

INTERMEDIATE CHAPTER

POSTWAR BERLIN: 1945-1949

In preparation for our simulated or real walk to locations of Berlin that have significance for the 1945–1949 period, we will turn to three films: Wolfgang Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (1946), Gerhard Lamprecht's *Irgendwo in Berlin* (1946); and Roberto Rossellini's *Germania anno zero* (1948). The war-ravaged city on the screen is barely recognizable as Berlin. Other than the panoramic view of the bombarded Reichstag at the beginning of *Germania anno zero* and later the brief shots of Black Market activities in its vicinity, the films include no Berlin landmarks. In each a landscape of equalizing rubble dominates. Given the American and British saturation bombings started in early 1943 and heightened in the spring of 1945 (the British bombed at night, the Americans during the day), it is a miracle that any buildings remained more or less intact. Why some were saved while others were destroyed seems inexplicable, just as inexplicable as the intact rooms jutting into the landscape on steel props from the sites of otherwise demolished buildings.

There is little evidence of the “Hurrah! We’re still alive!” feeling that supposedly animated Germans in 1945. Avoiding comments on the rubble, people move around in it as if it had been their natural surrounding their entire lives. No one worries about hidden explosives or about dropping into one of the many holes in the asphalt which off and on caused Berliners to land in subway tunnels. Focused on the present, on making it through the next day or merely the next hour, people simply cope with their hardships as best they can. Though many rubble shots suggest inner devastation, none of the three directors seem to believe in the “zero hour”—the conviction that the past was eradicated, enabling Germany to have a completely fresh start (the title *Germania anno zero* is of course partly ironic). Still, in contrast to Rossellini’s utterly bleak film, in which Nazi ideology continues to poison the young, the two German films, both sponsored by the East German DEFA studios, end with the possibility of creating a more just and humane society and thus also with the optimism needed for rebuilding Germany.

The day after watching the films, we walk down Unter den Linden in the center of Berlin. Some buildings remain intact under our gaze—for example, the State Opera, where the first German postwar film, *Die Mörder sind unter uns*, premiered (October 1946). When we transpose the unembellished and realistic rubble heaps from *Irgendwo in Berlin* and *Germania anno zero* to the Linden-avenue, we envision the rubble as a type of punishment and admonition. On the other hand, when following the example set in Staudte’s film, we give in to the urge to aestheticize the debris. Then we turn damaged buildings into dark silhouettes starkly puncturing a hazy sky. Evoking threatening shapes and elongated shadows, we also attempt to recreate expressionist terrors. Yet exercises such as these may be signs of evasion, attempts to repress the horror engendered by utter devastations. When we catch ourselves viewing the heaps of rubble in the way Albert Speer, Hitler’s architect, would have wanted us to see them—as signifiers of slowly decaying grandeur—we quickly halt our own image fabrications. Still, like many politicians and Berlin visitors in the immediate postwar period, we follow the call initiated by the postwar travel industry in 1947—“Berlin is alive! Berlin is calling you!”—and continue to engage in “rubble tourism.” By way of the Spandauer Straße, a right turn from Unter den Linden, we proceed to the city hall (called “Rotes Rathaus” because of its red color). After surveying its damages, we turn around and walk to Hitler’s New Reich Chancellery on the Voßstrasse.

Because the Soviets had focused on conquering the Reichstag, the Chancellery was less damaged than expected, but in the immediate postwar period the Soviets removed

many of its valuable parts, using them for constructing their war memorials in Berlin. By casting the building blocks of Nazi Germany into their own architectural structures, they purposely subverted their original message. The colonnade of the Tiergarten Park's Soviet War Memorial—opened in November 1945 at the crossing of the Siegesallee and the Charlottenburger Chaussee (A,4/5)—consists of six columns built from granite taken from Hitler's Chancellery. (Please refer to the map preceding chapter 3.) The marble for its towering centerpiece column came from the same source. Ostensibly the memorial—which we can reach in a matter of minutes from the Chancellery—mourns the Soviets who died in the Battle of Berlin, but the stern Russian soldier on top of the gigantic marble column, as well as the spoils of war comprising the six columns, overwhelmingly proclaim another message: Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. Spoils of war from Hitler's Chancellery also figure prominently in the Treptower Park Soviet War Memorial, open to the public since May 1949 (we reach it from the Puschkinallee in Berlin-Treptow). Its gateway, constructed from marble walls removed from the Chancellery, also reminds us of German defeat. The centerpiece of the complex—a soldier carrying a rescued German child—is humongous: it is 40 meters tall and weighs 70 tons. This bronze soldier certainly seems strong enough to have crushed the oversized swastika at his feet. Along with its slabs depicting military scenes, the gigantic complex seems so overwhelming that it is difficult to acknowledge that it commemorates thousands of Red Army soldiers who lost their lives in Berlin. The bombastic show of power seems antithetical to the purpose of creating empathy with victims.

Next, we proceed to the German-Russian Museum in Berlin-Karlshorst, a locality in the district of Lichtenberg (not far from Treptow). There we head for the room where the document declaring Germany's unconditional WWII surrender was signed on May 8-9, 1945 (Germany had already signed a surrender-document on May 7th in Reims, at General Eisenhower's headquarters, but Stalin insisted on its ratification in Karlshorst). Looking at the capitulation text, we read: "This Act is drawn up in the English, Russian, and German languages. English and Russian are the only authentic texts." The second sentence speaks volumes. It firmly sends the message that Germans have forfeited the right to self-determination and that the occupying powers would be making the decisions for them.

Photographs in the history section of the museum confirm the pervasive presence of the Soviets in all sections of Berlin until the other Allies arrived in July. Many show a Stalin quote plastered all over Berlin: "Die Hitler kommen und gehen, aber das deutsche Volk bleibt bestehen" (the Hitlers come and go, but the German people remain/remain the same). In contrast, Americans did not, at first, attempt to gain the affection of Berliners, as evident in the American movie reels showing German overtures to Americans, including Germans professing that they are sorry. "Sorry?" an American asks and then responds himself: "Sorry not for having started the war but for having lost the war!" By 1947, however, Berlin's tourist industry was able to attract visitors by stressing Berlin as a city characterized by international communication.

In reality, though, mutual understanding on the political level did not last long among the Allies. After leaving the Karlshorst Museum—our last stop on the first day—we think about the many postwar tensions. Soon after the Potsdam Conference (July-August 1945), the Western Allies and the Soviets—each with governing power in its own occupation zones—started to disagree particularly about money matters. The Western Allies disapproved of the excessive dismantling of German industry and of the large scale transfer of machinery to Russia. There were, moreover, substantial differences over other policies determined at the Potsdam Conference, such as

denazification, reeducation, and ways of democratizing Germans (these included political and media matters). Rifts increased when the western sectors accepted the European Recovery Plan, widely known as the Marshall Plan (named after its initiator), and when the Soviet Zone rejected it (as expected). Because currency reform was the precondition for receiving Marshall Plan aid, the Western Allies decided, in March 1948 in London, to form their own political entity, a decision that prompted the Russian representative on the Kontrollrat (Control Council)—the four-member organization of the Allies in charge of all administrative matters for Germany—to walk out of the meeting (the Kontrollrat never convened again). The Russian representative on the Alliierte Kommandatur (Allied Command), the entity charged with administering Berlin, also left the Western Allies, but only on June 16, 1948, not long before the currency reform introduced by the Western Allies in its sectors went into effect—an event that meant, regardless of protestations to the contrary, the start of a divided Germany.

West Berliners too were eager to exchange their Reichmarks for the German Marks given to the populations in the Western zones on July 20, 1948. They strongly protested when the Western Allies did not include them in the currency reform because of adhering to the London decision of 1944 (hammered out in 1945 first in Yalta and then Potsdam) that defined Berlin as a unit separate from the four Allied occupation zones—that is, as a locality to be governed not by one Ally but by all four. The Soviets, however, could hardly wait to change the status of Berlin: they wanted to annex all of West Berlin to their own zone. Thus the currency reform they instituted (very soon after the Western Allies had introduced theirs) was meant for West Berlin as well. Angry at this, the Western Allies changed their minds and extended their currency reform to West Berlin after all. This in turn infuriated the Soviets. The Western Allies had of course expected Soviet anger, but they were completely unprepared for the blockade of all land and water ways leading to West Berlin, which the Soviets imposed on July 23rd. How could this be circumvented? Someone remembered that the airways to Berlin were not blocked. Therefore the Americans and the British launched the Airlift that supplied West Berliners with necessities such as food, medicine, and coal from July 26th, 1948 to May 12th, 1949, when the Airlift officially ended. Approximately 278,000 flights and 2.34 million tons of food and supplies landed at Berlin's Tempelhof Airport during this period. The Tegel Airport in the district of Berlin-Reinickendorf was built in a record time of three months to accommodate other flights. In May 1949, soon after the Blockade was lifted, the Federal Republic of Germany was founded in Bonn as a provisional German state; in October 1949, East Germany followed suit with its own state, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), with East Berlin as its capital (in the GDR the designation "East Berlin" was forbidden; one had to call the GDR capital "Berlin"). West Berlin, however, remained an island under the governance of the three Allied powers, but the German Mark, its media, and its political institutions connected it with West Germans.

Two additional days of site visits combined with walks will contribute significantly to our experiential knowledge of the postwar Berlin of 1945-1949. On the first day we meet at the Teufelsberg in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, in the northern part of the Grunewald forest. The Teufelsberg is a tall, artificial hill built from piles of rubbles left in the wake of WWII. The NSA Field Station, an important listening post of the Cold War period, was on the top of it. On the one hand, then, the rubbles of the Teufelsberg represent the end of WWII; on the other, the new Cold War. From the Teufelsberg, we take the best available transportation to the Kleistpark in Berlin-Schöneberg to examine the building that had housed the Control Council. Our last stop is the imposing Tempelhof Airport (built 1936-41 by the Nazis), the site where the Airlift planes landed and departed. In

front of the airport, we also inspect the Airlift Memorial; its three claw-like protrusions commemorate the three air corridors used during the Airlift.

Our next day differs considerably from the first two. We meet at the Titania Theater in Berlin-Steglitz (off the Schloßstraße, Steglitz's main shopping thoroughfare). As one of the few elegant sites in Berlin not destroyed by bombs, many important receptions and events were held there in the immediate postwar period—among them, the official founding of the U.S. sponsored Freie Universität (Free University) in 1948. Simulating the kind of whim characteristic of flaneurs, we then decide to explore the Freie Universität, located in Berlin-Dahlem. We go by bus—down the Schloßstraße and then the Hindenburg Damm to the Steglitz locality named Lichterfelde (during the Cold War, this was the site of many U.S. Army barracks). Heading to Dahlem from Lichterfelde, we pass through Zehlendorf, known for its elegant villas and impressive gardens. Along with Steglitz and Dahlem, this is where most of the personnel of the Western Allies lived. Thus we also see areas of Berlin largely untouched by the bombs of WWII. In fact, when there was talk of abandoning the center of Berlin and relocating its functions as a capital to the periphery—to these areas—scathing Berlin tongues accused the Allies of wanting to turn Berlin from an urban into a “garden metropolis.” After walking around in the small central area of Dahlem and on parts of its scattered “campus” (some university buildings are in residential districts), we reach the building that was the seat of the Allied Command from 1945 to 1948.

In the days of the Airlift—West Berlin's signature event during 1945-1949—the relationship between the Western Allies and West Berliners changed dramatically. West Berlin became viewed as a bastion of freedom, in large part due to mayor Ernst Reuter's ability to rally West Berliners and the outside world behind him in clarion calls of freedom. The most memorable of these is his speech in front of the Reichstag on September 9, 1948, the one in which he implored all nations of the world not to abandon Berlin.

The occupational forces turned into protectors and, for them, the Germans into friends. Above all, Berliners and, by extension, Germans were no longer imagined with Nazi salutes but with arms stretched in anticipation of catching the gifts showered from American and British airplanes (later those of other nations as well), here and there mischievously testing American chewing gum and contentedly humming American tunes.

ANONYMA, EINE FRAU IN BERLIN (2000)

In 1954, after receiving the consent of the mysterious “Anonyma,” the writer Kurt W. Marek arranged the first publication of her diary in an English version in the U.S. Its title, *Eine Frau in Berlin*, suggests the commonality of women's experiences, an impression confirmed by the author of the preface—also anonymous—who stresses that it depicts the dreary collective fate of countless women. Strangely, neither the preface nor the epilogue, written by Marek, specifies the nature of the collective experience (even though it had not been the focus of any other published diaries): the mass rape of German women by the military personnel of the Red Army before Germany's official WWII capitulation on May 8th, 1945. Marek's phrase “the red apocalypse” might have appealed to the anti-communist zealots of the American McCarthy era in the 1950s, but it is not helpful for deducing what the collective experience was. It turns out, however, that Marek values the diary not for its description of the experience but for the author's

singular attitude toward it. Who the diary's author is matters after all. Predictably, sooner or later someone would discover her identity.

The discovery occurred later rather than earlier: in the second half of 2003, soon after the republication of the German edition of the diary (1959). Now, on the basis of Jens Bisky's research, it is commonly accepted that the "woman in Berlin" was the journalist Marta Hiller, who had studied at the Sorbonne, traveled widely—including in Russia—and had voluntarily returned to Germany during the Third Reich. There is far less consensus on the diary's authorship; for instance, on Marek's changes to the diary—if any. But, neither the discovery of the author's identity nor the still hotly debated authorship questions have changed the entrenched custom of referring to the woman in Berlin as Anonyma, a custom we also follow.

Anonyma's diary extends from the 20th of April to June 23rd. Fear of the advancing Soviets—heightened by the lack of reliable newspapers, dysfunctional radios, and the prevalence of rumors—governs her entries through April 25th. Contrary to fears, when the Soviets arrive in Berlin on April 26th, occupying apartment buildings throughout the city, they readily supply female Berliners with food, but at a high price: no woman, regardless of age or appearance, is safe from rape—rape that frequently turns into gang rape, especially because Russians tended to move around in groups. Resistance is useless.

After her own "gang rape" incident—one involving two Russians rather than the hordes that descended on many other women—Anonyma decides to take matters into her own hands. This is easier for her than for most others, since she had learned rudimentary Russian on a trip to Moscow. She succeeds in establishing a liaison with a major who protects her from the group advances of lower ranked army personnel. Though Anonyma develops a certain respect and even something resembling a grudging like for the major, she by no means falls in love with him—a fact that needs to be stressed because Max Färberböck's film, *Anonyma – eine Frau in Berlin* (2008), does develop a love relationship between Anonyma and the major—an aspect of the film that strongly deflects attention away from its other Russians. Thus the film distinctly departs from the nuanced, objective descriptions of a wide range of Russians that characterize the book.

Though Anonyma provides many instances of victimization among the rape cases she depicts, she often seems to justify Soviet behavior. She accepts views such as the following: that the Soviets have the right to rape German women as retaliation for the atrocities Germans committed in the Soviet Union; that women represent the spoils of war; and that the immense quantities of alcohol left by German generals so that the Soviets would become intoxicated and thus weaker war combatants actually led to many of the rape incidents. In short, if Anonyma feels victimized at all, she feels justifiably victimized.

Anonyma's diary is best known for her reactions to the raping rampage, but the rapes and the responses to them are of course not very relevant to the topographical emphasis of our book. Clearly topography plays no role in Anonyma's spatially restricted world in the final days of the war. Thus the excerpts from *Eine Frau in Berlin* included in *Berliner Spaziergänge* are from the immediate postwar period, an interval when Anonyma reclaims spatial and temporal categories. The expansion of her world is represented by the expansion of her physical space. No longer confined to the apartment building on Berliner Strasse - in all probability the Berliner Strasse of the Tempelhof district, renamed "Tempelhofer Damm" in 1949 -, she sets out on long walks to visit friends or acquaintances. She goes to Berlin-Steglitz once, but normally she proceeds to the Berlin

districts Schöneberg, Wilmersdorf, and Charlottenburg. Most of these walks involve treks of at least 20 kilometers. Curiously, she repeatedly uses the same, rather martial vocabulary to describe the walks: she “marches” or embarks on “marches”; walking in purposeful, “mechanical” fashion, she perceives of herself as a “Gehmaschine” (a walking machine or device), clearly a vast departure from her previous assessment of herself as “Beute” (war booty or prey). She enjoys her “job” as a walking machine, one that does not lead to sexual assaults.

On Anonyma’s first walks, the streets of Berlin tend to be eerily silent, devoid of other pedestrians (this despite the fact that the population of Berlin, though down from the nearly 4 million of pre-Nazi days, still consisted of 2.8 million inhabitants). Gradually, though, Anonyma again experiences the streets as lively sites of contemporary history rather than as inanimate displays of rubble. She notices Russian trucks headed toward Russia, transporting machinery confiscated from German factories; she watches groups of poverty-stricken old and young, pulling cheap carts filled with pitiful belongings, and concludes that they must be German refugees from eastern territories. From announcements taped on house facades, she finds out the names of Berlin’s new government officials. Because she does not know any of them, she assumes that they are Communists who had emigrated from Germany at the beginning of the Nazi period and had recently returned from Moscow (all of Berlin was indeed largely governed by these former emigrants until the Western Allies arrived in Berlin in July). And from the flags waving from apartment windows, she knows the directions in which the political winds are blowing. In the beginning, she notes that diligent German housewives had turned the red sections of the Nazi flags into Soviet flags; later she comments on the resourcefulness behind the sudden appearance of flags representing the countries of the Western Allies.

Other than registering the Kleistpark and the Bayrischer Platz (both in Berlin-Schöneberg) on her way to Charlottenburg, Anonyma’s references to specific sites remain generic: she passes through tunnels (quite likely subway tunnels), walks past subway stations, reaches a desired street, and so forth. But, we know from Marek’s comments that the names of specific sites were generally removed from the diary in order to prevent them from providing hints to decipher Anonyma’s identity. Of course, retaining the reference to the Rathaus (city hall) in the passage excerpted for *Berliner Spaziergänge* does not compromise Anonyma’s secret identity. It is from there that the Soviets constituted the first teams to rebuild urban Berlin. That Anonyma is designated as one of Berlin’s first *Trümmerfrauen* (rubble women) seems fitting, not only because the *Trümmerfrauen* have turned into the most prevalent iconic image for the rebuilding of Berlin—though this is certainly important—but because the *Trümmerfrauen*-activities also represent a collective postwar experience. It is, moreover, one that—unlike the collective experience of rape—did not need to be shrouded in secrecy.

Why secrecy in regard to the rapes became the rule rather than the exception for most of the postwar period becomes apparent in the reunion of Anonyma and her boyfriend, profiled in the last diary section of *Berliner Spaziergänge*. In general, German men could not tolerate the idea that their women, objects of their unconditional adulation, had been “defiled” by the Soviets, whom Nazi propaganda had depicted as *Untermenschen* (subspecies of human beings). In addition, many German men were ashamed that they had been unable to prevent the rapes. Thus the topic of mass rapes was relegated to the silence about the past that proved so harmful to the identity formation of the 1968 generation, which finally punctured it.

ALFRED DÖBLIN, *SCHICKSALSREISE* (1949)

Alfred Döblin's *Schicksalsreise* (1949) is divided into three parts: a) Döblin's emigration from Germany in the wake of the February 1933 Reichstag fire; his immigration to France, where he obtained French citizenship, and his subsequent emigration from France; b) his life in California; and c) his life in Germany during the immediate postwar years. Unlike many other Jewish Germans, who returned to Germany as U.S. army personnel, the 67-year-old Döblin arrived in postwar Germany as a colonel of the French army. Assigned to Baden-Baden in the French occupation zone, he was charged with carrying out French initiatives for the reeducation of Germans, a task that dampened his spirits almost as much as Baden-Baden's rainy and foggy weather did.

Disheartened at the astounding energy Germans were investing into the rebuilding of Germany (at the expense of focusing on their inner lives), Döblin compared them to the ants that incessantly—and senselessly—scurried back and forth among the ruins. His reeducation tasks seemed doomed to failure, for most Germans did not mourn the devastations around them. In Döblin's view, Germans even welcomed the devastations, for they enabled them to replace the old with the completely new. Rebuilding German cities, Döblin predicts in the 23rd chapter of *Schicksalsreise*, will be far easier than bringing Germans to reflect on how they had contributed to the devastations.

The third part of *Schicksalsreise* contains three chapters on Döblin's two postwar visits to Berlin, one in 1947 (July 5-12), the other in 1948 (Feb. 5-9). In the first of the three chapters (No. 26), Döblin concedes that he had been hesitant to return to Berlin earlier. Even in 1947, approaching Berlin seems difficult, especially because he vividly remembers how he used to love returning there from short trips, for he had truly considered Berlin his home. But, could he possibly feel at home again in Berlin? Perhaps inevitably, various images of Berlin in the past—actually of several past Berlins—surface in his memory, one after another in quick succession. Having arrived in Berlin in 1888, at age 10, he recalls Berlin as the capital of Prussia and of Bismarck's Reich. At that time there were no streetcars, no automobiles, and no phones. Suddenly he remembers the Wright brothers flying off in their first plane from a field that later became the site of the Tempelhof Airport. Department stores replace the memory of the airfield, subways the department stores, the lively, cosmopolitan city at the start of 1933 the subways, and then people everything else. He thinks of Berliners fondly, convinced that their unique temperament—their industrious nature, skeptical attitudes, dry, quick humor, and love of irony—will never change, regardless of how continuously everything around them changes. Having discovered at least one constant, Döblin is ready to face Berlin.

Because he visited various cities since his return to Germany, Döblin had considered himself mentally prepared for Berlin's devastations. But, the destruction he sees from the train on the way to the center of Berlin shocks him. It is as if floodlights were illuminating the worst possible nightmare. He cannot envision battles horrible enough to have caused such mutilation. In comparison, even the ugly, damaged *Mietskasernen* (Berlin's rectangular cement apartment buildings) in Berlin's center seem reassuring—they at least are recognizable as buildings.

From Berlin-Mitte Döblin heads to Bleibtreustraße in the district of Charlottenburg. With the help of the map in this book that precedes Chapter 3, it is easy to reconstruct his path from Chausseestraße to the Lehrter train station. There he catches the subway to the Savigny Platz, which is close to Bleibtreustraße. Almost everything Döblin sees on the way awakens memories—for example, of his research in the natural science institutes of

the Charité hospital complex and of the times he examined the pre-historic animal specimens of the Natural Science Museum (now the museum itself looks pre-historic). Like Anonyma, he remarks on the eerily silent, wide boulevards, once the hubs of cacophonous urban activity, and on the isolated groups of poverty-stricken people (quite likely refugees from eastern territories). Almost everything Döblin sees generates a past memory. Present and past continuously vie with each other.

Bleibtreustraße seems hopelessly ravaged by the war; but, miraculously, the house that Döblin seeks is completely undamaged. Why this house and not another, Döblin wonders. The high society people he visits seem as undamaged as the house. On his return trip, Döblin walks down Kurfürstendamm to the zoo, again registering, in detail, sights, sounds, smells, moods, much as he also does in February 1948 when he—the author of the famous urban novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*—returns to Alexanderplatz and its surroundings. Döblin's many nuanced descriptions of people, buildings, atmosphere, and different time periods evoked by the visual signify the importance he had attached and still attaches to streets, plazas, and railroad stations as urban texts triggering the imagination. Not once does he even mention the interior of the apartment house where he used to live or of the office where he had practiced medicine. It is the street life that is an extension of his private self, continuously regenerating, reshifting, relocating, and enriching it.

Berliner Spaziergänge includes only a short selection from Döblin's Berlin-wanderings, but an important one. In its second paragraph, the 69 year-old Döblin is standing, in the middle of the summer of 1947, in the heart of Berlin. His eyes slowly scan Unter den Linden, once Berlin's most splendid, tree-lined promenade. Nothing. No trees, no houses, no outside cafés, no Prussian statues, no flowers—nothing that could tempt the eyes to linger. Pariser Platz too is empty, as if it had been grazed. He seems surprised that the Brandenburg Gate is still at its customary location. Patiently scanning it up and down, Döblin's eyes see something at the top of the Gate. He remembers that the Victory Goddess had been there with her Quadriga. What is there now seems like nothing more than a clump, not worthy of attention.

Moving a block or so further, Döblin reaches Friedrichstraße, it too iconic of the former Berlin's center. At first nothing rewards his gaze. Then, suddenly, as if he were a lucky Diogenes—one whose bright lamp, carried on daytime strolls, finally discovers the human being he was seeking—Döblin detects two human beings in the center of Germany's largest metropolis. But, instead of citizens from Berlin's 2.8 million population, he sees two Russians. They are not rampaging combatants. A young Russian soldier and his wife are simply strolling down Friedrichstraße. The couple appears to feel just as much at home in Berlin as Döblin had in the past. Unlike all other images in Berlin, this one does not evoke layers of images from the past. It is so new and strange that it generates no associations whatsoever. Instead, the image of the Russian couple appropriating the Friedrichstraße seems to bring Döblin to the realization that the past is indeed the past—something that not even Berlin's rubble cityscapes had been able to do.

After many disappointments with the regressive politics of West Germany's Adenauer administration and after his failed attempts to reposition himself in Germany's literary world, these including a speech in Berlin's Charlottenburg Palace (1947) and several others on his 1948 visit to Berlin, Döblin decided to return to France. In 1953, in the parting letter he sent to Federal President Theodor Heuss, whom he respected, Döblin wrote that he simply felt superfluous in Germany.

Perhaps Döblin would be somewhat consoled to know that Berlin now wishes to correct its past disregard. In November 2008, it organized a highly profiled lecture series and an exhibit featuring a new ten-volume, reader-friendly edition of his best works. Titled “Alfred Döblin’s Return—Berlin,” the event focused on his 1947, 1948, and his “2008 in-absentia” returns. It was held at the new Akademie der Künste, located in the heart of Berlin, on the Pariser Platz, next to Brandenburg Gate. It was attended by the kinds of varied, noisy crowds Döblin had always liked so much—crowds that spilled onto the boulevard Unter den Linden, again graced with trees, and then strolled to nearby Friedrichstraße. Surely the Victory Goddess, back on the top of the Brandenburg Gate with her Quadriga, smiled in approval at Döblin’s belated, yet fitting return to the heart of Berlin.

CURT RIESS, *BERLIN BERLIN* (1953)

Like Alfred Döblin, Curt Riess spent his youth in Berlin, left Berlin for France in 1933, moved on to the U.S., and returned to Germany in 1945 with Allied Forces—in his case not the French but the U.S. army. Uncommonly well-informed on Berlin, Riess was one of its most widely read and influential postwar journalists. Just as his journalistic expertise extended into various fields (sports, politics, espionage, and film), his other writings spanned several genres—among them drama, the novel, and biography. Which genre, then, would he choose for the definitive work on Berlin that he hoped to write?

In his introduction to *Berlin Berlin*, Riess discloses that it had been his dream to write a Berlin novel, even *the* Berlin novel. With this in mind, he avidly kept a copious diary, filled many notebooks with jottings and quotes, conducted countless interviews, and collected thousands of articles. But, in 1951, when rereading his vast collection of materials, he doubted that a novel could have more narrative power than the tales he already had. Overcoming his aversion to the cliché that reality is stranger than fiction, he decided to use his “unreal realities” to write a history stressing the surreal nature of normalcy in postwar Berlin. Like the title *Berlin Berlin*, his mode of writing—prose mingled with the filmic—underscores this dualism.

In *Berlin Berlin*, the entire city is projected onto a screen. Riess’s gaze functions as the camera eye. As Steffan Damm notes in the epilogue to *Berlin Berlin*, there are many segments and large numbers of main and supporting characters “filmed” in varying ways: in panoramic shots, close-ups, medium close-ups, extreme close-ups. Slow takes alternate with quick takes, extended dialogues with snatches of dialogues. Varied shooting and pacing occurs, for example, in a sequence on Soviet soldiers raping German women in a hospital. Suddenly groups of soldiers stream through the hospital corridors, dispersing into various rooms. Several attack nurses, others jump on patients. Meanwhile, the patients spared from immediate rape—plastered with unraveling bandages—attempt to escape by crawling down hallways and staircases. Unharmed nurses with frightened faces (close-ups) attempt to hide under beds or drop to their knees and pray. Several soldiers gleefully pour bottles of alcohol over their victims. Others, standing at the hospital windows, return the gunfire coming at them from the outside. Suddenly the building is in flames. Next cut: on the following day, charred remains of soldiers are found among the hospital debris.

The primacy of the visual is particularly accentuated in Riess’s personal responses to the destroyed center of Berlin. Upon arrival in the barely damaged Berlin-Zehlendorf—where most American journalists resided—Riess did not sympathize with Berliners,

convinced that the devastation of their urban center was well-deserved. Soon afterward, driving down the boulevard Unter den Linden in his jeep and *seeing* what he had known only abstractly, he is completely jolted out of his smug views. He looks in vain for the Academy of the Arts, the Stock Market building, the French Embassy, and university buildings. Giving up on finding representative national buildings, he proceeds to the neighborhood where he had once lived. His family's home, his school, the house where his grandmother had died, and the house where his best friend had lived—all are gone. With increasing desperation, he drives to Tauentzienstraße. He sees no signs of the Romanische Café—where he had spent many animated evenings discussing literature, and there is no trace left of the building where he had his first journalist job. Suddenly he cannot bear to look further. He feels that his own identity has also been eradicated.

After the above testimonial to the importance of public and private spaces, Riess empathizes far more with Berliners. His Black Market section starts with a very old woman, the soles of her shoes filled with holes, stumbling down a street, carrying in a market bag an object in all likelihood removed from her last material possessions: a bronze figurine. She is going to one of the antique stores that have cropped up by the dozens in the center of town. There she can perhaps obtain a piece of bread in exchange for her bronze statue. Besides, she feels at home in the antique store. Many of her previous possessions are still there, whereas almost none are left in her home.

Riess offers numerous memorable examples of Black Market practices, zooming in on them in all nooks of Berlin and describing them in stark visual images. A funeral home owner tries to sell men's socks to a couple standing at a casket, mourning their dead family member; the cleaning woman of an elegant coffee house on Kurfürstendamm sells pudding powder in the restroom; a nurse informs her sick patient that her flowers had wilted—in reality, though, she sold them to a patient in another room. At no point does Riess condemn the desperate Berliners, stressing instead that the Black Market was the most important factor in their lives—a far greater power, in fact, than the occupation armies of the Allies. Moreover, as Riess explains at the end of the Black Market segment in *Berliner Spaziergänge*, the Black Market had deep repercussions on the lives of Berliners long after it stopped existing.

The second section in *Berliner Spaziergänge* highlights a meeting of Berlin's political representatives held in the eastern sector on the eve of the Berlin Blockade. Riess shows, on the one hand, how the Soviets deliberately terrorize the representatives from the western sectors and, on the other, Louise Schröder's ability to contain the tumult (she was the acting mayor because the staunch anti-communist Ernst Reuter, who had won the election, was unacceptable to the Soviet zone; once the Blockade started, confirming the division of east and west, Reuter became at least West Berlin's mayor). Stressing that there was no man around who could claim to be her equal, Riess gives Schröder her due for her ability to calm the frayed nerves of east and west.

The last excerpt in *Berliner Spaziergänge* also focuses on Riess's dominant theme: Berlin's surrealism (his term "existing surrealism" differentiates it from the unreality of the surrealism in dreams). Three years after the end of the war, writes Riess, at a time when Berlin was on the way to normalcy, it suddenly became the most abnormal city of Europe, perhaps even of the world. He attributes the peculiar state of things not to the boundary lines between East- and West-Berlin but to the artificial divisions constructed, often with considerable cunning and effort, by the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Our selection focuses on several ways in which the divisions affect one segment of society—the police—and how, in turn, society is affected by absurdities built into the police system. Not surprisingly, the most notable absurdities arise from spatial arrangements

on the Potsdamer Platz.

Riess provides one of his most memorable portrayals of surrealistic Berlin when he discusses the post-Blockade period of 1949. A huge Russian crew shows up to film the *Battle of Berlin* (1949) on site. During the same period an American crew arrives to film *The Big Lift* (1950), a love story intertwined with the Airlift. Filming for each production lasted many weeks. Thus it was not uncommon for Berliners to relive on their streets the recent history they had just lived through. People walking in front of the Reich Chancellery stumble across bodies of “dead” Soviet and German soldiers. Artillery fire and simulated bombs awaken old terrors. Suddenly the Black Market again flourishes in many parts of the city. Deafening airplanes return. As so-called extras, Berliners walk in and out of movie scenes, mostly as they choose—in one hour catching cans of milk powder or bags of coal falling from the sky, in the next reading a *Spiegel* article about the new Federal Republic, and in the third ducking into damaged buildings to escape artillery fire. In short, their lives consisted of an amalgam of surreal contemporary events, repeatedly intermingled with absurd layers of different pasts simultaneously alive on the streets of Berlin—just as alive as the present. No wonder that many found it difficult to differentiate between reality and illusion—a Berlin feeling that reasserted itself frequently in the coming years.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Many Berlin sites have multilayered histories. Describe the conflicting histories of two mentioned in this chapter. Which of the two sites would be more prone to yet another change? Why is a site (a building or a location) with multilayered, conflicting histories inherently interesting? What arguments could be used to interpret such sites negatively?
2. In 1933, Hitler had asked the Germans to give him time to create a Germany no one would recognize again (“Gebt mir vier Jahre Zeit, und ihr werdet Deutschland nicht wieder erkennen”). The quote turned out to be true, but not in the way Hitler had intended. In your opinion, why did Stalin plaster signs with the above quote all around Berlin in 1945? How does another quote plastered by Stalin around Berlin (his own)—“Hitlers come and go, but the German people will remain (the same)” —complement or negate the message of the one above?
3. In the absence of newspapers, radio, and official communications of any sort during the Battle for Berlin and in the immediate aftermath, Berliners were dependent on rumors to make sense of their world. Give examples of the kinds of wild rumors that may have circulated.
4. Referring to the Berlin districts in the parentheses, name Berlin landmarks in the British (Charlottenburg; Spandau, Tiergarten, and Wilmersdorf) and Soviet (Pankow, Weißensee, Prenzlauer Berg, Mitte, Friedrichshain, Lichtenberg, Köpenick, and Treptow) occupation zones. Which zone had more landmarks? Why did the American occupation zone (Neukölln, Kreuzberg, Tempelhof, Schöneberg, Steglitz, and Zehlendorf) have fewer Berlin landmarks and the French (Reinickendorf, Wedding) practically none?

5. The events Anonyma describes have the “ring of truth.” What difference does it make if her diary is a true record of what happened or whether it is a literary construction of events?
6. Alfred Döblin thought Germans would restore their cities more rapidly than they would deal with questions of guilt. What evidence do you see of this in the reading selections?
7. Curt Riess had originally wanted to write a Berlin novel. Based on the selections you read, would his material have been suitable for a novel? Would he, using the same events, have been able to write a good novel? How would a novel have differed from what he did write?
8. To entice West Germans to visit Berlin, the Berlin travel industry started offering tourist packages for “rubble tourism.” Why should West Germans, whose cities also had plenty of rubbles, have wanted to visit Berlin to view Berlin’s rubbles? As a travel guide, provide five interesting comments on Berlin’s rubbles.
9. In 2005, almost all major German news media (newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations) published dozens of articles (most available online) and/or prepared special online dossiers for the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII. Compare the headlines of articles published on the following websites: www.stern.de and www.ard.de and list 12 different topics that pertain to the end of WWII. Which ones did you not expect?
10. In 1910, the art critic Karl Scheffler wrote a sentence that continues to be one of the most quoted sentences about Berlin: „Berlin ist dazu verdammt, immerzu zu werden und niemals zu sein“—in essence that Berlin can never remain simply as it is; it is always condemned to be in a state of becoming. How does this quote pertain also to Berlin’s immediate postwar period?