost others and urban space, Mark Barinov’s 1958 novel *Villa ‘Edit’* (The Villa ‘Edith’). Barinov engages with the topic of the German past of Kaliningrad, but codes the traces of that past as negative, very much in accord with the official Soviet discourse. The novel is a spy thriller set mainly in post-war Kaliningrad, where a group of Soviet intelligence agents foil a plot by German and American spies to recover treasure and important documents that had been hidden away in the city’s vast (and much exaggerated here in comparison with reality) network of secret underground tunnels. As one of the spies briefs her comrades:

You don’t know the other Königsberg, the underground one. Here, under Königsberg, there are huge underground networks of tunnels that have been created over the centuries. Underground tunnels criss-cross the city in all directions. Do you understand the danger that this Königsberg labyrinth presents for our advancing forces? There is another side of all this too. There are many treasures of the Royal Museum, valuables taken from the population, and it’s all hidden underground.⁵⁵

There is also a tragic romantic subplot, described in flashbacks set during the war, when the main protagonist lost his love (the female spy posing as the fiancée of a high-ranking Nazi who makes the preceding statement) in a failed operation. The dramatic final scene takes place in the tunnels under the city and in the ruins of Königsberg castle, using the claustrophobic, crumbling cityscapes to full dramatic effect.

Barinov’s novel is obscure in the larger picture of Russian-Soviet literature, but in Kaliningrad at the time of publication it enjoyed huge popularity, becoming the basis of a successful stage adaptation that ran for ten seasons in the city (despite poor reviews in the official press). The novel and the play answered, according to Kaliningrad journalist Vladislav Rzhevskii, a need among the local population to talk openly about the various myths and rumours about the German past that circulated in the city. The novel and play also produced numerous imitations and,

according to Rzhevskii, inspired many locals to go searching for hidden German treasures, including at the villa that is central to the story (and located very exactly at an identifiable house in the city).⁵⁶

While it certainly seems to have answered a demand for representation of the topic, and in doing so may have inadvertently deviated from the official line, the novel contains no deeper reflection on the lost German past: its ostensible message is rather about the need to keep that past buried. Rather than making Kaliningrad 'knowable', Barinov prefers to emphasize the fact that, as the preceding citation has it, 'you don't know' the city, and gives the distinct impression that it is better not to know it. The dark underground and ruined pomp of Königsberg stand for the corruption, greed and hunger for power of the West, as embodied in the two Western spies, an unlikely double act of former US and Nazi agents. On top of this decaying world, Soviet society is building, through collective effort, a modern, socialist city, and the novel contains several admiring descriptions of the city's new infrastructure and architecture. Instead of bringing the hidden past to light, Barinov draws an ideological morality tale in which the Soviet reader knows that she is on the right side of history, and that whatever came before, though it still lies buried under the Soviet surface, is best forgotten.

Although very different from most of the works discussed here in terms of its ideological subtext, Barinov's use of Kaliningrad's legendary underground city nevertheless speaks to a common motif in works that seek to engage with lost urban pasts: that of the underground, 'duplicitous' city as threat and warning. Commenting on a recent novel by the Polish author Joanna Bator that makes use of subterranean passages in the Polish city of Wałbrzych (formerly German Waldenberg), Przemysław Czapliński describes how the writer uses this 'beloved chronotope of horror' for its potential to frighten the reader.⁵⁷ In Krajewski's *Festung Breslau*, scenes set in Breslau's secret underground tunnels – the only way to safely navigate the besieged city – provide a suitably suffocating atmosphere for the novel's disturbing and violent events. The plot of Marcin Wroński's *Morderstwo pod cenzurą* (Murder Under Censorship, 2007) revolves in part around treasure hidden in the tunnels under Lublin's castle by the city's Jews in the 17th century, during the Swedish invasions and Cossack uprisings, the discovery of which becomes tangled up in the tense politics of interwar Poland, where anti-Semitism is rife. In all of these examples, the city's hidden underground spaces become a vessel for its hidden and difficult past, providing a rich seam of metaphorical possibilities.

A more contemporary and very striking example of the motif of the underground is Igor Ostachowicz's novel *Noc żywych żydów* (Night of the Living Jews, 2012), which attracted a flurry of media attention on its publication and was nominated for Poland's leading literary prize, the Nike award. The protagonist, a Polish everyman living in contemporary Muranów, the site of the city's pre-war Jewish district and during the war the main part of the ghetto, has little interest in the Jewish (or, for that matter, any other) past, engaged as he is in the banal, materialistic concerns of most contemporary Poles. His encounters with Jewish zombies, who emerge from the basement of his building, changes his outlook:

these zombies are not man-eating monsters, but rather sensitive individuals with a desire to explain their horrific fate to present-day Varsovians. These guests from beyond the grave are also not entirely as fantastical as they might seem: while they may not emerge walking and talking, corpses buried during the devastation of the city during World War II are regularly discovered during construction works in Warsaw – something that is true especially in the former ghetto.⁵⁸ In the novel, Ostachowicz's protagonist and his friends join the zombies in a dramatic battle against Polish neo-Nazis – and some actual Nazi zombies left over from the German occupation – which takes place in a shopping centre, though much of the action is also played out in Warsaw's sewers (themselves an iconic symbol of the city's wartime past, given their important role in allowing insurgents to move around during the Warsaw Uprising, as famously captured in Andrzej Wajda's 1956 film *Kanał*). Eventually, with the conflict resolved in favour of the forces of good, the zombies return to the underworld, and the living return to the surface.

Ostachowicz's novel is less a genuinely commercial piece of popular fiction, and more a knowing pastiche composed from a patchwork of popular cultural references, the most obvious being George Romero's 1968 film *Night of the Living Dead* and the zombie movie trend that this sparked. It is also written with considerable irony and a willingness to play on the edge of good taste. The mixing of threats and thrills with deflating, ironic humour also recalls Popadin's approach to Kaliningrad's underground secrets. Despite its surface shock value, Ostachowicz's novel is in fact a highly moral tale (not unlike Romero's original film, which was widely seen as a moral warning against rampant American consumerism), whose irreverence masks an earnest liberal agenda. The message is straightforward and is an expression of the same desire to engage with the Jewish past that has become well-established among progressive Poles, including among progressive political elites, in recent decades, and which produced Muranów's state-of-the-art Museum of the History of Polish Jews. It is perhaps no coincidence that the author is a former adviser to Poland's former prime minister Donald Tusk, and thus himself a member of the progressive political class.

Ostachowicz is not the only contemporary author in Poland who combines popular liberal political messages with the underground spaces of crime or horror fiction. Two of the most significant novels of the early 2010s – Zygmunt Miłoszewski's detective novel *Ziarno prawdy* (Grain of Truth, 2011) and Joanna Bator's thriller *Ciemno, prawie noc* (Dark, Almost Night, 2012), both of which have been adapted as films by the director Borys Lankosz – rely on exactly the same combination. The former is a complex crime thriller that reflects on contemporary and past anti-Semitism and features key scenes of violence that take place in the medieval underground of the small city of Sandomierz in eastern Poland. The latter, set in the Silesian city of Wałbrzych (Waldenburg), features a plot that revolves around hidden German-era underground passages. As previously mentioned, Przemysław Czapliński notes the deliberate use of the underground in the latter novel, which he sees not only as a vehicle for exploring private and family secrets, but as a metaphor for the suppressed anxieties of broader Polish society.⁵⁹

The main character in *Grain of Truth*, Teodor Szacki, is a jaded detective from Warsaw who has moved to the pretty, sleepy provincial town of Sandomierz to escape his former, big-city life. The policeman finds himself immediately drawn into a gruesome series of murders that appears to have a connection with the city's history of anti-Semitism and violence against Jews. The murders bear the characteristics of Jewish ritual slaughter, which sparks suspicions of a Jewish maniac intent on revenge on Poles for wartime anti-Semitism; yet for Miłoszewski's detective, a cynic with time for neither nationalism nor religion, there is something too ostentatious in the staging of the killings. The detective's suspicions open the way for critical reflections on lingering Polish anti-Semitism, the erasure of the memory of anti-Semitic violence, the lurid way in which the topic of Poland's Jewish past sometimes appears in public discourse, as well as the occasionally shallow and self-serving 'politics of regret' of the liberal sections of Polish society – as with Ostachowicz, one can detect an earnest, at times polemical, at times educational agenda underneath the generic conventions.

Everything in the novel revolves around Sandomierz's cityscape, its old buildings and hidden underground spaces. The city's Cathedral of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary features prominently in the story because of its 18th-century paintings depicting Jews committing the ritual murder of Christian children (the detective senses a connection between the paintings and the murders). The murals are hidden by a screen, not removed – neither openly accepted nor condemned – reflecting the ambivalence in Polish thinking about its lost Jews. The story opens with a genealogist sitting in the local archive, which happens to be housed in an old synagogue, musing on the animosity he encounters whenever he uncovers a Jewish ancestor for one of his Polish clients. The character of the genealogists allows the author the opportunity to provide the reader with a wealth of precise facts and figures regarding the city's pre-war Jewish population. The detective is convinced that 'the answer to the riddle [of the crime] was hidden in the walls of the old city, which had existed since the beginnings of Polish history',⁶⁰ and recognizes the dangers posed by the fact that, in Sandomierz, 'everything has been done to sweep a part of history under the carpet'.⁶¹ The novel is full of precise descriptions of locations in the city, not least its underground spaces: the murderer stages gruesome spectacles in hidden underground chambers (sometimes remnants of buildings that have long since disappeared above ground) for his pursuers to find, and also uses underground passages in order to outwit them.

To augment his topographical explorations of Sandomierz's (and Poland's) dark present and past, Miłoszewski has his protagonist turn to a Rabbi in nearby Lublin for help. Here, the tone of the novel turns towards an almost essayistic exploration of Polish-Jewish relations, here echoing the concerns of the organizers of Kraków's Jewish festival and others cited in the previous chapter:

I don't like talking about the Holocaust,' he said, 'I don't like it that in the end every conversation between Poles and Jews returns to events from almost seventy years ago. As though there hadn't been seven hundred years

of common history before that and all that came after. Just a sea of corpses and nothing more.⁶²

The conversation with the Rabbi affords the author another opportunity to educate his readers, but also inspires Szacki to reflect on his own feelings towards the Jewish past, this time in reference to Warsaw, Szacki's home town:

He stood beside the Rabbi and felt like telling him about his great dream: he'd always wanted to walk through old Warsaw and feel and taste its diversity, walk the streets on which Polish, Russian and Yiddish intermingled. He felt a need to express his nostalgia for otherness, but he closed his opened mouth, fearing that he'd say something stupid, because like every educated Pole he had a mortal fear of appearing to be an anti-Semite.⁶³

It is interesting to note the contrast here between Miłoszewski's approach and that of writers like Krajewski, for example, who carefully reconstruct the spatial and sensory experience of the lost city. Krajewski's work disturbs to an extent, but softens the blow through the burlesque exaggeration of the detective story and in the way that it fully brings the German city to life, creating the impression of giving direct access to the lost inhabitants. Miłoszewski's Sandomierz (or, here, Warsaw) is a contemporary city in contact with which the protagonist comes face to face with contemporary Polish problems with forgetting the Jewish past. There is no revived presence here, despite the detective's passing desire to achieve such a thing ('to feel and taste' old Warsaw). Rather, Miłoszewski emphasizes the inaccessibility of the past, the loss of the old city, and the difficult aftermath of this loss.

The murders are revealed in the end not to be the work of some maniac driven by a generalized desire for Jewish vengeance against Poles, but relate rather to specific, personal stories of violence committed by local Poles against their Jewish neighbours when the latter returned to Sandomierz after the war. These were crimes that 'were simply never spoken about [...] Just like in the rest of Poland'.⁶⁴ The role of the city here is different to that which it plays in popular nostalgic representations of Poland's Jewish urban spaces: far from being a rich source of evocative traces of a lost multicultural society, the city fabric reveals traces of prejudice, animosity, violence and betrayal. As Szacki puts it, 'it was as though the old Polish city had seen too much, as though that crime from seventy years ago was too much for these walls and instead of sinking in as usual to the red bricks, it began to ricochet off the walls'.⁶⁵

Miłoszewski's approach to reading the traces of Jewish Sandomierz departs somewhat from what Magdalena Waligórska has identified as the dominant trend in Polish detective fiction that deals with the Jewish past. For Waligórska, such fiction 'give[s] solace not by avoiding difficult, painful topics like antisemitism or anti-Jewish violence, but by framing them in a narrative of crime and punishment'.⁶⁶ These novels (and the same could also be said of similar texts in Ukraine) tend to provide fantasies of vengeance that put right the story that 'we know

does not have a happy ending', or, alternatively, resort to nostalgia for multicultural Poland in 'a vision that idealises the other and foregrounds interethnic cooperation and empathy rather than conflict'.⁶⁷ Waligórska, echoing the links drawn by Andrews and Phelps cited previously, argues that retro-detective fiction is an extension of a wider process of the heritagization of the multicultural past of Poland that 'became one of the founding myths of the post-Communist Polish republic'.⁶⁸ Miłoszewski is doing something different with his detective, who has the wit to look beyond the polarized discourses over the Jewish past and to challenge his own liberal assumptions and his romanticized view of pre-war Jewish life in Poland: his is a nostalgia that cuts itself off before it is formed, leaving room only for cynicism about present memory politics and social attitudes.

While Miłoszewski stays firmly within the confines of the detective novel in order to provide insightful commentary on problems of cultural memory, Joanna Bator's *Dark, Almost Night* approaches the genre from a more oblique angle, incorporating the conventions of crime, thriller and horror fiction into a non-genre text. The novel received critical acclaim and was nominated for multiple awards, winning two, including the Nike prize. Bator's exploration of Wałbrzych/Waldenberg bears some structural similarities to *Grain of Truth*: a young liberal from Warsaw makes a journey into the Polish province to investigate murky crimes that appear to have links to the dark past. Instead of a detective, however, Bator's protagonist is a journalist, and her trip is not into the unknown, but back to her home town, where several children have disappeared in mysterious circumstances. The disappearances spark unrest and inspire animosity towards the town's Roma, who immediately fall under suspicion. As in Miłoszewski's case, the real object of investigation here is contemporary Polish society and its prejudices, superstitions and anxieties, in which past traumas play an important role. Bator's net of social critique is cast considerably wider, however, taking in attitudes to Jews, Germans, Roma, sexual minorities, and includes a grotesque parody of extreme manifestations of Polish Catholicism and patriotism, while a major theme of the novel is sexual violence against women and children and the way the legacy of this passes across generations. The novel has two main plot strands that intersect in complex ways: the first is the mystery of the disappearing children in the contemporary city; the second relates to horrific secrets in the journalist's own family history. Both plot strands converge around the city's hidden topography – the secret, underground passages and the old German tenements.

As Przemysław Czapliński has noted, the trope of the return to childhood by an adult protagonist seeking to solve half-forgotten mysteries has been used by several important Polish writers, including Stefan Chwin, Paweł Huelle and Antoni Libera, all of whom deal more widely with difficult questions from Poland's past.⁶⁹ The first two, as discussed in previous chapters, have also combined this device with an exhaustive exploration of the urban space of Gdańsk and its traces of lost others. Edward Saunders has noted, in relation to representations of Kaliningrad, that the child's perspective is a key means by which 'alternative narratives of [...] landscape' can be formulated in a fragmented, unknown urban space, citing De Certeau's idea that the child's view 'undoes [the] readable surfaces'

of urban space'; this certainly applies in the case of many Polish texts on post-German cities.⁷⁰ Bator's approach certainly provides alternative narratives, and undoes superficial interpretations of urban space; at the same time, her approach is different from those of Huelle or Chwin, deploying a postmodern pastiche of detective, thriller and horror conventions, and in this is far removed from the 'joyous and silent' childhood experience of space that De Certeau describes.⁷¹ Bator's grotesque, often violent approach to Wałbrzych/Waldenberg could even be seen as a subversion of the poetic, melancholic returns to Gdańsk/Danzig in Chwin and Huelle, and an undermining of the myth of innocent childhood experience in general. Initially, the explorations of ruined German buildings and abandoned passageways certainly appear similar to those mentioned previously: the protagonist's eccentric father, obsessed by the tunnels under the city's castle and the myth of treasures hidden underneath it, immediately recalls similar melancholic but also humorously unconventional figures (sometimes fathers) in Huelle, Chwin or Popadin. Yet the father's eccentricity turns out to be not simply an endearing character trait, but rather a way of escaping a home life that is shattered by the traumas of wartime violence and displacement that have drastically affected his wife. The protagonist's mother, we learn, was brutally raped as a child by Red Army soldiers, and subsequently abused her own daughter, the protagonist's sister, who later committed suicide. The revelation of this secret also uncovers another: the fact that the mother was German. A similar disclosure comes from a neighbour and family friend, Albert, who reveals that he is half-Roma and half-German, and had, throughout a life marked by violence, trauma and loss, been brought up by both German and Polish families. The characters are thus revealed to be the hybrid, post-traumatic 'golems' or 'whoevers' that appear in the texts by Zinik and Buida about Kaliningrad, as discussed in Chapter 2. Bator's descriptions of the charming German tenements of Wałbrzych, on the surface, also recall Huelle, Chwin and others. Yet while these writers tend to weave poetic, melancholic stories from leftover German traces (albeit often expressing ambivalence or frustration caused by a lack of access to the pasts they represent), in Bator's narrative, these traces are more disturbing: instead of finding old books or domestic objects, the children pick out German hair from between the floorboards. As discussed in Chapter 2, the effect is to present the German past not as a fascinating, hidden secret, but as what Julia Kristeva calls the abject – something disturbing within the self that is outside of the symbolic order, which revolts us and traumatizes us when we face it.

The uncovering of hidden identities and traumatic memories is, thus, in Bator's work facilitated through the conventions of the 'other city' novel already familiar to Polish readers from the literature of the 1990s and 2000s – the uncovering of traces of the lost cities, but also of family secrets, the exploration of the hidden corners of the family home and the city at large – but instead of a gentle, melancholic narrative, the reader is confronted with something far more shockingly other. In this sense, Czapliński notes in his review of *Dark, Almost Night*, that one of the main preoccupations of the horror genre is otherness. 'In order to love thy neighbour', the critic writes, 'one must first be horrified by him'.⁷² This is true in

Bator's and Miłoszewski's novels, which confront normative Polish society with its religious, ethnic, gender and sexual others, and use the post-German or post-Jewish cityscapes – spaces soaked in otherness – to this end. Yet at the same time the self–other binary is revealed by both writers to be far from straightforward: here, it is not the easily identified other, but rather the other – abject – element hidden within the self that is brought to light. As mentioned previously, at the beginning of his novel, Miłoszewski describes how clients of the historian-genealogist character are dismayed to find Jewish blood, so much so that they may react violently, causing the historian to purge such facts from the genealogies he composes. Jewishness in individual biographies, just like the traces of Jewishness in the city, is presented here not simply as otherness for Poles, but rather as a part of the self (or city) that is rejected, and often violently expunged. Similarly, the revelations of Jewish, German or Roma blood in Bator's characters are couched in stories of violence and revulsion, both on the part of characters themselves and wider society.

Conclusion

The role of popular literary forms in relation to the vanished others of east-central European cities is, as the preceding discussion has demonstrated, complex and multi-faceted. The popular culture paradigm is sometimes engaged wholesale, while at other times its elements are judiciously used by authors better known for 'serious' fiction; ultimately, there is no clear borderline between the popular and the highbrow, but rather a sliding scale, every point on which can provide useful strategies for representing the other past. These strategies include the careful manufacturing of 'topographical memory' and the vivid recreation of the sensory experience of the lost city. These texts create a 'postmemory' effect that is arguably more powerful than that achieved by memorials, monuments and museums, and appears as a literary counterpart to the nostalgic commercial ventures described in the previous chapter. Just like themed restaurants and festivals aimed at tourists, popular literature can be ambiguous in this sense: in making unknown pasts accessible and more easily consumable, it may elide conflict and violence, and thus ultimately hamper reconciliation between mnemonic factions. This is certainly the case in some of the examples discussed earlier in this chapter. At the same time, however, popular cultural idioms can be harnessed and used for precisely the opposite effect: they can disturb comfortable, nostalgic views of the pasts of familiar urban spaces, forcing readers to confront the horror of some of the events that have transformed these spaces, to recognize the convoluted ways in which elements of their past have become abject and the target of violent purging, and to begin to think of these purged elements as recoverable and desirable parts of the collective self. Whether used to make the difficult past more visible, to sanitize it, or to shock and horrify the reader with it, popular literature always also reflects a sociocultural need for these questions to be discussed, and facilitates that discussion through its accessibility and wide circulation.

Notes

- 1 David Barnett, 'David Mitchell: Separating Literary and Genre Fiction Is "Act of Self-Mutilation"', *The Guardian*, 10 November 2015, www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/nov/10/david-mitchell-and-literary-and-genre-fiction-world-fantasy-award [accessed 27 July 2017].
- 2 Katarzyna Kotyńska, *Lwów: O odczytywaniu miasta na nowo* (Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2012), p. 11.
- 3 Paul Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 44–45.
- 4 A detailed analysis of various aspects of the reception of popular literature in post-Soviet Russia can be found in Stephen Lovell and Birgit Menzel (eds), *Reading for Entertainment in Contemporary Russia: Post-Soviet Popular Literature in Historical Perspective* (Munich: Otto Sagner, 2005).
- 5 Lucy Andrews and Catherine Phelps, 'Introduction', in Lucy Andrew and Catherine Phelps (eds), *Crime Fiction in the City: Capital Crimes* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 1–7, 3.
- 6 Agnieszka Kołodyńska, 'Marek Krajewski został Ambasadorem Wrocławia', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 05 June 2008, http://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl/wroclaw/1,35771,5284160,Marek_Krajewski_zostal_Ambasadorem_Wroclawia.html#ixzz3sR1cZI9w [accessed 2 July 2018] (paragraph 7 of 10).
- 7 In the interview Krajewski uses the Polish word 'dorobić', which has multiple meanings depending on context, including to manufacture, complete, supplement, copy, or make more of something.
- 8 Kołodyńska, 'Marek Krajewski został Ambasadorem Wrocławia'.
- 9 It is perhaps no coincidence that on the last page of the first of several novels Krajewski has set in L'viv, *Głowa Minotaura* (*Head of the Minotaur*, 2009), one of those among the list of acknowledgements is Iurii Vynnychuk, one of several 'friendly L'vivians who are fascinated by their city's history'. Marek Krajewski, *Głowa Minotaura* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo AB, 2009), p. 348.
- 10 Full details on Wroński's website, *Marcin Wroński*, www.marcinwronski.art.pl/o-autorze/ [accessed 7 July 2018].
- 11 The percentage of Russian-language books sold in Ukraine is estimated at around 80 percent, due in large part to imports from Russia. See Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Democratization, Corruption, and the New Russian Imperialism* (Santa Barbara and Denver: Praeger Security International, 2015), p. 245. Other estimates, for example from the time of Yanukovych's presidency, cite 90 percent. See Michael Moser, *Language Policy and the Discourse on Languages in Ukraine Under President Yanukovych (25 February 2010–28 October 2012)* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2014), p. 55. In 2017, the Ukrainian government introduced legislation aimed at reducing the number of imports, which may alter the situation somewhat.
- 12 Kotyńska, *Lwów*, p. 22.
- 13 See Kotyńska, *Lwów*, pp. 127–133.
- 14 The latter book contains contributions by famous Galician musicians and writers such as Viktor Morozov, Taras Prokhas'ko and Taras Chubai, and is a spin-off of the Galician cuisine project mentioned in the previous chapter. Iurii Vynnychuk, *Halyts'ka kukhnia: istoriia, retsepty ta oblychchia* (L'viv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2014).
- 15 Kotyńska, *Lwów*, p. 147.
- 16 See Sofia Filonenko, "'Naikrashchyi syshchyk imperii" Vladyslava Ichenka: uposlidzhenyi na sluzhbi kolonizatora", in Tamara Hundorova and Agnieszka Matusiak (eds), *Postkolonializm: Heneratsii. Kul'tura* (Kyiv: Laurus, 2014), pp. 98–110, 103–105.
- 17 The question of whether Andrukhovych's novel should be considered highbrow or popular/mass literature was the cause of some debate among Ukrainian critics. See for

- example Andrii Drozda, 'Sam sobi iluzionist', *LitAktsent*, 29 September 2015, <http://litakcent.com/2014/09/29/sam-sobi-iljuzionist/> [accessed 27 July 2017].
- 18 Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador, 1994), p. 243.
- 19 Evan Fleischer, 'How Alasdair Gray Re-Imagined Glasgow', *The New Yorker*, 26 August 2015, www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/how-aldasair-gray-reimagined-glasgow?mbid=rss [accessed 27 July 2017].
- 20 Dave O'Brien, *Cultural Policy: Management, Value and Modernity in the Creative Industries* (Routledge: London and New York, 2014) p. 93.
- 21 Andrews and Phelps, 'Introduction', p. 3.
- 22 Igor Pietraszewski and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, 'Wrocław: Changes in Memory Narratives', in Barbara Törnquist-Plewa (ed), *Whose Memory? Which Future? Remembering Ethnic Cleansing and Lost Cultural Diversity in Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), pp. 17–48, 32.
- 23 Agnieszka Kołodyńska, 'Mock's Apartment Available to Visitors', *wroclaw.pl*, 01 October 2014, www.wroclaw.pl/en/mocks-apartment-available-to-visitors [accessed 27 July 2017].
- 24 Roman Ivanychuk, *Voda z kameniu* (L'viv: Kameniar', 1982), p. 26.
- 25 Marek Krajewski, *Śmierć w Breslau* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1999), p. 153–154.
- 26 Margaret Atack, 'Streets and Square, Quarters and Arrondissements: Paris Crime Scenes and the Poetics of Contestation in the Novels of Jean-François Vilar', in Lucy Andrew and Catherine Phelps (eds), *Crime Fiction in the City: Capital Crimes* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 85–106, 89.
- 27 Iurii Vynnychuk, *Knaipy L'vova* (L'viv: Spolom, 2000), p. 56.
- 28 Iurii Vynnychuk, *Taiemnytsi i'vivskoi kavy* (L'viv: Piramida, 2008), pp. 107–120.
- 29 Iurii Vynnychuk, *Lehendy L'vova: Knyha Druha* (L'viv: Piramida, 2009), p. 52.
- 30 Vynnychuk, *Lehendy L'vova: Knyha Druha*, p. 199.
- 31 Vynnychuk, *Lehendy L'vova: Knyha Druha*, p. 231.
- 32 Marek Krajewski, *Koniec świata w Breslau* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo AB, 2006), p. 47. With this citation I benefited from consulting Danusia Stok's translation: Marek Krajewski, *The End of the World in Breslau*, transl. by Danusia Stok (London: MacLehose Press, 2009), p. 39.
- 33 Marcin Wroński, *Morderstwo pod cenzurą* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo AB, 2010), p. 95.
- 34 Diana Kuryshko, 'Vynnychuk: dekomu bude nepriemno chytaty pro tortury', *BBC Ukrainian Service*, 19 November 2015, www.bbc.com/ukrainian/society/2015/11/151116_book_2015_interview_vynnychuk_dk [accessed 27 July 2017] (paragraph 10 of 29).
- 35 Andrii Kokotiukha, *Advokat z Lychakivs'koi* (Kharkiv: Folio, 2015), p. 99.
- 36 Sofia Andrukhovych, *Felix Austria* (L'viv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2014), pp. 65–66.
- 37 Vynnychuk, *Knaipy L'vova*, p. 8.
- 38 John Czaplicka, Nida Gelazis and Blair A. Ruble, 'Introduction', in John Czaplicka, Nida Gelazis and Blair A. Ruble (eds), *Cities After the Fall of Communism: Reshaping Cultural Landscapes and European Identity* (Baltimore and Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, John Hopkins University Press, 2009), pp. 1–13, 4–6. See also Craig Young and Sylvia Kaczmarek, 'The Socialist Past and Postsocialist Urban Identity in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Łódź', *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 15, 1, 2008, 53–70.
- 39 Vynnychuk, *Taiemnytsi*, p. 126. The word 'vyzvolitel', or liberator, has connotations of Soviet propaganda and is used ironically here.
- 40 Aleksandra Matiukhina, *W sowieckim Lwowie: Życie codzienne miasta w latach 1944–1990* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2000), pp. 18, 153.

- 41 Aleksandr Popadin, *Mestnoe vremia: progulki po Kaliningradu: Prakticheskoe posobie v dvukh knigakh* (Kaliningrad: Skorost' zvuka, 2010), p. 4.
- 42 Jacek Szczerba, 'Chcę wejść w stare fotografie – rozmowa z Markiem Krajewskim', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 21 August 2006, <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75517,3563752.html?as=1&startsz=0#ixzz1AjKcYzuM> [accessed 27 July 2017].
- 43 Photographs are discussed in more depth in Chapter 6.
- 44 Marek Krajewski, *Widma w mieście Breslau* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo AB, 2005), p. 176.
- 45 Vynnychuk, *Lehendy L'vova: Knyha Druha*, pp. 298–301. Viktor Morozov has recorded two albums of songs in the style of 'batiar' music. The songs are a mixture of covers of genuine songs from interwar Lwów, with texts translated from the specific interwar Lwów Polish dialect into its contemporary Ukrainian equivalent, and new songs written in the same style. Vynnychuk wrote some of the lyrics and did some of the translations for these albums. As discussed in Chapter 4, a 'Batiar Day' festival is now celebrated annually in L'viv.
- 46 Vynnychuk, *Taiemnytsi*, p. 108.
- 47 Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets*, p. 34.
- 48 Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets*, p. 32.
- 49 Marianne Hirsch, 'The Generation of Postmemory', *Poetics Today*, 29, 1, 2008, 103–128, 106–107.
- 50 Eleanor Narvselius, 'Spicing up Memories and Serving Nostalgias: Thematic Restaurants and Transnational Memories in East-Central European Borderland Cities', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 3, 2015, 417–432, 419.
- 51 Astrid Erll and Anne Rigney, 'Introduction: Cultural Memory and its Dynamics', in Astrid Erll and Anne Rigney (eds), *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 1–11.
- 52 For further analysis of this, see Kotyńska, *Lwów*, pp. 178–179.
- 53 Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets*, p. 32.
- 54 Andrews and Phelps, 'Introduction', p. 3.
- 55 Mark Barinov, *Villa "Edit"* (1958). The book is difficult to track down in hard copy, but various online editions can be found. See for example the website *litmir.me*, www.litmir.me/br/?b=219724&p=1. For the passage cited here, see page 6 of that online edition, paragraph 20 of 40, www.litmir.me/br/?b=219724&p=6 [accessed 2 July 2018].
- 56 Vladislav Rzhetskii, 'Taina villy "Edit"', *Trud*, 16 August 2013, www.trud.ru/article/16-08-2013/1298488_tajna_villy_edit.html [accessed 27 July 2017].
- 57 Przemysław Czapliński, 'Nowa powieść Joanny Bator. Alicja w krainie strachów', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 October 2012, (paragraph 27 of 36), http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,12762841,Nowa_powieść_Joanny_Bator__Alicja_w_krainie_strachow.html [accessed 27 July 2017].
- 58 Konstanty Gebert, 'Reading the Palimpsest', in Erica Lehrer and Michael Meng (eds), *Jewish Space in Contemporary Poland* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015), pp. 223–237, 230.
- 59 Czapliński, 'Nowa powieść Joanny Bator' (paragraph 33 of 36).
- 60 Zygmunt Miłoszewski, *Ziarno prawdy* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo AB, 2011), p. 212.
- 61 Miłoszewski, *Ziarno prawdy*, p. 78.
- 62 Miłoszewski, *Ziarno prawdy*, pp. 257–258.
- 63 Miłoszewski, *Ziarno prawdy*, p. 258.
- 64 Miłoszewski, *Ziarno prawdy*, p. 356.
- 65 Miłoszewski, *Ziarno prawdy*, p. 393.
- 66 Magdalena Waligórska, 'The Jewish-Theme Whodunnit in Contemporary Poland and Germany', *East European Jewish Affairs*, 43, 2, 2013, 143–161, 157.
- 67 Waligórska, 'The Jewish-Theme Whodunnit', p. 157.
- 68 Waligórska, 'The Jewish-Theme Whodunnit', p. 158.

- 69 Czapliński, 'Nowa powieść Joanny Bator'. Almost all the writers discussed in this study grew up in the cities they describe, and many use their childhood experience explicitly. This applies to Chwin, Tokarczuk, Huelle, Buida, Pomerantsev, Andrukhowych, Szewc, Paźniński, Zagajewski, Różycki and Bator, as well as numerous others.
- 70 Edward Saunders, 'Post-Soviet Childhood and East-Prussian Memory in Volker Koepp's Documentary *Hulenderblüte*', *Oxford German Studies*, 44, 3, 2015, 237–254, 238. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 110.
- 71 Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 109.
- 72 Czapliński, 'Nowa powieść Joanny Bator'.